Lockout Update Day 95: there is still a lockout. For @$%# sakes… (stay positive!)

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The newsfeed, or rather the NHL newsfeed, is so barren that I needed to solicit ideas in the forum to put a decent ramblings together. But the results were fantastic, I forgot how great an idea it was to do that.

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First the usual lockout news. Steve Fehr gave Bill Daly a call yesterday. The conversation was brief. No talks scheduled. Well done! Jason Kay from THN reports that the league will cancel more games between now and Friday. Friday being the day that the union probably dissolves. Just getting a little jab of their own in. The best defense is a good offense, right?

Here is a piece from the Globe and Mail about how the NHL is destroying the brand. As if that's a shocking development. But an interesting read with some interesting quotes:

They found a lot of males have slipped into "neutrality" about the game – are now bored with hockey talk and feel they no longer relate to the game. Football – both CFL and NFL – is on the rise among those fans, who continue to be interested in sports.

From a branding point of view, NHL hockey and its multiple corporate sponsors are facing a huge hurdle, Kincaid says. The passionate fans are angry, the neutral fans turned off and bored, the mostly non-fans – the people hockey needs to attract if it hopes to grow – disgusted.

"Think what this means to the sponsors of hockey," Kincaid says. "For almost one-third of Canadians, you are wasting your time on them. You've lost them. They are not going to become

even 'neutral.'"

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Here is some great insight on Dallas Stars prospects, and how they rate, this season, so far. The biggest risers are Brett Ritchie and Matej Stransky, as far as I'm concerned. The biggest faller is Scott Glennie, but Austin Smith hasn't been great either.

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If you missed the latest Down Goes Brown, it's good for a few laughs. He gives you a primer for the upcoming WJC. I love the Latvia section - read it here .

And while you're in a laughing mood, Puck Daddy reviews the 10 funniest hockey bloopers of 2012.

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Anders Lindback is sidelined for 10 days after suffering a cut on his knee. I'm sure if a season magically started in nine days, he'd be okay for then too.

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An interesting take by Mike Colligan over at The Hockey Writers, outlining how brilliant the Penguins are for shedding cap room without hurting their team. Now they have the flexibility to swoop in and 'help' teams hurting by lack of cap space, not to mention outbid teams in the pursuit of free agents. Fully agree.

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Devin Setoguchi has taken a leave of absence from his ECHL team. He wanted a break for the holidays and then hopes for a resolution to the lockout.

Pierre-Marc Bouchard is concussion symptom-free .

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I was asked what to do in a keeper league if the season is cancelled. This is one I've addressed a few times, especially last summer (when it wasn't too late) - basically, this contingency plan needed to be in place in September. The GM's needed to vote in a system and be clear on it. Anyway, hindsight is 20/20. But the best course of action is - follow the rules. Your rules will say that the draft is every September, based on the reverse order of finish. Take that literally. That is to say, draft again based on that reverse order of 2011-12 finish. That's what I'm doing in my two leagues. That's what we did last time. In fact, it resulted in someone getting both Ovechkin and Crosby last lockout. But the league is competitive enough that not only were the rest of us able to fight past that, but the guy never won. You have to follow the rules, and you have to give preferably a year's notice on any new rules. So at this point you stick with the rules you have in place. That's my advice, I'm sure there are other people with other thoughts on this.

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A request for a Claude Giroux update - he's nearly fully recovered from his neck injury and is skating in the Ottawa area. He has no plans to return to Germany.

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Some NCAA notes, also by request - I reviewed the nationwide stats, something that I haven't done in awhile but should do more often. A junior (third-year) undrafted player by the name of Brett Gensler (Bentley U.), 22, leads the nation in points and points-per-game with 26 (in 15). He's a small player, but probably bigger than the 160 pounds that HockeyDB has him listed at.

Next up is another undrafted junior - Ryan Walters. He also has 26 points (for U.Nebraska-Omaha), though in 18 games. He has some size, so I'm guessing he gets an NHL contract when the dust settles. He was player of the month in November after posting 15 points in just seven games.

Runner up for player of the month was Calgary prospect Johnny Gaudreau. I'm a big fan of Gaudreau - of course I am, he's a small, skilled guy. Here's your Nathan Gerbe Part 2 - you're looking at the same timeline for development and production… but with Gaudreau there is always the hope that he stays healthy. Proneness to injury is what is holding Gerbe back at this point. Gaudreau is 5-7, 150 pounds and his DobberProspects profile can be found here . It includes a couple of recent updates. We're updating pretty frequently over at DobberProspects - I updated a few guys myself this week.

Wild prospect Erik Haula, another junior, is also having a strong campaign with 22 points in 17 games. He leads U. of Minnesota in scoring, over teammates Nick Bjugstad (who is at a disappointing 13 points), Kyle Rau (15 points), Zach Budish (13) and Seth Ambroz (nine points). My feeling is that Haula doesn't turn pro in March. What would be the point? The Wild have a ton of prospects making the jump over the next 12 months, so Haula would have a better chance playing out his fourth season next year.

Florida prospect Rocco Grimaldi has 16 points in 18 games for North Dakota. He missed most of last year with a knee injury.

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Uh…wow? Wow! I love this - this is what I was trying to do, minus the technical know-how, with my Lockout Tracker. All the players with quick access to stats. But this is …literally showing the stats of all the players on each NHL team, with their current Euro/AHL teams! Check it here , s/t to Mr. Guru. I love my forum!

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Top 10 KHL hits for November. Yes, they hit in the KHL. Sometimes:

{youtube}Iz0z44uNf9A{/youtube}