The Ducks re-signed defenseman Francois Beauchemin - three years and $3.5 million per. Great cap hit for their best defenseman (this season, at least).

The next DobberNation will discuss the midseason fantasy award winners (and losers) - weigh in with your thoughts here.

What concussion? Two points and almost 30 minutes of ice time for Kris Letang. W-o-w.

Dobber's **Midseason Guide** was released January 6 and then an addendum was added Friday the 13th, get it here . Prospects, second-half projections, the trading block – and so much more.

Dustin Jeffrey had a great game – two goals, an assist, and four shots on goal. He centered the second line. Was the best player on the ice for either team. Huge opportunity for him right now with Staal/Crosby out. Pittsburgh would love him to take control of the second line vacancy.

Montreal's ice time for centers (game went to OT): 24 for Plekanec, 19 for Desharnais, 15 for Gomez, 10 for Eller. Desharnais is playing really, really well right now. I wouldn't sell high on him – I think he's for real. A bit of a risk with his size (I hate saying that, but its true), but he's a really solid player who understands his skills and limitations.

Erik Cole has five points in his last five games (although those points came in only two of the games). He's been a really good signing to date, and has been Montreal's best skater on many nights.

Minor trade – Ponikarovsky to the Devils. He'll fill a spot in the bottom six, and could move into the top six with an injury. Tedenby is likely to get sent down. I'll expand my thoughts on this later today.

Cam Ward with the shut out last night. Figures, as he's on the bench this week. With Halakamania running wild once again, I think it's time to swap Elliott out and put Ward back in.

Two goals for the streaky Jussi Jokinen last night.

Jeff Skinner had no points but didn't show any signs of being affected by the Orpik hit from earlier in the week. He was dangling all game long.

Jay Harrison is on pace for 15 goals and over 40 points. Another assist last night – glad I scooped him off the wire a few weeks ago. Harrison hasn't had over 30 points in any hockey season since back in the OHL in 2001-02.

Harrison already has more goals this season (seven) than he had in his previous 142 games as a Hurricane (six).

Eric Staal – 11 points in his last eight games…

Curtis Glencross is out for six weeks with a knee injury. Huge blow, as he was a big part of the top line with Jokinen and Iginla. Does Cammalleri slide in there?

Brendan Morrison and Alex Tanguay both should be back soon. Likely that Tanguay takes the top LW spot, leaving Cammalleri to stay on the second offensive line.

Something has to give in Phoenix eventually – Yandle, Ekman-Larsson, Rundblad, Gormley, Summers, Schlemko, etc. Having a deep prospect pool is great, but at some point these guys need to play. The Coyotes will likely move one or two of them for a forward… Rundblad was a great value acquisition in terms of his upside and the quality of prospect he is, but he is a redundant player with the young studs ahead of him on the depth chart.

Dustin Byfuglien is skating again. No word on a return, though.

Ottawa has called up Da Costa from the AHL. He has 19 points in 21 games, there. They lost a few players to injury in San Jose on Thursday.

I was wondering what was going on with Nino Niederreiter the other day. This piece was well-timed…

“I think towards the end of the season depending on how the Islanders are doing, how the management feels about Rolston, and injuries, we will see Nino jump to the third line naturally. This will be big for Nino, it will show the confidence the coaching staff has in his abilities and I believe he will take it to the next level.

Another big body on the Bailey line will turn it into a very nice checking line with a center that can put the puck on a stick. Nino has the hands that Martin doesn't quite have to finish attempts. By the end of the year Nino will have a full NHL season under his belt, not looking out of place, and know even further what to work on in the off season. I doubt we will see him in the AHL next season.

Moving forward in the offseason, Nino will most likely attend a skating camp again, get even stronger, and jump into training camp with an attitude of breaking the top six.”

Sharing lots of links today – I really liked this piece on the surprising Spezza.

“MacLean exhibited the faith he has in Spezza when he had his star on the ice in the final minute protecting a one-goal lead against the Maple Leafs, who have now dropped three in a row.

"Jason has shown more intensity in his game, and with our team being so young he taken upon more of a leadership role," Murray said.

Spezza still has the odd giveaway that frustrates Murray, MacLean and the Senators faithful. But that's going to happen with creative players like Spezza. But this season his mental mistakes have not been as frequent.

Still, even though there have been plenty of reasons for Spezza and the Senators to feel good about their game right now, they want to get better before the playoffs roll around in three months."

