

12-2-08

What a week! Seeing friends and family, catching some great hockey games, visiting Civil War sites in four states and enjoying some good eats = priceless. It's great to be back in the Lowcountry, though!

Four more Q&A's will be posted this week, including chats with former Stingrays enforcers Brent Henley and Grant McNeill. Check back for those on Wednesday and Thursday.

For those road warriors interested in checking out the organization from top to bottom, mark Feb. 20-22 on your calendars. The Washington Capitals host the Colorado Avalanche on Friday, 2-20; the Hershey Bears welcome the Philadelphia Phantoms on Saturday, 2-21; and the Stingrays close out a three-game northern road swing Sunday, 2-22 in Reading against the Royals.

In case you missed it, here's a story on the Stingrays' Ben Boudreau, who made his ECHL debut last week against Mississippi: <http://www.sunherald.com/local/story/983863.html>

In addition, here's a short interview with the first-year pro, courtesy of SunHerald TV: <http://www.sunherald.com/sunheraldtv/story/982493.html>

I received an e-mail last week from former Hershey Bears defenseman Martin Wilde, who's currently playing Cortina SG in Italy. It seems the native of Sweden and his Vermont-born wife, Sarah, have started an interesting new business venture: outdoor gaming. Their product, VKing, according to their website "is a take on a Swedish lawn game combining classic Swedish design with quality Vermont craftsmanship. VKing is inspired by a centuries old Swedish game that dates back to the time of the Vikings. It can be played almost anywhere outdoors and requires very little set up. It is the perfect game for families and friends and can be enjoyed by all ages." Take a gander: <http://www.playvking.com/>

Former Rays center Greg Schmidt, who spent three seasons in the Lowcountry and won a Kelly Cup with the team in 2001, ranks fourth on Bietigheim-Bissingen (Germany) with 20 points in 19 games.

"I just tape four Tylenols to it." – Former NHL defenseman Boris Mironov, on playing with a sore ankle

-Joe
joe@stingrayshockey.com

12-5-08

Tuesday's 3-2 loss to Gwinnett was South Carolina's first this season when leading after two periods. Previously the Stingrays had gone 8-0 when ahead after 40 minutes.

In case you missed last night's newscasts, here's video of Stingrays President Darren Abbott as "Principal for a Day" at Midland Park Elementary School in North Charleston:

http://www.counton2.com/cbd/sports/other/article/stingrays_president_takes_over_school/17713/

One of the interesting notes to cross the AHL wires this week was the assignment of future Hall of Fame defenseman Chris Chelios to the Grand Rapids Griffins for a weekend conditioning stint. Chelios, the second-oldest player in NHL history at 46, would, according to the Society for International Hockey Research, "become the oldest player in the 73-year history of the American Hockey League, supplanting former Hershey Bears trainer William "Scotty" Alexander, who was thrown between the pipes in an emergency during the 1953-54 season at the tender age of 45."

Can you name this former Stingray?

<http://cache.gettyimages.com/xc/1713465.jpg?v=1&c=ViewImages&k=2&d=17A4AD9FDB9CF1939057D9939C83F106C7FCBFA044CAAF945A5397277B4DC33E>

If you're shopping for a hockey fan this holiday season, here's your opportunity to save 70% off everything from www.HockeyAttire.com. Just apply the code "aloff70" at checkout.

Former Stingrays F Jeremy Stevenson, who began the 2008-09 season with the IHL's Kalamazoo Wings, retired following last Saturday's 1-0 loss to the Bloomington PrairieThunder to take a job outside of hockey. In 42 games with South Carolina in 2004-05, Stevenson, an NHL veteran of 207 contests with Anaheim, Nashville, Minnesota and Dallas, collected 29 points and 140 penalty minutes.

It's hard to believe that just eight short months ago there were nine teams competing in the current five-team South Division...

