

The Contrarian takes a look at "draft pick theory"

Today I am going to explore the idea behind draft pick theory.

The basic concept is that if you acquire players for your hockey pool roster that are drafted by NHL clubs in the first round you have a better chance of succeeding than if you go after players taken in the later rounds.

The Contrarian: Picky Picky

Written by Demetrios Fragopoulos Sunday, 16 February 2014 14:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 February 2014 17:21

Premise #1: Today's players are scouted so much and so thoroughly that it is hard to imagine that someone with great talent can be missed. A great example that comes up is Luc Robitaille, drafted in the 9th round, 171st overall, in the 1984 draft. Martin St. Louis is another who was never drafted. Talent is to be identified better than it used to be and is supposed to rise to the top.

Premise #2: There are no more hidden gems. Gone are the artificial walls and borders of the past. Players like Igor Larionov taken in the 11th round, 214th overall, in the 1985 draft are not going to happen again.

Premise #3: Players drafted in the earlier rounds, especially the first round, will be given more opportunity to succeed than players picked in later rounds. Teams invest in their selections and they don't want to have them disappoint. They are more willing to give the first round pick time and resources where the late round pick has to really fight for everything because they can easily be replaced.

Premise #4: A first round pick usually doesn't displace another first round pick off a roster. If they require time to adjust, they are usually given third line minutes and some selective time with the top lines. If they are immediately ready to play top line minutes, the guy who was in the top six drops down to the bottom six players on the roster or possibly gets traded. First rounders displaced other first rounders either through injury or retirement.

All that being said there are exceptions.

Some guys coming out of college sign as free agents. Players taken in later rounds still can become productive players. With the threat of Russian even European players possibly playing in the KHL, NHL GMs might not draft them as high as they would if the KHL did not exist. Players drafted in the first round can flop too. Alexander Svitov, Stanislav Chistov and not to look prejudiced against Europeans there are also Rob Schremp and Angelo Esposito as examples.

So why all the commotion behind draft theory?

Hockey pool owners are looking to minimize their risk. Take a look at this table (column one is the draft round):

Rank	1 to 30	31 to 60	61 to 90	91 to 120	121 to 150	151 to 180	181 to 210	211 to 240	241 to 270	271 to 300	
Pt Range	78 to 48	48 to 41	41 to 36	36 to 33	32 to 29	29 to 26	26 to 24	24 to 22	22 to 20	20 to 17	
1	23	16	15	15	17	14	10	15	17	9	15
2	1	6	9	5	2	0	7	6	7	5	4
3	1	5	1	2	1	4	2	1	1	2	2
4	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	2	0	1	1
5	1	0	0	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
6	0	1	1	2	4	2	1	3	0	0	1
7	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	1
8	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	
9	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
FA	2	1	1	2	4	4	2	1	2	6	2
	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	

The Contrarian: Picky Picky

Written by Demetrios Fragopoulos Sunday, 16 February 2014 14:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 February 2014 17:21

Of the current top 300 NHL players ranked by points, as of February 14th 2014, more than 50 percent are first round selections. Add another 16 percent for second rounders and almost seven percent for third rounders and you have a total of close to 73 percent.

Where the points range dramatically (ranks 1 to 30 for example), is where people who champion draft theory look at. In the top 30 players more than 76 percent are first rounders.

In later ranks where the point gaps are smaller (211 to 240 for example) it doesn't immediately look important. It is an equal split between first round selections and non-first round selections. However, the idea goes one step further by implying that the likelihood that the first rounders that are currently ranked in the lower ranges can (or will) become ranked higher in future seasons as compared to the non-first round players.

If you only acquire first rounder players the prizes and winnings will be falling at your feet, right? Not so fast. I didn't say that.

I'm saying that through draft theory those owners are trying to minimize their risk for poor performing players, or if you want to think of it another way, trying to optimize the risk for higher performing players.

Just like any other theory there are no guarantees. Simply playing odds. Like anything else it is a tool of information. It is not as sexy or technical as some other theories and formulae but should that really matter?

The Contrarian: Picky Picky Written by Demetrios Fragopoulos Sunday, 16 February 2014 14:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 February 2014 17:21 If your team is ranked at the bottom take a look at where your players were drafted. Take a look at the winning team too. See which guys you are being bombarded with trade offers for, which guys are being sent your way. I leave it to you to decide if it is worthwhile, if it can help you out in some limited manner or if it is to be disregarded entirely. Can you afford not to be picky?