*

Brendan Ross has some great insights on Alex Galchenyuk in the DobberProspects ramblings, which you can check out here.

*

Two games in the AHL last night. Here are some of the noteworthy fantasy lines:

Rochester and Lake Erie combined for 13 goals. For Rochester (Buffalo), Foligno and Luke Adam had two points each.

Kevin Porter also had two points. Porter is the guy who laid out Jake Gardiner with a hard hit behind the net last weekend.

For Lake Erie, rookie Mike Sgarbossa had three points and is moving up quickly in the AHL scoring race. His rookie season has been very, very impressive. He was always a prolific scorer in the OHL, but many wondered if he could translate that over to pro hockey.

Stefan Elliott had two points from the back end.

A few names from the past - Bill Thomas (former Phoenix forward) had three points, and defenseman Thomas Pock (a one-time Rangers prospect) had a goal.

*

Canucks prospect Darren Archibald has been playing really well in the AHL after spending the first few months of the season in the ECHL. He scored twice last night for the Wolves and has been one of their best forwards since getting the call up a few weeks ago.

Archibald would likely have been in the AHL all season if not for the lockout - there were too many bodies in Chicago.

Eddie Lack remains out of the lineup with a hip injury.

Jordan Schroeder added an assist, Chris Tanev had two, but Zack Kassian was pointless.

For Hamilton, Nathan Bealieu and Michael Bournival each scored goals.

Brendan Gallagher finished with a team high five shots on goal as well.

*

Canada has finalized their roster for the 2013 WJC. I wrote on 10 reasons why I am looking forward to the WJC in this post at the CanucksArmy yesterday.
The top reason?

The Nuge. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins held his own in the NHL last year against the best players in the world. And he did so while playing for an inferior team. He is going to be Canada's top line center and the player they lean on in every offensive situation. He may be in tough to break Peter Forsberg's tournament scoring record of 31 points, but he has a great shot to set the record for most points in a single tournament by a Canadian player at 18 (shared by Dale McCourt in 1977 and Brayden Schenn in 2011).

*

Back to Canada's roster. There weren't any huge surprises among the final cuts:

Defencemen Mathew Dumba, Frank Corrado and Ryan Sproul, forwards Hunter Shinkaruk, Tom Wilson, Mark McNeill and Daniel Catenacci and goaltender Laurent Brossoit were the eight players released from the team on Thursday.

*

Corrado has played great all season and stood out for the right reasons, but the team opted to go with the dynamic ability of Ryan Murphy (Canada's head coach Steve Sprott coaches Murphy in Kitchener).

The final roster can be viewed at TSN here.

*

Nathan MacKinnon and Jonathan Drouin are both draft-eligible players, and both made it to team Canada. They play on the same line together in Halifax, as well. Will Canada put them on the same line? It would seem like the logical decision, but the team may not want to have two 17 year olds on the ice at the same time.

One would assume Nugent-Hopkins will form the top unit with Scheifele and Huberdeau on his wings, and that the Niagara duo of Brett Ritchie and Ryan Strome would make up the second scoring line. Would Canada opt for three scoring lines and then a “grind line” centered by Boone Jenner
?

*

Brett Ritchie’s stock has risen faster than most prospects this season, and for good reason.

TSN analyst Ray Ferraro was effusive of his praise of Ritchie after the game and said that there's no reason that the big winger won't be on the top two lines in the upcoming tournament.

"I would think so. He was the most noticeable, I think, of all the White team skaters," said Ferraro. "I think he made himself a viable candidate for that top-six spot and I really don't see anyone who will threaten to push him out of that spot."

*

I am looking forward to seeing the mobile defensemen like Ryan Murphy and Morgan Rielly skate on the international ice.

*

Ryan Kesler 's agent claims that his client is still months away from playing. I call BS on this – Kesler has been working out, skating, and rehabbing hard in Vancouver for the past few months. This is more of a case of a team/agent/player playing it very cautious with the uncertainty regarding the lockout and its eventual conclusion (Kesler's injury has allowed him to collect a full pay cheque, which complicates things).

Agentspeak (I am making it into one word):

“I don’t think it’s fair to have any sort of time frame when he’s going to be 100 per cent and cleared to play. I don’t have a crystal ball and it’s certainly months away, it’s not weeks away. It’s several months away.”

Translates to…

“He’s not healthy, because if he was healthy, he wouldn’t be getting paid.”

