

July 1st Looming: NHL RFA's Pt. 1

Written by Jeff Angus

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2008 may be dubbed as “the summer of the offer sheet” if many of the rumours circulating come to fruition. There are numerous young players who are set to hit the RFA market this summer without a contract. There are also many teams with roster holes and enough cap space to make some bold offers to these players. In this first segment, I’ll break down the current situations for Corey Perry, Mike Green, Steve Bernier, Joe Pavelski, and Pierre-Marc Bouchard.

Corey Perry – ANA. If I were a betting man, I would place some money on Perry remaining a Duck. However, he will go to July 1st unsigned because of the Ducks current cap issues. There is always going to be a market for a young, gritty winger with 50-goal upside. There will be numerous teams calling Perry’s agent, but I cannot see Brian Burke letting the offer sheet beat

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him two summers in a row. His ego is much, much too big for that to happen. Perry's upside is 50 goals and 90-95 points wherever he goes. In Anaheim, he will always skate with Ryan Getzlaf, who is a fantastic offensive player. If he somehow found his way to Vancouver, he would score countless goals skating with the Sedin twins. Perry is a rotisserie stud wherever he plays; so don't put too much stock into what happens with him this summer.

Mike Green – WSH. Like Perry, Green is another guy who will most likely return to his club next season. However, much like Perry, Green will be hitting the open market. He and his agent seem to think that he will attract some pretty significant offer sheets, which is probably true. Even if Green is given a huge offer, I see the Caps matching it over taking the four first round picks. They have been hoarding picks and prospects for the past half-decade, and at this point they need to keep Green in the fold to lead the defence. Green will get a huge contract and is a fantasy stud. He will be the first defenseman since Kevin Hatcher to hit the 30-goal mark.

Steve Bernier – BUF. Bernier is an interesting case, and definitely a guy to watch this summer. Buffalo is stacked on the right side, with the likes of Drew Stafford, Max Afinogenov, Jason Pominville and Bernier. Afinogenov will most likely be dealt, but even then Bernier sits third on the depth chart. A team could very well offer him a modest contract and only have to give up a second rounder in compensation to the Sabres. Power forwards usually take longer to develop, and Bernier is no exception. If he goes to the right situation, he will get 25-30 goals and play lots of power play time. He has tremendous skill and a good shot for a big man.

Pierre-Marc Bouchard – MIN. In my opinion, Bouchard is the RFA to watch this summer. The Wild appear hesitant to give him a big, long-term deal (which he wants), but Bouchard doesn't want to accept another one-year deal. He is tremendously skilled and has 90-95 point upside in the right situation (not Minnesota). He plays almost exclusively on the right side now, so any team looking for a playmaking winger will be in contact with Bouchard's agent come July 1st. He remains underrated in the fantasy world, so do all you can to trade for him this summer.

Joe Pavelski – SJ. Pavelski's situation depends a lot on what happens with current Sharks captain, Patrick Marleau. Pavelski is ready to be the second line center in San Jose. He is more of a shooter than a playmaker, and could hit 30 goals next year. Even if Marleau sticks around, bank on Pavelski staying at the center position. Marleau has played some left wing over the past few seasons. Pavelski may be traded for a defenseman if the Sharks plan on going with a Thornton/Marleau combination down the middle. Again, his value is probably the best it can be in San Jose, so keep an eye on him, and if you own him hope he remains a Shark.