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My frame-by-frame breakdown of Henrik Sedin's goal in Dallas from Thursday evening.

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Niemi and Emery were both very good last night in the Sharks/Hawks game.

Brandon Saad 's strong rookie season continues – he showed great speed and a wicked release on his goal. He is fitting in nicely on the top line, and Quenneville is doing a good job of sheltering his minutes.

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The Vancouver/Nashville game was a snoozefest. Roberto Luongo was great. Pekka Rinne was good. The two teams played very, very defensive. Nothing to really report besides Bieksa's groin tweak – look for
Andrew Alberts
to play in his place tomorrow afternoon in Detroit.

*

Matt Niskanen 's solid play this season has to be compounding the wounds from trading away
James Neal
for Stars fans. Niskanen scored his third of the season last night, and he's been playing decent minutes for the Pens.

Jacob Markstrom stopped 37 of 40 shots in his first NHL start (of the season). He got off to a great start but the Pens found a way to get a few past him.

Malkin's injury is definitely neck related:

{youtube}qbRVGNKwQIE{/youtube}

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7pm is the deadline to enter your free team for today's contest with DraftStreet - details are here . Myself, I'm still trying to finish in the Top 100 for the first time this season - but I'm getting better each time. I think last time I was 110th - *Dobber*

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Kyle Quincey is day-to-day with a leg injury. Jakub Kindl will take his minutes in the short term, and Brendan Smith should be

back by next week (Wednesday sounds like the target date).

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Joel Quenneville answers five questions on the Blackhawks and their impressive start.

On Patrick Kane :

I think his focus, concentration and commitment has been in the right place. I think playing in Europe [during the lockout] helped him coming into the season. Every day he wants to be the best, wants the puck. It seems he's skating as well as he ever has, shooting the puck as well as he ever has.

I think he's gotten better defensively [plus-9 this season] and grown up each year he's been here. His shot is very dangerous and there's always a play or two, game in and game out,

whether it's a pass, deke or just one of his moves where you say, wow, did you see that? He has the puck a lot, which has been very good for us.

*

Erik Karlsson talks about his injury and his thoughts on the whole situation.

"As soon as I saw it was [Cooke], I knew what was going on. I've played long enough to know who's going to hit you and who's not. As I always do, I moved at the last second and he missed me, but he still went for me. I lost the strap on my helmet and his hands were high. He reached out his leg, which I don't think he had any reason to do. I don't understand why it happened. He had full control of his body, and he knows exactly what he's doing out there. That's why I'm sitting here with my leg in a cast."

*

Justin Bourne takes a closer look at the Taylor Hall hit from Thursday night.

Kneeing generally comes from getting "locked in" on a hit (I've written about that before). You see a guy coming up the ice from a ways a way, note that he seems distracted and is putting himself in a vulnerable position, and think "I'm gonna light this guy up." And, the intent is usually clean. "I'm going bury my shoulder into this punk's chest, make him yard sale his equipment all over the ice, get the crowd on their feet, and we'll take the puck and go the other way. That's allowed in hockey.

*

More on the Buffalo coaching change – Lindy Ruff ran out of answers in Buffalo.

I will say this, I do have a renewed sense of energy to watch this team. I'm eagerly anticipating the game in Toronto to see if the Sabres look like a different group of players. Over the last two weeks its been increasingly difficult to watch this team play and see the same defensive breakdowns, bad passes, and lack of physical play.

I'm sure there are players who are very happy to see Ruff leave but I'm sure there are guys who enjoyed playing for him. Either way, I expect a different voice leading the way will create a more inspired hockey team. After all, the blame can no longer be placed at the feet of the head coach so its up to the players to now perform.

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The Islanders waived Rick DiPietro yesterday. Something tells me he will go unclaimed…

With DiPietro in the minors, and after acquiring Tim Thomas 's contract from Boston, the Isles will have $8.6 million in cap space committed to two goalies that aren't playing for the team.*

If DiPietro gets bought out, the Isles will pay him until 2029. Think that is bad? The New York Mets are paying Bobby Bonilla until 2035. And he retired well over a decade ago. Now that is a bad buyout!

*

A great read on Nazem Kadri from Yahoo! Writer Nick Cotsonika. Kadri has been fantastic for the Leafs this season. Offensively he is a catalyst. He plays with an edge. And he is responsible away from the puck.

Amazing what happens when you show confidence in young players and put them in positions to succeed, isn't it?

*

Milan Michalek should beback for the Senators early next week. A little bit of light at the end of the injury tunnel in Ottawa.

Craig Anderson is day-to-day with a sprained ankle. Can't see him back sooner than a week – a sprained ankle for a goalie is not an injury to rush back from or play through.

*

Is Brad Richards a potential buyout candidate for the Rangers? With only two goals this season, he is not performing up to contract expectations. And while the Rangers can fit his salary under the cap now, what happens next year when the cap drops? And how about when McDonagh and Stepan need new contracts?

Can Derek Stepan be a top line center in the NHL?

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Jonathan Blum has been a lot better for the Preds this season after a miserable 2011-12 season. He had no confidence with the puck, and that killed his offensive production. He is a really smart defenseman, and he plays very instinctually. He got away from that a bit last year. I like his keeper value as a consistent 35-45 point guy.

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A look at some leaders in the non-traditional statistics:

(These are all as of Friday morning.)

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Francois Beauchemin leads the NHL with a plus-14 rating for the Ducks. He has been a rock on their back end and a large reason for their strong start in 2013.

Eric Staal is second at plus-13 – a huge swing from his miserable minus-20 rating last year (and combined minus-30 rating from 2010 to 2012).

No huge surprises on the top PIM list – Prust, Boll, Neil, Clowe, Orr, Dorsett – these are all names we would expect to see there.

The highest skill players: Clowe (56 PIM), Dubinsky/Simmonds (39 PIM), Ott (38 PIM), and Clarkson (35 PIM).

*

James Neal has eight PP goals already. He's one of the most lethal snipers in the league, to say the very least. Last season was no fluke.

Mike Ribeiro has five PP goals, but he is scoring on close to 30% of his shots. Let's say it together: un-sus-tain-able.

*

The SOG leaders – Parise, Clarkson, Kessel, Ovechkin, Tavares. Clarkson is the only surprise on there – he has quietly emerged as a great power forward and a multi-category stud.

Erik Karlsson is still 10th in the league in SOG even though he has played three less games than everyone else, and he is a defenseman. He would have had some impressive totals in 2013 if not for the injury. Now may be a good time to try and land him in a trade if you can.

*

Claude Giroux , Tyler Bozak , and Crosby have taken the most faceoffs in the league, and all three have been dominant at them, too (all of them have a winning percentage at or above 55 percent).

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Of Patrick Kane 's 22 points, only four have come at home. He leads the league (by far) in road points with 18.

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Some more unsustainable shooting percentages:

Brad Marchand (45% with nine goals)

Matt Frattin (38% with seven goals)

Patrik Bergund (26% with nine goals… about time)

Jonathan Huberdeau (24% with eight goals)

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