

November 22, 2012

Written by Jeff Angus

Wednesday, 21 November 2012 22:37 - Last Updated Thursday, 22 November 2012 13:11

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Some news and notes from the AHL games on Wednesday night:

Brayden Schenn continues his dominance - he had a goal and two helpers last night. Sean Couturier had a goal and a helper, and winger Jason Akeson had three assists.

Sami Vatanen scored a goal for Syracuse, and he also had four shots on net. Kyle Palmieri led the Crunch with nine shots on goal, though.

Dan Ellis allowed only two goals on 39 shots for Charlotte. Has he earned himself a contract with his solid AHL play thus far? Perhaps....

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Jeremy Morin had two goals and seven shots on net for the Rockford Icehogs.

The OKC Barons continue to dominate the league, as many expected they would.

The four-headed monster combined for nine points (three for Hall, and two each from Schultz, Nugent-Hopkins, and Eberle).

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[Pierre LeBrun offers his take](#) on the latest in the lockout.

Sure, hell will freeze over before the owners ever pay out \$393 million on the "make-whole" provision, which the NHLPA asked for Wednesday, not to mention that little guarantee that the union sneaked in there that the players' share in total dollars can't go down less than the

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previous season in the next CBA. Yeah, that's going to be left on the cutting room floor as well when all is said and done.

But you see, this is the point of actual negotiation. You give and you take, you go back and forth.

There's a deal here, it's more clear than ever after the players moved to a percentage-based framework.

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[Tell us who the best goalie of all time is](#) - the top three submissions will earn a chance to win an autographed Loui Eriksson 8x10 photograph.

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Cutting through all of the noise (believe me, it is very difficult), I think some serious progress has been made between the PA and NHL.

It sounds like the games from December 1 to December 15, as well as the All-Star Game in Columbus, will get the axe this Friday. Disappointing, but not totally surprising.

You get the sense that both sides are operating with some “drop dead” date in mind. Is it December 1? December 15? January 1? Either way, I don’t think we have seen either sides “best offer” yet, regardless of what they may say.

Anyway, as a fan and someone employed to write about the sport, the frustration continues. I am growing more apathetic by the day in terms of my fan support, but I still follow the news as I have to stay up to date with what is going on.

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Detroit prospect [Brendan Smith](#) has been [thriving in Grand Rapids this season](#) .

"He's one of the veterans down there," Holland said. "On most nights, he's being used as a real minute muncher. He's playing very, very well. Absolutely, there's a comparison there to Nik Kronwall.

"Smith is matching up against the other team's best players. He's a power-play guy. You need to learn those situations, and it's good to learn in the AHL. We think the time he's spending there is going to lessen the growing pains in the NHL."

Smith was my second best defensive prospect for keeper leagues a few months ago – [here is what I wrote about him back then](#):

Just like last year, Smith occupies the number two spot on this list. He's getting his feet wet in the NHL right now, something that would have happened long ago in many other organizations (Detroit takes their time with young defensemen). Like Schultz, Smith played his college hockey at Wisconsin. Like Schultz, there are few weaknesses in his game. He plays with a bit more flash and snarl than Schultz – he isn't afraid to drop the gloves, and he loves to throw bone-crunching hits.

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Sticking with Detroit defensive prospects, Ryan Sproul returns to action this weekend after missing over a month with a broken arm. [Sproul plays in the OHL with the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds.](#)

Sproul — a third-year player many expected would be one of the top defencemen in the OHL this season — began skating with the club after having a cast removed from his arm about 10 days ago.

“I’m very excited,” Sproul said after practice Tuesday afternoon. “I’m looking forward to coming back.”

Sproul says he was told by the doctor some time ago that he could return to action when he could complete 10 straight push-up without experiencing any pain.

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Ryan Murray is out for four months (at least) with a torn labrum in his shoulder. This is terrible news, obviously, as it halts what was an impressive season for Murray in Everett, and it ends his chances of playing at the World Juniors, too.

Murray is a stud two-way prospect and this probably doesn't hurt his long term value, but it has to be taken into consideration. Missing this much time during a formative season is never a good thing for a young player.

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Some things to chew on from the NHL/NHLPA negotiations - [the two sides seem to have agreed upon:](#)

Moving the start of free agency to June 15 or 48 hours after the Stanley Cup has been awarded, whichever is later.

This is great – July 1 is a holiday, and getting the free agency stuff out of the way will let all people in hockey (players, managers, fans, media) enjoy their summers.

Ability to trade salary cap space and give teams better ability to get out from loaded deals.

Another win. This probably benefits rich teams, but it will definitely give way to more trades, which as a fan, is definitely a positive.

Elimination of re-entry waivers.

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Good.

Neutral third-party arbitrators to weigh in on on-and-off-ice punishment.

Very good.

A joint health committee.

See above.

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Minimum roster requirements so teams couldn't dress fewer players to dodge salary cap problems.

Very good, as well. It is embarrassing if a team can't even afford to field a legitimate roster (the Flames had to contend with this issue a few years ago).

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Nick Backstrom has been dominant in the KHL. I'd be very happy if I owned him in a keeper league – he seems to be a forgotten man a bit – only a few years removed from a 100+ point season:

{youtube}ManOGoTIGt4{/youtube}

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[Jordin Tootoo](#) was accompanied by a few Ottawa players on a trip up to Inuvik. [Photos are here.](#)

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[Matt Duchene](#) [ripped some of his Swedish teammates](#) following a poor performance recently.

"If this was in the NHL, five players would be sent down to the minors after a game like this. But here, players are too comfortable. There are 33 million Canadians that would sacrifice an arm to play hockey at this level."

At the end, the coach of the Frolunda, Kent Johansson, commented on Duchene's quotes: "The biggest problem is that not everyone is contributing. Duchene didn't do that either. You have to do your own job well before you criticize others. On the other hand, it's good that we show that we don't accept this performance," he said to Swedish media."

Well doesn't that just sound like the peachiest of situations?

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[Roman Hamrlik](#) is not towing the company line right now, to say the very least.

"I am disgusted," Hamrlik said. "We have to push Fehr to the wall to get the deal. Time is against us. We lost [one-quarter of the] season, [about] \$425M. Who will give it back to us? Mr. Fehr? There should be voting between players. Four questions – YES or NO – then count it. If half of players say lets play, then they should sign new CBA. If there is no season he should leave and we will find someone new. Time is our enemy."

Hamrlik is 38 years old and knows he has only a few years left of earning potential (if that) – his opinion is likely quite different than a player that is 25 or 26. That being said, it is interesting that any player would have such strong comments, regardless of age.

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[Mike Colligan takes a look at how the Florida Panthers are coping with the lockout.](#)

The Panthers quietly took a major step towards diversification in late July when they signed a partnership agreement with Vegas casino operator Boyd Gaming to try to bring a large casino-resort to Sunrise. The proposed casino would be built on land surrounding the BB&T Center and adjacent to the Sawgrass Mills shopping center, the second most-visited tourist destination in Florida after Disney World.

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Brendan Ross unveiled his top 30 rankings for the 2013 draft [right here.](#)

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[Here is more](#) on 2013 draft-eligible prospect Hunter Shinkaruk:

"Kind of my favorite team growing up was Dallas," Shinkaruk says. "I wear number nine because of Mike Modano so if I went there that would be cool, obviously I couldn't wear nine but that would be pretty neat. But I'd be happy going anywhere."

Medicine Hat has been having an up and down year. They sit at 11-13-1 in a tough Central Division, so what does Shinkaruk think the Tigers have to do to end up with a successful season?

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[Don't forget to check out Justin Goldman's new blog over at McKeen's.](#)

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