Written by Michael Amato



Forensics - Drew Stafford - After getting through high-school math I never thought I would have to deal with charts, graphs, and percentages again. Then along came Frozen Pool and that all changed. At least this time it's for something I'm actually interested in and can analyze with a goal in mind.

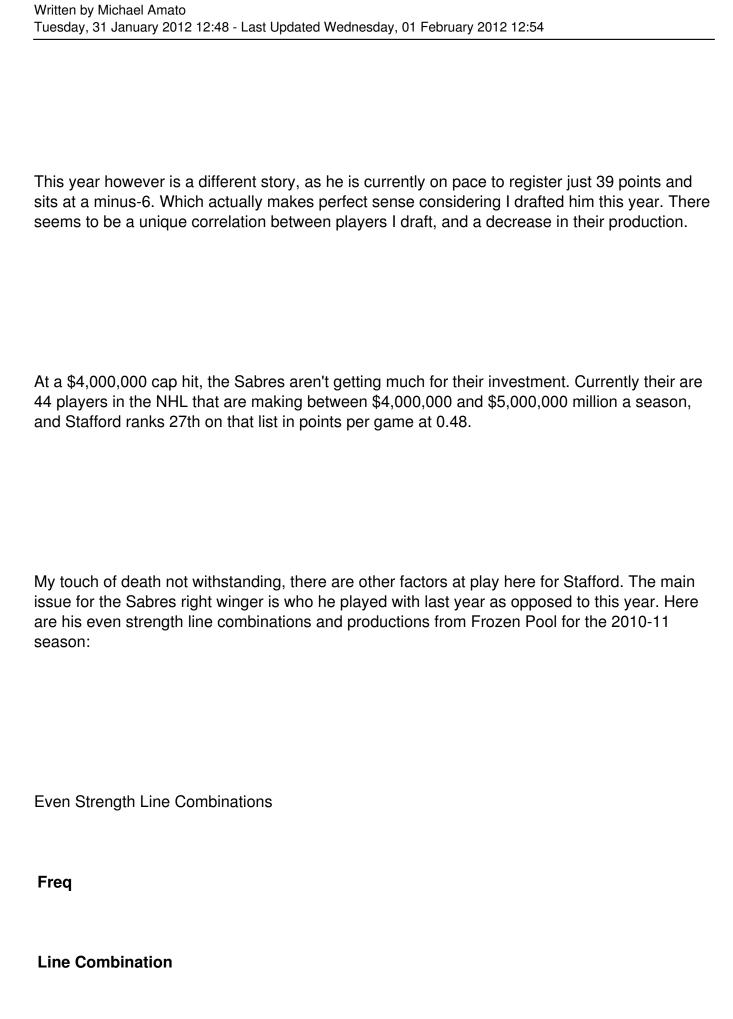
Drew Stafford had a breakthrough season last year by scoring 31 goals and 52 points, while finishing at plus-13 in just 62 games. If you project that out for a full 82 games that turns into a 69 point campaign.

