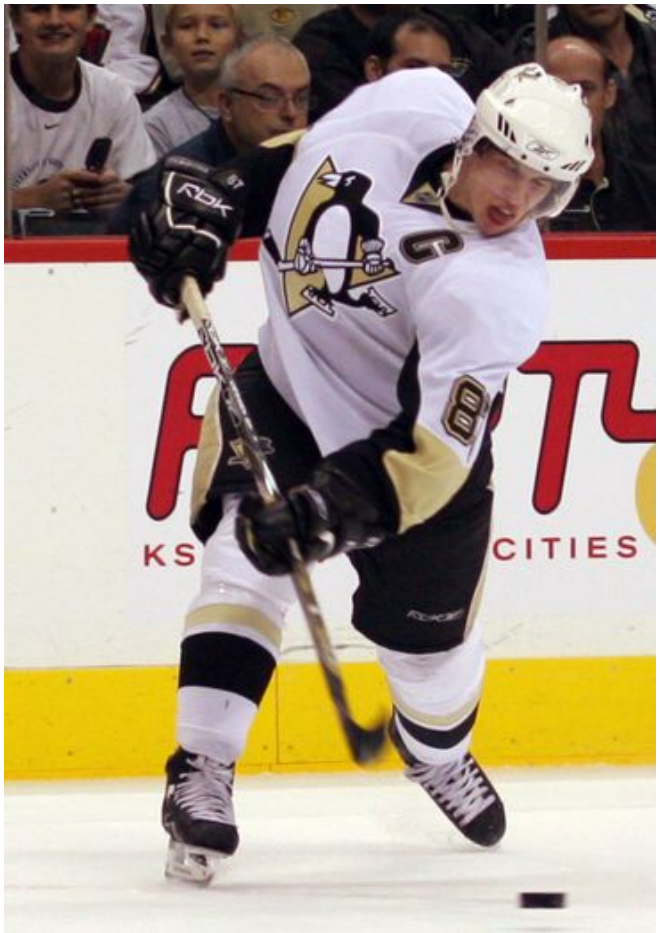

Sidney Crosby, originally diagnosed with a high-ankle sprain but will undergo an MRI Monday to find out for sure, could be on the shelf for as long as eight weeks. High-ankle sprains are the worst kind, keeping the likes of Martin Havlat (19 games last season), Marc-Andre Fleury (19 games and counting), Maxim Talbot (18 games) for extended periods of time. If he does indeed have a high-ankle sprain, reports of “out for four weeks” is a pipe dream. Crosby is tough and his legs are incredibly strong, so the best-case scenario is six weeks and it could be closer to eight. If the MRI finds a fracture, it may even be 10 weeks.

So what are the repercussions in the fantasy world?

First, let's look at Crosby himself. It looks as if he will miss 15 to 25 games, so assume 20. With a stronger second half, which is what I predicted, that means he misses out on 30 points.

In one-year rotisserie and head-to-head leagues, there are usually decent pivots on the waiver wire. In the DobberHockey expert league I was able to pick up Peter Mueller. He has nine points in his last six games and it looks as if he could pull off 15 to 18 points during Crosby's absence. That is probably the best you can hope for. Other suggestions include Sergei Fedorov (nine in his last seven, but his hip is bothering him and he missed Saturday's game), Boyd Gordon (seven points in eight games and has taken over Nylander's role on the second line in Washington) and Mike Fisher (19 points in 19 games for a team that desperately needs offensive forwards right now).

In keeper leagues, you are doing one of two things (if you are smart). You are either going for the money this season or you are going for last place and a better draft position in a rebuild. Finishing in the middle of the pack is a silly strategy (would somebody tell the Toronto Maple Leafs this please?).

If you are going for last place, then this is the best thing that could have happened to you. Crosby stops producing and you sink further to the bottom in the race to draft Steve Stamkos next summer. Perfect!

If you are going for the money, this is a devastating blow, obviously. All I can advise is – do not trade him. You have 15 years to enjoy what he can do for your team, he is the one player you should not trade under any circumstance. Ride it out.

If you don't own Crosby in your keeper league, but the owner at the top of the standings does, then now is the time to make a pitch for him. Go in early and go in hard – give him (or her) an offer that he can't refuse and do it quickly. Dazzle him or her with dollar signs and promises of glory! This opportunity may never come up again.

Now let's have a look at the 'trickle-down' fantasy-hockey effect. Colby Armstrong, who suffered a bruised hip in Montreal Saturday and may miss a game or two, becomes 'fantasy useless'. He clicked with Crosby, not Evgeni Malkin, so he becomes a fourth-liner again. The aforementioned Malkin does not lose value because his ice time and responsibility increase to make up for the loss of his talented linemate. He has been moved back to center and has never looked better.

Ryan Malone wasn't overly great fantasy-wise anyway, so this won't impact him in the slightest. Ditto for Petr Sykora. Crosby's absence may have a small downward pull on Sergei Gonchar's production. It will have a significant pull on Ryan Whitney's production, however. I had forecast a big second half for Whitney, but on a normal team he has 50-point upside. It was strictly Crosby's presence that gives Whitney an upside of over 70 points and his absence leaves the young rearguard with little to leech off of.

Last, but not least, Jordan Staal becomes the No.2 center. He will now see more ice time – and top power-play time – as evidenced by his 20-plus minutes on Saturday. His numbers will see a small 'pop'.

I think it's reasonable to expect that the Penguins will be a .500 hockey team going forward, which will be something like 9-9-2 over the next few weeks. Ty Conklin and Dany Sabourin will split those numbers now that Conklin's hot streak is over and Sabourin is coming off a strong shutout performance. Fleury will return to the lineup in about three weeks and will make things interesting – the team will have a three-man rotation until one goalie stumbles. Even Fleury could wind up back in Wilkes-Barre!

Finally, some repercussions off the ice. The Penguins play 11 games on the road between January 21 and March 5, including New Jersey twice. Of those 10 arenas, you have to figure that an average of 2000 to 4000 fans will stay home when normally they would go to the games. At an average of 50 bucks a pop, each game missed would cost the host team $150,000 in ticket revenue, plus concessions and parking. Let's not forget the nearby restaurants and bars either. Think about that – nearly two million dollars in money that impacts businesses relying on the sport. It trickles down further than that, too – what about the waitresses taking home less tip money? Cab drivers? The Hockey News may have been onto something when they named Crosby the No.1 person of power and influence in the sport of hockey.

One last thing to look at. In DobberHockey's Looking Ahead feature, we analyze the upcoming seven-day schedule and give you the best (and worst) teams to look at for players based on their schedule (i.e. if Team A plays four games against easy teams, and Team B plays just two games against the likes of Detroit and Vancouver, it would be wise to dress a player from Team A over Team B). For the purpose of this article, I have analyzed the next 45 days and will give you the best and worst 10 teams. This should help you choose your replacement for Crosby in your lineup (January 21 to March 5):

Best

1

Sabres

22.70

2

Islanders

21.86

3

Capitals

21.75

4

Penguins

21.68

5

Blues

21.60

6

Flyers

21.43

7

Devils

21.22

8

Panthers

20.58

9

Senators

20.29

10

Bruins

20.15

Worst

30

Oilers

16.23

29

Ducks

16.99

28

Flames

17.07

27

Blackhawks

17.26

26

Canucks

17.45

25

Kings

17.77

24

Avalanche

18.06

23

Blue Jackets

18.27

22

Thrashers

18.50

21

Red Wings

18.62

Discuss Sid the Kid here...