Written by Jeff Ponder
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Unbeknownst to most of the St. Louis area, the Blues open up the 2011-12 season tomorrow night at Scottrade Center.

Why is this the case? Well, St. Louis is a baseball town through and through.

The St. Louis Cardinals play Game 5 of their National League Divisional Series tonight with the Philadelphia Phillies. Normally, the Blues can still sneak into sports talk radio and the sports section of the newspaper despite the Cardinals' playoff run. But not this time.

The Cardinals are getting all of the attention right now in every aspect of the media. It is well deserved.

The Cardinals have had quite the miracle run to end the season. On August 25, the Cardinals were 10 ½ games back from the wild card.
They just came off a 3-game sweep at the hands of the Los Angeles Dodgers at Busch Stadium and it looked like the season was over for the historic team.

Things changed in a hurry. That night, the Cardinals began an impressive 22-9 run to close out the season, clinching a wild card playoff berth in the final night of the regular season, when the slumping Atlanta Braves lost in extra innings to the Phillies, forfeiting their spot atop the wild card standings.

With the series tied 2-2, the Cardinals look to advance tonight with long-time ace Chris Carpenter on the mound. First pitch will be at 7:30 at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I know, I know, this is supposed to be a Blues story. Even I can't just focus on the Blues right now.

How many times have the Blues taken a backseat to the Cardinals? It seems like it has been happening two times a year lately; once in April when Cardinals season is kicking off and the Blues are finishing up their campaign and then again in September/October when the Cardinals are finishing off their season and the Blues are trying to get hype around theirs.
It's pretty much a lose-lose situation for the Blues.

How can they get around this dilemma?

Win. Be above .500 every season and make the playoffs and go deep.

The Blues are pretty close to being able to do that. With additions like Jamie Langenbrunner and Jason Arnott, this team has picked up valuable veteran know-how and a new sense of winning. Langenbrunner and Arnott add Stanley Cup experience to the roster, something that has been lacking for the most part since Al MacInnis retired in 2005.

It is not just experience these guys bring, but it's the addition of depth to the lineup.

Let's take a look back, shall we? Here is what the Blues' starting lineup looked like to open the 2010-11 season:

Offense:

David Perron – David Backes – Brad Boyes

Andy McDonald – Patrik Berglund – T.J. Oshie

Alex Steen – Jay McClement – B.J. Crombeen

Brad Winchester – Matt D'Agostini – Cam Janssen

Defense:

Barret Jackman – Erik Johnson

Eric Brewer – Roman Polak

Carlo Colaiacovo – Alex Pietrangelo

Goalies: Jaroslav Halak, Ty Conklin

Now, here is your opening roster for the 2011 season:

Offense:

Andy McDonald – David Backes – Jamie Langenbrunner

T.J. Oshie – Patrik Berglund – Chris Stewart

Alex Steen – Jason Arnott – Matt D'Agostini

Vladimir Sobotka – Scott Nichol – Ryan Reaves

Defense:

Carlo Colaiacovo – Alex Pietrangelo

Barret Jackman – Kevin Shattenkirk

Kent Huskins – Roman Polak

Goalies: Jaroslav Halak, Brian Elliott

Of course the deletion of David Perron is a negative, but he will likely be back this season. Ever ything else looks like an improvement to me, especially when considering the less experienced players, such as Berglund, D'Agostini and Oshie, have had another season under their belt and they now know what they are capable of.

This team will have to be ok with taking a backseat to the Cardinals, though. Even if the Blues are playoff-bound in April, the Cardinals will take first priority when their season starts.
It is just the way it goes in St. Louis.

But if this team can rack up a lot of Ws, taking a backseat may not be as noticeable. In a few years, they may even be sitting in the passenger seat.

Blues News and Notes: The big news surrounding the Blues has been the reports that Matthew Hulsizer has reached a verbal agreement with Dave Checketts to purchase the team. The deal is reportedly worth $190 million and it will keep Checketts in the organization in some capacity.
While both Checketts and Hulsizer have been unavailable to comment, this spells good news for the Blues' organization… B.J. Crombeen injured his shoulder in the last pre-season game against Dallas last Saturday after crashing into the boards in the third period.
Crombeen has a left shoulder scapula fracture and is listed as being out indefinitely.

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