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OH, SO DELICIOUS: FLAMES-OILERS PLAYOFF A POSSIBILITY

If an Oilers-Flames regular-season game in, say, mid-January is billed as the Battle of Alberta, what explosive description could be given to a seven-game series between two of the National Hockey League's most bitter rivals?

There are still close to 20 games to play for every NHL team, but both the Flames and Oilers are in solid playoff position and if one of them finishes first in the Pacific Division (a very real possibility) and the other one finishes as the second wildcard team (another real possibility), or if they finish 2-3 in the Pacific Division, then the first round of the playoffs could feature this hockey war to end all wars.

Could Canadian hockey fans stomach a Matthew Tkachuk-Zack Kassian clash night after night for seven games? Would there be enough St. John Ambulance personnel to staff a seven-game series with Milan Lucic running at everything wearing an Oilers' jersey? Maybe they can arrange for the two starting goalies to do battle at centre ice during the pregame warmup just to get it out of the way. Would Mayor Naheed Nenshi skip the traditional good-humoured 'wager' with Edmonton mayor Don Iveson and go for the throat? Would the end-of-series congratulatory handshake line turn into a full-scale brawl? Would there be space in the bowels of Rogers Place and Scotiabank Saddledome for the fleet of ambulances such a series would require?

The provincial rivals haven't met in a playoff series since 1991 — 29 years ago, back when Wayne Gretzky, by then no longer an Oiler, was only 30 years old. Only a handful of players on the current Edmonton and Calgary rosters were even alive when that ancient series, won by the Oilers, took place. The two teams didn't hate each other as much as they do today and while that 1991 affair took on a higher level of interest because it was two provincial rivals competing, a recurrence in April of 2020 would attract international attention.

This would be such an epic battle, more than merely advancing to the second round should be at stake. How about this? Loser has to leave Alberta and become part of Saskatchewan.

- **Janice Hough** of leftcoastsportsbabe.com, on former Stampeder cornerback **Tre Roberson** considering nine offers before signing with the Chicago Bears: "Because Chicago is most likely to give him that sub-zero game-day weather he's gotten used to in Calgary."
- **Greg Cote** of The Miami Herald, on **Derek Jeter's** near-unanimous election to the Baseball Hall of Fame: "Jeter is best known of course as the Miami Marlins president, although reportedly also played several years with the Yankees."
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "**Madison Bumgarner's** former housekeeper — who pleaded guilty to possession of stolen property after she sold one of the pitcher's wife's \$45,000 diamond earrings to a jeweller — was sentenced to 100 hours of community service and 30 months of probation. Not to mention MLB's first 'caught stealing' of 2020."
- **Norman Chad** of the Washington Post, analyzing the work of analyst **Greg McElroy**, during the opening day of the XFL season: "McElroy was intent on emphasizing that these players were THIS CLOSE to being in the NFL, much as I am THIS CLOSE to writing for the New York Times."
- **Patti Dawn Swansson**, the River City Renegade, referring to the news blackout over the **Dustin Byfuglien/Winnipeg Jets** situation: "Byfuglien takes his right to remain silent more seriously than a guy handcuffed in the back seat of a cop car."
- **Michael Rosenberg** in Sports Illustrated, reviewing sports over the past decade: "The 2010s were a wild decade in sports — nobody knew what was coming, except the Astros."
- **Bob Molinaro** of pilotonline.com (Hampton, Va.): "Tampa Bay Bucs quarterback **Jameis Winston** recently underwent Lasik surgery to fix his nearsightedness. Seeing as how he led the league with 30 interceptions, maybe he's also colour-blind."
- **@AdamRank**, on Twitter: "**Jameis Winston** got LASIK surgery and now has perfect 30/30 vision."
- **Mike Bianchi** of the Orlando Sentinel: "I'm not saying **Antonio Brown** is going overboard with apologies, but I think he just said, 'I'm sorry,' to Major League Baseball for the Houston Astros stealing signs."
- **Dwight Perry** again: "San Francisco has been named the healthiest city in the U.S., according to WalletHub number-crunchers. At least it was until the final nine minutes of Super Bowl LIV."
- Another one from Perry: Red-faced Target officials apologized after four Twin Cities stores offered 'Minnesota Badgers' onesies for sale. No word on how the fresh shipment of 'Green Bay Vikings' kiddie shirts is selling in Milwaukee."
- **RJ Currie** of Sportsdeke.com, among his list of unlikely sponsorship deals: "**Alex Ovechkin**: American Dental Association. ... **Tiger Woods**: Fidelity Investments. ... **Michael Vick**: Fido."

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