In terms of talent, Spezza is one of the best in the game. He is injury prone and has proven to be a streaky producer in the past. What is different this year? He has less talent around him (up front, at least – Karlsson's been a huge boon to Ottawa's forwards). Does he enjoy playing more of a leadership role with all of the young players? It certainly appears that way.

How has Zach Parise's play been this season compared to the previous few? Find out.

“On the other hand, it could be a clear sign that Parise isn't someone who can drive a line; he's at his best when he has a Zajac like player centering him or a complementary player like Langenbrunner. Since Zajac remains injured and Langenbrunner isn't coming back to NJ anytime soon (or at all), one has to wonder how effective he really is at even strength? The question looms larger when one considers that he's not facing the toughest competition every night. Must Parise have certain type of players for him to be most effective? Who are these players? Is this what we should expect if Parise isn't with those players; and if so, how can we say he's a good player at even strength? These are just some of the questions this invites; this season is providing at least some kind of answer. I will admit this may not even be an either-or situation; there could be other explanations or even a little bit of both at hand. Still, it's something a team should consider before making an offer to Parise.

There's still plenty of time in this season for this to change, of course. Zajac will eventually get healthy (hopefully) and when he's in form, the question of where to slot him will arise again. Perhaps he'll be re-united with Parise and the duo can make 5-on-5 magic happen again. Maybe some more consistency out of Parise, Henrique, and Kovalchuk can help each other out in this regard.”

Joining two thoughts – the Parise piece and the Friedman one on big contracts – is he a sell-high candidate if/when he signs a big deal in NJ or elsewhere? Even if he has a disappointing offensive season, can you even sell high on him? What are your thoughts?

Troy Brouwer has been a perfect fit in Washington – well worth the 1st round pick they gave up for him (proven over unproven, one of my golden rules. Brouwer's on pace for a modest 44 points, but 25 goals is pretty nice.

Chicago really misses him, too. Bickell has been a huge bust in terms of playing any sort of offensive power forward role. Sharp and Toews are both solid but not really physical or net presences. Brunette is great down low but doesn't have any sort of that presence, either.

A really, really, really good read on why big contracts are proving to be more bust than boom in the NHL. Unsurprisingly, written by Elliotte Friedman.

Some excerpts:

"A couple of years ago, I was doing research for a piece on Daniel Briere. As part of that, I spoke to one of Briere's biggest boosters, Dave Farrish, who was an assistant under Randy Carlyle in Anaheim. Farrish coached the Philadelphia Flyers sniper at AHL Springfield in

1997-98, a season in which Briere scored 92 points in 68 games.

Briere struggled when he first got to Philadelphia and we talked about why.

"Someone should do a study on how players do after signing a big free-agent contract," Farrish said. "You feel so much pressure to live up that contract ... There's also no guarantee you'll fit in to a new city, a new system, with new teammates. It can be hard."

*"**THE BIGGEST SUCCESSES ARE ON THE BLUE-LINE***

I can't remember who said this, but I've heard a couple of team officials say they believe a forward's production will decrease as he ages but defencemen can get better.

The biggest free-agent grand slam over the past five years was one, and three others play major roles on top-notch Stanley Cup contenders. Boston just signed Zdeno Chara to his second contract with the organization. All he's done is captain the Bruins to a Stanley Cup, win a Norris Trophy and never put up less than 43 points in a season.

At 36, in the fifth year of a six-year contract, Kimmo Timonen remains a rock on the Philadelphia blue-line. He plays very well against the opposition's best and remains a 40-point threat. Meanwhile, Dan Hamhuis improved the Vancouver blue-line and, while he'll never be Paul Coffey, is putting up points at a better pace than his final four seasons in Nashville. (Never realized how good a player Hamhuis is. I just don't see the Predators enough).”

In terms of fantasy relevance, I think there is a lot of it. Selling high when a player signs a big contract with a new team is never a bad idea, and this article reaffirms that stance.

A funny mad libs put together by Kevin Bieksa.

Turns out Datsyuk's move isn't foolproof – what a save. Mike Smith is such a fun goalie to watch (and yes, I have ripped on him before – he's proving me wrong in a big way):

{youtube}FlJwRFsF_7U{/youtube}

Dirty play by a "reformed" player – slew foots and low bridges are the two of the dirtiest – Shanahan was harsh on Marchand, surprised nothing came of this:

{youtube}OBZX68jTZJE{/youtube}

PK Slewbban?

{youtube}6l9iUP_YQ-4{/youtube}