An interesting look at the tax effects in different NHL cities.

The Pens have locked up Matt Niskanen to a two-year contract. The cap hit is $2.3 million. He rebounded in Pittsburgh after a tough stretch in Dallas. Right now he's a solid puck mover in the 5/6 role for the Penguins, and the upside to play in the top four is still there.

Some stuff from Pierre LeBrun - expect the Parise/Suter contracts to be very long, and very frontloaded. Both players want lockout protection (frontloaded, more money now) in the way of a large signing bonus, much like the $8 million bonus Christian Ehrhoff received last year.

Suter wants to sign a career contract, so he is going to weigh his options. Money probably won't be the sole driver for him - family fit, and so on. Suter's wife is from Minnesota.

The Toronto Maple Leafs have bought out forward Colby Armstrong. Didn't work out from the start in Toronto for Armstrong.

Calgary has re-signed Lee Stempniak to a two-year, $2.5 million per contract.

Montreal has locked up UFA-to-be Travis Moen to a four-year extension. Moen was one-third of the checking line that powered Anaheim to the Cup back in 2007, along with Sammy Pahlsson and Rob Niedermayer .

Moen will get $1.85 million per. He's a great veteran for the Montreal lineup, and supplies toughness without hurting his team. Solid forward on the PK, too.

Jay Feaster says he has no plans to trade Jay Bouwmeester . Good move – for all of his faults, Bouwmeester plays a ton of tough minutes for a pretty thin defensive group. He isn't the offensive dynamo Calgary was hoping for, but he's steady and reliable in his own zone.

Those of you in PIM leagues – Matt Kassian (no relation to Zack) signed a two-year, one-way deal with the Wild. He had 55 PIM in 24 games with the Wild last year, and has averaged over 130 PIM in his most recent three AHL seasons in Houston.

If the Panthers are unwilling to let Nick Bjugstad go in a Luongo trade, Drew Shore would be a solid replacement prospect in the trade for the Canucks. Shore is a two-way power forward who is coming off of a very impressive college career.

I'd imagine Florida would want to send back either Scottie Upshall or Tomas Kopecky as salary going the other way.

Shore's DobberProspects bio right here.

The latest in the Parise saga – his parents shared a box during the Stanley Cup Final with Sidney Crosby
, who is a good friend and, like Parise, a Shattuck-St. Mary's alum.

I have mentioned Dallas a few times as a team that could make a splash come July 1. Colorado is another.

The Avs have a lot of cap space, and Denver is a city that pro athletes love to play in. The team on the ice has a few big holes to fill, too. They could use a top line winger, and a couple of front end defensemen, as well. The core pieces are in place, including a young goalie to build around (Semyon Varlamov), a young defensive group (Erik Johnson , Stefan Elliott , Tyson Barrie), and a mix of grit and skill up front (Ryan O'Reilly, Gabriel Landeskog , Matt Duchene , Paul Stastny , and so on).

Colorado will add a few players – they hope it is Parise and/or Suter, but it could very well be Garrison and/or Parenteau. They are definitely a team to keep an eye on.

I'd say Colorado makes a ton of sense for Alex Semin , too. The team has the cap space to give him a fat one or two year offer ($6 or $7 million), and they would love to add his talent to a group of wingers not really known to score goals (David Jones is injury prone, Milan Hejduk 's best days are behind him, and Peter Muller is a UFA).

Their lineup, as of right now (more of a depth chart than actual lines):

Jones – Stastny – Hejduk

Landeskog – O'Reilly – Downie

McGinn – Duchene - ???

Olver – ??? – McLeod

Johnson – Hejda

O'Byrne – Wilson

O'Brien – Hunwick

Elliott – Barrie

Varlamov

Giguere

Obvious holes – top six winger, top pairing defenseman, second or third pairing defenseman.

How will Phoenix's defense shake out in 2011-12? The locks are Zbynek Michalek , Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Derek Morris (sorry Smith), Keith Yandle , David Schlemko , and Rusty Klesla.

One could see why the 'Yotes were shopping Yandle. Trading from a position of strength to shore up a weakness (winger) makes a lot of sense.

The Coyotes were already thin on the wing – imagine if Shane Doan and Ray Whitney both leave? Behind the five defensemen mentioned above, Brandon Gormley is NHL ready, and David Rundblad, Connor Murphy, and Michael Stone aren't far behind. There is also Maxim Goncharov in the mix.

Does Chris Stewart make sense for the Penguins?

'On Saturday at the draft, Bylsma described the characteristics that he feels make up the ideal goal-scoring winger for Crosby: "You look for the speed, the aggressiveness, the attack on the puck, the confidence to play with a star like that." Those attributes aren't easy to find and teams that possess players of that mold aren't apt to give them up. If the Penguins can't sign Parise, Shero needs to find a situation where a promising, young winger needs a change of scenery. Shero needs to focus his attention on Chris Stewart . Stewart exploded onto the NHL scene when he scored 28 goals in 2009, his second season with the Colorado Avalanche. At 6-foot-2, 230 pounds, Stewart had the makings of the next great goal-scoring power forward…'

Some notes from Isles prospect camp.

Kirill Kabanov is looking good, and more mature than he has at past prospect camps.

Ryan Strome hasn't shown a ton offensively yet, but his all-around game looks much better. He has an outside shot at a roster spot, but the Isles are in no position to rush him. In the long run he's the perfect #2 between Tavares and Nielsen (although don't forget about Casey Cizikas, the prospect pegged as a checker who had an offensive breakout in 2011-12).

The Ducks will miss Lubomir Visnovsky, a lot. An interesting look at his positive impact on the rest of the Anaheim lineup – right here.

' Ryan Getzlaf played some 338 5-on-5 minutes with Lubo, and he was a plus player in those shared minutes – 2.84 goals-for-per-60-minutes vs. 2.31 goals-against-per-60. Getzlaf also played 958 5-on-5 minutes without Lubo, where he was outscored – 1.57 GF/60 vs. 2.38 GA/60. The last set of columns shows the scoring rate improvements with Visnovsky – in particular, Getzlaf's offense seemed pretty Lubo-reliant; goals-for went in nearly twice as often when Lubo was on the ice.

Similarly, we can see a positive effect on most of Lubo's teammates – well, not most of the Finnish ones. Koivu, Selanne, and Lydman all had better results without Visnovsky, though those differences are generally slight. Lydman is a bit of weird case in that two seasons ago, the Lubo-Lydman pairing was incredible – Toni starting the season injured may have played a role in their inability to duplicate that.'

Litter Box Cats, a great Panthers blog, offers their take on a potential Luongo trade.

'Sticker shock rightfully surrounds Roberto Luongo , but if the best laid plans of the Panthers management hold then the reasons for acquiring the goaltender are very tantalizing. All roads seem to lead to this trade happening before training camp, and while it may be a slap in the face for Theodore and Markstrom, the life of a professional athlete isn't always fair. If Tallon can find a way to disable the historical Panthers-Canucks trade discrepancy bomb, immediate and long term results should add a new threat for teams facing the redefined Florida Panthers.'

A really cool look at Pavel Bure – not the highlights you have seen over and over again – some great examples of his speed and vision in these clips:

{youtube}zt5YW_GqO1c{/youtube}