A couple of afternoon posts - I take some Canucks-related questions in this mailbag edition of my Canucks Army weekly piece. My thoughts on Luongo, the second line, and the overall expectations for the team in 2013.

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And for the PlayNow Sports blog, I tackle four big questions in the West - replacing Lidstrom, the Wild as playoff contenders, the Kings as repeat winners, and Edmonton's window to win.

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How busy has trade activity been in your keeper league since the NHL and NHLPA resolved the lockout this past Sunday? If I could place a guess based on the number of trade advice e-mails I have received, I'd say trade activity is up... a lot.

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One trickle-down effect that the lockout is going to have is players in the AHL and CHL will now be given more ice time and responsibility that they didn't have before. Keep an eye on prospects who emerge offensively now that the log jam of talented players ahead of them has been cleared a bit.

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First off, let's start with the Burke firing. A surprise to many, I am sure. I wrote a post on the Luongo trade rumors yesterday
, and had to make some changes to it after the Burke news came down.

*Luongo is traded to Toronto (all the signs seem to be pointing this way) for Tyler Bozak and Nazem Kadri
. According to Botchford, Burke hasn't been the point-man on the Luongo trade talks (likely his right-hand man Dave Nonis, who now may walk into another GM position after Burke is fired from the post).*

*

Pierre LeBrun offers his reasoned take on the Burke firing over at ESPN.

That's a sentiment shared by several NHL team execs we talked to Wednesday, who believe the rest of the Leafs front office is pro-Luongo but Burke wasn't sold on him.

(On a side note, expect trade talks between the Leafs and Canucks on Luongo to heat up big time now that Dave Nonis is GM, Nonis having acquired Luongo during his days as Vancouver GM and has always been high on him.)

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And on Tuesday night we get this tweet from James Duthie saying that the Flyers are interested in Luongo. Well, to be fair, the Flyers seem to be interested in every single big name that ever becomes available.

More seriously, though, the Flyers could make a move for Luongo and buy Bryzgalov out in the summer. It would cost a lot of money, but nothing against the cap (using one of their two amnesty buyouts). And what Philadelphia wants, they get (or at least aggressively pursue). This isn't a team that sits around and waits for something to happen.

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The Seattle arena owner Chris Hansen is on the verge of purchasing the NBA's Sacramento Kings. What does this have to do with hockey? A lot, actually. The NHL may be coming to Seattle in the not-too-distant future, and this is another positive step towards that.

Here is more on hockey in Seattle from a post I wrote last fall.

The NHL can't come to Seattle without an arena, and an arena can't come to Seattle without an NBA team. Even if you love hockey and loathe basketball, it's time to bust those Sonics colours out (imagine for a second that the reincarnation would be named the Sonics, similar to what Winnipeg did with the Jets) and cheer for the NBA's return.

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Who should start on opening night for the Senators? The argument could be made for Robin Lehner
.

Lehner will get an invite to training camp but his chances of staying up in the NHL are low. Unlike Anderson (and Ben Bishop), Lehner has a two-way contract. Paying Lehner his NHL salary of $900,000 instead of $67,500 for two weeks would cost Eugene Melnyk around an extra $70,000. It does seem like small change, but there is always the matter of perceptions.

Craig Anderson played very well for Ottawa in the last half of the season and in the playoffs. He would not take too kindly to being bumped for a rookie. The other option would be to play

Bishop. He hasn't done quite as spectacularly as Lehner, but has stopped 92.8% of shots in the AHL this season.

Lehner's play this season has been great, and Ottawa must be very excited about his upside. He has always had the talent, but attitude-related issues have arisen in the past (and the team brought Ben Bishop over from St. Louis to push Lehner a bit more).

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The only fantasy guide (to our knowledge at this moment) that you can get that is updated for the 48-game season with analysis of how the players did in the other leagues, injuries, etc. Both the Fantasy Guide and Draft List are updated, buy them here .

*

Rick DiPietro is healthy and ready to go for the Islanders. Not something you read every day. Jokes aside, it would be foolish to put any faith in his ability to remain healthy. That being said, if you are dumpster diving for a goalie, he could be a worthwhile risk. Not really much downside, as it is almost an expectation that he will get injured at some point.

"I'm confident with how my body feels now and my ability to be smarter. Older and smarter. I'm not stupid. You can't have everything fixed by the doctors, which I've learned the hard way, and it's a fact of life. I'm bright eyed, bushy tailed, and ready to rock and roll. … It's going to be all about having a solid start and not having an extended losing streak. That will keep you where you want to be through the 48 games."

Trying to handicap the Islanders goaltending situation is tricky. Nabokov is the starter, and DiPietro will be the back up (provided that he is healthy). Kevin Poulin is a solid young goalie, and Anders Nilsson is as well. But they may play no games, or a few games, depending on DiPietro's health.

