

Eye On Sports

The Philadelphia Flyers begin rebuilding for the future

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This season has not gone according to plan for the Philadelphia Flyers. At the beginning of the season, the Flyers were thought to be a contender for the Atlantic Division crown and an obvious pick to make the playoffs. However, this season has seen the Flyers hit rock bottom; they are in last place in the National Hockey League (NHL).

On February 27, the NHL trade deadline expires. All 30 NHL teams have until this date to try to trade players and draft picks with other teams. Each team's place in the standings determines what teams will be looking to upgrade their rosters (buyers) and what teams are likely to try to acquire young talent and draft picks by trading away their veteran players (sellers).

The Philadelphia Flyers, who are used to being buyers, are sellers this year after

a very disappointing season. Flyers' forward Peter Forsberg, heavily regarded as one of the best hockey players in the world, and was the biggest name across the league that was eligible to be traded. The Flyers were looking to pick up some young players with promising futures to begin rebuilding for next year.

On February 15, the Flyers traded Peter Forsberg to the Nashville Predators, one of the top teams in the league, for forward Scottie Upshall, defensive prospect Ryan Parent, and first and third round draft picks in the 2007 NHL Entry Draft.

Forsberg, 33, was signed as a free agent after the lockout on August 3, 2005, to try to bring the Stanley Cup back to



Photo from NHL.com

Philadelphia. He had scored 30 goals and 86 assists for 116 points during his 100 games as a Flyer. This season, however, he was severely hampered by foot problems following surgery during the summer of 2006. Rumors circulated throughout the league about likely trade destinations for Forsberg for much of the season. Nashville was the team that gave the Flyers the best offer. Nashville hopes that Forsberg has solved his foot problems after seeing many doctors in the United States, Canada, and his native Sweden trying

to find a solution.

Upshall, 23, was drafted by Nashville sixth overall in the 2002 entry draft. He has played a total of 77 games for the

Predators during the last four seasons, during which he has 11 goals and 18 assists for 29 points.

Parent, 19, is regarded as a top defensive prospect. He is currently playing in the Ontario Hockey League in Canada to prepare for an NHL career. He was drafted eighteenth overall in the 2005 entry draft. His most impressive credentials are being a member of the gold medal winning Canada National Teams during the World Junior Championships in 2006 and 2007.

Upshall and Parent have bright futures, but what could perhaps be icing on the cake for the Flyers is that Forsberg has said he may return to the Flyers when his contract with the Predators expires in July.

Before the February 27 trade deadline, more trades are possible for the Flyers. The Peter Forsberg trade is only the beginning of the Flyers' rebuilding. Hopefully the Flyers will be back as contenders for the Stanley Cup sooner, rather than later.

Miller is Burning....on the Broad Street 'Playmakers'

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The Andy Reid family drama is the latest 'arrested' development in the world of Philadelphia sports management. The case of Reid's two eldest sons, Garrett and Brit, have overshadowed the Eagles' head coach's questionable decision to punt on 4th down with two minutes to go in the NFC Divisional Playoff against New Orleans in January.

However Reid's personal affairs are none of our business.

What is our business are those ticket prices for Eagles and Flyers games because they're the worst. One nose bleed seat at either the Link or the Wachovia Center will run you a hundred dollars easily. And it's all thanks to men like Jeffrey Lurie and Ed Snider who continually preach that they want their teams go all the way but are more than satisfied with hefty profit courtesy of you, the fans.

Putting the soaring ticket prices aside, let's talk about General Managers, specifically Bob Clarke and Billy King. Clarke supposedly had some kind of breakdown last summer because the Flyers had failed to make it through round one of the 2006 playoffs despite his popular signing of NHL superstar Peter Forsberg. But apparently he still felt confident until seven games into the current season when he suddenly resigned. Clarke is gone forever right? Wrong. He was hired six weeks later by the Flyers as Senior Vice President. I think Clarke has set a record for how many times he's been fired and hired by the same organization.

