



# ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

## NOVEMBER

### Player Development News

#### Bruins Stats - NHL News - NHL Stats

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Bruins go back to school: Keenan's classes plenty challenging  
by Steve Conroy , Boston Globe  
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Coach Mike Keenan worked on his players' minds on Monday night.

Bruins goalie Byron Dafoe takes a break during practice yesterday at the FleetCenter. Dafoe, testing his injured left hamstring for the first time in three weeks, reported no problems after the workout. (Staff photo by Jim Mahoney) He put their bodies to the test yesterday.

After giving his players a written assignment concerning their goals the night before, the Bruins' coach put the team through a spirited, hour-long workout yesterday at the FleetCenter and, afterward, another hour's worth of off-ice conditioning.

With three consecutive days off leading into tomorrow night's contest against the Ottawa Senators, Keenan has been afforded some quality, extended practice for the first time since he abruptly took over the coaching reins from Pat Burns two weeks ago. Keenan is making an impression.

"It was interesting," goalie Byron Dafoe said of yesterday's session. "It was completely different than what Burnsie ran. It was my first practice under Mike and, I'll tell you, he's a motivated guy out there. He's talking during every drill. It's short, but it's hard. He keeps everybody moving. There's no standing around out there and that's good. You put your hour's worth of work in at 100 percent, then you're out of there."

The team, coming off two bad, lopsided losses over the weekend, spent much of the on-ice session scrimmaging, first going 3-on-3, then 4-on-4 and then full strength. They finished up the practice with a hard conditioning skate.

"It was fun," said Dafoe. "When practices get drawn out to an hour and a half or longer, guys can lose focus and you start making sloppy passes and sloppy plays. And that can carry over into a game. But when it's short, hard and guys know what they're doing, that's what you want going into a hockey game."

Newcomer Dixon Ward, a free agent who signed with the Bruins on Friday after missing training camp and the first month of the season, believed the workout was what he and the team needed. And he expects more of it.

“It was hard, but it was good,” said Ward. “It was a good time for it. We had a day off (Monday) to rest and don't play till (tomorrow), so it was a real good time to do it. Mike stresses every day that the only way you can be the hardest working team is to be the best-conditioned team. So we're going to raise our fitness level to its peak and make the game easier.”

Defenseman Hal Gill said that Keenan's philosophy is all-encompassing.

“It reminds me a lot of Paul Pooley at Providence (College),” said Gill. “There's a lifestyle you have to lead to be successful, not just playing hockey, but living right, eating right, getting rest, working out afterward. It's a whole lifestyle you have to lead to be a good player and be successful.”

Keenan, 2-4-0-1 since arriving in Boston, came with a reputation of being a taskmaster who could be extremely tough on his players. Before he even coached a game with the B's, he pointed out that in places such as Chicago, Philadelphia and New York, where he earned that reputation, he was coaching teams that accomplished plenty. Here, he's been more like a challenging educator than a caustic drill sergeant.

“You have to continue to increase and focus on the things they do well, build their confidence from there,” said Keenan. “Give them a base, a foundation, something they can hang their hat on, and at the same time teach them aspects of team play or individual development that would make them better and the team better.”

“The one thing that you have to be mindful of is you're never as bad as you think you are and you're never as good as you think you are.”