



As if things couldn't get worse for the hapless Blue Jackets, the injury bug has reared its ugly head yet again. James Wisniewski, the prized free agent acquisition who already missed eight games due to suspension, will be out the next six weeks with a broken ankle. Prior to the injury, Wisniewski ranked 13th in the NHL in average time on ice with 24:55 per game.

The Blue Jackets were already a boat full of holes but the Wisniewski hole will be too big for the team to plug. With Wisniewski out to start the season, the Jackets began the year 0-7-1 and showed how dependent they were on his presence. The sad reality was that Wisniewski had not even played a game yet and his absence was clearly visible.

Having won just 10 of their first 38 games, the focus shifts to the Blue Jackets scouting staff who are burning the midnight oil traveling all over Canada to gather their reports on the top-ranked players for the 2012 NHL Entry Draft. Unfortunately for the Blue Jackets, several highly-touted draft eligibles have been injured, a couple with season-ending ACL tears, making it hard for scouts to adequately do their due diligence on these players.

In any event, the frustration has finally reached the boiling point for Scott Arniel. While being grilled about his team's 4-on-4 play this year, he stormed out of the media room. Despite repeated attempts to tell the media and the players that Scott Arniel's job is safe, many remain unconvinced. The problem runs far deeper than Arniel, but the team's regression could point to issues between player and coach. Every tidbit of information is likely nothing more than speculation.

After I talked up the United States for their development and high hopes for the 2012 World Junior Championships, they went 1-3 in round robin play, with their lone win coming against Denmark. The U.S. team could not create enough offense in losses to Finland, the Czechs, and Canada.

As a result, the U.S. WJC team was sent to the relegation round to play Latvia. The U.S. team blew Latvia's doors off 12-2 to avoid relegation. This year's tournament marked the first time in 13 years that the U.S. failed to reach the medal round. The Americans did play admirably in a 3-2 loss to Canada, a game that saw them fall behind 3-0. Their fate was already sealed in terms of not making the medal round, but they still played hard. The best the team can finish is seventh.

The yearly spectacle known as the Winter Classic was played on Monday at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia. It was an exciting game that featured a game-tying penalty shot opportunity with just 19.6 seconds left. Henrik Lundqvist turned aside Daniel Briere and preserved the 3-2 Rangers win.

Cleveland's own Mike Rupp, a former St. Edward Eagle, had two goals in the win.

The win for the road team Rangers marked the fourth win in five tries for road teams in the Winter Classic.

The HBO 24/7 Road to the Winter Classic Flyers/Rangers finale will air on Thursday night at 10 p.m. Both last year's and this year's 24/7 specials have given fans an inside look at the day-to-day lives of hockey players and have been really entertaining.

Although Gary Bettman would not confirm or deny the rumors, the speculation among media members is that the 2013 Winter Classic would be hosted by the Detroit Red Wings and possibly played in Ann Arbor at Michigan Stadium. Theoretically, it would make sense for Detroit to play Columbus, however, Columbus probably isn't a big enough draw for the league

or the networks.

Happy 2012 everybody!