Ken Dryden wrote a special feature for The Globe and Mail . In a word: Fascinating.

He highlights the 4th International Consensus Conference on Concussion in Sport, which was held recently in Zurich.

Dryden points out that at the opening of the conference, Mark Aubry, chief medical officer for the IIHF and a team doctor for the Ottawa Senators, described the current state of our scientific understanding and treatment of concussions this way: “We’re at the end of the beginning,” he said.

Concussions have been a hot button issue in sports especially in the past few years, but it’s so true that we are only just starting to really comprehend the actual impact of them. Dryden runs through a spectrum of issues on the subject and ends with the need for a ‘game-changing conversation’ when it comes to rules, rules enforcement, strategies, techniques of play, and the

culture of our games.

Dryden's take is one of the more compelling online offerings in recent memory, actually.

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A speculative piece in The Ottawa Sun suggests the Penguins will be targeting former Pittsburgh defenceman Sergei Gonchar once a new CBA is signed. The 38-year old Ottawa Senators blueliner is set to become an unrestricted free agent this summer. According to the article, Gonchar will either be traded during the shortened season or would be signed by Ray Shero to a one-year deal over the summer.

The Sens would apparently try Marc Methot with Erik Karlsson at even strength, with Chris Phillips joining Gonchar as another pairing if the veteran is not dealt. Sans Jared Cowen already though, is moving a big minute-eater something Bryan Murray will want to do? Yes, Gonchar is getting older but he can still log in the 21-minute range each night.

Gonchar's spot on the first power play unit with the Sens would also need to be filled. Aside from Karlsson's team-best 3:53 per-game total, Gonchar was right up there with anyone else with the man advantage in Ottawa. Filip Kuba, you may remember from what seems like years ago now, signed a two-year, $8 million free agent deal with the Florida Panthers over the summer.

On the Penguins' side of the coin, there is zero doubt the power play is Kris Letang's show in terms of rearguards. No ifs, ands or buts. But with Steve Sullivan moving on to Phoenix (seriously, a big refresher course will be needed once the new season finally gets underway), Gonchar could certainly play opposite Letang once again.

Given the choice for poolies, it's really a win-win.

Stay in Ottawa and we know what Karlsson can do. The top forwards on the team can provide enough firepower to support a decent season for Gonchar once again.

Head back to Pittsburgh and, well, it's Malkin and Sidney Crosby. Not too shabby. Letang, for my fantasy dollar, is as dangerous offensively from the blueline as anyone in the NHL today, including Karlsson.

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Panoramic shot of Bridgeport Sound Tigers jerseys w/Newtown kids names on the back twitter.com/darrenrovell/s…

— darren rovell (@darrenrovell) December 23, 2012

> on.fb.me/VZcNxE #Newtown

— AmericanHockeyLeague (@TheAHL) December 23, 2012

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The Boston Globe profiles Dougie Hamilton and we can expect a whole lot more of those in the coming seasons. A few Sundays back there was a pretty big Ramblings blurb on him so no need to go too deeply in detail here, but of note is that a) he's grown from 6-4 to 6-5 since being drafted in 2011 and has put on 12-15 pounds in that time too. He's playing at around 205 now.

"He's 6-foot-5. He will fill out that frame to 215 or 220 when he gets into his low-or-middle 20s," said Niagara coach Marty Williamson. "There's just not too many holes in his game. There are small things that he's going to learn. If he fills out and uses his body more, he'll realize just how easy he can make the game for himself. I think he is going to have an unbelievable mentor there for him. When you talk about a big man who plays defense, who better to learn from than Zdeno Chara?''

Again, Hamilton is just one of those players who seems destined for poolie success.

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Solid read from The Toronto Star on Team Canada coach Steve Spott. His best friend growing up was then future NHLer Adam Graves. Spott mentions how important his education at Colgate University was while he played hockey there and then how his career led into coaching.

“You realize in a hurry that he is very intelligent,” says Graves. “His rapport, the way he communicates with people, it’s very balanced. If you want a serious conversation, or you want to put a smile on your face, he’s the guy.

“To have success, you have to have passion for what you’re doing,” adds Graves. “Steve exudes his passion for the game of hockey. When he decided to retire from playing, that passion translated into coaching. And it’s gotten stronger.”

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The IIHF ran a feature on Richard Mraz, who is hoping for a career U-turn after working his way back from what must have been a pretty frightening and life-threatening enlarged spleen issue. It was four times its normal size and was pushing out other organs. He talks about his time with the Ottawa 67’s and why he wanted to leave, as well as why he won’t rule out a return to the OHL next season. He wants to play ‘technical hockey’ and wants his space on the ice.

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The Columbus Dispatch wrote up a few notes on Boone Jenner's hit on Jesper Pettersen in the Canada vs. Sweden tilt.

"It was not a malicious hit," Blue Jackets GM Scott Howson said. "It was a little late."

Team Sweden GM Tommy Boustedt, however, saw the hit as "intent to injure."

Miss the game? Here's the hit. You decide.

{youtube}vbwW3B5wvBU{/youtube}

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The Detroit Free Press relays that The Detroit Red Wings Alumni Association and the Joe Kocur Foundation for Children teamed up with the Heroes in Blue, a group of local police officers, for a charity hockey game at Compuware Arena in Plymouth and raised more than $120,000 for the O'Rourke family trust. Patrick O'Rourke, a 12-year veteran of the West Bloomfield Police Department, was shot and killed in the line of duty Sept. 9.

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44-year-old former sniper Peter Bondra took part in a shinny game at Kettler with his son, several current Caps and others on Friday. Tweets from John Carlson helped to get some fans out for the game. CSNWashington.com notes the final score was 16-16 with the help of a timekeeper who kept stopping the clock to allow the college players home from winter break to tie it.

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With Christmas coming Tuesday, all the best to you and your loved ones during the holiday season. A sincere wish for great health, strong fortunes and some NHL hockey.

Whether the season is cancelled or not, I'll be hanging around for 2013 Ramblings each Sunday.

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

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

Fresh Ramblings each Sunday.