

News From Around the League

Written by Jeff Angus

Wednesday, 10 June 2009 09:38 - Last Updated Saturday, 13 June 2009 06:04



Even with Game 7 looming, there is no shortage of news from around the rest of the NHL. Dany Heatley has asked the Senators for a trade, the Flyers have signed Ray Emery to be their starting goalie, the Canucks are close to signing a top Russian prospect, and the Bruins are trying to figure out how to keep their team together. Let me break it all down from a fantasy perspective.

Heatley's point totals have been on the decline the past four seasons. After posting back-to-back 50 goal seasons in 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, he has averaged 40 in his past two campaigns with the Senators. I would still draft him fourth overall after the "big three" in most fantasy leagues, unless a goalie is needed. Heatley is going to hit the 50-goal mark once again wherever he ends up, but obviously some situations may be better than others.

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The rumor is that he wants to come out West, and with a no-movement clause in his contract, he has the final say on where he wants to go. When he was being traded from Atlanta, he told Thrashers management he would accept a trade to Ottawa, Calgary, or Vancouver (as they promised to give him a choice after the whole Dan Snyder incident). If Heatley ends up somewhere with a lot of young talent (Los Angeles, Edmonton), or somewhere with some potential line mates (Vancouver, Calgary), he could challenge Ovechkin for the Rocket Richard trophy. He has a unique ability to score goals from anywhere in the offensive zone, and it makes him one of the most dangerous – and valuable – forwards in the entire league.

The Flyers made a great move when they signed Ray Emery to be their starting goalie next season. The move cannot be made official until July 1st, but the deal is essentially complete. Emery is a very talented goalie that helped the Senators earn a birth in the 2007 Cup Final, where they ultimately lost to the Anaheim Ducks. But the main reason why this move is a good one? It allows the Flyers to keep their awesome young forward group together. They may still move out Joffrey Lupul to free up some cap space for a defenseman (Jay Bouwmeester, perhaps).

If the Flyers decided to go for an established, top goalie like Marty Turco or JS Giguere, chances are they would have traded away some solid assets, like James van Riemsdyk or Simon Gagne. If Emery falters, the Flyers have a lot of trading chips to go after another goalie. But this is a move with low risk, and a very high reward. Figuring out where to draft Emery will be tough. I'd personally take a flyer (no pun intended) pretty early, as I have a good feeling about this situation. Wait to see whom the Flyers bring in as their second goalie as well, to ensure that Ray will see enough starts to warrant being drafted to your fantasy squad.

There are rumors floating around Vancouver that the Canucks are close to bringing over Russian prospect Sergei Shirokov. Shirokov initially attracted scouts with his strong play at the World Juniors, but he dropped to the sixth round in 2006 because it was thought that he wouldn't make the trip over to North America and was content to play in Russia. Shirokov has had three straight impressive seasons for CSKA, averaging close to 15 goals and 35 points (impressive numbers in the KHL). He earned an NHL-level salary last year, so any contract would probably be contingent on him making the Canucks roster. Shirokov is not big, but he has a powerful stride and is a very dangerous offensive player. He is someone to keep on your radar for deep keeper leagues.

Boston was able to lock up David Krejci to a very cap-friendly three-year extension. The cap hit on Krejci's deal is \$3.75 million, and Krejci could have fetched at least a million more if he opted to wait for the offer sheets to fly in. The Bruins now have moved to Phil Kessel, but there are some rumors that he is looking for close to \$5 million a season. Kessel had a great breakout season, proving many doubters (including yours truly) wrong about his ability to be a star at the

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NHL level. However, the Bruins are very tight against the cap. They have some options on the trade front, including names like Marco Sturm (NTC), Marc Savard (NTC), and Patrice Bergeron (tough contract to move). Something has to give here – either the Bruins move Kessel, or they re-sign him and move another good forward out. Keep an eye on who is dealt, as it will mean more ice-time for the likes of Blake Wheeler for next season.