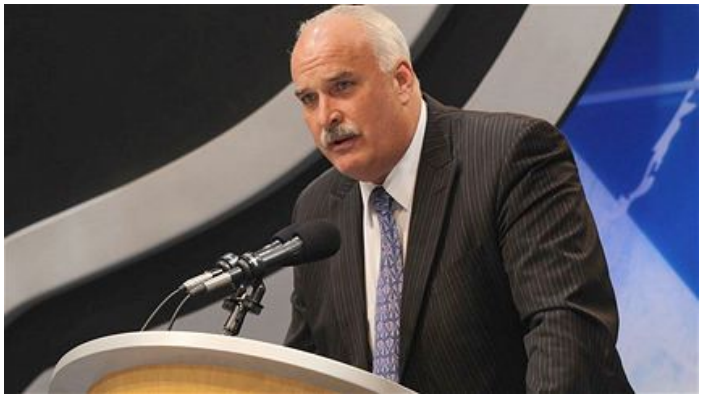

While things continue to look rather bleak on the lockout front, Columbus Blue Jackets fans were treated to a beacon of hope on Wednesday afternoon. The team announced that they have hired former St. Louis Blues President of Hockey Operations John Davidson to be the President of Hockey Operations for the Blue Jackets. Davidson, who is widely respected around the league, provides legitimacy to a front office in dire need of experienced personnel.

In Davidson, the Blue Jackets are bringing in a very smart hockey mind that helped the Blues to two playoff appearances and the best record in the Western Conference for the 2011-12 season. Davidson, a former goaltender, believes in building teams from the net out, something that should help the Blue Jackets, who have never had a strong goaltender and defense at the same time. Davidson is also in the Hockey Hall of Fame for his contributions to broadcasting, an honor bestowed upon him in 2009. Davidson is also part of the Hockey Hall of Fame selection committee.

While with the Blues, Davidson had a fairly quick trigger finger with coaches, using four different bench bosses in the six seasons he was at the helm. Couple Davidson with Craig Patrick, currently a Senior Advisor to Hockey Operations, and that gives the Blue Jackets have two men who have been around the game of hockey for over 40 years. With Patrick working closely with Davidson, the future certainly looks bright for the Blue Jackets, a team that has desperately needed an influx of new ideas and talent at every level of the organization.

Patrick was the assistant General Manager and assistant coach of the 1980 Miracle on Ice team, as well as a two-time Stanley Cup winning GM with the Pittsburgh Penguins in the early ‘90s. Like Davidson, Patrick also has a plaque in the Hockey Hall of Fame, with his residing in the “Builders” section for front office personnel.

With two very driven, highly influential men now making some of the most important hockey decisions in Columbus, the lockout cannot end soon enough. It will take some time for Davidson and Patrick to achieve what they want to achieve in Columbus, but the future, which had been murky with the Rick Nash trade and the ongoing uncertainty at the goaltending position, now looks significantly better.

As for the NHL lockout, there isn't much to report. The key issue now that the NHL has agreed to a 50/50 revenue sharing format with the players is honoring existing contracts. The new CBA includes provisions to cut contracts down to five years, to prevent frontloading or backloading them to circumvent the salary cap. It also lowers the free agency age and service time, along with other restrictions that the players are not very fond of.

With the previous CBA, some players are signed to 10 or more year contracts. The owners are not willing to honor these contracts, so the league and the players' association are at yet another impasse. Even though this seems like a major stumbling block, the league could likely start play by mid-November if the owners simply agreed to honor the contracts they agreed to before the lockout. The players seem be content with the 50/50 revenue sharing split. Many of the other issues seem to have gone by the wayside at this point. The two sticking points have always been the ones worth the most money to each side.

The lockout is taking a serious public relations toll on both parties. Players are bombarded daily on Twitter by angry fans chastising them for being greedy. The league seems more interested in playing hardball than getting a season started. The longer the lockout drags on, the worse the situation becomes for the NHL.

The Lake Erie Monsters are now 4-2 on the season after taking two of three on their southern U.S. road trip to Oklahoma City and Texas. The Monsters had a good road trip offensively, scoring 12 goals in three games. Their 20 goals rank second in the Western Conference, although their six games played are tied for the most in the conference.

They opened the trip with a 5-3 win over Oklahoma City, coming from behind with a three powerplay goals in the third period to seal the win. On Sunday, they shut out Texas 4-0 in the middle game of the road trip, with Calvin Pickard recording his second shutout of the young season. On Tuesday night, in the final game of the trip, the Monsters allowed four powerplay goals, falling 4-3 to Oklahoma City in their final regular season game against the Barons.

The Monsters have been balanced offensively, having eight players with four or more points through six games. Tuesday's game marked the first time that the Monsters gave up more than three goals in a game, and goaltending like that should continue to give them a chance to win.

The Monsters will return home to host the Abbotsford Heat (Calgary's affiliate) this weekend with 7:30 p.m. puck drops on Friday and Saturday night. After that, the Monsters will head out on a two-week, seven-game, and six-city road trip from November 1-14.