Carolina lost Justin Williams for the season and quickly replaced him with Sergei Samsonov. Later, they decided to trade Cory Stillman to Ottawa rather than let him walk away as an unrestricted free agent in the summer. Days later, captain Rod Brind'Amour's season came to a sudden close when he tore his ACL in a game against the Penguins.

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It is doubtful there are other Sergei Samsonovs out there on the waiver wire, so the door swings wide open for 22-year-old winger Andrew Ladd, who has kicked a doorstop under it to keep it open.

With the added ice time, the Maple Ridge, B.C. native has flourished with seven points in his past five contests. Since Stillman was traded on Feb. 11, Ladd has averaged more than 16 minutes of ice time per game. That's more than five minutes above his average prior to those three games and much of those extra minutes have come on the power play.

Next year, Ladd will be in his fourth NHL season – a traditional breakout year for many players. He is a prime candidate to take the next step. His upside is 65 points and don't be surprised if he gets there sooner rather than later. In the meantime, he makes for a solid pick up in roto leagues…

Jimmy Howard is looking like an excellent pickup for keeper leagues. The way he has subbed in (60 shots faced, three goals allowed in three appearances) for a slumping Chris Osgood is proof he is ready to stay full-time and if Dominik Hasek retires this summer, that's what it'll be.

With Osgood's spotty injury history and streaky play, Howard would be a good dark horse to sneak into 50-odd games next campaign. With a team like Detroit in front of him, you know his numbers will be solid. Incidentally, Howard allowed just one goal Sunday despite the fact the team in front of him allowed 31 shots. That's the sixth-most shots allowed by Detroit this season…

Injuries, from a fantasy league perspective: Marc-Andre Fleury is in the American League on a conditioning stint, having recovered from his high-ankle sprain. His numbers are very impressive in the AHL so far: 1-1-0, 1.01 GAA and .966 save percentage. He will be recalled by the end of the week and he and Ty Conklin will likely rotate the goaltending duties until one of them clearly becomes hotter than the other; Dany Sabourin will be the odd man out…Speaking of high-ankle sprains in Pittsburgh; Sidney Crosby is now taking contact in practice. The Pens are not saying anything about an early return and seem to be doing everything they can to dissuade the notion. This could be one of those situations where his return to the lineup catches everyone off guard, so by next weekend you may want to activate him just to be safe.

Dobber has two new rants - Mats Sundin and Pascal Leclaire - check them out right here in his Blog " Dobber's Take "