The Tampa Bay Times calls University of Minnesota goalie Adam Wilcox one of the nation's top freshman goalies and one of the Lightning's most interesting and promising prospects.

"He makes big saves, timely saves," Lightning goaltending coach Frantz Jean said. "That's the X factor everybody is looking for."

Best part of the column? How Wilcox's ability to solve a Rubik's Cube quickly relates to his on-ice vision.

"With doing that, you see ahead to the next move you have to make," he said. "I can kind of see what's going to happen ahead. I can see a guy coming in, if it's going to be to the back door. I can make the move before it happens."

"The same with school and stuff," Wilcox added about majoring in sports management. "I like looking ahead and planning."

Wilcox is profiled extensively in the Fantasy Goalie Report, and here is an excerpt of that:

We would never mention a goalie so far down a depth chart like Tampa's unless the prospect was truly talented. Wilcox fits the bill, and even if he spends all four years playing in the NCAA, GM Steve Yzerman will come to learn that Adam has legitimate value, and he could evolve into a blue chip prospect worth trading or developing.

Pick up this Report today - well worth it for under seven bucks. Buy it here .

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Wilkes-Barre/Scranton blueliner Joe Morrow is following the path of most rearguards when it comes to getting ready for the NHL. Games. Development. Scratches to watch from above. Rinse. Repeat.

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review checks in with him, noting his play in the offensive zone is already close to NHL-caliber. The brilliant skating, predatory offensive instincts and big shot that got him picked in the first round of the 2011 draft are still there.

In the defensive zone, there are plenty of areas to shore up.

“How to use his stick. Taking away ice when he‘s playing in one-on-one situations. Defensive habits and certain things he needs to learn down low that are just small little details that will help his game,” coach John Hynes said.

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The Texas Stars announced Saturday they had released Cam Barker from his 25-game professional tryout contract. The 26-year old attended camp as a tryout and had 3-5-8 in 23 GP. His 66 shots led the team and he also had 24 PIM.

He has played for Chicago, Minnesota and Edmonton already in his NHL career. He was

drafted third overall by the Hawks in 2004.

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Players will certainly need some physical preparation in training camp if this season ever gets underway, but both Jason Chimera and Jay Beagle tell CSNWashington.com that the mental aspect can't be overlooked either.

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When the Caps finally do skate together as a team again, it'll be Adam Oates raring to go as the new head coach.

The Washington Post writes the Capitals and their fans don't yet know his style for sure. But it won't be to bottle up candor, even if it stays in the dressing room between player and coach, even if it is delivered with a whisper rather than a scream.

“When you say something, you got to back it up,” Oates said. “It’s weird, because I’m a guy that really respects authority, chain of command, structure. I do. I’m one of those guys.”

He also says, “I believe in communication. “I can’t be a hypocrite. I don’t want to be a hypocrite as a coach.”

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Mike Babcock impresses upon Michigan Live that depth will be imperative during a shortened NHL campaign.

“We got some guys that are really knocking on the door for jobs," Babcock said. “Let's face it, when we get started, there's going to be a lot of games in a short period of time. We're going to need lots of players, so it's great we got about four guys in Grand Rapids ready to go.”

He outlines defenceman Brendan Smith, along with a trio of forwards: Gustav Nyquist, Tomas Tatar and Joakim Andersson.

Smith is listed as a lock. Nyquist, who has a strong skill-set and who worked harder on his strength during the summer, is noted as competing for a top-six slot. If he doesn't land one, chances are he'll stay in the AHL for now. Tatar is believed to be the first call-up (relative to what happens with Nyquist, of course) and Andersson's abrasiveness and size are pointed out.

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Pretty safe to say G Allen York has been Springfield's best player tonight. Stopped 16 of 17 here early in second, but good ones in there.

— Aaron Portzline (@Aportzline) December 16, 2012

Game is still going on at publication, but Portzline notes this is York's first AHL start of the season. His early-season absence was due to a compressed disc in lower back and groin injuries. # **CBJ** fans will recall York's play at end of 11-12. He battled for pucks to the delight of veteran players, and they played hard for him

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The Binghampton Senators have enjoyed quite a bit of success early on and youngsters on the team tell The Ottawa Sun coach Luke Richardson has played a large role. In particular, the young defencemen have been helped quite a bit by his tutelage.

“It’s awesome having him around ... he’s so knowledgeable about the game, especially from a defensive defenceman’s aspect,” said Gryba, a physical, 6-foot-3, 215-pounder who missed a chunk of the early season with a hand injury. “I can ask him questions and he’s going to point things out to me that I’m not doing right, that I need to improve on. And that’s why I’m here. To develop and get better. He’s been great to this point.”

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The Associated Press notes ex-Rangers great Mike Richter will put his talent on display Sunday in the middle of Manhattan and will instruct kids at Bryant Park as he hosts the Citi Mike Richter Hockey ProCamp for boys and girls ages 7-14.

He talks about that, the lockout and his connection to New York these many years later.

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The Columbus Dispatch examines how Blue Jackets fans may never get to see 39-year-old Adrian Aucoin lace them up for the squad thanks to a lockout which now potentially threatens the entire season.

The well-traveled defenceman gives the paper some insight into why Ohio may be the perfect fit for his family, as well as just how important that family is to him.

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Fire & Ice relays that Albany Devils general manager Chris Lamoriello announced that 24-year-old Matt Corrente underwent successful surgery on his shoulder surgery Friday and is expected to miss the remainder of the season. Corrente, the Devils' 2006 first-round pick, was injured in last Sunday's game against the Connecticut Whale in Hartford.

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The lockout has had a negative impact is so many areas, including a number of charitable aspects.

The Tribune-Review delves into how teams and players can't join forces to help out, but both the Penguins organization and players are still trying to help the community.

The Canadian Press did a separate piece on how the labour stoppage is putting the pinch on

some food banks around Canada. The article covers six of the seven teams, except for the Leafs – who did not respond to a request for a comment.

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Loved to read this story Friday night. The Tampa Tribune indicates Lightning owner Jeff Vinik will be giving all full-time team employees an extended paid vacation during the holidays. Not only will they be getting their full salary during this time, but all of the approximately 150 people will not have this time off count against their normal vacation time either.

Pretty sweet. We've heard about the layoffs and such around the league from various teams, so it's nice to see Vinik taking care of his own during this time of idiocy between the owners and players.

The cool bonus is everyone will also be getting an extra $75 bonus, which will be funded by the Lightning Foundation. The hope is that extra bit of cash will be used to help out those in need for either a charity or a needy family close to that employee's heart.

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

Weekday Hockey Hearsay blogs on Sportsnet.ca, 12 months a year.

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