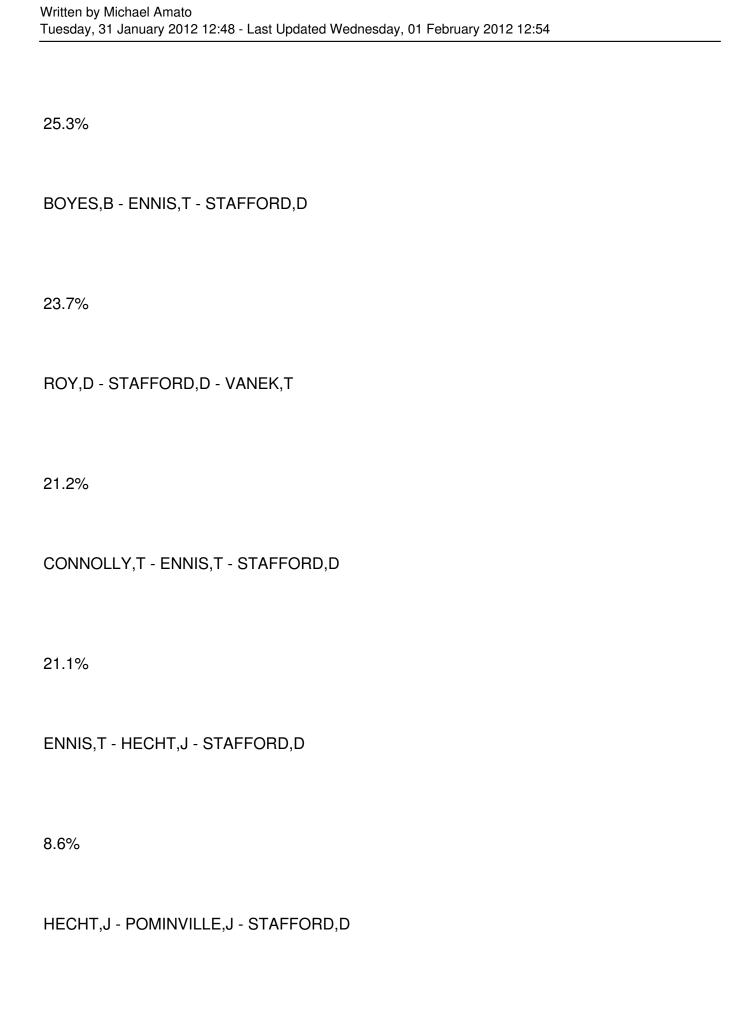
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GP
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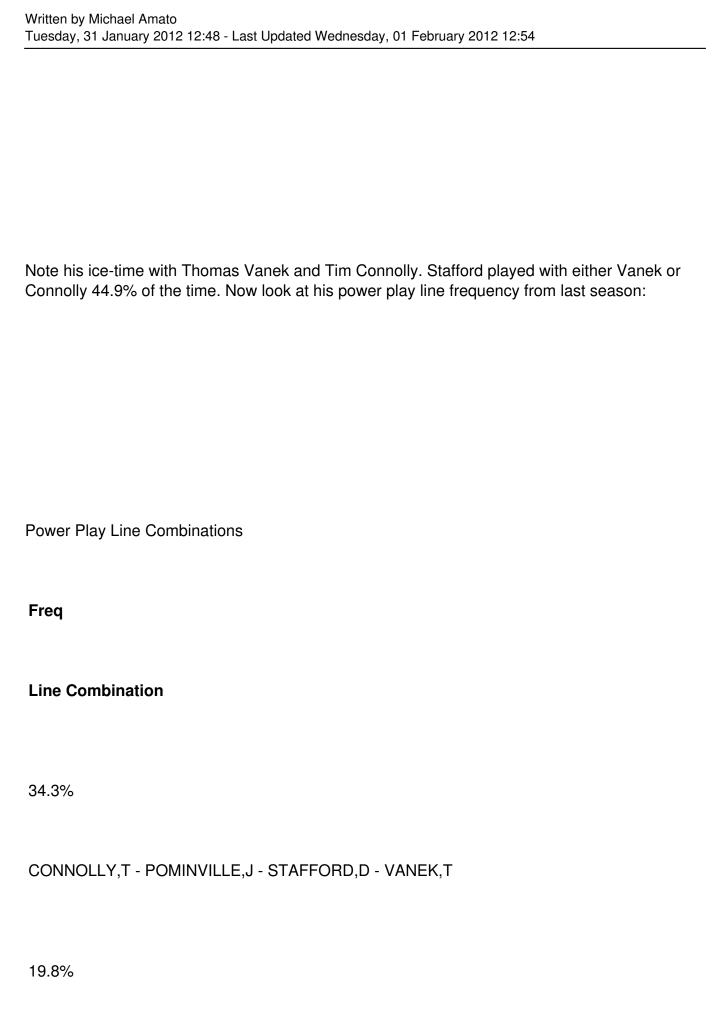
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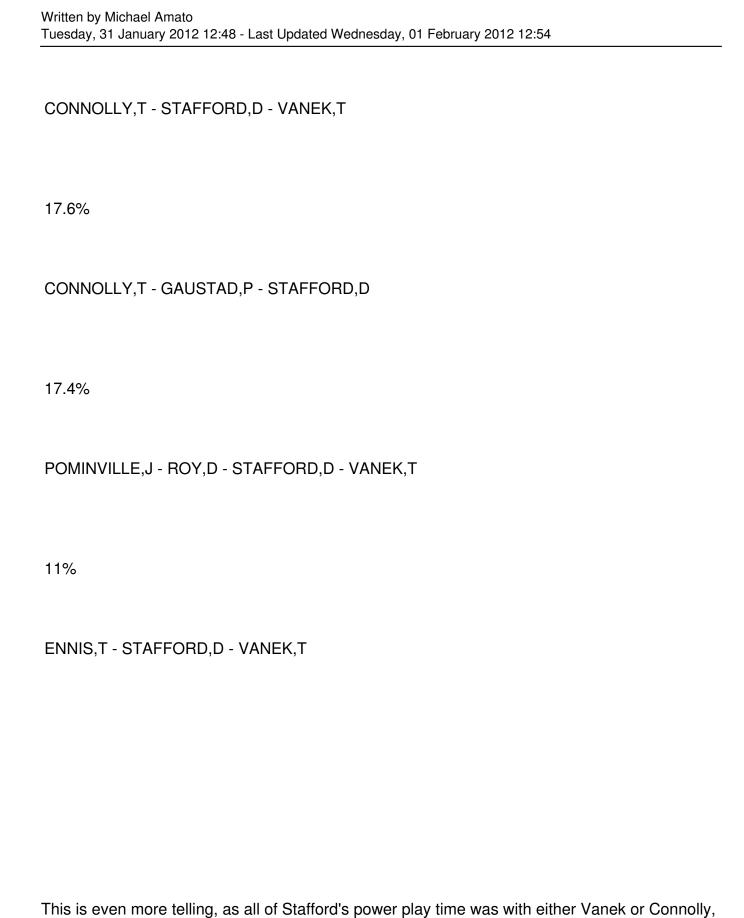
Tuesday, 31 January 2012 12:48 - Last Updated Wednesday, 01 February 2012 12:54 SHG SHP %PP %SH %TOI 62 31 21 52 0.84 69