If I am a betting man and a season starts in January, expect Kesler to be ready to go.

*

An anonymous NHL governor passed along a balanced proposal to ESPN's Scott Burnside. Worth the read.

The ownership source acknowledged that leaving out the buyout element as part of the transition to a new CBA would be the least contentious way to bridge the gap at least as it relates to the owners' concerns about funding the transition. The buyouts were introduced by the players' association last week, the timing of which annoyed the owners -- not to mention the fact the buyouts as the players suggested would be outside the hockey-revenue pie, a significant problem for the owners.

*

Like father, like son. Claude's son Brendan earned an eight-game suspension for this hit:

{youtube}XEGANreTxcA{/youtube}

*

Jonathan Bernier will play goal for Canada at the Spengler Cup if the lockout extends through the end of January.

Hockey Canada doesn't expect to formally name the Spengler Cup team until just before Christmas because of the uncertainty brought on by the NHL lockout. Canada is scheduled open the tournament against Adler Mannheim on Dec. 26.

Bernier previously represented Canada during the 2008 world junior championship, winning gold as a backup to Steve Mason , and at the 2011 IIHF World Hockey Championship. He also played in the world under-18 championship.

*

Cody Hodgson has been out for over a month with a broken hand, but he will make his return to the Rochester lineup soon (likely Saturday).

*

Some very cool NHL wallpapers – not made by me, but I really like the minimalist theme.

*

An update on the goaltending in the Tampa Bay system, from their goalie coach Frantz Jean:

About Tokarski: "He came in in tremendous shape. He's really matured and takes ownership of his game. When he feels there's an issue that needs to be addressed, he addresses it right away. I like where he is at physically and mentally."

About Helenius: "I like the improvement I've seen since the start of training camp. His battle level is really high right now. We're doing baby steps with him, but the improvement is there every week."

*

The Oilers are holding an interesting contest, asking fans to share their analytical insights with the team.

The details:

Edmonton Oilers fans and analytics experts have a chance to become insiders with the team, help the team win games and capture some cool prizes in a unique contest. The club is opening

its analytical information vault to launch Oilers Hackathon 2.0. Contestants will look at the data and determine the best methodology to solve questions posed by the Oilers.

*

Lockout talk (see how long that took?) – CBC's Elliotte Friedman on why the NHL has already won.

NHL teams are still very curious to hear what the transition rules are going to be, but if you look at it objectively, compare the expired agreement to what we're looking at now. The biggest gains are being made by the NHL. There is no other way to look at it. For the second time in eight years, your winner, on paper, will be the owners.

Just as Dobber has said all along. This was never a fair fight from the start – but as we all know, life isn't fair.

*

Love him or hate him, there is no denying Mark Cuban's ability to cut through the BS. He rips the NHL a bit in this reasonably-levelled take on the current status of the league:

"When you have all your southern franchises basically sucking wind, there's a message there that you have to fix it. I mean, you have two different worlds; the north and the south. It's kind of like the civil war right now going on, and it's got to be fixed. So, yeah I'd cringe more as a hockey fan. I'd cringe more if they don't fix it. Just like the last one, it's only been like seven years right? But I even wrote a blog back then that they should have fixed it, and they didn't."

And there is the major issue. All of this contracting stuff, CBA term length, and so on, would be solved if the NHL and Bettman owned up to their poor decisions with expansion (not just poor, but horrendously awfully poor). The NHL would never cut two or four teams right away, but it would resolve the issues of this "missing money." I'm not saying which teams deserve to be relocated and which can stay, as we don't have access to accurate financial records (even the Forbes numbers are just estimates).

In a vacuum, if the NHL cut down to 26 teams, the product would improve. The PA wouldn't go

for it as they lose close to 100 jobs, and the league wouldn't either, or at least Bettman and company wouldn't. But the hockey would be better, there would be less teams bleeding money, and both sides would be better off financially.

*

On that same grain… here's a great read on stopping sports welfare.

"It's like this magic alchemy where we take all this public money and it morphs into private profit," says Dave Zirin, author of "Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Games We Love." "The most egregious example of this is the Seattle Sonics going from the 14th biggest [media] market in the country to Oklahoma City, a market that is No. 45. Why did that move make sense? One place offered corporate welfare and another didn't. The NBA punished a city for not giving them hundreds of millions of dollars."

*