Breaking down each quarterfinal match-up. Included in these reports - injury news, fantasy predictions, and of course my overall prediction.

Western Conference Quarterfinals: (4) Chicago Blackhawks vs. (5) Calgary Flames

The Skinny:

Calgary is not in a good situation right now, as they are limping in to the postseason with multiple significant injuries. There is no word on Robyn Regehr's knee injury, and it looks like Cory Sarich will be out for at least the first two rounds. Rene Bourque should return at some point though, and he has been a huge offensive catalyst all season for the Flames. Calgary still boasts an impressive offensive attack with the likes of Mike Cammalleri, Jarome Iginla, and Olli Jokinen.

Chicago has a fantastic transition game, thanks to swift-skating defensemen like Duncan Keith and Brian Campbell. They also have a deep, balanced forward group. And unlike Calgary, they are very healthy right now. This will be the first taste of post-season for many of their young stars, but they do have some experience on the club (Sami Pahlsson and Andrew Ladd both boast cup rings).

From a fantasy perspective, Bourque is a big time sleeper for Calgary. He has great speed and will be playing with some added motivation against his former club. Avoid Todd Bertuzzi and Jokinen. Bertuzzi has never been a playoff performer, and Jokinen has been awful for the past month or so. Look for Daymond Langkow to step up and ride shotgun with Jarome offensively. If you think Calgary has a few rounds in them, Iginla, Langkow, and Aucoin would all be very solid pool picks.

On the Hawks, there are some interesting fantasy names to keep in mind. Ladd has the experience of winning a cup, and he has a much bigger role now than he did with Carolina in 2006. Toews is Jonathan Toews is developing into a big-time clutch goal-scorer for Chicago and will lead their offensive charge in this series. I like Kris Versteeg as a sleeper. He has slowed down considerably this season, but he competes hard and will get some favourable match-ups against a very undermanned Calgary defense if he stays on the third line.

Forwards: Even. Both teams have two solid scoring lines, and some very good role players beyond that.

Defense: Chicago. Big edge to the Hawks, who have a very strong top-four with Keith, Campbell, Cam Barker, and Brent Seabrook.

Goaltending: Calgary. Kiprusoff must be getting tired, but I'd still be worried about his ability to steal a game if I was Chicago.

Intangibles: Calgary. Hard to count out a team featuring Jarome Iginla. If Regehr can somehow get back in the series, the Flames may have a shot to grind this one out.

Match-up to Watch For:

It will be interesting to see who the Flames use against the Hawks top line (assuming it is Jonathan Toews, Martin Havlat, and either Patrick Sharp or Andrew Ladd on the left side). Dion Phaneuf has been a disaster defensively this season, and Regehr is injured. Look for veteran

Adrian Aucoin and rookie Adam Pardy to be leaned on heavily in this series.

However, the most intriguing match-up to me is Khabibulin vs. the Calgary offense. If Calgary struggles to score, they won't win a game. Chicago is going to get its fair share of chances against a very banged up and inexperienced defensive group. Calgary must keep up and find a way to put three or four past Khabibulin, or they will be facing a very quick exit.

The Verdict:

Calgary just doesn't have the horses to compete in this series. Hawks in Five.

Western Conference Quarterfinals: (2) Detroit Red Wings vs. (7) Columbus Blue Jackets

The Skinny:

Detroit and Columbus will be a very interesting match-up, and the series essentially comes down to one factor: can Chris Osgood play well enough for the Wings to win?

Steve Mason has had a season to remember for the Blue Jackets, but he will be in tough against the deep and talented Wings offensive attack. However, he does possess the skill and mental game to steal a couple in this series. Columbus is thin up front and that may be their undoing, but help is on the way. Reports out of Columbus indicate Freddy Modin will be back for game one, and star rookie Derick Brassard may suit up as early as game three.

Fantasy-wise, the Wings are chalk-full of players. As a sleeper, I like Valtteri Filppula. He was fantastic last year in the playoffs, and he is a very versatile player. Look for him to step his game up. On Columbus, it obviously starts with Rick Nash, but shrewd pickups Jason Williams and Antoine Vermette have both provided some secondary scoring as well.

Forwards: Detroit. Deeper and more talented. Both teams have excellent defensive forwards though.

Defense: Even. Columbus has little star power on the back end, but their six-man unit is deep and defensively sound. Look for Jan Hejda to make a name for himself if the Jackets pull the upset.

Goaltending: Columbus. Mason has been one of the better goalies in NHL this season. Osgood has been very underwhelming.

Intangibles: Detroit. Columbus has some key veteran players who have been through the battles before (Mike Peca and Mike Commodore among others), but the Wings are the defending cup champs.

