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DEPTH GIVES CANADA EDGE ON ICE OVER U.S.

There's a reason Canada is No. 1 when it comes to North American hockey.

Depth.

The United States comes close to matching Canada when comparing the top six forwards, but it's the secondary lines and depth on defence that puts Canada into the driver's seat.

Last week, we put forth the hypothesis that a major international hockey tournament was approaching and 22-player teams from Canada and the U.S. had to be picked. Last week was Canada. This week it's the Americans' turn.

At centre, the U.S. with Auston Matthews and Jack Eichel compares favourably with Canada's best, Connor McDavid and Nathan MacKinnon. But the next two centres for the U.S. — J.T. Miller and rookie Jack Hughes — don't come close.

On the left side, the Americans could boast the quartet of Jake Guentzel, Max Pacioretty, Kyle Connor and Johnny Gaudreau ... not bad, and equal or perhaps superior to the top four Canadians at that position (Marchand, Huberdeau, Perron, Hall).

On the right side, the U.S. would start with superstar Patrick Kane and then fall off to Brock Boeser, Blake Wheeler and Clayton Keller. (Canada's Scheifele, Stone, Marnier and Konecny is a far stronger group.)

Cracking the U.S. squad on defence would be John Carlson, Keith Yandle, Ryan Suter, Seth Jones, rookie Quinn Hughes, Tony DeAngelo and Jacob Trouba, leaving Torey Krug and Kevin Shattenkirk as spare parts.

The American team would be strong in goal, with Connor Hellebuyck, a Vezina Trophy contender this year, probably the No. 1 guy. Backing him up would be Ben Bishop and John Gibson.

These two fictitious North American squads would battle it out in a best-of-seven series with Canada winning in five. Canada's four wins would come from talent, grit, depth and history. The U.S. gets its one victory from flag-waving enthusiasm.

• Ex-USC QB **Carson Palmer**, to the L.A. Times, on the condition of his 2002 Heisman Trophy: "The base of it is beat up. It looks like it's played in a game, like the Bengals' offensive line has pass-protected for it."

• **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "Not that football needs another rule or anything, but any player who goes nuts celebrating a first down, a touchdown or a turnover — when his team is trailing by three or more scores — should get flagged 15 yards for stupidity."

• Tottenham coach **Jose Mourinho**, to reporters, after getting booked by referee **Mike Dean** during a 1-0 loss to Southampton: "I clearly deserved the yellow card, as I was rude. But I was rude to an idiot."

• **Greg Cote** of the Miami Herald: "The underperforming Cowboys finally fired coach **Jason Garrett**. Prominent among the possible replacements being interviewed: **Mike McCarthy** and **Marvin Lewis**. Good to see that **Jerry Jones** believes in recycling."

• **Norman Chad** of the Washington Post, on Twitter: "Eagles won final four games of regular season — against NFC East teams. That's like winning a 100-yard dash against a snail, a caterpillar and a fire hydrant."

• Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: "Iran launched 20 long-range missiles at two US bases but did not hit any key targets."

We're calling it Operation New York Knicks."

• Vancouver radio comedy guy **Torben Rolfsen**: "Sign your team is tanking: When your D gives up a touchdown and gets flagged for an excessive celebration penalty."

• Rolfsen again: "What a winter for agent **Scott Boras**. Every Christmas he celebrates the birthday of **Curt Flood**."

• You have to know your sports history to understand this crack from blogger **Eric Stangel**, on Twitter: "I mean, if the Expos can win the damn World Series, why couldn't the Oilers win the Super Bowl?"

• Stangel again: "Looking to fill the vacancy, I'm hearing **Josh McDaniels** is to meet with the royal family Tuesday."

• **Dwight Perry** again: "**Casey DeSmith** just coined a new hockey term: The stay-at-home goaltender. DeSmith, the netminder for the minor-league Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins, missed out on a call-up to join the parent Pittsburgh team in Montreal because he misplaced his passport. You know what they say in puck circles: It pays to forecheck."

• **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com, on **Jeanne Calment** — who died at age 122 in 1997 — attributing her longevity to olive oil, port and 'regular smiling': "Oh, well; at least Bill Belichick can buy olive oil and port."

• **Mike Hart** of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, on the age discrepancy between Seahawks coach **Pete Carroll** (68) and the Packers' **Matt LaFleur** (40) on the eve of the teams' recent NFC playoff game: "It is quite possible that LaFleur's parents weren't even going steady when Carroll began coaching."

• Comedy writer **Jim Barach**, after West Virginia basketball coach **Bob Huggins** was fined \$10,000 for calling referees "Three Blind Mice": "Unfortunately for him they weren't also deaf."

Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca