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The St. Louis Blues have entered their second purchase agreement in a month with another potential buyer. This time around, Tom Stillman, the current minority owner of the Blues and the CEO of Summit Distributing, has the exclusive rights to purchase the team.The Blues hope that this purchase agreement goes better than the last one.

Matthew Hulsizer, a Chicago businessman and sports enthusiast, had his purchase agreement terminated by the NHL in early January. Hulsizer was given a deadline of December 31, 2011 to agree to the NHL's terms but sources say that he tried to restructure the sale on numerous occasions. The agreement was signed in October and Hulsizer was given a strict end-of-the-year deadline to complete the sale. It is unknown if the NHL refused to grant Hulsizer more time to complete the deal.

When the deadline hit, attention immediately shifted to Stillman, who has expressed interest in buying the team since current owner Dave Checketts put the Blues up for sale in March 2011.

Stillman's deal is expected to be around the $135 million range, considering the purchase would include the Blues, the Peoria Rivermen of the AHL, the lease to the Scottrade Center and a significant stake in the Peabody Opera House, which is located next door to the Blues' home arena.

Stillman brings a different package to the Blues than Hulsizer would have.

Tom Stillman: local businessman and familiar face. Stillman is the chairman and CEO of Summit Distributing, the second-largest beer distributor in Missouri. He has been a minority owner of the Blues since March of 2007 and serves on the boards of many St. Louis-based organizations, including the St. Louis Blues 14 Fund, the St. Louis Sports Commission and Commerce Bank, St. Louis Region.

Stillman can be seen at almost any Blues home game as well. Ask any Scottrade Center employee; Stillman is usually seen lurking around the ground floor of the arena.

Hulsizer's company is still based in Chicago. While a trip between Chicago and St. Louis is not a long journey by any stretch of the imagination, Hulsizer would not have been as easily accessible as Stillman will be.

Possible Brett Hull Sighting. If you think that Stillman has a familiar face with the organization, wait until you get a load of who may be joining his investment group. Jeremy Rutherford of STLToday reports that Brett Hull, the team's all-time leader in goals-scored, "has a desire to become more than an investor in Stillman's group, and in fact, could have a role within the organization." What could this mean for the organization?

Let's take a look at the Los Angeles Kings organization. In May 2007, the Kings hired the team's all-time goals leader, Luc Robitaille, to be the President of Business Operations. Since Robitaille's takeover, the Kings have increased their number of sellouts every season and the Kings have reached an all-time high for the organization in revenue. This could be attributed to Robitaille's unique take on the business aspect of hockey. One point that cannot be denied is that the Kings, coming off a rebuild, put a familiar face in the front office to communicate with fans and the results were astounding.

Hull, who played with the Blues for 11 seasons, could potentially bring that same aspect to his former club. St. Louis is a market that is dominated in the media by Cardinals baseball and Rams football; it is just waiting for that extra jolt to get the city's hockey team into everyday discussion. This could be just what the Blues need to become a lot more relevant in St. Louis and its surrounding areas.

Dave Checketts on his way out of town. Since 2006, Dave Checketts has been the face of the Blues' front office. He was the one behind the Brett Hull statue and even promised a Stanley Cup parade down Market Street in the near future. Under Stillman's ownership, Checketts will not be attending that parade as a member of the team administration.

If Hulsizer would have completed his purchase of the team, Checketts would have likely remained with the team as an investor or a managing partner. Stillman's group entering a

purchase agreement with the NHL suggests that Checketts is no longer under control of the sale process or has decided not to delay the sale to Stillman. Despite having a working relationship for the past four years, fellow media members and some Blues front office members have described Checketts and Stillman's relationship as "frosty" at best.

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It is likely that there will be a break in Blues sale news until after All-Star Weekend (January 27-29). It will be then when the NHL Board of Governors will meet to only discuss the situation. Approval of the sale will not come for quite some time.

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