Tampa Bay actually had a pretty decent campaign. Certainly better than anyone had expected. But that wasn't good enough to save the jobs of GM Brian Lawton and Coach Rick Tocchet. A new owner is in town and Jeff Vinik saw the problem right away. Uncertainty, instability – an overall culture of dysfunction. So while Tocchet did an acceptable job as a new coach in not only getting a team closer to the postseason, but also turning Steve Downie into quite a player – he was part of the slate that needed to be cleaned. No real complaints about Lawton either, but to change a culture the change must be sweeping and it must start at the top. So what does all this mean in fantasy circles?

Vinik brought in Steve Yzerman to be the new GM. He knew what he wanted and he went after it. Yzerman was actually rumoured to have turned the job down but Vinik kept bringing him back to the table until he convinced him. Normally, I frown upon ex-jocks taking up a management position – a position that needs business strength more than hockey expertise – but in this case, it was the right move. While still very new to the business of managing a team, Yzerman is probably going to be a fine GM. After all, he trained under the best in Detroit under Ken Holland. But more importantly, Yzerman brings stability and respect.

The current players on the roster feel better about the future. Unrestricted free agents will take the team seriously. Other general managers are clear on who they are negotiating with. The chain of command is clear. Yzerman would not change cities like that without being given carte blanche. Fans in Florida will notice. This will absolutely make a difference.

So with the culture and the future now positive and stable, how will they move forward? With a salary cap increase, the team is looking at about $22.5 million in cap space for next season. The signed players fill the following depth chart as such:

Martin St. Louis – Steven Stamkos – RFA

Ryan Malone – Vincent Lecavalier – space

Space – space - RFA

Todd Fedoruk – space – space

Andrej Meszaros – Victor Hedman

Mattias Ohlund – Matt Walker

RFA - space

Matt Lashoff – Matt Smaby

Mike Smith

Space

The RFA's are the three restricted free agents that I expect them to sign – Steve Downie, Mike Lundin and Ted Purcell. The team could also re-sign Paul Ranger and Vladimir Mihalik, but if this team really does transform itself on the ice as much as in the front office, then don't count on it. So Tampa Bay needs to fill seven roster spots, plus three depth spots either from within or through free agency or trade. There is nothing glaring in the pipeline, so trade and free agency are the likely options.

Which brings us to Vinny Lecavalier. No longer the franchise, but it would be a mistake to write

him off. He just turned 30 and despite the fact that he has only missed six games in the last four years, he has been playing through terrible shoulder and wrist problems. He's had surgery on each, but there is a recovery period and as he recovered his fantasy owners have been bailing on him. But make no mistake, the Lecavalier who tallied 200 points in two seasons (2006-07, 2007-08) is still there. October will be the first time in three years that he is playing pain free with full mobility. Furthermore, all the uncertainty will be behind him. Yzerman will either trade him, or he will make it clear that he will not be dealt. More importantly – the matter will settled. That's another intangible that Yzerman brings to the table. People will believe him. No more distractions.

Lecavalier will have his best season in three years. Mark it. And if Stamkos gets 95 points and Lecavalier gets 95 points, what does this mean for the wingers? It will mean a repeat of strong campaigns from St. Louis, Malone and Downie. It will mean a strong year from whomever they sign as a free agent to take the spot of the departing Alex Tanguay (who is an unrestricted free agent). It will mean that Purcell is a nice dark horse.

The domino effect will be this – contention for the playoffs, more W's for the goaltenders, more production from the likes of Hedman. This is an important offseason for Tampa Bay, but I have faith for the first time in years.