

2008-2009 Season Review
by Peter Diamantakos

The 2008-2009 season started with action, generally reserved for the trade front after a four-month hiatus, coming from the boardroom. Two franchises changed hands, as the Klann Korp. and Griffiths Riggs were replaced and continued on as the Day Express and Dedrick Devils, respectively. Furthermore, to avoid a long and drawn out summer of pre-protection trading, or lack thereof, the protection date was moved up from September 1st to August 1st. Concurrently, rosters were frozen as the SCHL implemented for the first time a two-round waiver wire whereby teams could scoop up unprotected players – a team with less than 12 protects could do so with no ramifications; a team with 12 protects would have to release a protected player back into the pool. Based on the lack of movement and overall effect, the waiver wire was abandoned.

On a more contentious note, a rule was put in place to curb tanking brought to light by recent controversial methods of building and competing, namely by the Wilson Bullets and Tarpan Horses. As such, implemented was a rule stating that each team must walk out of the draft and head into the first week of the season with at least 13 players who have played at least 10 NHL games. After that, a prospect free-for-all could be had, but this rule was designed for teams to provide at least some semblance of competitiveness, even if they are better served and destined for a lottery pick. Finally, in another effort to increase competitiveness (parity), an SCHL staple fell to the wayside – after 10 years and long, drawn out debates, Money Men were removed in a razor-thin vote. No longer could teams just build a top heavy core, but a roster that was solid from top to bottom. Accordingly, goalie points were adjusted downwards with: shutouts now worth 3 points as opposed to 5; assists leveled to those of skaters at 1 point as opposed to 3; and goals (as rare as they are) down to 5 points from 20.

Despite all that, there indeed were moves and the summer of 2008 started off with a blockbuster between the Express and Barracudas. After losing the draft lottery and ending up with the 2nd overall pick, the Express peddled the pick to the Barracudas in a deal centering around Bobby Ryan, a former 2nd overall pick (NHL) himself. Noticing their team had the makings to be a prime candidate for a breakout season, the Barracudas shuffled the pick for immediate help by bringing in offensive d-man stud Sergei Gonchar; unfortunately things didn't work out as planned as Gonchar was sidelined for the majority of the season. Not to be outdone, the Jawas entered the fray and were quite busy as long-time Jawa Jay Bouwmeester was moved to the Goldminers for a more experienced Lubomir Viznovsky. In addition, Rick Nash was moved to the Triads in a deal that included a couple high 1st round picks while Daniel Alfredsson was brought in tow for Andrej Meszaros and one of the aforementioned 1sts.

The draft was held at the home of the Barracudas (more so a common area) for the second time. Originally scheduled to be held at the home of four-time champion the Heartbreakers, a national election was called and thus has to be moved. A beauty draft that was well set-up and arranged, the Devils kicked off the festivities by drafting Steven Stamkos, the consensus 1st overall pick. The Assassins then used the 2nd overall pick to grab stud defenceman Drew Doughty. At 3rd overall, the Spartans added dynamic Nikita Filatov to their stable. A move that was in works for months was finally consummated on draft day with the Goldminers frantically swinging a deal with the Millionaires to move up to 6th overall and solidify the Kostitsyn duo by drafting Andrei's younger brother, Sergei. Other than that, the Assassins stole the spotlight on notable moves by further solidifying their back end by grabbing Alex Pietrangelo, another stud defenceman, and Steve Mason, who'd go on to record 10 shutouts and win the Calder Trophy, all the while trading gifted forward Paul Kariya to the Shrubdogs for a bunch of fluff.

The regular season provided its usual excitement, and was marked with some incredible feats and moments. Most notably, we saw:

- ❑ The Tycoons steamroll through the schedule and roll off 18 consecutive wins, obliterating the previous record of 10 wins, on their way to their third Wayne Gretzky and Prime Minister championships, a record-setting seventh division title and became only the second repeat winner of the Snipers Cup (more on that to follow);
- ❑ The Regime end up with the first ever winless season, having gone 0-21-1;

- ❑ The powerhouse Kilts struggle through the regular season – buoyed by an injury to Hall of Famer Martin Brodeur – and narrowly squeezing into the playoffs with their first losing record since the inaugural season. A stark contrast for a team that was always in the upper echelon;
- ❑ The close-but-no-cigar Gryphons, who are always considered to have a chance to win it all only to come up short, falter out of the gate and also squeeze through the back door into the playoffs by reeling off 7 wins to end the season; and
- ❑ The Express turn a moribund franchise around into one not only competitive week-to-week, but one that just barely missed the playoffs.

or a more comprehensive look at the season that was, here's a review for each SCHL team:

Bellamy Barracudas:

In Nathan's own words: The 2008-2009 season for the Bellamy Barracudas started off with a whimper similar to that in which a dog would let out should its tail be stepped on by a 3 year old girl. With only one draft pick GM Nathan Bellamy selected, predictably, Jaroslav Halak as his backup goaltender to up-and-coming star, Carey Price.

