This series is finishing up in an awful hurry. I think, in our hearts, most of us were thinking sweep before the series began… but most of us, myself included, were afraid to say it. Because the Devils have been surprising us all spring.

Jonathan Quick has faced 21.6 shots per game. Brodeur has faced 23.4. We've seen it all playoffs from these two teams. But now the Devils are getting schooled in how to play that way.

Another reason why I like Zach Parise better than Ilya Kovalchuk – he has 11 shots in the series. Kovy has five. Parise needed much of this season to get his timing back, but he's rolling now and next year he'll get the numbers you'd expect. On a new team.

Simon Gagne played 6:39 in his return to the lineup. He still managed three shots on goal, but it was a nice way to ease him back into the lineup. And correct me if I'm wrong, but to get your name on the Cup you need to either play 41 games for the winning team in the regular season, or one game in the Cup Final. If so, then accommodations were made here to get him in.

Ratings are down in the Cup Final. So I ask you this: would ratings be down if the Kings were scored 280 regular season goals and were scoring over 3.3 per game in the playoffs, while the Devils scored 260 and 3.0?

That Vokoun signing (write-up on that is here) caught me off guard. The Penguins shift gears and instead of investing the NHL minimum in their backup, they add $1.5 per year or thereabouts. Their strategy had been sound… until they learned the hard way that they needed an upgrade. So that money will be taken out of their investment in their forwards, which to me would say 'bye-bye' to Steve Sullivan and instead shave off a few hundred thousand and perhaps get Eric Tangradi on the team – read or not.

It also puts the onus on the goalie trade market. No more Vokoun, which some silly Leaf fans felt was the right answer for their team. It's not the right answer – if Burked signed Vokoun he'd be fired by January. Because as an everyday goalie Vokoun would get hurt early. Then the Leafs will lose like crazy, thus the firing. It's trade market or nothing. At least with 'nothing' there would be low expectations. (that would be fulfilled)

On one hand, I believe Tim Thomas will return in a year and he'll perform well. On the other hand, I believe that nobody in my league has the same opinion so he sits on my team untradeable. It's not like I'm not used to a key player sitting on my bench doing nothing. Ahem (Crosby).

If you haven't spun by DobberProspects lately, take a look – recent profiles added or updated include Michael Stone , Casey Wellman , Carl Hagelin and Ludvig Rensfeldt.

Michel Therrien as coach of the Habs. At first I thought they were nuts. But then I realized, the Habs aren't winning the Cup next year. Or the year after. If the stars align and everything is done right, then they are one of 25 teams who could win in three years. By then, Therrien will be fired. He's a decent coach, but not a Cup winner.

I like Therrien's track record in Montreal. Let's see… first he had them miss the playoffs, then he had them knocked out in the second round…. and he was fired halfway through 2002-03.

The City of Glendale needed to shop around . I would have managed the arena for $10 million.

The Rangers are going after Alexander Radulov and if I'm the Preds I'm inclined to do such a deal. I'm sure they would get great return. Let the Rangers worry about convincing Rads not to go back to the KHL.

If I'm Nashville, I pay Ryan Suter whatever he wants. Then I trade Shea Weber . I really think Suter is the unsung hero, and if not the better defenseman then pretty damn close.

Here is my column for The Hockey News yesterday – offseason report for Tampa Bay and St. Louis.

There was a big rumor yesterday that Vladimir Tarasenko signed a two-year contract to play in the KHL. The St. Louis Blues and Tarasenko's agent each deny this rumor. May be related to Kuznetsov, who officially signed his two-year KHL deal yesterday.

The Avs re-signed Cody McLeod to a three year deal worth $3.45 million

How awesome is Kopitar? Sweet pass by Brown, too:

{youtube}MQqjmiIR20k{/youtube}

The great one drops the puck:

{youtube}SduQVDn8heQ{/youtube}