Part I   Part II

Here we are. The final installment of my three part series of my Prime Cuts team is finally here. This article will cover the remaining four defensemen, the backup goaltender, and will also make note of several “honorable mentions” that just missed making this team.

The Remaining Defense:

Mark Streit – Mike Green
Braydon Coburn – Alex Edler

The remaining four defensemen have all had impressive breakout campaigns in 2007-2008. Mark Streit has bounced back between forward and defense, but has been used almost exclusively on the back end this season. He already has amassed 58 points, and is a huge reason why the Habs powerplay has continued its dominance even with the departure of Sheldon Souray. Streit is a UFA and will command upwards of $4 million per season. His vision and skating combined with his outstanding versatility earned him a spot on this squad. His partner is a personal favourite of mine; Mike Green from Washington. Green is a great skater and incredibly flashy with the puck. He will be a consistent 50-point defenseman on a very rapidly improving Washington club. He rushes the puck up the ice like Paul Coffey, and is developing a nasty edge to his game.

Braydon Coburn has been improving all season in Philadelphia and is going to make the Thrashers kick themselves for moving him last season. He is arguably the best skating big defenseman in the game, and is becoming more and more polished. If not for the clutch heroics of Mike Richards, Coburn may very well be the most improved Flyer this season. The final member of this defense is a young guy I have seen play considerably. His upside is sky high, and his development has been off the charts. Alex Edler has made an impact at every level he has played in North America. He was not even expected to play in the NHL but because of Vancouver's horrendous injury woes, has been in almost every game. His vision and poise with the puck is comparable to some of the best. He has some rough patches to his game, but projects to be one of the leagues' best in a few years.

Mathieu Garon has been outstanding in shootouts this season, and his play has kept the Oilers in the Western Conference playoff race right up until the end. He should be back playing soon, and has shown why the Kings made a huge mistake giving up on him.

The Roster:

Alex Ovechkin – Evgeni Malkin – Alex Kovalev
Zach Parise – Tomas Plekanec – Jason Pominville
Niklas Hagman – Ryan Kesler – Patrick Sharp
Steve Ott – Brandon Dubinsky – Milan Lucic

Nicklas Lidstrom – Brent Burns
Mark Streit – Mike Green
Braydon Coburn – Alex Edler

Evgeni Nabokov
Mathieu Garon

Now, for the honorable mentions:

David Booth – the shifty Panther has had a huge season, potting over 20 goals and providing a spark every night.

Dustin Byfuglien – the rugged winger/defenseman has shown why his size/skill combination has had the Hawks so excited. Possesses dominant upside.

Andrei Kostitsyn – I couldn't include too many Habs, but the senior of the Kostitsyn brothers has been dangerous with the puck all season.

Mike Richards – narrowly beaten out by Plekanec for the second line centre gig. Has scored big goals all season for the Flyers.

Jeff Finger – another Avalanche prospect to come out of nowhere and play a huge role. He has been one of the most consistent defensemen on the team this season.

Brad Boyes – the Blues leading scorer has been sniping all season without much help.

Dion Phaneuf – thriving under Mike Keenan. Phaneuf has cleaned up his defensive game and still brings the pain physically and offensively.

Shane Doan – having a career year with the revitalized Coyotes, Doan is one of the most underrated stars in the game.

Joe Pavelski – has been the second best Shark forward this season, behind the other Joe.

Pavel Datsyuk – did you know he is fourth in league scoring? Could have one of the quietest 100-point seasons in recent memory.

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