

Daily Clips – 5/15/14

Yohe: Penguins need to get younger By The Tribune-Review

The Penguins' coaching staff and front office will receive plenty of attention this week.

At some point, the roster will be under the microscope. And when it is, a harsh reality will be evident: The Penguins have gotten old.

Of the 20 Penguins who participated in Game 7 against the New York Rangers, eight are 30 or older. Two other 30-somethings, defenseman Brooks Orpik and right wing Pascal Dupuis, likely would have been in the lineup had they been healthy.

Once the league's fresh-faced team, the Penguins should be searching for youthful legs this summer.

But getting younger in free agency isn't realistic, and the Penguins' system isn't blessed with an impact forward at the AHL level, though many young defensemen could be ready.

And while the Penguins' stars are still young, they aren't kids anymore.

This summer, Sidney Crosby turns 27 and Evgeni Malkin turns 28.

Mario Lemieux never won a Stanley Cup past 26. Wayne Gretzky won his last championship at 27. Hockey is a young man's game, and while the Penguins' stars aren't old by any stretch, their championship window isn't as wide as it once was.

Even goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury, who rebounded with one of his strongest NHL seasons, will turn 30 next fall.

The Penguins might lose one of their best younger players as defenseman Matt Niskanen, 27, is a free agent this summer and right wing James Neal, 26, will be the subject of summer trade rumors.

When the Penguins won the Stanley Cup in 2009, seven of their skaters that night in Detroit were 30 or older.

They've gotten older since then, and few would argue that they've gotten better.

The Penguins have been hesitant to dispatch of their veterans over the years out of concern that the organization's young talent wasn't ready to replace the older players.

It might be time to find out this summer, regardless of who the head coach and general manager are.

Penguins ownership favors firing Bylsma, still to decide on Shero By Rob Rossi

Mario Lemieux was not inside the Penguins' dressing room after their Game 7 loss to the New York Rangers.

He already was at work trying to figure out his club's future.

Lemieux, fellow majority co-owner Ron Burkle and CEO David Morehouse met Wednesday to determine the future of general manager Ray Shero and coach Dan Bylsma, sources told the Tribune-Review. The Penguins' top brass also met before Game 7 — in New York and Pittsburgh — to evaluate the state of the franchise, the sources said.

Ownership is not happy with a perceived lack of accountability, overall team toughness and poor drafts, the sources said.

No decision on Shero had been made as of Wednesday, but ownership favored terminating Bylsma, the sources said.

Lemieux, also the Penguins' chairman, preferred keeping Shero, the general manager since May 2006. Burkle believed the Penguins needed a new general manager to rebuild a potential championship roster around captain Sidney Crosby, the sources said.

Crosby's body language during the playoffs concerned ownership, the sources said. That is one reason Lemieux took the unusual move of talking with Crosby in the visitors dressing room at Madison Square Garden after Game 6, the sources said.

Crosby scored only one goal in 13 playoff games and finished without a point in three losses to the Rangers after the Penguins jumped to a 3-1 series lead in Round 2. The regular-season scoring champion and presumptive MVP, Crosby said he was not injured.

Crosby once lived in Lemieux's Sewickley guest house and is close with the family. He also is tight with Burkle, a billionaire grocery magnate. Crosby and Burkle teamed to try to end the NHL lockout in December 2012.

Crosby signed a 12-year, \$104.4 million extension in July 2012. A year later, fellow franchise center Evgeni Malkin was inked to an eight-year extension worth \$76 million.

All NHL contracts are guaranteed. The Penguins already have paid Crosby and Malkin a combined \$119 million since their NHL debuts. The players have combined to win four scoring titles, two MVPs and the Stanley Cup in 2009.

They appeared together at a podium to handle media responsibilities a day before Game 7, and each acknowledged a friendship has developed beyond just being teammates.

Crosby and Malkin felt they needed one another this season when they grew frustrated with Bylsma, the sources said.

