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A couple of great posts from the Dobber crew today.

Goldman profiles Ray Emery and his improbable success story over at NHL.com.

Dobber with his weekly hits over at Puck Daddy.

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Don't forget to check out the free one-day Fantasy challenge hosted by DraftStreet.

The contest is for February 23rd (Saturday), and there are $300 in prizes, exclusively for DobberHockey readers/members. Check it out at the link above.

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Another miserable performance from the Flames last night. The perpetual mediocrity over the past few years has descended into perpetual ineptitude. The team has arguably the worst future of any team in hockey (Sven Bartschi, TJ Brodie, Mikael Backlund, and...), and their roster is a mishmash of cast-offs with no real identity.

There are two ways to rebuild (probably more, but two philosophies). The total blow up, which is what Pittsburgh and Edmonton have done. Or, the retool through shrewd trades and asset management. GM Jay Feaster has made it quite clear he and the Calgary ownership aren't interested in a rebuild, but the problem is they don't have the assets (or the mentaility) to retool. Terrible contracts last summer (the Wideman one will be an anchor, and Jiri Hudler is a good player, but he fits in on a contending team).

Calgary will sell out their home games. They have a great fan base and play in a hockey mad city. But the future is very, very bleak, and hopefully someone can recognize that and get some sort of plan/idea/goal in mind for the next few years. Because it is going to be an ugly couple of years in Cowtown.

Oh, and the Flames lost 3-1 to LA last night.

TJ Brodie scored the lone goal, and he has been a bright spot on the back end. He is big and mobile, and has great offensive instincts. And he is making the most of his opportunity this season - he played over 22 minutes last night.

Joey MacDonald let in three goals on 33 shots. Bernier got the start for LA, stopping all but one of the 27 shots he faced.

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Semyon Varlamov was sensational for Colorado, stealing a 1-0 win last night against the more talented St. Louis Blues. Matt Hunwick played close to 25 minutes (and had an assist, but come on... Matt Hunwick?).

Stefan Elliott played 21 minutes - about two more than Tyson Barrie. The thinking in Colorado is that only one of them can be on the team at one time, but they both saw regular minutes last night.

Vladimir Tarasenko left the game after getting rocked by Avs formward Mark Olver. Apparently he was OK and was cleared to leave the hospital to travel with his team.

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So much for a slump - Jake "the Snake" Voracek now seven points in two games, and 44 in his last 44 with the Flyers (including playoffs). And to think, the BJ's could have him and Couturier instead of Jack Johnson. For shame...

Couturier and Voracek combined for 12 shots on goal as well.

Crosby/Dupuis/Kunitz were a combined minus-9. Ouch. Crosby at least got his fantasy owners a beastly 21 faceoff wins.

Paul Martin had three helpers on the Pittsburgh back end. Kudos to him for remaking himself this year after struggling a bit last season with the Pens.

Bryzgalov and Vokoun were both horrendous - what would a Flyers/Pens game be without shoddy goaltending?

Giroux had a great game too - two helpers and he could have had two or three more quite easily.

An effective game for Wayne Simmonds - three points in less than 12 minutes of ice time.

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My take on the Lindy Ruff firing – a change needed to be made, but he is a scapegoat for a pretty mismanaged couple of years.

Back in 2006-07, the Sabres were the class of the NHL. Speed, skill, depth, they had it all.

What has happened since then?

Well, similar to the Washington Capitals, the Sabres tried to change their style on the fly, and what has resulted is a lack of an identity.

The team is small and weak up the middle. Cody Hodgson , Tyler Ennis , and Jochen Hecht are all below average at faceoffs (closer to 40 than 50, which is horrible), and the only center in the positive on the draw is
Steve Ott
.

The team simply can't compete with the top clubs in the East – Crosby/Malkin, Krejci/Bergeron, you name it, and the top teams are all experienced and deep down the middle.

Ehrhoff has been a good defenseman for them, but they paid a ton to get him (don't get fooled by his $4 million cap hit, he made $18 million over the first two years thanks to some ridiculous bonuses).

Ville Leino , who has yet to suit up for a single game this year, has been a monumental flop.

Sure, the top line has been productive, but no one else is contributing. Drew Stafford has been invisible for much of the season.
Marcus Foligno
hasn't had nearly the same impact he had last year as rookie.

And Tyler Myers , who was paid handsomely based off of one good season, has regressed significantly, and doesn't even look NHL calibre on many nights.

No wonder Ryan Miller is so angry all of the time.

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I have watched Jannik Hansen play a lot of hockey over the course of his career. And before you go claiming I am a "biased" Canucks fan, hear me out:

He has never done anything dirty/intentional. That being said, he needs to control himself on the ice. What I think happened – he was reaching for the puck, saw that Hossa wasn't moving, and at the last second tried to hit him out of the way. Reckless play, and one that probably warranted a short suspension. Hossa's injury history complicates things a bit.

And as a fan of hockey, I hope that Hossa is back soon – he is one of a handful of truly elite forwards in the league, and he is damn near unstoppable when on his game (like he was on Tuesday against the Canucks.

