

☐ My look at the best left wingers in hockey. Where does Ovechkin rank? How about Sedin? Any surprises? Read on to find out.

I have a few general rules when it comes to building a team in a fantasy hockey keeper league. One of the more important ones is to not plan beyond a two or three year window. You are not building a real NHL club, and too often we place an emphasis on age, upside, and potential over proven veterans with gas still left in the tank. So using my general rule, take a look at your team(s). Can you realistically say you will have a shot at winning the league at some point within the next two or three seasons? If not, time to scrap the rebuild and start adding proven NHL talent.

Written by Jeff Angus Thursday, 21 February 2013 14:42 - Last Updated Friday, 22 February 2013 16:20

Here are my past lists ranking the best left wingers in the NHL:

- 2012 List
- 2011 List
- 2010 List

Keeping the above rule in mind, I have compiled a list of the top ten keeper league left wingers to own (assuming standard keeper league rules and scoring categories). Using the two or three season scope, I had to balance proven production with young players who are making a name for themselves in the NHL.

Clarifying what "standard categories" means, here is the league format that I am basing my selections on:

- 12 to 15 teams
- Start 4 C, 4 LW, 4 RW, 6 D, 2 G (5 Bench)
- G, A, +/-, PIM, PPP (power play points), GWG (game winning goals), Hits, SOG (shots on goal)

I put an emphasis on offensive categories. They are harder to find on draft day – it is much easier to scoop up a PIM/HITS type of player on the waiver wire than it is to get a player who fills the G/A/PPP categories nicely.

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This was the first time that Alex Ovechkin wasn't at the top of my left winger list. He can easily play his way back up to the top, but his game has really fallen off over the past three or four years. There have been many reasons for that (more on Ovechkin below) – team dynamic, compete level (an overused term, I know), expectations with a big money contract, and other non-hockey related distractions, to name a few.

Heck, Ovechkin may find himself on the right winger list next year (he has been playing primarily on the right side under head coach Adam Oates).

Anyway, enough talking about the artist formerly known as the best left-winger in hockey – let's get to the list.

And one final note – this isn't the be-all, end-all of lists. I watch a lot of hockey, but many of my readers see these guys on a more frequent basis than I do (especially if it is for a team that you follow closely). I am always open to feedback, ideas, suggestions, and thoughts. I did my best to slot players into the correct positions, but in some cases, I had to make a judgement call.

1. Zach Parise - Minnesota Wild

2. Alex Ovechkin – Washington Capitals

Written by Jeff Angus Thursday, 21 February 2013 14:42 - Last Updated Friday, 22 February 2013 16:20 - Rank in 2012: 2 - Rank in 2011: 4 - Rank in 2010: 4 Parise isn't the most talented player on this list. He isn't as big or strong as Ilya Kovalchuk, Ja mes Neal , or Alex Ovechkin . He can't skate like Taylor Hall , and he doesn't have a twin brother to play with. However, what Parise does is fill up a number of scoring categories with great consistency. Often times there is a big letdown when a player signs a massive contract (cough, Ovechkin), but Parise is not the type of player or person to let the money go to his head. His playing style is immune to slumps - he works his tail off every game, and even when he isn't scoring, he is generating a lot of scoring chances and shots on goal. {youtube}t44myhIOfwM{/youtube}

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Rank in 2012: 1Rank in 2011: 1Rank in 2010: 1

Ovechkin's tumble from the top isn't a far one (for now). I am cutting him some slack because the coaching/philosophical changes in Washington have messed with his head a bit, and because he fills so many scoring categories even when he isn't scoring like he used to. If you play in a salary or money league, Ovechkin is an overpriced asset with a \$10 million annual cap hit (approximately). But his salary can be ignored if you don't (unless you are Ted Leonsis).

However, I am still holding out hope that he regains some of his earlier offensive success – at the very least he should be a consistent 35-45-goal threat each season. Don't trade him if you own him, unless you can somehow find a way to get fair value for him. What is fair value? Well that depends on your league categories, but I wouldn't move Ovechkin for anything less than a similar player with more consistency (Daniel Sedin, for example) or for a package of young talent (Vladimir Tarasenko and another top prospect, for example). Ovechkin's value has nowhere to go but up.

3. Taylor Hall - Edmonton Oilers

Rank in 2012: 6Rank in 2011: 6

- Rank in 2010: Not Drafted

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Hall moves up three spots from last year. Now that he has his shoulder injury fully behind him, he is able to play his reckless/dynamic game with more consistency (I mean reckless in the good sense – perhaps fearless would be a better word). Hall can take almost any NHL defensemen one-on-one, and he will win many of those battles because of his skill, power, and speed. He is still only scratching the surface of his NHL upside.

Some may question why he ranks so high on this list, as he doesn't supply a lot in the way of peripheral stats, but I place an emphasis on the offensive stuff (goals, assists, power play points, shots on goal) first when I evaluate players. In my experience, it is easier to fill the other categories through in-season trades or free agent/waiver wire acquisitions.

Thus far in 2013, Hall has been a scoring chance-generating machine for the Oilers.

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Scoring chances conversion rates, 2013 season, after 14 games	Games played	Contributions to even strength scoring chances	Contributions to power play scoring chances	Contributions to penalty kill scoring chances	Contributions to scoring chances per game	Officials Points	Con % of cha
Hall	14	86	26	0	8.0	15	1
Eberle	14	77	29	0	7.6	11	1
RNH	13	72	22	0	7.2	7	
J. Schultz	14	53	31	0	6.0	7	
Gagner	14	44	34	2	5.7	15	1
Hemsky	14	40	30	0	5.0	10	1
Yakupov	14	30	23	0	3.8	9	•
Whitney	11	19	21	0	3.6	3	
N. Schultz	14	38	0	0	2.7	0	
Smyth	13	20	5	5	2.3	4	1
Hartikainen	13	21	12	0	2.5	2	
Smid	14	30	0	1	2.2	2	1, 3
Horcoff	7	6	7	0	1.9	2	
Paajarvi	11	15	1	1	1.5	1	
Belanger	11	11	0	2	1.2	1	
Petry	14	31	2	0	2.4	0	
Potter	9	14	1	0	1.7	0	4
Petrell	13	for compiling the	0	2	1.4	1	1