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WILD

Wild Add Hanzal as Post-Bye Week Play Looms



By [Heather Rule](#) - February 27, 2017

From the department of Captain Obvious, the Minnesota Wild are having their best regular season ever. The club threw some more poker chips into the pot with news Sunday that they acquired center Martin Hanzal and forward Ryan White from the Arizona Coyotes.

It's quite an unfamiliar position for the Wild. They're a top NHL team looking to boost the roster with hopes of a deep playoff run. Let that sink in for a minute.

Hanzal, a 6-6 player from the Czech Republic who turned 30 a week ago, has a decade of NHL experience. He's tied his career-high in goals this season with 16, a mark he hit in 2010-11. Last season, he scored 13 goals and 28 assists in 64 games. His faceoff winning percentage sits at 56 percent this season.

He's not afraid of the physical play or dropping the gloves.

White has 29 goals and 29 assists in 294 career games and 433 penalty minutes.

Wild General Manager Chuck Fletcher surrendered a 2017 first-round draft pick, a 2018 second-round pick, a conditional 2019 fourth-round pick and minor-league center Grayson Downing. In return, the Wild got a fourth-round pick in 2017 in addition to Hanzal and White.

Hanzal is a two-way centerman who's got size. He's not afraid of the physical play or dropping the gloves. It will be really intriguing to see what kind of element he brings to this Wild team in that regard.

He's also a guy that scored an overtime playoff-goal against the Chicago Blackhawks in the 2012 quarterfinals. Anybody can do that to the rival Blackhawks is already a friend of the Wild.

Having another center seems like a great move on the surface, too. Mikko Koivu has played extremely well this season, but the knock in the past has been he's not a first-line center. The past few years, the depth at that position has been a cause for concern. They made one step in the right direction by signing veteran Eric Staal in the offseason.

The word is that Hanzal and White will be ready to go for Monday's Wild game against the Kings. It will be a chance to see, first of all, how Bruce Boudreau handles the lineup situation. As always, hearing Boudreau's comments should be a good indication, too. He's a pretty candid guy.

We'll see how the new personnel fares. Any added offense or physicality is sure to be a good thing to help the Wild.

Trade news is a bye-week brightener

The news got the Wild community chattering again, at the end of the bye week. There's some

collective breath-holding going on to see how the Wild plays in the return to action Monday night, ending their lengthy eight-game homestand with a contest against the Los Angeles Kings.

So, this is the perfect opportunity to touch on how the bye week is kind of annoying. Giving each NHL team five straight days off without games or practice is new this season. It hasn't exactly been met with positive results.

It's odd to see games every other day for weeks.

First of all, there are plenty of weird quirks about sports schedules. It's just another thing that a bunch of fans and average Joes can complain about like they're a bunch of experts, even though nobody actually would want to handle the task of scheduling these games.

Perhaps predictably, teams haven't fared well coming back from the bye week (3-12-4). Not real surprising, considering it's almost like an All-Star Break when players take the extra time to jet off to sunny destinations. Jason Zucker hit up the Magic Kingdom, for example.

But there already *is* an All-Star Break, which wasn't too long ago. So now the Wild just finished their break. Then they return to quite the grind to finish out the regular season where they play four back-to-backs and have a pretty consistent Sunday-Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday rotation of games each week. That's weird right there. Hockey schedules vary with days of the week and in between games. It's odd to see games every other day for weeks.

The Wild are in a great position for a strong regular-season finish. It might be a far worse concern if they were on the playoff bubble needing to make up some ground this month. It's a lot of games with chances for points, but it's also a chance to tire out. What's the point of these breaks if it just means a bigger grind and condensed schedule?

They just had the All-Star Break, the bye week, plus at least one stretch in November where they went four days in between games as part of the regular schedule. It doesn't seem to be a system to set teams up for success.

Luckily, the powers that be in the Wild organization have set up their club for success this year. Adding Hanzal and White is just another piece to that puzzle.

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