Sixers' GM, Billy King, put up with Allen Iverson so many times since the Sixers blew it against the Lakers in 2001 that he had to trade him to save the team's life. What's happened? We got a couple of first round draft picks which may yield nothing and someone named Andre Miller. King could have traded Iverson so many times but instead the Sixers have gone through four coaches

since Larry Brown departed four years ago. And let's not forget how Pat Croce was railroaded out of Philadelphia. He wanted to buy the Sixers and Flyers from Ed Snider but Snider slammed the door in Croce's face.

All of these miscalculations do not even come close as to how the Phillies operate. In the last 20 years the Phillies have made the playoffs once in 1993. We all know what happened that year. Scott Rolen couldn't withstand the onslaught of the fans for having Sundays off. Terry Francona, who just two years ago won the World Series with the Boston Red Sox didn't last long. Larry Bowa stuck his head out of the dug out one too many times and he got fired.

After so many years of coming up short, Ed Wade finally was ousted at the end of the 2005 season. But in comes Pat Gillick, and what does he do? He panics at the trade deadline and sends away Bobby Abreu, a hitter with a high priced contract, and not Pat Burrell who can't hit the broad side of a barn.

Whether it be coaches, GMs, grumpy old owners, or even players, life as a part of a Philadelphia professional sports team is tough. If one thing is certain, it is the fact that if you don't perform, you, as Harry Kalas would say, are "outta here!" I give the Eagles credit for staying under the radar. It was that whole T.O. mess that brought them into the national spotlight.

We unfortunately are witnessing how low our favorite Philadelphia teams are sinking. If men like Ed Snider, Billy King, Ed Wade, and Andy Reid had woken up a little sooner and not let their egos get in the way of running their respective teams the right way instead of the most profitable way, we the fans might actually be getting our money's worth.

The Eagles and Andy Reid are the exception. At least they managed to crawl out of a 5-6 hole and go deep in the playoffs. Try that Flyers and Sixers! Phillies, you just stop losing the Wild Card birth the last weekend of the season.

Delco Athletics Update

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Women's Basketball: The Lady Lions finished up their regular season with a win over PSU Scranton. It was Senior Night and Dana Johnson was honored. Dana is the first four year basketball player for the Lions and she holds the Delco scoring record with over 1,500 collegiate points. Our Lions finished the season with an 13 game winning streak; they were 18-5 overall and 12-1 in league play. The women received a bye in the playoffs and will be headed to University Park on March 9th to play in the "Final Four". The following players are members of this year's team: Dana Johnson; Megan Russo; Cara Zibelman; Deanna Gineitis; Angelle Green; Katie Martin; Tiesha Dunlap; Samantha Matthews; Tiffany Ragins-Morris; Athena Nikolos; Comfort Ibare-Jones. Make sure you wish our Lions well as they get ready to head to "The Park."

Men's Basketball: The Men's basketball team has been fighting their way through an improved PSUAC this year. Five teams have 14 or more wins. The final game of the season saw our Lions rip through Scranton. The highlight of the night was when Tim Forrest was honored as the team's only senior and then went out and scored his 1,000th career point. Tim received the game ball which he turned around and gave to his parents. The Lions are making a playoff appearance for the 2nd straight year but will have to win their way to University Park. Our Lions are the 5th seed and will play PSU Hazleton away on March 5th. The team finished 17-8 overall and 14-4 in league play. This year's team is comprised of: Tim Forrest; Josh Etheridge; Jamil Nelson; Andrew Thornton; Jeff Gardiner; Sean Sweeny; John Valentik; Oluwaseun Afuwape; Taron Franklin; Kyle Haggerty; Pat Harron; Dustin Jacquette; Ryan McAndrews.

Baseball: The baseball team has begun indoor practice. The first game will be on March 7th at 2:30 weather and field conditions permitting.