

Ryan Johansen is quietly having a really good rookie season. He had two helpers last night and is on pace for close to 50 points. He'd be getting a lot more press if he played in a bigger hockey market, of course. He got off to a bit of a slow start and he bounced around the lineup a bit, but he's settling in now. It's amazing how many good young players the Portland Winterhawks have churned out in recent years.

Tomas Fleischmann played (and scored) last night. Great to see after that headshot he took the other night.

Crosby had another strong game. He recorded three points (all in the first 10 minutes of the game) against Ottawa.

Carolina continues to be awful. I am so frustrated as a Cam Ward owner, and I am sure many of you out there feel the same way.

Cory Schneider recorded his second consecutive shutout last night. He wasn't tested a lot by

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the Coyotes, but he did make five or six tough saves throughout the game.

Ryan Kesler played his best game of the season (by far). Encouraging to see. Not surprisingly, Booth looked a lot better too.

Derek Morris had arguably the worst game I have seen from a defenseman this season.

Cody Hodgson only played 10 minutes last night. I was surprised to see that number after the game. He had another solid effort and recorded another really nice assist. He's becoming a really good young NHL player. I hadn't written him off last season, but his potential took a serious nose dive. Nice to see him building it back up.

Stefan Elliott was recalled by the Colorado Avalanche and will play tonight.

The Sabres recalled defenseman Brayden McNabb. He had 72 points last season in the WHL, and has 10 points in 19 games this season in the AHL. Keep an eye on him.

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I'll have a lot of fresh content up around noon or so. Caught a few of the earlier games while at work, and watched the Canucks in Phoenix later on in the evening.

Ryan Callahan, the Swiss-Army Knife in New York, had three assists. Goal scorer, playmaker, hitter, leader, he really does it all. I don't buy jerseys, but if I did he'd be my first or second choice.

Artem Anisimov is really flourishing as a two-way threat under Tortorella. Seven shots on goal to lead the team, and two points to boot.

Fedotenko had two goals and played almost 20 minutes. A great complimentary/role player as he has proven in Pittsburgh and Tampa Bay.

Carl Hagelin, who I wrote about yesterday, had an assist and recorded his first career NHL point.

As a Pat Sharp owner, I was of course happy to see his three goal, six shot output. He hasn't been his usual self so far this season.

Toews had a five point game. His line was ridiculous – 12 faceoff wins, two goals, three assists, plus-3, six shots on goal, and two PIM.

Bobby Ryan is alive, ladies and gentlemen! Two goals and seven shots on goal. He's been invisible for much of the season.

Selanne the Ageless with another two points. This league seems to be too easy for him. Won three of five faceoffs taken, as well.

Francois Beauchemin had an assist. More impressive is the fact he logged close to nine minutes shorthanded. Hard to be a productive player with that much ice time on the penalty kill.

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I hate to rub salt in wounds, but McDonagh had a helper and played almost 29 minutes for the Rangers. One half of the league's most underrated defensive pairing (with Girardi). Sorry, Habs fans...

Ovechkin scored his first goal at home this season. Considering it is almost December, that is an alarming statistic (to say the least).

Ryan Smyth should get more than a few votes for surprise player of the season (to date). Another two points for him last night against the Wild.

The Nuge had two goals. Kid is unbelievably good. Reminds me a lot of Pat Kane, but I think he is a bit more polished than Kane was at the same age.

Taylor Hall had two points, as did Eberle. Hall had a bit of a slow start but has turned the corner in a big way. These three young talents are so fun to watch (even as a Canucks fan). I can appreciate good hockey.

Speaking of underrated defensive pairings, how about Smid and Gilbert? Gilbert has somehow learned how to play defense in one summer, and Smid (when healthy) is a solid, steady force in the defensive zone.

Heatley/Koivu/Setoguchi combined for two points and a Staal-like minus-9 rating.

To say the Ducks are struggling would be an understatement. One win in their last 13 games, and they allowed three third period goals to the Blackhawks last night. Hiller was eventually pulled. The Ducks lack depth and it is showing.

Brad Richards owners must have been happy to see his two point effort. It's been a slow start on Broadway for Richards. Don't make a panic move, he's one of the most consistent producers in the league.

Minnesota Wild prospect Zach Phillips has a 17 game point streak right now in the QMJHL. Before last night, he had 43 points in only 24 games.

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[Here's a solid read on Phillips.](#) I'll post the most useful stuff:

(From November 17)

"He's 3rd in the league with 28 assists (with 5 fewer games than leader Yannick Gauthier, who has 32). He's also 5th in the league with 42 points in 23 games (again, 5 fewer games than leader Gauthier, who has 48). He notched 4 assists in a losing cause and was quite likely put on a line with Tesink and Oke to distribute the scoring more evenly. He directly assisted on Tesink's 7th and 8th goal of the season. Simply put, Phillips makes the players around him better, which is great. He's also 3rd in team goals with 14. He had 3 shots on goal and almost put a puck into a gaping net, but Brennan jumped in just in time to rob him of a 5th point."

The Sea Dogs have a solid team. Huberdeau is the Crosby to Phillips' Malkin, as the above column notes.

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Ilya Kovalchuk played more last night than Tedenby, Brad Mills, Cam Janssen, and Petr Sykora – combined.

Mark Fayne led all Devils blueliners in ice time – I don't know a lot about him. Seen him play a few times – seems to be a decent two-way guy. He played about two minutes on the PP, but didn't record any points.

Josh Bailey is wasting away in New York. I really wonder where he'd be if Detroit or San Jose had drafted him and kept him in the OHL for another year or two.

Travis Hamonic and Matt Martin had seven hits apiece for the Isles.

Sean Couturier was without a point, but he continues to impress. Almost five minutes on the PK, and five shots on goal.

Jakub Voracek had a great game, although Claude Giroux is a pretty easy guy to play with.

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Voracek has replaced Jagr on Giroux's right side.

Surprise to no one, but Giroux is my early season choice for the Hart Trophy.

Jonathan Ericsson is so, so bad defensively. I was shocked when the Wings gave him a lucrative extension – Ken Holland and Mike Babcock have proven themselves to both be very astute talent evaluators. At the best of times, Ericsson is a mobile big man who can skate the puck up the ice. At the worst, he's a pylon in the defensive zone and is prone to boneheaded passes.

Tuukka Rask had a very solid game for the red hot Bruins – but the team lost in the shootout (thanks for the correction).

Blake Comeau was claimed by Calgary. I agree with Dobber on this one – Comeau is likely going to go on a hot streak now. He's a western Canada boy, and the Flames are desperate for some offense. Comeau only made it past Columbus (would have put them over the cap) and Anaheim (would have put them close to the cap) as Calgary sat third in the waiver order.

Roman Josi has been called up by the Preds. He was given a look in camp to make the team before sustaining a concussion. Since returning to the lineup in Milwaukee, he has four points in five games. Great skater, really does everything well. Kimmo Timonen comparisons have been made.

Based on Twitter responses, the three most likely destinations for Jarome Iginla are Washington, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. He sure would look good in the Orange & Black... Calgary has needs at all three positions and should just be focused on maximizing trade value.

Not only is Peter Mueller battling concussion issues, but he has a groin injury as well.

The Winter Classic Alumni rosters [have been announced](#) – Lindros on Philadelphia, Kasparaitis on the Rangers. Interesting...

Beauty goal from Lapierre:

{youtube}e_paATFpba8{/youtube}