With the news that his recently acquired defensive monster Sergei Gonchar will be out for half the season or more and the week one loss to the Tycoons, things were not looking up for the fish.

Most of the SCHL laughed when the "Frankcaster" rankings had the Barracudas placing 3rd overall in the predicted standings, but Bellamy wasn't laughing. He knew that what he had assembled was quality and even without Sergei he knew his team could compete.

The weeks rolled by and the 'Cudas kept stacking up the points. Price was rolling along fine and most of the team was playing well. Surprise breakouts from Hartnell and Zajac fueled the Barracuda fire and all was going well. At the halfway point of the season the surprise Barracudas found them in 2nd place, trailing only the eventual Snipers Cup champions. Everyone was talking, everyone was scared of the Barracuda machine.

And then a lugnut started to wiggle.....

The Montreal Canadians went in the tank and so did an injured Price. Barracuda allstar Thomas Vanek took a puck in the face and had to have his jaw wired shut. Brad Richards who seemingly never gets hurt went down with a serious injury and even Corey Perry started missing the occasional game.

It was the beginning of the end. With Gonchar still weeks away the Barracudas began limping, and consequently, falling in the WG standings. Sure the team made the playoffs and knocked off the equally struggling Gryphons in Round 1, but the Barracudas went in cold, lacking the scoring strength that had blessed them all season.

Mr. Bellamy can rest at night knowing that he didn't mortgage his future to get this far (other than a wasted pick on Andrew Brunette) Moving forward the core of this team remains young, improving and deed. And with the help of Baby Jesus a healthy Barracuda squad come October, will be something to be afraid of.

Day Express:

In Derek's own words: The Express' first full season under new management was a successful one, starting off with a bang when they handed the Championship Bullets their first loss of the season.

Pegged in the season preview to finish dead last in the league, the Express clawed their way past six other teams to finish a respectable 16th, which was acknowledged by the franchise's first piece of hardware, Most Improved 2008-09. On route to claiming that title, they were in a constant battle for a promotion to the Silver division and the last playoff spot, eventually losing out to the Kilts only due to a tie breaker.

Some big names were moved, most notably Kyle Turris. The powers that be were not a fan of his play in the NHL from what they saw, and ultimately decided that his stock was at a high, and were it was time to pull the trigger. In return, the Express received 3 high 1sts in the upcoming entry draft. Jose Theodore was also moved right before he began a downward spiral, giving the team a total of five first round picks to play with in the upcoming draft.

With the most improved under their belt, the Express are looking to achieve that honor an unheard of second year in a row. With no notable losses to their 16th place roster, they have now added a stud d-man in Zidlicky, Antropov, four 1st round picks in the top fourteen and can look forward to full seasons from Sullivan and Ryan.

Diamantakos Spartans:

In Pete's own words: Entering their 3rd season, the Spartans brass knew that it was still at least a year too soon to discuss a playoff berth. Instead, they were hoping for continued improvement and development amongst their young core and that the signs were there of a competing team in the not too distant future.

With that in mind and even with not-so-high expectations, the first half of the season was an utter disaster as the team hit the half-way point with a 1-8-2 record. Consistent scoring from all around remained an issue and the team seemed destined for another season in which the amount of wins could be counted on one hand. The second half however ended up being the polar opposite of the first half whereby the Spartans ended off the season strong with a 6-4 playoff-pace record.

Player highlights included:

- Cam Ward establishing himself as a top 5-8 SCHL goalie;
- Ryan Kesler far exceeding expectations to show that a 55+ point producer may be had;
- Kris Letang showing signs of being a catalyst on Pittsburgh's 1st PP unit; and
- The Florida duo of Stephen Weiss and Keith Ballard proving they may become a possible 100-point combo.

Disappointments came in the form of: prized summer acquisition Shawn Horcoff, who was less than advertised; uber talented yet extremely lazy/enigmatic Robert Nilsson playing himself off the team; and Paul Ranger suffering an injury-riddled season.

