The owners and the players' association are finally starting to make some progress. Interestingly, the progress is coming without Commissioner Gary Bettman or NHLPA Chief Donald Fehr in the room. Negotiations were headed up by Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly and Steve Fehr represented the players. This appeared to be a last-ditch effort to save the season, with the all-important Board of Governors meeting taking place on Wednesday afternoon. Talks seemed to be positive and both sides left the table hopeful for a resolution.

Six owners were part of the talks, a group constructed of teams who would have varying requests. Three of the owners were from Canadian teams, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Calgary, two were from strong hockey markets in Pittsburgh and Boston, and another was from Tampa Bay. Eighteen players also took part in the meeting, including big names like Sidney Crosby, Shane Doan and Ryan Miller. Neither side would say that a deal was imminent, however, both sides believe some steps in the right direction were made.

At this stage, any bit of good news on the labor front is welcomed with open arms. The closer the lockout moves to the start of 2013, the likelihood of the cancellation 2012-13 season grows. The players, seemingly encouraged with the progress, collaborated with Donald Fehr, the head of the players' association, to finalize a proposal to submit sometime this week. No word on what any of their concessions might be or what the will ask of the owners, however the players taking a more assertive stance on things would be a good sign for negotiations. After all, the players who are in that room are the ones who chose not go overseas and play, so they aren't making any money right now, unlike their breathren collecting paychecks to play hockey.

No details were given by Bettman on what transpired at the Board of Governors meeting. Columbus Blue Jackets President John Davidson said he was "happy with the information that he got". Davidson is still waiting to really dig into the problems that the Blue Jackets have. He was hired in October to serve as Team President and has yet to really be able to dive in. Considering that there's a lot that needs to be done to help the Blue Jackets, Davidson would probably like to get started sooner rather than later.

In any event, it appears that negotiations are moving in the right direction and that a shortened season could soon be a reality. Desperation appears to be setting in on both sides, as it took the NHL a very long time to recover from the lockout that cost the entire 2004-05 season.

A brief update on the Lake Erie Monsters, who are struggling mightily right now. The team has lost seven of its last nine games and has dropped to eighth in the Western Conference standings. The Monsters have also allowed four or more goals in five of their last seven games, all losses. To show how good the team was playing early in the season, even with losing seven of nine and allowing a lot of goals in the process, the team is exactly even in goal differential.

Mike Sgarbossa leads the way with 19 points in 22 games. The Monsters do not have a player with more than nine goals through 22 games. The goaltending tandem of Sami Aittokallio and Calvin Pickard has dropped off as well, with each guy sporting a goals against average above 2.75.

The Monsters head to Charlotte for a pair of games this weekend against the Checkers, the Carolina Hurricanes affiliate.