

Lets Get Ready To Rumble! (Part Two)

Written by Jeff Angus

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Now that training camps have finally concluded, potential line combinations are beginning to form out west. There were several notable (and a few not-so-notable) rookies making their respective clubs. There were a few surprising cuts, as well.

In Vancouver, speedy rookie Mason Raymond impressed head coach Alain Vigneault enough that he may begin the season on the top line. He possesses blazing speed and solid hands, but needs to fill out to handle the punishment of the NHL game.

Raymond looked solid with the Sedin twins in the pre-season, but they have a way of turning any player into an offensive contributor. Don't expect him to stick there, but he could be worth

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having around for the first few weeks as the Canucks want to see if they need to make a move to address their scoring issues or not.

Along with Raymond, Ryan Shannon also impressed enough to make the team. He will most likely suit up on the newly formed second line with Markus Naslund and the much improved Ryan Kesler. Shannon will play more than Raymond this season, and could hit 40 points. Defenseman Alexander Edler has shown to be more than NHL ready, but with Vancouver's depth on defense he won't see consistent minutes. Expect him to be the fill-in for any injury, and he will see some powerplay time. He could get five goals and 25 points this season.

David Perron impressed the Blues brass enough that they waived Petr Cajanek to make room for him. He clicked with Doug Weight in the pre-season and that is a combination the Blues will most likely try out early in the season. Perron may only last nine games before being returned to junior, but he could stick. As you all saw during the Canada/Russia games, Perron is incredibly skilled with the puck. It will be his play away from the puck that will show if he can handle the pro game.

In Detroit, it looks like Zetterberg and Datsyuk will finally be split up. Datsyuk has been centering a line with Johan Franzen and Tomas Holmstrom, while Zetterberg has been playing with Jiri Hudler and Mikael Samuelsson. Igor Grigorenko was a disappointment in camp, as his conditioning was not up to NHL standards. Hudler has always been productive, but has never really been given enough minutes to be a worthwhile contributor. Detroit wants to keep Zetterberg and Datsyuk at center (at least to begin the year), so look for Hudler to get his fair share of offensive minutes. He could break 50-60 points if he plays enough this year.

There was some surprising news out of Phoenix. Rookie winger Bill Thomas was cut and sent to the AHL, after many pegged him to be on the second line. Both Peter Mueller and Martin Hanzal have made the squad, and it is obvious that the Coyotes are prepared to endure the growing pains. Thomas won't be in the AHL for long, as the Coyotes are paper thin at forward and he showed last season he could play at the NHL level. Expect him to be called up in the not-too-distant future. Daniel Carcillo was one of the best Coyotes at camp, and earned a spot on the second line with Mueller. He will be a valuable fantasy player this year because of his PIM totals and modest offensive numbers (30-35 points).

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