Heading into year four, the possibility of both dynamic Nikita Filatov and WJC standout Colin Wilson making their respective teams bodes well for a Spartan team still thirsting for scoring from up front.

There is a lot of work still to be done, but things aren't looking so glum in Sparta. Continued development will remain the name of the game. Just as planned.

Dedrick Devils:

In Steve own words: The 2008/2009 season was the first inaugural season with the Devils franchise under my full control. After drafting Stamkos 1st overall the buzz in the Devils locker room was high.

The off-season was light with long time Devils Drew Stafford and Brent Seabrook leaving the organization to bring in some more established players, in an effort to stabilize the goal tending and FWD positions.

The 2008/2009 SCHL regular season got underway and as expected the Devils struggled right out of the gate. With their prized forward starting off slowly, points were inconsistent and wins were few and far between. Week 4 was a historic one with the Devils registering their first career victory against the lowly Assassins. A common theme with the Devils in the first season were 1, 2 and 3 point losses, with a majority of them being that way. The Devils were putting up decent numbers but finished off the season with the most points against overall.

Not all was bad news for the Devils as they improved 6 spots overall in the WG Standings and finished 3rd overall in Defensive scoring thanks to a Monstrous season by franchise player Mike Green. Stamkos turned on the heat late and the younger FWDS put up some solid numbers.

The Devils will continue to bring their team along slowly and keep looking to bring in high end FWD talent to help improve their fortunes.

Denroche Regime:

In Brian's own words: The Regime has pretty low expectations last year and did we ever deliver. Going a staggering 0-21-1 was pretty much all we can say about that season. Poor Devils, thanks for the tie.

With a bright future full of young players with some positive upside we can look forward to a better year ahead.

The landing of the 1st overall selection in this upcoming draft was the cornerstone of my rebuilding. John Tavares is going to be a nugget.

Hopefully we can string together some W's this year and look forward to maybe a return of the flakey Russian bastard deserter. 2010 should yield another high end prospect and after that we will be off to the races.

Franson Shrubdogs:

In Adam's own words: After a magical 07/08 season which saw the Shrubdogs win Bronze, reach the Frozen Four and eventually get promoted to Silver, the Shrubs took a bit of a stumble in 08/09.

Things started well enough with a win over eventual Snipers Cup Champions, the Tycoons in week 2.

Unfortunately the tide turned the following week as recently acquired Shrub and the leagues scoring leader at the time Paul Kariya, went down with a season ending injury. The Shrubs then traded wins with the Cudas and Bullets before Tornadoes keeper Roberto Luongo chose week 5 to lay more eggs than Brian Denroche and in turn sealed the fate of the Silver division contender.

Missing the postseason on a tiebreak with the Kilts after they both put up 20 pts was definitely not in the forecast for a team that eventually finished 8th in the WG race.

As has been well documented, the disheartening loss to the Bullets in the 08 Frozen Four and what has come to be known as Iggy'gate still very much lingers so you can imagine what another tiebreaker defeat does to GM Adam Franson.

The season was not without bright spots however, rookie Patrick Berglund had a great start for the Shrubbies before slowing down over the last two months of the season and perennial sick bay regular Timmy Connolly showed all of the "S" just what he's capable of when healthy as he registered a pt a game for the 48 contests he dressed for. Pleasant surprise Denis Grebeshkov emerged as a leader in the dressing room as well as on the ice even registering 5 pts in a contest on New Years Eve.

All in all it was disappointing yes because the Franson Shrubdogs failed to improve on a great 07/08 but there's reason for optimism.

A healthy Kariya and Connolly, coupled with the emergence of "The Emergence" David Backes, as well as Berglund and Grebeshkov is compelling.

Add to that what should be a motivated team captain in Jason Spezza, the reliable snipes of Marty St.Yoowee and the acquisition of Nikolai Khabibulin from the Bullets to stabilize the crease, expect a return to greatness in Shrub-land. And who knows just what surprises remain up the sleeve of GM Franson...stay tuned.

