The 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver are still almost two years away, but the projections and predictions for Canada's roster have began to circulate. All of the hockey experts love to try and guess what the team will be, but this article will not do that. I am going to project the best possible lineup (i.e. mine) that gives Canada the best shot at earning the gold.

Forwards

Up front with Canada, there are several "sure-things." Joe Sakic will undoubtedly be the captain if he is still playing (if he does retire between now and 2010, look for the C to be handed to Jarome Iginla). Besides those two, other locks include Sidney Crosby, Rick Nash, Joe Thornton, Dany Heatley, Vincent Lecavalier, and Eric Staal. That right there gives Canada three or four centers, but expect some to convert to wing. Nash and Thornton have shown chemistry in the

past, and Heatley can play with just about anyone, as long as they get him the puck. Staal is a dominant two-way center and will be a mainstay on Canada for the next decade.

There are also several players that are highly likely to be on the team, some of which I would include on my team, and others I would probably leave off. This group includes Ryan Smyth, Daniel Briere, Brenden Morrow, Mike and Brad Richards, Martin St. Louis, Shane Doan, and so on. Simon Gagne would be a lock of he did not have the concussion issues. He has been fantastic for Canada in the past, and his defensive play is the perfect compliment to offensive line mates. There are some young studs that could earn a spot over the next season, including Jonathan Toews, Kyle Turris, and Ryan Getzlaf. Jason Spezza is a notable omission from my team. He is extremely talented offensively, but his shortcomings in other areas of the game put him below five or six other centers on the depth chart.

Projected Forwards:

Rick Nash – Joe Thornton – Dany Heatley
Vincent Lecavalier – Sidney Crosby – Martin St. Louis
Joe Sakic – Eric Staal – Jarome Iginla
Brenden Morrow – Mike Richards – Shane Doan

Extras:

Ryan Getzlaf

Jonathan Toews
Jason Spezza
Simon Gagne

Steven Stamkos

Defense

On the blue line, there are also a few locks. Chris Pronger will most likely be the veteran of this group, as I do not see Scott Niedermayer sticking around in the league much longer. Ed Jovanovski has a shot at making the team if he can stay healthy, as he was very solid in 2002. His play has dropped off since then, and Canada has some impressive young talent that may push him off the club. Dion Phaneuf and Jay Bouwmeester are also locks for this squad.

After those as the top three, there are some up-and-comers that should crack the team. This includes Brent Burns, the dynamic Mike Green, and Shea Weber. Weber and Phaneuf have played together in the past, so that has the potential to form one of the most vicious defensive pairings imaginable. Green would be a force on the powerplay, but his defensive shortcomings would only be magnified on the Olympic scale. Brian Campbell is also a potential pick, as he is a bit more polished defensively than Green. Robyn Regehr will probably make the squad as the shutdown guy. He is not the best skater, but moves well for a big defenseman and will love playing on the NHL-sized ice. Finally, the unheralded Duncan Keith has a shot as well. He had an extremely impressive season with the Blackhawks, contending for the +/- lead while playing tough minutes on a non-playoff squad. He is a great skater and solid at both ends of the ice (i.e. the perfect seventh defenseman).

Projected Defense:

Chris Pronger – Jay Bouwmeester
Shea Weber – Dion Phaneuf
Robyn Regehr – Brent Burns

Extras:
Duncan Keith
Mike Green

Goaltending

Brodeur will start, Luongo will be the backup, and the third goalie will either be a young guy (Price), or a veteran (Giguere or Turco).