Lockout Update Day 93: there is still a lockout. So close, yet so far.

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Will the league and the PA stubbornly let the season burn because of their refusal to meet in the middle on two key issues? I'm perplexed. Because:

1. The league wants a 10-year deal. The players want eight. This is the opposite of what it should be. If I'm a player, I want a 20-year deal. Hell yeah. Because the owners will just play another stupid lockout stunt, and take take take again. Bet the players wished the last CBA was 10 years…

Fehr's reason for the shorter term? Because the future players in the league will be in a CBA that they didn't get to vote on. Garbage. This is just a Fehr power trip, trying to say 'black' because the owners said 'white'. Dumb.

2. The league wants to cap contracts at five years. The players want it capped at eight years. More backwards ideals. Granted, two dozen or so players would benefit from eight-year deals, thanks to injuries, etc. The Marc Savards and the Rick DiPietros of the future will thank Fehr for being stubborn here. But the Taylor Halls and the Ryan Nugent-Hopkins will say "Shit, had I signed for five years, I'd have a new contract for Year 6 and with salaries rising like they have been, I'd be making $10 million that year. Instead, I'm in Year 6 of an eight-year deal and I'm stuck making $5 million."

Other issues…

3. The league wants the gap in dollars between the top-salary year of a contract and the bottom-salary year of a contract to be 5% at the most. The PA wants this to be 75%. Okay, this is the first bit of stubbornness that actually makes sense for the players. Frankly, I think if they agreed to meet in the middle for points one and two (and again, they should actually meet the

owners *all* the way - and then take it even further…they have it bass-ackwards), they can get this point to be closer to 20%

4. The NHLPA wants a cap on escrow. Another thing that makes sense, though from what I can gather this is a 'new' thing that they tossed into the discussion less than two weeks ago. I don't see why the league can't give this to them.

So that's where we're at, folks. Is the season done?

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The NHLPA, if they vote to enact the disclaimer of interest, the two sides will have 20 days to get a deal done or the season is essentially toast. So if you want your hard date, it's January 6. Although, I'm not sure about "business days" or "any day". And with Christmas in there then perhaps 20 days becomes closer to 30. But regardless, I'm sure that exact, accurate detail is known by both sides. So they have their "drop dead" date. It will speed things along finally.

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In my eighth annual Fantasy Hockey Guide, I'll be updating every player's projections based on a XX-game season. As soon as I know the games, I'm getting to work. And it's not just a matter of rolling all the current projections back by a percentage. Hell no. A player who was out until December I would have projected for 55 games or so. Well rolling that back as a percentage makes it around 30 games. But we all know that's incorrect - since he's healthy now. So the 55 becomes 48. I have to go player by player and do this right - and I'll be on top of it as soon as the amount of games is leaked. I'll sit down all day and into the night and try and get this released to you within 24 hours. Then, within 72 hours, I hope to have a full slate of injury updates for you - updating all injury notes (which I've already been updating), with more emphasis on who is healthy now.

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KHL All-Star teams:

West:

Pavel Datsyuk, Alexander Ovechkin, Ilya Kovalchuk

Zdeno Chara, Alexander Ryazantsev

Semyon Varlamov

East:

Evgeny Malkin, Evgeny Kuznetsov, Sergei Kostitsyn

Ilya Nikulin, Sergei Gonchar

Michael Garnett

Conspicuous by his absence - Alexander Radulov, who had 24,935 votes, about 7000 behind Kovalchuk. Varlamov beat Rinne by 140 votes. Sergei Kostitsyn beat his brother Andrei by 253 votes.

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Players playing for Grand Rapids right now who are " NHL ready " according Detroit coach Mike Babcock:

Gustav Nyquist, Brendan Smith, Tomas Tatar, Joakim Andersson. Babcock goes onto say that Smith is a lock, Nyquist added strength in the offseason and will compete for a top-six spot, while Tatar will be one of the first call-ups of the season.

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Florida prospect Alex Petrovic is a promising offensive defenseman who also adds toughness and reminds of Brendan Smith in that he'll get 100+ penalty minutes in an NHL season before he gives you 30+ points. That's a handy prospect to own, for those in leagues that count PIM, because he's not going to waste a roster spot - he'll at least contribute in one category. But from what I'm reading this year, he's been far from consistent and strikes me as someone at least two years away.

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As if New Jersey prospect defenseman Matt Corrente's fall from grace hasn't been enough, he's now out for the season . He had shoulder surgery after injuring it in a game a week ago.

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Jordan Eberle has taken over the scoring lead in the AHL. He had four goals and five points Saturday, which shoots him up to 37 points on the year, tying him with teammate Justin Schultz, who had a measly two points. The two of them each had a point in Sunday's contest and sit at 38.

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Very interesting to see that, despite an All-Star cast, the Houston Aeros are being led by undrafted college star Justin Fontaine, who has 21 points in his last 21 contests. Granted, Mikael Granlund would lead right now had he not been hurt, but Fontaine is ahead of the likes of Charlie Coyle, Johan Larsson and Jason Zucker.

Zucker had two points Sunday, but more astonishing were his 13 shots. THIRTEEN! A pretty big deal in college, it was thought that he would be a 'tweener' at the NHL level. But so far as a pro he's looking like a top sixer. That shot total really opens my eyes.

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Jonathan Blum has just nine points in 25 games and is a minus-4 for Milwaukee. He's nowhere near where he should be. Easily behind Mattias Ekholm and of course Ryan Ellis. What is going on in Nashville? These dmen look great right up until the very last moment! First Franson and now Blum.

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Paul Ranger posted back to back two-point efforts over the weekend. He has 12 in 21 games and is plus-6 on the year. The Leafs are already set on defense, but if this guy is back to his old form, they suddenly have a surplus again.

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Brendan Ross has a piece over at The Hockey Writers about Alex Galchenyuk and the WJC here.

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Some positive lockout thoughts to leave you with:

PK Subban " guarantees " the NHL will play this year. Hey, what more do you need?

The NBA and NBPA came to an agreement, tentatively, 12 days after the union was dissolved into a trade association.

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Funniest moments of last season:

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