

Offsider

The hockey Panthers spent the past weekend in Nova Scotia and lost two games. Saturday's game against the St. Mary's Huskies was a 6-1 Panther loss. Sunday, the Panthers played the Acadia Axemen and lost 3-1 to the talented, offensive team. One possible reason for the two losses is the new line-up. The Panthers have added Brian McCullough and Paul MacInnis to the team; it will take a couple of games for the two to fit into the team.

Panther fans were relieved to learn that rookies Greg Webber and Mike Tilley will stay with the team; the two had been considering a move to the Charlottetown Abbies, but, they decided to return to the Panthers after their return from playing softball in new Zealand for Canada's team in the World Junior Championship. Luckily for the team, Webber and Tilley will be back in time for the playoffs.

Hockey "experts" had been attempting to evaluate the Quebec Nordiques and Philadelphia Flyers pre-season trade before either team had the new players on ice. The present time seems best for evaluation; the NHL season is approximately half over.

The Nordiques did benefit from trading Eric Lindros to the Flyers. As of Monday, the Nordiques were one point behind perennial Adams Division leaders Montreal and ahead of Adam's favorites, Boston. Not all of Quebec's wins are able to be attributed to Ron Hextall, Steve Duchesne, and Mike Ricci; most of the success is coming from the Nordiques themselves. Guys like Mats Sundin and Owen Nolan needed time to develop. Rookies are not ready for Stanley Cups as soon as they put on NHL uniforms and skate in places like Boston Garden or Chicago Stadium. It takes time. Sundin put forth a good show last season; Nolan really came into his game this season. Nordiques' General Manager Pierre Page fished Lindros around the league for a year; the mystery and potential of Lindros increased his market value. Page brought older, more experienced hockey players to his team with the trade; guys like Duchesne and Hextall offer the Nordiques some of the stability and experience they had been seeking. Recently, the Nordiques lost two of their star players, Joe Sakic and Sundin, to injuries but still managed to win. This proves the Nordiques are no longer the joke of the Adams; go, Ottawa, go!

The benefits to the Flyers go beyond Eric Lindros. By trading Ron Hextall, the Flyers are now able to work with two great rookie goaltenders: Tommy Soderstrom and Dominic Roussel. Had Hextall not been traded, there would have been room to develop only one of the rookies. Soderstrom is playing with a shadow much like Islander's goaltender Mark Fitzpatrick's; Soderstrom has recently undergone delicate heart surgery to correct a problem which causes a secondary heartbeat. Soderstrom is not 100% recovered, but he is able to play. He posted his first NHL shutout on January 10th with a 4-0 win over the Edmonton Oilers. He will be subjected to further testing at the end of January.

The Flyers are in the same place in the standings as they were at this time last season. The Patrick Division is harder than Quebec's Adams; comparisons cannot be made on the

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basis of divisional standings. The Patrick has no 'joke' like the Adam's Ottawa or Hartford. It makes a big difference in the teams.

It is hard to rate the trade to see who won. Both teams benefitted in different ways. Quebec gained experience in defence and goaltending, but Philadelphia got the chance to develop two excellent goaltending prospects. The Flyers also gained Lindros and put him on a line with Mark Recchi and Rod Brind'Amour--the Crazy Eights line. For both teams the effects of the trade will last longer than one season - Flyers gained youth with Lindros and the Nordiques will always have the vestiges of the experience of the older, mature ex-Flyers. It was a good trade for everyone involved. ●

Fifteen reasons why Detroit won't win the cup this year

1. Coach Murray doesn't know how to motivate his team's full potential - his past playoff coaching proves this.
2. Detroit doesn't have Keenan or Burns- two of the best NHL coaches.
3. Vladimir Konstantinov has ticked off far too many opponents. I can't wait to see what the Black Hawks do to this fella.
4. Murray isn't showing any confidence in Gerard Gallant.
5. Detroit fans give Yzerman less than he deserves. Stevey Y. needs to have more applause than Probert, Fedorov etc.
6. Detroit Red Wings are not as tough as the Black Hawks. According to Stan Fischler on a scale of 50 Chicago rates 44 in toughness while Detroit is at 34.
7. Tim Cheveldae - he just hasn't made me a believer.
8. Red Wings give up way too many goals per game.
9. Chicago Black Hawks and other Norris teams have more seasoned veteran players, more cup winners, etc.
10. Mark Howe and Brad McCrimmon never won the cup in Philly - when they were younger, and they won't win the Cup in Detroit.
11. Chuck Norris, for whom the Norris division is named, says, "The best defence is not to pretend. Sorry guys, you don't cut it."
12. Konstantinov dyes his hair. If he can't get a grip and concentrate on the game then he is a liability which is bad for the team.
13. Detroit has a lousy .500 record within the Chuck Norris division.
14. Ron MacLean picks Detroit to win the Norris division, and as everyone knows Ron MacLean is usually wrong.
15. Most importantly, the Detroit organization has literally screwed Gordie, and for this reason, Detroit has been cursed ever since.