Crosby and Malkin grew disenchanted with perceived harsh criticism they received from Bylsma during meetings, the sources said. They and other veteran players were unhappy with Bylsma's numerous meetings and long practices and the decreasing sense of fun within the Penguins' environment, the sources said.

Ownership believed Bylsma lost the dressing room this season, specifically the support of Crosby and Malkin, the sources said.

The sources added that Burkle contended Shero specifically tethered himself to Bylsma, whom he signed to a two-year extension after the Penguins were swept from the Eastern Conference final last June. That is why the length of Bylsma's deal was made to run concurrent with the final years remaining on Shero's contract, the sources said.

If Bylsma were deemed necessary to replace, Shero would be held accountable, the sources said.

"Dan's my coach," Shero said last June.

Shero told his wife to be ready to move if the Penguins lost Game 7 against the Rangers, the sources said.

The Penguins lost 2-1 to complete a second blown 3-1 series lead in the past four postseasons. They have lost to a lower-seeded playoff opponent for five consecutive years since winning the Cup in 2009.

No members of the Penguins were available for comment Wednesday, vice president of communications Tom McMillan said.

The Penguins final media availability for players is scheduled for Thursday morning. No mention of Bylsma was on the news release sent via email about 1 p.m. on Wednesday.

Starkey: Lemieux faces offseason conundrum By The Tribune-Review

Mario Lemieux might well give the angry mob what it wants: the heads of general manager Ray Shero and coach Dan Bylsma.

Might be necessary, too.

But it won't answer The Question.

Mario can't run from The Question.

If he really wants to fix what ails this franchise, he and fellow owner Ron Burkle must determine the right answer to The Question.

What kind of team do we want?

After Game 7 on Tuesday, USA Today's Kevin Allen wrote that the [Penguins](#) are looking to adopt to “a more-defensive, grittier system.” That seems to be the popular sentiment. But when your best players are addicted to offense, is it realistic?

The boys apparently weren't having enough “fun” under Dan Bylsma, according to Rob Rossi's report in The Trib on Wednesday. Now you want to make them accountable to a stricter coach and system?

We've seen what happens to defense-first coaches around here. Ask Michel Therrien or Kevin Constantine.

Yeah, Mario could try to make his team more like the Boston Bruins. But the Penguins aren't the Bruins, whose three best players are a defensive defenseman, a goalie and a Selke Trophy winner.

The Penguins' three best players — theoretically — should be Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Kris Letang. So good luck with that defensive, gritty system thing.

And welcome to ownership's conundrum.

Mario surely prefers an entertaining, high-scoring, star-centric team built in his image.

But is that the way to win?

That kind of team is what the Penguins had in mind coming out of the lockout 10 years ago, when the NHL opened the spigots. Those Penguins, flush with two new superstars and determined to draft as many smooth-skating, offensive defensemen as possible, were going to thrive in an obstruction-free world. And for a bit, they did.

But like a big, ugly python, obstruction crept back in and strangled much of the fun from the sport. The “garage league” made a comeback. The Penguins were stuck. They are stuck. It's as if they bought a beachfront mansion only to see the floodwaters roll in.

The conundrum thickens.

Ideally, you'd like a team with perfect balance. One that can prevent goals, score them when it matters and keep the paying customers entertained. You'd like to be the Chicago Blackhawks.

But Chicago's best player (Jonathan Toews) is a two-way demon with a Selke Trophy on his shelf. The Penguins don't have a guy like that or like Marian Hossa, another elite two-way forward. Chicago also isn't bogged down with a top-heavy cap situation (although they soon might be).

The Penguins tried to become more rounded this season. Bylsma adopted a more conservative system and brought in Jacques Martin to work beside him. It didn't translate at playoff time.

Maybe this franchise lost its best chance at real balance when Jordan Staal — a player Shero said he never would trade — was traded. Maybe the best scenario would have been Crosby centering the first line with the big-bodied Staal centering the second and the rest of the roster fleshed out with the massive return on a trade for Malkin.

Now, for better or worse, the Penguins have a top-heavy roster without a ton of flexibility. So whether he hires a new GM or not, Mario might start by working with the material on hand. He can help shape the team he wants.

This would be an excellent time for a long talk with Crosby on how to lead this team into a new era.

For starters, Mario could remind the captain that nobody wants to hear any more whispers attributed to Sid's camp — i.e., ever-present father Troy and agent Pat Brisson — about Sid needing more help. The Penguins signed his two wingers, including Pascal Dupuis, the guy Sid wanted on his right for last year's playoffs instead of the newly acquired Jarome Iginla.

Mario also could implore Sid to play along the goal line on a power play that has torpedoed this team in the past two playoffs. Give Malkin the half-boards.

Look, Mario authorized every big move Shero made. This is his baby, too. If people wonder why Shero's latest rosters had less edge, maybe it's because the Penguins — starting at the top — fancied themselves the flag bearers of a cleaner NHL after Crosby's concussion issues and Matt Cooke's meltdowns.

So what kind of team does Mario want?

Man, that's a tough one. When he finds an answer, it'd be nice to hear from him.

It's been awhile.

Penguins: Time to go? As disgruntled fans close wallets, a major purge looms

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

This is not 2013, and these Penguins were not widely regarded as a mortal lock to end up in the Stanley Cup final.

It was possible, of course, but only if a lot of variables — everything from injuries to

favorable matchups in every round — broke perfectly for them.

And, while much did go right for the Penguins the past month, it didn't prevent them from flaming out in the playoffs earlier than expected for the fifth consecutive spring.

The difference is that their seven-game loss against the New York Rangers in Round 2 of the Stanley Cup playoffs — the second time in the past four years that they have squandered a 3-1 lead in a best-of-seven series — will be a life-altering event for some of those involved.

There will be firings with coach Dan Bylsma the presumed headliner on that list.

There will be trades because the makeup of this group certainly appears to be flawed.

There will be numerous other departures and additions intended to prevent a recurrence in 2015. And not only because the Penguins have only one Stanley Cup title — and a string of postseason flops — to show for having Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin on the payroll for the better part of a decade.

This is not just about hockey anymore.

It is about a fan base that is becoming increasingly sour over the Penguins' chronic underachieving in the playoffs. Partisans previously content to offer scathing critiques on message boards and talk shows now appear to be seeking other outlets for their disposable income.

Consider the following evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, of fan disillusionment. Just in case the waves of boos that ushered the Penguins off the ice after their 2-1 loss Tuesday night in Game 7 didn't make the point.

In December 2012, a team official said the Penguins had a season-ticket waiting list of about 9,500. Wednesday morning, their website placed that figure at "over 4,400."

Monday afternoon, the first thing people visiting the team's website saw was a screen touting the availability of tickets for Game 7 at Consol Energy Center. In other years, tickets to such a high-stakes game would have been as treasured — and scarce — as a winning lottery ticket.

About eight hours before game time, a secondary-market vendor sent out an email saying that tickets for Game 7 were selling for less than face value.

For a Game 7. In the home rink of a team that, not long ago, was celebrated for its ability to attract, cultivate and maintain a large and loyal following.

If the Penguins' penchant for unraveling in the postseason isn't enough to cause co-owners Mario Lemieux and Ron Burkle to consume antacids by the six-pack, the apparent erosion of support from the paying public surely is.

There had been whispers for a while of the Penguins going to considerable lengths to preserve the sellout streak that has reached 334. Perhaps No. 335 shouldn't be taken for granted.

Because the emotional aftershocks of the Penguins' elimination still are rumbling through the region and organization, it would be prudent to delay any major conclusions about personnel for at least a few days.

