My update on a potential Roberto Luongo trade , including a look at the potential destinations and how their goaltenders are faring in 2013.

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Bad news from Ottawa - Jason Spezza is out indefinitely, as he will need surgery on his back to repair a herniated disc. A huge opportunity for Turris to center line one, and it slides up Ottawa's depth centers as well.

No word on how long Spezza will be out for.

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Adam Henrique is making his season debut for New Jersey tonight.

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After getting outplayed significantly by Zac Dalpe and Drayson Bowman this season, the Hurricanes have waived Zach Boychuk. He has never lived up to the hype he had as a prospect. Would a fresh start help him out?

From Shutdown Line (a Hurricanes blog):

The whole Boychuk situation has been frustrating for awhile because his previous track record

in the AHL hasn't been terrible in terms of his ability to drive the play forward and the door is somewhat open for him to make the NHL. Boychuk could probably still have a shot at being a third-liner on the Hurricanes with the starts that Chad LaRose and Jussi Jokinen are off to but like I said earlier, Muller does not see him as a fit for his system which is why he was sitting the last few games and why Nodl was called up.

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Columbus has recalled defenseman Tim Erixon from the AHL, as well as scoring winger Jonathan Audy-Marchessault. For the sake of spell check, I will refer him to him as JAM from now on.

Erixon, who was acquired in the Rick Nash trade, is a skilled two-way defenseman who is fourth among AHL blueliners in scoring.

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I mentioned it below - here is more on Loktionov's trade request.

Could he thrive on another team? I think so. Last year he had an unproductive stint with the Kings, getting 3 goals and 4 assists in 39 games; but as a playmaker, he is going to get most of his points from assists, and he didn't have linemates with much finish. Though most of the team struggled to score, Brad Richardson shot just 5.1% that year, and Trevor Lewis was even worse (2.9%). He could bounce back in a different situation. One of his greatest strengths is creativity; a shot at the second unit power play could also help.

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Roberto Luongo is sure building his trade value - another rock solid performance in goal last night. He stopped 24 shots in a shutout win over the Avalanche.

To be fair to Colorado, their entire top line was out (Landeskog and Downie injured, and O'Reilly holding out).

Zack Kassian's strong season continues - he was arguably Vancouver's most dangerous forward and he scored his fifth goal of the season.

Jordan Schroeder was pointless but he has been impressing with his sound two-way play.

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Matt Duchene and Paul Stastny were both invisible for Colorado.

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Solid game from Zack Smith for Ottawa - big fan of his game. Two helpers, five PIM, and a plus-2 rating.

Ottawa got great performances from a few other depth players, too. Jim O'Brien has been really impressive this season, and he was great last night on a like with Mika Zibanejad.

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Craig Anderson posted a .969 save percentage - and his season number dropped because of it. He continues to be absolutely sensational this season.

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Jonas Brodin has looked as cool as a cucumber on the Minnesota back end. He logged close to 25 minutes last night for the Wild against Chicago. I'm not sure if/when any offense will come, but he is a very solid defensive defenseman already as a rookie.

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Nail Yakupov scored the OT winner for the Oilers last night. I caught none of this game, but it sounds like Devan Dubnyk had a great game in goal. He is showing a lot this season, and I think the confidence that he is getting from playing so much is a huge reason for his strong play.

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Antoine Vermette was dominant on the draw last night (15-for-19), but he finished pointless.

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Los Angeles prospect Andrei Loktionov has asked for a trade. He has been tried unsuccessfully on the wing, and the Kings are set up the middle for the foreseeable future. He should carry some value – he is ready for the NHL, and could slide in on a second or third scoring unit as a low-cost option.

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My top five underrated NHLers for the PlayNow Sports blog – a very subjective piece open for debate. Who are your underrated players? And yes,
Loui Eriksson
made my list. He always makes these lists. Does that make him overrated? Or fairly rated? I still don't think he gets the credit he deserves.

Eriksson has been tabbed as the most underrated NHL player for a few years now, but he still continues to fly under the radar around the league. Eriksson's game is all about consistency – Dallas knows what it is going to get every single night from number 21 on the wing. Eriksson is one of those players who is good at everything, and because of that he gets overlooked when compared to players with one or two defining attributes.

He is big and strong, and is almost impossible to knock off the puck. He has a deadly wrist shot and he sees the ice like a playmaker. He is also capable of shadowing the best forwards in the game, and he can anchor a forward group defensively. I am very excited to see what he can do alongside Jamie Benn and Jaromir Jagr this season.

