Mercifully, for the Blue Jackets, they only have to take the ice a few more times this season. In a year where nothing has gone right and the team's top prospect has not playing consistent minutes, there are next to no positives from the 2011-12 season. One has to ever wonder if they'll be able to keep the first overall pick, as they have just a 48.2% chance of that happening. The way the season's gone, it wouldn't surprise anybody if they lost the near 50/50 chance.

The Blue Jackets enter the final week and a half of the season having lost 52 of their 76 games. Emergency rooms have seen fewer injuries since October than the Blue Jackets. The future looks cloudier than ever and the Columbus Clippers look like more of a professional team than the Blue Jackets do.

To compound what has already been a lost season, Steve Mason took a puck to the head on Wednesday morning at practice. Allen York and Shawn Hunwick (who?) were the goaltenders listed on the roster. Oh, yeah, and Detroit's in town. The Jackets, who will literally limp to the finish line, are 16 points worse than the Edmonton Oilers and an incredible 38 points worse than the team closest to them in the Central Division.

They may get in the futility record books this season, which is about the only thing that will be remembered from the 2011-12 season. That, and the Rick Nash debacle surrounding the trade deadline.

Next week, I'll write up a season recap for the Blue Jackets as I'd rather dedicate the week following the conclusion of the regular season to previewing the playoffs. The Jackets final two games after my column is posted won't drastically alter the content I'd have in it.

Some teams are thriving down the stretch run while others are barely hanging on for dear life. The 75+ games and seven months of hockey from training camp to this point are taking their toll on some teams more than others. The nightly grind of battling for playoff position is forcing players to really dig deep and leave it all on the line for the opportunity to get in the playoffs and face one of the conference's titans.

The Buffalo Sabres have embraced that fight. Led by goaltender Ryan Miller, the Sabres have rattled off an incredible 11-2-2 run since the trade deadline, even with the loss of a strong defensive centerman in Paul Gaustad, who was traded to Nashville. The run culminated on Tuesday night with a 5-1 drubbing of the Washington Capitals on the road. The Sabres now control their own playoff destiny with a two-point lead over the Caps and sit just two points behind division rival Ottawa for the seventh seed. The Sabres do not own the tiebreaker, so getting ahead of Washington was a must.

Another team who has embraced the fight for playoff positioning is the Pittsburgh Penguins. Since February 21, the Penguins have rolled to a 14-2-1 record and closed what was thought of as an insurmountable gap between them and the New York Rangers to just three points. With Sidney Crosby returning from a concussion, the Penguins could surpass the Rangers for the first seed in the East. One has to wonder, though, if the Penguins ridiculously strong run has burned them out for the playoffs. Peaking too early is always a concern, did the Penguins do just that?

The aforementioned Washington Capitals are in dire straits right now. Even though they're just two points out of the final playoff spot, this is a team that hasn't played a meaningful game in March since the 2007-08 season. The Southeast Division is usually a cakewalk for the Caps, but this year, they're in a fight for their playoff lives. As a team that has been viewed as having next to no leadership and a questionable work ethic, this is a really bad spot for them to be in.

Out West, everybody is beating everybody and the playoff picture will take up until the last day to be determined. Not a single team in the Western Conference has won more than six of their last ten games. Six teams are within two points of the final two playoff spots in the conference and four of them are from the same division, the Pacific.

The St. Louis Blues have separated themselves from the pack, building a four point lead over Vancouver for the top seed in the West. Given the home/road record splits across the conference, home ice is critical for a lot of Western Conference teams. The Blues dismantled the Nashville Predators 3-0 in a dominating performance on Tuesday night, beating a team that they've had trouble with all season long.

One of the more interesting teams in the Western Conference has to be the Dallas Stars. The Stars would probably team the lowest-profile team looking to get in the playoffs. They don't exactly have the big names that the other teams have, but they put forth one of the more consistent efforts on a nightly basis. They're minus-1 in goal differential and nothing else really jumps off the page about them. But, they've been in the hunt the entire time and that has them battle tested for a playoff run. Neither the third seed, where they would play Chicago, nor the seventh or eighth seed are very favorable matchups for them but they would be a difficult team to play in a long series.

A look at the Lake Erie Monsters and their playoff hopes shows that they are dwindling. The Monsters sit just one point out of the final playoff spot in the Western Conference, but they have also played the most games of any of the 12 teams in the postseason picture. The Monsters also no longer hold the necessary tiebreakers to get in to the playoffs in the event of a tie.

With just seven games remaining, the chances look bleak of a return to the playoffs.