Both sides are back at the bargaining tables at an undisclosed location in New York City, but the prospects of a season continue to look bleak. Last week, the NHL canceled the annual Winter Classic outdoor hockey game and more cancellations for December could be on the horizon. After getting the league to budge on the issue of revenue sharing, the players' association has now planted its flag in honoring existing contracts, leaving some in the media to believe that the only way the two sides come to a resolution is for the league to also make that concession.

Not much has changed over the last week regarding negotiations, except that both sides are talking again. The two sides met for over seven hours on Tuesday and were reportedly meeting again at 1 p.m. on Wednesday. That could be a small step in the right direction, but by no means does this mean that an agreement is imminent. As mentioned in previous columns, now that the players are playing overseas or in minor leagues, they're more content than the owners and league officials who are sitting around doing very little. The onus remains on the league, along with the caveat that the players made the bulk of the concessions following the 2004-05 lockout.

Other concerns still to be discussed include AHL salaries counting towards the NHL salary cap, the new free agency rules, and further issues regarding revenue.

In Columbus Blue Jackets related news, if the league and the players are able to settle their dispute, the city of Columbus is still in line to host the 2013 NHL All-Star Game. In the event that there is not a season or no All-Star Game is played, it will be interesting to see what happens. There was no All-Star Game in 2010 due to the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. If the NHL players participate in the 2014 Sochi, Russia Olympic Games, there will probably be no All-Star Game again. That could push Columbus's All-Star Game all the way to 2015.

The American Hockey League turned 76 on Wednesday. Back on November 7, 1936, the Cleveland Falcons were in action, falling 4-2 to the Pittsburgh Hornets. The following year, the Falcons would change their name to the Barons and go on to win nine Calder Cup championships from 1938-1964.

As for the current Cleveland team, the Lake Erie Monsters, they took two out of three to start their seven-game road trip, winning the first two and dropping the finale. The Monsters are now 7-4-0-0, good for fourth place in the Western Conference. Tyson Barrie continues to lead the way with 10 points, while Bryan Lerg leads the team with six goals.

Calvin Pickard and Sami Aittokallio continue to get playing time, with Pickard starting to separate himself a little bit. Pickard has played seven of the 11 games, going 4-3 with a 2.41 goals against average. Aittokallio is 3-1 in his four games with a 2.97 GAA.

The Monsters, who came home with six days in between games, will head back out on the road for games Friday and Saturday in Texas and then games next Tuesday and Wednesday in Abbotsford, British Columbia. The Monsters will look to avoid losing consecutive games for the second time this season when they take on Houston on Friday night.