A few Sunday notes to supplement last night's post.

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Thomas Vanek suffered a muscle strain of some sort Friday and was ruled out for Sunday's action against the Capitals. He, Cody Hodgson and Jason Pominville have formed one of the scarier lines around the NHL so far. Scary good too – not scary like Alex Ovechkin skating with Jay Beagle and Joey Crabb.

Mikhail Grigorenko, incidentally, will suit up for his fifth game. Then it'll be decision time.

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While we’re on that subject... The Flyers’ keep or send back decision for Scott Laughton hasn’t been announced as of this writing, but there’s a young guy who impressed virtually anyone who took the time to watch him play. He puts himself in the right position out there on both sides of the puck, he plays Flyers’ hockey and as an 18-year old, he really hasn’t looked like he belongs anywhere BUT the NHL.

Completely understandable if they decide to give him the rest of this year back in junior, but he’s yet another player about whom Flyers’ fans can be excited. And that team has a few gems up front.

Regardless of the outcome here, his five-game heart-and-soul tryout should be an example not only to every single junior player out there – but the rest of us as well. Forget about what anyone else says your chances of success are. Just go out, work your ass off and let the chips fall where they may.

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The Leafs have brought Jake Gardiner back up from the Marlies after a brief conditioning stint. As much as Gardiner's lockout concussion aftermath is hampering his game and value right now, he's turning into a value-add in average sized to deeper roto leagues where you can afford to stash him on your bench. This kid is 'legit' defined and once he gets up to speed he'll be dealing fantasy damage nightly.

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The Tampa Tribune has a feature on Ryan Malone which exemplifies why finding an effective NHL line combination is dependent on more than just skill. Coaches need to find which pieces mesh well together and Guy Boucher has done that for the Lightning by putting the gritty Ryan Malone with elite forwards Steven Stamkos and Martin St. Louis.

Yin-Yang. North-south hockey and east-west style of play. Good read.

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Pretty average day until you get a random call and its Wayne Gretzky on the phone #stunned #WayToCool

— Connor McDavid(@cmcdavid97) January 27, 2013

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Jiri Hudler (0-1-1, 17:36 TOI) and Roman Cervenka (17:44 TOI) played their first games here, flanking Matt Stajan. Heck of a beginning for Curtis Glencross (1-0-1). Lee Stempniak (1-2-3, 5 SOG) has goals in three of four. Linemate Mikael Backlund (1-0-1) has points in three of four and Michael Cammalleri (0-1-1) had just one point before this evening. Jarome Iginla (0-1-1) has helpers in three straight. He was also 10-3 on faceoffs.

B2B multi-pointers for Justin Schultz (1-2-3), who has six points in four affairs early on. Seriously, what's not to love about this guy if you're an Oilers fan and especially a fantasy owner this year? Patience with the long-term development, but the player this team is getting

fresh out of the wrapping paper is pretty damn impressive. Jordan Eberle (1-1-2) is just doing what he does, while Taylor Hall (0-1-1) already had three points in his first three games. Another late goal from Edmonton, but too little too late. Sam Gagner (1-0-1) has points in all four starts and RNH (0-1-1) has assists in three in a row.

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Daniel Winnik (1-0-1) and Saku Koivu (0-1-1) provided some more for their poolies here, as they've been doing early on. Bobby Ryan (1-0-1) had been blanked in his first three clashes. Cam Fowler (0-1-1) had zeroes as well. Teemu Selanne (0-1-1), well... he is Teemu freaking Selanne. This was Viktor Fasth's (19/21, .905) first NHL start and he made a good showing overall here, from the parts I saw. Semi-dramatic save on the final shot of the shootout too. Sweet assist for Corey Perry (0-1-1) and he fired home the only marker in the shootout as well.

Patric Hornqvist left this game injured. David Legwand (1-0-1) has goals in two of three. Shea Weber has zero points in five games now. Start nosing around if his owner is impatient and worried about there being no Ryan Suter there because the production will come.