Grossman Flash:

In Jon's own words: The 2008-09 season finished with the Flash bowing out to the dominant Johnston Tycoons in a less than epic final. The Flash, plagued all year by injuries, simply ran out of gas. Along the way, the Flash dispatched of the Vanguard and Jawas. The semi-final match up with the Jawas was a hard fought affair, with the Flash prevailing by one point. Flash GM Jon Grossman was asked to provide some summative thoughts on a season that was expected to end with a second Snipers Cup crown:

"We thought that with the additions we made at the start of the year, picking up Joe Sakic and Nicklas Lidstrom, we had a legitimate chance to win it all. Unfortunately, injuries to Joe and Brendan really hurt our forward depth. Brian Rolston, a guy we acquired to help pick up some of the offensive slack, didn't perform up to expectations. On a positive note, I was really impressed with our young guns. Dunc [Duncan Keith] proved that he is an elite all-around defenseman who should be an all-star for years to come. 'Pickles' [Marc-Edourd Vlasic] also stepped up his game to the point where we felt comfortable trading Whitney. Up front, Kyle and Josh [Kyle Okposo and Josh Bailey] showed that they will be dynamic offensive players sooner rather than later. Finally, Val [Valtteri Filppula] played really well in the playoffs for Detroit and we expect him to contribute more next year. Our vets, Gomez, Marleau, Roy, Kovy, all had good or decent years. Nabby, as we expected, played lights out for most of the year. Looking ahead, we will continue to stockpile talent for the future. It is likely Nick's [Nicklas Lidstrom's] last year, so finding a dynamo offensive defenseman remains one of our draft priorities. With a few astute selections on draft day we expect to compete for a second Snipers Cup. I also won't rule out shaking things up by trading some key cogs. It has to make sense for our team, though. All in all, I was proud of our guys this year. Finally, the entire Flash organization would like to thank Joe Sakic for his years of service to the team and community. Although Joe's season was cut short due to a series of injuries, his legend will live on with the Flash faithful. Joe was a consummate professional and displayed a mix of integrity, skill, and humility rarely seen in today's athletes."

Hesketh Goldminers:

In Ryan's own words: The Goldminers began a dreadful end to last season hoping to rebound and make the playoffs in their third year since expansion. This would not prove to be an easy task after starting the year off 2-4-1. The Goldminers began to battle winning the next two both by double digits. The luck quickly ran out as the 'Miners lost some crucial battles in the final seconds against the Triads and the Flash.

After week 15, staring at a 5-8-1 record, things began to change for the better. After winning the next three weeks I was right back in the scene with three weeks left. Fortunately for me the Shrubs and the Gryphons had both suffered horrendous starts and basically needed to win one of the final three weeks.

Figured to be possible until tragedy struck at Hockey Day in Canada during a Miller trot. Long story short Miller was sidelined for the rest of the SCHL regular season. After losing the next two weeks it was a must win final week versus the Devils...Millerless. In the end my team, minus Burns and Miller, put up 28 points to clinch my first birth into the post season. The Champagne was popped and cigar lit as soon as HNIC finished and the celebration began. We ended up squaring off against the 79ers. It proved to be a lopsided affair as the 79ers jumped out to a 10pt lead Sunday and never looked back leading by as many as 20 points.

In the end after 2/3's of the regular season had passed I would have bet against making the playoffs. I wasn't overly impressed with the route that was chosen to make the playoffs, but satisfied with the end result of my season.

Johnston Tycoons:

In Blake's own words: The season started off with what would turn out to be a fantastic draft. We got Milan Lucic (37th), David Booth (69th) & Tim Thomas (88th). All players are being protected this year, but not necessarily on the Tycoons.

We started the season going 1-1, then proceeding to rattle off a new SCHL record 18 straight wins and cruised to a back-to-back Wayne Gretzky title and picking up the Prime Ministers Award. A loss to the Bullets in Week 21 prevented us from getting the best regular season ever.

With a WG in the house all that was left to do was win the Snipers Cup for the best season ever. After a bye week, the Tycoons tackled the upstart Heartbreakers. The Heartbreakers gave the Tycoons a huge scare and the head start points were needed for the win. Tony Roy is still pissed to this day. The 79ers were up next. While I was the top dog all year, the 79ers came into the match hotter and were looking for victory. The 79ers looked good from the get go, but a sluggish opening round for us didn't leak into this round and we booted the 79ers to the curb in convincing fashion. Finally, it was a finals vs the Flash. Two long time SCHLers going toe to toe. It was not much of a match; however, we took it home.

Killer draft, 18 game winning streak, WG, PM, Premier and of course the Snipers Cup = Best SCHL season ever. It's all downhill from here.

Lee Triads:

In Dave's own words: With the acquisition of Rick Nash in the offseason, the Triads had great hopes at the beginning of the 2008/2009. Their main focus was to win the Bronze and get promoted and to make some noise in the playoffs.