I'd say the one game suspension is fair, all things considered. Similar to PM Bouchard getting suspended for a reckless and unintentional high stick.

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I will be releasing my top 10 keeper league lists in the coming weeks. Up first is the LW, a position that has taken quite a hit with Ilya Kovalchuk , Rick Nash , and James Neal all moving to the right side.
Feel free to share your thoughts on the 2013 edition here
, and you can also look back at my past three lists from 2010, 2011, and 2012.

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I interviewed Zack Kassian 's trainer last week, and you can read our discussion here.

Kassian, who got off to a great start to the season, has hit a bit of a wall over the past few weeks. It also doesn't help that Alex Burrows has reclaimed his spot on the top line.

What about his upside as an NHL player?

"It's the tip of the iceberg. If you look at tape from his junior days, he has a great set of hands, and he knows where to be out on the ice. He knows when to make the right play, and the more ice time he gets, and the more confidence people show in him, the better he is going to be.

"Kass has a lot of talent, and it is just a matter of learning how to use it. I am glad that he didn't get painted as the guy who is there to only fight. He can score goals and he can really play hockey."

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I ranked the top five undersized NHL players for the PlayNow Sports Blog – how would you rank them? I tried to pick players 5-9 and under (and yes,
Patrick Kane
is 5-9, regardless of what he is listed online).

3. Tobias Enstrom – Winnipeg Jets

Enstrom is the only defenseman on this list, as there are few blue liners in the NHL under 5-10 (there aren't many under 6-0, for that matter). What Enstrom lacks in size and strength he makes up for in hockey IQ, mobility, and skill. He has been the number one defenseman in the Winnipeg/Atlanta organization for the past five years, and his quietly-efficient game doesn't garner a lot of league-wide attention. But fans who are lucky enough to get to watch him to play on a regular basis know how good he is. 238 players were drafted ahead of Enstrom back in 2003, and since that time he has made many NHL teams look foolish for passing on him.

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And in my weekly post for DefendingBigD , I broke down the Brenden Dillon game winner from Friday night in Vancouver. A lot goes into a goal, and the Stars did a lot of great things away from the puck to set this goal up.

He leads Stars defensemen in goals (three), PIM (20), and is second in plus/minus at plus-4 (only he and Robidas have been plus defensemen in 2013). His 30 shots on goal ranks him second only to Alex Goligoski , and he is seeing only 0:27 of PP time per game (compared to 3:03 for Goligoski). His ability to fill up the stat sheet in a variety of ways has started to give him some value in many fantasy hockey leagues, as well.

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The results from the 2XU February Fantasy Contest will be posted in tomorrow's ramblings – a lot of great submissions, thanks to everyone for taking part.

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Hockey Prospectus takes an interesting look at several realignment options.

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The Panthers are going to give Jacob Markstrom every opportunity to seize the starting gig in Florida. Is he ready for it? How many of you have been patiently waiting with him on your farm/bench? Theodore and Clemmensen have both been terrible this year, and if Florida doesn't turn things around soon, I'd expect them to be sellers at the deadline in a little over a month.

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Ranking the top five Jets prospects, from the Hockey Writers.

Checking in at number one:

Scheifele usually receives this honor due to the fact that he has experience at NHL level. However, Jacob Trouba is a player who definitely deserves a lot of credit, and he has the potential to be a huge piece of a future blue line alongside Tobias Enstrom , Dustin Byfuglien and Zach Bogosian .

Trouba's reputation is as a hard-hitting, gritty and physical defenseman. He could do with adding a little more weight, but he has already shown that he is more than willing to mix it up and use what size he has.

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Mikael Granlund has hit a bit of a rookie wall in Minnesota. What should the Wild do with him?

Have we not learned from the Gillies and Sheppard experiments? If they aren't ready, they aren't ready. Top line prospects should not be rotting playing less than 10 minutes a night.

Yes, the AHL is a tier-lower than the NHL, but the leagues still have similarities in playing style. There is also alot of NHL talented players in the AHL.

And as much as we want him to be in the NHL, wouldn't it be good for his development to play as the Aero's powerplay quaterback as well as the team's top center, playing 20+ minutes a night against the toughest defense the AHL has to offer?

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Tomas Vincour had two goals last night for the Texas Stars – he'll be back up with Dallas soon. I don't think he was playing poorly, but the Stars wanted a bi t more grit/tenacity in their bottom six.

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Connor McDavid is well on his way to becoming the next prodigy in hockey – he was featured in the New York Times the other day too.

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Thoughts on the Kings/Flames, Blues/Avs, as well as a preview for tonight's action… coming soon.

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One on five? No problem for Mr. Datsyuk:

{youtube}YWNAaGyBUMo{/youtube}

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Interviewing Ben Prentiss today (really looking forward to it) – he trains a ton of top level NHLers:

{youtube}mAyDRanshqY{/youtube}

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Friedman's 30 thoughts, in case you missed it.

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