

Written by Jeff Angus Friday, 04 January 2013 18:06 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 January 2013 15:17

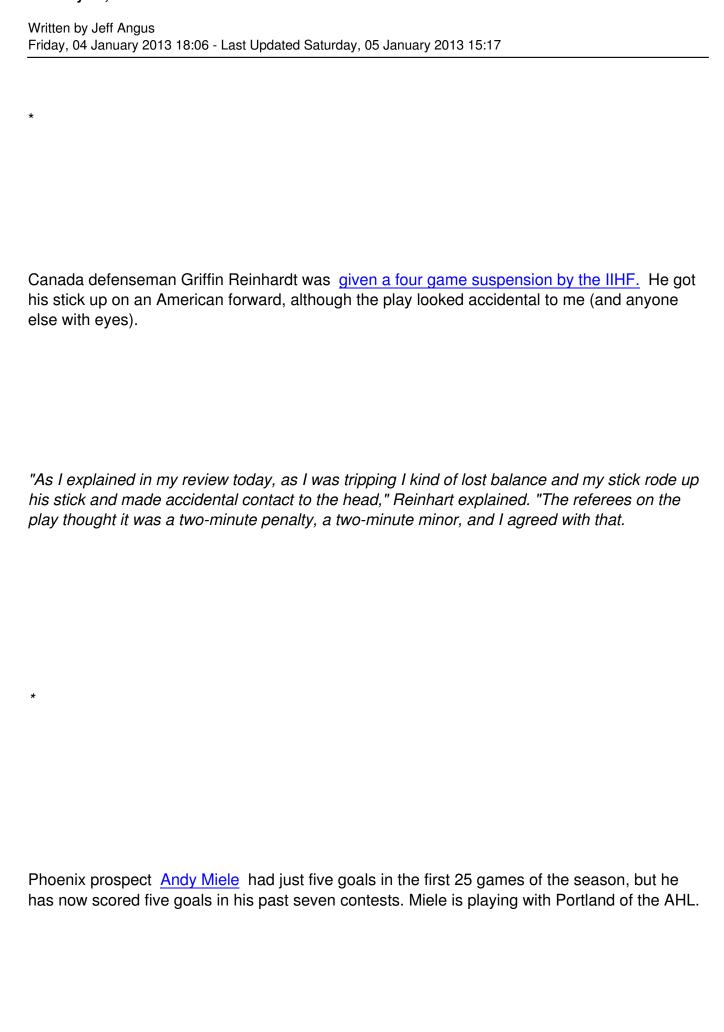
Columbus prospect <u>Cam Atkinson</u> is currently third in the AHL in scoring with 35 points (trailing only Eberle and Schultz). Atkinson is going to get an opportunity in Columbus to be a go-to player for the team right out of the gate. He's ready for it, and the time in the AHL season this year will benefit him tremendously in the long run.

