Sidney Crosby has signed a massive 12-year contract extension with a cap hit of $8.7 million (the exact same as his deal now). The deal is front loaded, and in the final three years he will earn around $3.5 million per season.

I guess the Penguins are confident in his health, no?

The Justin Schultz short list - he is meeting with these teams today: NYR, TOR, OTT, VAN, EDM.

Interesting news out of Carolina – Kirk Muller plans on playing Jordan and Eric together on the top line. I imagine the Hurricanes will keep Jussi Jokinen at center, and this keeps a spot open for Zac Dalpe, too. Now the big question… who plays with them?

I'd assume Eric shifts over to the left wing while Jordan would center.

I could see Carolina going with a Tlusty-Jokinen-Skinner second line if they wanted to move Ruutu up to the top unit, or Skinner could slide up there, too. For now it remains a potential training camp experiment, but the ramifications for the rest of the Carolina lineup would be significant.

Dennis Wideman will help Calgary's PP and… that's about it. Wideman can't skate, and his defensive game is even worse. This contract makes little sense, unless the Flames knew they wouldn't be able to trade for or sign a decent defenseman come July 1. A few thoughts…

1. Does this mean Jay Bouwmeester is on the market? They are completely opposite defensemen (Bouwmeester can defend and skate, with little offense), but it is a lot of salary to have in two non-star defensemen.

2. Wideman will help the fantasy values of Calgary's top PP unit forwards, as he's a clear upgrade on TJ Brodie and/or Mark Giordano .

3. Miikka Kiprusoff will come to loathe every moment Wideman is on the ice.

Some Wideman positives:

He is a minute-eating defenseman on a team that desperately needed one. He's extremely durable, and Calgary's PP was atrocious last year. He will help the team, but not to the level he is paid (although you could say that about all UFAs).

Calgary just seems stuck in the middle. They have some interesting young pieces, but their best players are all north of 30 (save for Bouwmeester and Giordano). Jay Feaster has his work cut out for him if he is going to try and retool without shedding veteran assets.

Lost in the Wideman madness – Calgary got Blake Comeau back for one season at $1.25 million. Very reasonable cap hit for a solid depth scorer with 25 goal potential (provided the right opportunities).According to Darren Dreger the Capitals are looking to trade Alexander Semin's rights. Potentially interested… any guesses? Detroit? Pittsburgh?

How sought after is Justin Schultz? The Red Wings are willing to give him first crack at a roster spot. The Canucks are waiting to sign Sami Salo (contract is essentially done on a one-year extension), and they cut Aaron Rome and MA Gragnani loose. These teams are doing all they can to sign him.

Some thoughts on news from a few days ago – love the Adam Oates hiring for the Caps. Will this be a return to the run-and-gun they played under Bruce Boudreau? Let's hope so, and not just for fantasy hockey's sake.

Green, Ovechkin, Ribeiro, Backstrom, Carlson… the list goes on. The Caps have a handful of dynamic talents. Green and Ovechkin especially should benefit from Oates, who will put his scorers in positions to score (the anti Dale Hunter, if you will).

This is huge news for anyone who owns a Washington Capital. Save for Braden Holtby , potentially. I like this news the best for Ovechkin, closely followed by Green.

I think the Caps will structure their lines by giving Ovechkin-Ribeiro-someone the easy minutes, while a line with Laich-Backstrom-Brouwer (just an example) would play harder minutes. On paper, the idea makes a lot of sense.

Shane Doan is going to test the open market. He loves the Phoenix area, but isn't willing to commit to a team with no clear ownership or direction right now, nor does he want to sign a one-year extension to see where things go.

Every contending team would love to add Doan – a gritty, two-way leader who can score goals, defend, and do a lot of other things well. I know the Canucks have tried to trade for him several times in the past. Does Doan return to Winnipeg? Could be an interesting situation to watch there.

Pavel Bure… finally in the Hockey Hall of Fame. I was ecstatic to hear the news the other day. Bure was far and away my favorite player growing up, and he is the main reason I was hooked on the game of hockey from a young age.

My 10 favorite Pavel Bure memories of all time – check them out here.

Great signing by the Sharks getting Justin Braun under contract for three years at a very reasonable cap hit of $1.25 million. Braun was very good for the Sharks, and has the upside to be a solid puck mover in the 3 or 4 spot.

Peter Mueller is an intriguing option for a team willing to take a risk on him. He is better off as a right winger at this point, and the concussion issues will factor in to contract negotiations. Still, his skill and size is hard to ignore. And it isn't like he is living purely off of potential, either. Mueller has proven in the past he can be a very good point producer at the NHL level (especially on the power play).

I have made this point a few times, but here goes again. Mueller was the best player I ever saw live at the WHL level – Brule, Benn, Myers, Weber, Schenn, Lucic, Kane, Bartschi, Johansen, Niederreiter, Dubinsky, and so on. He was absolutely dominant.

