Lockout Update Day 109: There is still a lockout.

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To recap the latest CBA stuff - the NHL floated a 288 page proposal Thursday night to the NHLPA. The PA then submitted a counter proposal Monday afternoon, roughly in the neighborhood of 20 pages. That indicates to me that the two sides are very close on the bulk of the NHL's CBA. Last night, the NHL countered again. The NHLPA asked a couple of questions about it, and have been reviewing everything last night and this morning. Donald Fehr intends to meet with Gary Bettman again later today.

I think we're in an area where the basic structure of a deal will be announced within a few days, and finalized several days in advance of the January 11 soft deadline. If so, we could have a 50-game season. I don't think things will blow up at this point, but there is a lot of work to do and if it was a 'guarantee' then an announcement would have been made by now. So I'm cautious with my optimism, unlike in early December when I was reckless with it.

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Canada will play USA in the Semi-Finals at the WJC, after the United States hhhhhhammered the Czech Republic 7-0 this morning. Big games for Johnny Gaudreau, Seth Jones and Jacob Trouba. Gaudreau had a hat trick, after posting three points on Monday. USA were snakebitten all tournament long, but once they buried themselves in a deep enough hole they decided to snap out of it with 16 goals in two games.

Seth Jones, Alex Galchenyuk and Jacob Trouba have been the three skaters who have been solid all tournament long. They've just been waiting for their teammates to get going. We already know about the first two - Jones and Galchenyuk - so no big surprises there. But Columbus Winnipeg (my bad) draft pick Trouba, a defenseman, has opened lots of eyes. Another four assists for him this morning and he has eight points altogether - sitting him seconds in scoring (tied with Galchenyuk).

Florida prospect Rocco Grimaldi was benched for much of the 16-goal outburst. Girmaldi and Gaudreau are each 5-6 tall, and each drafted in 2011. But Grimaldi was grabbed 33rd overall, while Gaudreau was taken 104th. Clearly Gaudreau has surpassed Grimaldi in terms of fantasy appeal.

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Today I will begin preparations on the updated Fantasy Guide, because when an announcement is made I want this thing ready for download as soon as possible - with 48-game projections. It's a big project, to get everything done that needs to be done in order to properly arm you for the draft/season - I'm looking at 30 hours or more. Those are some long days, so I'd best get started. But let me tell you - I couldn't be happier to do it.

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Ilya Bryzgalov on why he quit CSKA, and is leaving the KHL with a 6-5 record, 2.13 GAA:

"I quit CSKA because the lockout is ending."

He later "softened" his stance and reworded the quote. A Russian reporter has indicated that the parting was at the behest of CSKA, and not Bryzgalov. Either way, I'm sure pro hockey teams all around the world, except in Philadelphia, are relieved that they don't have him signed for another nine years.

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Rumors of Tyler Seguin having a serious hip issue are unfounded , as he has stated that he is one million percent healthy. That's 100 percent healthy times 10,000, which is better than my

best math result.

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Puck Daddy counts down the Top 10 goals of 2012 here . One change I'd make - I'd bump No. 5 down to No.10, and slide the other ones up higher accordingly.

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KHL players of the month:

Best goaltender - Karri Ramo , .957 SP in seven games

Best defenseman - Sergei Gonchar , one goal, 10 assists, nine games

Best attacker - Evgeni Malkin , 25 points in nine games. Ridiculous.

Best rookie - goaltender Alexander Sharychenkov

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Regarding the monthly player rankings - hope to have them done today.

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Jason Demers suffered a wrist injury during the Spengler Cup and will be sidelined for three weeks. That would impact the potential start of the season for him.

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Jordan Eberle watch - two more points last night gives him 49 in 32 games. If the NHL season is cancelled, I estimate that Eberle will get 346 points this year in the AHL. Roughly.

Jason Zucker tallied three points last night for Houston and has 29 points in 28 games to lead the team. I underestimated his upside. Although he is more physically mature than Charlie Coyle, giving him an edge, he is looking like he's more NHL-ready. Zucker is second in AHL rookie scoring behind Justin Schultz, and should win the crown, since Schultz will probably be in the NHL soon.

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Fantasy Goalie Guide - over 130 goaltenders scouted and profiled by expert Justin Goldman, plus the full fantasy slant and political scenario of every single goaltender belonging to an NHL team done by yours truly. Combined, this bad boy has it all. Pick it up here .

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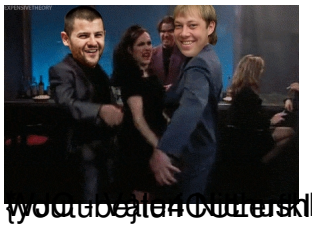
Awesome (via On the Forecheck):



{youtube}ln4Ocrenskk{youtube}

{youtube}ln4Ocrenskk{youtube}misconduct on Tyler Wotherspoon: