We are nearing the Christmas break for the NHL season. We have had plenty of surprises as well as plenty of disappointment, hopefully you have been reading many of the articles that are on the website to help you keep up to date on the latest news that's happening on the fantasy front.

Maasquito Buzzings…

- Mikko Koivu is now the Western Conference leader in faceoff wins with 321. Shawn Horcoff is second with 310 and is followed closely by Sammy Pahlsson at 307.
- Mikko Koivu has the most power-play faceoffs won in the Western Conference with 81.
- B.J. Crombeen led the Western Conference with six points this past week.
- Crombeen, Dustin Brown, and Ed Jovanovski were all ranked ninth, twelfth and eighteenth respectively in Yahoo rankings this week. It just shows how the Eastern Conference is the more offensive conference as the season rolls along.
- Crombeen (4%) and Jovanovski (68%) and Alex Steen (3%) are all having decent weeks and could be very productive in fantasy hockey pools moving forward.

- Dustin Brown maintains the lead in the Western Conference with 99 hits.
- Kyle Wellwood's shooting percentage dropped slightly to 35.3%. I'm still waiting for the huge drop to transpire. Tomas Holstrom is firing at 25.8%, while Alex Frolov is hitting a quarter of his shots on goal.
- For the first time this year, Teemu Selanne didn't register a power-play goal this week, he still maintains the NHL lead with 13 power-play goals. Brown picked up two power-play tallies last week, and seems to be ready to break out of his early season slump.
- Dustin Brown is firing a ton of bombs on opposing goalies as he maintained his Western Conference lead with 135 shots on goal, he's still 35 shots on goal behind league-leader Alex Ovechkin though. Marian Hossa is fifth overall with 126 and Corey Perry is tied with Henrik Zetterberg for eighth with 109.
- Zetterberg , Brown and Johan Franzen fired 15 shots on goal this past week as Western Conference leaders, followed by Anze Kopitar, Brad Boyes, Ryan Getzlaf and Perry at 14.
- Shane O'Brien had a huge PIMs week, as he picked up 32 last week. He now has 110 on the season and is on pace for 291 this season. He's well worth a pick up if you don't really have a solid number four defensemen on your fantasy squad just for the PIMs. He's only 24% owned in Yahoo leagues.
- Minnesota isn't as airtight on the PK as they were earlier in the season, they stayed steady at 88.7% on the PK for the season.
- San Jose maintained their even strength play by leading the Western Conference with a ratio in five-on-five situations of 1.36. Minnesota is the worst in the Western Conference with a rating of 0.78, which explains why they are on a five game losing streak.
- Detroit leads the Western Conference with an average of 10.8 minutes in penalties per contest. So don't look for any big PIM producers on a very disciplined Detroit line-up. Anaheim is averaging the league high of 19.8 and Vancouver is second last while averaging 19.7. Both teams are near or under the 80% mark on the PK, so would think that doesn't bode well for the coaching staff.
- An interesting stat that I never paid attention to, San Jose is 8-0-0 when being outshot by their opponents, St. Louis is last at 5-11-2. San Jose is 16-3-2 when out shooting their opponents, while Anaheim is last at 5-7-1 when out shooting their opponents, but is 12-4-0 when being outshot by their opponents…

Around the Wild West

Columbus has lost five consecutive road games and they play their next eight out of 11 games on the road. You might want to bench your Blue Jackets if you own them. With the solid play of

Steve Mason, he looks like he has stolen the number one gig away from Pascal Leclaire. It also means that Fredrik Norrena will probably be sent to the minors if not dealt to another team. The Blue Jackets are still struggling to find scoring from the D, they have only tallied 55 points as a whole unit in 30 games. If you are looking for a bright spot, R.J. Umberger, who is only 8% owned in fantasy leagues might be worth picking up. A few ago I mentioned the advantages of owning a shooting center, Umberger has 92 shots in 30 contests, and it's just a matter of time before Rick Nash, and Kristian Huselius begin to start scoring. Derick Brassard also has five points in his past seven games, he's slowed down a bit since the start of the season, but he still averages 14:43 in total ice-time for the Jackets and should have a very productive rookie season.

Chicago has been brilliant this season at home, where they are 10-1-4 this season. On the road, however is a totally different story, as they are just 5-5-3. The Hawks have split Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane apart, as Toews lined up with Dustin Byfuglien and Troy Bouwer, while Kane winged for Patrick Sharp and Kris Versteeg. Martin Havlat joins Dave Bolland and a red-hot Andrew Ladd on the third line. The Hawks have a very balanced offense which shows in their third ranked 3.46 goals per game average. Nikolai Khabibulin returned to action so it looks like Cristobal Huet and Habby will be splitting time once again.

