Dale Hunter spoke with The London Free Press about his time as head coach of the Washington Capitals. Worthwhile perusal. He left no doubt he loved his time in D.C. and that 'there was another contract if I wanted it'. He alluded to his motivation techniques for Alex Semin, how the media blew it out of proportion (that doesn't sound like the media I know...) and that as far as Alex Ovechkin and the alleged rift, 'we had no confrontation, no ultimatum'.

He also conveys 'never say never' when it comes to a potential return to the NHL, but for now he'll be an even smarter coach with the London Knights. Scary proposition for the rest of the OHL.

"I've learned. You pick up a lot of things you don't know when you coach against the best," he said.

Either way, Alex Ovechkin is a sharper hockey player for having been taught more about defensive responsibility and overall team commitment by Hunter. Whether No. 8 can translate and flip that tutelage into a rebound offensive campaign is a matter for summertime debate, but just having a healthy Nicklas Backstrom for a full year will go a long way there. The good news for Ovechkin, theoretically, is that even if something happens to Backstrom in the way of a

further concussion (I'm knocking on my head, don't worry), the team has upgraded the cavalry with a pretty sweet set of back-up hands with Mike Ribeiro.

It's certainly possible new bench boss Adam Oates will even try Ribeiro on L1 initially, but methinks a veteran NHLer like Oates – especially one who was one of the best playmakers this league has ever seen and a Nichols' pool staple growing up – knows the value of pre-existing chemistry between a centre and his clutch scoring winger. Ovechkin and Backstrom are golden together. Leave them alone and step back. They have to be so hungry – nay, starved – for a monster season. Yes, they have been apart before. They will be at times in the future regardless. But give them the chance to get back on track together from the start now.

Random thought insertion: can't deny any homeristic claims when it comes to my Oilers (although it generally tends to make me tougher on their projections, not easier), but I've just had this feeling since '11-12 wrapped up that Ryan Nugent-Hopkins is going to be dominant offensively this year. Like, the kind of dominant where if he's slotted into your fantasy service's ranks with every other 52-point guy, you're likely to see positively towering returns on your investment.

Lubomir Visnovsky reportedly crashed his Ferrari during a car race in Slovakia Saturday, but Isles GM Garth Snow released a statement later in the day saying this: "I have spoken directly with Lubomir, and am pleased to report that he did not suffer any serious injuries."

You can see a pic of the post-wreck Ferrari, along with more info, via Puck Daddy. Ouch. Front end was obliterated. Thankfully he's fine and no, there was no word on any update on the trade grievance filed.

Where he'll be this fall, or whenever the season starts, is yet to be determined. Wherever he ends up though, chances are strong he'll post more than the 27 points he finished with last year. Or, technically, he'll finish on a better points-per-game pace. Maybe the season will be really short. Yes, he turned 36 a week ago. The wheels didn't just fall off though. He can still get the job done on the power play and last year's results are going to leave him way down on virtually every fantasy service's rankings.

I've said this every year for the past decade, but the fact that many (most?) services don't tend do much adjusting from the prior season's results beyond the obvious cosmetic changes in the early rounds can be your best secret weapon at the draft each fall. It really pays off to go through their pre-ordered lists and spot the bargains. Aside from the guys like Visnovsky who had off-years, it's the easiest way to get the skaters who had low GP totals because of injuries or whatever the circumstances happened to be. Secure a few of those gents who slipped through the proverbial cracks and you'll be starting off the season with a nice little boost simply because you took a few extra minutes to capitalize on the laziness of someone else.

A few interesting points made by The Vancouver Sun in reporting that the Canucks have begun preliminary talks on a contract extension with Alex Burrows, who is slated to become a UFA next summer. Burrows will be worthy of a big bump from his current annual salary of $2 million. Whether or not the 31-year-old will take another form of discounted contract remains to be seen, but The Sun believes a deal for about $4 million per campaign could be in the cards. Comparables of Wayne Simmonds (just signed at six-year, $3.975 million per), Johan Franzen ($3.975 million per) and Ryan Callahan ($4.275 million per) are cited.

