



Swedes teed up for big backup battle

Brad Ziemer – The Vancouver Sun (Saturday September 14, 2013)

[Lack appears favourite to 'watch' Luongo, but Eriksson making case for the crease](#)

Coach John Tortorella had a great Swedish goalie with the New York Rangers. He would settle for a good one with the Vancouver Canucks.

Eddie Lack and Joacim Eriksson won't be mistaken for Henrik Lundqvist, but one of them figures to emerge as Roberto Luongo's backup with the Canucks. At least, that's the hope. The Canucks are taking something of a gamble by not having a veteran with National Hockey League experience at camp to potentially step in as the No. 2 guy.

For now, they are content to let Lack and Eriksson battle it out. The two Swedes have combined to play zero NHL games and Lack, the favourite to win the job, is coming off major hip surgery and hasn't played a game since late November of last year.

Tortorella, who had an established veteran in Martin Biron as backup to Lundqvist in New York, said he's not worried about the lack of experience behind Luongo.

"I don't get nervous about things you can't control," the Canucks coach said on Friday. "This is what we have as far as our camp and so we'll let them fight it out. There is lot of things in this game you can't control. I am not going to get worried about it, we'll just go about our business."

Lack and Eriksson faced one another in the first scrimmage of training camp on Friday morning at Rogers Arena. Lack went the distance in leading Team White to a 4-1 win over Team Blue. Eriksson played only half the game and allowed one goal.

Tortorella acknowledged he does not know much about either player. "I thought Lack played well in the scrimmage game," he said. "We'll just let it play out."

While it was only a scrimmage, it almost felt like a playoff game for Lack. His

appearance Friday followed a lengthy rehab from surgery in January to repair a torn hip labrum.

"It was a fun game," Lack said. "Just to be out there and be able to compete again, it's a feeling I definitely missed."

The recovery was a long one for the 25-year-old Lack, who has been back on skates for the last 2 ½ months.

“First of all, it was just like a huge relief that everything went well and everything is working. Then it was just like so much fun being back again. I missed the daily routine and seeing shots and being with the guys in the locker- room and everything. It’s just so much fun.”

The job is probably Lack’s to lose. He was signed to a twoyear contract last summer and the final year of that pact — this season — is a one- way deal. The Canucks will pay him \$ 750,000 this season whether he plays here or with their new AHL affiliate in Utica, N. Y. Eriksson, who helped lead Skelleftea

to the Swedish Elite League championship last season, is on a two- way contract.

When Lack signed that contract, the Canucks were expecting he would get another full season of work in the AHL. But his injury threw a wrench into that plan.

Despite that setback, Lack insists he’s ready to make the jump to the NHL. “I always put the most pressure on myself,” he said. “I have done 2 ½ years in the minors now. I feel ready to step into the backup role here and be a support for Roberto.

“I had zero problem with my hip. My body feels 100 per cent and I feel strong out there.”

Barring a Luongo injury, the backup doesn’t figure to play a whole lot. Tortorella will ride Luongo much the way he did Lundqvist in New York. In his first couple of years with the Rangers, Lundqvist played 70- plus games. In recent years, Tortorella reduced that number to 60- plus.

“I think if you look at the goaltending, you look at the guys that get to the (Stanley Cup) finals and do what they have to do, you’re in that 60to 65- game area,” Tortorella said. “In this situation I know Roberto is going to be our No. 1 guy. I’m not sure where we are with our backup yet. We’ll formulate something as we break camp and see what we have.”

Lack and Eriksson will get long looks in pre- season and Tortorella acknowledged he will lean heavily on goaltending coach Rollie Melanson.

“I am staying out of the way,” Tortorella said. “I don’t know enough about the position. I have known Rollie a long time.

He is very good at conversing with me and just keeping me up- to- date as far as what he’s going to do and what’s coming ahead.”

Lack and Eriksson are friends and both say that friendship will endure no matter what happens over the next two or three weeks. “Outside the ice, we are good friends,” the 22- year- old Eriksson said. “On the ice, we compete hard and both want to be the goalie standing in the crease.”

“When we are on the ice we try to beat the other guy, but off the ice we are having dinner together just talking about a lot of stuff and having fun together,” Lack said.

ICE CHIPS: Lack has a picture of his father, Jan, on the back of his mask. “My dad is watching every game even though it’s 3 a. m. in Sweden, so I wanted him on there with me,” Lack said.

Santorelli feels at home trying to stick in Vancouver

Elliott Pap – The Vancouver Sun (Saturday September 14, 2013)

In the early going at Vancouver Canucks’ training camp, centre Mike Santorelli is proving it’s never too late.

On Wednesday, he finished first in the two- mile run, edging out the Sedin twins, which apparently was considered an upset. On Friday, he was one of the most prominent players in coach John Tortorella’s first training camp scrimmage.

This is good stuff for the 27- year- old from Burnaby, who thought he had found a hockey home with the Florida Panthers after scoring 20 goals for them in 2010- 11. But things went sour for Santorelli down south and he was waived last season. The Winnipeg Jets picked him up, played him for 10 games and then let him go.

Now he is truly home and a viable candidate to help solve

Vancouver’s muddled centre position. Only Brad Richardson, among the newbie contenders, has more experience than Santorelli.

“You dream of this opportunity when you’re a kid,” he said Friday. “I think every minor hockey player in Vancouver wants that

when growing up. The opportunity is here and I just want to show what I’ve got.”

Santorelli signed a one- year, two- way deal with the Canucks on July 6 and the two- way is usually an indication of the club’s plans: a ticket to the minors to start and maybe a

call- up when Ryan Kesler (or another centre) is hurt. Santorelli won’t allow himself to think that way.

Beating the Sedins in Wednesday’s run was a sign he means business.

“It was probably just a good day or something,” he said modestly. “I saw them and they were going at a pretty good pace and I was, like, I don’t think I can get them. So I just put the head down and kept going.”

Even better was his performance on the ice Friday. He was all over the puck, skating with it, moving it, and was noticeable on almost every one of his shifts. Other centre candidates Bo

Horvat, Brendan Gaunce and Kellan Lain were in the same scrimmage but didn't have the same impact.

"My mindset is every day is a new day and I just want to improve each and every day," said Santorelli. "Yeah, the scrimmage felt pretty good and

I want to build off it. I think each day is so important. If it's fitness testing, you have to show you're fit. If it's a scrimmage, you have to show you can compete."

He is more than willing to be a grinder if that is what's required. "The game nowadays is such a hard-nosed game and everybody has to be a checker," Santorelli said. "Everybody has to play that role or else you're not going to succeed. If I want to be here, I'll have to do that."

Port Coquitlam's Zach Hamill is in a similar fight for recognition within the Canuck organization. A one-time firstround pick of the Boston Bruins — eighth overall in 2007 — Hamill was never able to crack the Bruins' lineup as a regular. Last season, he wound up playing for Hershey, San Antonio and Milwaukee, none of them NHL teams.

