

Eye on Sports

Concerns Arising for the Orange and Black

By Dave Hoffer - *Lion's Eye Staff Writer* - deh5081@psu.edu

With the arrival of playoff hockey just one month away, the Flyers are sitting pretty. Leading the Atlantic Division and the Eastern Conference, the Flyers are heavy favorites to duplicate their run from last year en route to capturing the Stanley Cup. However, not all well for the Orange and Black. With the possibility of meeting the Tampa Bay Lightning or the Pittsburgh Penguins in the postseason, two teams the Flyers have struggled with in recent playoffs years, the team must be clicking on all cylinders. In order to do that, there are three key areas the Flyers will need focus on.

Power Play













So far for the month of February, the Flyers have averaged just over 2 goals a game, a far cry from the copious amount of goals they racked up to start the season. A big part in that drop in goal production stems from the struggles on the power play. Currently, the Flyers are ranked 18th in the NHL on the man advantage. They are 17th amongst home teams and 19th amongst road teams. Lately, all line and personnel combinations have failed to deliver consistency in scoring power play goals. The line of Jeff Carter, Mike Richards, and Ville Leino has shown little chemistry and a tendency to try and do too much while on the ice. The second unit of Danny Briere, Scott Hartnell, and Claude Giroux has also not jelled quite as well as one would think. James van Riemsdyk and Andreas Nodl have also been used in power play situations, but have not been effective. One solution to the power play troubles may currently be stalking the blue line. Chris Pronger can work wonders as a havoc creating big man in front of the net much like John LeClair, Mike Knuble and even Derian Hatcher were on the man advantage.

Line Combinations

With the loss of little used forward Nikolay Zherdev, the Flyers dept at offense has shrunk considerably compared to when "Z" was in the lineup. Before, the line of Zherdev, Carter, and Giroux could be counted on as a solid 3rd line. Now, with the insertion of Jody Shelly or Dan Carcillo, Carter and Giroux now will try and produce with a line mate more known for his fists than scoring touch. Lately, Coach Laviolette has experimented with different combinations including pairing Carter and Richards and replacing Hartnell or Leino on Briere's line, much like he does on the power play. So far, like the power play, neither move has made the recent struggles of goal scoring subside. Despite the line combinations, key players need to get going. Andreas Nodl, who has been a fixture on the top line with Richards and van Riemsdyk, has just 2 points in his last 13 games. Richards has just 7 points in his last 11 and JVR has just 5 in his last 10.

Playoff Starter

It wouldn't be a normal season for the Flyers if there wasn't some sort of goalie controversy. We all know the Flyers haven't have a definitive number one since the heyday of Hextall, but for the first time since Brian Boucher circa 1999, the Flyers hope that they have discovered a young diamond in the rough. That man is the man known as "Bob," Sergei Bobrovski. The 22 year old has shown amazing promise through the first half of the year, his first year in the NHL. Bob has started over 37 games and has a GAA of 2.45 and SV% of .918. On the flip side of the young stoic Bobrovski, is the crafty veteran Brian Boucher. Boucher is having a solid season in net starting over 22 games and posting a GAA of 2.26 and a SV% of .922. With over a decade of experience, amassed from half a dozen teams, the once journeyman goaltender is playing the most confident hockey in his carrier. Coach Laviolette has little over a month, barring injury, to hand the reigns of the net to one of his two solid goaltenders. Only time will tell if the raucous sold out Wells Fargo Center crowd will be chanting "BOB!" or "BOOOSH" in unison in round one of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

03/03	 Maple Leafs	vs.	Flyers 	- 07:00pm (ET)
03/05	 Sabres	vs.	Flyers 	- 01:00pm (ET)
03/06	 Flyers	vs.	Rangers 	- 12:30pm (ET)
03/08	 Oilers	vs.	Flyers 	- 07:00pm (ET)
03/10	 Flyers	vs.	Maple Leafs 	- 07:00pm (ET)
03/12	 Thrashers	vs.	Flyers 	- 07:00pm (ET)

Phillies Spring Training Update

By John Henry - *Lion's Eye Staff Writer* - jah5698@psu.edu

As the weather is beginning to warm up here, down in Clearwater Florida the Phillies have began warming up for the most anticipated season in quite some time.

