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## Gary Bettman Is The Anti-Christ

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"Money, Money, Money, Root Of All Evil!"

-Horace Andy

You'd think that Gary Bettman was banker in a previous life, his passion for money is so great. Since his appointment as the first NHL commissioner in 1993, he's run roughshod over hockey and the general public like Patrick Bateman in American Psycho. A sociopath with one goal and no moral qualms about doing anything he needs to get it done.

We're currently in the middle of the fifteenth anniversary of Gary's reign of terror and after that long, it's time for a coup, that's likes of which sports has never seen. If there is any intention of increasing the quality of the game, helping a diluted talent pool heal itself and allowing the American TV market to actually get a chance to see a proper NHL game, the man needs to go and it's all David Stern's fault. but that's another story for another day entirely. It's time for the NHL to get rid of Gary Bettman once and for all.

Since beginning his NHL career, Gary Bettman has been the little black rain cloud that has hung over the league, spreading, bad vibes and terror through a new bloated and it's going to take strong wind to get rid of him. Since he began his tenure in the NHL, four teams have declared bankruptcy. Four! He should be counting his blessings that two of them (Ottawa and Buffalo) have at least had the kind of astute owners and G.M.'s that have allowed them to get back into the playoffs. Los Angeles and Pittsburgh have barely survived the last few years and we all know that it's only for the acquisition of Sidney Crosby that the Penguins are still in Pittsburgh at all!

The biggest scar that Bettman has left on the NHL though has been his need for expansion. The late 90's boom ended up establishing teams in Raleigh, Denver, and Phoenix via contraction/moving established teams elsewhere and in Nashville, Atlanta, Minnesota, and Columbus via the dreaded expansion curse. This quest for expansion money has created more teams and has driven the NHL brand further into the darkest heart of America, but at what cost? Nashville looks like it's the next team to move, the Coyotes are drowning in their own failure, and the Hurricanes can't draw fans even on free ticket night. It's become fairly evident that the Southeast can handle the NHL, it's just it isn't even interested in it. I mean come on, if you're in Nashville, are you going to want to be in close proximity to the ice or the waterfront?

Even Bettman's biggest success has begun to eat its own tail. The two enforced work stoppages, the most recent of which lead the establishment of an NHL salary cap, have turned out to mean absolutely nothing. With the increase in the salary cap, we've seen the recent batch of free agent signings peak out at ridiculous sums. Scott Gomez was signed to a seven-year, \$51.5 million contract. Do the math and you'll see he's making seven million dollars a year. If the salary cap was designed to decrease the gap between the NHL's have and have-nots, the league has now tossed the baby out with the bathwater in another attempt to wallow in its own greed.

So where do we go from here? Well, we can only hope that the small-market-owners realize that Bettman is the anti-Christ and revolt. where we go from there is up to them. the way the NHL has handling its hiring process, they'd get rid of Gary Bettman and hire another one of David Stern's favorite people, Stu Jackson. If you're an NBA fan, you'll know it was Stu who took on the role of General Manager of the Vancouver Grizzlies when the team first came into the league and proceeded to bury it into the ground with the kind of astounding draft and trade decisions that could only be made by a sixteen year-old playing in his first fantasy sports league.

Pray my friends, pray, that's all we can do, because as long as the Anti-Christ still continues to lead the way in the NHL, we're still going to be looking puzzled and unhappy.

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