

Penguins GM Shero Talks Team Building with Fanhouse

Written by Matthew Coller
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When the NHL adopted a salary cap, teams could no longer load up top-to-bottom with superstars. Instead, winners have found a new strategy: put more than 50 percent of cap space into a few top flight players. The last two Stanley Cup winners have done just that.

The Pittsburgh Penguins currently have 60 percent of their cap space wrapped up in six players. The Chicago Blackhawks put all their chips with Marian Hossa, Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews, Duncan Keith and Brian Campbell – all All-Star caliber.

AOL Fanhouse writer Adam Gretz spoke with Penguins GM Ray Shero ([read the entire article here](#)) concerning this strategy:

"If you have money tied up in three or four guys, hopefully that means you've got three or four top players," said Shero during a phone interview with FanHouse. "The worst thing you can do is have three or four guys tied up in big money contracts, but they're not difference makers. We're fortunate here to have Crosby and Malkin as our franchise players. We have a lot of money tied up in them, \$8.7 a piece cap wise per year. When you go back to the pre-lockout era, it's hard to recall, but there used to not even be a roster size and you could have as many guys on your roster as you wanted. When Detroit won the Cup, back whenever it was, and Luc Robitaille was a fourth-line player, a Hall of Fame guy, you could carry 28 guys on your payroll if you could afford it."

The Blackhawks are hurting because of the types of risks referenced by Shero, their names are Christobal Huet (\$5.625 million) and Brian Campbell (\$7.140 million). Both aren't stars and both have enormous contracts. The Blackhawks are forced to fill in more marginal players than they'd like because of those failed contracts.

One way around being forced to use average players is to develop young ones. Gretz notes that Shelly Anderson of the [Post-Gazette](#) wrote that this increased need means development camps are now more important.

"We didn't really want to use the development camp as an evaluation as much as an education

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for the players," Shero told Fanhouse. "I think it was our best development camp so far. The competition was really good, we liked what we saw in Eric Tangradi and Dustin Jeffrey, and they showed they have a chance to help us.

"Still, It's more of an education for the players both on and off the ice," he continued. "This is the one time we can see a number of college players, and they have to pay their own way, but I think it's good for them because they never had the chance to come to training camp to get a feel for what it's like. It's really their only chance to see what it's like in that environment and meet the people and coaches and have some idea of what to expect."

Along with putting the big bucks into stars and developing young talent, Shero says that each time finds their own identity and formula for winning. But eludes to goaltending as, let's just say, not as important as it once was.

"I think it really just depends on how your team is going to be built. Detroit has never really had a ton of money in goaltending, they choose to spend it elsewhere. A team like Philadelphia now, that's kind of what they're doing, going heavy in defense and not as much in goal. Every team is a little bit different. If you have it, you want to keep it. If you don't, there's other avenues you can go to to hopefully have success on a year-to-year basis. I think it just really depends what you have for assets in goal. I'm not looking to move Marc-Andre Fleury to replace him with another goaltender, that's just not what we're looking to do. We have Marc-Andre, we'll keep him and build our team that way."

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