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Joe Colborne had two assists for the Marlies on Wednesday night, but his struggles continue. He has looked ineffective at the best of times this season. His skating, never a strong suit, is really holding him back.

Big, slow, rangy centers have been able to make it in the NHL if they are supremely skilled (Jason Allison
is a great example of this). What will happen with Colborne?

If you own him, I wouldn't look to move him right now. I'd entertain the thought of buying low on him, but only if you can stash him away on your farm somewhere without having him eat up a valuable roster spot.

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Braden Holtby continues to stake his claim as the starter in Washington – he stopped all 35 shots he faced on Wednesday night for Hershey in a shutout victory.

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Some Detroit news – Brendan Smith and Gustav Nyqvist continue to prove why they are both ready for NHL action. Smith was a plus-3 on Wednesday for Grand Rapids, while Nyqvist had two helpers.

*

Some impressive performances from Islanders prospects on Wednesday evening (there were a ton of AHL games on Wednesday, but not so many on Thursday):

Defenseman Matt Donovan , who made my “five to watch” list a few months ago , had two goals, and finished plus-3 with four shots on goal.

Donovan is a puck-moving defenseman who hails from Oklahoma (something you don’t read every day), where he played his junior hockey until the age of 16. He spent two years with the University of Denver before turning pro in 2011. In his final year at Denver, he scored nine goals and added 32 points and 64 PIM in 36 games. In 2011-12, his first full season as a professional, Donovan scored an impressive 10 goals and added 44 points in 72 games for the Bridgeport Sound Tigers, earning a berth on the AHL’s All-Rookie Team. He played three games with the Islanders as well.

Center Casey Cizikas also had a pair of goals for Bridgeport.

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Jeremy Morin scored a goal for Rockford on Wednesday – he is a solid goal scorer, but will he be able to improve his skating enough to make it to the NHL? I’d expect Chicago to give him a shot at earning a top nine gig once the lockout ends.

*

Richard Bachman better be looking over his shoulders, as Stars prospect goaltender Christopher Nihlstorp is on fire right now. Nihlstorp took the starting gig from Jack Campbell, and he hasn't looked back. He stopped 27 shots for a shutout victory on Wednesday night as well.
And at 28 years old, he has more experience than most rookie goalies.

Nilstorp, 28, is an AHL rookie but is in his eighth year of professional hockey. He posted a .923 save percentage, a 2.04 goals-against average and five shutouts in 54 games for Färjestads BK during its Swedish hockey season's championship year in 2011-12. He was Team Sweden's No. 3 goalie at the 2012 IIHF World Championship, where he caught the eye of Dallas Stars General Manager Joe Nieuwendyk.

At a rangy 6 feet 4 inches, Nilstorp is deceptively quick to the puck and surprisingly tough. When opposing centers lean back into the crease against him, he is not afraid to mix it up with them and push back. In North America, the game is really played in a North-South style. Here, things happen quicker, magnifying mistakes and producing constant pressure.

Nihlstorp could be a sleeper goalie to keep in mind. He doesn't have a shot at unseating Kari Lehtonen, but he could find himself holding down the role of back up in Dallas very soon.

*

A great and timely ad from Nike Hockey:

{youtube}mQ4JTjFcU7Q{/youtube}

Jamie Oleksiak makes quick work of Florida prospect Alex Petrovic :

{youtube}GwHJAlOVaHU{/youtube}

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Evander Kane 's latest incident has the Winnipeg media up in arms again . It is not a very healthy relationship, dating back to last season.

Six years is a long time. At this rate, Evander Kane won't live out the term of his contract as a member of the Winnipeg Jets.

Another day and another firestorm for Kane. It happens too often and if changes aren't made by the player, the team will make its own changes and deal him.

Kane was rumored to want out of Winnipeg in hopes of playing for a bigger market, but his agent is believed to have talked some sense into him last year. The Jets committed big term and big money to him before the CBA expired.

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Steve Rushin asks – do fans really miss hockey? I know I do. I am growing apathetic about the NHL, but hockey itself is a different entity.

None of this would be worth commenting on if the league's demise weren't so relatively swift, and so nearly comprehensive. Canada's Globe and Mail this week ran a story about Level5, a brand-analysis company that surveyed 1,066 Canadians and found only one third of the country still passionate about the NHL, while one third is neutral and one third is entirely without interest. Level5's CEO, David Kincaid, said the NHL's brand has been damaged "at levels we have not seen. It's quite alarming, really. If anyone thinks that the lockout can end and everyone will come back to Happy Valley, it ain't going to happen."

*

Joffrey Lupul struggled to adapt to Russia. He wrote about it for Ask Men – it was a pretty interesting read.

*Quick story: My first NHL road trip included stops in Dallas, Nashville and another city (a six- or seven-day trip). I spent hours packing, not knowing exactly what I should bring. I was a nervous wreck. I showed up at the airport for the charter, and Stanislav Chistov and Alexei Smirnov (two rookie Russian first-round picks) were there with only a shaving kit. I would assume that they had no idea that the trip was six days and lacked the English and/or confidence to ask anyone. The general response from the guys on the team was "what a couple of f*cking idiots," and they were chirped pretty much the whole time to Dallas, whereupon arrival they had to go shopping and buy a week's worth of clothing.*

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One year later – has the lockout changed anything in the NBA?

The NBA and NHL have different systems, but they are the most similar of any of the four major pro leagues in North America. (Can hockey still be included in this group?)

As for owners, not all of them are happy; this is rarely the case, anyway. But league officials have projected that the league as a whole will be profitable this season after losing an average of $300 million a year under the previous six-year CBA. With a new revenue-sharing formula that the owners are still tweaking (read: arguing about), outgoing commissioner Stern has predicted that 25 of the NBA's 30 teams will be profitable by next season. In fact, Stern said last month at the Board of Governors press conference that the CBA is working so well for the owners that it gave him license to announce his retirement, which will happen on Feb. 1, 2014. Deputy commissioner Adam Silver, the league's lead negotiator on the past three CBAs, will take over.

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Here is a WJC Pool that is getting set up on the DobberHockey forums.

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Canucks GM Mike Gillis and assistant GM Laurence Gilman were on the radio yesterday to discuss almost everything related to the team. I pulled some of the more interesting quotes in this piece here . Topics include Kassian, Edler, Ballard, Kesler, and more.