*

An updated look at the Art Ross race:

PATRICK KANE

Kane has been the best forward in the NHL season, and he has led the Blackhawks to a ridiculous 10-0-2 start. He is known for his ability to make opposing defensemen look foolish, and he is doing so game after game in 2013. He and Marian Hossa have been a nightmare to contain for opposing defenses. Don't be surprised to see Kane keep going on his impressive scoring pace for the rest of the 2013 regular season.

*

The Avalanche still have yet to receive a goal from a defenseman this season. With 5:19 of PP time, rookie Tyson Barrie saw more man advantage ice time than any other defenseman (in fact, it wasn't even close. Erik Johnson saw the second most at 1:40).

Injuries and a lack of depth on the back end are both killing the Avs right now. Oh and the fact that their best forward remains unsigned.

*

Speaking of a lack of depth - Suter, Jonas Brodin, and Tom Gilbert all logged between 24 and 29 minutes last night for the Wild. Brodin continues to look good as he gets acclimatized to the NHL game.

*

10 thoughts on the Dallas Stars - my latest for DefendingBigD.

On the struggling Goligoski:

Goligoski is one of the smartest defensemen in the league, and he needs to rely on his strengths (skating, vision, hockey IQ, and outlet passing) to succeed in this league. He isn't ever going to be a shutdown defenseman, but if he keeps solid gaps, makes good reads, and has an active stick, his lack of size shouldn't hurt him too much in his own zone.

I think Goligoski is really going to take off if and when he finds a steady defensive partner to play with. I don't think Oleksiak is ready just yet, but I could see those two playing together for a lot of years. They complement each other well, and they would be great to have on the ice with the top line forwards, as both of them make terrific outlet passes and like to skate up in the rush.

*

Well, the Leafs/Flyers game was full of everything.

James Reimer left with what looks to be a serious knee/leg injury.

James van Riemsdyk scored his seventh goal of the season, and in the process he absolutely torched Luke Schenn . Early returns look really good for the Leafs.

Claude Giroux 's offensive struggles can be explained by one thing - a lack of puck movers on the Flyers back end. It is hard to do much of anything offensively if you constantly have to pick up pucks off the boards. The Flyers defensemen are simply unable to string tape-to-tape passes together on the outlet with any regularity.

Cody Franson 's strong season continues. He isn't playing a ton but added two helpers from the back end last night.

Kadri and Frattin are becoming one of my favourite duos to watch. They were both demons on the forecheck last night and generated a ton against the Flyers. Frattin scored his seventh and added an assist, while Kadri finished the game with two helpers.

Bryzgalov got the yank but it was far from his fault - he was hung out to dry for the most part by the rest of his team.

*

14 Blue Jackets found the scoresheet last night in their 6-2 victory over the Sharks. I was impressed with Steve Mason 's game. Quick in the net, and he didn't overplay on first-chance opportunities (a problem he has had in past years).

Matt Calvert had two helpers and looked really good skating on a very gritty/feisty line along with Dubinsky and Nick Foligno .

*

Tlusty/Staal/Semin combined for nine points against the Islanders last night. Semin in particular had a fantastic game with a goal and two helpers. He also helped to generate a lot of offensive opportunities.

Matt Moulson had two goals, an assist, and five shots on goal. However, he also finished the game with an ugly minus-3 rating.

Lubomir Visnovsky had two points and looked fantastic on the PP, playing 5:25 for the Isles in a man advantage situation.

Another tough outing for Kyle Okposo - he's playing his way out of the New York top six.

*

Cam Fowler will be out for at least another week with an upper body injury. Sheldon Souray has been a beast on the Anaheim PP, and I could see the two forming a great duo back there when Fowler returns.

*

Dustin Byfuglien is back tonight against Philadelphia. Schedule your evening accordingly.

*

Alex Killorn made his NHL debut on Sunday for the Lightning, and Richard Panik is going to do the same tonight for Tampa Bay. With Ryan Malone on the shelf (lower body injury, no word on severity), Panik has been recalled.

Like Killorn, Panik has top six NHL upside.

The 22-year-old forward stands 6'2" and has 21 goals and 14 assists in 43 games with Syracuse this season after making his first full professional season last season with the Norfolk Admirals, Tampa Bay's former AHL affiliate. He put up 41 points for the Ads in 2011-12 (19 goals, 22 assists) in 64 games.

*

Washington 2012 1st round pick Tom Wilson has an impressive seven points in his last two games. The power forward plays for the

Plymouth Whalers of the OHL.

*

Winger Ty Rattie (Blues prospect) had four goals and an assist for Portland yesterday as they destroyed the Vancouver Giants 8-3. He's pretty good.

*

Don't forget to check out the contest we are running over the next week at DobberHockey – we have some sweet prizes up for grabs thanks to our friends at 2XU Canada.

I made the contest really easy to enter and even easier to track. I'll post my own picks (I can't win though, don't worry) on Wednesday morning.

*

I interviewed Dave Orton last week, and published part of our interview over on my blog .