The Triads were able to fulfill 1 out of 2 of the set goals going into the season. They won the Bronze division, but were not able to make any noise in the playoffs, due to the inconsistency of Marian Hossa and J.P. Dumont, who was acquired mid season. The main headache was in goal with Chris Osgood.

The year was a success, but with also failures. 2009/2010 looks brighter with the additions of Alfredsson and Thomas. With these 2, there is added hope, but also added pressure.

Ma Tornadoes:

In Kevin's own words: Following a dismal 07-08 season, the Ma Bay Tornadoes continued their rebuilding efforts through the 08-09 season. Armed with 8 picks in the draft, the Tornadoes wheeled and dealt their way to 4 first round picks – Zach Bogosian, Cody Hodgson, Mikael Backlund and Alex Edler. Despite the plethora of young talent, the Tornadoes were very thin with actual NHL talent. After injuries to Sturm, Bogosian, Brassard, Luongo and no-shows by Nylander, Legwand, Cheechoo and Redden, the Tornadoes turned in a 19th place finish with another DNQ and a spot amongst the basement dwellers. GM Kevin Ma can only hope for some of the youngsters to turn it up several notches in the coming years.

Mitchell Vanguard:

In Griff's own words: After a whirlwind year of making the finals expectations were high for the Vanguard going into the 08-09 season. While they were able to win the Silver division and dispatch the mighty Rowdy Kilts in Round 1 of the playoffs, it was a flat performance in Round 2 to the Flash that put a serious damper on the year. Really the team never fully got on track from the get-go as a envisioned lineup with big off-season acquisition Mats Sundin never materialized until far too late into the year. Coupled with sub-par years from the likes of Vincent Lecavalier, Dion Phaneuf and in the first half Eric Staal, the team brass never saw the team bust out at its full potential. The team wasn't without its bright spots however, as Ryan Getzlaf continued on his path as a top echelon center, Phil "the thrill" Kessel busted out with a team high 36 goals and for the first time in franchise history the team had a full season of top notch goaltending thanks to Niklas Backstrom. With a vote of confidence from the front office to keep the core intact this same squad will be given a chance to do big and better things next season as they make their debut in the highly competitive Gold division.

Moran Assassins:

In Sean's own words: After blowing up a team that was sure to go the distance but failed to even make the playoffs, we knew this season would be a long one.

Traded away some big names in Gonchar, Alfredsson, Koivu, Kovalev and Timonen for some top picks and young, promising players with strong potential. Most worked out exceptionally well for us.

Last year's draft was pretty much the highlight of the year for this organization drafting 3 studs destined for superstardom in Doughty, Pietrangelo and Mason.

The back end will be one of the best this league has ever seen in a few years while the forward group is close to one of the worst, but can only improve each year. We have a solid core of forwards, but lack a top 1 and 2 and maybe 3 type players to lead the way. Perron, Stafford, Wolski, Brunstrom, Lucic should really be rotating in the bottom 3 instead of all a top 6, but sometimes as a professional, you are asked to go above and beyond every once in awhile.

The season was a write-off with many things to be excited about. Can't wait for next year.

North Shore Screamin' Jawas:

In Cam's own words: The 2008-09 season was one of many highs and a few lows for the North Shore Screamin' Jawas. The Jawas finished the year with their best ever result in the Wayne Gretzky standings (2nd), their best ever playoff showing (3rd place), as well as most wins in a season (16). Despite not having the Money Man rule in place, the Jawas managed to get more points from their players than they did in any of the first 6 years of the league.

Despite all the improving, placing, and money won, there were still a few areas that could have gone better.

The biggest disappointments came from Alfredsson, O'Sullivan, Visnovsky, and Turco. With Alfredsson, it could've been age, or the fact that the Senators were not performing up to expectations. O'Sullivan, despite finishing well the previous season, never seemed to get on pace, and ended up getting traded from LA to Edmonton. Visnovsky got hurt and missed a pretty sizable chunk of the season. Turco played like a superstar... when Sean Avery wasn't playing in the NHL. Unfortunately, he didn't stay away and that was somehow related to Turco's average overall results.

The bright spots on the team were Malkinon, Goligoski, and Streit. Malkinon changed his name out of respect for the team's owner and GM. Goligoski showed he could play in the NHL far sooner than expected. Mark Streit was expected to see his numbers dive after signing with the Islanders, but he reproduced his numbers from Montreal.

