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LINE CHANGES: THE REAL VALUE OF THE TRADE DEADLINE

1 COMMENTS 02 MARCH 2011

Posted by Dickie-Dunn

By Tony Khing

Better late than never, here's a quick "Line Changes" for today.

Okay, so by the National Hockey League trading deadline Monday there were 16 trades with 35 players moved. As for the eye-popping deals of the day, there was really only one: right wing Dustin Penner going from Edmonton to Los Angeles (and now, the Western Conference playoff and the Pacific Division races get really interesting). If you want to count two, how about Columbus sending veteran D-man Rostislav Klesla to Phoenix?

But aside from non-playoff teams dumping salary and playoff potential teams getting stronger, there's really only one reason why the trading deadline is good for hockey: publicity for the game.

How many media-types were blogging and yakking on Monday? TSN, CBC and the NHL Network (what, no TMZ?) were making it front and center. Did you rise at 5 a.m. to watch the coverage? Even media outlets who pay pedestrian interest to hockey gave some pub to what the local skaters didn't do at the deadline.

Late February/early March is a time when a sports fan's fancy turns to Spring Training, NCAA basketball and even the NFL Scouting Combine. On trade deadline day, real hockey fans are glued to their computers/televisions. That's a given. But the trading deadline hoop-dee-doo forces even those wondering if Brandon Belt will make the Giants opening day roster to pay some attention.

So maybe the Buster Posey set will realize that the NHL regular season is now going into the bottom of the ninth inning. Perhaps those more concerned with the seeding in the ACC Men's Basketball Tournament will take a moment to see how the Western Conference playoff race will incorporate the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat over the next 30-plus days. And while football fans are amazed at how fast a 300-pound defensive lineman runs the 40-yard dash, just imagine how the 6-foot-4, 245-pound Penner will force his way through some of the NHL's top blueliners. By the way, Penner is doing it on skates. Could you picture 49ers linebacker Patrick Willis putting on some Bauer Total One Supremes to chase one of the Sedin twins?

We're not asking you to go cold turkey on baseball, college basketball and football. We're asking those of you who are on the fence about hockey or have a passing interest (could be one in the same here) to pay a little more attention for the next couple of months. It will be fast. It will be fun. It will be exciting.

Besides, you'll have a lot of time to closely watch Belt and Posey...starting in late June (after the Stanley Cup Finals).

Time for a Line Change! Thanks for reading and see you soon.

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