

Every Wednesday this summer, I will bring you a sleeper to watch for the 2009-2010 season (and potentially beyond). Released in no particular order, I will refrain from picking sleepers that have already shown glimpses of breaking out in the past – the obvious candidates. Time to go beneath the surface for some sleepers that you may not have thought about...

The 2009-10 defensive group of the Carolina Hurricanes will be much different than what was iced just one season before. Gone is Frantisek Kaberle after being bought out, and both Anton Babchuk and Denis Seidenberg are still unrestricted free agents, and it doesn't appear that either player will return. Carolina did reacquire a familiar face in Aaron Ward, and they also signed free agent Andrew Alberts, but neither defenseman will bring the offensive presence that

## Summer Sleeper Series - Carson, McBain, or Rodney

Written by Jeff Angus Thursday, 13 August 2009 07:50 - Last Updated Thursday, 13 August 2009 07:51

both Babchuk (16 goals) and Seidenberg (30 points) did. Carolina does have Joni Pitkanen and Joe Corvo, who are both elite offensive defensemen. They also have a group of young defensemen who may be worth watching as early as this season. This group includes Brett Carson, Bryan Rodney, and Jamie McBain.

Carson is probably the most NHL-ready of the group. He has played three seasons with Albany of the AHL, and his development has been very promising. He recorded 35 points with the River Rats in 2008-09, which is even more impressive considering that the leading scorer (Jerome Samson) had 54 points. Carson will see second-unit power play time in Carolina, and could surprise with 20-25 points in his rookie campaign. He is a fantastic skater, something that will help his chances of making the team, as Carolina's style of play encourages defensemen to rush the puck and pinch in offensively. Carolina has their three defensive guys (Tim Gleason, Ward, and Alberts). They have Pitkanen and Corvo for offense, and a mobile, big defenseman like Carson would be the perfect complement on the bottom pairing.

You may remember Rodney from the 2004-05 juggernaut London Knights. The Knights took the CHL by storm, eventually winning the Memorial Cup on home ice. Rodney had 62 points in 64 games that season in London. Even with those impressive numbers, he still trailed Danny Syvret for the overall team lead among defensemen (Syvret had 69 points). Rodney's stock got a bit of a boost when Carolina GM Jim Rutherford said that he (Rodney) had a spot to lose on Carolina's defense for this season. Rodney may be in tough with the competition among Carolina prospects, though. He scored 36 points for Albany last year (one more than Carson) after bouncing around the ECHL for a few seasons. Regardless of what Rutherford said, Rodney is a long shot to make Carolina this season. He isn't as polished as Carson, or does he have the upside of McBain, so he may get lost a bit in Carolina.

Of the three, McBain has the largest offensive upside. He had a very impressive 37 points in 40 games with the University of Wisconsin last season. However, he is also the youngest and most raw of the three, so expect him to play at least one year with Albany before making the jump to the NHL full-time. He has the talent to be a 40 or 50-point defenseman one day in the NHL. He has a chance at earning a spot out of camp, but thanks to the other young talent I have mentioned, Carolina doesn't need to rush him.