

15 Prime Cuts: Gallagher, Eberle, Schenn, and more

Written by Jeff Angus

Sunday, 08 January 2012 14:46 - Last Updated Monday, 09 January 2012 09:45



New name, same content. My monthly 15 Points to Consider has now become a weekly 15 Prime Cuts. 15 of my thoughts from the week that was in the world of hockey. This week, I take a look at Jiri Hudler, Brendan Gallagher, the mess in Edmonton (once again), Brayden Schenn, and more.

1. Jiri Hudler already has more goals (11) in 38 games than he did all of last season (10 in 73 games). He was an afterthought in the offseason for most Wings fans and poolies, but he's bounced back and is playing a key role for Detroit up front. He's on pace for 24 goals and 54 points, and his ice time is just below the 15 minute mark. Could be a trade chip if the Wings are looking to add something at the deadline, as he is still only 27. I'm not really sure what the Wings would need to add - likely a depth blueliner and a big checking winger.

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I bet they'd love to trade 2011-12 Zetterberg for the 2007-08 edition, too.

2. I really enjoyed the HBO Winter Classic special this season. It wasn't as good as the Pittsburgh/Washington match up from 2011, but it was another great look behind-the-scenes at the players and off-ice personnel in the league. Hard to hate any of the players after you get a glimpse into their off-ice lives. The Rangers, in particular, really hold true to their reputation as a blue collar team with all of the elements to win.

Best part of the show was Claude Giroux's on ice banter with the opposition.

3. I mentioned a few Minnesota prospects last week, and they had two players play key roles on Sweden's way to winning the Gold at the World Juniors – Jonas Brodin and Johan Larsson. Larsson is a skilled and tenacious winger with 23 points in 31 SEL games. Brodin is a poised and steady defenseman who could make the Wild out of training camp next season. Even though the NHL club is really struggling, things are looking good for the next few seasons.

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4. Edmonton is really going to miss Jordan Eberle, however long he may be out. He's been the best player for the team this season, and was well on his way to flirting with 80-85 points (an impressive total considering the lack of talent on that roster).

5. Sticking with the Oilers... it really is time they clean house with management. The team has been spinning tires for about four years, and looks to be on the way to contending for another 1st overall draft pick. The fact that they did nothing last summer to address a crippling weakness on defense (no, signing Andy Sutton and Cam Barker doesn't count) is even more of an oversight now considering Ryan Whitney's lack of progress in rehabbing his injury.

They have also screwed up the Ales Hemsky situation, and they'll probably be forced to trade a really good winger for less than his real value.

6. If you would redraft the 2008 first round, what would your top five be? Mine, in order: Stamkos, Karlsson, Doughty, Eberle, Pietrangelo. Carlson, Hodgson and Myers wouldn't be far behind.

7. Anze Kopitar has one goal since November 23rd . The Kings are last in the league in goals for. I wonder if the two are related?

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8. Ducks prospect defenseman Justin Schultz is tearing up the NCAA. The skilled puck mover is the only defenseman in the overall top 20 in scoring (32 points in 20 games), and he is the first Wisconsin defenseman to surpass the career 100-point mark since Brian Rafalski. He was picked in the second round back in 2008 and should be a lock to play with the Ducks next season (if he decides to forego his final year of college).

9. Montreal prospect and a favourite of mine, Brendan Gallagher, had a very impressive World Juniors tournament for Canada. Not much was known about Gallagher outside of Vancouver until he almost made the Canadiens out of training camp this season. He is the prototypical undersized and skilled winger who plays bigger than his size.

He is getting a mention today because he had a dominant game against one of the best teams in the WHL (the 26-12-2-1 Portland Winterhawks) last night – three goals and four assists (on the same night that Habs legend Guy Lafleur was honoured at the game - the kid already has a flair for the dramatic).

10. It took Shane Doan 1161 career NHL regular season games, but he finally recorded his first hat trick last night. Coincidentally, it was the same night in which Jarome Iginla finally buried his 500th career goal. Two of the most universally respected and liked players in the entire game.

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11. Pittsburgh is now without their best player (Crosby), best defenseman (Letang), best shutdown forward (Staal), and best winger (Neal). The team kept its head above water for a while, but injuries to so many top players can only be contended with for so long. Look for the Pens to make a trade to bring a forward in, as it doesn't sound like any of the aforementioned players will be back soon. They sure could use Mark Letestu right now. (Timing is everything, isn't it?)

12. Derek Roy is on the trading block (although it seems like we hear this every season). Sabres GM Darcy Regier is notoriously tough to trade with, as he values his own players quite highly. Roy would be a great fit with the Chicago Blackhawks, who desperately need to add a second line center behind Toews. Would the Sabres be interested in something involving Jeremy Morin? What are Buffalo's needs right now? Roy is a really good player, and definitely holds more value than his current production shows (on pace for a measly 16 goals and 49 points).

13. Bryan Little had an assist on Saturday night, his first game back since missing eight with a bone bruise in his foot. He centered the top line with Kane and Wheeler. Little was moved to the wing early on in his pro career, but has successfully made the move over to center in the past few seasons. He's going to be a really good player, but the production won't take off until the Jets other young guns (like Kane, Burmistrov, Bogosian, and so on) take the next step, as well. A good keeper league investment.

14. Brayden Schenn scored his first career goal during the Winter Classic. He also now has points in three straight games. [According to the Frozen Pool line combinations tool](#), Schenn is playing most of his shifts on a line with Wayne Simmonds and James van Riemsdyk. Schenn was [my top-rated fantasy forward prospect back in March of 2011](#). Philadelphia will be harder for him to get prime minutes right away than Los Angeles would have been, but he is still one of the best young players in the game.

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15. Lots of great comeback stories this year in the league. Joffrey Lupul is playing like a superstar after battling a serious blood-related infection a few years ago. Ray Emery is playing great hockey for Chicago after rebuilding one of his hips (the same injury that forced Bo Jackson to retire). [Find out more on Emery's injury here](#) (a really interesting read).