The Leafs and Nikolai Kulemin are negotiating a new deal. Right now, Kulemin is probably looking either at playing with Grabovski and JVR on the second unit in Toronto, or he may slide down to line three if the Leafs want to put Matt Frattin or Clarke MacArthur there. Don't forget about a potential Luongo trade, either, as it would likely involve a forward going back to Vancouver.

The Ondrej Pavelec contract – awful. The Jets were completely taken to school by Pavelec's agent. I caught quite a few Jets games last year – he was good at times, but he didn't "carry the team" by any stretch of the imagination (outside of a few games here and there).

He could grow into the deal, but it is too much and too long. The team could have let him run off to the KHL, sign or trade for a veteran on a short deal, and then re-assess in a few years. I don't have any feelings towards the Jets (good or bad), and perhaps Jets fans feel differently, as Pavelec is a homegrown player (from Atlanta, same organization though) and he is still young by goaltending standards.

I just haven't seen anything from him to warrant almost $4 million for the next half-decade.

A really cool look at some high level stuff going on in the NBA – player analysis with military-grade cameras. Imagine being able to track every single shot/scoring chance to really evaluate how much players contribute?

"There are two massive obstacles to the advancement of statistical analysis in hockey, in my opinion. One is the speed and complexity of the game, which makes it difficult to track and isolate specific events. A game like baseball lends itself well to advanced statistics because it is so easily parsed into individual events that can be quantified and analysed. In hockey, it's extremely difficult to isolate events beyond the obvious, like faceoffs and shots. It's one of the reasons why a lot of advanced statistical analysis revolves around attempted shots: they're one of the few isolated, individual events that are available to be analysed."

Mikhail Grigorenko is already working out with the Sabres. Loved the pick of him at 12 – Buffalo can afford to take a risk on him, as they have a huge need for a top line center down the road (don't see Cody Hodgson or Tyler Ennis getting to top line status, but both should be really good #2's).

"The man the Sabres took with the 12th overall pick on Friday has arrived in Buffalo. Mikhail Grigorenko had his first workout today and Sabres Director of Amateur scouting said he's a tired young man. Grigorenko has been back home already so he's not planning on leaving Western New York anytime soon, "Right now all my family is in North America so I already went to Russia for my brother's wedding so for the rest of the summer, I will stay in North America. He will stay in Buffalo at least through Rookie Camp which is July 8-13 and maybe longer than that."

Some of my thoughts on Elliotte Friedman's most recent 30 Thoughts:

'7. Generally, offer sheet talk is a waste of time. But I'm curious to see if two other players get any action. One is is Sam Gagner. He'll be 23 in August and the fit hasn't always been good in Edmonton. You're not going to throw $5 million at him, but is he worth a first- and third-round pick? (That's between $3,364,391 and $5,046,585.) There are a lot of teams looking for centres.'

I agree regarding Gagner. He took a huge step forward last year, and has the skills and drive to be a top six center. Will it be in Edmonton? Would the Oilers match an offer sheet for $4.5 million per? Can they afford to if they know in a few years they need to extend Hall and Eberle to massive second contracts?

'20. Do believe the report that the Ottawa Senators is not on Rick Nash's list, but this would be a really good fit. He'd look great with Jason Spezza and Erik Karlsson creating opportunities. The Senators will need a top winger to replace Daniel Alfredsson (how could Alfredsson retire if Nash actually did show up?). This is a team with the assets to close a Columbus deal. Don't know how flexible Nash is willing to be, but it wouldn't hurt to consider this.'

I agree. Ottawa would be a great fit, for many reasons. I don't see many teams stepping up to the plate on Nash, but that may change once Zach Parise signs somewhere on July 1. Most teams would rather give Nash's money to Parise, but if they miss out, they may come back and give Columbus a call again.

I am really looking forward to writing the fantasy analysis of a Justin Schultz signing, whenever that happens. The kid is going to have a significant impact. From those I have talked to at Wisconson, he has the game to be better than former teammates Jake Gardiner , Brendan Smith , and Ryan McDonagh. Not bad company there….

Rhys Richards takes a look at the Wings 2nd round draft pick, Martin Frk.

'In 2010-2011, Frk contributed 22 goals and 28 assists in 62 games for Halifax. At the Wrold Junior Championship, he added three goals in six games to lead the Czech team in scoring as its youngest player. While Fischer believes that Frk needs to work on his speed, he thinks highly of the young Czech. As he told the Detroit Free Press, "He can play the point on the power play. He can find loose pucks around the net. Relentless on the forecheck. He really [has] second effort hunting pucks down, even after 50-50 battles."'

One of the most electrifying skaters in the history of hockey:

{youtube}lsSzkiImAF4{/youtube}

Mueller shows off a heavy wrist shot here:

{youtube}hnTl68Xy-bc{/youtube}