



Beer is the lifeblood of the sports fan. Think about it. You sit down on Saturdays to watch college ball with a brew or two, or twelve. On Sunday mornings, you probably double fist (and I'm still talking about beer) as a pre-game. Then, once you get in the stadium or once the pigskin is airborne to start the game, it's time for another beer.

Maybe you drink because you enjoy the taste of beer. Maybe you drink because it is the only way to get through your team's game. Maybe you drink because everybody else is doing it. But, for hockey players and fans, we drink because it's a necessity.

Beer and hockey go better together than macaroni and cheese, better than meat and potatoes, and better than strippers and bachelor parties. Hell, hockey players generally bust open at least two or three beers in the locker room after the game. The only time I can honestly say I've drank a beer in the shower was after a hockey game.

Perhaps the people over at [Yahoo's Puck Daddy blog](#) are on to something. In their October 27, 2010 post entitled [Drink in the 2010 NHL Beer Cost Index](#)

, Greg Wyshynski takes the findings from the [Team Marketing Report NHL Fan Cost Index](#)

and examines the average cost of beer at a hockey game. The Columbus Blue Jackets have the second highest price-per-ounce at a whopping 56 cents per ounce. Only the Montreal Canadiens, who ironically play in a building that used to be known as the Molson Centre, have a

higher PPO at 61 cents per ounce for the suds.

Is there really a correlation between the price of beer and the Jackets poor attendance figures? Probably not, but it's more interesting than talking about the team's continued run of less-than-mediocre play.

This year's Blue Jackets have won four out of their last five games and are starting to show real signs of improvement. The improvement lies in the fact that they have been winning games with their best player struggling mightily. Rick Nash has just three goals in eight games, one of which being empty net goal. The captain also has a minus-5 rating and two games where he recorded a minus-3. Plus/minus is calculated by giving the player a "plus" for being on the ice when his team scores, excluding power play goals, and a "minus" for being on the ice when the opposition scores, again excluding power play goals.

For comparison purposes, Rick Nash started last season with points in six straight games after the opening game. He had four goals and seven assists after the first eight games. Interestingly, the Jackets were 5-3 after eight games last season as well.

Through two games, Mathieu Garon has stopped 49-of-52 shots. One must ask if it is in the Jackets best interest to officially split the games between Garon and Steve Mason. Garon has played in 37 games with the Blue Jackets, sporting a 14-9-6 record with a 2.32 goals against average. Mason, meanwhile, since his rookie of the year winning season, had a 3.05 last year and has a 3.18 this year. With a Jackets team that enters Wednesday's play tied for 21st in goals scored, it is something to consider.

In other Jackets news: A scary moment for Will Weber, a defenseman for the Miami of Ohio Redhawks. Weber, a Jackets second round draft pick in 2007, was [cut by a skate](#) in the team's Friday night game against Northern Michigan. It took over 100 stitches and 15 staples to close the laceration. (If you can stomach it, here's a [picture](#) of the incident and the aftermath.) Most definitely one of the scariest occurrences in a hockey

game, and best wishes to Weber on his recovery.

In other NHL news:

The National Hockey League season started on October 7. The Carolina Hurricanes are played their first real home game on October 27 against the Washington Capitals. Every other team played at least two home games before Carolina got their first. Their one “home” win propelled them to a 2-0 start, winning both games in Finland against the Minnesota Wild.

Olympic hero Ryan Miller is winless at home in five starts, allowing over three goals per game. On the road, however, Miller is 3-1 allowing just a hair above two goals per game. For his career, Miller is 105-55-17 at home against 85-54-17 on the road.

The next week will be deadline day for some NHL teams and rookies. If a player plays ten games during the season, the first year of his entry-level contract kicks in. The Jackets monitored this rule closely back in the 2008-09 season, when Filatov played four games in October and four games in January. He spent the bulk of the year in Syracuse with the Jackets’ affiliate.

NHL following the NFL?: Seven suspensions and more than \$302,500 in fines/suspensions without pay have been handed down by the NHL so far this year. Three players have been suspended for hits to the head, which the NHL is desperately trying to cut down on. Much like the NFL, the NHL has seen a drastic increase in concussions over the last couple seasons.

No incident may have been worse than Rick Rypien's assault of a Minnesota Wild fan (Youtube [here](#)) during the October 19 Vancouver Canucks-Minnesota Wild game. Rypien received a six-game suspension for his actions and the fan was in the process of filing assault charges.

A minor league update as the Lake Erie Monsters finally head home from their lengthy road trip. They started and finished the trip with victories, beating Houston on Sunday to add the win on the first game of the trip way back on October 9. They finish their first road trip 2-4-1, which is not that bad all things considered.

The team will now play nine of their next ten at Quicken Loans Arena. I suggest you check them out. If you are new to hockey, it's an exciting, affordable (tickets start at \$10), family-friendly atmosphere.