

The NHLPA has gone to YouTube with 'A message from Players to Fans about the NHL Owners Lockout'. The video is posted at bottom of this page.

\*

If you haven't read it, [here is the NHL's message to the fans](#) now that we've all been locked out. It's touching. Careful. The tears will well up in your eyes as you read it.

Have no fear though. The NHL remains 'committed to negotiating around the clock to reach a new CBA'. To which Sportsnet's Ian Mendes tweeted: "The NHL saying they are committed to working around the clock to find a CBA solution reminds me of OJ saying he would look for the killer."

September 16, 2012

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

Twitter is such an asset this time around, compared with how information was gathered in the last lockout. Here are a few of the lockout contract-related items that have made their way across my feed since I woke up.

Dmitry Chesnokov, who is [a must-follow on Twitter](#) indicates Ilya Kovalchuk's agent says a contract with #KHL's SKA will be signed by September 19. Pavel Kubina signs with Vitkovice. Despite Vladimir Tarasenko having been sent down to the AHL, his agent confirms talks with

[#KHL](#)

's SKA are ongoing.

[#Jets](#)

Alexei Ponikarovsky and

[#Flyers](#)

Ruslan Fedotenko will play for

[#KHL](#)

's Donbass (Ukraine) the team GM announced). Jaromir Jagr and Tomas Plekanec will play for Kladno during the lockout the club announced.

[#Jets](#)

Nik Antropov received an offer from

[#KHL](#)

's Barys. Nikolai Kulemin will sign with Malkin in Magnitogorsk. Datsyuk: "Won't talk right now; in about a week; need time for the medical and to sign a contract after that." (via

[@plysenkov](#)

)

From [Matias Strozyk](#) : CZE media rumours: Hemskey, Krejci to Pardubice; Polak, Kuba, Fleischmann to Vitkovice; Smid to Liberec; Erat to Zlin. Zidlicky training with Kladno, looking to sign with Sparta, who also want Elias. CZE media connecting Sparta to Neuvirth as well.

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

Datsyuk signs with Ak Bars Kazan, as per Sport-Express report. Hockeysverige: Västerås working on deals with Patrik Berglund & Mikael Backlund. Adler Mannheim looking to sign Marcel Goc, Jochen Hecht. Seidenberg too, but he wants to wait a couple of weeks. (via RP). Rumours: Stastny to Nürnberg; Ehrhoff to Krefeld; Kopitar to Servette, who have apparently joined the hunt to compete against Mora. Zug coach told SUI media they're expecting Brunner & Diaz to practice tomorrow. Also negotiating w/Sbisa, who is talking to ZSC & Lugano too.

[Agent Allan Walsh](#) , who is never at a loss for words, had a zinger tweet: The NHL is preparing the on ice stencils for whenever the lockout ends. "Thank You Fans...again."

\*

It's official. The deadline has come and gone and the NHL and NHLPA are now officially without a Collective Bargaining Agreement.

You know you're headed into a lockout when you see an email from your favourite NHL club with the subject line, "Oilers Assign 26 to Oklahoma City".

\*

Evander Kane and the Winnipeg Jets finally ended what had to be some tense times for fans, signing the high-end RFA to a six-year deal worth a reported \$31.5 million. That puts the AAV at \$5.25 million.

Kane took a big step forward in his development last season, reaching the 30-goal plateau and recording 57 points in all. That result marked a 14-point improvement over the prior year and more than doubled his rookie campaign output of 26 points.

Beyond the stats though, Kane just looked like a better hockey player last season. More confident. He also did much of his damage on what was basically the team's second line with less talent with which to play.

This season he'll seemingly have free agent signee Olli Jokinen anchoring his line and combined with the inevitability that Kane was going to kick it up a notch offensively anyway, this has the makings of an even stronger campaign from the 21-year-old winger. He has all the makings of being a force in this league and his overall fantasy value should only rise from here on in.

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

\*

Matt Martin set the NHL single season record for hits last season with a whopping 374, which was 81 more than his next-closest competition (Dustin Brown). Hmm. 374 hits in 80 starts for 4.675 hits per game. Not too shabby. He also had 121 PIM in that stretch. The Isles got the RFA to put pen to paper on a four-year contract worth a reported \$1 million per year.

He registered another four hits before leaving the room.

\*

[The San Jose Mercury News caught up](#) with Douglas Murray and got his thoughts on the lockout situation, including how he would explain the situation to any fan.

