Claude Giroux suffered a head injury in Germany this weekend after taking a check to the head. He left the game too.

Thankfully, as of this writing this doesn't seem to be a big deal.

In messages exchanged late on Saturday night in Berlin time, Giroux told the Philadelphia Daily News that it was "just a little neck injury" and to "not read too much into it."

GM Paul Holmgren told CSNPhilly.com Saturday that the club doesn't believe the injury to be serious.

Giroux's agent, Pat Brisson, tells the Courier-Post it is a "very minor upper-body injury." According to a report, Giroux said it was his neck that was injured.

Three different sources? Well, yeah. It's Claude Freaking Giroux. He's kind of a big deal. Especially when we're talking about a head/neck injury for a legitimate superstar who has been sidelined with a concussion before.

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Interesting perspective from The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review on how Sidney Crosby is the face of the NHL, which puts him in a somewhat precarious position when it comes to speaking out on the lockout.

Marc-Andre Fleury describes it as an 'only-lose spot' for Sid, while No. 87 himself maintains he has 'really tried to understand everyone's position.'

“There is only one hockey player that everybody talks about, and that is Sidney,” said Lynn Lashbrook, founder of Portland-based Sports Management World Wide.

“More than any athlete in North America he is the face of his league, his sport — and that is what makes his participation during this lockout, his articulation of how he sees things going, so very important. He’ll be the guy who has to bring hockey back when this is over, so he should be having his say right now in this moment that has a lot of us scratching our heads.”

*

It is incredibly easy to pile on the carcasses of Winnipeg Jets stars Evander Kane and Ondrej Pavelec after their basically-disastrous stints in Europe. The criticism seems to be warranted, frankly.

That said, The Winnipeg Free Press believes that a heaping serving of humble pie may serve those two well when the NHL resumes play. The adversity might ‘re-stoke the inner fires.’

For my fantasy money, if you're in a standard league and Kane's owner seems down on him I'd absolutely, unequivocally strike while the proverbial iron is hot. Say what you will about him off the ice. Say what you will about him on the ice. You'll likely fire off valid points in both instances. But in pools counting those peripheral categories like penalty minutes and shots, this kid will be a goldmine. Period. Argue against it, but time will show you wrong.

For what it's worth, I also believe it has quietly proven extremely beneficial for Kane to have Dustin Byfuglien as a teammate. The defenceman is a big target (you're thinking it but I'm not going to write it... stop it... don't go there) for the media and fans who still manages to push the scrutiny aside and who generally does not let it impact his on-ice performance; something to which Kane is becoming increasingly accustomed.

In terms of Pavelec's fantasy worth, I don't think his early-season travails will have one iota of negative impingement on what'll be left of the '12-13 NHL campaign when the lockout ends. He surely sits near the bottom of most starter rankings headed into the season anyway playing behind the fifth-worst team defence last year. He should be slotted as a No. 3 netminder in most 10-team league situations with potential to move up in value. The guy can play. He's not in the greatest of situations for a goalie though and his consistency between the pipes still needs work.

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When looking at sleepers during the summer, it can be especially difficult to gauge how either a drafted prospect or free agent signee coming over from Europe to the NHL will fare. As such, assigning an accurate value to said player can truly be a crapshoot for fantasy owners.

One positive to the lockout has been we've all been tangibly able to see just how effective a duo Damien Brunner and Henrik Zetterberg may become in Motown.

This was in Friday's Hockey Hearsay , but Mike Babcock calls Brunner 'a real fit' and says, "I mean, if Z thinks you can play, and he wants to play with you, that's pretty good."

Ken Holland alluded to the fact that if and when the new CBA looks close to being signed, the Wings would like to bring Brunner to North America to play a few games in Grand Rapids to get used to the smaller ice surface.

Is all of this a guarantee of '12-13 NHL success for Brunner? Nope. But he's gone from being a roll of the dice to a guy who is beginning to stack the odds in his favour.

