It's safe to say this is not the start the Blue Jackets envisioned for the 2011-2012 season. They sit 0-3 to start the year for the first time in franchise history and, if you have followed the team, you know that with how bad some of the teams have been, that's quite a feat.

Mediocre goaltending, bad defensive zone coverage and a miserable powerplay have kept the Blue Jackets from gathering their first win of the season. The team is already left looking for answers and the NHL season is not even a week old. With a very tough schedule the rest of the month with games against Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, and Anaheim, the ship needs to get righted fast.

The offense has sputtered with just six goals in three games and racking up a 0-for-16 on the man advantage. Part of the problem for the suffering offense is that the Blue Jackets have not gotten contributions from their defensemen. Of the team's 17 points, goals plus assists, just three are from d-men and none of them are goals. Exactly one-third, 30 of 90, shots on goal belong to defensemen entering Wednesday's game against Colorado.

Steve Mason's 10 goals allowed over a three-game span have not all been his fault, but he has struggled with rebound control. This may be a little in-depth for some readers, but here is how I can best explain why rebound control is critical for a team like the Blue Jackets. There's the obvious point – rebounds generally lead to shots on an empty net.

But, also, there's why they are so bad for a team like the Blue Jackets. The way the roster is constructed, there aren't many players with a physical edge, and few on defense. When a goaltender gives up rebounds, the players in front of the net have to play physically to prevent the opposition from getting shots off rebounds. If the forwards don't help in this process, the

defensemen can get outnumbered and outworked. If the forwards do help, the Blue Jackets have a hard time getting out of the defensive zone because the forwards are unavailable for a pass. With defensemen whose games are not equipped to handle the puck a lot, this presents a problem.

Basically, there is not a whole lot of coaching Scott Arniel can do to remedy this problem. The only fix is Steve Mason controlling his rebounds better.

It hasn't been all bad for the Blue Jackets to this point. Jeff Carter has looked very good with three assists, is leading the team in shots on goal and leads the league in faceoffs won. Grant Clitsome has helped the loss of James Wisniewski to suspension by playing well in all three zones. Vinny Prospal has been an excellent addition with a couple goals in three games.

A lot has been made of rookie Cam Atkinson, the Boston College product who earned a spot on the roster in training camp. He scored his first NHL goal against Vancouver on a great pass from Derek MacKenzie. Atkinson showed good instincts on the goal, going to the front of the net and finding open space.

My fear with Atkinson is this. His size is going to be an issue at this level. Only supremely talented players like Martin St. Louis can regularly be a force in NHL games. Atkinson, while skilled, does not possess really above average talent. He has shown the ability to play well along the boards against physical play. The problem is that smaller players get worn down. When the bumps, bruises, aches, and pains or the season catch up to them, they lose their speed edge and can get complacent in high-hitting areas of the ice.

I hope he proves me wrong. I really do. I like to root for the smaller, skilled guys in the NHL because they simply cannot help their genetics and body type.

Looking ahead, the Blue Jackets have a difficult rest of the month with two against Dallas, two against Detroit, Buffalo, Chicago and Anaheim. These are a measuring stick for the team. By no means is it time to panic. That said, having to leapfrog five or six teams for playoff spots in the era of three-point games, speaking about the overtime/shootout loss point, is extremely difficult. Things could change abruptly and the Jackets gel faster than expected and be right in the hunt from the start. If that doesn't happen, the West will be tough to play catch up in.

Upcoming schedule:

10/12 v. Colorado

10/15 @ Dallas

10/18 v. Dallas