It is the last Saturday of the year and I would like to thank those people who followed my picks. It was a tough year for everyone who was “man” enough to put their picks down on paper so to speak. Post-lockout hockey truly is the toughest sport to pick a winner or wager your hard earned money on.

For this week, things change a little bit. If the game has any meaning at all, you have to try a figure out what teams are thinking and where they would like to be seeded. Playoff teams are going to be entering into potential seven-game wars with other teams and they want to be sure that they match up well with their prospective opponent if they can. Good luck, and thanks again.

Anaheim at Los Angeles 4:00 PM EST

Anaheim plays Dallas in the first round and has home ice advantage no matter what happens in their final two games. As evidenced by Niedermayer and Selanne, the Ducks have no problem resting players so that they are primed and ready for a long playoff run. Also resting for extended periods of time recently (some by choice, others injured) are, Getzlaf, Pronger, Perry, Pahlsson, Carter and Weight. This is also the Ducks first game in 6 days. Los Angeles is tied with Tampa Bay for last place in the league. The Kings however have won 2 of their last 3 at home and are 5-4-2 in their last 11 games overall.
Los Angeles – H

Columbus at St. Louis 5:00 PM EST
Columbus has no chance at getting the 1st overall pick in the lottery as they can finish no worse the 6th worst overall. This will be a back-to-back, home and home series to finish the season for both teams. The season series is split 3-3 right now with all the victories coming by the home side. St. Louis has dominated Columbus at home, outscoring them 14-4 in those 3 previous games. No matter what happens in the Blues final 2 games, they have a shot at the 1st overall pick by finishing either 3rd or 4th last in the league.
St. Louis – H

Buffalo at Boston
The Sabres put forth a great effort in their final push at earning a playoff spot. This team is young, has tons of pride and will put up a good fight in this game. The thing is though, Boston controls where they finish in the East and although they can't predict their opponent, they know they don't want to lose this game. A loss tonight would mean they would have a first round matchup with either Pittsburgh (no thanks) or a Montreal team they are 0-8 against this year. A win by the Bruins and they would face the Hurricanes, Rangers, Devils, or Capitals. All of those are better matchups….except the Capitals who whopped them 10-2 on National TV. Boston will play the odds and win this game to stay away from Pittsburgh or Montreal.
Boston – H

Toronto at Montreal
Word out of Toronto is that everyone is wearing a full cage tonight.
A win by the Canadians will temporarily put them atop the Eastern Conference and forces Pittsburgh to win a big game on Sunday against Philly.
Montreal – H

Florida at Washington
We all know what this game means, and I suspect if you have the NHL Center Ice package, you will be watching this game. If Washington gets a point in this game they make history by becoming the 1st team to ever make the playoffs (let alone win their Division) after being 14th or 15th in their Conference after 41 games.
Washington – H+

Tampa Bay at Atlanta
After winning the 1st two games in the season series, Tampa Bay is 0-3-2 in its last five games against the Thrashers, and has only one win in its last six visits to Atlanta. With no Lecavalier, the ice-cold Marty St. Louis will try to lead the Lighting to victory. For Atlanta, Kovalchuk will attempt to set a personal high for goals in a season. His next goal will give him 53 and a new milestone to break in 2008-09.
Atlanta – H+

Calgary at Vancouver
This is a tough game to call, and I am not sure what angle to go at. I honestly have no clue what is going to happen. Vancouver in winning the season series 5 games to 2 and has made it look easy at times. The Canucks will want to have a good showing for their home fans and at least leave them on a good note to spew this summer about an unacceptable year. Calgary on the other hand, looks up in the standings and sees a victory puts them in 7th (temporarily) and sets up a first round matchup with San Jose.
Vancouver – H+

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