

SPORTS

SECTION C



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NHL really needs to get over itself in a hurry

They tell me Trenton was under siege, people carrying angry placards, waving hockey sticks, wearing team jerseys and serious frowns. They marched on the capital shortly after the season was pronounced dead, then they took to the streets in Newark, future home of the Devils and a hotbed of hockey.

You couldn't go anywhere in New Jersey without running into agitated hockey fans, shocked and dismayed over the cancellation of the season.

Same thing in other states around the country, my sources tell me. Arizona, Tennessee, Florida, North Carolina — there was great consternation everywhere hockey roots run deep.



BILL HANDLEMAN

People were up in arms, they say, threatening to write letters to their congressmen and everything.

Here at the Shore, you couldn't hear yourself think over the wailing. Wherever you turned, someone would be agonizing over the failure of talks between the owners and the players' association. Grown men standing on the corner in Asbury Park, grappling with the concept of cost certainty, women wandering the boardwalk in Spring Lake, wondering whatever happened to Sasha Lakovic.

Terrible thing, the cancellation of the hockey season.

Life will never be the same, judging from the early postings on the Internet. It's a disgrace, the hockey scribes are writing, furiously. Gary Bettman should be fired. Bob Goodenow should be fired. Come to think of it, they should both be fired. Better yet, off with their heads!

This is the worst thing that's happened to sports fans in this country since the greedy

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MORE COVERAGE

Local fans put the blame on players and owners. A1

Why couldn't the sides come together. C2

A chronology of events that led to the official end of the 2004-05 season. C2

STAFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JEFF COLSON AND JOHN V. SMITH

"Every day that this thing continues we don't think it's good for the game. Every offer by the players moved in the owners' direction. Keep one thing perfectly clear, the players never asked for more money."

— *Bob Goodenow*
NHLPA executive director

"This is a sad, regrettable day that all of us wish could have been avoided. This is a tragedy for the players. Their careers are short and this is money and opportunity they'll never get back."

— *Gary Bettman*
NHL commissioner

NHL season is officially shut down by Bettman

By **MIKE KERWICK**
STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK — He delivered the death sentence a few ticks after 1 p.m. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman walked past the cameras, pulled a sheet of paper from his jacket pocket and placed it on a lectern.

Up until Bettman read the words on that paper, there was hope. Hope that the National Hockey League's owners and players would bridge a \$6.5 million gap. Hope that one side would cave just enough to salvage a season from this wreckage. Hope that some last-minute phone call, e-mail or counteroffer would trickle in and bring fans back to hockey arenas.

There was no savior, no angel, no miracle. Four stories above Times Square, a short walk from Madison Square Garden and a short cab ride from Continental Airlines Arena, Bettman officially dropped the axe on the 2004-05 NHL season Wednesday afternoon.

"As I stand before you today," Bettman said in a prepared statement, "it is my sad duty to announce that because that solution has not yet been attained, it no longer is

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Devils' Marshall calls for ouster of Goodenow

By **MIKE KERWICK**
STAFF WRITER

EAST RUTHERFORD — Grant Marshall was furious, so furious that he said maybe the National Hockey League should get rid of commissioner Gary Bettman and the NHL Players' Association should dump executive director Bob Goodenow.

"If they can't get a deal done, they should be fired," the Devils forward said Wednesday afternoon. "Both of them. If they can't get a deal done, there's something wrong."

"How can you not stay in a room? I don't care if it's three weeks straight. I'll order them pizza. How can you not stay in a room? If you care about the fans and the game of hockey you will do that. That's what they're paid to do."

Hours after Bettman

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