Last year when Roy Halladay took the mound at Spring Training, we knew that he was going to do some pretty spectacular things for us. He didn't disappoint, he only threw a no hitter in his first playoff game ever and a perfect game in the regular season. But Ruben Amaro wasn't satisfied; he went out and got a familiar face in cliff Lee this offseason. This move bolstered the pitching rotation, which now consists of 4 aces and by the way, the best 5th starter on any team in Joe Blanton. By Ruben adding all this great pitching depth, he set the bar so high this year to be either parade or bust.

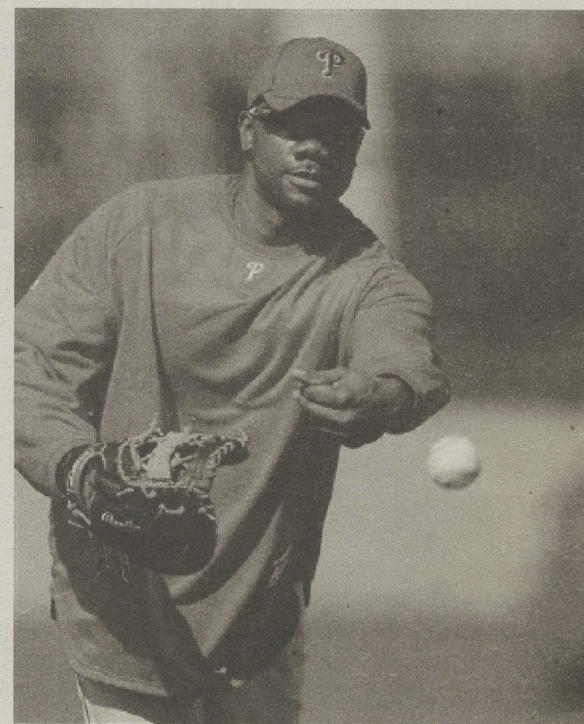
The Cliff Lee signing wasn't just about acquiring another ace, but bringing back a guy who didn't lose a game in the 2009 playoffs for us, and it turns out that he never wanted to leave here in the first place. He took less money to come here than New York, because he knew that the Phillies had a better team, and he loved playing here in front of these loud, energetic, loyal fans in 2009. Man, if you take a step back and think how great that is, turning down the New York Yankees, the most successful franchise in all of professional sports to come here, should put a huge smile on every Phillies fans face. Let's not forget about the offense though. Last year the whole offense was incon-

sistent throughout the whole year. I guess you can attribute the lack of offense to injuries, but nonetheless they were healthy during the postseason, and they were still a major reason for why they lost to the Giants in the playoffs. Utley, Howard and Rollins all had down years for their standards, and I think that we can expect all three of them to have solid bounce back years. Let's face it, we are going to be in almost every single game this year because of the dynamic pitching that we are going to be throwing out every single day, so that should take some of the pressure off of the offense. The biggest offensive question going into camp is whose going to be the starting right fielder on opening day? Is Dominic Brown ready to step up and become a full time every day starter? The other candidates include: Ross Gload, Ben Francisco and John Mayberry Jr. Charlie Manuel still has not decided yet, it is a position up for grabs, and whoever shines the most out of all four will most likely earn the job.

In the bullpen Brad Lidge and Ryan Madson are going to be pitching in a lot of games this year. Madson, known as "The Bridge to Lidge" needs to keep doing what he has done the past couple of years, by getting the game to Brad Lidge with the lead still intact. The average amount of innings that the aces are going to pitch is probably going to be about seven each game, so that's when Madson comes in. We can all see that Lidge is really fired up for this year to begin by

coming out and saying "We've gotta win this thing." Since the Phillies lost game 6 in the playoffs last year, Lidge said that he has thrown virtually every single day. Hopefully we see the '08 Lidge where he was perfect in save opportunities. It's great to hear a fired up Lidge going into the season; hopefully he can transition that attitude onto the field.

If the Phillies want to make it to the World Series this year, they cannot overlook the long, and grinding regular season. They know that they've gotta take a "one game at a time" attitude and to never take off games or down play to their opponents. If the Phils also stay, for the most part injury free, they will most likely be the best team in baseball throughout the whole year. The whole city is very hungry for one of the most anticipated seasons to begin, and hopefully the end result is sweet, not sour like last year.



Philadelphia Phillies' Ryan Howard (photo courtesy google.com)

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 vs BAL 1:05 PM	3 @ BOS 1:05 PM	4 @ PIT 1:05 PM	5 vs PIT 1:05 PM
