

## Angus' Prime Cuts 08-09 - Part 5 of 5

Written by Jeff Angus

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The full roster for the 2008-2009 edition of the Prime Cuts, as well as some insight as to why I

picked certain players over others. A list of honorable mentions is included as well...

### The Roster

Zach Parise – Evgeni Malkin – Martin St. Louis  
Scott Hartnell – Travis Zajac – Martin Havlat  
David Booth – Ryan Kesler – David Backes  
Cody McLeod – Jay McClement – Cal Clutterbuck

Mike Green – Zdeno Chara  
Mark Streit – Keith Ballard  
Jan Hejda – Matt Greene

Tim Thomas  
Scott Clemmensen

I made the tough choice of leaving Ovechkin off of this team. He has everything you could ever want in a hockey player, but I ultimately decided to go with Parise for a few reasons. First off, not many people saw Parise's breakout season coming. I placed a bit of an emphasis on players breaking out as opposed to already being established on this team. Second, I have always been a bit of a Parise fan and feel some level of reward for predicting he had the skills to be a 90-100 point player (at the time I even questioned my own optimism).

This team could easily and obviously have had Ovechkin on it. He is clearly the better player versus Parise, but for the reasons above I left him off. This isn't the NHL's First All-Star Team – it's Angus' Prime Cuts.

The top line center gig was also hotly contested, between Malkin and fellow Russian Pavel Datsyuk. Datsyuk has obvious qualities that Malkin doesn't (faceoff ability, defensive presence), but with my selection of a feisty forechecking winger like Parise on the left side and a play-making winger in St. Louis in the right side, a goal-scoring center was more appropriate. Not to discount Datsyuk's goal scoring ability at all (he is one of the best), I just consider Malkin more of a sniper. Again Datsyuk was very close to making it. At right wing, there were not many candidates. I like St. Louis because he brings the same compete level every night. Marian Hossa was in the mix, as was Jarome Iginla. But ultimately I decided for the speedy, gritty game of St. Louis. It must have been tough to come to the ice every day on that Tampa Bay team this

year (yes, I know they are millionaires, but it is still the case), but Marty's work ethic was the one consistent on that awful club.

I was deciding between Zajac and Jeff Carter for the second line center position. Carter has been the Flyers MVP this season (yes, even ahead of Mike Richards), thanks to a ton of timely, important goals. However, like Parise over Ovechkin, Zajac flew under the radar this season. He has really matured both offensively and defensively. Don't be surprised to see his name mentioned in Selke talks. The rest of the second line was pretty easy to pick. I did debate Havlat and Alexander Semin for a while.

For the bottom six forwards it was mostly non-statistical skills that earned these players a nomination. Kesler and Backes have both had breakout offensive seasons, but both are such impact players even when they are not producing.

### **Here are some 'Honorable Mentions' for the Prime Cuts squad (in no specific order):**

Bobby Ryan – should win the Calder (him or Doughty), and is incredibly skilled for a big guy (similar to line mate Ryan Getzlaf). He doesn't play a power forward game, more like a younger John Leclair.

Rene Bourque – Bourque would have made this team if not for a nasty ankle injury. Arguably the most valuable Flames forward for many nights this season. No weaknesses in his game at all.

Steve Mason – Great rookie goalie on a team that makes goalies look fantastic. Hard to discount his numbers, though.

Loui Eriksson – Really stepped up in the absence of a few injured Stars forwards.

James Neal – An absolute beast on the puck, Neal will hit 40 goals very soon (next year, perhaps).

Pavel Datsyuk – Wizard with the puck, tenacious without it.

Duncan Keith – The best defenseman on Chicago blends an effortless skating stride with fantastic positional play defensively.

Dwayne Roloson – Surprised everyone with his phenomenal play for the Oilers, but faded a bit late due to an insane workload (and a team that couldn't score consistently in front of him).

Drew Doughty – Narrowly edges out Zach Bogosian for best rookie defenseman. Doughty is going to be scary good.

Andrei Markov – The only reason Montreal is in playoff contention after multiple collapses in their centennial season.

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Pekka Rinne – Big upside for the underrated Fin. Rinne is very solid fundamentally and is a big goalie as well.

Paul Martin – Martin goes under the radar because he does everything well, but nothing at an elite level.

Ryan Callahan – Wrecking ball winger (like Clutterbuck) with hands. Over 20 goals on the offensively-challenged Rangers.

Jeff Carter – One of the most lethal snipers in the league.

Alex Ovechkin – Arguably the best player in the league, inarguably the most exciting.

Dan Boyle – Tampa rues the day they dealt away Boyle.

Alex Burrows – 28 goals, an impact player all over the ice. Burrows was narrowly beaten out by Booth for the third line left wing (although he is now playing top line right wing on Vancouver).