

Dallas Stars: What to Expect

Written by Jeff Angus

Wednesday, 20 August 2008 05:38 - Last Updated Friday, 22 August 2008 08:39



Having run out of interesting title names with reference to the Dallas Stars, this title (and article) will be all meat and potatoes. Here is a look at Dallas from a fantasy and an on-ice perspective, at all three positions.

Up front Dallas had a very interesting off-season. Their playoff run was enough to lure the highly sought after Swede Fabian Brunnstrom, who signed an entry level deal with the Stars. They also signed the much talked about Sean Avery, giving them one of the feistiest – if not the feistiest – teams in the league. Avery, Steve Ott and captain Brenden Morrow can all yap, check, and fight, and the Stars will be lucky enough to split them up to play on three different lines. Brunnstrom will get every opportunity to earn a spot in the top six, but do not consider him a lock by any means. Loui Eriksson is already NHL-proven and boasts more offensive upside

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than Brunnstrom.

Their power play promises to be lethal, with Brad Richards and Sergei Zubov manning the points, and Morrow wreaking havoc in front of the net. Mike Ribeiro is entering the first of a monster five-year deal, but don't expect his numbers to slip at all. Dallas has depth at center and wing, as their second power play unit will boast the likes of Jere Lehtinen, Loui Eriksson, and at times Mike Modano.

On the back end Dallas is hoping for a healthy Sergei Zubov. He was very effective last year, but only played 46 games in the regular season. Both he and Philippe Boucher are the veterans on a defensive unit with a lot of young talent. Matt Niskanen will see a lot of offensive minutes and has 45-point upside. He had 26 points last year and will undoubtedly improve on that this campaign. Dallas' other young d-men (Grossman and Fistic) are big, mean, and defensive. Not much value from a fantasy perspective, but the Stars love what they bring to the team. Boucher could become trade bait this season, depending on how fast Niskanen continues to develop. Trevor Daley is a decent fantasy player, as he will more than likely anchor the second power play unit.

In goal, Marty Turco is one of the best in the game. He is a workhorse and will get a ton of wins on this strong Stars squad. His unique puck-playing ability makes it frustrating to try and dump-and-chase against the Stars, which is why I correctly predicted the Stars would best both Anaheim and San Jose in the playoffs last year. They gave the puck-possession Red Wings a good run, but no one was going to beat that Detroit team. In one-year leagues, Turco is a top three goalie this year.

Dallas is very deep, very tough, and very skilled. They will challenge Detroit and Pittsburgh for the President's Trophy in 2008-2009.