"Don't go through life without goals." -- Hockey Saying

-Joe

joe@stingrayshockey.com

12-9-08

For those keeping track, Sean Collins was the first former Stingrays player since Rich Peverley in 2006-07 to see action in an NHL contest following a stint in the Lowcountry. Collins is the tenth former Ray to play in the NHL after his SC days, joining Martin Biron, David Cooper, Sean Gauthier, Jonas Johansson, Steve McLaren, Peverley, Steve Shields, Jeremy Stevenson and Joey Tenute. If you want to get technical, though, 12 players have gone on to play in the NHL from South Carolina, as Maxime Daigneault and Daren Machesney were summoned for back-up duty in Washington during the 2005-06 and 2006-07 seasons, respectively. Neither goaltender, however, played for the Caps.

Shane Malloy with TSN released his list of the Capitals' Top 12 Prospects the other day, and I'm sure Stingrays fans will be happy to see some familiar names included:

http://www.tsn.ca/nhl/story/?id=258847&lid=sublink07&lpos=headlines_nhl

Eight players have already played for both SC and Hershey this season, two off last year's mark of ten.

Congrats to the Hershey Bears on their team record 11th straight win Sunday night against Norfolk. Even with the endless recalls, the Bears continue to put together a strong lineup. It's a testament to the fantastic job the management, scouts and coaching staff, from top to bottom, have done over the last few years.

I came across an interesting story on the NHL's "The Hockey Show" yesterday, profiling a pair of Canadian-Punjabi broadcasters who cover games for the Vancouver Canucks. I'm constantly amazed with the far-reaching ability this sport has, and these gentlemen represent just some of the new faces and cultures you're bound to come across at the rink. Here's the link to the show, and be sure to select the appropriate story, "Punjabi Hockey," on the right-hand side of the screen:

<http://www.nhl.tv/team/console.jsp?catid=2>

The Chicago Blackhawks have put together some comical videos campaigning their young guns for this season's All-Star Game. Check it out: <http://blackhawks.nhl.tv/team/console.jsp?catid=-6&id=25619>

Former Stingrays F Trevor Gallant (1995-96), who turned pro with SC following the conclusion of his junior career, currently ranks second on the Austrian League's Vienna Capitals with 29 points in 29 games.

"There are two types of forwards. Scorers and bangers. Scorers score and bangers bang." – Ken Dryden

-Joe

joe@stingrayshockey.com

12-12-08

It should be an interesting two-game set in Estero tonight and tomorrow. Both the Rays and 'Blades have been bit by the recall bug recently, but nevertheless I expect a competitive series featuring two of the top teams in the division. Strong goaltending, defense and scoring ability on both sides – something has to give.

I mentioned on Tuesday that eight players have been recalled from the Stingrays to Hershey this season, but the Bears, in turn, have seen 10 skaters summoned to the District of Columbia in 2008-09.

After Thursday night's 6-5 shootout loss to the Philadelphia Flyers, Carolina Hurricanes Head Coach Paul Maurice must not have been a happy man. The bench boss, recently hired for his second tour of duty with the 'Canes, saw his team's 5-1 lead evaporate in the third period. Ouch, that's gotta hurt! I wonder what kind of paces he'll be putting his team through this morning at practice...

On a related note, Norfolk Admirals Head Coach Darren Rumble brought his team back out onto the ice following a 7-3 thumping to Wilkes-Barre Wednesday evening:

<http://hamptonroads.com/2008/12/wbscranton-skates-circles-round-admirals-scope>

In case you missed it, former Stingrays forward Rich Peverley earned his first NHL fighting major Tuesday night, dropping the gloves with Vancouver's Jason Jaffray:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vj0FpvzkIHU>

Not bad, although the two combatants should've shed their helmets and not risked themselves a possible hand injury. During his time in SC, Peverley engaged in two fights, including a bout with current Everblade Ryan Lang.