‘ That damn Twitter’ dislike ushers in harsh side of Tortorella

Cam Cole – The Vancouver Sun (Saturday September 14, 2013)

Still, the idea of planting security men in the crowds at CenturyLink Field wearing San Francisco 49ers jerseys for this weekend's game in Seattle against the Seahawks — to gauge how badly visiting fans are abused by the locals — isn't a terrible idea. It's just odd that relatively genteel Seattle would be ground zero.

They may be over-reaching a bit, too, thinking they can stop "unruly, disruptive behaviour, intoxication, substance impairment, foul language, obscene gestures, verbal or physical harassment," and on and on.

It's all so NFL. The league that pretends to abhor gambling but

thrives on it now is going to tell fans who spend hours before games tailgating and getting publicly bombed that they must play nice with the other kids once inside the stadium.

The Raiders and Eagles might as well just stop selling tickets. **YOU COULD LOOK IT UP:** Fans of the great Mariano Rivera may have been outraged the other night when the legendary Yankees closer entered the game in the bottom of the ninth against Baltimore with a onerun lead, set the Orioles down 1- 2- 3, yet didn't get a save.

But it actually is the prerogative of the official scorer to award him the win, instead,

even though setup man David Robertson, who blew a three-run lead in the bottom of the eighth, was still technically the pitcher of record when the Yankees retook the lead in the top of the ninth. The scorer decided Robertson was lousy (he was) and didn't deserve the win, and he's allowed to award the victory to the most effective reliever to follow. It's a judgment call, one more reason a lot of official scorers retire with ulcers.

Call a difficult play a hit, and the pitcher is angry and you'll hear about it. Call it an error, and both the hitter and the fielder are incensed.

The argument that a stat as

valuable (and potentially lucrative) as a win or save shouldn't be left to a scorer's judgment is fatuous in a game as rife with judgment calls as baseball, where every umpire has a different strike zone, and bangbang plays at any base can be influenced by obscured vision, where a stolen base can be deemed "uncontested" or not, and where the visiting team seems to get the short end of a disproportionate number of close calls, and a great pitcher gets more than his fair share of good ones.

And anyway, long live human error. It's the stuff water- cooler arguments are made of.

KANE, ABLE: For 90 seconds of wow- inducing video, look up Patrick Kane's Bauer commercial on YouTube, in which the Blackhawks star puts on a three- part exhibition of stickhandling around an increasing number of stationary pucks on the ice without ever touching one of them with his own puck, stick or skates. There were outtakes, of course, but not too many of them. What this guy can do with a puck is dazzling.

BUTTERFLY ALERT: A common theme from hockey camps has been what a tough season the lockout- shortened 2013 campaign was for elite

goaltenders. Well, 2013- 14 isn't shaping up to be any day at the beach either, with many NHL backstops having to shave up to three inches off their nearly waist- high goal pads to meet the new league standard.

That's almost certain to open a lot of formerly impenetrable five- holes, where the tops of the pads used to overlap. Yet to be determined is whether NHL shooters will exploit the new portals, or goalies will adapt.

Or neither. The way it's going, more shots will be blocked by skaters, and fewer than ever will even reach the goalkeeper.

End of the Escape Goat

(and other off-season changes)

Jordan Bowman and Wyatt Arndt – The Province (Sunday September 15, 2013)

Using a highly specialized computer (it's an Etch A Sketch), we here at the Legion of Blog have identified the three biggest off-season changes that will impact the fans and the team this coming season.

We want to make sure everyone fully understands the ramifications of these changes, so we've broken them down for you, because we're nice like that.

Mason Raymond is gone

You remember Raymond, right? The guy who would fall to the ice anytime a puppy sneezed within a five-mile radius of him?

The guy who would speed around the offensive zone three times as if he was acting out some sort of horrible one-man NASCAR reenactment? "Look how fast I'm going!" he would shout with glee as he tumbled to the ice amid a shower of ice and fan sadness.

Well, he moved on to Toronto, and with him went the Canucks fans favourite scapegoat (or "escape goat" if you're Don Cherry).

This means Canucks fans will need to find a new guy to blame when the team does poorly.

No longer can you blame that 3-1 loss on ol' Mason, now you'll have to find a new target for your anger.

Early candidates are probably going to be Dale Weise and Tom Sestito, but don't forget about Daniel Sedin.

People say he's just like Henrik, but we're pretty sure he's the evil twin.

Roberto Luongo is still here

In perhaps the most awkward relationship since Skyler found out what Walter White was really up to, Roberto Luongo is still in Vancouver.

At least if this ends in a shootout like Breaking Bad, we know none of the bullets will hit Luongo. (Because it's a shootout!) He's not good at shootouts. The puck misses him a lot. That's the joke. We're sorry. The point remains that Vancouver now has to deal with the awkward situation of having kicked Luongo out of the nets, only to beg him to come back.

It also means Vancouver no longer has a top-notch replacement waiting in case we mentally break Luongo.

So you have to be on your best behaviour with him now, because the Canucks can't just throw Cory Schneider in nets anymore if he checks himself into a mental institution. So the next time you "Luuuuuuuuuu" at him, really try hard to pronounce those L's so Lu doesn't think anyone is booing him.

Also, if you're "that guy" that tries to take Luongo's stick after a game when he was clearly pointing at a child, just simply hand it over to the child.

Alain Vigneault

Vigneault had his supporters, so not everyone was happy about his firing, but it happened and now people have to deal with the fact Tortorella is the new coach.

The immediate effects of Vigneault leaving town is, of course, chewing gum and lozenge sales will drop dramatically.

The other immediate effect? Well, let's picture a scenario: Zack Kassian is flying down the wing and cuts to the middle; He gets hit, loses the puck and backchecks awkwardly until Luongo covers the puck.

Under Alain Vigneault, Kassian would have been benched, possibly slapped three times, and then maybe had hot soup thrown in his face for that play.

Under Tortorella, he seems to have a mandate (or a mandate was pushed upon him?) to play the young players more and to let them work through their mistakes.

You might actually see Zack Kassian play on the top line for more than five games.

Crazy talk, we know, but you might just see Schroeder make a bad pass and not get cut this year.

These are the three major changes we've seen so far, and there could be many more to come as the team tries to deal with the high expectations of the last several years.

The Canucks might not have their strongest team they've fielded in the last several years, but it sure looks like it will be an interesting one at least.

Scoring deficit demands tighter defence

Canucks' goal output has dipped in recent years, but their goals-against has gone the opposite direction

Tony Gallagher – The Province (Sunday September 15, 2013)

Most everyone is expecting the Vancouver Canucks will have trouble scoring at the rate this team has become accustomed to over the past few years, unless Ryan Kesler should happen to stay healthy over an entire season and the power play snaps back to attention.

And many more would say not to read too much into last year's statistics, but it's the most recent data we have and as such, it may surprise some to learn that even though this team had outstanding goaltending from both Roberto Luongo and Cory Schneider, seven teams in the Western Conference gave up fewer goals than the Canucks.

For a team so proud of its quality players at the back, to say nothing of how much cap money they have invested there as well, that needs to improve.

As the vernacular goes, a pairing of No. 2 and 3 can no longer equal minus-1 if this team wants to get back where it once was in the eyes of themselves and the league.

