

Hanowski, Hartzall, and More Recent Rookie Signings

Written by Jeff Angus

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Hanowski may be a rookie, but his hair has been in the league for 20 years.

At this time of the year there are many prospects that are signed to entry-level contracts. Some are drafted players who finished their junior or college season while others are undrafted free agents who have made an impression on NHL clubs. With most people currently focused on the final stretch of their fantasy leagues, this is a chance to take note of, and in some cases

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acquire, some prospects who can help you in the coming years.

The focus will be put on salary cap leagues so financial factors will play a large role in which prospects are profiled. As they develop they will be excellent call-ups to cover for injuries on your main roster when they get cups of coffee in the NHL without hurting your team's payroll while they are up.

Adam Lowry (LW) – Winnipeg

2013-14: 828,833

2014-15: 828,833

2015-16: 828,833

As with most giant forwards, Adam Lowry needed extra development before hitting his stride as a scorer at the junior level. This season he exploded for 45 goals and 88 points in 72 games, eclipsing his previous best of 18 goals and 45 points, and added 102 PIM for Swift Current of the WHL.

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While he does not have sky-high potential, Lowry's combination of scoring and a physical game make him an intriguing prospect in all formats. His size and two-way ability make him a candidate to start his NHL career in the bottom-six while he continues to add bulk. Short-term, expect limited points with good peripheral stats. Long-term, the scoring may catch up.

Ben Hanowski (LW) – Calgary

2012-13: 900,000

2013-14: 900,000

Like Lowry, Ben Hanowski has good size and scoring ability. However, he does not possess Lowry's toughness and ability to pile up PIM for poolies. But perhaps his best attribute is opportunity as Flames' management tries to justify the Jarome Iginla trade. He has already made a mark in Calgary following the signing of his rookie contract as he scored in his first NHL game and has averaged 12 minutes of ice time in two games.

Moving forward, Hanowski is clearly in the plans as the Flames will probably continue to turn their focus to young talent. He does not possess the upside of the elite prospects but could be a decent second-line winger if all goes well. In deep leagues he could be an asset next year as he should spend the majority of the season in the NHL and will have a cap hit of under \$1 million.

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Chad Ruhwedel (D) – Buffalo

2012-13: 925,000

2013-14: 925,000

Another prospect who could benefit from opportunity coming from his team's youth movement is Chad Ruhwedel who recently signed with the Buffalo Sabres and has appeared in three NHL games. His college numbers were decent but not spectacular during the last two seasons as he posted a combined 13 goals and 48 points in 78 games. He is most likely going to be a depth producer at the NHL level and his lack of size could be a tough obstacle to overcome. However, in deep leagues there is certainly a possibility that a young defenseman with a bit of upside and an immediate opportunity could be useful.

Nick Shore (C) – Los Angeles

2012-13: 925,000

2013-14: 925,000

2015-16: 925,000

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Nick Shore is a sound two-way player who is a pretty safe prospect. His complete game could give him the inside track in getting an eventual promotion to the main roster. His college numbers were similar to Hanowski's but in this case the opportunity to move into the top-six in the near future is definitely not present. Meanwhile the 47 PIM that Shore obtained in 39 games during his final college season is very intriguing. It is not always clear how penalty statistics and physical play will translate to the pro game but it is certainly worth watching. He could be an underrated asset in roto leagues.

Eric Hartzell (G) – Pittsburgh

2012-13: 1,536,923

Eric Hartzell's situation is a bit different than the other players profiled because of the uncertainty over the fine details of his contract. The cap hit of \$1.5 million is high but he is not going to be seeing NHL action in the immediate future so he should be stored in the farm team or prospects list of a fantasy team anyway. The deal expires this summer and there is a strong chance that his next pact will have a lower cap hit.

Hartzell's future will be greatly impacted by how well he plays next year in the AHL. If he does

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well and moves ahead of Jeff Zatkoff on the depth chart he could be Marc-Andre Fleury's next backup after Tomas Vokoun's current contract expires. The talent is certainly there as evidenced by his 30-7-5 record with a 1.57 GAA and .933 save percentage in college this year. Opportunity is big with goaltenders and there is certainly a backup position to be had down the road. It will be up to Hartzell to prove himself as the man for the job.

{youtube}HpVBgKosuf4{/youtube}

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