



After taking a personal one week hiatus, it took almost another full week for anything of great significance to happen to the Blue Jackets and be added to this week's column. The significant event comes in the form of another injury to Columbus's resident injury-prone forward, this one a bit of a freak incident.

Kristian Huselius will miss four-to-six months with a torn pectoral muscle suffered while bench pressing in his home country of Sweden. Huselius's injury somewhat negates the big offseason acquisition of Jeff Carter because the Jackets are now scrambling to fill another top six forward spot. By no means does it diminish the addition of Carter, but it temporarily changes the Blue Jackets' offseason philosophy.

There are plenty of good veteran forwards remaining in free agency, including guys like Cory Stillman, JP Dumont, Vaclav Prospal and Marek Svatos. None of these guys are going to be big impact players, but they are battle-tested and experienced, something that the rest of the Jackets' current depth is not. It would be difficult to expect a young player like Matt Calvert to consistently elevate his game over the grind of a full regular season.

So, now, rather than focus on solidifying the team's depth, both at forward and defense, the Jackets are forced to fill an important spot for half a season. The players are no strangers to playing without Kristian Huselius, as "Juice" played just 39 games in the 2010-2011 season after missing eight games in each of his first two seasons. When healthy, he is capable of a 55-70 point season. Replacing that many points with what's currently available in free agency or trade is not easy at this stage.

Ryan Johansen, the team's first round pick in 2010, will have to play a very big role very early on this season. Without Huselius, Johansen will have more responsibility and be under more pressure to contribute more than the organization would have liked in his young career.

At this point, there are not many in-house replacements for Kristian Huselius. The top six will include Rick Nash, Jeff Carter, Derick Brassard, and RJ Umberger for certain. Antoine Vermette and Matt Calvert were on the fringe of that group and may now have to play on one of the top two lines. Calvert is the most likely choice to play on the second line, with Vermette and Samuel Pahlsson pairing up to form a dynamite third line. There is a possibility that the Jackets simply roll with these six and focus on solidifying their depth.

Columbus does have a wealth of prospect depth on defense, with a handful of guys who are capable of being average to slightly above average in the NHL, but not guys who can be used to add star players. Howson will either have to trade 2012 draft picks, something he is reluctant to do, or move a bigger piece like John Moore. Personally, I see them standing pat and filling out the bottom six lines with bargain bin free agents and buyout players, leaving Vermette and Calvert playing with top two lines.

As for good news, the Blue Jackets added Mark Dekanich to be the backup goaltender and signed Radek Martinek, a move I proposed in my pre-free agency article a couple weeks back. Martinek is a solid right handed shot to anchor the second powerplay unit and be a responsible defenseman alongside Marc Methot or Kris Russell.

While old news, though I hinted at it in my article, the Blue Jackets were able to sign James Wisniewski before the free agent deadline hit. Between Wisniewski and Carter, the Jackets have made themselves exponentially better, despite losing Jan Hejda to Colorado. Other than that, the Blue Jackets bought out Mike Commodore, lost Mathieu Garon to free agency, and then bolstered their lineup with the aforementioned players.

Scott Howson and the Blue Jackets will now play the waiting game. They will see what players lower their demands and see who will be willing to play in the capital of Ohio. At the present, the Jackets will meet to determine their course of action. Do they try to trade for a top six forward to replace Huselius or do they hope for some overachievement and focus on adding grind line depth and veteran leadership?

Over the coming weeks, we will know for sure.