Back on December 9th, I had one mantra for the Columbus Blue Jackets. Avoid the collapse of 2009. In 2009, the Blue Jackets opened the season 13-9-5. They proceeded to lose 16 of 18 and freefall to the bottom of the Central Division, where they would stay. This year, after 27 games, the Jackets were 15-10-1.

History repeats itself.

Since then, the Blue Jackets have gone 5-10-3. It isn't losing 16 of 18, but it is losing 13 of 18, and it plummeted them to the bottom of the Central Division and places them as the third-worst team in the Western Conference. The team has scored just 110 goals in 43 games.

After beginning the season 8-3 on the road, and earning my praises, the team has gone 1-7-2 on the road and spent an entire month's worth of road games not having a lead. They are winless in 2011, having lost four of the five games on the road and allowing at least four goals in each game.

Jackets' goaltenders are facing an average of 30.3 shots per game. This is simply too many shots. It may not seem like a lot, but when you are talking about a team that generates very little offense, the goaltenders have an exceptionally small margin of error. On most nights, you would need a .933 (28/30) save percentage from either Mason or Garon to have a good chance at winning. One goaltender in the NHL, Tim Thomas, has a save percentage above .930.

Secondary scoring has been a problem, both historically and this season. Rick Nash has 20 goals and is on pace for around 40. RJ Umberger is second with 14. After that, no other Blue

Jacket has found the net 10 times. One issue for the team is scoring from the defensemen. Just 12 of the team's 110 goals have come from defensemen.

Couple these struggles along with the alienation of one of the few veterans on the roster and you have real problems in Ohio's capital. Mike Commodore has been sent to Springfield of the American Hockey League because of his inability to crack Scott Howson's lineup and the fact that he is vastly overpaid at $3.75M per season. He went unclaimed on waivers and re-entry waivers, where half of his salary would have been paid by the Blue Jackets if he had been claimed.

Last season, Commodore was injured early in camp and never regained his endurance. His skating never caught up and he was often tired late in games and not used at all. This season, Commodore was rumored to be in excellent shape, but his skill set is just not advanced enough for today's NHL. Now, the Blue Jackets are left with a disheveled locker room. More importantly, in a league with a salary cap, Commodore's $3.75M is a huge hit to take for a guy not contributing.

With a back-to-back against the hated Detroit Red Wings, a trip to Florida to face the division-leading Lightning and the pesky Panthers, a game against perennial pain-in-the-ass St. Louis, and then Anaheim, a current playoff team, on the horizon, the team is at serious risk of going winless in January.

In other NHL news:

Updating a tidbit from my last article on the Winter Classic, the Devils have managed to score nine goals over their last three games. They are now on pace to score 152 goals! The record for lowest goals in a season is the 1953-54 Blackhawks who scored 133, but it was a 70 game season. That's good for 1.9 goals per game. The Devils would beat that mark with 1.85 goals per game if they stay on their current pace.

The injury bug has visited the Detroit Red Wings again this year. Missing from the lineup are Pavel Datsyuk, Dan Cleary, Chris Osgood, Mike Modano, and Brad Stuart. Yet they have a seven point lead in the Central Division and currently hold the second seed in the Western Conference. If you want a model organization in sports, look no farther than that one. What they

do year in and year out is incredible.

A minor league update on the Lake Erie Monsters:

The lengthy road trip I mentioned last week has not been kind to the Monsters. So far they are 1-3 on the trip, with the only win coming on Saturday against Texas. They will play three games in three days this weekend to finish off the long trip.

Upcoming schedules:

Columbus: 1/14 v. DET, 1/15 @ DET, 1/18 @ TB, 1/19 @ FLA

Lake Erie: 1/14 @ Rochester, 1/15 @ Hershey, 1/16 @ Rochester, 1/18 v. Oklahoma City