Later in the piece, after a non-update update on Shane Doan (who is, as we're all painfully aware, still waiting patiently for the Coyotes never-ending ownership saga to conclude), The Sun indicates coach Alain Vigneault would likely give Doan a long look with the Sedin twins. Doan would bring an added physical presence to the line and could conceivably help open up more ice for the twins. Burrows would then drop down to the second line with Ryan Kesler's injury placeholder, or Kesler himself is there is a lockout stretching into Decemberish.

It's all seemingly a moot point anyway, since Doan likely would have left Arizona by now if he were going to leave, but it's something for Burrows' keeper league owners to keep in mind and also a situation in which you'll want to be aware at your single-season draft.

Speaking of which: are you still planning on holding your draft when you'd normally have it, even if training camp doesn't begin on time because of a work stoppage? If I had the choice, I'd rather wait and pick players right before the season begins when the freshest and most relevant info is available. Work and home life schedules being what they are though, maybe your group of owners will be best-served by getting it over with in September like you normally would. Remember too though, the regular season isn't actually slated to begin until October 11th... no European action this time.

Oh – one last item from that Sun piece: the Canucks will begin talks with Alexander Edler's agent 'in a short period of time'. Edler, like Burrows, would become a UFA next summer if not extended. Shouldn't be too much of an issue getting him locked up.

Enough Canucks talk. The Globe and Mail has a pretty juicy report involving Dany Heatley, who is suing several companies whose principals involve the McAlpine family. You may remember the name Stacey McAlpine, who was his former agent and business advisor. Heatley's current representation is J.P. Barry, who has been his agent since 2004. According to the report, Heatley alleges that McAlpine and his parents lured him into several real-estate ventures across Canada and the United States with promises of huge returns that never materialized. The lawsuit, filed last week in the Court of Queen's Bench in Calgary, also alleges that Heatley's former agent dipped into his bank accounts and made unauthorized withdrawals of more than $4 million. The total amount of money in the lawsuit is around $11 million.

Heatley is slated to earn a total of another $11 million over the next two seasons with a cap hit of $7.5 million. He has caught the ire of a vast many poolies, who have been disappointed with 64 and 53-point results over the past two years. Truth be told, he played better for the Wild than for which he was generally given credit and there's every reason to expect a rebound this time around with a stronger top six and Ryan Suter's transition game help from the back end. Not sure why, but I have generally liked Heatley. Still do, actually.

With the aforementioned Suter having left for greener pastures – much greener $od – in Minnesota, the question in Nashville has been who will be paired with Shea Weber? According to The Tennessean
, the answer – unless proven different at training camp and the preseason – will be Roman Josi.

Coach Barry Trotz (hockey fans will be reminded of just how good of a coach he is this season) says Josi 'might be a good complement for Webs', while veteran blueliner Hal Gill had this to say: "If he's going to play with Webs, he's going to use Webs and they're going to use each other, I'd imagine. I like that matchup. I think those two can really feed off each other."

Since Josi would automatically be going up against the top lines every night with Weber, the Preds have hooked the 22-year-old up with a nutritionist. They want more muscle on his body and maybe some weight without, obviously, any increased fat.

Question from a guy who openly admits to having tried Wendy's new Baconator the other night: shouldn't a young NHL defenceman want that for himself (more muscle, not the Baconator) anyway, with or without a potential Weber assignment?

Anyway, if you're in a deeper league where even the smallest point bumps matter, it can't hurt Josi's shot at augmenting last year's total of 16 points if he sticks with captain Weber.

Two quickies from The Columbus Dispatch , which you may or may not have already seen. It's summer and stuff tends to slip through the cracks, so it can't hurt to pass them along.

* Unsigned 2004 draft pick Mathieu Corbeil signed with the AHL Chicago Wolves. The Wolves are coached by former Blue Jackets coach Scott Arniel. Corbeil was the top goaltender. Corbeil led the QMJHL with 37 wins, six shutouts and a 2.38 gaa for Saint John last season.

* Goaltender Joonas Korpisalo will remain with Jokerit of Finland this season. The Blue Jackets' third-round pick in the June draft was the No. 5 pick of the CHL import draft (Prince George) but elected to stay in Europe.

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