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ESPN relays that Marian Gaborik is still rehabbing his shoulder and is working on getting it stronger. He's 'trying to take it day-by-day' and says it's tough to mark how close he is to being able to take part in full-contact drills.

He had the surgery in early June and the projected recovery timeline then was up to six months. Early this week will be around the five month and two week mark, so it looks like he'll be going the distance before he'll feels comfortable to play. At least there's no pressure on him to rush back with no season so far, which should serve the Rangers well down the line and into the playoffs. It will also make Gaborik a more relevant option if you decide to go in for a half-season draft.

*

Kris Versteeg tells The Sun-Sentinel he was cleared by the team doctor to play after a lengthy rehab on his surgically repaired hip.

Had the season actually started on time, it would have been interesting to see who would have been used in Versteeg's first line wing slot over the last month or so. Last season that trio with Stephen Weiss centring Tomas Fleischmann and Versteeg became money for poolies. Would Kevin Dineen have used newcomer Peter Mueller, who can play centre or the wing, in that opening? Maybe. That would have been the best fit, IMO.

*

The Gaborik and Versteeg injuries remind me of Jonathan Quick, who, as far as I know, is still doing a non-game rehab assignment with Manchester in the AHL.

When Quick had his back surgery in early August, it was described as 'minor' and it was believed that he'd need six weeks or so to recover. The Kings were still painting this as a situation where he'd be ready around when training camp opened though, so it didn't seem to be a huge deal. The six-week timeline would have put him good to go around mid-to-late September.

But here we sit in mid-November and although he may be really close to being game-ready now (there really hasn't been much info released at all), this would have still been at least six weeks of the regular season where the defending Stanley Cup champs would have been without their No. 1 and Conn Smythe-winning netminder.

For fantasy owners, this is also someone who was tabbed as one of the top goalie picks for any format. I still didn't have him ahead of Henrik Lundqvist in my rankings, but Quick was undisputedly set to remain one of the most value poolie commodities around thanks to his skills, determination and –perhaps most importantly for any stats-based endeavour – his locale.

That's pretty significant and it really hasn't received a whole lot of attention, stemming back to the initial under-reporting of Quick's surgery in August.

Had there NOT been a lockout, Jonathan Bernier would have likely received all or mostly every start for the Kings. This would have been a golden opportunity to raise his actual trade value to where the organization likely perceives it to be with his potential.

Teams looking to acquire a young goalie (it's a small market share among NHL teams right now, but it definitely does exist) would have been given a prime viewing chance and Bernier really would have been in a sink or swim scenario. He craves the chance to vie for No. 1 gig and this would have been a terrific chance, playing behind a Darryl Sutter defence, to show potential suitors what he could do.

Had Benier enjoyed a lot of success, he could have potentially earned that one-way plane ticket to a team which doesn't have a No. 1 goalie locked up with a 10-year extension. Dean Lombardi

isn't about to give Bernier away just because Bernier said he wants out, but an enticing offer from an interested trading partner surely wouldn't be ignored. There are more than enough veteran options available via free agency to back up Quick.

Had Bernier struggled, it might have hampered his immediate trade value (from the Kings' perspective, which is the only one that counts at this point) but then at least he'd only be able to look at himself in the mirror and know he had a chance to win his freedom.

Next summer, incidentally, Bernier will become a restricted free agent.

*

The Dallas Morning News passes along that Sunday will be the one-year ownership mark for Tom Gaglardi with the Dallas Stars. Lockout aside, the pieces seem to be in place for the Stars to succeed financially.

*

Charlie Coyle certainly hasn't been what we'd classify as an 'off-the-radar' player in hockey circles or among most poolies, but what he has shown in the AHL this year has impressed even those who know him in-depth within the organization.

"I didn't think that Charlie would have the impact that he has on a daily basis," Jim Mill, the Aeros' general manager and an assistant to the general manager with the Wild, told The St. Paul Pioneer Press. "He's been consistently one of the top forwards on the team every single night. He's really impressive."