The Sedins, as always, produced at a fine pace, and were consistent throughout most of the season. Not many players produce near a point-per-game pace, and these guys do it on a regular basis. They are the anchor for the Jawas franchise.

Paik Gryphons:

In Ryan's own words: The Gryphons headed into the year with high expectations and for a while things were looking good, going 3-0 and being among the WG leaders. Then everything fell apart.

The biggest problem was in lacking NHL starters. Giroux and Purcell did not make the big club out of camp and spent the first half of the year in the AHL. Gaborik and Zubov, both hugely important parts of the Gryphon line-up, spent most of the year on the sidelines. Stastny missed almost half the year, and Semin also missed significant time. At one point, the Gryphons were starting 5 defencemen. To make matters worse, Heatley, Stastny, Niedermayer, and Vokoun were all struggling to put up points.

Combine all that with a higher than average points against and it's no surprise the Gryphons' record was 4-10 at one point and the season was looking like a total write-off. Then things finally started to turn around. Some low scoring weeks were won. Niedermayer woke up from his slumber. Vokoun got back

the starter gig. Giroux and Purcell were recalled. In the last two weeks, Cullen was added via trade and would help cap off a seven game winning streak to end the season.

The comeback came to an end in the first week of the playoffs by losing a low scoring match against the Barracudas.

Ratray Rowdy Kilts:

In Tanner's own words: The Rowdy Kilts were in their usual position of first place 3 weeks into the season, everything going according to plan, then the unthinkable happened. Franchise goalie and Mr. Durability, Martin Brodeur tore his bicep and was sidelined for 6 months.

With a last round draft pick disaster, passing up on the next player on the list in Tim Thomas, for a live exhibiton performance by Canuck Jannick Hansen, the Kilts were left without a backup goalie and an instant serious heap of trouble.

Struggling to stay afloat the Kilts were forced to trade for Vesa Toskala, who struggled throughout the year and simply had too big of skates to fill for the SCHL's greatest goalie/player of all-time.

There were many blunders made throughout the season, including relying on a teenager to be awake at 9:50am on a Sunday to get Samsonov in. Not having a laptop so I didnt have to contact that teenager in the first place. Trading outright picks for has-been's in Modano and Naslund, the list goes on.

Some minor bright spots for the Kilts that had their worst season since the inaugural year included JR'ing the Assassins and bringing in Mr.Consistancy/45 in the bag every year, Kimmo Timmonen who should definately help out in the years to come. Taking the Tycoons to the final day of action, and almost breaking their epic win streak with a depleted roster. (Wanged my girlfriend on the last day of Mexico to soak in the game by myself at a local pub) As well as, keeping the SCHL record of 9 straight playoff appearances in tact for another year.

With many changes this off-season including the hire of long-time hockey fantasy guru Wade Ballsillie as assistant GM, a new direction and a revamped roster with injected youth the upcoming 2009/10 season has the Kilts brass more excited than they can ever recall. This year will be our greatest challenge yet.

Sampson Brahmas:

In Daryl's own words: In a nutshell, the Brahmas looked poised for a Gold Division title going into last season, they had a lot of depth up front with the nice addition of Patrick Sharp at the draft, although Preissing turned out to be a huge draft mistake for me and didn't pan out....Ellis, coming off a strong season a year before also was a bust, causing the Brahmas huge headaches in goal and had to give up a ransom to acquire Theodore, who didn't pay dividends like expected. So, when all is said and done, the Brahmas were left facing their first relegation ever. A huge disappointment to such a promising season....there were some bright spots in Jason Blake , Marc Savard, Dennis Wideman, but that wasn't enough to get it done. I chalk it up to a whole lot of bad luck.

Steier 79ers:

More of the same, top tier talent, crappy bottom. The 79ers made it to the second, but lost to the eventual champs.

Tarpan Horses:

In Tarpan's own words: 2007-08 Season was a developmental one for the Horses. Showing patience with their young players, the Horses tried bringing in some veteran talent to try to win some games and make the post-season but didn't break the bank while developing their young players in hopes of building a winner through patience, a trait the Horses have lacked in the past. The Horses were thrilled with the offensive explosion of David Krejci as well as great performances from Mike Richards and Shea Weber. The Horses fought to avoid relegation, but were just barely unable to avoid it. Looking at a season in the bronze division is rough, but the Horses are looking forward to further development by their core of young talent and hope that will translate into getting out of the Bronze as quickly as possible.

