

NHL: Back on, and off to a wild start

Written by Chris Jennings, Sports Columnist
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This is what it's all about. Close finishes, exciting goals and a lot of passion. The NHL finally returned this weekend and provided fans with all of the above. As an avid hockey fan, it's hard to pick what I enjoyed most about this weekend, but I'll give it a go.

Old-timers making an impact

While all eyes were on the usual batch of young superstars, it was the grizzled veterans of the NHL that provided some of the most thrilling entertainment over the weekend.

Teemu Selanne, 42, of the Anaheim Ducks, put up four points (2G, 2A) in the Ducks' first game of the season. Selanne, who's led the NHL in goals three times over his long career, is currently the oldest player in the NHL.

Jaromir Jagr, 40, of the Dallas Stars also finished with two goals and two assists in his first game as a Star. One of those assists went to Ray Whitney, another 40 year-old and first-time Dallas Star, who put a nice snapshot past Phoenix goalie (and former teammate) Mike Smith. I can't make this stuff up.

And finally, there's Martin Brodeur. Old Marty Brody is entering season number 21 with the New Jersey Devils and he started it by picking up a 2-1 win against the New York Islanders on Saturday. Brodeur is one of my favorite goalies of all-time, and he continues to exhibit an incredible touch.

How can you not be impressed by these guys? They are all-around classy players that play the game the way it was meant to be played and are completely ageless. My hat goes off to all of them and I hope they are still around for years to come.

Blackhawks, Blackhawks and more Blackhawks

I apologize to all of my loyal Twitter followers this weekend as I constantly bombarded your timelines with endless Blackhawks commentary and retweets. Needless to say, it was an exciting weekend to be a Hawks fan.

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Marian Hossa's four goals were easily the highlight of my weekend. Seeing Big Hoss light the lamp made me extremely giddy and reassured all Hawks fans that the concussion he suffered last May doesn't seem to be affecting him. He was a key factor in both wins, so it's nice to see him back.

Another great moment for Hawks fans was seeing Phoenix goalie Mike Smith absolutely lose it on Sunday night, smashing his stick against the post after he gave up another weak goal en route to a 6-4 Hawks win. Smith's crybaby antics are always funny to watch, and with two more games against Phoenix this year, I can't wait to see it happen again.

Canucks, Rangers flounder

Both of these teams were projected to start very strongly, but it didn't happen. Consequently, each team now sits in a 0-2 hole.

The Canucks, for whatever reason, can't seem to figure out their goaltending. After finally appointing Cory Schneider starting goalie, Schneider gave up five goals on opening night and was pulled in favor of the ever-inconsistent Roberto Luongo. Luongo didn't fare much better, giving up a pair of goals to the Ducks and losing in a shootout to the Oilers the next day. Talk about a circus.

Meanwhile, the Rangers welcomed new star Rick Nash by losing in bad fashion to the Bruins and Penguins. In addition, last year's Venzina winner, Henrik Lundqvist, was pulled in the loss to the Penguins. Lundqvist let up four goals as a result of the Rangers sloppy defense. It's not looking good right now for the Rangers, whom many predicted would win the Stanley Cup.

Regardless of wins and losses, it was a fine start to the season, and with multiple games being played every night from here until the end of April, there will be no time for fans to catch their breath. Fine with me. The best sport in the world is back, and I'm ready.