

Capped: Breaking Down the Cole/Ryder Trade

Written by Eric Daoust

Thursday, 28 February 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Thursday, 28 February 2013 14:57



Eric Daoust takes a look at the recent trade between Dallas and Montreal.

Two days ago there was a trade that saw [Erik Cole](#) traded from Montreal to Dallas in exchange for [Michael Ryder](#) and a third round draft pick in 2013. Dobber's fantasy take on the transaction can be found [here](#)

. Here we will dig deeper and look at the deal from each team's perspective with a dedicated focus on their respective situations within the NHL's salary cap structure.

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The Canadiens re-acquire Ryder after he began his career with a splash on the same team. Looking at his career numbers we see a lot of highs and lows in his goal and point totals.

Year	Team	GP	G	A	Pts	+/-	PIM	Hits	BkS	FW	FL	FO%	PPG	PP
2003-04				MON		81				25				
2005-06				MON		81				30				

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2006-07	MON	82	30
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2007-08	MON	70	14
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2008-09	BOS	74	27
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2009-10	BOS	82	18
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2010-11	BOS	79	18
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2011-12	DAL	82	35
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2012-13	DAL	19	6
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Career	650	203	207
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For the most part he has been very durable but his goals and point show no year-to-year

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consistency outside of his first three years in the league. This works against his value as a player because you simply do not know what you are getting when you have Ryder in your lineup.

On the other side, there were obvious issues with Cole dating back to the end of the lockout when he expressed displeasure about the new collective bargaining agreement and even hinted at retiring. That was followed by a poor start that saw him knocked off the Canadiens' top line. He also agreed to waive his no-trade clause so you have to believe that he was not at all opposed to moving on to a new team.

Cole generally brings a lot of intangibles to the table and is an excellent skater for a power forward. He scored a career-high 35 goals last year which makes the trade even more surprising given that he had delivered great production to the Canadiens in the recent past.

From Montreal's perspective

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The first obvious difference is that Ryder costs \$3.5 million on the salary cap while Cole's cap hit was \$4.5 million. The extra money can be used to make some trades in the immediate future if there are injuries in the lineup as the team is surprisingly in a great position to challenge for a playoff spot.

Going the trade route will be Montreal's only effective method to bring in reinforcements because their farm club in Hamilton is dry of talent that is ready to make the jump to the NHL.

[Gabriel Dumont](#)

, who projects more as an energy line player, leads all players with 30 points in 51 games. No other player has eclipsed 20 points this season.

On top of that, Ryder's contract expires after this season while Cole's pact lasts two more years beyond this one. Given Cole's struggles there was a possibility that he could become a cap albatross down the road and the team most likely has its final compliance buy-out reserved for

[Tomas Kaberle](#)

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With Cole in the lineup the Habs would have had 12 forwards under contract next year giving

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itself very little flexibility to make changes. In addition to having a core locked up and a pair of emerging young players in [Brendan Gallagher](#) and [Alex Galchenyuk](#), the team also has [Travis Moen](#)

and

[Brandon Prust](#)

, both being primarily bottom-six players, signed for three more seasons. That makes it difficult for new players such as senior college prospect Danny Kristo to break into the lineup. Moving Cole clears up a roster space for this summer and gives the team more flexibility to make changes if necessary.

Also, if Ryder is not retained it puts the team in a position to make a move on the upcoming crop of unrestricted free agents. This pool of players will likely include some unexpected names as NHL teams use their compliance buy-outs to help get under the salary cap which lowers to \$64.3 million for next season.

Evidently there is some risk in trading Cole, who was the team's best player last season. It is possible that the team gave up on him too soon and could have left some great production and grit on the table. On the flip side, will Ryder deliver as expected or will he struggle to produce like he has at various times during his career? And most importantly, if Ryder is not retained after this season it creates a hole in the lineup. Who fill this void? Will the net result be worth it in the end?

From Dallas' perspective

Evidently the Stars wanted a style change. Ryder is smaller and more of a finesse player while Cole is bigger, faster and throws a lot of hits. They also like the fact that Cole's contract extends beyond this season. If you ignore the draft pick included in the trade, you can think of this as Dallas signing Cole as an unrestricted free agent. Only in this case they get their guy now instead of taking their chances this summer.

With [Jaromir Jagr](#) , [Brenden Morrow](#) , [Derek Roy](#) and Erik Nystrom set to become unrestricted free agents in July it makes sense for the Stars to seek replacements that will be part of the group next year. Cole's acquisition could help offset some of Morrow's grit in the event that he moves on to another club in the near future.

Even though Cole is a more expensive player to own than Ryder, his dollar figure does not hurt the Stars with respect to the salary cap ceiling because the team operates under a smaller internal budget. But with that said there are risks that come with acquiring Cole despite a very good career in the NHL.

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Regardless of how much the team wants to spend it must still do so intelligently to get the most out of every dollar. With Cole struggling this year and with questions about his commitment and conditioning there is a possibility that Cole will not be productive in Dallas. He must get back to being a productive top-six winger in order for this trade to make sense. Otherwise it could be a chunk of wasted cap space and teams who spend less than the big market clubs can ill afford to make mistakes in their money allocation.

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