

Pay Nashville Back!

Written by Jeff Ponder
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This is the final straw. Blues management saw it fit that Marek Svatos should wear a Blues jersey by signing him to a two-way contract for a miniscule amount of money. Everything was set for Svatos to join the Blues. The only thing that was keeping him from skating in a Blues uniform was a 24-hour waiting period where Svatos had to clear waivers. The 24th hour hit and what do you know; the Nashville Predators claimed Svatos! It's obvious this was done to keep the Blues from adding scoring depth; Nashville has no need for Svatos on their offensive unit. This is not the first time that Nashville has found a way to screw over the Blues.

The truth is, this team has been doing everything to destroy the Blues since day one. The NHL held its expansion draft on June 26, 1998 for two new teams, including the Atlanta Thrashers and Nashville Predators. The new Central Division team, Nashville, selected Blues forward Blair Atcheynum from their roster. Atcheynum was 1/3 of one of the most premier checking lines in the NHL. They broke up the infamous CPA line (Craig Conroy – Scott Pellerin – Blair Atcheynum), and pretty much ruined Atcheynum's career from there on out. He played just 53 games for the Predators, then bounced around the NHL and other leagues until he finally left professional hockey in 2001, playing in his last game with the Norfolk Admirals of the AHL.

It didn't end there. While the Blues were easy to be stepped on, Nashville made sure to grind the Blues into the dirt. Blues fans try to forget 2005-06, but Nashville's neglect of the Gateway City cannot go unnoticed. Remember Simon Gamache and Timofei Shishkanov? The Blues claimed Gamache off waivers from the Predators, hoping for some kind of offensive spark from the Quebec native. He put up three goals and four assists in 15 games, but was immediately put back on waivers. Nashville took him back. Why, I don't know, but it was a failed experiment for St. Louis. And Shishkanov... well, let's not even talk about Shishkanov.

Paul Kariya cannot go unmentioned. Kariya was a healthy individual while with the Predators, scoring 31 goals and 24 goals in two seasons. He then signs a three-year contract with the Blues and scores just 36 total goals in his St. Louis tenure! This is obviously a ploy by Nashville. They must have sabotaged the once all-star. Kariya was a time-bomb waiting to go off. Do you believe that spies could be a real problem in hockey? The Predators make me think so.

Taking all of this in to account, it's time for St. Louis to strike back. Get them back in a way that could really hurt.

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What about attacking their RFAs next summer? Think about this scenario. It could be a smart move for the Blues.

All-star defenseman Shea Weber will be a restricted free-agent next summer. Eric Brewer will be an unrestricted free-agent July 1. If Weber is still unsigned to a contract extension and Brewer is allowed to walk away from St. Louis, Blues management could target Weber.

Weber is currently making \$4.5 million this season. Brewer is currently earning \$4.25 million. If Brewer is not re-signed, the Blues need to make up salary somewhere, so as not to be below the salary floor (although there are many other players who will have their contracts expire at this season's end).

Why not? The Blues would win either way. If Nashville decides not to match the offer, the Blues get Weber, a solid defenseman who would fill the Blues' need for a power-play quarterback. He would round out a powerful and young defense that would have the likes of Roman Polak, Alex Pietrangelo and Erik Johnson in the mix. Essentially, the team would be replacing Brewer with a younger, more offensive defenseman.

If the Predators match the offer, it may force them to make other moves to be within their salary plans. They are currently about \$9 million under the cap, but factoring in that other key players have contracts expiring (Steve Sullivan, Cal O'Reilly and Sergei Kostitsyn), this may force the hand of Predators management to let someone go that they had not originally intended.

Shaving cream in the skates or tying the laces together will not be enough to get the Predators back for their punishment on the Blues.

This means war.

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