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

The best part of the quotes came at the very end though, when the writer asked the rugged defenceman about the report on a Swedish web site that he was seen this summer at a Stockholm night club with Tiger Woods' ex-wife, Elin Nordegren.

Murray's response?

"You're a sports writer."

#smackdown

\*

Jason Spezza has a few interesting CBA points [he shared with The Ottawa Citizen](#). During the 2004-05 lockout, approximately 20 percent of players had signed deals. Today, around 80

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

percent of players have existing contracts. Huge difference. So naturally there's an even stronger sentiment this time around of not giving immediate cash back to the same owners who signed these deals.

Is that stat actually true though? 20 percent to 80 percent? 80 percent sounds about right. But only 20 percent back then? Seems really, really low.

Anyway, he also provided The Citizen an inside look at one conversation NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr had with players regarding salary rollbacks vs. revenue sharing.

"If Toronto is making \$20 million (annually) and Phoenix is losing \$20 million and you take \$10 million and give it to Toronto and take \$10 million and give it to Phoenix ... well, Phoenix is still losing \$10 million and Toronto is now making \$30 million," he said.

"So, you still have a team in trouble and another team is making more money. So that's where you have to get into some kind of meaningful revenue sharing. The best thing for the league is to have a fully successful league, where every team is doing well."

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

\*

The New York Rangers plan to do whatever they can to stay together during the lockout and maintain their current level of conditioning. They had already been working hard to be ready for John Tortorella's dreaded conditioning tests set for the end of next week when training camp would have been slated to open.

"We've looked into different possibilities concerning rinks and will come up with a plan," Ryan Callahan [told The New York Post](#). "Just about everybody is staying here at least for the foreseeable future, so we're going to come up with a plan where we can skate as a group three or four times a week.

"I think it's going to be as tough to stay mentally sharp and focused as it's going to be to stay in top physical condition, but we have the benefit of being in great shape because of all the preparation we've done in advance of the testing," the captain added. "We don't want to let that drop."

\*

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

In pointing out that the Panthers will be without Kris Versteeg (hip surgery recovery) for another few months and Erik Gudbranson (four months following his shoulder surgery) regardless of the lockout status, [The Miami Herald also has an update](#) on the Dmitry Kulikov contract situation.

The Panthers apparently haven't been in a hurry to get anything done with the CBA expiring and Kulikov says he expects to have a deal done shortly after the new CBA is wrapped up.

He may play in Russia during a lockout, but says when it comes to leaving South Florida for Russia in terms of his hockey career? Not going to happen.

"There has never been a thought in my head that I would leave Florida. Never," Kulikov said. "I don't want to leave the NHL to play in Russia just because I don't have a deal. Anything can be discussed on both of our parts."

Really enticing offensive upside with this kid and he'll be a first unit power play staple with Brian Campbell in '12-13, with a realistic expectation of the 21-year-old challenging the 40-point mark. Since he only played 58 games last year (4-24-28), he has all the makings of an excellent sleeper pick.

Speaking of which: Monday, barring something unforeseen, I'll be rolling out an article on Sportsnet.ca dedicated to sleepers in leagues of all sizes for poolies frustrated with the lockout garbage. I'll tweet a link once it's up. There will also be a rankings-related note there as well.

\*

After signing Milan Lucic to a three-year extension (\$18 million) Saturday, the Boston Bruins have now committed more than \$70 million to three players in the past eight days. Tyler Seguin came in at \$5.75 million per season for six years, while Brad Marchand was \$18 million over four seasons.

On a conference call with reporters, GM Peter Chiarelli had this to say: "These are big numbers we've given these guys the past little bit. They're deserving of them. They're all very good players, core guys. It's more about keeping the core together. We don't throw caution to the wind. We do our planning with different scenarios depending on what the system will be going forward. We feel we've got some latitude going forward."

The Bruins have been a veritable gold mine for fantasy owners in recent years and there's no reason to expect that to change anytime soon. They had six different players with at least 50 points last year and had Nathan Horton not been hurt, that number would have climbed to

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

seven. No fewer than five Bruins came in at plus-30 or better and we know how stellar the netminding stats have been. Tuukka Rask is set to inherit a highly-enviable No. 1 gig, without a doubt.

Good for Lucic. Back-to-back campaigns with at least 60 points, a minimum of 120 penalty minutes in three of his past four seasons and if your league also counts hits then the guy is a downright beastly performer. The older he becomes, the more consistently his game should continue to evolve.

Chiarelli calls him 'a signature player', which is bang-on.