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David Perron broke out with a 2-1-3 outing and has points in two of three. Blues edged the Stars 4-3 and Jaroslav Halak added his third win in his fourth start. Alex Pietrangelo (0-1-1) maintained his point-per-game average and Kevin Shattenkirk (0-1-1) is even slightly better than that. More pointage for rookie phenom Vladimir Tarasenko (0-1-1) with another assist here and Chris Stewart (1-0-1, 5 SOG) stopped a three-game pointless skid with a goal. He opened the year with a two-goal contest. Wade Redden, who has been working with Pietrangelo, scored a goal in his second start. Ken Hitchcock apparently called him the best defenceman on the ice in this clash.

Cris Nilstorp left this one with a groin injury. Jaromir Jagr (back) and Derek Roy (groin) were already held out of that one. Ray Whitney (0-1-1) has five points in five games and Michael Ryder (1-0-1) has three goals in his past three starts.

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Anze Kopitar (2-0-0) scored twice (his first points) in his third start of the season. Linemate Dustin Brown (0-1-1) and Justin Williams ((0-1-1) also removed the goose eggs beside their names. Kings beat Coyotes 4-2 in a tilt that saw Mike Richards and Shane Doan fight. Jake Muzzin's (1-1-2, +4) first NHL goal in a two-point result. Secondary PP time for him.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson (0-1-1) has four points in his past three tries and Mikkel Boedker (1-0-1) pushed his point streak to four games. Doan (1-0-1, 7 PIM, 5 hits) has four points in his past four attempts.

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Danny Briere (no points, 14:01 TOI) made his season debut for the Flyers in the 7-1 win over Florida, skating with Sean Couturier and Jakub Voracek on the second line. The vet played the wing because his wrist can't handle faceoffs yet. Luke Schenn (1-1-2) had 11 hits. 11! Matt Read (3-0-3) had a hat trick on the Claude Giroux (0-2-2) line and Wayne Simmonds (1-0-1), also on that unit, has four points in his past four affairs. Mike Knuble (0-1-1) started his first game back with the Flyers, playing with Scott Laughton and Brayden Schenn (0-1-1). Secondary PP time for the grizzled winger. Tye McGinn (1-1-2) earned his first goal and assist in the bigs.

I wouldn't be surprised either way, but my gut says Laughton goes back to juniors. #Flyers #PromisingFuture

— Sam Carchidi (@BroadStBull) January 27, 2013

Despite the lopsided loss, Tomas Kopecky (16-5) and Drew Shore (10-2) were exceptional on faceoffs for the Panthers.

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Spectacular results for Marian Gaborik (2-2-4, +4, 5 SOG), who has eight points in his last three outings. He, Brad Richards (1-1-2) and Rick Nash (0-2-2) combined for eight points against the Leafs in a 5-2 win. Michael Del Zotto (0-2-2) has points in three of four, while Marc Staal (1-1-2) has them in two of three. Derek Stepan (0-1-1) has four points in his past four contests.

If only there was some sort of guide so the women watching this @ nyrangers @ mapleleafs game with us could understand it.

— LA Kings (@LAKings) January 27, 2013

Clarke MacArthur (0-1-1) has three points in three outings, but check his injury status. He's been skating in Joffrey Lupul's spot on L1 w/ Tyler Bozak and Phil Kessel. After opening the season with a two-assist outing against the Habs, Kessel has been blanked in four straight. JVR (1-0-1) with four points in his last three affairs. Linemate Mikhail Grabovski (1-0-1) has found the back of the net in three in a row, while Nikolai Kulemin (0-1-1) has four helpers in his last three games.

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Really like the signing of Jason Arnott by the New York Rangers. As tweeted when the news broke, he was a depth guy for the St. Louis Blues last season (bottom-six role) and should be the same for the Rangers, but he's more than capable of stepping into a top-six gig when the inevitable injuries arise.

He’s been around the block more than a few times and with a team that should be among the contenders here, he’ll have little trouble fitting into John Tortorella’s defined role. With the loss of Brandon Dubinsky and Artem Anisimov to Columbus in the Rick Nash trade, the Rangers surrendered some depth versatility in their lineup. This helps to fill that void.

Sometimes when veterans like this get signed, people tend to get too caught up in how the player may not be what they once were; without taking the time to appreciate what they are now and what they can contribute to the cause.

