



Steve Mason made his triumphant return to the ice on Tuesday night and did so by picking up a shootout victory. Mason, out for the past several weeks with a head injury suffered in practice, will have to keep up that type of play in order to get his full-time duties back.

Curtis Sanford was the unlikely hero who kept the ship somewhat afloat in Mason's absence and now it leads to Mason being pushed by a journeyman goaltender who has never held a NHL starting job. It will be an interesting situation to watch going forward. The team appears to be out of the race already thanks to their bad start, so one would think that Mason would receive the bulk of the work. That is, if he deserves to be the starter.

As we enter mid-December, the Blue Jackets hold two not-so-spectacular distinctions in the Western Conference. They are the first team to allow 100 goals and they are one of two teams without a double digit goal scorer. Nashville is the other.

Team leader Rick Nash is on pace for one of his worst seasons ever. With just 21 points through 30 games, Nash is on pace to score just 25 goals, 32 assists, for 57 points and be a minus-43. He was a minus-35 in his second professional season with just 57 points, but 41 of those were goals. Realistically, we can't even point to the Jeff Carter injury as why because Vinny Prospal has been the team's best player and Nash has played without a Carter-type talent his entire career.

Kristian Huselius is injured again. Raise your hand if you're surprised. He'll miss 4-6 weeks.

Another issue plaguing the team is the ongoing Derick Brassard saga. It had been rumored last

week that Brassard and his agent had requested a trade. Then, Brassard was re-inserted into the lineup on the second line. This is either the team's way of giving Brassard one last chance to prove himself or to showcase himself enough to fetch a decent trade return.

Aaron Portzline [tweeted last week](#) that Scott Howson declined a trade offer from Carolina where the Jackets would receive defenseman Tomas Kaberle and a second round draft pick for Brassard. Initially, I was shocked by the report, but after looking and seeing that Tomas Kaberle is owed \$4.25M for the next three seasons, it was less surprising. The second round pick could have been beneficial, and without Kaberle, Howson may have accepted.

In any event, there is some good behind the scenes news going on with the Blue Jackets. The team hired former Penguins GM Craig Patrick and gave him the title of "Senior Advisor". Along with having been a NHL GM, Patrick also was the assistant GM and coach of the 1980 US Men's Olympic Team.

In terms of prospect news, Jackets' prospect Boone Jenner has made the Canadian Under-20 World Junior Championship team. The tournament will be held Dec. 26-Jan. 5 in Alberta, Canada.

And finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't address the Sidney Crosby concussion saga. Crosby is again out with concussion-like symptoms, reportedly after an elbow received during the game against the Boston Bruins. With Crosby out an indefinite period of time, it is hard to envision many scenarios where he comes back the same player. It's a shame for the game of hockey, and certainly nobody wants to see a player like Crosby confined to the press box. Might be Eric Lindros all over again.

I'll end the column on a good note: [Shea Weber is awesome](#) .