As the NHL season came to a temporary halt for the 2010 Olympics, Pavol Demitra was looking like another former star fading into obscurity. He missed the majority of the season while recovering from off-season shoulder surgery, taking his time to ensure he was 100 percent before returning to the Vancouver line-up. Demitra looked sluggish and physically overmatched in his 11 games after returning, scoring only once. However, as soon as he pulled over the blue, red, and white jersey of Slovakia, he played like a man possessed. Demitra was arguably the most dangerous forward in the Olympics, above the likes of Sidney Crosby, Tore Vikingstad, and Alexander Ovechkin. He finished the tournament with three goals and seven assists in only seven games, and was flying each and every single night at Canada Hockey Place.

Who is the real Pavol Demitra? Is he the slow, soft player we saw in January? Or is he the

offensive superstar that we saw for the past two weeks in Vancouver? The answer lies somewhere in between...

Going back well before his tenure with the Canucks, the book on Demitra has read, “great skill, great speed, but inconsistent, soft, and injury prone.” He was signed last season by Mike Gillis to be a secondary scorer, and he finished 2008-09 with very respectable second line numbers – 20 goals, 33 assists, and 53 points. Of course, he also missed over 20 games, but he still was a positive contributor for the Canucks. Demitra’s numbers really took off once he was placed alongside Mats Sundin and Ryan Kesler on Vancouver’s second unit. Kesler in particular was a great fit for Demitra, as he plays an aggressive style and is fantastic at puck retrieval, which is perhaps the weakest part of Demitra’s game.

This season in his limited action, Demitra skated on a line with Kyle Wellwood for close to 60 percent of the time. The third member of that line was usually either Tanner Glass or Steve Bernier. Both players are far from the level of a Kesler, or even an extremely sluggish Sundin for that matter. At these Olympics, Demitra skated with Marian and Marcel Hossa, and also quarterbacked the Slovak power play.

Lots of DobberHockey members were wondering how the Olympics would impact players from a fantasy perspective. Looking at Demitra, the potential benefit is huge. Firstly, he showed to himself that he is still able to compete – and excel – against the best players in the world in physical hockey games. Secondly, and most importantly, he was able to show to Vancouver coach Alain Vigneault that he still has the ability to be a valuable offensive contributor at the NHL level, both at even strength and on the power play. Almost instantly after the Olympics concluded, Vigneault and his coaching staff were figuring out whether to drop Mason Raymond or Mikael Samuelsson down to the third line to make room for Demitra on the second unit. If I were a betting man, I’d expect Raymond to slide down for now to play with Wellwood and Bernier, his linemates from last spring. A return alongside Kesler, who also had a fantastic

Olympics, will help Demitra. Samuelsson plays a very patient offensive game, and is equally adept at passing the puck as he is at shooting it (too often into the crest of the goalie's jersey, though). The trio has a great mix of skill, toughness, speed, and defensive awareness.

This article may even be outdated by the time Wednesday hits, as Vancouver is looking to add a forward at the trade deadline. However, their most glaring need is a defensive center, as their offense has been near the top of the NHL all season long. The Canucks have 21 games left, and it is not a stretch to assume Demitra could hit 20 points in that time. Obviously he is a player who plays with more emotion and effort while suiting up for his country, but his fantastic Olympic tournament should revitalize a career that looked to be in a freefall. In addition, Demitra is slated to become an unrestricted free agent this summer, and a strong finish to the season (coupled with a strong playoff run, provided that Vancouver qualifies), would go a long way to ensure that he has at least one payday left in the NHL.