With the recent news that Alexei Kovalev is not accompanying the team on their short two game road trip, we are going to see what the Canadiens are made of. Kovalev is an All-World talent, but can sometimes disappear for long stretches. This will be a wake up call for him.

Kovalev was tied for second in team scoring with Robert Lang, behind defenseman Andrei Markov. That's the same Robert Lang who had 54 points last season, a full 30 points less than Kovalev had last year.

Maybe we should have seen Kovalev's poor season coming. Over the last five seasons, his points have been up and down more often than Steve Downie serving an NHL suspension. Starting with last year's 84 points and working back, Kovalev has scored 47, 65, 45 and 77 points in consecutive seasons. That's the kind of consistency that makes even Vaclav Prospal envious.

I have heard all sorts of rumours that Kovalev will be traded and that he has played his last game as a Canadien, but I personally just can't see that. Of course, luck will have him traded as you are reading this! It is more likely to spark the enigmatic talent. I'd go against the grain and look to buy low on Kovalev if possible.

Injuries to Alex Tanguay, Robert Lang and Guillaume Latendresse are testing Montreal's depth and certainly don't help the situation any. Heading into play last night, there was a four way logjam for fifth in the Eastern Conference with 66 points. The ninth place Hurricanes were five points back, so there isn't much room for a prolonged slump in Montreal.

Tuesday night I had the pleasure (as a happy Vokoun owner) of watching Florida destroy a previously smoking hot New Jersey Devils team 4-0. In their previous two games, the Devils beat the two top teams in the NHL, the San Jose Sharks and Boston Bruins. The Panthers simply out-worked the Devils. Rookie Michael Frolik has points in each of his last four games.

Florida has been sizzling of late, recording eight wins in their last 11 games. Tomas Vokoun has been outstanding in February, with five wins against only two losses. His 36 save shutout on Tuesday was his second goose egg of the month. Vokoun's goals-against-average and save percentage in the month of February are 1.70 and 0.951 respectively.

If you are looking for a reason why the New York Islanders own the worst record in the NHL, look no further than their play against their own division. The Isles are 2-13-2 against Atlantic division inhabitants, by far the worst of any NHL team versus their own division. All the division leaders in the NHL have the best record within their respective divisions.

Steven Stamkos had his first career hat trick Tuesday night. He's starting to come around under Rick Tocchet with points in nine of his last 14 games.

Sens sophomore Nick Foligno has five points in his last seven games. This is another case of a new coach being familiar with a young player speeds his development.

Tops over the last 30 days:

Top Point Scoring Forwards:

17 – Parise, Ovechkin
16 – Langenbrunner, J.Blake, Datsyuk
15 – Hemsky, Connolly, D.Moore, Hossa

Top Goal Scoring Forwards:

12 – Ovechkin
11 – Hossa
10 – Langenbrunner, Kovalchuk, Cammalleri
9 – Kesler
8 – Stafford, J.Blake, Parise, Hemsky, Marleau

Top Assists by Forwards:

13 – D.Moore
11 – Zajac, Stillman, Backstrom, Weiss

10 – J.Thornton, Pominville, Crosby

Top Point Scoring Defensemen:

17 – M.Green
14 – Gilbert
12 – Rafalski
11 – Kronwall, Edler, Niedermayer
10 – Colaiacovo, Bieksa, Niskanen, Wideman, Lidstrom

Top Plus/Minus (Forwards & Defence Combined)

12 – J.Schultz, C.White, M.Green, K.Timonen
10 – Ballard, Fleischmann, Zajac
9 – Ma.Walker, Datsyuk
8 – Hejda, Zednik, Fisher

Top Penalty Minutes (Forwards & Defence Combined)

51 – R.Cote
50 – Orr
47 – Carcillo
40 – Dorsett
35 – Asham
34 – Jovanovski
33 – J.Ruutu, Crombeen
32 – Voros
28 – Phaneuf, Salei (all minors!)