Clear-headed decisions about players and coaches can't be made when frustration and anger still are percolating and, most of the time, management is wise to disregard unsolicited — and often ill-informed — advice from the media and public.

In this case, however, ignoring fans' demands that individuals be held accountable for the Penguins' latest warm-weather failure would be bad business.

Trying to placate the masses will necessitate, at the absolute minimum, eating the two-year contract extension Bylsma received after the Penguins' four-game self-immolation in the Eastern Conference final against Boston in 2013.

Bylsma's job appeared to be in jeopardy then, and giving him an extension after that sweep was a significant surprise. It was a tangible display of general manager Ray Shero's commendable loyalty, but it also was a mistake.

Five years ago, Bylsma was a folk hero in these parts. Today, some people with their pictures on post-office walls might be more popular.

It doesn't matter that Bylsma earned a place alongside Bob Johnson and Scott Bowman in franchise lore in 2009, when he replaced Michel Therrien in mid-February and led the Penguins on a breathtaking turnaround that culminated in the franchise's third Stanley Cup.

Not when, despite some remarkable successes in the regular seasons that followed, Bylsma's teams have been eliminated by lower-seeded teams in five consecutive playoffs. Especially when they often have looked bad — undisciplined, unfocused or without urgency, if not all of the above — while doing so.

It's tough to ignore that trend. And even tougher to accept it.

Shero, who assembled this team and coaching staff, obviously has to share responsibility for its failings, and ownership presumably has been debating whether he will retain his job.

He should.

Shero can be criticized for any number of things — from the generous contract he gave defenseman Kris Letang last summer to inadequate team toughness to his inability to land a true top-six winger at the trade deadline — but he still has made more good moves than bad. (Anyone remember that Carolina paid 30 percent of Jussi Jokinen's

contract?)

Besides, much as some in the public might like to see a guillotine and conveyer belt set up outside the team offices, a mass purge — including firing the GM little more than a month before the draft — almost surely would be counter-productive.

Shero should stay.

But some of the people with whom he has been working should not. And will not.

The results demand it. So do the dollars.

Gene Collier: Cup-or-bust style backfires on Penguins

By Gene Collier / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Barely a week ago, in what I suppose would be called the newly renovated bowels of newly renovated Madison Square Garden, Penguins top management stood just outside the visiting team dressing room wearing smiles as bright as Broadway.

Co-owners Mario Lemieux and Ron Burkle and CEO David Morehouse had just watched the franchise they had saved, constructed and lacquered to a high gloss take a 3-1 lead in the Metropolitan Division final, and none of them nor anyone else in that part of the Garden that night could foresee that Dan Bylsma's team, having just scored four goals in Game 4, would score three goals, total, in Games 5, 6, and 7.

Because there is no figuring out hockey.

That's the problem for those executives today. They've got to figure out hockey, and worse, much worse, Penguins hockey.

You wanna try?

On March 30, Sidney Crosby scored two goals while the Penguins beat the Chicago Blackhawks, 4-1, solidifying their status as a team that could outskate and outplay and outwork anybody.

Over the next 6½ weeks, Crosby scored one goal, ultimately solidifying the Penguins' status as a running postseason disaster. Once upon a time in NHL folklore, the Philadelphia Flyers and the Washington Capitals were the great notorious choking dogs of the postseason.

Well, move over Rover.

Try figuring that out.

At one point last week, the Penguins were 19-5 all time against the New York Rangers in the postseason. Then couldn't get to 20 in three tries.

Make sense of that.

On the night of January 3, the Penguins scored four times in the first two periods and went on to beat the visiting Rangers, 5-2, the 20th time they had beaten the Rangers in the past 22 meetings in Pittsburgh.

The Rangers would go 25 months between victories on Penguins ice, but, in the playoffs, they got two victories in little more than two weeks.

Right. Figure that out.

