Let's assume that the NHL season is broken down in to periods, much like the games are. If that is the case, then the first period of the Columbus Blue Jackets season has essentially come to an end. The Jackets play game number 27 on Thursday night against the St. Louis Blues. That makes the regular season 32.92% complete.

Last season, after 27 games, the Blue Jackets were 13-9-5. This year, the Jackets are 15-10-1. Game #27 of the 2009-10 season marked the beginning of the team's freefall. With a shootout loss to Chicago, the Jackets began a string of losing 16 of 18, effectively ending their season before the second week of January.

Ironically, the Blue Jackets just ended a five-game losing streak in dramatic fashion. Captain Rick Nash and best player of the decade scored through a screen with 46.1 seconds left to send the game to overtime. The Jackets eventually won in a shootout thanks to Kyle Wilson's game winner.

So the record is similar, the inconsistencies that plague a young team still remain. What is different about the season's team? First and foremost, this Blue Jackets team is winning on the

road. They have an 8-3 road record while last team's squad had a 12-23-6 record away from Nationwide Arena. Winning on the road is difficult in the NHL. First, the home team has the benefit of the last line change. The home coach can get the matchups that he wants for a majority of the game. Second, especially in the case of the Blue Jackets, the travel can be rough. The Blue Jackets are the easternmost team in the Western Conference. With the exception of Detroit, every other team in the conference is in a time zone other than the Eastern.

Creativity is key on Scott Arniel's team. Derick Brassard and Jakub Voracek have combined for 35 points so far this season. The two combined for 86 points all of last season. Four players on the roster have over ten assists already.

Simply put, it is hard to put in words the importance of Rostislav Klesla to the team. Klesla is a team-leading, and league-leading, +17 and is blocking just over two shots per game. A healthy Klesla can help this team go a long way. Klesla did not play a game after November 30 last season. The Jackets freefall began in their next game.

Finally, Mathieu Garon has been everything you would want a backup goaltender to be. He is 7-2 with three shutouts and a 1.94 goals-against-average. As the team's third-oldest player, he must take on a leadership role and help Steve Mason, 11 years his junior. So far, Garon has done everything asked of him and been a real bright spot for this team.

However, for everything that's gone well, there are still some huge concerns. Nikita Filatov is without a goal on the season and is averaging just 12:14 of ice time per game. Certainly not what you want to see out of a former first round pick. Fedor Tyutin was scratched on Monday night against Dallas. It marked the first time Tyutin has been a healthy scratch since being acquired by Columbus in 2007.

The mantra for the second period: Avoid the collapse of 2009-2010.

In other Blue Jackets news:

How about some strange stats from the first period of the season? Steve Mason is 3-7 on Fridays and Saturdays with a goals-against-average well above 4.00.

I have said before that the Blue Jackets go as Rick Nash goes. In the 15 wins, Rick Nash has 17 of his 20 points and 13 of his 14 goals. In the 10 regulation losses, Nash has 3 of his 20 points and is -11.

Explaining the home/road discrepancy a bit, the Blue Jackets have a 7.7% efficiency rating on the powerplay at home. That number jumps to 15.1% on the road.

Far from a strange stat, but the Blue Jackets are 12-2 when the score first.

In other NHL news:

Not necessarily NHL news, but one of my favorite times of the year, the Under-20 World Junior Championships takes place from December 26-January 5 in Buffalo, NY. The US is the defending champion.

The preliminary roster was announced on Tuesday. The United States tournament games are usually broadcast on NHL Network. When the TV schedule is released, it will appear in my column closest to the tournament.

Sidney Crosby has decided to cement himself as the best player in the league. Crosby is on pace for 137 points and has a legitimate shot at 50 goals in 50 games. He has 26 in 30 games, including eight goals in four games in December.

Jere Lehtinen, one of the best two-way players of this generation has retired from the NHL at 37. Lehtinen spent 14 seasons with the Dallas Stars. He retires as the only Finnish-born player with a Stanley Cup and a World Championships gold medal. Lehtinen is also one of four players in NHL history to win three or more Selke trophies as the league's top defensive forward.

Finally, not NHL news, but here's an entertaining bench-clearing brawl from the Elite Ice Hockey League in the United Kingdom: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B185Pn_Wkh4

A minor league update on the Lake Erie Monsters:

Saturday night's game is Chuck-a-Bear night. After the first Monsters goal, fans are asked to throw stuffed teddy bears on to the ice to benefit local charities and provide a nighttime companion for some of the less fortunate kids in the area.

The Monsters lost a couple of one-goal heartbreakers in Abbotsford, British Columbia this week, a 3-2 shootout loss on Tuesday and a 1-0 shutout loss on Wednesday.

Upcoming schedules:

Columbus: 12/9 @ STL, 12/11 v. NYR, 12/13 @ CGY, 12/15 @ VAN

Lake Erie: 12/11 v. TOR, 12/12 v. Houston