A goal differential over 48 games of plus-six for Vancouver compared to plus-53 for Chicago isn't going to get you very far, and to speak to Ryan Kesler's "bleep" contention, the Canuck goal differential in their glory year of 2010-11 was plus-77.

So if goals-for aren't going to take off, there had better be fewer leaks at the back.

After Jason Garrison and the always smooth and reliable Dan Hamhuis, the rest of the back end was decidedly sub-par last year. And going into this season there has to be some concern about Kevin Bieksa, who finished the season with a debilitating sports hernia type, groin-hip concern never really properly identified to us in the media. He opted not to have surgery and he's back on the ice, but so far in the very brief look we've had at him, he has not been at his best although that might simply be rust.

Assuming he's okay and he works his way back into shape, all the ingredients are present for that part of the team to improve.

Team defence heavily involves the forwards, of course, so their diligent contribution will also have to be forthcoming, but this year at least the D will be free of the constant fire drill whereby just about every lefthanded defender and one of John Tortorella's dogs had his turn in the barrel playing his off side.

Some were better at it than others, of course, but not by much. When they are forced into it by the team's situation, of course they always say it's "no problem" and "I've done it lots of times during my career," all part of the usual positive spin that's so essential to being a pro athlete. But now that this year the club is four deep in both left- and righthanded shots, and only a series of injuries will mean somebody has to play his off side, their true feelings can be heard.

"All us guys on the left side took our turns doing it last year, and of course it makes a difference," says Garrison, whose plus-18 in 47 games led the group by a wide margin, with Hamhuis the next best at plus-9.

“I think just about everyone would admit they are more comfortable on their natural side and it is nice that we do seem a lot more balanced that way. But we’ve all got to be a little better than we were last year. That will help, but as a group and as individuals I think we can be better.

“It starts with priding yourself in not giving up a goal when you’re out there, which I’m sure we all have and have to live by as a group.”

Curiously enough, Garrison is often most effective on the power play on his off side where he was so effective shooting the puck in Florida, something he didn’t get to do at all here with the first power-play unit even though it finished at a staggeringly low 22nd in the league.

“I love to shoot the puck, so any time I can get out there doing that, it doesn’t matter to me what side.”

We will get some idea of whom the coaching staff likes as pairings as we work through the mercifully brief six game exhibition season which begins Monday night, but he may not even figure out the configuration he wants to start the season with until he’s seen a few combinations together under fire.

And the fire that matters doesn’t start until the season begins.

Canucks centre in on main woes

[Jason Botchford – The Province \(Sunday September 15, 2013\)](#)

[Vancouver’s third-line faceoff artist and playmaker has been biggest problem](#)

“You certainly look at chemistry as you go through this.”

John Tortorella

Crap happens, and, if you ask Ryan Kesler, it’s every time someone dismisses the Canucks.

There’s a few more of those this year. Get humiliated in the first round in consecutive seasons and you tend to attract some skepticism.

Some even think the Canucks are no longer Stanley Cup contenders. The gall. That concept, amid all the good vibes at training camp, is all it took to trigger Angry Kes.

“To be honest, I don’t listen to that s---,” he declared. “That’s what it is. It’s s---. We believe in ourselves in the dressing room.”

Of course they do. It’s training camp and it’s a place as hopeful as the first day at a new job. Anything seems possible.

Well, anything but the Canucks effectively filling their holes at centre.

Manny Malhotra's eyewass mashed on March 16, 2011. In the 2½ years since, the Canucks have tried young centres (Jordan Schroeder, Cody Hodgson), old centres (Sami Pahlsson), skilled centres (Derek Roy), and pest centres (Max Lapierre).

At its worst, the situation has looked nearly pathetic. At its very best, it's been nearly adequate. Really, it's been a bigger mess than the goalies. Just a whole lot less dramatic.

And after all this time, the Canucks still don't have the answer. They believe — hope — it could begin to change this pre-season.

If it doesn't, bank on hearing from those crappy skeptics who, this year, will not be distracted by the Vancouver goalie troupe and all its drama.

As much as Kesler is the Canucks most important player, their thirdline centre is the biggest X-factor.

Brad Richardson was the thriftshop acquisition who sits, for now, next in line to carry the torch passed on by all those failing hands. The Canucks courted him, then signed him to a two-year, \$2.3-million contract.

He was well aware of the gorge in the lineup carved out after Malhotra's injury.

"I played against them a lot. I knew this team very well," Richardson said. "I know the role I need to be in and that's what I'm working toward."

It may be that Richardson is a better fit here than he was last year in L.A., where he was a healthy scratch in 27 of their first 29 games.

He sure got off to a rollicking start at camp. In the team's scrimmage Saturday, he was lined with Jannik Hansen and Chris Higgins and the together they threw four goals on the scoreboard.

"You certainly look at chemistry as you go through this," said John Tortorella, when asked if these scrimmages have value in assessing players.

"There were some good things there. You write them down and when you're trying to put your lines together when the season starts, or maybe even the middle of the year, you may come back to it.

"We look at that stuff. But we just don't want to get locked in."

Richardson is being chased by a pair of young prospects, (Bo Horvat and Brendan Gaunce), a 27-yearold veteran (Mike Santorelli) and one mystery candidate.

That would be Jordan Schroeder, who often seems the forgotten man. He doesn't get the mentions Horvat and Gaunce do when Tortorella says things like this: "We're not going to force it, but we need to get some kids in our lineup."

Schroeder is 22 years old. If he's not a kid anymore, he's not far off. He has the talent and experience to outplay Richardson. His size will always be an issue. His drive, however, will not be.

In May, Schroeder had shoulder surgery for a torn labrum. He was told then he wouldn't be healthy to play until October, but was cleared before training camp, a month early.

"I worked my butt off every single day for a few hours," Schroeder said. "That was my goal. It feels good to go out there and throw the body around and not fear your shoulder is going to give out."

That was a fear which haunted him. Schroeder has had that shoulder problem since the start of his pro career. He tried to play through the nagging injury over the years, but it got progressively worse.

"When I would get hit, it could just pop out. My shoulder would just go numb. It happened in games quite often. Probably six or seven times last year," Schroeder said. "You are a little hesitant with it. It would be tight and sore but I could still play through it."

"Going for a puck, and reaching, you're hesitant."

He won't have that to worry about now.

"I want to prove I belong," he said showing the scars on his shoulder.

Schroeder was asked if the new coach changes things for him this year.

"I think it will help. It's a fresh start for everyone," Schroeder said.

Doesn't hurt that Tortorella said this Friday: "The young guys, they are going to get a long look. A long look."

Workhorse needs a colt around

[Ed Willes – The Province \(Sunday September 15, 2013\)](#)

[Luongo's workload has been unparalleled in the NHL, and he needs a solid backup](#)

This might be the first and only time you see Albert Einstein and Roberto Luongo referenced in the same lead, but Einstein said: "I never think of the future; it comes soon enough," and, on Friday, Luongo said he hasn't thought about what lies ahead because his preoccupation is taking the net and playing well this season.

"When you're doing that, you're not thinking about anything else, and that's where I want to be," Luongo said after a late practice session.

And that's about what you'd expect.