"You work all year to put yourself in a position to win a Game 7," spat forward James Neal in the minutes after the series was blown. "We're supposed to score in big moments in big games. We didn't, and that falls on our top players. We just didn't get it done."

In moments like these, this management team knows, it first has to step back for the broad view, even though that in itself has become wearying.

They will find the Penguins had a terrible year health-wise, leading the league in man-games lost to illness or injury, losing Pascal Dupuis from the top line to knee surgery, absorbing the shock and concern when Kris Letang had a stroke, and on and on.

When the postseason started, the club's bedrock Cup-or-bust philosophy already was unrealistic, given their propensity for hurting themselves.

The playoffs barely had started when Brooks Orpik disappeared for a week. But, when Marc-Andre Fleury put back-to-back shutouts together and the Penguins got ahead, 3-1, expectations flipped and soared, crashed and burned.

The most useful thing management can figure out from all this is not why the Penguins' manic audience always considers a 3-1 lead in a series a done deal, but why the Penguins themselves take pretty much the same approach.

Bylsma had no problem identifying Game 5 as the kill shot in the series that just ended. That was the night the Penguins needed one of those simple workmanlike home victories that were once routine against Henrik Lundqvist, but instead were crushed like a stinkbug, 5-1.

But it is Bylsma who will hang for that, for three failures in a home Game 7 in five years, and for two wasted 3-1 series leads in four years.

It's time, it says here, to question Ray Shero's Cup-or-bust approach. After winning Lord Stanley's ostentatious receptacle in 2009, the Penguins under Shero and Bylsma have become disconnected with the reality that they, like everyone else, actually have to earn

things.

You can have the best player in the world, and maybe the next-best player in the world, but all that and all your other assets really get you is a fat red bull's-eye.

There is no utility in arriving at the postseason with the idea that one team is playing for the Cup and the other 15 are just trying to win a hockey game, and, with a little luck, another hockey game.

That is the mentality, in this opinion, that gets a supremely talented team into a 2-2 rat fight with the Columbus Blue Jackets. The same mentality is at work when the Penguins get ahead, 3-1, in a series, which they seem to feel is validation that, again, they're playing for the Cup rather than something so pedestrian as a fourth victory in a second-round series with the Rangers.

Whether with their philosophy or their strategy or the habitual substandard postseason performances of their top players, or from some combination of all three, the Penguins over the past five years have produced a sophisticated and complex formula that just doesn't work when it matters.

Figuring out how to fix that is a job for big hockey brains and bigger hockey wallets now that their biggest New York smiles have faded from view.

Penguins face murky future after early exit

PITTSBURGH (AP) -- Sidney Crosby will be back. Evgeni Malkin too.

After that, what happens to the Pittsburgh Penguins over another postseason disappointment is anybody's guess.

Dan Bylsma, the winningest coach in franchise history, may be out of a job. Ray Shero, the general manager who spent the last half-decade unsuccessfully trying to replicate the success of 2009, could also be gone.

When Crosby lifted the Stanley Cup in triumph on that warm night in Detroit five years ago, it was supposed to mark the beginning of hockey's next dynasty.

That hasn't materialized. A handful of maddening springs later, it might be time to move on. Bylsma allowed as much Tuesday night after the Penguins fell to the New York Rangers in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference semifinals, a 2-1 defeat that capped a stunning collapse after Pittsburgh grabbed a commanding 3-1 series lead.

"You think about it being the last game," Bylsma said.

While the Rangers exulted at one end of the Consol Energy Center ice after advancing to hockey's final four, the Penguins solemnly lined up for a handshake after losing a Game 7 at home for the third time in five seasons.

This isn't the way it was supposed to go. Not this time. Despite losing over 500 man games to injury - easily the highest total in the NHL - Pittsburgh strolled to the Metropolitan Division title behind the steady and spectacular play of Crosby, who led the league in scoring and is a heavy favorite to win his second MVP award.

