Angus here - don't forget to vote in the "greatest goaltender of all time" contest - the three top submissions can be viewed here.

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It's not official yet, but the odds seem to be highly in favour of Ryan Nugent-Hopkins suiting up for Team Canada at the World Junior Championship in Russia later this month.

"He told me late Friday night, 'I want to play for my country. I just want to play in that tournament,'" Nugent-Hopkins' agent Rick Valette told Sportsnet.ca on Sunday morning. "He wants to win a gold medal. My instincts tell me that he'll play."

The Oilers are also reportedly on board with the idea, but a precautionary shoulder exam will be the final piece the team and RNH will need to mentally clear that final hurdle. His agent says the shoulder, which was injured twice last season before having surgery on it, has held up fine in the AHL so far.

Bob McKenzie, incidentally, tweeted early Sunday afternoon that RNH's shoulder isn't "injured" per se but hasn't felt quite right this season in AHL.

Assuming the shoulder is fine, is it a good or bad idea to have him play in the WJCs instead of leaving him in OKC? Either has its benefits, but, IMO, letting him play for Team Canada is the right move. He hasn't had that experience yet and having already proven he can be a difference-maker in both the NHL and AHL, why not let him soak up the pressure-filled atmosphere created with a medal and patriotic honour on the line? The Oilers may be a team on the rise, but the playoffs haven't exactly been a fixture on Edmonton's hockey scene in recent years. This experience for RNH could prove invaluable down the line when the team finally does begin to play in contests that matter, so this seems like the best fit for his situation.

Conversely, I think the Sens made the right call a few days ago when they announced they won't release Mika Zibanejad to play for his country again. Last winter he was the hero for Sweden against Russia, striking for the overtime game-winner in the deciding gold medal tilt.

Having played his young career overseas until this year, where he's learning the North American game with the Binghampton Senators in the AHL, it really makes sense to give him that extra time on the smaller rink against older and more experienced competition. That's especially true since he'll have a strong shot to make the big club when the lockout ends.

In both cases, with RNH and Zibanejad, it really seems like both organizations are tailoring their decisions to give the player the best chance to succeed both in the short and long terms.

Hockey Canada will announce the selection camp roster, which has to account for both lockout and non-lockout possibilities, Monday at 12:30pm et/ 9:30am pt.

Incidentally, Hockey Canada's chief scout Kevin Prendergast said in the first week of November that Canada's first three lines are probably set if there's no NHL and the fourth line would be "an energy, physical line."

He mentioned RNH as the team's No. 1 centre, with Mark Scheifele and Nathan MacKinnon as possibilities down the middle after him. At this writing Scheifele is tied for fifth in OHL scoring (21-23-44 in 27 GP) and MacKinnon is fighting for the QMJHL lead with 22-24-46 in 26 GP, just two points off the leader with one fewer game played.

However things shake out roster-wise, this is going to be one hell of a tournament for fans to watch.

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Logan Couture left Genève-Servette HC of the Swiss National League for what are being described as ‘personal reasons.’ He had a solid 7-16-23 in 22 outings over there.

Couture averaged second unit power play time with the Sharks last year but he still managed to snipe 11 goals with the man advantage, which led the team. His 65 points were good for second overall on San Jose and while he may not have been a lock to match or exceed that total in ’12-13 over a full season, the 23-year-old is certainly on the rise overall. There’s no reason why he shouldn’t put up another 30-goal pace and as is the case with most finishers, that shot total adds more value in leagues which count more peripheral categories.

He’ll be an RFA in 2014, although GM Doug Wilson will certainly do everything in his power to get his young star locked up before then.

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Jason Pominville tells The Buffalo News he is looking at his signing with Adler Mannheim of the German elite league as, at worst, a chance to hit the ground running if and when the lockout finally ends.

“If we do end up playing, we’re probably not going to play for another two weeks to a month, so it gives me basically a mini training camp where I can get into shape and do what I need to get ready when it starts and if it starts.”

He and his family will leave for Germany on Monday.

Pominville led the Sabres with 30-43-73 last season and he actually just celebrated his 30th birthday Friday. He should be good for at least a 60-point pace in the next handful of years and anything the winger collects on top of that would be gravy. He’s a constant on the first power play unit, he has topped the 200-shot plateau for six straight campaigns and in five of the past six years he has suited up for the full 82 games. All in all, he’s just a pretty solid value for the fantasy dollar.

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Following the recent news that Sidney Crosby is getting serious about potentially making the jump to play overseas during the lockout, Shea Weber says to The Nashville Tennessean he still sees too many hurdles for himself to play in Europe.

“I definitely want to play, too, but it’s harder than you think,” Weber said. “There’s probably not a lot of teams over there that have a lot of spots for imports, but with insurance and a number of other aspects it may not be so easy.”

