Not even one full game. That's how long Ottawa training camp standout Peter Regin stayed on the second line. It's a story replayed in every NHL city. You've got to love the patience of NHL coaches who need to win if they want to stay employed. They are never far away from being the General Managers scapegoat of convenience.

The Senators have seemingly started the season strong, recording a 6-3-2 record in eleven games. Taking a closer look at those six wins, the Sens beat Toronto 2-1, the Islanders 3-2, Atlanta 4-2, Tampa Bay 7-1, a struggling Montreal 3-1 and Florida 4-3. The only team that was playing well at the time Ottawa played them were the Thrashers. If you add up the records of all six teams the Sens have beaten, they have a combined record of 19-31-12 including last night's

games. Underwhelming to say the least.

Two of the outright losses came when they played quality opponents. They lost to the Rangers 5-2 and then 4-1 to the defending champion Pens. Ottawa is not as good as they may look at the moment. A couple of bad breaks and this house of cards could very likely come tumbling down.

The past week has been very telling for the Sens. Last Thursday against Nashville, the sporting Sens spotted the visiting Predators to a three goal head start. Ottawa battled back with the next three tallies and then the teams played last goal wins until the overtime period where the Sens ultimately lost 6-5. This was against a Nashville team that averages fewer than two goals a game and has been shutout three times already this year.

Two nights later against a Bruins team playing without Marc Savard and Milan Lucic, the Sens were up 3-1 deep in the third period and gave up two late markers in the last minute and a half. Patrice Bergeron scored in the shootout to lock down the extra point for Boston.

Last night without Jason Spezza in the line up, Ottawa looked lethargic in a 5-2 loss and were outworked by Tampa Bay, a team they had easily beaten earlier this season. Granted the Sens were playing the second night of a back-to-back and one of their top players was out of the line up, but those are only excuses.

The Sens GM, Bryan Murray has had trouble keeping the same head coach behind the bench in consecutive years (other than himself) since dismissing Jacques Martin after another disappointing playoff in 2004.

Martin was replaced by the 63-year-old Bryan Murray who coached 164 games between 2005 and 2007. He was followed by 53-year-old John Paddock, who was fired after only 64 games during the 2007-08 season.

Ottawa started 2008-09 by signing a new head coach to a three year deal in June of 2008. The 49-year-old Craig Hartsburg lasted a meagre 48 games before being let go.

The 39-year-old Cory Clouston took over for Hartsburg and was able to staunch the bleeding to finish out the year. Murray then signed the young head coach to a two year deal. Clouston's handling of Dany Heatley played a key role in the former two time 50 goal scorer's departure from the Senators.

Ottawa will be in the middle of a very average season when they travel to San Jose to play Dany Heatley's new team on the first day of December. The Sharks will feast on the Sens and win big with the former Senator having a big day. It won't help that Ottawa has been without the injured Pascal Leclaire since the middle of November.

In a desperate attempt to save his job, Bryan Murray trades Spezza and Leclaire to the Islanders for Martin Biron, Josh Bailey, Matt Moulson and what he hopes will be the first overall pick in the entry draft. Ottawa GM Murray justifies the trade by saying that the team needed to inject some youth into the aging lineup and that Coach Clouston had become frustrated with Spezza's lack of defensive awareness.

Isles GM, Garth Snow stated "By acquiring Jason Spezza, we are trying to right some of the wrongs of the previous regime. Everyone knows that Spezza should have been an Islander back in 2001." The Isles then sign the 27-year-old Leclaire to a 15 year, $25-million dollar contract, citing a friendly cap hit. "Between DiPietro and Leclaire, we have two number one goalies with a combined cap hit of just over $6 million per year" says Snow.

And come New Year's Eve, the Senators will lose to the rejuvenated Islanders, leaving Ottawa in sole possession of last place in the NHL. From that demoralizing point on, the media and fans will be rabid in Ottawa. The Sens wunderkind head coach is given his walking papers mid-January.

Following the trend of hiring consecutively younger head coaches, 29-year-old team mascot Spartacat will be named interim head coach while the team weighs its options. Surprisingly, the team responds well citing the polar opposite personality difference between Clouston's edgy style and Spartacat's playful nature.

Somewhere from a beach in Southern California, a tanned and relaxed Dany Heatley is ringing in the New Year in shorts and dreaming about the upcoming Olympic games and beyond to a lengthy playoff run. He who laughs last, laughs best.

It may be that Ottawa backed the wrong horse; quietly placate a proven 50 goal scorer or a back a 39-year-old rookie NHL coach? A 28-year-old, two-time 50 goal scorer is more difficult and costlier to replace than an NHL head coach. Should the Sens falter, the blame should fall squarely on the GM.

The Senators had better not go into a tailspin at any point this season because not only will Clouston be canned; Bryan Murray's tenure with the team should also mercifully come to a close.

A Stanley Cup finalist in 2007, Ottawa's talent level has steadily decreased under Murray's watch. This was the top team in the Eastern Conference in 2005-06 with 113 points. The following season, Ottawa finished with 105 points. The Sens barely qualified for the playoffs in 2007-08, tying for the last playoff spot in the East with 94 points and then last year's horrid first

half had Ottawa finishing with 83 points and eleventh place in the East.

The Senators are a now mere shadow of the team that was three wins away from winning the Stanley Cup in 2007.