After surviving a bumpy six-game series with plucky Columbus in the opening round, the Penguins appeared in total control after a 4-2 win in Game 4 against the weary Rangers.

Then it all fell apart. A dismal 5-1 loss in Game 5 shifted momentum to the guys in the blue shirts. New York goaltender Henrik Lundqvist did the rest, including 35 sublime saves in the deciding game.

Defenseman Matt Niskanen called the debacle in Game 5 a "missed opportunity," one that could lead to significant change in a dressing room that has been among the most stable in the league.

"When expectations are high and you don't win, that's normal," Crosby said. "I'm sure there will be a lot of questions."

At the moment, there don't appear to be a lot of answers.

Crosby insists he's healthy but lacked his otherworldly sharpness at times, scoring just one goal in 13 playoff games.

"It wasn't a lack of effort or competing or anything like that," he said. "I'd love to tear it up every series, but it's not always the case. It doesn't make it any easier, I'll tell you that. It's tough losing as it is but when you're unable to contribute as much as you'd like, it's even tougher."

Maybe, but it's become all too common for one of the NHL's marquee franchises. The Penguins have sold out every home game since Valentine's Day in 2007 and play a brand of entertaining hockey that is overwhelmingly successful in the regular season but doesn't always translate in the tight-checking crucible of the playoffs.

The league's top power play during the regular season went just 1 for 20 with the man advantage against New York. Unable to generate much offense from in front of the net, the Penguins spent most of the last three games unsuccessfully peppering Lundqvist from long distance.

It's a path that led only to frustration and an all-too-familiar result: the Penguins watching another team skate off the ice in celebration.

It happened in 2010, when Pittsburgh fell to Montreal at home in Game 7. It happened last spring, when the Penguins failed to lead the Boston Bruins for a single second while getting swept out of the conference finals.

Ray Shero doubled down after seeing his team silenced by the Bruins. He awarded Bylsma a two-year extension, signed Malkin and defenseman Kris Letang to long-term deals and brought back defenseman Rob Scuderi to give the blue line some heft.

Different path. Same result. Only this time there will be no doubling down. There will be only change.

"It's all tough," Malkin said. "We have great teammates here. We work hard. But 3-1 up in series and last three games we lost, it's tough. See you next season, I don't know."

Neither does anybody else.

Despres' goal in double overtime gives WBS series lead

BY JONATHAN BOMBULIE (STAFF WRITER)

PROVIDENCE, R.I. - Simon Despres has always been the kind of defenseman who is on the prowl for a big play.

Sometimes, it's gotten him into trouble.

On Wednesday night, it got him the glory.

Despres scored 6:32 into the second overtime to give the Penguins a come-from-behind 5-4 win over the Providence Bruins in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference semifinals Wednesday night.

The Penguins lead the series 2-1. Game 4 is Friday night in Providence.

"He wants to make a difference," coach John Hynes said. "Sometimes that's a real strength of his in these overtime games. That's also something you've got to control with him at times. He wants to be a difference maker and he does a nice job of doing it."

The Penguins have only played five multiple overtime games in team history, and Despres netted the game winner in two of them. He also did it in Game 5 of a second-round series with St. John's in 2012.

"I like playing in overtime," Despres said. "It's big-time hockey. That's why we play hockey."

On the winning goal, Brendan Mikkelson took a shot from the left wing and the rebound caromed to Despres near the right half-wall. With goalie Niklas Svedberg slow to react to the change in direction, Despres shot the puck into an essentially empty cage.

"It was rolling, so I didn't even look at the net. I just whipped it at the net, hoping for a bounce," Despres said. "I guess (Svedberg) didn't know where the puck was."

After Chuck Kobasew stole a puck from Svedberg and scored to give the Penguins a 1-0 lead early in the second period, the P-Bruins took control of the game.

Defenseman Harrison Ruopp took a roughing minor at the bench, and Providence tied the score on a Seth Griffith blast on the ensuing power play.

