



This is part four of my Columbus Blue Jackets' All-Decade Team. I have written about my selections for top goaltender, top two defensemen, top three forwards, and best overall player. The fourth installment will cover the best player of the decade.

The suspense must be unbearable. Who is the best player to have worn a Columbus Blue Jackets sweater over the first decade of the franchise's existence? My previous pieces during the decade-in-review have featured the top goaltender, Marc Denis, the top two defensemen, Rusty Klesla and Jaroslav Spacek, and the top three forward, Ray Whitney, Geoff Sanderson, and Rick Nash. Taking those six names in to account, it's probably pretty easy to figure out the best player of the decade.

Number 61 has been the most consistent and most talented Blue Jacket over the first ten years of the franchise. Rick Nash, the first overall pick in the 2002 NHL Entry Draft has lived up to his lofty expectations, despite rarely being surrounded with talent comparable to his ability. Nash has two forty-goal seasons, made more impressive by the fact that Nash has never played with a bona fide top line center.

Nash, for all of his Blue Jackets accolades, also has five international medals. He won gold with the 2010 Canadian team in this past Olympics and in the 2007 World Championships in Moscow. He also has two silvers from previous World Championship tournaments and silver in the 2002 World Junior Championships. He has also been the cover boy for NHL2K9.

Rick Nash has been the unquestionable face of the franchise. He even passed up greener pastures by signing an eight-year contract extension in 2009 to remain a Blue Jacket through the 2018 season. In a day and age where very few players spend their entire career with one

team, Nash may be one of that cherished group of individuals

For a team that has had some awful seasons, a lot of veteran signings, and a frustrated fan base, Nash has been one of the few bright spots over the first decade of Blue Jackets hockey and will continue to be one throughout the next decade.

In other Blue Jackets news:

[Forbes released the team values](#) for each NHL team on December 1, and the Blue Jackets are near the bottom. In fact, the four teams below the Blue Jackets have constantly been mentioned in relocation rumors. Forbes reports that the Blue Jackets are worth \$153M, down 7% from 2009. The Blue Jackets have operated at a deficit every year since 2005. More in-depth figures can be found [here](#).

The Blue Jackets finished November 8-4, but with back-to-back losses to archrival Detroit to end the month to snap a five-game winning streak. The Jackets are just 6-6-1 at home, but a conference-best 8-2 on the road. They were one of three teams without an overtime loss until Wednesday night's SOL to Nashville.

The early successes of the Blue Jackets have not been thanks to the powerplay. The Jackets have the third-worst powerplay in the league, something that has plagued them in recent history. Clicking at an 10.5% rate, the team absolutely needs to get the powerplay going. The Central Division remains one of the league's hardest and cashing in on man advantages is crucial.

Nikita Filatov has been scratched twice in the last three games. He has to be reaching "bust" status. It's a huge problem for the Blue Jackets who have lacked top-flight offensive talent since being an expansion franchise.

Other news from around the NHL:

The hockey world said good-bye to a legendary coach last week. Pat Burns, former head coach of the Devils, Canadiens, Leafs, and Bruins succumbed to cancer at the age of 58. Over the past couple years, there was a large grass roots movement on Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of personal media to get Burns inducted into the Hall of Fame prior to his death. The HOF Committee never budged.

Also passing away over the past week was longtime hockey writer Jim Kelley. Kelley worked for sportsnet.ca and was a well-respected, Hall of Fame journalist. His [final column](#) discussed Pat Burns and his life and much of what he said about Burns will likely be said about him.

HBO will be airing a 24/7 special entitled "The Road to the Winter Classic" featuring the Washington Capitals and Pittsburgh Penguins. It will likely be a censored behind the scenes look at the rivalry between the two teams, most notably Sidney Crosby and Alexander Ovechkin. The Winter Classic will be played at Heinz Field on Jan. 1. The HBO series will air on Wednesday nights starting December 15.

[Rumors are swirling](#) that Buffalo Sabres owner Tom Golisano is looking to sell the team. Terry Pegula, a Pennsylvania billionaire, is reportedly the front runner. The Sabres were on extremely rocky ground after the previous ownership group, headed by the Rigas family, was convicted of fraud.

A minor league update on the Lake Erie Monsters:

The Avalanche traded Monsters defenseman Colby Cohen to Boston in exchange for Matt Hunwick. With several players out due to injury, the Monsters roster has again been ravaged by their parent club.

The team, meanwhile, has kept plugging along. First through fifth in the North Division are separated by five points and the Monsters sit in fourth. The team has points in each of their last three games.

Upcoming schedules:

Columbus: 12/3: @ BUF, 12/4: v. PIT, 12/6: v. DAL

Lake Erie: 12/3: v. CHI, 12/4: v. Peoria, 12/7 & 12/8: @ Abbotsford