The big news out of Detroit is the return of veteran defensemen Chris Chelios. Chelios, who turns 47 next month, is competing with a variety of younger defensemen for the fifth and sixth defensive spots on the Detroit blue-line. He won't garner enough fantasy value to be owned in fantasy pools, but his veteran presence might have a calming influence in the dressing room and help in non-fantasy related ways. Osgood, continues to be a double-edged sword. His 12-1-4 record isn't anything to complain about, but his 3.20 gaa and .875 sv % probably hurts more fantasy teams than it does helps. If you own Osgood, it would be wise to pair him up with a Mike Smith, Tim Thomas or even Dwayne Roloson just to even out the stats. Tomas Holmstrom also returned to the Detroit lineup. He has four points in five contests and should be owned in more than 55% of Yahoo leagues. He rejoined Pavel Datsyuk, and Henrik Zetterberg on the top-lines for the Wings. Pick him up ASAP!

Nashville likes to play ahead of the competition, as they are unbeaten this season when they have a lead after 20 minutes. They are also second to only Detroit in faceoff percentage. What that translates to is that, when you win faceoffs you win puck possession, when you have puck possession it usually means more opportunities to score. That just provides another reason so go after Jason Arnott, especially if you are in a league that counts faceoff wins. Joel Ward might have hit the jackpot, as he earns a top-line spot alongside Arnott and J.P. Dumont, who as a pair have accounted for 51points so far this season. Ellis hasn't been great this season as his 9-11-3 record demonstrates, but he did pick up his second shut out of the season against the Stars. He's only allowed three goals in the past three games, which shows that he's rounding back into form. If he keeps it up, its only a matter of time before the wins start to arrive.

B.J. Crombeen continues to be red-hot for the Blues. The third-line grinder continues to pile on the points, when many expected him to go ice-cold. He has seven points in seven games and seems to have enjoyed plenty of success playing alongside Alex Steen, and Jay McClement. David Backes has six points in seven December games. Brad Winchester is lining up alongside Patrick Berglund and David Perron, he finally started producing on Saturday against San Jose after being recalled from the minors 10 games ago. Paul Kariya and T.J. Oshie are recovering well from their respective injuries and should be returning later on this month. Manny Legace is out because of a concussion, look for Chris Mason to get the bulk of the starts till he returns.

The Flames have been great on the penalty kill so far this season as they are operating at 85.2% and is tied for fourth in that department in the NHL. The power-play is on the opposite end of the scale as they only have one goal in the past four contests. Miikka Kiprusoff has been solid in December, as he has a 2.11 gaa and a .920 save percentage this month. If you are looking for goalie help, you might want to use Kipper's slow start to your advantage and see if you can buy-low on him. Craig Conroy has rejoined Jarome Iginla and Mike Cammalleri on the Flame's top-line. Curtis Glencross joins Matthew Lombardi and Rene Bourque on the third line, while Todd Bertuzzi, Daymond Langkow and David Moss compete on the second line for the Flames. Bourque has 16 points in 30 games so far this season, and could be in for a very quiet 50 points this season. Brandon Prust will be out until January so they'll most likely depend on Andre Roy to pick up the slack in the fighting department.

In Colorado, the big line of Ryan Smyth, Paul Stastny and Milan Hejduk have been playing well in the last few weeks. Smyth has six points in the past six games, while Stastny and Hejduk both have eight points in the same amount of games. All three have been off to slow starts this season, so you might be able to take advantage of that and see if you can acquire them right now. Wojtek Wolski has also begun to pick up the scoring slack too, he scored his seventh goal of the season last night against Detroit. He's scored five of those goals in the past eight contests. A few weeks ago, he was shooting at only 6%, and as projected he's rose up near his career 12.5% average now. He should breach 20 goals and maybe 25 if he can maintain his second-line roster spot with Tyler Arnasson and T.J. Hensick. He's only 39% owned in Yahoo leagues, and might be worth a pickup if you are looking for help on the left wing.

Eric Cole has been a big disappointment for the Oilers this season, he only has three goals in 27 games this season. The Oilers seem to be happy with the trio of Mathieu Garon, Jeff Drouin Deslauriers and Dwayne Roloson between the pipes. With the shutout against the Canucks on Saturday it looks like Roloson has picked up the number one gig in Edmonton. Dustin Penner has eight points in seven games and seems to have developed some chemistry with Ales Hemsky and Shawn Horcoff. Horcoff has 12 points in the past eight games and is very hot. He is only owned in 41% of Yahoo leagues, so if you are in need of help up the middle, Horcoff maybe the way to go.

