It was confirmed by Boston Bruins goaltender Tim Thomas that he will be taking next season off to spend more time with his family. This would be the opposite of what *the Onion* reported New York Giants Super Bowl winning coach Tom Coughlin did in 2009, by retiring from his family to spend more time with football.

General Manager Peter Chiarelli had already stated that he was approaching next year as if Thomas wouldn't be playing. Keep in mind that just a year ago that Thomas led the Bruins to a Stanley Cup while capturing the Conn Smythe and Vezina trophies.

For most teams, losing a world-class goalie of Thomas' calibre would be devastating. Although the Bruins are no doubt disappointed that he has decided not to play, they have the luxury of turning to young netminder Tuukka Rask to fill the void. The Bruins goaltending situation is not unlike that of the Vancouver Canucks tandem of Roberto Luongo and Cory Schneider. Rask could probably start for two thirds of the teams in the NHL with his talent, but instead he has played second fiddle to Thomas in Boston much of the time.

Rask has played 102 NHL games and has posted 11 career shutouts. That equates to almost a shutout per every ten games played. Not too shabby for a backup. In fact, in 2009-10 while Thomas was recovering from an injury, Rask played in 45 games and all 13 of the Bruins playoff contests. That just shows you what kind of confidence Boston has in him.

So what can Bruins fans expect from Rask next season? Well if 2011-12 is any indication then they are in good shape.

Rask actually ranked first overall in save percentage when facing shots from 1-15 feet, the highest degree of difficulty.

Rank	Name	Team	GP	Shots	Goals	Save%
1	RASK,TUUKKA	BOS	23			

1	SCHNEIDER,CORY	VAN	31
2	LUNDQVIST,HENRIK	NYR	62
3	HILLER,JONAS	ANA	72
4	REIMER,JAMES	TOR	33
5	ELLIOTT,BRIAN	STL	37
6	HALAK,JAROSLAV	STL	43

When you rank ahead of Henrik Lundqvist and that St. Louis Blues pairing, you know you are having a strong season. The one troubling thing about Rask though is that his save percentage actually got worse when measured on shots from 15-30 feet. He went from .881 to .861 which was only good enough for 28th overall. One would think as the degree of difficulty of shots gets

easier, a goalie's save percentage should get better.

He did bounce back however on shots from 30-4 feet. In that category Rask posted a .958 save percentage which put him back in the top ten.

Rank	Name	Team	GP	Shots	Goals	Save%
1	ELLIOTT,BRIAN	STL	38			
2	HARDING,JOSH	MIN	34			
3	BRYZGALOV,ILJA	PHI	59			
4	BACKSTROM,NIKLAS	MIN	45			
4	EMERY,RAY	CHI	32			

5	KIPRUSOFF,MIIKKA	CGY	69
5	SCHNEIDER,CORY	VAN	32
6	RINNE,PEKKA	NSH	73
7	SMITH,MIKE	PHX	67
8	HALAK,JAROSLAV	STL	46
9	RASK,TUUKKA	BOS	23
9	KHABIBULIN,NIKOLAI	EDM	40
10	LUONGO,ROBERTO	VAN	55

Rask also proved he could play with some consistency in 2011-12. In 23 games he posted 11 victories and three shutouts. What's unique about this is those 11 victories came over a 13 game stretch. That run included seven wins in a row and his three shutouts came in a four game span.

One thing Rask will have to prove next season if he is thrust into the starters role is that he can play against tough competition. Only three of his wins in 2011-12 came against playoff teams. Now that is mainly due to the fact as a backup he was normally on the bench as Thomas faced the more elite teams. It's not that Rask can't get the job done; he just has to prove it.

Fortunately for Rask, as well as poolies that own him, the Finnish goaltender is in the perfect position to succeed. With a team in front of him that should be able to contend for many years, Rask has a chance to have an exceptional season in 2012-13. That's the great thing about goalies that play for strong for teams; you don't necessarily have to be spectacular to put up big numbers. If you do have an abundance of talent like Rask does though, the sky is the limit.