About three minutes later, former Penguins defenseman Joe Morrow picked up the rebound of a Blake Parlett shot, danced up the left wing and shoved a backhand shot past goalie Peter Mannino to give the P-Bruins the lead for the first time with 1:22 left.

Intermission did not stop Providence's momentum. In fact, it ramped it up.

Just 15 seconds into the third period, Parlett scored on a one-timer from the blue line to make it 3-1.

Hynes called a timeout to try to regroup, but 51 seconds later, Alexander Khokhlachev tipped in a Mike Moore shot from the left point to make it 4-1.

"They were outskating us. They were winning the puck battles. They were really aggressive on the forecheck and they were using their speed," Hynes said. "We were in mud. We weren't skating. We weren't moving the puck."

Unexpectedly, the momentum swung back in favor of the Penguins when Providence defenseman Chris Casto was called for tripping with 12:29 left in regulation.

It took the Penguins just six seconds to convert on the power play. Tom Kostopoulos tipped in a Mikkelson shot from the left point to make it 4-2 with 12:23 to go.

About five minutes later, Despres took a shot from the right point that, with Zach Sill right in his grill, Svedberg couldn't stop.

Finally, with 5:51 left in the third, Brian Dumoulin skated up the right wing and muscled a centering pass to the front of the net, where Conor Sheary lifted it over Svedberg to tie the score 4-4.

"Once we got a couple, we started to get a little bit of life," Hynes said. "And it was early enough in the game where you feel like you can really come back. There was plenty of time."

Another team record for Penguins captain Kostopoulos

BY JONATHAN BOMBULIE (STAFF WRITER)

PROVIDENCE, R.I. -When Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins captain Tom Kostopoulos stepped on the ice for Game 3 of the Eastern Conference semifinals against the Providence Bruins on Wednesday night, he erased his assistant coach's name from the team record books.

Kostopoulos played in his 58th career playoff game for the Penguins, moving out of a tie with Alain Nasreddine for the top spot on the team's all-time list.

"This guy is Mr. Wilkes-Barre," Nasreddine said. "I actually thought he had broken it before. If there's one guy I would pick to surpass me, that's fine if it's him. He deserves it. Hopefully he beats it by a large margin. Even better."

It might seem like an obscure record, but it's actually a pretty meaningful one. It means a player was a consistent contributor to a series of good teams.

It's not like Nasreddine or Kostopoulos amassed those postseason games played by picking up five or six a year for 10 years. They both helped the Penguins to the Calder Cup finals twice

Nasreddine played for the Penguins for parts of five seasons from 2004-08, but he amassed his 57 postseason games in just three years. He missed the AHL playoffs in 2006 because of an injury and 2007 because he was up with Pittsburgh most of the year.

The Penguins played 11 playoff games in each of those seasons.

"Maybe my record would be untouchable if I played," Nasreddine said with a laugh.

WHAT'S LEFT?

Kostopoulos now holds team records for games played (406), goals (122), assists (178) and points (300) in the regular season and games played (58), assists (30) and points (43) in the playoffs.

The one record he has yet to break is Chris Minard's mark of 17 career playoff goals. Coming into Game 3, Kostopoulos had 13. Eric Meloche is second with 16. Kris Beech and Milan Kraft are tied for third with 14.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

The 10-minute misconduct Brian Dumoulin received in the third period of Game 2 last Saturday was the first in his 147-game AHL career, counting regular season and playoffs.

He's recorded only one major penalty in his career too, a fight with Hershey's Josh Brittain on Nov. 16 this season.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

Goalie Brad Thiessen stopped 36-of-38 shots Tuesday night to lead Norfolk to a 3-2 overtime victory over St. John's to extend the Eastern Conference semifinals series to a sixth game.

Thiessen is 9-2 with a .953 save percentage when facing elimination in his AHL career, including a 4-1 mark with the Penguins last season.