When the Columbus Blue Jackets acquired Jeff Carter during the offseason, the expectation was that he would play well with Rick Nash and help the team contend in a highly-contested Western Conference. Unfortunately for the Blue Jackets fans and the front office, Carter would get injured early in the season with a broken foot and never contribute to his fullest potential. With rampant speculation abound regarding Carter's level of happiness in the Ohio capital, the writing appeared to be on the wall that Scott Howson would have to trade his prized offseason acquisition and try his best to recoup the value he traded away in June of 2011.

That trade finally happened on the night of February 23. After weeks of proposals and rumors, Jeff Carter will make the cross-country trek to Los Angeles, CA to suit up for the offensively-inept Los Angeles Kings. In return, the Kings will send University of Michigan alum Jack Johnson to Columbus along with a first round pick in either 2012 or 2013. The Blue Jackets hold the option of which pick they would like to receive. According to Columbus Dispatch beat writer Aaron Portzline, the Blue Jackets have until two picks before the Kings are on the clock for the 2012 NHL Entry Draft to make their decision.

As for Jack Johnson, the Blue Jackets get a proven defenseman with 343 NHL games under his belt. A former third overall draft pick by the Carolina Hurricanes in 2005, Johnson has underachieved in his NHL career. Johnson is a big, strong left handed shot who has been playing under the shadow of world-class defenseman Drew Doughty for the last couple of years. The biggest issue for Johnson has been consistency, posting a negative plus/minus in each of his six seasons in Los Angeles.

Despite having already played over 340 games and six seasons, Johnson is still just 25 years old. The hope for the Blue Jackets would be that Johnson finds a comfort level in Columbus. Born and raised in Indianapolis, IN, Johnson is a graduate of the University of Michigan and there's hope that he possibly just didn't adapt well to the Southern California style of living. There's still untapped potential there and the Blue Jackets, and specifically GM Scott Howson, are really hopeful that he uncovers it in Columbus.

As far as comparing what the Blue Jackets gave up for Jeff Carter to this trade, it doesn't look as bad as it could, but by no means is it ideal. The Blue Jackets acquired Jeff Carter when the Philadelphia Flyers were attempting to unload salary and change the character dynamic of their team. Carter was viewed as an abrasive personality and not a team player. Even with these concerns, the Blue Jackets, who have lacked talent for the entire history of the franchise, took a chance on Carter, hoping that he would click playing with Rick Nash and being out of a city with an extremely critical fan base. Instead, Carter battled injuries and seemed to be unhappy. Realizing that Carter's trade value was likely going to continue to plummet, Scott Howson made the decision to send Carter westward.

If you'll recall, the Blue Jackets traded forward Jake Voracek, Columbus's first round pick in the 2011 NHL Entry Draft (Sean Couturier) and a third round pick. Jack Johnson's value is certainly dependent on who you talk to, but he is a solid player to have for the future. The Kings first round pick will probably be around ten or twelve picks lower than the Blue Jackets 2011 pick, which was eighth.

Howson took this trade at a loss, but he did the best with what he could. League-wide, the opinion of Jeff Carter has soured since the June trade that the Blue Jackets completed. To get a top-four defenseman and a first round pick for an unhappy player with questionable character is not a bad return.

The spotlight remains on Scott Howson as the hours tick down toward the trade deadline. Rick Nash remains the most attractive name on the trade market and this Carter deal likely enhances the likelihood of Nash being sent to a new destination.

Keep checking back to TheClevelandFan.com throughout the week for the latest updates on the Blue Jackets and the NHL Trade Deadline.