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Allan Muir from Sports Illustrated offers his take on what to expect from a shortened season.

Lots of penalties:

The lockout-shortened 1995 season was the beginning of hockey's dark time, the clutch-and-grab era. A good part of that descent into on-ice anarchy was due to a recent influx of lesser-talented players who had arrived through the course of expansion. But it was also a coaching technique that took advantage of lax rules to compensate for the lack of conditioning that was the direct result of limited camp time that season.

I am already drooling at the thought of watching Schultz-Eberle-Nugent-Hopkins-Yakupov-Hall on the power play for Edmonton.

*

Friend of DobberHockey Dirk Hoag and I chatted over at On the Forecheck, previewing the

fantasy hockey season ahead of us in 2013.

On who I like in Carolina:

I like several of Carolina's players from a fantasy perspective. Eric Staal is as consistent as they come, and he has the best supporting crew around him since the Hurricanes won the Stanley Cup back in 2007. On the back end,
Justin Faulk
is one of the best defensemen no one has heard about. He played top pairing minutes as a teenager last season. Jamie McBain is another talented young defenseman, but he is further down on the offensive depth chart (behind veterans like
Joni Pitkanen
and
Joe Corvo
).

Jordan Staal will love having more offensive responsibilities centering Carolina's second line, and he will have either Jeff Skinner or Semin as a primary passing target.

The Tuomo Ruutu injury news also opens up a top six spot for one of Carolina's young

forwards - likely Jiri Tlusty , Zach Boychuk, or Drayson Bowman . Boychuk and Bowman haven't developed as hoped over the past few years, but they have each had very solid 2012-13 campaigns down in the AHL with the Charlotte Checkers.

Carolina likes Jokinen at center, but his value as a playmaker may be most useful on Jordan Staal's wing. Here are some lines I came up with:

Tlusty-E. Staal-Semin

Jokinen-J.Staal-Skinner

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Vladimir Tarasenko is on his way to St. Louis after dominating in the KHL this season. He should be considered a Calder favourite, even on the Blues, a team with a lot of depth up front. Ken Hitchcock is reportedly going to play Tarasenko with Steen (at center, where he has played all season in the SEL) and Andy MacDonald on the left side.

That leaves Backes, Perron, Berglund, Stewart, Oshie, Schwartz, and so on to combine to form the other two scoring units.

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Ilya Bryzgalov is back in Philly, and enjoying life (for now).

"All I have to worry about is work hard," Bryzgalov said when asked what impact a buyout might have hanging over him. "Give my team chance to win. The rest of the stuff is out of my control. I don't have to worry about it."

Call me crazy, but I have high hopes for Bryzgalov this year. I know he has struggled in the KHL in 2012-13, but I think he is due for a rebound. I also think the Flyers will have a better defensive group in front of him, too (Luke Schenn will benefit from a change in scenery). I'd consider Bryzgalov one of the better second tier goaltenders to own in one-year pools.

However, a Luongo trade to Philadelphia (as far-fetched as it may seem) would create a very interesting and very complicated situation.

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Big news out of Washington – Nicklas Backstrom may not be ready to go for the first game of the season. That would obviously bump up
Mike Ribeiro
to line one, and one of Laich/Johansson/Perreault to line two.

Having suffered a neck injury on Dec. 26 while playing with Dynamo Moscow of Russia's Kontinental Hockey League, the status of the 25-year-old is unknown as of this time.

*

My latest post (busy few days of writing…) for DefendingBigD – four reasons why Dallas will make the playoffs in 2013.

The top reason? Kari Lehtonen .

As I alluded to at the beginning, a shortened season introduces a lot more luck and chance into the playoff equation. It also makes goaltending even more important. The Pacific Division is stacked with great goaltending, and Lehtonen has quietly developed into a top 10 goaltender in the league over the past few years. His play didn't decline noticeably last season, but he did struggle a bit once the team in front of him started to slide. Even really good goaltenders can't cover up every blemish on a roster. That being said, Lehtonen was able to mask some of the issues on the Stars last season, and he should do the same for them in 2013.

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Not hockey related, but here are 10 fitness tips from Angus Certified for the month of January. I hope you can find some useful information in there.

Warming up serves many purposes. It gets the body ready for working out. It gets the mind ready for working out. It grooves movement patterns. It helps to prevent injury. There are many more reasons to warm up. But most people don't warm up properly.

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He's still got it after all of these years:

{youtube}P8ieTp2KG6A{/youtube}

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Some news and notes from around the CHL – including some prospects with NHL futures, perhaps this year.

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Buy the Dobber Draft app for Android - HERE .

Buy the Dobber Draft app for iPhone - HERE .

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