There are only about 312 questions for the goalie and the Vancouver Canucks to answer after this season, but for Luongo, new head coach John Tortorella, and all those invested in this team, there are more immediate concerns.

These include going into the season with Luongo, who turns 35 in April and whose days as a workhorse seem behind him; and a backup in Eddie Lack, who's played, roughly, zero NHL games, and hasn't played a meaningful professional game since November of last year.

Add those two things together and there's no real point in talking about the future, largely because the present is a lot more interesting.

"I think so. I don't know," Luongo answered when asked if he's still capable of playing 65 to 70 games.

"I think I'm in pretty good shape. It all depends on the travel and the schedule and all that stuff put together.

"Right now I'm in that area where I'm not sure how (his body) is going to respond. I mean, I want to play in every game. At the same time you have to listen to your body and we have a very capable backup here."

Or so the Canucks would like to think.

Goalie Confidential, of course, took a stunning twist over the summer when the Canucks moved Cory Schneider and turned the net over to Luongo, the man they'd been trying to trade for over a year. The Montrealer's pedigree speaks for itself. But without a proven option behind him — at least not as of this writing — the Canucks' goaltending responsibility falls to Luongo, and it's hard to know what he can provide consistently at this stage of his career.

Luongo is entering his 14th NHL season, but that's only part of the story. Over that time, he's endured an almost inhumane workload.

In six of those seasons, he played at least 65 games. In his career, he's faced 22,226 shots in the regular season.

To put that number in perspective, Miikka Kiprusoff, who retired this season and is 2 ½ years older than Luongo, faced over 5,000 fewer shots in his career.

The data from last season would also suggest goaltending is becoming a younger man's game. Of the top 20 goalies in save percentage, 37-year-old Tomas Vokoun was the only grizzled veteran. The first nine, in fact, were all certified No. 1s, and the oldest of that group was Ottawa's Craig Anderson, who's 32 but has played 329 fewer career games than Luongo.

Conspicuous on that list is the Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist, who spent the last 4½ seasons under Tortorella's immediate supervision. Lundqvist, it should be noted, was a 70-game-a-season man when Tortorella arrived in Manhattan, but was cut back to 68 games in 2010-11 and 62 in 2011-12 before he played in 43 of 48 in last year's lockout campaign.

Tortorella was asked if anything should be read into that pattern.

"I cut back Lundqvist a lot," he answered. "It took a couple of years for him to understand (why). He wanted to play so many games, but, by the playoffs, he was out in the first round."

As for Luongo, Tortorella said: "I know Roberto is going to be the No. 1 guy. I'm not sure where we are with the our backup."

Neither is anyone else in the organization.

Tortorella added that recent history suggests the optimum number for a starting goalie is in the 60- to 65-game area. But, in Vancouver's case, that could be dependent on Lack emerging as a reliable backup or the Canucks bringing in a proven veteran.

"I'll take it as it goes," Luongo said. "The only thing is, over the course of the year, I have a little more trouble on the back-to-backs on the second night. We'll figure it out as we go along."

As for what comes after this season, Luongo said the matter is irrelevant.

"I want to play great," he said. "I want to stop pucks and I want to win some hockey games. That's what I'm about right now. I'm excited to be playing. I'm excited to get this pre-season going and just get in the net."

And let the future take care of itself.

'I know I can score more goals'

[Ben Kuzma – The Province](#)

[Winger looking to take more shots and improve his percentages](#)

The haunting image is as lasting as the bitter memory of being swept by the San Jose Sharks. When Daniel Sedin hesitated and put a rebound off the post in Game 4 of the Western Conference quarter-final — a 4-3 overtime loss that was the catalyst for coaching change — it was symbolic of an offence that managed eight series goals.

"The last two playoff exits have been so disappointing," the Vancouver Canucks left-winger said Sunday, knowing he and twin brother Henrik didn't score against the Sharks. "We know we have the team to go a long way and that's why it sucks losing out so early."

“You know it’s tough in the playoffs and anything can happen. I don’t want to say we threw it away, but we didn’t play our best.”

The distant memory of the march to the 2011 Stanley Cup final seems like a mirage with the Canucks slipping from first to 22nd on the power play in two seasons and first to 19th in offence. Yet, through the darkness, Daniel sees a promising light if he’s quicker on the trigger because new coach John Tortorella won’t stifle offensive creativity, as long as his forwards maintain a defensive awareness when they don’t have the puck.

“It’s a two-way street,” said Tortorella. “I’ll get out of your way offensively, but you’ve got to meet me half way in terms of getting the puck back and playing away from the puck. That’s the deal I make.”

Even though the focus will be on seeing what kind of bite the kids bring Monday night when the Canucks open their six-game preseason schedule against those same Sharks at Rogers Arena, veterans must make a dramatic difference when the club starts playing for keeps.

“I’m thinking if I can get 3.5 to four shots a game and a shooting percentage of 13-14 per cent, that’s going to put me right there scoring wise,” added Daniel. “I know I can score more goals. I scored 40 once and would like to be up there again. I still feel I can produce a lot more than I have.”

In his career 41-goal season in 2010-11, Daniel was averaging 3.24 shots per game and a 15.4 per cent accuracy rate. In the lockout season, he averaged 2.9 shots per outing and had an 8.7 accuracy rate on his dozen goals in 47 games. Daniel also netted a career-best 18 power play goals in 2010-11, a total that slipped to 10 the following season and then just three in the lockout-shortened season.

Assistant coach Glen Gulutzan succeeds Newell Brown as the Canucks’ power-play architect and creativity will be as vital as execution in what has become a special-teams league.

“When you score on the power play, you get confidence and when you don’t, it’s the other way around,” added Daniel. “That’s the mentality. The power play should be in the top five, top 10 in the league. We have the personnel to be up there.

“I’ve always been a goal scorer — maybe not the great shot that Kes (Ryan Kesler) has, but I’m good at getting into position to score and getting to those rebounds. That hasn’t been there the last two years.

“It’s skating and moving and outworking the other team and maybe that hasn’t been the case every game.”

Zack Kassian will get a pre-season audition with the Sedins, and while Daniel said his personal point production doesn’t matter as long as the Canucks win, they’re not going anywhere unless the Swede regains his scoring touch — regardless of what potential a more focused Kassian may provide.

“Zack can be a powerful player,” said Daniel. “We have to be on him and push him and he wants that, too. It should be interesting.”

So should ongoing contract talks. The Sedins turn 33 on Sept. 26 and judging by their top-ranked fitness scores, there’s reason to believe they can continue to be durable. In the final seasons of expiring five-year deals that pay \$6.1 million US annually, term may be the biggest pursuit because the Sedins would like to finish their careers here. The Canucks are banking on that because extensions for the twins could be concluded before the regular season commences.

“That would be awesome,” said Daniel. “But if that’s not the case, we’re not guys who worry too much about those kind of things. Last time, it (extension) went into the summer.”

If the Sedins needed something to soothe the wounds of another pitiful playoff exit, winning the world championship with Sweden was the right medicine.

“It was awesome. It was big. A great ending,” said Daniel. “You go from one week and a fiasco and you’re so down on yourself. And the next week you’re winning something and winning for your country and in your own country. It made it so easy to go back and work out in the summer. We were energized. It’s nice winning the last game of the season.”

