Went a bit off-script for this Ramblings and stuck to one main topic. Sometimes it just needs to be done.

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Christmas time and the World Junior Hockey Championships all rolled into one? Heaven. Thy name is heaven.

At its core, this yearly holiday engagement lets even the most jaded hockey fans – a section of people which is rising to disastrous levels all too quickly - revel in the youthful exuberance on display as teams vie for national pride and medals.

It’s not about money. Or contracts. Or points.

Sacrifice.

Wins.

Gold.

The NHL and NHLPA have been embroiled in this ridiculous dispute for months now, fighting over the dollars which are derived entirely from you, your friends and your family – either directly or indirectly.

When the league finally resumes a shortened season, many fans will still bring their hands out of their pockets. But instead of cash, they’ll likely be giving a much more colourful digital salute.

In the meantime, these games in Ufa, Russia are providing us a meaningful distraction as they lead to a rising crescendo of intense action in the medal round.

For we of the fantasy league ilk, it's another chance to hone our craft in terms of scouting for our own rosters. If anything, this annual tournament should be a reminder as to just how fun it is to be in a deeper keeper league format with some semblance of a farm team.

There are solid arguments to be made for hanging onto only a handful of players each season; perhaps led by the fact that all teams are then more or less beginning each campaign on even ground with a chance to win a title, while still being able to own a handful of favourite players.

But as you're watching Canada take on the United States or any other number of enticing match-ups as this tournament progresses, try to harness that sense of unbridled excitement you feel and realize it can easily be translated into your pool.

Five years later, I still remember how the 2008 tourney led me to nab Steve Mason, who

backstopped Canada to a fourth straight gold, as a free agent in our league. Circumstances then presented him with a chance to play for the Blue Jackets earlier than expected, which he translated into a Calder win.

Well, let's be honest. He and Ken Hitchcock translated that into a Calder win.

Fast-forward to a short time later and cue a need of a rival leaguemate to get younger in net. He was willing to part with standard league asset Mike Richards to get him. Mason still had farm eligibility in our format and Richards did not , which meant the other owner would theoretically get to have one more keeper than I would if we executed that straight-up deal.

Enter a subtle request for a smallish throw-in defenceman to the side of the trade I'd get. One Tobias Enstrom. Too bad that kid never panned out.

Yes, that's one of the trades that worked out well for me. There were a number which did not. But the entire chain of events emanated from being glued to that year's WJHC and then doing what I could to improve my farm roster's depth.

Does a standout performance there automatically translate into NHL greatness? Hell no. But part of the fun is developing your own scouting acumen, right?

The information available on the web is vastly superior to what it was even those short five years ago and with the instantaneous nature of news it's certainly much tougher to get any sort of jump on your fellow fantasy owners. But special events like the WJHC still can't be topped when it comes to getting those competitive juices flowing.

If you're reading this Ramblings, you're more or less classed as a hard core hockey fan. Certainly one with at least a passing interest in pools.

And yet you may well be severely turned off by the NHL right now. Who could blame you? We're so far beyond right and wrong for either side. Thousands upon thousands of innocent people have been gravely impacted financially because of this calamity and countless more fans have been robbed of their sport performed at the highest level.

But the World Juniors are a tangible reminder of one of the reasons we love hockey in the first place.

Passion. Leaving it all out of the ice. Coming together as a team to strive for one unified goal.

So bottle that atmosphere. Cultivate that sensation.

Let the exhilaration you feel watching these WJHC tilts manifest itself into your fantasy league. If you’re not already, get a serious discussion going about being able to invest in the youth of the game by putting a farm system in place.

You will not regret it.

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.