Uptown Heartbreakers:

In Tony's own words: The Heartbreakers aren't back in the money, but they are back on everyone's radar. With a second consecutive Bellamy Up, this time to the Gold division the Heartbreakers signaled their basement dwelling days are over. In 08-09 Heartbreaker frontman Zach Parise emerged as a bone fide superstar, Zdeno Chara took home the NHL Norris Trophy and late round snag Jonas Hiller took the reigns and was off to the races in net posting obscene GAA numbers and helping take the Heartbreakers to a near magical season finale. After a season of steady scoring the Heartbreakers exceeded last years run by making the playoffs again, this time defeating the Triads in round one and emerging into the Quarter Finals for a matchup with the 19-2 Tycoons, WG leading who had just posted the longest winning streak in SCHL history. In a stunner of a matchup the Heartbreakers erased the four point head start deficit and got off to an early lead. It was back and forth all week ... and, in a down to the wire finish the Heartbreakers were left Heartbroken for a change after posting more points than the mighty Tycoons but losing by a mere one point once the head start points were factored in. The Heartbreakers were extremely proud of the run, and are on pace to build a competitive team for the future. Trades this season were limited to the acquiring of d-man Jaroslav Spacek.

Vancouver Millionaires:

In Rick's own words: Well this was the 2nd year of my 5 year plan.

I think the Carter trade which had a lot of people crying early on, ended up being a good deal for the Millionaires. We worked on acquiring assets and preparing for the off season. We moved a few players that we no longer needed and gained a few draft picks. Boedker stayed with phoenix for the whole year, something that not a lot of 18 year olds manage. We expect a 10-15 point improvement in his second year. This is with all of the mismanagement by the phoenix organization (bringing in vets so the youth dont get the opportunities to excel).

My collective D started off slowly and poorly, but by the end of the season they were putting up the numbers that I had hoped. I believe this is the best D core in the history of our organization. Let's hope the season starts off on a positive note.

Andymac - the most undervalued guy in the league, he started the season on fire, putting up huge numbers on a nightly basis, until he got hurt. Oh how i hate the injury bug. Poni did better than expected and is a perfect filler player while my youth get some experience. Plekanec had a big set back this season and he will be watched very carefully as we have a lot of talented youth and he will be fighting for one of those forward positions. Another season like this one and I think he will stop wearing the Millionaires colours. Justin Williams was another disappointment with injuries and his poor play when he did come back, we are expecting 60-70 points from him and like Plekanec he may be on the end of a long bench. Dubinsky got pushed down the chart a bit and he numbers stayed the same. We need to see some improvements from him in the future or else he is at risk of the boot. Finally Espo, after making the junior team and playing very very well, he got hurt. This really wasn't what I was hoping for. We need to get him playing to fully evaluate his potential.

One major disappointment was the health of Rick D. This and the fact that I didn't have a backup goalie resulted in an embarrassing season. The current status of Rick D is still up in the air with some rumors of him retiring or sitting for the full year.

I guess we had a couple of highlights like Carter and Bod, coupled with a lot of injuries. Things can only go up from here.

Wilson Bullets:

In Lorne's own words: The 2007/2008 season added three trophies to the Bullets trophy case; the Most Improved Team award, a Silver Division crown, and most important, the Snipers Cup. Even with this success, the Bullets 7th place finish in the Wayne Gretzky race indicated there was still some work to be done...bring on 2008/2009.

The off-season brought about a major structural change to the Snipers Cup with the removal of Money Men. However, the off-season brought about only minor changes to the Bullets roster. With a budding group of young offensive talent, the Bullets organization knew patience was key. In a summer deal, the Bullets acquired Alex Kovalev for a first and third round picks. Kovalev added some much needed veteran leadership to the group of forwards, and stabilized the top six. In other summer SCHL headlines, second year Bullet Erik Johnson blew out a knee in "soon to be famous" golf cart incident. The loss of the leader on the point was a major blow to the Bullets d-line, requiring the Bullets to select Fedor Tyutin for his second tour with the club in the SCHL's annual draft.

The 2008/2009 SCHL regular season started with a major thud for the defending Snipers Cup Champions, as they lost the first week to Day Express. However, the young Bullets took this loss as a learning experience and quickly turned the season around. Heading into the final week of the regular season, the Bullets who were on a four game winning streak faced-off against the Johnston Tycoons. At this point of the season the Tycoons were a lock to win the total points race, and were currently riding a SCHL record setting 18 straight victories. Unfortunately for the Tycoons, they ran into a more hungry team in week 21, as the Bullets handed them only their second loss of the season, 37-25. The Bullets wrapped-up the regular season with a 16-4-1 record, good for a tie for second with 33 SCHL points and a bye into the second round of the playoffs.

