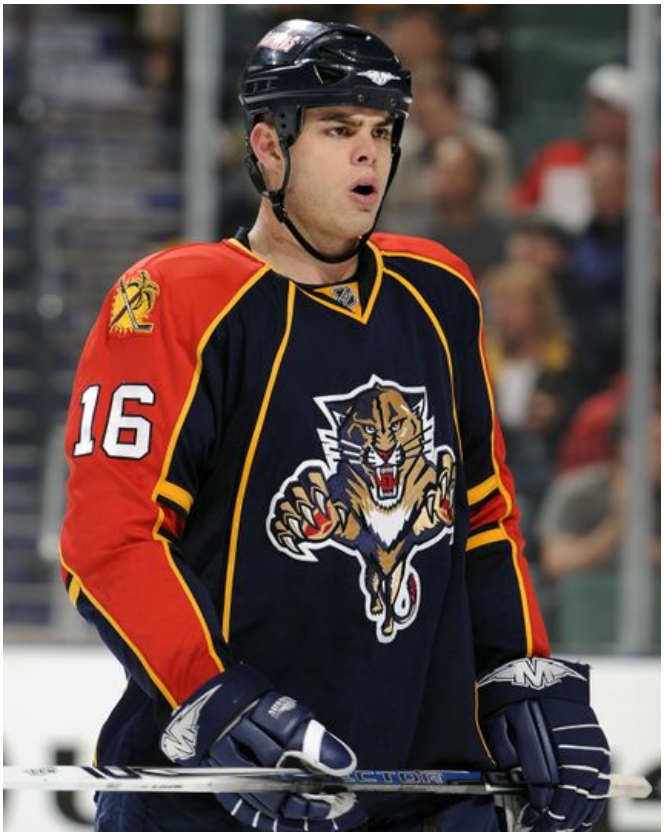

The Panthers have been incredible since the turn of the calendar year. Last night's loss against the Dallas Stars was their first regulation defeat in 2009, going 5-1-3 in January. Over that period, they have averaged exactly four goals a game, while allowing just over three against. David Booth has led the way with 16 points in his last 12 games. While Nathan Horton had 11 points in ten games and Stephen Weiss recorded 11 points in his last 13 games.

Including last night's games, Florida had ten players with 20 points or more, second only to Detroit's daring dozen. Conversely, Ottawa was tied with Dallas for the least number of 20 point scorers with only four. David Booth's 31 points was the lowest of any NHL team's leading

scorer.

The recent news that the Islanders goaltender for life Rick DiPietro is going to be out for the rest of the season has a silver lining for fish stick fans. They currently sit dead last in the NHL with 31 points, eight points behind the next worst team. Of course the real reason Isles fans should be happy is that their team is now the odds on favourite to draft John Tavares.

The Islanders have a decent number of young players playing right now; Kyle Okposo, Frans Nielsen, Josh Bailey and Jack Hillen, just to name a few. Combine that with other young players along with some solid prospects and the Isles have hope for the future.

Eastern Conference Musings:

Atlanta - Including Tuesday night's games, Todd White scored 16 points in the preceding month, the same number as Ovechkin and one more than some guy named Malkin. Rich Peverley is averaging over 19 minutes per game with Atlanta and has a goal and six assists in four games since the trade. He has ignited Kovalchuk who has four goals in his last three games, all assisted by Peverley.

Boston - Chuck Kobasew has six points in his last seven games. Big Z has seven points in the last six games. Boston is ten points ahead of second in the East and are missing Kessel, Sturm, Bergeron and Ference!

Montreal - Both Robert Lang and Andrei Kostitsyn have 11 points in nine games, but were shut down in their last two games. Andrei Markov and Mark Streit are the only defensemen to lead their respective teams in scoring (and they still have more points than Booth!).

New Jersey - Brendan Shanahan looked good in his debut with the Devils, recorded 13:59 in ice time, six shots on goal (some things never change) and potted his first goal of the season. Shanny logged 12:45, two shots on goal and no points in his second game. John Madden has seven points in his last five games.

Ottawa – Sure the Sens are 3-0-1 in their last four games, but they are 4-4-2 over their last ten. That's not nearly good enough. In my opinion, the Senators management are making a huge mistake by doing everything they can in order to squeak into the playoffs. Ottawa was 12 points back of the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference with five teams to overtake. All it would take is for one of those teams ahead of them to play at a better clip and they will ultimately fall short while finishing ninth or tenth in the Conference (sound familiar, Leaf fans?). The gap is just too much to overcome for a one line team with a rookie goaltender.

Even the lowly Tampa Bay Lightning were three points ahead of the Sens in the standings. If Ottawa were to start planning for next season, they would be a great candidate for a very quick turn around, much like what the Flyers did a couple seasons ago. As it stands now, I have a feeling that come April, there will be many disappointed fans in the Nation's capital.

Tampa Bay - Cory Murphy has played two games with his new team and has a goal and two

assists. He played 23:12 in his first game and 24:32 in the second while playing on the top power play unit. Vincent Lecavalier is as hot as the trade rumours to Montreal. He has 17 points in his last 13 games. Vaclav Prospal has 13 points in his last 12 games. Steve Stamkos had a point in four straight contests until being shut out last night. Pretty good considering nine forwards had more ice time in last night's game than Stamkos including Adam Hall. It looked like Stamkos was playing on a line with Jussi Jokinen and Steve Downie for most of the game.

Washington - After a very slow start with only two goals in his first 11 games, Alexander Ovechkin has 29 goals in the next 35 games. Mike Green has 13 points in his last 12 games. Alexander "What's so special about Crosby" Semin has a point in 26 of 30 games this season and enters the All-Star break on a six game point streak.