Canucks Notes: Horvat earns coach's kudos with goal in Sunday scrimmage

Ben Kuzma – The Province

John Tortorella prefers to speak of the collective, not the individual. However, the Vancouver Canucks coach did single out Bo Horvat on Sunday after the centre scored in a training-camp scrimmage.

The ninth-overall pick in the 2013 draft — the promising return of trading Cory Schneider to New Jersey — finished off a long cross-ice feed from Jannik Hansen to help the Whites post a 2-0 scrimmage win over the Blues at Rogers Arena. After centring Tom Sestito and Dale Weise in an earlier scrimmage, Horvat didn’t look out of place with Chris Higgins and Hansen.

“We want to play him with a little more speed and give a long evaluation in a lot of different situations and I thought that line played well,” said Tortorella. “You can see he (Horvat) has some skill to him and he had a good day today. We’re not sure if the kids are ready, we’ll find out in the next couple of weeks.”

That process starts Monday as the Canucks open their six-game preseason schedule by hosting the San Jose Sharks. Tortorella didn’t reveal his roster but hinted that youth will be served early with the trio of new coaches — Mike Sullivan and Glen Gulutzan will also be on the bench —

starting some series evaluating. The Canucks have to dress eight players with 100 games of pro experience or being a 2013 first-round pick.

“The first two games are important for us to really take a look at some young guys,” added Tortorella. “The last two are where I want our team to be. I really like the way the camp has gone. It’s been a heavy camp and we hit a wall today and that’s usually the fourth or fifth day. It’s a good time to shift over.”

As for Horvat, the world junior championship and Memorial Cup tournament with host London are in the distance and that’s a great maturation curve. But he can’t help think of the what-ifs. He can play nine regular-season games before returning to junior, but scoring Sunday has him thinking.

“Getting the first one (goal) out of the way is a relief,” said Horvat. “The pace is crazy. Higgins and Hansen are really good. They know where each other is on the ice and make unbelievable plays. You always want to make the big club and stick here and I try not to think about it too much. It’s always in the back of your mind. You just try to play your game, but it’s not a bad thing if I get sent back, it’s a great learning curve.”

HANSEN’S DOUBLE DUTY

This is the toughest camp in the last six years, but Jannik Hansen just smiles through it all. When his wife, Karen, gave birth to twin boys Lucas and Daniel — born early at 29 weeks on March 3 in Vancouver — the winger was at the hospital because of charter snow delay en route to Calgary. The sleep-deprived Dane even scored in a 4-2 loss to the Flames.

“The twins are very good,” said Hansen. “It’s been a while now. It goes quick and it’s been extremely exciting and every day a new thing happening. You come home and it seems like they’re changing every day. It’s the greatest gift you can get and your day to day changes and is turned upside down from what I was used to. The joy and looking into their eyes in worth it.”

Hansen was third in team scoring during the lockout season with 10 goals and 27 points in 47 games. His \$1.35 million US contract is expiring, but he’s thinking more about his boys than bigger bucks.

“I approach every year to get better and if you look too far ahead, it can be overwhelming,” said Hansen.

LUONGO SHRINKS

New equipment rules mean Roberto Luongo has lost less than half an inch off the height of his goal pads and it may actually be of some benefit.

“I feel I can move better and I don’t have a problem with it at all,” he said.

As for the additional four inches of room behind the net with reduced size of the nets creating more wrap-around chances and crease congestion, he wasn't fazed by it.

"It might be a bit of a factor early on," he added. "Like everything else, you adjust and make the adjustments that you have it make — if there are any. In both scrimmages, I didn't really notice that much of a difference and we'll see as the preseason progresses if there's a difference or not. As long as you're sound technically, it shouldn't be an issue."

[Canucks camp notes: Bo knows net, happy dad Hansen, Luongo is shrinking](#)

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Daniel Sedin's goal this season is simple: more goals

[Brad Ziemer – The Vancouver Sun](#)

[Winger looking to rebound from two 'disappointing' seasons](#)

Like fellow Vancouver Canuck forward Ryan Kesler, Daniel Sedin is held to the high standard he reached in 2010-11 when he scored 41 goals and had 104 points.

And just like Kesler, Sedin insists his best years are not behind him and hopes to prove it by adopting more of a shootfirst mentality this season.

“It has been a disappointment the last two years in that department and I think I need to score,” Sedin said after Sunday’s scrimmage at Rogers Arena. “Especially on our line, I am the goal-scorer. It’s up to me to get better.”

In last season’s abbreviated campaign, Sedin had just 12 goals in 47 games. The year before he had 30 goals.

In other words, he is trending in the wrong direction and when you are a player about to turn 33, people begin to wonder.

But Sedin was adamant Sunday that he can return to past form.

“I have always been a goal scorer,” he said. “I don’t maybe have the great shot that Kes has, but I think I am pretty good at getting in positions to score and work to get to those rebounds and that hasn’t been there the last two years and that has been disappointing.” And don’t try suggesting to Sedin that the lockout- shortened 2012- 13 season doesn’t really count.

“I was disappointed with last season,” he said. “That wasn’t good enough and anyone that says last season goes out the window, I think they’re wrong. For me, any game you play is an important game. It’s disappointing, but I know I can score more. I scored 40 once and I would like to be up there again. I still feel like I can produce a lot more than I have the last two years.”

For Sedin, it all comes down to percentages. He feels if he gets the right number of shots on goal, the goals will come.

“For me, if I can get three and a half to four shots a game my shooting percentage is usually around 13 or 14 per cent,” he said. “That is going to put me right there goal- wise. That is key for me, to think shot and if I can get three or four it’s going to become some goals, I think.”

Last season, Sedin’s shooting percentage dropped to just 8.7 per cent. He clicked on 15.4 per cent of his shots in his 41- goal year in 2010- 11.

Sedin thinks at times last season, he became hesitant to shoot and occasionally passed the puck when he should have put a shot on net.

“We are a line where I have to think shots and Hank is usually the other way around,” he said. “I have to be the shooter.”

Vancouver’s struggling power play certainly played a part in Sedin’s spotty production last season.

“For sure, when you score on the power play, get production on the power play, it’s going to make you get confidence and when you don’t score on the power play it’s the other way around. If you can’t score on the power play, how are we going to score five- on-five, that’s the mentality that is there. Our power play has to be better. It should be top 10, top 5 in this league. We have the personnel to be there. That was on us last year and we shouldn’t have been that bad.”

The pressure for Sedin to score figures to increase if Zack Kassian begins the season on the top line. The past few seasons, Alex Burrows has provided plenty of goals as the line's right winger.

"If Zack plays with us and we are a successful team, we are more than happy," Sedin said.

"Zack can be a powerful player out there. I think he has to realize that and we are going to have to talk to him a lot and be on him and push him and I think he wants it, too. It is going to be interesting."

Sedin said the pace of this year's training camp under new coach John Tortorella has been quite different. Even he and brother Henrik have had to catch their breath on occasion.

"We are pushing ourselves, we are doing it together as a team," he said.