Match-up to Watch For:

Rick Nash vs. Nick Lidstrom. Not much else to say.

The Verdict:

Detroit is deeper and more talented, but do they have the goaltending? I think so. Wings in six.

Western Conference Quarterfinals: (1) San Jose Sharks vs. (8) Anaheim Ducks

The Skinny:

Look for this to be the most physical of the eight quarterfinal match-ups. The Sharks have a giant chip on their shoulder after numerous playoff disappointments, and the Ducks still boast a lineup similar to the one that captured the 2007 Stanley Cup. However, their goaltending is a bit suspect, and JS Giguere has been overtaken as the starter by Jonas Hiller. More to come there.

If there is one guarantee about this series, it is that both Sharks players and fans will want to get at Corey Perry by the end of it. He plays over the edge all the time, and never backs up what he starts. Look for him to be a big factor in this series.

Fantasy-wise, the Ducks are a very to-heavy team. After the top line of Perry, Bobby Ryan, and Ryan Getzlaf, they are thin up front. Teemu Selanne has lost a step and Andrew Ebbett has only really played half a season in the league. The Ducks will need their big guns to produce to have any shot in this series.

On the other side, the Sharks boast depth at both forward and defense. Look for Dan Boyle to be a huge impact player for the Sharks. He skates very well and eats up a ton of minutes. He will be the key to their dangerous power-play, which will have lots of opportunity against the undisciplined Ducks.

Forwards: San Jose. Top end is relatively even (the Ducks top line may even be better), but the Sharks are bigger, faster, more experienced, and more skilled. Big edge.

Defense: Anaheim. Cannot discount Chris Pronger and Scott Niedermayer, even if both have not played up to standard this season. James Wisniewski is a heart-and-soul player and was a very underrated pick up by the Ducks at the deadline.

Goaltending: San Jose. Big edge here. Hiller has struggled lately and he is prone to letting in soft goals. Giguere has been a mess all season. Nabokov is one of the most consistent elite goaltenders in the league, and he thrives in the post-season.

Intangibles: San Jose. The Sharks have something to prove once again.

Match-up to Watch For:

Anaheim’s top unit against whatever shutdown unit the Sharks put together. If the Ducks top line is held off the score sheet, they have absolutely no chance in this series.

The Verdict:

San Jose outclasses the Ducks in a short - but physical - series. Sharks in four.

Western Conference Quarterfinals: (3) Vancouver Canucks vs. (6) St. Louis Blues

The Skinny:

The two hottest teams in the NHL since the all-star break face off in this quarterfinal match-up. Roberto Luongo was named the NHL's first star of the final week of regular season games, and Chris Mason was right behind him at second star. The Blues are fast, young, and dynamic up front, and they have some warriors on the back end. The Canucks are deep up front, a marked difference from years' past. They also boast one of the deepest defences in the league, and the great equalizer between the pipes.

Paul Kariya will be returning for game one, and look for him to reunite with Brad Boyes to form a deadly power play combination. The Blues were top 10 in both power play and on the penalty kill, so the Canucks will need to pick up their special teams. The Blues are relatively thin at defense after Barrett Jackman, but Eric Brewer is inching closer to a return.

Ryan Kesler has been in the league for a while now, but thanks to injuries has only seen one playoff game (that seven-period marathon against Dallas in 2007). His game is tailor-made to the playoffs. Look for him to emerge as a star forward for the Canucks. On the other side, the Blues have some young stars that have energized the veterans. TJ Oshie and David Backes in particular have combined a skill game with a nasty physical edge. This series will be full of big hits, that is one guarantee.

Forwards: Even. The Canucks have a very impressive top-six group, and an underrated third line centered by Kyle Wellwood, who has unexpectedly developed into a solid defensive center. The Blues are deep as well, and have Jay McClement who will be seeing a lot of Daniel and Henrik.

Defense: Vancouver. After Jackman, the Blues have surprising youngsters Roman Polak and Jeff Woywitka who have both stepped their games up. The Canucks have six mobile, physical, big defensemen. Sami Salo is one of the most underrated defensemen league-wide and is the key to the Canucks back end.

Goaltending: Vancouver. When he is on, Luongo is nearly unbeatable. Not to discredit Mason, who is the main reason for the Blues resurgence, but Luongo takes this one.

Intangibles: Even. Andy Murray is a master tactician, and the Canucks have Mats Sundin, who may be playing in his final post-season.

Match-up to Watch For:

The Canucks second line (Pavol Demitra, Sundin, Kesler), against the Blues second defensive pairing. The Sedin twins will see a lot of Jackman. Who can shut down the second line?

The Verdict:

In a very interesting series, I like the Canucks a bit more. Luongo is in the zone right now. Canucks in seven.