



Unfortunately, even with the NHL still in lockout mode, the Blue Jackets can't avoid bad news and bad luck. Coupled with the fact that the 2013 NHL All-Star Game, which the city of Columbus was scheduled to host, will likely be canceled very soon with the next round of game cancellations, the Blue Jackets top prospect, Ryan Murray, separated his shoulder while playing for Everett of the Western Hockey League and could be out for the remainder of the season.

Murray, the Blue Jackets first-round pick in this past June's draft, was going to play for Team Canada at the Under-20 World Junior Hockey Championships, which begin just after Christmas, and was expected to be one of the players recalled to Columbus if the league and the players union came to an agreement to end the lockout and start the season. According to Aaron Portzline of the Columbus Dispatch, it remains to be seen if Murray will need surgery, though early reports indicate that Murray suffered a partially torn labrum as a result of the separation.

Murray should fully heal from this incident and be no worse for the wear. However, being just 19 years old, his development is important for the Blue Jackets and this injury is a major disappointment. Murray was considered to be pretty close to NHL-ready when he was drafted, sent back to juniors because of the lockout. So far this season with Everett of the Western Hockey League, Murray racked up 17 points in 22 games while serving as the team's captain. He's not a guy projected to put up a lot of points, but rather be a solid two-way defenseman with good vision to get the puck out of his own zone.

In other NHL news, the league remains at the bargaining table after an empty threat of halting negotiations for a two-week period. Despite both sides talking regularly of late, there has been no indication that a resolution is close. Finger pointing continues to be the status quo as both sides attempt to shift the blame. The closer we get to the New Year, the more it appears the entire 2012-13 season will be a wash.

According to various Associated Press sources, the NHL Players Association is expected to give the NHL their full proposal on Wednesday. Obviously, this could be a major step in negotiations or just another instance where the league squashes ideas and both sides go back to square one.

Regarding the All-Star Game in Columbus, which was scheduled for January 27, like I noted in my column a couple of weeks ago, the earliest that the game could be scheduled for Columbus is 2015. The 2014 Sochi Olympics will keep the NHL from having an All-Star weekend, so the game, which Portzline expects to bring nearly \$12 million into the local economy, would be pushed back two more years. That's if bidding hasn't already taken place for the 2015 All-Star game and its festivities.

An update on the Lake Erie Monsters: The Monsters returned home and dropped a 6-5 overtime decision to the Grand Rapids Griffins last Friday night. They'll host the Rockford Ice Hogs on Friday and Saturday. With the overtime loss, and a mini-slump of late, the Monsters fell to third place in the North Division, behind Abbotsford and Toronto. The loss also dropped the Monsters to fifth in the conference.

Andrew Agozzino and Mike Sgarbossa lead the way for the Monsters offensively with 13 points in 16 games. Six Monsters players have 10 or more points so far on the season, including defensemen Tyson Barrie and Thomas Pock.

In true AHL fashion this week, the Monsters will have home games Friday and Saturday and then have to travel to Hamilton, Ontario for a 4 p.m. puck drop on Sunday. They will have the

same format the following weekend, with a Sunday trip to Toronto and a 3 p.m. puck drop.