The SCHL playoffs were over quickly for the young Bullets team, as their second round opponent the Steier 79ers won in a walk, 35-23. While not the successful finish the Bullets were looking for, they did make strides in the SCHL in 2008/2009, improving their Wayne Gretzky standing to fourth overall, and being promoted to the Premier Division. With a roster that includes some of the best young names in the game, the Bullets are eagerly awaiting October and a new challenge.

Snipers Cup Playoffs

The Tycoons, Jawas, Bullets and Flash all enjoyed round one of the playoffs by occupying a bye position. The playoffs welcomed two newcomers, the Triads and Goldminers, whose first forays were against former champions the Heartbreakers and 79ers, respectively. The other matchups pitted last year's finalist the Vanguard against the Kilts and the Barracudas against the Gryphons. The newcomers were not welcomed with open arms as they went out with a whimper, whereas the Vanguard and Barracudas just barely escaped round one.

With the bye teams now in the equation, we saw the Tycoons barely eke out a victory over the Heartbreakers on the back of their 4-point headstart rewarded for their incredible regular season. The Barracudas up-and-down season finally came to an end as the Jawas finally enjoyed their first taste of playoff success with their first ever playoff victory. The defending champion Bullets would not be enjoying another champagne-filled summer as they ran into a hot 79ers team and were beaten with no mercy. The other finalist from a year ago was served with the same fate as the Flash laid a pounding on the Vanguard.

The Frozen Four featured three previous champions and the odds were certainly in favour of the SCHL seeing its second two-time champion. The matchups were no doubt beauties. In one semifinal match, the Tycoons lined up against the 79ers – Ovechkin vs. Crosby, Backstrom vs. Thornton, Kiprusoff vs. Lundqvist. The ongoing debate of Ovechkin or Crosby rages on, but Alexander the Great was the winner in this battle as the Tycoons easily handled the 79ers 36-26, whose lack of depth couldn't be overcome. The Tycoons were headed back to the finals and their dominant season was one step closer to going down as the greatest season in SCHL history.

The other semifinal saw the Jawas take on the Flash – teams led by two of Russia's best, Malkin and Kovalchuk. This one was much closer as the Flash held off the Jawas for a 24-23 victory. With a huge man-game advantage on Saturday, the Jawas were a hair short despite Malkin's 3-point effort against the Turco-less Stars. Coming down to the night cap with the Sedins left to play, the Jawas needed four points from the twins to seal the victory as the Flash held the tiebreaker. The twins did each pick up a point, but wasn't enough as the Jawas' season came to a disappointing end.

The 2008-2009 finals, dubbed "Battle of the Comrades", assured the SCHL another two-time champ. This battle featured not only two comrades, Ovechkin and Kovalcuk, but two teams boasting lineups solid from top to bottom. The Tycoons were also led by Backstrom, Hemsy and Markov, while the Flash were also led by Marleau, Roy and Lidstrom. The goaltenders featured were byproducts of the San Jose system, Kiprusoff and Nabokov (the former traded away giving the reigns solely to the latter).

This one saw the Tycoons pull away with a lead from the get-go, but the Flash held tight and kept it close. Until Day 6 of the finals that is, when the Tycoons busted out in a big way and the duo of Ovechkin and Backstrom combined for a whopping 7 points and Hemsy chipping in with a couple himself. A relatively close matchup now turned into a blowout and all the Tycoons would need to do is hold on for four more days. A huge goalie matchup on the third last day of the finals could have been crucial, but by then this one was out of hand. Nabokov sealed the victory over Kiprusoff, but all that would do in this matchup was provide a moral/consolation victory for the Flash. On the last day the Tycoons saw Kovalchuk and Roy combine for four points in a Thrashers/Sabres match, but in typical Tycoon fashion, countered that with three points of their own from the dynamic Washington duo.

The final buzzer went and the Tycoons were officially crowned the 2008-2009 SCHL champions! A year to remember and one that will go down as the greatest in SCHL history thus far and will be hard pressed to be topped.

SCHL, WG, PM and Division championships and an 18-game win streak all in one season. The 2008-2009 Tycoons' season could be summed up in just one word: Domination.