

**November 16, 2012**

Written by Jeff Angus

Thursday, 15 November 2012 20:02 - Last Updated Friday, 16 November 2012 10:28

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The Texas Stars (AHL) got back in the win column last night.

Big winger Matt Fraser scored twice - Fraser had 38 goals last season for Texas. His game is raw, but he has scoring-line upside at the NHL level.

Scott Glennie scored the other goal for Texas - his first of the season.

Cody Eakin had a helper - Eakin is clearly the best player on the Texas team, and he is showing himself to be more than ready for NHL duty once the lockout is over.

\*

Rangers prospect Christian Thomas is [adjusting to life in the AHL](#).

*One of Steve Thomas' calling cards at the NHL level, despite being a smaller player like Christian, was his powerful and accurate shot. Christian, to have scored as many goals as he did in a league as good as the OHL, had to have inherited a good dose of that skill. He showed flashes of being a real sharpshooter in his first pro action, but like everything else, that element of the game changes somewhat when a player moves up the ranks.*

\*

Dallas prospect Reilly Smith has been struggling this season – [Ross Bonander tells us why](#).

*Comparatively, Joe Nieuwyndyk seemed to see a lot of himself in highly-regarded Dallas Stars prospect Reilly Smith. Maybe it was the Canadian-born-lacrosse-loving-NCAA-hockey-playing connection. Whatever it was, Joe was so convinced of Smith's abilities and of the experience he'd gain by joining Dallas straight from the Miami RedHawks (as Joe had done from Cornell to Calgary), he burned up a year of his ELC last season.*

I like Smith as a decent sleeper prospect, but the Stars for the most part have all struggled. It shouldn't be much of a surprise – there are a lot of new faces in Texas this year coming from different leagues, and they simply have to learn the system and learn how to perform like a pro every game.

\*

[Do the NHL fans even care?](#) A solid piece from the Columbus Dispatch, regardless of your stance on the lockout.

*Go ahead and take the rest of the year to argue over who is going to pay for the lockout. Take two years. It is apparent that the league is bent on a path to irrelevance and, at this point, fans are willing to cooperate. Most of us could care less every day. Mission accomplished.*

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Hey Pekka – stay in your net!

{youtube}3LLRkerK26g{/youtube}

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Canucks associate coach Rick Bowness was on local radio the other day, and [gave some insights into potential defense pairings.](#)

Whoever ends up with the Sedins should see a point increase (I am going to guess it will be Garrison-Edler right now).

*Presumably the Canucks will go through some trial and error with different defensive combinations during a shortened training camp and preseason, and probably into a shortened regular season as well (god willing). So again: we don't really know anything yet, and it's still very much possible that Garrison ends up on Edler's right-side.*

\*

The Islanders have some very good prospects – most people know about [Nino Niederreiter](#) and [Ryan Strome](#). Brock Nelson is a name to keep in mind, as well. Nelson is a very solid center [who isn't far from being NHL ready.](#)

*The most exciting part of Nelson's progression towards the NHL is the fact that for the first time in eons, the Islanders look very strong at the Center position. With [John Tavares](#) and [Frans Nielsen](#) already cemented with the club, and Nelson, fellow Sound Tiger [Casey Cizikas](#), and former first rounder [Ryan Strome](#) waiting in the wings, the Isles look set in the faceoff circle for years to come.*

Assuming they all develop as planned, Tavares and Strome will be a dynamite 1-2 punch down the middle.

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[Frans Nielsen](#) has developed into a second line center, but he will likely slide into a [Jordan Staal](#)-like role on the third line. That leaves Cizikas and Nelson, both of whom possess upside well beyond that of a fourth line center.

An abundance of good centers is a problem that the Islanders have not faced in quite some time.

\*

Good news out of Hamilton – Montreal prospect [Blake Geoffrion](#) is out of the hospital following surgery to repair a cracked skull.

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Me and Pat LaFontaine agree on one thing – [the NHL simply can't afford another full season meltdown.](#)

*"I'm fairly optimistic that we'll see hockey. I hope before Christmas, but I think worst-case scenario – I'm an optimistic person – I see at least a half a season."*

\*

Vancouver Giants winger and Detroit prospect Marek Tvrdon is out for the season with a blood clot in his shoulder – this has been a season to forget for the G-men, and Tvrdon was their only true star forward. The good news – he is expected to make a full recovery for next season (likely in the AHL).

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If you want to know almost everything there is to know about [Jordan Staal](#) 's on ice performance, read [his comprehensive post from Shutdown Line](#)

[t](#)

*So what did I learn from all this? Overall, not much since it is only one game but I'm excited to see what conclusions we can make about [Jordan Staal](#) and many other players after I get more games tracked here. If there is one thing I did learn from this game it is that Staal's defensive strengths is as good as advertised. It would also be nice if he shot the puck more, but that's just a personal opinion.*

\*

Tampa Bay prospect [Richard Panik](#) is getting more [comfortable in the AHL](#) . He shouldn't get too comfortable, though, as the Lightning could be calling in the near (far?) future.

I like his motivation tactics too:



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*"Last year, it was like crazy. We had so many meetings about it," Panik recalled. "Every time he'd show one of my turnovers, it was pretty bad."*

*At home, Panik came up with the idea to establish a turnover jar, dropping in a dollar every time he made a miscue.*

*"It was a lot (of money)," Panik said. "I had to fill it up full."*

\*

If you are Edmonton GM Steve Tambellini, do you allow [Ryan Nugent-Hopkins](#) to play for Canada at the WJC (assuming the NHL isn't back)?

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