It has been obvious since Ryan Reaves' first call-up that if Cam Janssen were to go elsewhere, Reaves would be the first to get the opportunity to take his role. So why does it seem that he may not get the same opportunity as Janssen once had?

Saturday, Janssen signed a one-year contract with the club that originally drafted him, the New Jersey Devils. This means the "tough-guy role" is now vacant in St. Louis.

The Blues followed this news up by signing Reaves, 24, to a one-year, two-way contract that will pay him $525,000 when a member of the Blues and $105,000 when playing with the Peoria Rivermen of the AHL. Reaves was the last remaining restricted free-agent that the Blues had not come to terms with yet.

Reaves was signed to be the Blues' new enforcer… but a spot on the big club just cannot be handed to the first guy with a big bag of knuckles this coming season. That may have been the case a few seasons ago when the Blues did not have as high of expectations as they do now.

It's kind of related to the job market nowadays. Before the recession, a company would hire someone for a certain position. Once that person left after the recession, they just simply delete that position if they feel that the remaining employees can just step in to do the workload that now has no one to do it.

This is what is happening to the enforcer role. Don't think it is just in St. Louis either; it is happening league-wide. If the team needs a big fight for momentum reasons, someone who is not your typical enforcer will step in and stir up a fight.

The Blues have bolstered their offensive lines this summer, bringing in veterans Scott Nichol, Jamie Langenbrunner and Jason Arnott. Not only will players like Reaves and long-time Riverman Chris Porter be battling for spots, but last season's big surprise, Matt D'Agostini, will be battling for a full-time spot, along with guys like Vladimir Sobotka, B.J. Crombeen and

newcomer Phil McRae. That's the beauty of the Blues being active in the free-agent market; it will make everyone battle harder for a spot and it also gives the Blues plenty of options for lineup changes after a few losses.

Reaves will still get a crack at the St. Louis lineup. After all, the winger surprised everyone when he had his first two career- goals in his first 28 NHL games last season.
Not too shabby for a guy that is known for dropping the mitts.

Reaves will still be the enforcer of the team, even if he spends some time in Peoria. He does have some skill to go along with his feisty play.
If Reaves has a strong training camp in September, he very well may see himself on the opening day roster.

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