

In [this week's Q&A](#) , I took a different tact and approached the way events like Sam Gagner's eight-point night speak to a larger problem with all of us... fans, media and poolies... when it comes to making too much out of anything and everything. So I guess I got my essay on Gagner after all. :) There's also a "save Hemskey" rant imbedded in there. Couldn't help myself.

It's actually kind of funny timing that outspoken player agent Allan Walsh (@walsha) just tweeted these thoughts, which - although on a slightly different topic - speak perfectly to the overall point of the Gagner article and how people just tend to hyperventilate over everything.

He tweeted: "Always find it interesting when NHL rumor guys place so much misplaced importance on where pro scouts attend games leading up to deadline./ Every NHL team has at least 2 pro scouts, they have to go somewhere and it's their job to cover as many teams as possible./ Every team pulls isolated video of a player they have an interest in, breathless reporting of a scout in the building means nothing./ Lots of love for scouts, no love for rumor guys that make up stuff.

Taylor Hall was on After Hours and his scar looks WAY better now. No discolouration in the eye either.

All I have to say is that be glad Sam Gagner's eight-point night didn't come on my Ramblings evening... there would have been a 1200-word essay to peruse that didn't include any other teams. But seriously, can you believe this? A three-point first period against the Wings and then a shootout goal, which paved the way for Ryan Nugent-Hopkins to win the game in his return to the lineup after recovering from his shoulder injury. And all of that underscored by another clutch effort from Jordan Eberle, who delivered his second goal of the game in the last minute of the third to tie it up.

HNIC noted at the start of the third period that Wings GM Ken Holland and Oilers President Kevin Lowe had been holed up together for the whole game to that point, leading to the inevitable Ales Hemsky trade rumour banter. Hemsky was ROCKED by a terrific Niklas Kronwall hit. Ouch. Hemsky's a gamer though. Say what you will about his injury track record, but the guy competes hard. I still wouldn't deal him, personally. Not at this point.

Todd Bertuzzi's second goal of the game? Beauty. He scored a sharp one in the shootout too. He netted his 300th and 301st career markers here and he continues to skate with Pavel Datsyuk and Johan Franzen.

Despite rumours to the contrary, Hawks GM Stan Bowman [has no plans](#) to look for goaltending help in Chicago. He says better team D will help the cause and Corey Crawford himself is baffled in terms of why his results have been so up and down this season.

"It's been a weird, weird year," Crawford said. "I've played some really good hockey and some not-so-good hockey. I'm just trying to figure out a way to be consistent and be solid night in and night out for the guys in front of me. To be a top team in the league, what a team needs is a goalie who is going to go in there every game and give them confidence and give them saves at the right time."

Joffrey Lupul collected another two points tonight and that gives him 54 already, which means a new career high. It's been pretty obvious he was going to break that sophomore mark for awhile now with the way he and Phil Kessel have been ripping it up, but the fact that it's official now is a true feather in his cap. He's endured a lot of bad injury breaks in his career and he's done his best to remain mentally strong and has eventually overcome it. There's a lesson in there for all of us.

There were a number of solid offensive notes from that game, but he deserves the stand-alone mention tonight. How about James Reimer in net though, posting his second straight shutout? A career high 49-save performance in a 5-0 spanking of the Sens.

February 05, 2012

Written by Chris Nichols

Sunday, 05 February 2012 00:09 - Last Updated Sunday, 05 February 2012 16:13

Daniel Alfredsson, after the team's sixth straight loss: "There's urgency, no question - but panic is not the right word. We have to find a way and dig deep here."

Logan Couture extended his point streak to six games (nine points) after scoring in SJ's loss to Phoenix. Linemate Ryane Clowe had three helpers and has points in both games since returning to action.

Several Coyotes had good nights, but it's worth nothing that Shane Doan has seven points in seven games. He only has 32 points in 52 games overall. He's been skating with Boyd Gordon and Lauri Korpikoski of late. Radim Vrbata and Ray Whitney had a couple of points each, but their totals have been steadier this season than Doan, who's generally more of a mainstay for standard league owners than he has been to date in '11-12.

Marek Zidlicky received his first start since January 19th. He's been a healthy scratch and you no doubt heard about his complaining interview last week. He was on PP1 and when I saw he was generally out there with the top six forwards skating too. Kyle Brodziak is on a career-high six-game point streak and has nine in his past nine now. Erik Christensen made his debut for the Wild between Darroll Powe and Carson McMillan and while Christensen's fantasy value is still really low, at least he's not a healthy scratch with the Rangers anymore.