You've got to hand it to the marketing folks with the Las Vegas Wranglers for coming up with another creative promotion: <http://www.lasvegasnow.com/Global/story.asp?S=9501441>

And speaking of unique promotions, the AHL's Philadelphia Phantoms are turning an embarrassing moment for the Flyers' Scott Hartnell (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3EwTo9LFrw>) into a worthy cause: <http://www.phantomshockey.com/pressbox/archive/2361.asp>

So did you hear about future Hall of Famer Joe Sakic breaking three of his fingers in a freak snow

blowing accident? http://sports.yahoo.com/nhl/news;_ylt=AnFoKvfuiY6BwIPdZR4uvPt7vLYF?slug=ap-avalanche-sakicout&prov=ap&type=lgns

It's still not as bad (or embarrassing) as some of these incidents from athletes in other sports over the years: <http://www.extremeskins.com/showthread.php?t=104002>

Two words: *old school*: http://cgi.ebay.com/SC-STINGGRAYS-HOCKEY-ECHL-WIND-JACKET-XXL-NWT_W00QitemZ150314871775QQcmdZViewItemQQptZUS_SM_Fan_Shop?hash=item150314871775&trksid=p3286.c0.m14&trkparms=72%3A1205%7C66%3A2%7C65%3A12%7C39%3A1%7C240%3A1318%7C301%3A1%7C293%3A1%7C294%3A50

Former Stingrays scrapper Eric Labelle, now playing for the LNAH's Trois-Rivieres, ranks third on the club with eight fighting majors this season. In 22 games with South Carolina in 2005-06, Labelle racked up 90 penalty minutes.

"My goal is to deny yours." – Hockey Saying

-Joe

joe@stingrayshockey.com

12-16-08

It was nearly one year ago – Dec. 19, 2007, to be exact – when Chris Chaput recorded the last 4-goal game for the Stingrays. Just in case you were wondering...

Mike Brodeur, who was left searching for a new home after the Augusta Lynx went belly up, was named AHL Player of the Week yesterday: http://www.theahl.com/news/league/index.html?article_id=9167

The New York Rangers' Brandon Dubinsky sure knows how to pick a winner, eh?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW9UinAYWpA>

Former NHL'er Sean Pronger, the older brother of All-Star defenseman Chris Pronger, gives readers a humorous glimpse of the life of a healthy scratch: <http://www.thehockeynews.com/articles/21217-Sean-Prongers-Blog-Life-as-a-healthy-scratch.html>

The Columbia Inferno may no longer be in the ECHL (at least for now), but Stingrays fans can add a seven-year-old collectible commemorating their first-ever meeting with their Palmetto State rival: http://cgi.ebay.com/Columbia-Inferno-ECHL-Hockey-Puck-2001-Inagural-Game_W0QQitemZ350140772372QQcmdZViewItemQQptZUS_SM_Fan_Shop?hash=item350140772372&trksid=p3286.c0.m14&trkparms=72%3A1205%7C66%3A2%7C65%3A12%7C39%3A1%7C240%3A1318%7C301%3A1%7C293%3A1%7C294%3A50

Some great recollections in this article about the "Aud," the former home of the Buffalo Sabres: <http://msn.foxsports.com/nhl/story/8933490/Buffalo's-Aud-has-grand-old-memories>

Here's some video of a brawl from the Cardiff Devils-Sheffield Steelers game the other night, courtesy of the BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/other_sports/ice_hockey/7770014.stm

The reason I added the link is that former Rays netminder Jody Lehman is mentioned in the article and video...and I'm sure Stingrays fans can recall a time or two Lehman when engaged in fisticuffs.

A new Behind the Bench with Bednar will be posted by early this afternoon.

"Our first priority was staying alive. Our second was stopping the puck." – Glenn Hall

-Joe

joe@stingrayshockey.com

12-19-08

It'll be great seeing some new blood this weekend, with the Elmira Jackals making their first-ever trek to the Lowcountry tonight and tomorrow. Hopefully the Rays can translate some of their road success into victory on home ice, where they've mustered just a 4-4-0-1 mark this season. Getting Michal Neuvirth, Maxime Lacroix and Viktor Dovgan back from Hershey certainly helps.