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The Seattle arena deal has been one I have been tracking quite closely – and I updated the current status of the arena, the NBA's return, and a potential NBA relocation/expansion.

The SoDo area in Seattle is on the verge of becoming a 'Sports Mecca' – three world-class facilities within a few square city blocks? Yes please.

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The Dallas Stars really like Jamie Benn . Gee, ya don't say? On Benn:

"I wish I had the talent, the skills that he has," Nieuwendyk said.

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"That's saying a lot."

Nieuwendyk laughed.

"Well, maybe it's saying a lot about myself," he said.

Funny. Nieuwendyk scored 51 goals in each of his first two full NHL seasons. He won the Calder Trophy, the Conn Smythe Trophy and three Stanley Cups, plus an Olympic gold medal. He was a captain, a winner. He is a Hall of Famer.

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Michal Neuvirth has thoroughly outplayed Brayden Holtby early on this season. I grabbed Neuvirth as my third goalie in the Dobber Experts league (behind Schneider and Dubnyk) and I am very glad I did – Schneider and Luongo will probably split starts for the most part until a trade occurs. Dubnyk has been pretty solid too, aside from the San Jose game.

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Wade Redden has settled in quite nicely on the St. Louis back end. His offense will continue to come too – playing with a two-way stud like Pietrangelo will allow Redden a lot of comfort with jumping up into the rush and stepping into shots in the offensive zone.

"It was the perfect fit for us and Alex Pietrangelo ," Hitchcock said of the Redden signing. "Redden makes all of the little plays that at the end of the night add up to easier exits [from the defensive zone]. They need to get on the ice where they don't get bogged down in their zone, and that's where Redden really helps."

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Jake Gardiner has been sent down to the AHL – I imagine he will be up in Toronto in short order after shaking off the rust in a few games.

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Relatively good news out of New York – Ryan Callahan is expected to miss only 10-14 days with a shoulder injury. It looked a lot worse when it happened (in a scrap with Max Talbot of the Flyers). Carl Hagelin likely slides into a top six spot now.

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Hard hitting analysis on Alex Ovechkin , courtesy of Capitals owner Ted Leonsis:

“He needs to play better. I don’t have the answers, obviously; I’m not running the hockey operations.”

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My latest fitness post – who are the fittest NHL players? I profile a few, including Zdeno Chara , Sidney Crosby , and Kris Letang .

On Crosby:

His vision is very special, specifically his ability to track moving objects, but I think the characteristic that stands out the most is his lack of complacency. In 12 year of working with him, he's never missed a workout, and he's never given anything less than his best effort. He has a remarkable way of bringing his "A" game on a daily basis, which requires tremendous focus, determination, and mental toughness.

He's extremely bright and very serious about his performance. He's also a fierce competitor, and takes advantage of his ability to intimidate his competition.

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10 thoughts on the Dallas Stars through the first few weeks of the season – my latest post for DefendingBigD.

This will be an up and down season for Dallas (and many other NHL teams). The condensed schedule will increase the number of injuries, and it will also increase the relevance of randomness and luck in the outcome of games. At the end of the day, this is a transitional period for the organization, both on and off of the ice.

The team isn't ready to contend for the Cup now. They could sneak into the postseason with a strong season from Lehtonen and Benn, but playoffs should be considered a bonus right now (although no one in the organization would be caught saying that).

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Oh, and Kari Lehtonen could use some help too .

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Here is an early season look at the seven Canadian teams through the first week of the season.

On Winnipeg:

Winnipeg boasts a lot of depth and versatility up front, and that has been a significant reason for their strong start. Ondrej Pavelec has been good in goal, and the defense has once again been led by the solid duo of Tobias Enstrom and Dustin Byfuglien .

Olli Jokinen is a huge upgrade at center compared to what the Jets had last year, and Evander Kane looks poised to take another step forward offensively.

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Unsurprisingly , Matt Carle and Sami Salo have both made huge impacts in Tampa Bay.

But according to head coach Guy Boucher, it's a pair of free agent defensemen: Matt Carle and Sami Salo .

"A huge impact," he told the Tampa Bay Times in describing the additions of Salo and Carle. "What they do is solidify pairings, not what they do individually."

Salo's calming influence has been a major reason for Victor Hedman 's early season production. Hedman isn't going to win any scoring titles, but he has a bomb of a shot and he moves the puck really well. The offense will come – he has improved by leaps and bounds defensively since coming in to the league a few years ago.

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A good scrap from Tuesday night between Brenden Dillon and Jordin Tootoo :

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