Alex Goligoski has 10 points in his past 12 games, so his production has definitely been moving in the right direction after a pretty slow start. He's on PP1. Kari Lehtonen has only surrendered

an average of one goal in his last three starts too.

Martin Erat (1G, 2A), Sergei Kostitsyn (1G, 1A) and Mike Fisher (1G) have been sizzling for awhile now and they delivered another win for the Preds this evening. Patric Hornqvist has six points in six games and he remains the definition of an all or nothing fantasy performer. When you put him in the lineup you just hope it's not the start of his next month-long dry spell. If you time it right though, he can deliver some pretty stellar results.

Tampa Bay has won six of its past seven with points in all seven games. Martin St. Louis, who struck for his fifth career hat trick in his 900th regular season game, offered this on his team's rising place in the Eastern Conference playoff race: "We're just winning games and we'll see where it takes us." Vincent Lecavalier had a four-pointer, leaving him with 19 points in his past 14 affairs. Steven Stamkos chipped in 1G, 1A.

Mikael Samuelsson added another goal in that one and he's been gaining steam offensively. He's playing with Marcel Goc and Sean Bergenheim.

Justin Williams, who is winging it with Anze Kopitar and Dustin Brown these days, has points in 10 of 11 now after contributing an assist in his team's 2-1 loss to the Canes.

February 05, 2012

Written by Chris Nichols

Sunday, 05 February 2012 00:09 - Last Updated Sunday, 05 February 2012 16:13

Jeff Skinner, who had Jussi Jokinen and Drayson Bowman on his line this evening, has points in five of seven. He's still looking for his first multi-pointer since November 20th, but he's slowly building up to a hot streak since returning from his concussion.

Ryan Miller has endured a largely forgettable season, but his shootout win over the Isles earned him his 235th career victory and that's good enough for first in Sabres' franchise history past some guy named Dominik Hasek.

Frans Nielsen ended a six-game pointless spell in that outing with a three-point effort, while Mark Streit has 11 points in his past 15 starts.

Did you see Kevin Bieksa's diving save to prevent the Avs from scoring an empty netter in the matinee? Bieksa then fed off that to strike for the GTG himself, which was followed by a shootout winner from Mason Raymond.

I did a double-take when I saw Peter Mueller on the scratched list for the game because we know his concussion history, but this was apparently just the legit flu sickness today and nothing else to worry about.

Speaking of time off, Alex Ovechkin returned from suspension in the 3-0 win over the Habs. He mustered one shot, though, with no points. More impressive was that Alexander Semin scored on a penalty shot in that one (pretty sweet slap shot goal, which is one of the rarer moves), which gives him 19 points in his past 20 games. He only has 30 on the season, but that's a nice turnaround after an awful start. Tomas Vokoun earned his third shutout of the year and 47th of his career.

Ilya Kovalchuk and Kurtis Foster each had three points in a 6-4 win over the Flyers that saw Philly storm back to score four goals in the third period, but it was too little too late.

Kovalchuk and Brayden Schenn fought in this one (Kovalchuk tossed him around like a rag doll for part of it and then connected with a zinger to Schenn's face) and regardless of the circumstances leading to it (Rinaldo's idiocy on Parise, to which Kovalchuk responded and then Schenn and Kovalchuk eventually separated from the huge fracas and went at it), it's another case of wondering why a player so fresh off a concussion is dropping his gloves for any reason. I mentioned it after the Horton fight not that long ago... what's the point? Usually it's the typical athletic machismo mentality. Bravo.

I think a Ramblings or two ago I mentioned how weird it was that Wayne Simmonds' penalties had disappeared from his nightly box score contributions. Today he finally picked up two minute in the sin bin, which was only his second minor in 15 games. For a guy who now has 57 PIM in 51 GP, that's a pretty impressive run that Peter Laviolette probably loves. Poolies appreciate the extra trips to the box, but that's another argument for another day as to how counter-productive it is to count PIM as a positive in fantasy.

Oh... and yawn... Evgeni Malkin scored again. He, James Neal and Chris Kunitz had points and Cal'Reilly played his first game with the Pens since being claimed on waivers. He had Steve Sullivan and Tyler Kennedy on his line.

Brad Marchand was smacked hard into the boards this afternoon by the karma train with its conductor, Brooks Orpik. Marchand was woozy afterward and we'll see if he can go Sunday or not. If you listened quietly right after it happened, there was a small roar of applause emanating from the Western coastline of Canada.

Should you be so inclined, you can [follow me on Twitter](#) .

Read [Live NHL Recaps](#) nightly with fresh line combos, PP times and plenty of player notes from each game, every evening.