

July 6, 2013

Written by Steve Laidlaw
Saturday, 06 July 2013 02:09 -

What an exhausting day of signings. Fun and exciting but exhausting. Kudos to Dobber, Angus and Amato for staying on top of all the action. All of those quick trade breakdowns that give you the info you need to stay a step ahead of your competition – that's what makes this site the best fantasy hockey site out there – I'm proud to be a part of this.

I'll try not to step on all the work those guys did yesterday but at the same time I feel the need to use this space to offer my own take on many of these deals.

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I feel like Michael Ryder's deal with the Devils was the single best signing of the day. Why? He signed for market value.

Ryder is one-dimensional, but that dimension is one that often receives an overpayment. At two years and \$3.5 million per season, Ryder is properly paid, which you can't say about a lot of these signings.

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Ryder fills a huge need for the Devils as well because they had some real holes in their top six. All he does is score and he'll do so in New Jersey.

Props to the Devils for locking up Patrick Elias earlier this week as well. Obviously they still have use for him in their top six but more than anything it's just nice to see him sticking around with his one and only NHL team after a season where we've seen marquee names like Vinny Lecavalier, Jarome Iginla and Daniel Alfredsson all with new clubs.

It helps that Elias already has his rings and was never the team's face of the franchise but he's still been a great player for the Devils for a long time – this contract will take him to his 20th NHL season, all with the Devils. He certainly gets his jersey retired. A Hall-of-Famer as well?

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By the way, I hate this whole Alfredsson to Detroit business. Just hate it. The Senators are ready to make a push. They just acquired Bobby Ryan for goodness sake! Granted that happened after Alffie had decided to leave but still. He easily could have chased the ring in Ottawa. I firmly believe they are contenders now that Pittsburgh and Boston are taking steps backward.

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Because don't kid yourselves, Ottawa was on the rise regardless of this Ryan deal but acquiring him gives them a tremendous boost. They haven't had a player of his ilk since... since... maybe ever, I don't know. I can't recall a player with his size, athleticism, skill and tenacity ever playing for the Senators.

You can certainly argue that there was an opportunity cost dealing those prospects and pick when the team could have just hit free agency for their power forward but no one on the market was as good as Ryan, except maybe Horton who is older and more injury prone.

It's important to note that Ryan is not injury prone because that's a huge contrast with pretty well the entirety of this Senators roster.

The shackles are coming off for Ryan in Ottawa too. No more second line duties. No more second unit power play. No more being forced into center duty. The Senators have all of that covered. He will be a first liner, skating beside a top 5-10 playmaking center, on a team with the league's best coach and the league's top (offensive) defenseman. If he doesn't score 80 points this season he is a bust and has always been a bust. I hate to put the pressure on like this but that has to be the expectation. He's too good and this situation is too good for anything else to happen.

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I will add that you should absolutely NOT try to trade for Ryan now. His value just spiked. Maybe he plays up to these expectations but you won't get any value dealing for him now. Best to sit back and hope some other guys get hyped and maybe you get good value on Ryan later.

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As Angus pointed out Edmonton's signings of Andrew Ference, Boyd Gordon and Jason Labarbera are carry residual value. To me, this points to one man, Devan Dubnyk. Less than a week ago the Oilers were shopping for his replacement, now they bring in his backup to be. That's a vote of confidence. What's more, Gordon and Ference, while probably overpaid, improve the Oilers depth a lot and will make them tougher to play against. You can argue that will open up more ice for their scorers but all I am willing to say is that this helps Dubnyk. The Oilers haven't done enough to become a playoff team yet though.

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The Leafs, among other moves, [extended Jonathan Bernier on Friday](#) . The hit and term are both larger and longer than what they've got James Reimer signed for so there's that much more fuel for the impending goaltending battle. For the life of me I can't tell you who will be the starter in Toronto next season. I just know that I'm not a huge fan of Reimer's even though he

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clearly battles hard and gets good results.

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I don't get what Nashville is doing. They just went and scooped the bottom of the free agent barrel and overpaid across the board. There wasn't one bargain among any of the four deals they signed today bringing in Matt Hendricks, Matt Cullen, Viktor Stalberg and Eric Nystrom. It just seems to me they could've waited a week and gotten similar guys for much cheaper and less term.

Maybe David Poile is still drunk from having Seth Jones land in his lap.

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By the way, on Jones, I don't take him anywhere near the top pick in a fantasy draft.

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He fell in the NHL draft for the same reason he should fall in your fantasy draft – forwards develop quicker. You are going to get way better dividends drafting most of the forwards taken in the top 10. I'm not even certain Jones is the top defenseman in this draft for fantasy purposes. There's just too much uncertainty with defensemen.

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[Jonathan Drouin signed his entry-level contract with Tampa Bay](#) . He's my pick for number one in a fantasy draft. I've said that a few times now.

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Is it just me or did the Leafs just run in a big circle? To me they flexed a bunch of financial muscle just for the sake of doing it. Buying out Mikhail Grabovski won't even make them flinch because they have that money to spend and they replaced him aptly with David Bolland and his deal that expires next summer so there's flexibility going forward. But there would also be

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flexibility if you just keep Grabovski and wait a year to buy him out if necessary.

Then they went out and overpaid for Clarkson, which I mean, he takes Clarke MacArthur's spot so he's an upgrade but it isn't a big one.

And finally, they re-signed Tyler Bozak, to what is actually a very affordable deal considering what other centermen were getting.

But you can also argue that Grabovski had to go because of his run-ins with Randy Carlyle.

What will be interesting is where Clarkson fits in for Toronto. He was a Peter DeBoer favourite in New Jersey and they also had no other options. Now he's got to get on Carlyle's good side and leapfrog a bunch of other players for ice time. I think we see him regress even though that already kind of happened this year after a torrid start to the season.

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Man, oh man, did Mike Ribeiro's fantasy value ever just take a hit! He goes from skating with Ovechkin and the high flying Caps to the desert dogs and all the non-fantasy worthy forwards they employ.

I kid. We've seen players like Ray Whitney post very strong fantasy numbers in Phoenix. And we've also seen Dave Tippett coach Ribeiro before when he coaxed the two best seasons of Ribeiro's career out of him. Ribeiro could sneakily maintain his value in Phoenix.

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Who are the best free agents still available? [CapGeek](#) always offers a great run-down.

Some highlights of the list:

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Jaromir Jagr, Mikhail Grabovski, Damien Brunner, Tim Thomas

In other words, slim pickins'!

Hope you enjoyed the mayhem on Friday. I will try to post a few updates this morning.