

Six Lines to Watch

Written by Jeff Angus

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The NHL pre-season is now in full swing, and astute fantasy poolies are doing their best to pay attention to as many teams as they can. There have been many surprises so far, and equally as many disappointments. Now is the time that coaches are trying to find the right chemistry with their forward lines. There have been countless combinations thrown together that have shown a lot of promise to click once the regular season begins. Here are a few of them...

Rick Nash – Derrick Brassard – Kristian Huselius

The Blue Jackets originally acquired RJ Umberger to play with Rick Nash, but rookie Derrick Brassard looks to be the guy going into this season. Free agent signing Kristian Huselius will play on his off wing. He is extremely crafty and will get the puck to Nash a lot. Watch for Columbus' second line as well (Fred Modin – RJ Umberger – Jakub Voracek), there is some definite potential as well. Nash could finally have the big breakout season that everyone around the league has been waiting for. Brassard may not stick all season on the top line, but he is definitely the long-run top line solution in Columbus.

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Sergei Samsonov – Eric Staal – Patrick Eaves

The Hurricanes suffered a major blow when Justin Williams got hurt a few weeks ago. He is by far their most dangerous forward offensively, but his loss opens up a few spots for some sleeper picks to shine. Ray Whitney will skate with Rod Brind'amour on the second line (most likely with Tuomo Ruutu on the right side). Samsonov showed he can still play after coming over from Chicago last year, and the Hurricanes are high on Eaves. Both of them are great sleeper picks, especially if they can stick with Staal all season. Staal is going to return to his 100-point form, and one of/both of these guys could be riding shotgun.

Ruslan Fedotenko – Sidney Crosby – Miroslav Satan

Satan and Crosby have been looking absolutely fantastic together so far. Without Crosby, Satan is at best a 55-point guy at this stage of his career. With Crosby, he could hit 70. The Penguins have tried out Fedotenko, Janne Pesonen, and Pascal Dupuis on the left side, and Fedotenko is probably the best fit. Both of the former Islanders have a great shot to put up career numbers playing with the world's best player this season.

Patrik Elias – Brian Rolston – Brian Gionta

The Devils are hoping that their two under-performing stars can return to glory playing with Rolston on the top unit. Rolston played exclusively wing in Minnesota, but he played a lot of center earlier in his career. He is a pure sniper (like Gionta), so expect Elias to be the playmaker for this line. Rolston is very reliable defensively, so him at center seems like a natural fit. His point totals may dip a bit with the added responsibility that being center entails, but look for Elias and Gionta to bounce back.

Thomas Vanek – Derek Roy – Maxim Afinogenov

The "RAV" line is back together. Afinogenov has looked good skating with Vanek and Roy, and the Sabres are also very content with their new second line of Jochen Hecht centering Dan Paille and Jason Pominville. Both Vanek and Roy are fantasy studs, and it looks like Afinogenov is going to have a great opportunity to bounce back this season.

Dan Carcillo – Kyle Turris – Mikkel Boedker

The Coyotes really like how Turris and Boedker have looked together, and they have been trying a few options on the left side. Todd Fedoruk was tried as he has played with skilled guys in both Minnesota and Anaheim before. Carcillo has good hands and opens up a lot of space for Turris to skate with the puck. With a Peter Mueller – Olli Jokinen – Shane Doan top line, things are looking up in the desert.