"We are struggling out there skating. Everyone is dead tired after skates, but we are doing it together as a team and that is going to make us stronger, I think, in the long run. We are going to go into the season knowing we have done everything we can to be in as good a shape as we can. If you know you have done more than the guy on the other side of the rink, mentally that is huge."

The Canucks open up their six- game pre- season schedule tonight against the San Jose Sharks at Rogers Arena.

"We've done enough of this and so now we get to the next part of camp here," Tortorella said. "That's when we really start our evaluation when we start playing exhibition games."

ICE CHIPS: Tortorella would not reveal his lineup for tonight's game, but did say he wants to give some of the younger players a good look early. "The first two games are important for us to really take a look at the young guys," he said. ... Tortorella said assistant coach Glen Gulutzan will handle power play duties this season, while fellow assistant Mike Sullivan will be in charge of the penalty- kill.

Who starred, surprised at Young Stars prospects tourney?

Kevin McCartney - TSN

PENTICTON, B.C.—With the Vancouver Canucks' Young Stars Tournament over and NHL training camps officially open, we look back at the stand-outs from each team and the players of the future for each franchise.

The tournament featured prospects from the Canucks, Calgary Flames, Edmonton Oilers, San Jose Sharks and Winnipeg Jets. Past tournaments have featured 30 players who dressed in NHL

games during the following season, including Jordan Eberle, Taylor Hall, Chris Tanev and Aaron Volpatti.

Calgary Flames

The Flames arrived in Penticton on a mission. They came to the tournament with a roster full of high draft picks and experienced pros, including 2011 Young Stars stud Sven Baertschi. Their practices were much more intense and professional. They played to win, and fell only to the underdog Sharks in the final game. They allowed the fewest goals of any team in the tournament with six, and tied Vancouver for second with 11 goals for.

Best forward

Markus Granlund: Powerful off the half wall and hard to contain on the end boards. Granlund used a very professional approach to score, with few unnecessary movements and constant attacks to the net. He cycled well, too.

Best defender

John Ramage: Excellent escapes and transition plays. Above-average transition skating, and a professional demeanor that led to efficiency with the puck.

Best goalie

Joni Ortio: Only played one game, but it was the best by a goalie the whole weekend. Exceptional athletics bailed out his rebound-inept defence group, while even better rebound control made it rare he had to.

Best invite player

Linden Penner, W: His only game wasn't spectacular. Still, he used his size (6'4", 220) to open up space for his linemates and showed tournament average speed and hands.

Most NHL ready

Markus Granlund, C: Lacks the quickness of an NHL forward, but consistently drove the play the right direction and established possession for extended portions of his shifts. Looked good with various linemates. Very good strength for his age.

Best practice moment

The Flames ran the most intense practices, with just a half-hour on the ice and no breaks. Drills were explained beforehand in the dressing room, and changing from one drill to the next was prepared by the coaches while the players did hard laps. Very organized and serious feel to their approach.

Biggest surprise

Keegan Kanzig, D: Much smarter than expected, read back-door plays and forward movements extremely well. Also better range, supporting the play up ice often, and even throwing a few hits on the offensive end boards without being trapped. His turning and pivots are slow, and he uses large gaps as a result, but a very good showing for the big bear.

Biggest disappointment

Sven Baertschi, W: I considered Baertschi's attendance at the tournament an expression of the team's desire to win by bringing their best eligible players, but he managed to turn that around with this play. Didn't score a single point and looked frustrated and often lost.

Edmonton Oilers

The Oilers brought mostly face-punchers in their forward compliment, electing not to dress their most skilled forwards from Russia or the AHL. On the back end, however, the Oilers boasted six NHL hopefuls among their 8 exclusively left-handed defensemen. Not surprisingly, the Oilers were beaten in every game and lost goal differential a whopping 17-6.

Best forward

Marco Roy: Creative, anticipation-based game with good puck skills and two-way play. Got better with each game and ended with 13 shots on.

Best defender

Brandon Davidson: Puck supports well, good transition passes, and excellent blue line skills. Thinks the game at a high level and remains calm in his own end. Needs to work on his in-close defending.

Best goalie

Frank Palazzese: 40 saves (ignore the scoresheet) to backstop the Oilers' only lead of the tournament and best chance at a win. Tracked the puck well, maintained positioning and form in lateral movement, and controlled rebounds a little better than Bunz.

Best invite player

Chase Schaber: Good range, makes smart contact, plays his position well in both ends of the rink, and carried his line in Games 2 and 3. Showed some offensive spark in Game 2, but doesn't have the pure skill to create.

Most NHL ready

Martin Marincin: Perhaps not surprising given his year in the AHL, but Marincin did all the little things a pro defenseman does in Game 1 — closing out lanes, pushing forwards off-balance before pivoting to go after a puck — while showing high-end skating and stick skills. Played his off-side the whole tournament. Didn't adjust well to a new system in game two.

Best practice moment

Tyler Bunz does the move where you scoop the puck, spin, and throw it off your stick... with a goalie stick in full goalie gear. Then, Bunz does a Crosby pull through his own legs, shoulder drop, and back hand roof-job... with a goalie stick in full goalie gear.

Biggest surprise

Greg Chase, W: A tremendous pest, but also a pretty impressive possession player. Was one of the few forwards to get the concept of the Oilers' offensive system in the first game, and executed it well on their first goal to earn an assist. Had at least three head-scratching moments in the tournament, but generally showed good awareness for the game at both ends.

Biggest disappointment

Oscar Klefbom, D: Missed most of the season with injury, and is new to smaller ice. Still, Klefbom showed the skill that made him a 1st round pick in flashes, in particular elite level skating. Overall though, looked lost in both ends and read the play slowly.

San Jose Sharks

One of the Sharks' two stars for the tournament — 2013 1st rounder Mirco Mueller — was injured early in game one and didn't return to the tournament. The Sharks played a conservative game, with a single forechecker and neutral zone trap, but were out-scored 11-7 and managed just one win. Most glaringly, the Sharks lacked scoring talent and relied on an opportunistic attack.

Best forward

Matthew Nieto: Was outscored by Rylan Schwartz, but played a better two-way game to my eye. Quick, uses his linemates well, and good in the neutral zone. Strong transition play and regroup support.

Best defender

Konrad Abeltshauser: Ended the tournament with an unsightly plus/minus, but played the toughest competition and managed the puck well. Good shot, strong blue line play. Among the

best transition defensemen on the Sharks. Doesn't make much contact in the defensive zone, and didn't do well at boxing out or clearing defenders despite ridiculous size (6-5, 225 pounds).

Best goalie

J.P. Anderson: It wasn't a strong tournament for Shark goalies, but Anderson had fewer holes in lateral movement.

Most NHL ready

Kyle Bigos, D: This team isn't exactly star-studded, but I was impressed with a lot of Bigos's game, so he goes in this category. Yes, he knows his way around an opponent's face with his fists and elbows, but it was his passing and lane control by which I was most impressed. Transitioned the puck well, consistently making efficient choices out of the defensive end. Good stick placements. Played passing lanes well from both sides. Ended the tournament plus-2 on a team with only six even-strength goals for while playing tough minutes after Mueller went down. Slow in his skating transitions, however, and Hunter Shinkaruk turned him a number of times in the first game. Got a little more comfortable at managing his gaps as the tournament went on but still needs to add foot-speed to play the pro game.