Dave is a strength coach in Windsor, Ontario, and he works with NHLers like Zack Kassian and
Matt Martin
. We talked a lot on training athletes, hockey players, the benefits of MMA conditioning, and more. He's a really insightful guy to say the least.

Orton: I have always trained with the philosophy that everybody should train like an athlete. I did that before there was such a thing as the term sports specific training.

If you look at what athletes do when they play sports, I don't care if it is hockey, football, lacrosse, wrestling, tennis, whatever, all that they do through the sport are the same movements that every day people do, just faster.

*

Thomas Drance takes an in-depth look at Life after Lidstrom in Detroit.

Ultimately, Detroit should be saved by the steady play of Jimmy Howard in net and the overwhelming quality of their even-strength puck possession. I do think Babcock is going to need to move his top players into a power-play role though, and that ken Holland might need to be looking around for an overpaid defenseman he can acquire on the cheap. The Red Wings aren't an elite team anymore, not with that blueline, but they're a playoff team and I think they're better than they've looked so far this season.

*

I enjoyed this post on Puck Daddy – the top 10 video game hockey characters of all time.

*

I don't usually ramble on the day after Elliotte Friedman's 30 thoughts column comes out. However, with Dobber in Vegas, I have that opportunity today. Here is Friedman's most recent column , and I'll share some of my thoughts below his.

There's a lot of angst in Minnesota about the Wild's 5-5-1 start. After the free-agent bonanza, several opponents said Wild general manager Chuck Fletcher's biggest challenge would be managing expectations. While Parise and Ryan Suter are big upgrades, the roster has holes. The organization is stocked with talented youth, but in different stages of development. "They will not be a contender until their young players are ready," said one executive. "But that will be hard for ownership to hear."

I concur. The Wild simply don't have the depth at forward or defense right now, even with Parise/Suter now in the fold. The team will take a giant step forward when Coyle, Zucker, Brodin, and Granlund are all ready to take on significant roles at the NHL level.

Who is available? Well, a few teams would love Ryan O'Reilly, but God knows how that ends. Once again, Derick Brassard 's name is coming up. That's been an uneasy marriage, to say the least. The Columbus Blue Jackets have three first-round picks next year -- their own and one each from the Los Angeles Kings and New York Rangers. I can't imagine they'd trade their own for anything less than a superstud, but the other two are strong commodities in a deep draft.

I could see Calgary having interest in Brassard, but who would they give up? A change of scenery may do him good (Brassard, that is).

*

And a shoutout to former DobberNation host Andrew Walker!

My favourite radio bit right now is Andrew Walker's sarcastic player profile on Sportsnet 960 in Calgary. Before every game, Walker takes a member of the opposition and does a funny rip job based on those puffball features us media types do. Here's the problem. In nine games, Walker's targets have skewered the Flames for six goals, four assists and one shootout winner. If that wasn't bad enough, the Detroit subject, Johan Franzen , injured Miikka Kiprusoff . I can't wait to hear which member of the Wild is getting a hat trick Monday night

*

DefendingBigD rates the Dallas roster through the first 12 games of the season.

On Jamie Benn , who was named NHL 2nd star of the week:

Comments: Had a bit of a slow start after returning with a fresh, new contract but has been the best player on the ice for the Stars during the three-game winning streak. Those two facts are almost certainly related.

*

Calgary has claimed Joey MacDonald off of waivers. Does this mean that Leland Irving has lost the back up job, or does it mean that Kiprusoff's injury is more serious than the team is letting on?

*

More on Winterhawks (WHL) forward Nic Petan , who I mentioned in my most recent Prime Cuts:

Nic Petan is going to score 50 goals as a 17 year-old. Unless someone can correct me, which is easy to do, Patrick Marleau of the Seattle Thunderbirds was the last 17 year-old to score 50 goals in one season in the WHL. Petan is smallish, but I don't care if he's 4 foot 3, he goes to the right areas to score goals. Petan is playing with two highly skilled players but he isn't riding on their coat tails.

*

Pekka Rinne calls out the Predators offense. Heading into Monday night….

"It's tough to win when you don't score goals," he told The Tennessean following Sunday's 3-0 loss to Chicago. "This is the third time in 11 games now that we got shut out."

Nashville sits dead last in a number of the NHL's most significant offensive stat categories: goals per game (1.83), shots on goal per game (21.1) and third-period goals (five).

*

Ilya Bryzgalov has been the best Flyer by far , according to GM Paul Holmgren. Now if they could figure out some way to play great hockey at the same time they are receiving great goaltending…

*

Sergei Fedorov offers up some praise for Blues rookie Vladimir Tarasenko.

"He is a very good player, so talented and with outstanding puck skills," Fedorov told the Windsor Star. "I'm absolutely very happy that he's gone over there and made an impact so quickly.

"I think he's been a very impressive NHL player so far."

I love what the Blues are doing with Sergei Zubov serving as a mentor for Tarasenko. I wish more NHL teams did this with top prospects – they have so much money invested in these kids, putting them with experienced former players to teach them how to act like a pro on and off of the ice can only pay dividends in the present and future.

*

Only in Russia?

{youtube}6iTGyVJx-II{/youtube}