

Uncovering the Wild Side

Written by Jeff Angus

Sunday, 17 January 2010 17:18 - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2010 14:17



There are very few player-for-player transactions in the NHL these days, thanks in large part to the salary cap. Players are hard – if not impossible – to evaluate on strictly a skill basis, as their attached salary figure usually dictates true value. Last month, Montreal and Minnesota swapped maligned offensive players. Guillaume Latendresse, who was having trouble breaking out of the bottom six in Montreal, was sent packing to Minnesota. In exchange, the Wild traded away Benoit Pouliot; a player picked only three spots after Sidney Crosby in 2005. Almost immediately both players started to pay dividends for their new teams. Latendresse went from playing 11 minutes per night with Montreal to over 16 with the Wild. And instead of skating with Maxim Lapierre, he is lining up with Marty Havlat. Are there other players in the league right now who have the same potential to break out if traded? Why yes, there are!

Latendresse, even with all of the criticism he received for being lazy and inconsistent, was still a decent offensive player in Montreal. He only averaged 13 minutes during his first three seasons with Montreal, but still managed to score 46 goals in 209 games. Not great, but in limited minutes not awful either. Minutes played (especially on the powerplay) are obviously the key for offensive production, and often that only comes when a player is moved to a team willing to give him that opportunity.

Uncovering the Wild Side

Written by Jeff Angus

Sunday, 17 January 2010 17:18 - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2010 14:17

Eric Fehr is quietly on pace for a 20 goal, 40 point season. He is averaging only 12 minutes per game, and is only averaging around two shots per game. He is an obvious candidate to be moved at the deadline, for a few reasons. Firstly, Washington has depth at wing, and Fehr will attract some attention from teams looking for an offensive winger with upside. Secondly, he is set to become a restricted free agent and may not fit in to Washington's future plans at a bigger salary. Fehr has an elite shot and has improved leaps and bounds in other areas of the game as well, but he won't be able to reach his full potential playing limited minutes on the second or third line with the Capitals. If Fehr gets moved to a team willing to play him 16-18 minutes per game, I have no doubts that he can be a 30-35 goal scorer as early as next season.

Using the Frozen Pools tools available on DobberHockey, it is easy to pull up a variety of fantasy-relevant information. Using the line combination tool, it is easy to see that Boston's **Vladimir Sobotka**

is not playing with high-end players on a consistent basis. Sobotka is a fantastic defensive forward, and has been put in a checking role this season with Boston. However, he possesses a lot of offensive upside, and could be moved at the deadline this year. Sobotka has only four goals this season, and is averaging a shade under 11 minutes per game. Sobotka has proven he can produce in North America, as he has averaged over a point-per game in the AHL. In 68 games with Providence, he has scored 34 goals and added 40 assists. Sobotka is not a flashy player, but he plays a smart, consistent game and bears watching in keeper leagues if he is moved out of Boston in the near future.

Andrew Ladd has been a great pickup for the Chicago Blackhawks. He provides size and physicality on a team loaded with high-end offensive skill. However, because of Chicago's depth up front, he hasn't been able to produce at any significant level. He scored 15 goals last season in 82 games, and is on pace for 15 this season as well. A 35-40 point player doesn't hold much fantasy value, but Ladd is not your typical 35-40 point player. Ladd has primarily played with John Madden this season, but he also has seen time with Patrick Sharp and Marian Hossa.

Uncovering the Wild Side

Written by Jeff Angus

Sunday, 17 January 2010 17:18 - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2010 14:17

However, much like last season, he sees next to no power play time. Chicago has designated Troy Brouwer as their big body on the power play, a role Ladd would be well suited for on any team. Chicago doesn't want to move him, but they will need to shed some cap space this off-season, and he is an impending restricted free agent. Ladd has 30 goal upside if he is put on a scoring line. He is a great skater for his size, and has shown flashes of the skills that enticed Carolina to select him 4th overall in 2004.

Perhaps the ultimate "what if" player in the league right now is **Jordan Staal**. There is next-to-no chance Pittsburgh ever deals him, but I have no doubts that Staal would be a 70-80 point center on any other team. He is so good defensively that Pittsburgh can maximize his skills there, as they are obviously set at center on the first two lines.