This post was originally published at TheHockeyWriters.com .

After the Blues finished off a 3-2 shootout victory over the Winnipeg Jets Saturday afternoon, there will be a lull in their six-game road trip until Monday night when they travel to Calgary to take on the Flames. The Blues will take to the ice at the Scotiabank Sattledome six hours after the NHL Trade Deadline has passed.

The same group of players heading from Winnipeg to Calgary Saturday night may not differentiate from the team that will take the ice Monday night.

Earlier this month, Blues General Manager Doug Armstrong told Jeremy Rutherford of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that major changes are likely not in the future for the St. Louis team.

"We started the year saying that we need to find out about these players," Armstrong said. "Well, there's no better time to find out about a player than a drive into the playoffs. To bring in other players and put guys we want to find out about in different roles, then we're just pushing off the process. The season is going to end the way it's going to end. There's no guarantee that you bring in a player, and all of a sudden you're going to become the high-scoring Detroit Red Wings. Those players aren't out there. We need to see what these players can do when the game is on the line."

Armstrong took a dip in the free-agent pool last summer, signing some veteran NHL talent to one-year contracts to go along with the Blues' young roster. Jason Arnott and Jamie Langenbrunner both signed $2.50 million contracts, while checking forward Scott Nichol notched a $600,000 contract. Defenseman Kent Huskins was also brought to the Gateway City, signing a $1 million contract.

Goaltender Brian Elliott also inked a one-year deal but due to his outstanding performance this season, he has since been rewarded with a two-year, $3.60 million contract extension.

Armstrong made even bigger headlines on November 6 when he fired Head Coach Davis Payne and hired former Columbus Blue Jackets Head Coach Ken Hitchcock. While the change behind the bench was scrutinized at first, Hitchcock's 21-5-6 record more than quiets the critics.

Here is the point: Armstrong has already made changes to this team from last season. He has changed the makeup of the Blues to fit what he thinks is a winner. His trade deadline started in the Blues' last game of the 2010-11 season.

Now, that is certainly not saying that if a deal that favors the Blues presents itself, Armstrong would turn the cold shoulder.

"You're always looking to see if you can improve your team," added Armstrong. "But I like this group and I like the depth that we have here. We'll keep our ears open as we get closer to the deadline. But we're like two-thirds of the NHL, we work under a business framework and whatever deals we make have to fit into that plan."

Speculating on a possible trade is not my game. However, the Blues do have some contracts up in July. There may be some minor deals that go down.

Here are some items that Armstrong will be keeping in mind over the next 24 hours or so:

1) **Overabundance of defenseman.** With the steady play at the NHL level of 23-year old defenseman Ian Cole, the Blues have somewhat of a logjam in the defense position. Alex Pietrangelo, Roman Polak, Kris Russell and Kevin Shattenkirk are all under contract for next season. Kent Huskins, Carlo Colaiacovo and long-time Blue Barret Jackman all have contracts expiring at season's end and all three will be unrestricted free-agents. I am not suggesting that all three will be moved.

I am suggesting that one of these three may be expendable for the right price, though. The Blues will likely leave one of these defenseman unsigned when July 1 hits, so moving one of these guys as a rental player may not be a bad option so that the team does receive something in return. I do think that Jackman will be staying put for now, especially since he has picked his

game up this season and has been an emotional leader for this club down the stretch. Huskins has been a pleasant surprise for the Blues this season; he and Pietrangelo have been a dynamic pair when they get the chance to play together. He has to be a priority heading into the free-agency period.

That leaves Colaiacovo. While the 29-year old defenseman has been one of the better defenders for the Blues since being acquired in November 2008 (plus-15 rating spanning over four seasons), he has become the odd-man out in my opinion. He would bring in a decent return from a Stanley Cup contender looking for a solid third-pairing guy to help steady a defensive unit.

Biggest problem; the Toronto Maple Leafs also have an overabundance of defensemen. Darren Dreger reported on TSN that Carl Gunnarsson, Cody Franson and Keith Aullie are all likely available. With this many defensemen on the market (and Philadelphia already filling their defensive needs by acquiring Nicklas Grossman from Dallas), the likelihood of getting a decent return for a defenseman are dwindling.

2) **Chris Stewart's contract is over after this season.** Right-winger Chris Stewart, acquired in the trade last February that sent Erik Johnson to Colorado, has not had a picture-perfect season. Only contributing 13 goals and 11 assists, Stewart has been at the forefront for trade discussion in St. Louis. He has a restricted tag for the summer but is still drawing a lot of attention from fans and media.

I would be shocked if Stewart was traded. While he has not been the offensive juggernaut that Armstrong had hoped, he is still young (24) and he has shown potential in the past to be an excellent first-line winger. I would expect Stewart to be given a one-year deal in hopes that he can rejuvenate his play next season.

However, if a team is willing to give up a lot for him, Armstrong will likely be listening.

3) **Ben Bishop is a restricted free-agent this summer.** The 25-year old goaltender has been waiting in the wings for his shot at the NHL. I doubt that would be coming anytime soon if he stays with his current organization.

Bishop was slated to be the backup goalie for Jaroslav Halak this season until Brian Elliott took control of the backup role in training camp. He has not looked back since.

Halak and Elliott make up arguably the best goaltending tandem in the league. The two netminders have posted six shutouts each this season, which is an NHL-first. Both goalies currently find themselves in the top-four of the GAA league-leaders, as the Blues have allowed the fewest number of goals against in the entire NHL.

Bishop is approaching what is usually the prime of an NHL goalie's career. He has posted a 24-14-0-6 record for the Peoria Rivermen this season, also placing in the top-five of AHL goalies with a 2.26 GAA. At this point, his desire to play in the NHL has presumably overtaken his desire to play for his hometown team, the St. Louis Blues.

A problem that Bishop may face is that there are more NHL-quality goaltenders than NHL teams. Josh Harding of Minnesota and Cory Schneider of Vancouver are worthy of being starters but still ride the pine because it seems that every team is currently happy with their goaltending and are unwilling to make a move between the pipes.

If there is a trade for a goaltender at the deadline, it is usually for a proven NHL goalie. If Bishop is moved, I would expect it to be at the NHL Entry Draft in June. At that time, the Blues would simply be trading his negotiating rights.

****UPDATE**** Ben Bishop was traded Sunday afternoon to the Ottawa Senators for a 2nd round draft pick in 2013. Bishop then signed a one-year, one-way contract worth $650,000. I will speak for everyone at LetsGoBlues.com and wish Ben the best of luck in his quest to be an NHL starting goalie!

The Blues are currently in fourth in the Western Conference and hold a four-point lead over the fifth place Nashville Predators. It seems that this club is playoff bound for only the second time in seven years. Why shake up the roster when everything seems to finally be going in the right direction?

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