

## BETWEEN THE LINES

## Souray saga continues to drag on as Oilers have yet to make a trade

With Edmonton Oilers training camp less than a month away, disgruntled defenceman Sheldon Souray still does not have a change of address and free-agent centres Sam Gagner and Andrew Cogliano do not have contracts. There is a gulf between what the Oilers and best buddies Gagner and Cogliano believe they are worth after three seasons of playing in the NHL. But the Souray soap opera is a much pricklier situation. "We're still trying hard to make a deal ... I don't want to go there yet," general man-

ager Steve Tambellini said of Souray becoming a major training camp distraction. There is not a long lineup of suitors chasing Souray mainly because the blue-liner has two years left on his hefty contract at US\$5.4-million a season. Souray, who cleared waivers with no takers weeks ago, has been mentioned just about everywhere in trade rumours. The latest has the Washington Capitals getting the Elk Point, Alta., product for forward Tomas Fleischmann. *Jim Matheson, Postmedia News*

## THE HOCKEY SUMMIT

## Don't expect much from this summit

Agenda is light on hockey's most pressing issues



BRUCE ARTHUR  
in Toronto

No sport is so obsessed with itself, and with alternately fixing and/or papering over its imperfections, as hockey, at least in this country. And so in Canada, we manage to never stop talking about the game, one way or another.

No, really. Between the NHL and the Olympics and the playoffs and free agency and Ilya Kovalchuk's contract drama and Tomas Kaberle's trade window and Olli Jokinen's return to Calgary — so funny that even Michael Bublé has made fun of it — we have managed to fill almost every gap in the 2010 calendar with hockey talk. Frankly, we should all probably take a week or two, and maybe more, to think about something else. Like, say, the census. Or our mothers. Anything, really.

Not this week, though, as the World Hockey Summit convenes in Toronto. Four days of delving into the issues that afflict the game, with stakeholders from all over hockey assembled in one place to solve some problems. Or, um, not.

Either way, there will be plenty of talk. There will be question-and-answer sessions and panel discussions — there were four last night — and more panel discussions, and quite a few continental breakfasts. They will talk about the state of the game, the potentially pernicious effect of agents on some young players, and relations between the NHL and Russia's Continental Hockey League. They will review the 2010 Olympics, and whether a World Cup can and should be shoehorned into the global schedule. (Answer: As long as the NHL allows its players to participate in the Olympics, why bother?)

But like the game itself, this summit could use some fixing. It's great that they are going to discuss things, even if it's more likely that any progress will be fueled by healthy debate over a few beers after the panels are over than it will during the panels themselves. Putting everybody in the same room is usually a good thing, unless it is the NHL and its players negotiating a CBA, or the players trying to choose a leader.

But this Hockey Summit is not a United Nations of hockey, with binding resolutions. It's talk. It's a show. Yes, the various distinguished panelists involved are probably here with pure intent and so forth, but there is a reason it costs \$450 for a four-day pass, or \$150 for last night's four panels. We care far too much about hockey sometimes. And that two-week break should be legislated, as soon as they fix that census thing.

When you examine the guts of this summit, you find plenty missing, and plenty that could be improved. What are the most pressing issues in hockey?

Here's one list: head injuries; fighting; the continued participation of NHL players in the Olympics; relations between the NHL and the Kontinental Hockey League; the spectre of performance-enhancing drugs; the increasing difficulty in getting kids to play; the difficulties in growing the game globally; the battle for players between the NCAA and junior hockey in Canada; and while we're at it, the fact that more than one NHL franchise is billowing financial smoke, under which you are likely to find a stack of money being metaphorically set on fire.

Of those issues — the last of which is NHL-centric, yes, but which is likely to have a great effect on the world's best players, and the most important league in the world — the NHL-KHL issue will be discussed. There will be talk of why the competitive level of the men's game seems to be declining internationally.

But the rest won't make the agenda except by happenstance, or as part of a bigger issue. The NCAA's big men were not even invited. Fighting and head shots are afterthoughts. They are going to spend the final day of the summit discussing the future of women's hockey after the 2010 Olympics, during which International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge suggested on the day of the gold-medal game that the sport could be dropped due to the lopsided nature of the international game.

Well, the panellists on the subject hail from Canada (gold medal), the United States (silver medal), Finland (bronze medal), and Sweden (fourth place). Solid metaphor, that.

No, it feels more like something cooked up to talk about the non-threatening parts of the game, the transactions and the architecture and the business, with sponsorship by Molson, while selling tickets and operating a trade show on the side.

Maybe we just have hopes that are too high; maybe we expect the United Nations, and get the G-8 instead. The people in charge are in charge for a reason, and the problems with hockey are problems for a reason.

It's nice that they are going to get together and talk, and maybe all that talk will produce a germ of a solution, the first few feet of a smoother road.

But don't expect too much. At the last such summit in 1999, convened in the wake of Canada's disaster in Nagano, keynote speaker Ken Dryden said, "This is the kind of event that only really happens when there's an excuse for it to happen, and the excuse is that we have come to the end of the century, and it's a great opportunity to look at where we've been, where we are and where we think we're going next."

There's no such excuse here, no such common cause. There is just the game, and the selling of the game, and some non-binding discussion. The last summit was about finding the beginning of a new era. This one, it seems, is the extension of the current one. That's fine, and all. It's just not the start, or the end, of the world.

National Post

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## NHL NOTEBOOK

The Chicago Blackhawks may soon have a resolution to one of their major salary cap problems. Goaltender **Cristobal Huet**, who served as a backup to Antti Niemi during the National Hockey League team's Stanley Cup run, is likely to join Swiss team Fribourg-Gotteron, according to Swiss website 20 Minutes Online. "We've talked, but it's not definitive at this point," Huet's agent, Stephen Bartlett, told ESPNChicago.com. "We'll know if it will happen probably in the next couple of days." The Hawks owe Huet more than US\$11-million over the next two seasons. If he is loaned to the Swiss league, Chicago will still need to pay his salary, but his US\$5.6-million cap figure will come off the books. Huet playing in Europe "is probably the leading option right now," Bartlett told The Chicago Tribune yesterday. "Before he can be assigned anywhere we have to finalize the agreement, he has to clear waivers and be assigned over there." The Hawks have been unable to find another NHL home for Huet, opening the door to the European option. "We still have several things that have to happen before Europe really becomes a final consideration," Bartlett said.

National Post, with files from Postmedia News



JUSTIN K. ALLER / GETTY IMAGES

The Hockey Summit fails to talk about pressing issues in the game this year, like head injuries. In March, Boston's Marc Savard, pictured, suffered a serious concussion at the hands of Pittsburgh's Matt Cooke.



## A GRAND SLAM IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PROSTATE CANCER

At the recent Rogers Cup in Toronto, 377 men took advantage of free PSA blood tests from Prostate Cancer Canada.

During their lifetime, 1 in 6 Canadian men will be diagnosed with the disease. Over 90% of prostate cancer cases are curable if detected and treated in their earliest stages. We encourage men from age 40 to talk to their doctor about the risk of prostate cancer.

Thanks to Tennis Canada for their support in helping raise awareness of prostate cancer - the most common cancer to afflict Canadian men.

If we are united across Canada in the fight against prostate cancer, we will win - game, set and match.

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