Here's a story I found Wednesday on Yahoo! NHL, on why the Washington Capitals aren't happy with just winning games: http://sports.yahoo.com/nhl/news;_ylt=Av7vy.V_vFNfOdI4MxFjOFBW2bYF?slug=ap-surgincapitals&prov=ap&type=lgns

With Simeon Varlamov getting the start (and win) in last night's 4-2 win over the St. Louis Blues, there's a good chance Bobby Goepfert will get the nod in goal for the Hershey Bears this evening in Wilkes-Barre. Hopefully the players, staff and management arrive safely and on time, since a pending winter storm is expected to dump 5-8 inches of snow on Northeast PA.

The American Hockey League has opened the polls for voting on this season's All-Star Game, which will be held in Worcester, MA: <http://www.theahl.com/balloting/>

Several former Stingrays are on the ballot, including Andrew Gordon, Jamie Fraser, Deryk Engelland, and Dave Spina. Heck, even Grant McNeill is on the ballot.

Former Stingrays netminder Daren Machesney was selected this week to represent Canada at this year's Spengler Cup, which, according to Wikipedia, "is the second-oldest international ice hockey club team tournament." According to the Bears' press release, Machesney "will take leave of the team on December 26, and miss home games against Binghamton and Albany on December 27 and 28, and also the December 31 game in Springfield against the Falcons. Machesney is expected to return in time for Hershey's game in Providence on January 2."

Thank goodness Mats Sundin has finally made the decision as to where he will play this season. I really was getting tired of seeing the daily "Where will he sign?" updates on virtually every major hockey media outlet. Now we can move on to more serious questions, like "Who sports the NHL's best 'stache?"

USA Today put together a gallery of all the new alternate-style NHL jerseys debuting this season: http://www.usatoday.com/sports/hockey/nhl/2008-09_season/flash.htm?gid=720&aid=3861

For my money, you can't go wrong with the retro versions worn by the Flyers and Leafs, or any of the Original and Second Six teams for that matter. At the other end of the spectrum, however, are the

Tampa Bay Lightning and Ottawa Senators sweaters, which lack any originality with their respective "SENS" and "BOLTS" crests.

Darren Ritchie, who spent a portion of the 1995-96 campaign with South Carolina, is in his second season as assistant coach with the WHL's Brandon Wheat Kings.

"You don't have enough talent to win on talent alone." – Herb Brooks, 1980 US Olympic Hockey Coach

-Joe

joe@stingrayshockey.com

12-23-08

Nate Kiser needs just five penalty minutes to tie Marc Tardif for third place in team history. In 258 career games with the Rays, "Big Nasty" has amassed 815 PIMs, and currently leads the club with 77 minutes spent in the "sin bin" this season. Tardif, who played with South Carolina from 1995-2000, accumulated 820 penalty minutes in 220 contests.

Congratulations to Hershey Bears broadcaster John Walton, who got the chance to call the second period of last Thursday's Capitals-Blues game for KMOX. JW planned to take in the game simply as a spectator, but got "called up" when asked by Blues radio play-by-play broadcaster Chris Kerber. You can read all about his unforgettable night on his website: <http://johnwaltonhockey.blogspot.com/2008/12/20-minutes-in-heaven.html>

The Lady Byng Trophy is awarded each year to the NHL player "adjudged to have exhibited the best type of sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct combined with a high standard of playing ability."

So I guess that eliminates Sidney Crosby from this year's potential candidates:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wqR17KrLKw>

Whoops: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZAgccYTjvE&feature=related>

Without further ado I proudly present to you the 1st Annual Barbs & Blurbs Holiday All-Name Team

D – Kevin Christmas
D – Phil Youngclaus
F – Heinrich Santa
F – Robert Snowball
F – Boyd Kane
G – Mark "Trees" Laforest

Head Coach – Claude Noel

Just missing the cut: Zach Ham, Kevin Turkey, Garth Snow, Matt Jolly, Calvin Elfring, Tyler Chestnut, Ozzie Toy

Whether you're celebrating Christmas, Chanukah, or Festivus, make it a safe and enjoyable one!

"I'm not dirty, just aggressive. Fighter pilots have machine guns, I only have my mask and stick." - Gerry Cheevers

-Joe

joe@stingrayshockey.com