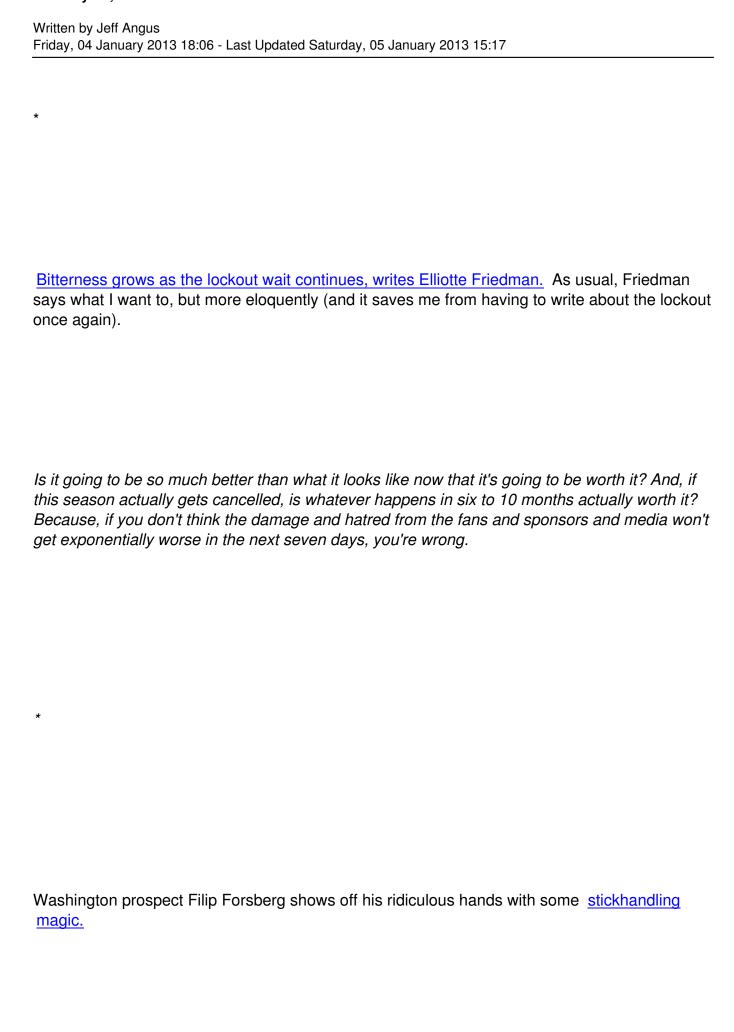
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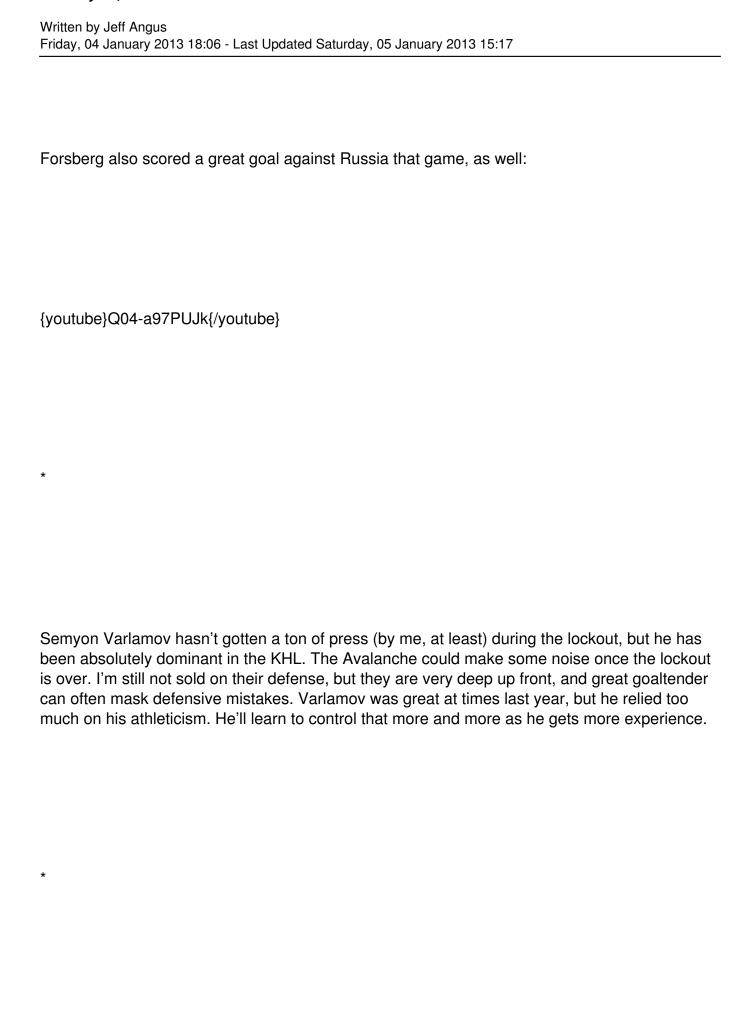
Another player having a strong AHL season is Zach Boychuk, who has 15 goals and 30 points for the Charlotte Checkers. Boychuk, after years of stalled development, needed this kind of season in a big way. Since turning pro back in 2009, he hasn't taken many strides forward with his game, leading some in Carolina to wonder about his NHL upside.

He had 21 goals in 64 games last season, and has 15 in just over half that amount in 2012-13. He is benefitting from better quality teammates on the ice, but he is also playing against better opposing players, as well.

And with the news that <u>Tuomo Ruutu</u> is out until May after undergoing hip surgery, the potential opportunity for Boychuk to step in to a top six or top nine role in Carolina increases.









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NBA
NFL
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New Jersey prospect Jon Merrill is ready to return to the Michigan lineup after suffering a fractured vertebrae earlier this season. When healthy, he is one of the best defensemen in college hockey, and a great prospect to boot.
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<u>Injury updates</u> for a few Isles prospects. Brock Nelson and <u>Kirill Kabanov</u> have both been skating, while <u>Travi</u> s Hamonic

remains off the ice. Hamonic has been out since early December. I did some digging but couldn't find out exactly what is ailing him – he's a huge part of the Islanders defense (one could argue he is their best defenseman).

Hamonic doesn't really have much to prove at the AHL level, and the Islanders could just simply be resting him if/when the NHL returns.

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The Islanders are going to have some great "problems" within the next few years. Tavares, Strome, Nielsen, and Cizikas are all great young centers. Brock Nelson surely factors into the mix, as well.

On the wing, Grabner, Okposo, and Moulson will be joined by the likes of Niederreiter (who as mentioned is having a great season), Kabanov, Ullstrom, and so on. The team has been bad for a while, and one of the outcomes of consistent ineptitude is a lot of draft picks. The Islanders have, for the most part, used theirs wisely.

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