



It was only a matter of time until the NHL announced the cancellation of the All-Star Game, which was scheduled to take place on January 27, 2013 in Columbus. That time was late last week as the NHL announced another round of cancellations, including the All-Star Game. The cancellations now run through December 14. A federal mediator has been called to action to try and lead the league and the players' association to a resolution in hopes that part of the season can be salvaged.

Before fans get too excited, it's important to note a couple of things about federal mediation, as it pertains to the NHL. First off, whatever agreement both sides come to as a result of the talks is not binding. The purpose of mediation is to use experts to try and close the gap and get both parties moving in the right direction. Second, which elaborates the previous point, the league and the players' association tried mediation proceedings during the 2004-05 lockout. Nothing came of it and the league announced the cancellation of the season shortly thereafter. One caveat is that those mediation proceedings did not take place until February, when the season was in extremely dire straits to begin with.

Overall, it's difficult to say what effect, if any, mediation will have on the lockout. The hope, obviously, is that some assistance from an impartial third party would improve the chance of a resolution and a shortened season. The biggest concern is that this could be a last ditch effort, since there are no other alternatives from this point forward. If mediation doesn't work, the two sides are back at the same impasse they have been at since July.

Frankly, the 2012-13 season looks to be hanging by a thread. The issues are already laid out on the table and arguments have been presented from both sides. It's hard to foresee a third party changing anyone's mind. Money has always been at the forefront, both with what the league and its owners are losing, as well as the concessions that the players are unwilling to make regarding salaries and revenue sharing. If the inherent greed of the people in positions of power and the importance of money to everyone involved has yet to be enough to find a way to come to an agreement, it would seem unlikely that common ground can be achieved in the near future.

Furthermore, the rise of social media is really taking a toll on this lockout as fans are simply disenfranchised with both sides and speaking their minds about it. For the image of the National Hockey League, the best course of action is to come to an agreement, but the constant finger pointing has left negotiations spinning in the mud.

As for the cancellation of the NHL All-Star Game, it remains to be seen if the city will have to bid for the event again or if the league will honor their agreement for 2013. Due to the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia in 2014, the city of Columbus will now have to wait until 2015 to host the All-Star Game. In any event, it's a big blow to the local economy, along with a blow to the Jackets and the operators of Nationwide Arena.

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An update on the Lake Erie Monsters: The Monsters snapped a five-game losing streak by salvaging Sunday's game in Hamilton by a 4-1 final. That game concluded a stretch of three games in 45 hours for the Monsters, losing Friday and Saturday night at home to the Rockford Ice Hogs. The team did manage a point in Saturday's shootout loss.

The biggest problem for the Monsters has been defense and goaltending. In 11 games in November, the Monsters have allowed 38 goals, allowing more than four or more goals in a game on six different occasions.

The Monsters are still fifth in the Western Conference standings with a 10-7-1-1 record. They host San Antonio on Friday night at 7:30 and on Saturday afternoon at 1:00 before heading north to Toronto to finish the weekend on Sunday at 5:00.

Staying in the AHL, a quick look at the Columbus Blue Jackets' AHL affiliate, the Springfield Falcons. The Falcons are second in the Eastern Conference, leading the Northeast Division by four points. Some names of note for Blue Jackets fans include Cam Atkinson, who has 16 points in 17 games, John Moore, who is a +10 on the season with 10 points, and Ryan Johansen, who has 13 points in 17 games.

If the NHL season does begin again, all three would likely be recalled by Columbus to play with the Jackets.