

It's October and there are no NHL hockey games on the horizon.

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It should be the start of the NHL hockey league 2004–2005 season but it's not happening. The sports arenas across North America are quiet. There are no piercing sounds of whistles, no scraping sounds of hockey skate blades digging into the ice or pucks being slammed into the boards. The television crews normally setting up to televise the games are nowhere in sight. The NHL hockey players, coaches, and TV crews are off doing something else this season.

And there is no sign of NHL hockey coming back any time soon. The owners and the players are on opposite sides of the spectrum and there have been no talks since September 9, 2004. No further talks have been scheduled. The longer the impasse continues, the greater the blackout will carry on. Hence, in all probability, there will be no hockey season this year.

It's for certain that no games will be played in October or November for that matter. As for December, even if the sides come to some agreement, December will most likely be used for training and the earliest a game can be played would be January.

What are the players doing? 200 of them (1/4) are currently in Europe playing hockey. Their contracts have out clauses which mean that if the NHL starts up again, they will return to North America to play here.

And if you are a die hard fan needing to see a hockey game, the minor hockey leagues are up and running in the smaller towns and are happy to have you come out and see them play.

Catherine Kenyeres is a freelance writer and publisher of <http://www.best-4u-tickets.com>. Catherine has written numerous articles for the sports enthusiast.

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According to Gary Bettman, the prevailing NHL hockey commissioner, during a recent interview with TSN, the Canadian cable sports network the NHL hockey season is just slipping away. He is not confident that a settlement between the players' union can be reached soon. Bettman maintains that the NHL needs a strong economic system and the owners will wait until such a pact is secured that ensures the league's viability.

Furthermore, Bettman reiterated to TSN the NHL league's dismal financial position. Both the owners and players argued whether or not the financial troubles indeed exist. The players' union emphatically denies that the owners have any financial difficulty at all. Given this, it is hard for both sides to come to a unified solution when everyone on the face of the earth knows, except for the players' union, that the NHL is in serious financial trouble. Bettman says, "If at any point in time the union is interested in resuming formal negotiations, all they have to do is let us know and we'll be happy to re-engage."

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