Carolina is winless in their last 13 games (0-10-3) and have only seven points in 17 games (2-12-3) on the season, good for last place in the entire NHL. They look nothing like the team that eliminated the third seed New Jersey Devils and one seed Boston Bruins in last year's playoffs.

A big part of the poor start is the woeful power play. The Hurricanes own the second worst power play in the NHL, clicking a meagre 12.2 per cent of the time. Only the pathetic Predator power play is poorer (11.9 per cent). That will have to change if there is going to be a turn around in Carolina.

Complicating matters, injuries have reared their ugly head. Just when the team welcomes Erik Cole back into the fold, Eric Staal goes down with an injury. Then there is the serious cut to Cam Ward's leg, forcing the superstar netminder out of the line up until early December.

Five of the 12 worst plus/minus numbers belong to Hurricanes players. Last year, Rod Brind'Amour finished with the second worst plus/minus in the league with a minus-23. This season, he has picked up where he left off and has a league worst minus-13. Aaron Ward (minus-12), Joni Pitkanen (minus-10) and Joe Corvo and Sergei Samsonov (both minus-9) are all big minus players so far this season. Matt Cullen is close as well with a minus-8 rating.

Carolina is having trouble scoring goals and sit dead last in goals per game at 1.94. It's no surprise that Washington leads the league in goal scoring, averaging 3.78 per game.

Last year's leading scorer for Carolina, Ray Whitney is not having a banner season. He has nine points in 15 games and is on pace for 48 points, his lowest total since 2003-04. As long as Whitney can stay healthy, he will be fine.

Eric Staal has had an abysmal season to date and is on pace for only 30 points, but there is no way that he is going to finish anywhere near his rookie season's point total (31). Staal has averaged 81.75 points over the last four years. Have faith, he will turn it around.

Odds'N'Sods

Here are some random statistics relating to Eastern Conference players:

Antero Niittymaki and Mike Smith have both played exactly 462 minutes this season. Smith's record is 2-3-3 with a 3.64 goals-against-average and 0.880 save percentage. Niittymaki sports a 4-1-2 record and a sparkling 1.95 goals-against-average and league leading 0.940 save percentage. Niittymaki is certainly making the most of his opportunities and is not only outplaying his crease partner, but most of the NHL!

Ryan Miller is in the midst of a career year and sits second in save percentage (0.938) and first in goals-against-average (1.82). Only three times this season has he let in more than two goals in a game, two coming at the hands of the New York Islanders.

Tomas Kaberle not only leads all defensemen in scoring with 20 points, he also is tied for the league lead in power play points with a couple of AK's not named Alexei Kovalev (Anze Kopitar and Ales Kotalik).

New Jersey leads the NHL with a 2.12 goals-against-average. Toronto (3.69), Carolina (3.65) and Florida (3.60) sit at the bottom in goals against and not surprisingly, all three reside in the basement of NHL standings.

Leading the league in plus/minus is Matt Carle, along with surprising rookie Ryan O'Reilly; both are a balmy plus-14. Alex Goligoski is at plus-12 and Chris Pronger is on his way to having another fine season in this category with a plus-11.

New Jersey is 8-0-0 on the road so far this season and 9-1-0 in their last ten games overall. There are two teams in the NHL yet to lose in regulation at home, one is San Jose (6-0-1) and the other is Tampa Bay!? Hard to believe, but the Lightning are 4-0-3 at home. Carolina is the only team in the NHL yet to win a game on the road.

Washington is 7-1-2 in their last ten and much of that has been without the services of two-time reigning Hart trophy winner Ovechkin. The Caps are 3-3 without the big guy. The Pens have been without Malkin for six games and are 2-4, losing their last three straight.

Philadelphia has the leagues top power play, clicking at a 26.6 per cent rate. Surprisingly, Toronto's man advantage unit is tied for second with San Jose at 25 per cent.

The New York Rangers penalty kill is second only to Chicago (87.1 per cent) in the NHL at 86.6 per cent, while the Maple Leafs sit in the cellar with an awful 71.6 per cent kill ratio. Look no further to see why the teams are where they are in the standings.

Michael Del Zotto has one point in his last six games. Chris Higgins has two points in his last three games.

Marian Gaborik has been held off the score sheet only twice in 16 games this season. You heard that correctly, he's played 16 of 18 games so far this season. At his current pace, he'll play 80 games and score 110 points. At least that leaves team doctors free to deal with other players.

Chris Neil is only one penalty minute behind league leader Kevin Bieksa's 61.

Is there any better roto-stud out there than Zdeno Chara? First of all, he plays defence, add in nine points, a plus-6 rating, 36 penalty minutes, five power play points, 40 shots on goal and you have a bona fide fantasy stud.

Ottawa leads the league in short-handed goals with four. Daniel Alfredsson leads the league in short-handed points with three, while Milan Michalek, Mike Fisher and Chris Phillips all have two short-handed points.

Philadelphia and Ray Emery are playing Ottawa Thursday night. Look for Razor to have a good game as he left the team on bad terms, so while the Ottawa players may have moved on, Emery most certainly has something to prove. It will be interesting to see what will happen if Chris Neil crashes the net, Emery doesn't mind chucking knuckles. Let's hope the contest lives up to the billing.