As far as Crosby, I just do not see the upside in him going to Europe to play. And he has enough of a target on his back when he’s playing on North American ice, no? Doesn’t seem wise to up the potential ante in that area. There was a report somewhere last week suggesting he’d skip the KHL for that exact reason (along with that league presenting a tougher travel schedule), perhaps opting for Switzerland. Even still, if I were in the shoes of a Crosby owner and/or Penguins fan I’d strongly prefer he not play anywhere until the lockout ends.

With Weber, the real question for poolies will be should his draft value be downgraded for this season (whenever it comes) with the loss of partner Ryan Suter? I wrestled with that topic briefly when doing the fall rankings, but on the whole there really isn’t a reason to do anything but make him one of the early guys off the board in standard formats. He’s just too valuable in each and every aspect and while Suter’s presence will be missed, Weber is still a stud in his own right and he’ll produce. It shouldn’t matter too much which youngster they put alongside Weber on the power play.

On a side note, I actually tried to search the Sportsnet.ca database to find those rankings, which are sitting and waiting to go if we decide to roll them out for a half-season. If there is even a half-season. But it's been so long since I last accessed that blog I couldn't even remember its precise name, so I couldn't find it. Funny and incredibly sad, all rolled into one. Needless to say, I can't reference exactly where I had Weber. But he clearly fared well.

*

A scant two Ramblings ago we dove into the failings of Evander Kane's KHL misadventures. The Winnipeg Free Press has two new pieces out on him.

In the first , Kane is asked mostly about lockout-related items. While that in itself is a subject which puts most of us to sleep these days – or causes things to be thrown against the wall in frustration, there are some good quotes about how his dad has been a big influence in both the hockey and business aspects of his career.

Kane also notes he was 'looking forward to coming back and following up a pretty good year and try to better that season', along with 'maybe playing in the playoffs.'

In the second , which is the one I'd recommend if you only have time for one of the articles, Kane expands on his 12-game stint with Dinamo Minsk. He really seems to have taken the experience in stride, which is certainly important for any young player. On the whole, he came away sounding pretty positive. Which is good.

What was lacking from his comments though, at least in my opinion, was any real acknowledgment that he could or should have done a better job. Was he actually out of shape, as his coach alleged in the media a few games into his Russian experience? What were the differences between the leagues that caused such an adjustment issue? We've read media and fans' takes on it, but I would have liked to have heard it from Kane's own perspective.

The quote which really bothered me was, "You play six minutes a night and they want you to score three goals a game.'

Hyperbole. Garbage.

Keep in mind this criticism is coming from a guy in me who has been pretty pro-Kane along the way. In fantasy circles I've made no bones about the fact I think he'll be a monstrously strong asset for standard league owners, but I also think he's going to be a huge key for the Jets on the ice in the coming years. He has holes in his game still, yes, but his style of play is one that can and will make a difference.

It just would have been nice to see a little more contrition of sorts from him.

*

A source advises The New York Post that Madison Square Garden owner James Dolan is willing to join talks with NHL players in an effort to end the lockout. The piece indicates one of the critical points there may be that Dolan played a substantial role in brokering an agreement between NBA owners and NBA players that ended that league's 2011-12 lockout last Dec. 8 and allowed for a 66-game season to commence on Christmas Day.

So far, the NHL has only had negotiating meeting representation from the Bruins' Jeremy Jacobs, the Capitals' Ted Leonsis, the Flames' Murray Edwards and the Wild's Craig Leipold.

Somebody. Do something. Please.

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Lest you be worried about the Mostly Millionaires Club coming up short for Christmas cash, the NHLPA executive committee Saturday voted in favour of $10,000 stipend payments going to locked out members. The money comes from the union's general fund.

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The Detroit News points out that both defenceman Brendan Smith and forward Gustav Nyquist (playing on a line with Joakim Andersson and Tomas Tatar) have been critical to the Griffins' early success.

"Our focus at the beginning of the season was we wanted to make sure that when the season in the NHL resumed, they were ready to be impact players," said Griffins coach Jeff Blashill, a Red Wings assistant last season. "Not to make the team, but to be ready to be impact players.

"To do that you still have to get better at a lot of things. So let's focus on getting better at things. They've both showed up on a daily basis to get better. They've been outstanding."

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Occasionally even just a tweet can paint a powerful picture of a highlight in your mind...

Ridonkulous goal by Erik Haula. Takes pass in the slot after coming off bench, slides across slot and backhands goal through traffic.

— Michael Russo (@Russostrib) December 2, 2012

*

Speaking of Russo, he also notes Mikael Granlund is likely to return for the Aeros later this week. He's been sidelined around a month with a lateral ankle sprain. He tallied 4-8-12 in his eight AHL starts before the injury and it sounds like we'll be seeing him weave his magic on the ice shortly.

*

One OHL note as this edition gets set to publish. Alex Galchenyuk with another first-rate 3-1-4 effort, helping Sarnia bring down Peterborough by a 5-2 count. The Petes outshot the Sting 41-26, but trying to stop this kid is proving to be a nearly impossible task. He's up to 19-29-48 in only 27 starts.

Twitter: @Nichols_NHLPool NHL news, analysis & fantasy takes with minimal inane babble.

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