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The Hawks moved to 5-0 with a 3-2 win over Columbus. Jonathan Toews (1-0-1) is averaging a point-per-game and was a dominant 13-6 on faceoffs. Patrick Kane (0-2-2) has points in all five games and if you missed it, see my Twitter timeline from Friday night. Good quotes from Kane about how he’s taking things more seriously on and off the ice. He’s said it before, but the results speak for themselves so far. All of Dave Bolland’s (1-0-1, 6 PIM) three points had come via one game before adding a goal here. Quite happy for Corey Crawford (24/26, .923), who needed a good beginning to this campaign. His stats are stellar to date.

Brandon Dubinsky (0-1-1) got his first point, but he has been chipping in PIM. Cam Atkinson is on the IR with his groin injury now, retroactive to January 23. He can come off January 30 if he’s ready.

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Randy Hahn on #SJSharks TV: "If you play fantasy hockey and you drafted Marleau-Thornton-Pavelski, you may have already won your league."

— Chris Nichols (@Nichols_NHLPool) January 26, 2013

Patrick Marleau (2-1-3, 7 SOG) extended his two-goal game streak to four. Yes, he now has four consecutive games with a pair of goals in each. Three straight 2-1-3 efforts. San Jose blanked Colorado 4-0. Joe Thornton (1-1-2) has 11 points in that four-game stretch, while Joe Pavelski (0-1-1) has eight helpers in that period. San Jose's power play right now is just unstoppable.

Dan Boyle (0-2-2) has five points, Ryane Clowe (0-2-2) added his second and third points here and Martin Havlat (0-1-1) has made a box score appearance in each tilt. No points for Logan Couture, the third member of that second line, this afternoon, but he had seven points in the first three so don't be too disappointed if he's on your roster.

Scott Gomez (15:03 TOI) made his debut, skating with Andrew Desjardins and Adam Burish. He also saw a decent chunk of power play time. He will have some fantasy value in really deep leagues, but for the most part this is really just about wishing the guy on his comeback path.

First NHL shutout for Thomas Greiss (24/24). First NHL goal for Matt Irwin (1-0-1), who also has points in B2B starts. He has been paired with Boyle. Eight hits for Patrick Bordeleau.

Gabriel Landeskog was rocked by a Brad Stuart hit, which completely changed the complexion of this game. What did you think of it? The Avs' captain missed some playing time in this one because of it, but did return in the next period.

{youtube}5R5sLIPrqio{/youtube}

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Damien Brunner has fared well early on in his transition to North America with the Detroit Red Wings, but here's a cool tidbit you may not have heard.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune tells the tale of how two years ago, when Brunner was still establishing himself in the Swiss League, he had a high ankle sprain and traveled to Minnesota to see a doctor. The Wild's director of pro scouting was a big fan, so the Wild invited Brunner to St. Paul for a meeting.

General Manager Chuck Fletcher was willing to sign Brunner right on the spot. Brunner felt he wasn't NHL-ready at the time.

Pierre-Marc Bouchard, incidentally, should be taking Matt Cullen's L2 wing slot alongside Mikael Granlund and Devin Setoguchi Sunday against the St. Louis Blues.

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Max Pacioretty will miss in the vicinity of one month thanks to an emergency appendectomy.

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Lubomir Visnovsky will report to NYI no later than Feb 11th, possibly sooner, due to personal medical reasons within his immediate family.

— NEIL SHEEHY (@ICEHockeyAgent) January 27, 2013

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Cory Schneider will start for the Canucks Sunday against the Sharks and The Province has some good quotes
from Roberto Luongo, who, as usual, took the news in stride.

“Of course, but I’ve put my ego aside here and I’m trying to work hard and do my best and be ready,” he’s said. “We all know, and it goes without saying, that both Cory and I want to play. We’re competitors but I’m not going to put myself ahead of the team.”

Until general manager Mike Gillis gets the right return on that deal he’s hinted at — and approaches Luongo who has a no-trade clause and will waive it for the right destination — the goalie doesn’t want to dwell on the daily dose of rumours and speculation.

“That’s what I told him,” said Luongo. “I don’t really want to be bothered on a day-to-day basis with that stuff and I’ve pretty much given him the green light to do whatever.”

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

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