Mill classes Coyle as a prototypical power forward who is a smart, all-around player who should fit in well with the Wild when the lockout ends.

The man who will be Coyle's NHL coach likes what he sees too.

"You look at a guy that could potentially add some things that we could really use in our lineup," Wild bench boss Mike Yeo. "You talk about size, about net-front presence, about puck protection, these things are real important for the type of game we want to play, and he has demonstrated a lot of them."

As much as the signings of Zach Parise and Ryan Suter were breathtakingly-exciting for the fan base in July, the expected contributions of Coyle and the now-injured Mikael Granlund and Jonas Brodin in these coming years are equally anticipated by Wild faithful.

This is so clearly a team on the rise in the Western Conference and Coyle is using his time wisely in his first AHL campaign to ready himself for the next level.

*

Jared Cowen had his hip surgery Saturday to repair the torn labrum and everything went well. The projected recovery time is six-to-eight months.

We don't really know how the NHL season will play out given the lockout predicament, but regardless this will be a costly lost year of development for the 21-year-old with a still-bright future.

Sens GM Bryan Murray tells the Ottawa Citizen that sans Cowen, it'll be André Benoit, Mark Borowiecki, Patrick Wiercioch and Erik Gryba all being looked at closely for a spot in the NHL when the lockout ends.

"It certainly opens the door for another candidate," said Murray. "We think we have some good young players. Three or four are very close."

*

The Edmonton Journal raves about the 43-save performance of Yann Danis Friday night. The article points out that Danis had a 2.24 goals- against average last season. His GAA has been above 3.00 most of this season.

In case you're wondering what's up, head coach Todd Nelson said much of that can be attributed to an inconsistent defence.

“We were exchanging too many chances early in the year and were exposing both our goalies,” Nelson said. “We need to play well in front of him. Sometimes Yann has to make a big save for us to win. That’s what he did tonight.”

*

The New York Times narrates the tale of Dave Dupuis, who is a hockey player whom you’ve probably never heard mentioned before. He’s currently a third line left winger playing for the Division III Skidmore CollegeThoroughbreds and while his on-ice performance may not set him apart, the fact that he’s among the first Inuit to play NCAA hockey – if not the first – makes for an inspirational read.

Of particular interest to you may be how a phone call from ex-NHLer Joe Juneau shifted the educational aspiration mindset of Dupuis for the better, which should have a positive lifelong impact on the youngster and those who will surely follow after him.

*

Speaking of educational precedents, Milan Doczy's saga is engaging for hockey onlookers. It seems as if The Toronto Star telling his story had a firm hand in the OHL changing its position on scholarship funding for European players.

Never before has a European received funding and schooling in general is so critical for these players; the vast majority of whom will not make the show.

"This will change my life."

*

Plymouth Whalers coach Mike Vellucci tells The Ottawa Sun he still remembers when he was coaching OHL draft-eligible prospects and saw Stefan Noesen.

“He hates to lose, and no matter what the score is he's always trying to win the hockey game. Guys like that are winners. When the game is on the line, he wants to be the guy who's delivering."

Velluci sees Noesen as a third or fourth line guy at the NHL level initially, but still as someone who can be a top-six guy once he’s established himself because of good hockey sense and skills.

*

If you’ve attended an Everett Silvertips game recently, you’ve no doubt noticed that on the back of Ryan Murray’s jersey it simply reads: “STUD”

Unfortunately, the sure-fire NHLer seems to have suffered a dislocated shoulder Friday night.

“It’s not good news,” Blue Jackets GM Scott Howson admitted to The Columbus Dispatch . “Right now his arm is in a sling, held tight to his body, and he’s in a lot of pain He’ll have an MRI early this week, and then we’ll know more.

“You’ll have to see how much damage he’s done to the labrum. Does he have any broken bones from the thrust of the fall? Once it’s come out, it tends to come out easier in the future. Our doctors will take a look at the tests and we’ll decide the next step.”

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