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13
34
179
5
11
19
0
0
52.3
5.8
27.2









and 51.1% was with the two of them together. In fact 19 of his points last year came with the man advantage and 41 of his 52 total points came while playing with either Vanek or Connolly.

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Let's jump to Stafford's struggles this season. Connolly is now gone to Toronto, and his ice-time with Vanek in 2011-12 has decreased significantly.
Even Strength Line Combinations
Frequency
Ctrongth
Strength
Line Combination
20.11%
EV
23 LEINO, VILLE - 9 ROY, DEREK - 21 STAFFORD, DREW

17.44%
EV
42 GERBE,NATHAN - 9 ROY,DEREK - 21 STAFFORD,DREW
14.63%
EV
63 ENNIS,TYLER - 9 ROY,DEREK - 21 STAFFORD,DREW
12.87%
EV
22 BOYES,BRAD - 23 LEINO,VILLE - 21 STAFFORD,DREW
3.44%

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EV
22 BOYES,BRAD - 9 ROY,DEREK - 21 STAFFORD,DREW
3.07%
EV
72 ADAM,LUKE - 23 LEINO,VILLE - 21 STAFFORD,DREW
1.9%
EV
9 ROY,DEREK - 21 STAFFORD,DREW - 26 VANEK,THOMAS
Power Play Line Combinations

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Freq **Line Combination** 42.8% POMINVILLE, J - STAFFORD, D - VANEK, T 18.4% ADAM, L - LEINO, V - STAFFORD, D 17.4% POMINVILLE, J - ROY, D - STAFFORD, D - VANEK, T 11.8% LEINO, V - ROY, D - STAFFORD, D 9.5%

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GERBE,N - ROY,D - STAFFORD,D

Stafford is still getting some power play time with Vanek, but you can see the two of them are playing on a line together less than 2% of the time in even strength situations. That translates into a more than 20% drop from last year. What has replaced this is over 35% of even strength ice-time for Stafford with Ville Leino. And with Leino's play this season, that's the equivalent of trading in a Porsche for a wood-panelled station wagon.

Now there are certainly other factors involved in Stafford's low production as well. The Sabres as a whole have performed well below expectations so far and that can typically affect a player's production. Derek Roy missed substantial time last season and that no doubt contributed to Stafford receiving increased minutes and opportunities in key situations.

At just 26 years of age, Stafford still has time to turn it around and become a consistent pro. Unfortunately probably not in time to add anything to my fantasy squad for this season. Unless Brian Burke acquires Stafford and Vanek in order to reunite them with Connolly. A guy can dream can't he?