

Cory Schneider - The Next Big Thing?

Written by Jeff Angus

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The mass hysteria in the fantasy hockey world reached a record high recently with the news that superstar goaltender Roberto Luongo would be out with a long-term injury. Mass panic ensued, and many promising fantasy seasons went down the tube. No one will be able to replace Luongo, especially with the kind of season he was having. He looked to be a lock for the Vezina and once again a contender for the Hart Trophy. But now that he is out, what does that mean for Luongo owners?

Back-up Curtis Sanford has played solid hockey, earning back-to-back wins over Minnesota and Pittsburgh in Luongo's absence. His highest game total for one season in the NHL is 34 (with the Blues in 2005-2006). He is a small, quick goalie with good fundamentals. However, he is

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probably not the medium-term solution for the Canucks. Who may that be, you ask?

Cory Schneider was taken in the first round of the 2004 entry draft. He played spectacular hockey at Boston College, twice losing in the NCAA Frozen Four Finals with the Eagles. His transition to professional hockey was rough at first, as he struggled in Manitoba, posting a 3-7 record with a dismal 3.69 goals-against-average in his first few months. However, after a meeting with coach Scott Arniel, things started to turn around. He finished the 2007-2008 campaign on a tear, going 18-5-2 with a 1.72 goals-against-average and a sparkling .926 save percentage to finish the season off. He was even better in the AHL post-season, but the Moose failed to advance past the second round.

This season Schneider has taken full flight to future stardom, stifling the AHL competition with a mind-blowing .945 save percentage, a miniscule 1.37 goals against average, as well as posting ten consecutive wins (his overall record is 10-1). On many other NHL clubs, he would already be playing in the league, but being behind Luongo did not allow him to prove his worth against the big boys.

Now that Schneider has that opportunity, expect him to run with it. And if you think I may be a biased Canuck fan? Think again. Bob McKenzie compared Schneider's skill level and impact to the one Carey Price had last year in Montreal. He is the best American goalie prospect since Rick DiPietro, and his time to shine is now.