Best practice moment

San Jose held a long practice on the Okanagan Hockey School ice during Penticton's minor hockey jamboree day. Eventually, with kids in gear circling the glass, the zamboni drove onto the ice and started cleaning while the Sharks players and staff scrambled to get all the pucks, cones, and bottles off the ice surface.

Biggest surprise

Max Iafrate, D: This guy is mean and while his skating was below average to average for the tournament, he still managed to line some people up. May have stock in an ice-pack company. At 6'2", 220 as a '94 birthday, Iafrate could be an effective physical defender, but needs to build on his technical skating and foot quickness.

Biggest disappointment

Tomas Hertl, W: Aside from causing scrums with dirty hits, Hertl was almost never at the center of any play. Average to above-average speed for the tournament, but lacked quickness or power in his skating. Didn't show much talent for offense and wasn't exactly a dynamo in his own end either. In transition he lagged. If you took the name off his jersey, you'd swear he was a bruiser with limited skill.

Vancouver Canucks

The Canucks played every team in the tournament as the hosts, and brought a large roster of 28 skaters. They boasted a star-packed forward group, but their defence was less impressive. Jordan Subban of Canada's second family of hockey and Frank Corrado were the two NHL hopefuls on the back end. The team played a very high-tempo style and more sophisticated special teams than most of their opponents. The Canucks went 3 and 1 with 11 goals for and 9 against.

Best forward

Hunter Shinkaruk: He was one of the most dangerous forwards in the tournament offensively—and with violence. Put Mirco Mueller out of the tournament in Game 1 with an offensive-zone cross check after throwing a hit in the neutral zone and steaming through two defenders on the dump-and-chase. Much more edge to his game than reported, and all the skill and speed imagined on draft day, when the Canucks took him in the first round.

Best defender

Frank Corrado: Guimond had 4 points in 4 games, but turnovers and defensive coverage to make your cringe. Subban showed excellent skills, but made odd decisions and struggled to use his team mates. Corrado had a stellar game against the Flames, a bit of a loose and angry game against the Oilers, and tightened it up again to face the Jets. Looked too good for the tournament.

Best goalie

Joacim Eriksson: Aside from a John Ramage goal and an Eric Roy shot that may have hit a Canuck en route, Eriksson turned in 180 minutes of excellent hockey. Great reads, efficient movement, good rebound work.

Best invite player

Zach Hall, F: Hall showed tremendous speed and fit in well on scoring lines. Clearly had good puck skills and scoring sense, but struggled to create off the wing. Would have liked to see a game at center for Hall. Recorded no points, but had a very good tournament.

Most NHL ready

Niklas Jensen, W: The speedy forward showed a love for contact and the rare ability to create in traffic as well as with space. Only credited with 1 point but tied for the tournament lead with 14 shots in three games.

Best practice moment

Former Oiler prospect Jeremie Blain was fantastic at practice, and in two reps of a drill with three 1-on-1 battles managed to win them all. The only defender to come close to that. Great foot work in small spaces, active stick. Didn't play in a game for reasons of which I'm not aware.

Biggest surprise

Alexandre Mallet, C: Started with a very good game against the Sharks in what was the most up-tempo, physical contest of the tourney. Showed some offense in Game 1, but by Game 3 he was mostly agitating, for whatever reason. Very good vertical speed. Closes hits well. Rarely gets out of position to make contact, but always seems to be finishing his checks. Wins board battles, gets the puck to danger areas.

Biggest disappointment

Brendan Gaunce, C: It seems his stock plummeted during this tournament, in which he looked slow and confused. His first game against the Sharks was played on the fourth line from which he was the Canucks' worst forward. He improved as the tournament went along and showed some scoring instincts against Edmonton and managed his only four shots of the tournament against Winnipeg in the final game.

Winnipeg Jets

The Jets brought a highly skilled but very young group of prospects to Penticton, led by NHL hopefuls Mark Scheifele and Jacob Trouba. It wasn't those two who impressed in this short tournament, however, as the team was led by under-sized 2013 second rounder Nic Petan up front and the efforts of 2013 draft picks Josh Morrissey, Jan Kostalek, and former Islander draftee Brenden Kichton. The Jets were the highest scoring team at the tournament with 13 goals in two wins and one loss, while allowing just seven.

Best forward

Nic Petan: Elite anticipation and dominating with the puck. A bag of tricks seemingly too big for his 5-9 frame. Controlled play at both ends of the rink, with and without the puck.

Best defender

Brenden Kichton: It's a tough category for the Jets, who had a number of stand-outs. Kichton scored four points and showed elite blue-line work. Very good skater, great puck skills, not afraid to take contact to make a play. Played in all three disciplines.

Best goalie

Juho Olkinuora: A confident showing that included a body check above the hashmarks on the side boards. Great puck handler, efficient movements, and very good rebound control. Needs to communicate more.

Best invite player

Axel Blomqvist, W: Blomqvist raised his stock for next year's draft at the very least, using his massive 6-5 frame to protect the puck and drive the net. Drew double teams, caused panic for defenders. Scored two goals, one of which was a knocked-down pass and breakaway that ended with the Hulk Hogan listening gesture at the stunned crowd. Needs to work on his skating. Youngest player on the roster.

Most NHL ready

Adam Lowry, C: Huge, NHL-sized body at 6-5 and well over 200 pounds. Powerful core, compact stride, makes contact with a bit of relish, and knows where to be in both ends. Managed the middle of the ice with good awareness. Would have liked to see more scoring. Scheifele might be the obvious answer here, but he didn't use his linemates well and tried to do too much, even to the point of getting rocked while trying to rag the puck on the penalty kill as though a superstar at beer league. The Jets can hope that by the end of pro camp, this answer will look foolish.

Best practice moment

Scheifele's wrist shot is so hard that the children of the family standing next to me complained to their parents about how loud it was when it hit the glass.

Biggest Surprise

Jan Kostalek, D: Dropped from a first-round preliminary ranking to the third round in the 2013 draft, Kostalek showed a very complete game, albeit with a high-risk, high-reward styling. Played in all three disciplines, generated offense, and threw some enormous open ice hits. Very good skater, wins pucks along the boards, and maintains very good gaps. Made some gambles at the offensive blue line, but won more than he lost.

Biggest disappointment

Jacob Trouba, D: Looked like a young Jack Johnson — tremendous athletic skill paired with confusing decision making and a dangerous lack of hockey sense. Played read-and-react hockey against other teenagers.

San Jose Sharks' backup goaltender competition begins in earnest

Curtis Pashelka – San Jose Mercury News

SAN JOSE -- After four days of training camp, the competition between Alex Stalock and Harri Sateri to be the Sharks' backup goaltender will ratchet up Monday when San Jose opens its NHL exhibition season at Vancouver.

Both Sateri and Stalock will dress against the Canucks, with No. 1 goalie Antti Niemi staying back in San Jose, coach Todd McLellan said.