Marian Gaborik looks like he'll be ready to return from his groin injury. Some reports have stated that he should return to the Wild lineup on Wednesday. Marek Zidlicky has 28 PIMs in 25 contests, he also has 14 points, 11 of which have come on the power-play. Zidlicky is one of the main reasons why I'm sitting on top of the Dobber Expert Fantasy hockey league. He's only 58% owned, and should be way higher than that considering his stats. His acquisition this off-season, has greatly affected the fantasy value of Brent Burns. Mikko Koivu has cooled down quite a bit as he has only picked up one assist in four contests this past week. Owen Nolan missed four contests with a leg injury and won't accompany the Wild on their three game roadtrip. Backstrom was 0-3-0 this week despite having a 2.33 gaa and .933 save percentage.

Big news coming out of Vancouver is that superstar goalie Roberto Luongo suffered a season-threatening setback in his rehab stint. His status has been downgraded from day-to-day to week-to-week. If you own Luongo, you might want to adjust your roster accordingly. If Curtis Sanford or Corey Schneider is still available in your league, you might want to pick them up. As the Mats Sundin sweepstakes draw closer and closer, it looks like the Canucks are the front runners for Sundin's services. They have the most lucrative financial deal, but may not have the talent to get them very deep into the playoffs. Unless Sundin is willing to take a huge paycut to play for a contender it looks like he's going to end up in Vancouver. The Canucks power-play has been on fire as of late registering at least one power-play goal in six of the past seven games and have gone eight for 27 in that span. Kevin Bieksa has 17 points in 18 games and is the top defensemen in Vancouver.

Corey Perry finally snapped a eight-game goal-less drought by potting one against Minnesota. Jean Sebastian Giguere has been red-hot in the past five games, with a 1.93 gaa and a .942 save percentage. Bobby Ryan has been demoted down to the fourth line for the Ducks. His talents are wasted playing alongside Ryan Carter and George Parros. I still don't see why they don't stick him on the second line with Brendan Morrison and Teemu Selanne.

Ding Dong the witch is dead... Sean Avery is not going to return to the Stars this season. He'll still get paid but won't be an active member of the team. It'll be interesting to see what happens to his career going forward. With the numerous injuries to the Stars blue-line, Trevor Daley seems to be the main beneficiary in terms of ice-time. He picked up 23:33 in Saturday night's contest. Stephane Robidas will be out at least another week with a broken jaw injury. Sergei Zubov has still not begun skating. Jere Lehtinen still has begun skating with his teammates, but still looks weeks away. Chris Conner joins Brad Richards and Loui Eriksson on the top-line for the Stars, keep an eye on him to see if his fantasy value increases.

Sometimes splitting two talented players results in positive changes for a team. That's exactly what happened in LA, when Dustin Brown and Anze Kopitar were separated from each other. Kopitar joined Patrick O'Sullivan and Teddy Purcell on the top-line, while Brown joined Jarett Stoll and Kyle Calder on the second unit for the Kings. Erik Ersberg injured himself in the second period of Monday night's game and if it results in a long-term injury look for Jason LaBarbera to cement himself as the number one in LA. For the past few weeks I've been touting Kyle Quincey, he hasn't proven me wrong yet as he has seven points in his past 10 games. He also has 27 shots on goal, eight PIMs, and is a plus four in that span. He's still only 50% owned in Yahoo leagues.

In Phoenix, the high expectations entering this season have not been met. They have struggled immensely to begin this season, but their play recently has improved quite a bit since the beginning of the season. Martin Hanzal has seven points in seven games playing alongside Mikkel Boedker and Viktor Tikhonov and is beginning to show signs in the positive direction in his development. Peter Mueller has six points in eight games, all of which are assists. He'll come around sooner or later, he'd be a target I'd attempt to buy-low on right now. Ed Jovanovski is finally picking it back up again. He has nine points in the past eight contests, after starting the season with four points in his first 20 games. 68% ownage seems awfully low for a 50 point defenseman last year.

Last but not least, we have the Sharks. The injuries are starting to rack up on offense for the Sharks, as they were without Jeremy Roenick, Joe Pavelski and Jonathan Cheechoo this week. Dan Boyle has been ridiculous this season while registering 26 points in 29 contests this season. He's also on pace to pot nearly 30 goals this season as well. Devin Setoguchi is continuing his hot-start as he now has 32 points in 30 contests, and five in his last six. Milan Michalek was shifted to center to compensate for all the injuries down the middle for the Sharks. Evgeni Nabokov continues to rack up the wins, but his goals against average and save percentage aren't anything to be proud of. He falls under the same category as Chris Osgood above, you might want to pair him up with a Thomas, Roloson, or Smith as you can.

See you next week, as the Maaaasquito buzzes along. By the way, after solid production this month, I have climbed atop the Dobber Expert League Fantasy Pool. I was second-last six weeks ago and now am six points clear at the top of the standings. All of this occurred after I basically gave Lanky Ovechkin for free (because of Brenden Morrow's injury the day after the trade).