\*

Cam Fowler's entry level deal was set to run out next summer, so Saturday the Ducks extended him five years for an annual salary of \$4 million. The horrendous minus-53 rating over his first two campaigns provides you with a glorious chance to snatch him up from a frustrated owner in your keeper league.

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

With a Bruce Boudreau training camp from the start this time around, whenever the season begins, the Ducks should be poised for more consistency and Fowler should take that next step in his development. I don't believe his plus-minus will be much of a concern for poolies this year. Frankly, when things finally 'click' for him he should be a blueliner on which you should count on for a baseline of 50 points each and every season. His skill-set is that stunning.

He and Sheldon Souray, incidentally, should fare quite well as a duo on the Ducks' first power play unit with Teemu Selanne, Corey Perry and Ryan Getzlaf up front. Bobby Ryan will eventually move into that role on a full-time basis, if Father Time can ever catch up with Selanne.

\*

[The Denver Post reports](#) the Avalanche and the agent for restricted free agent Ryan O'Reilly have agreed not to hold any more contract talks until a new CBA is in place.

O'Reilly's 55 points led the Avs, he was a penalty-killing fixture and also tended to be a staple on the first power play unit. He also averaged 42 more seconds of ice time nightly than any other forward on the team, so he is a crucial piece of the franchise no matter how you slice that cake. Best of all, he and rookie hotshot Gabriel Landeskog didn't just have great chemistry on

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

the ice – they taught the class in that area.

There's some sort of gap between the team and O'Reilly money-wise, but how far apart they are is entirely speculative.

For what it's worth, I don't see O'Reilly as a lock to match last year's output. He could. I like him. Just one of those feelings his totals will decrease this season.

\*

Tyler Ennis is no longer an RFA. Sabres GM Darcy Regier has the guy who seems to be his number one centre under contract for a really reasonable cap hit of just over \$2.8 million per year. Hard not to like that signing for Buffalo.

Based on what we've seen from the Sabres individually offensively in the past few seasons and given Ennis's offensive potential, my sense on him would be the general 50 to 55-point range

for '12-13. If he nets more for you, fantastic.

Keep in mind he finished last year really hot with a streak that began in mid-February and saw him produce 27 points in his final 26 starts. He really thrived when called on by Lindy Ruff to man a pivot slot instead of the wing, so we'll see how that carries going forward. Ennis may not be the biggest guy, but he definitely has NHL-level skills. He was dominant in his last few years of junior, highly-effective in his only AHL campaign (Rookie of the Year) and has shown more than enough reason to believe in him in the best league in the world.

\*

The Preds extended Craig Smith for two more years, bumping him up to a \$2 million dollar yearly average in that time. He has another season to go on his current contract, which earns him a total of \$1.43 million.

He averaged about 14 minutes a game last year, which we should see rise a little bit going forward. He was often a second unit power play option too. Smith started off last year really well, scoring in both of his first two NHL contests. He had 17 points in his first two months, but finished with 'only' 36. He should pass the 40-point threshold with increased responsibilities.

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

“This is a leap of faith, obviously we’re taking his salary up to a significant level after the season. We’re betting that he’s going to be one of our best offensive players,” Predators General Manager David Poile [told The Nashville Tennessean](#).

“He has only played one year in the league, but he and Colin Wilson, two young forwards represent for us an area in offense to turn it up a notch”

\*

We saw Friday how Alex Burrows signed that four-year contract extension with Vancouver ahead of next summer’s unrestricted agency. I thought \$4.5 million was a pretty fair price for both sides and maybe even more important for that, from the Canucks’ perspective, was the term was pretty much perfect.

His agent had told The Province the day before that his side was seeking a five or six year deal, which would have locked him in until he was potentially 38. Now he’ll only be 36, which is right around the time he’ll either take a lower amount to stay with the Canucks (most likely) or get a similar annual salary with another team via free agency.

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

[Loved this quote](#) from Willie Mitchell, who played four years with Burrows in Vancouver.

“Excellent player, awesome teammate. Take him on my team any day of the week. Competes, understands the game ... shit disturber ... I know playing against him now and I know what my peers don't like playing against him, but when you don't like playing against a guy, what does that say?”

\*

{youtube}RCW0VsfR9FM{/youtube}

Twitter: [@Nichols NHLPool](#) NHL news, analysis & fantasy takes with minimal inane babble.

**September 16, 2012**

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 15 September 2012 21:08 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 September 2012 14:22

---

Weekday [Hockey Hearsay blogs](#) on Sportsnet.ca, 12 months a year.

*Fresh Ramblings each Sunday.*