McLellan wouldn't commit to playing both goaltenders in Monday's game but said he's been pleased with each of their performances so far in camp. He said he will lean on assistant general manager Wayne Thomas and goaltending development coach Corey Schwab to help with the decision on who stays with the team to start the season.

They're "in a dogfight," McLellan said. "That's maybe not the right assessment, but that's what they're in. Both have worked hard in practice, both have been attentive."

Thomas believes both goalies are ready for the NHL and wants the two to make the organization's decision a hard one.

"It's always a competition," Thomas said. "They certainly don't want to get outworked, knowing how hard the other guy is working. They won't let that influence our decision."

- Defenseman Mirco Mueller, the Sharks' first-round draft choice this year, practiced with the team for the first time in training camp Sunday after sitting out the first three days with a sore back.

Mueller's first practice coincided with the Sharks' most physical skate of camp so far. But Mueller, 18, came out of it well and was happy to get the initial experience of playing with NHL players out of the way.

"First thing I noticed was they practiced really hard and really fast," said Mueller, whose already sore back was aggravated by a cross check in the Sharks' first game of the YoungStars Tournament against Vancouver in British Columbia earlier this month. "It was a really high pace today, and it felt good to get back out there."

San Jose Sharks' first draft pick Mirco Mueller finally healthy

Curtis Pashelka – San Jose Mercury News

SAN JOSE -- Defenseman Mirco Mueller, the Sharks' first round draft choice this earlier year, practiced with the team for the first time in training camp Sunday after sitting out the first three days with a sore back.

Mueller's first practice just happened to coincide with the Sharks' most physical skate of camp so far. But Mueller came out of it well and was happy to get the initial experience of playing with NHL players for the first time out of the way.

"First thing I noticed was they practiced really hard and really fast," said Mueller, whose already sore back was aggravated by a cross check in the Sharks' first game of the YoungStars Tournament against Vancouver in British Columbia earlier this month. "It was a really high pace today and it felt good to get back out there."

Mueller, who is 6-foot-3 and listed as 195 pounds, isn't expected to make the team out of camp as the Sharks already have several defensemen with NHL experience vying for the one of the final spots. But Mueller, whose style has been compared to that of Marc Edouard-Vlasic, is soaking in as much as he can right now from the other blueliners.

"I just want to play my best hockey," said Mueller, a Swiss native who was drafted out of Everett (Wash.) of the WHL. "The rest is up to management and the coaches. I just want to do my best and see what happens."

Sharks coach Todd McLellan was pleased with Mueller's performance Sunday, especially considering the ice time Mueller has missed.

"As a young player, you can't afford to miss time. You want to be healthy," McLellan said. "The good thing is he's been involved in all of the meetings, the video sessions, so he's at last got the instruction, but the ability to apply it is real important. You want to stay healthy and stay on your toes."

First-rounder Mueller makes Sharks training camp debut

Jasmes O'Brien – NBC Sports

San Jose Sharks prospect Mirco Mueller made his training camp debut on Sunday, [CSNBayArea.com reports](http://CSNBayArea.com/reports).

"Pretty special. It was my first practice with the pros," Mueller said. "The first thing I noticed is they practice really hard and really fast. It was a really high pace today."

The 2013 first-rounder (18th overall) was previously limited by a minor back injury.

Sharks head coach Todd McLellan seemed happy with what he saw from the 18-year-old defenseman, who said that he models his game after blueliners such as San Jose's own [Marc-Edouard Vlasic](#).

"I thought Mirco was fine," Todd McLellan said. "For him, the big test was to get over his injury from the prospect camp tournament. For him to be thrown in without having the other three days, I thought he did an admirable job."

As CSNBayArea.com notes, Mueller's an extreme long-shot to make the big club right out of the draft. Still, it doesn't hurt to make a good first impression, so he must be glad to finally get a chance to do that.

Battle for backup spot a 'dogfight'

Kevin Kurz – CSN Bay Area

SAN JOSE – There isn't exactly an abundance of high profile storylines at Sharks training camp, with the majority of the team that finished the shortened 2013 season back for another go-round this year.

The competition for the backup goaltender spot is on that short list, though. Alex Stalock and Harri Sateri, teammates for AHL Worcester last season, are vying for the spot vacated by Thomas Greiss, whom the organization wasn't interested in retaining as a free agent. Greiss signed a one-year deal with Phoenix to back up Mike Smith.

Stalock and Sateri will both go to Vancouver for the Sharks' first preseason game on Monday night, and head coach Todd McLellan said on Sunday that the battle for the backup position between the 26-year-old Stalock and Sateri, 23, is a "dogfight." Assistant general manager Wayne Thomas, a former NHL goalie who works with the organization's netminders, echoed that sentiment earlier in the weekend.

"Obviously, both are unproven, but hopefully someone will emerge during camp and grab the job and the opportunity," Thomas said. "Certainly, whoever isn't here, it doesn't mean there won't be opportunity in the future, but it's a short window here for the coaching staff and management to make a decision. Every practice, scrimmage and exhibition game is important for them."

Still, it's difficult not to think that Stalock has at least a slight edge on Sateri coming into camp. After all, Stalock is older, more experienced at the minor league level, and played in two NHL games last season in relief of Antti Niemi when Greiss was out with an injury. Stalock was also the team's emergency third goalie in the playoffs, another indication he's higher up on the depth chart.

Stalock had better numbers than Sateri in Worcester last season, too. In 38 games, Stalock posted a 17-16-4 mark with a 2.60 goals-against average and .912 save percentage. Sateri was 14-21-3 with a 2.89 GAA and .903 SP in 39 games.

If Stalock believes he's got an advantage, though, he's not letting on.

"I don't know how they look at that up top, but [after] years of being here, I don't think that matters at all," said the St. Paul, Minnesota native. "You come in ready to compete, and obviously this organization wants to win every night. That starts with game one, and they need the best chance of winning from game one."

Sateri, a Finland native like starter Antti Niemi, was asked if he believes Stalock is the favorite to land the job.

"I don't know. I'm not going to think about that. I just give my best," he said.

Both goaltenders said that they have a good relationship, after spending the majority of last season together. Stalock has been with the organization since he was drafted in 2005, while Sateri was chosen three years later.

"We're really good friends," Sateri said. "He's a good guy, and we hang out together a lot, especially last season in Worcester. Of course it's a competition on the ice, but we're really good friends off the ice."

Stalock said: "He's a good kid and good young goalie, and he's got a bright future so it's fun being with him."

Each is expected to get a long, hard look in preseason action. After Monday, the Sharks have back-to-back home games on Friday and Saturday against Anaheim and Phoenix, respectively. According to Thomas, a decision will likely be made after the Sharks' fourth preseason game on Sept. 24 vs. Vancouver.

"For both of them, they're both going to see things they haven't seen before," Thomas said. "They may have seen them on TV, but they're going to experience them live at NHL speed. Hopefully they can react properly to it, and in a hurry, and if they do make a mistake, recover from it for the next shot or next game."

Stalock welcomes the challenge.

"With the move they made this summer and the confidence in their system, it shows they want to have a guy there from inside their system, and it's going to be a battle," he said.
