The third annual Prime Cuts roster is here! Check out the Prime Cuts rosters from 2007-08 and 2008-09. The thinking process that goes in to selecting the team is similar to Pierre McGuire's "Monsters" for TSN (I promise that is the first and only time I will compare my thinking process to Pierre's). Since this is a fantasy hockey site, the selection process favours players that have had strong seasons on the score sheet, obviously. However, not just goals and assists are weighted – perhaps a player has started to shoot the puck more, or play better defensively. Intangibles like heart, grit, and determination factor in to the selection process as well. It is far and away my favourite article to write each year, and I hope you will all enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed writing it!

Part 4 of the article series will name the **top forward line.**

The first line: Alex Ovechkin, Henrik Sedin, and **Martin St. Louis**

Picking Alex Ovechkin as the top line left wing for the second straight season was probably the easiest roster decision I had to make. Ovechkin is a fantasy hockey monster – he scores a ton of goals, shoots the puck more than anyone, and plays the game with a nasty edge. He finished the 2009-10 season second in the league in goals (50), sixth in assists (59), second in points

(109), first among forwards in plus-minus (45), third in game-winners (seven), and first in shots (368). He was fourth in ice-time among all forwards, and also had 89 penalty minutes, the most among the top 18 in league scoring. He also missed 10 games due to a few suspensions (which directly relate to the edge he plays with).

Ovechkin is a very polarizing figure for hockey fans. Those who love him defended him over the Brian Campbell hit. Those who hate him wanted a huge suspension. Some love his goal celebrations. Others think he is showing up the opposition. I'll admit, in the great Crosby/Ovechkin debate, I prefer Crosby. But that doesn't mean I don't enjoy watching Ovechkin play. Both players are great for the league, and if it wasn't for a surprise Art Ross winner (more on that in a bit), they would have tied for first with 109 points (Crosby held the tiebreaker with one more goal). If you own Ovechkin in your hockey pool, count your lucky stars. Unless an offer featuring Crosby and Mike Green come rolling in, Ovechkin is the guy to build your team around.

Henrik Sedin's incredible 112-point season came as a surprise to everyone. He and his twin brother Daniel had developed into consistent, dependable 75-85 point top line players in Vancouver since the lockout, and their consistency and reliability made them very safe and valuable fantasy players to own. Henrik started the season with 16 points in 14 October games, and had 12 points in November, playing without Daniel, who was on the shelf with a broken foot. Henrik's production skyrocketed once Daniel returned, putting up 25 points in both December (which earned him the NHL Player of the Month award) and January. He struggled during February, with only two assists in seven road games. At that point, most expected Ovechkin to blow past Sedin in the scoring race. However, Henrik got back in track in March with 24 points in only 15 games. Like all great players, he saved his best for last, with a four-assist effort against Calgary during the Canucks final regular season contest.

Henrik scored 21 more points than any other Western Conference player (Brad Richards of

Dallas had 91). His 112 points were the highest total from a player in the West since Joe Thornton had 114 for San Jose in 2006-07. He led the league with 83 even-strength points, exactly 10 more than the second-place Ovechkin. He and Daniel obviously feed off of each other production-wise, and their near-identical point-per-game numbers (1.37 for Henrik, 1.35 for Daniel) attest to that. Don't expect another 112-point season from Sedin, but 2009-10 wasn't a fluke. He and Daniel should be valued as 90-100 point players for at least the next few seasons. For the first time since the Sedin twins have developed into top line players, Vancouver has insulated them with lots of offensive talent up front.

Martin St. Louis had an unforgettable season in 2009-10, but how many paid attention? He was surprisingly left off of Canada's 2010 Olympic roster, but arguing whether that was a good move or not is pointless considering Canada ended up winning the gold. The chemistry St. Louis formed with Steven Stamkos was phenomenal to watch – the two combined for 80 goals and 189 points this season. There were some rumblings out of Tampa Bay last month that he may ask for a trade this summer to a contender. I would be surprised to see that happen, as he is the heart and soul of that team and they are only a few roster moves away from competing for a playoff spot.

St. Louis hasn't missed a game since the 2005-06 season. He led all NHL forwards in total time on ice, and was third in ice time per game (21:48), trailing only Ilya Kovalchuk (22:02) and Sidney Crosby (21:57). He displayed consistently both on a game-to-game basis and within games. Of his 94 points, 31 came in first periods, and 30 each in the second and the third (the remaining three came in overtime, of course). If the Lightning were a playoff team, he would have been a contender for the Hart Trophy. All three members of Tampa Bay's top line made the 2009-10 Prime Cuts roster (St. Louis on the top line, Stamkos on the second line, and Downie on the third). Like all great players, St. Louis separates himself by being able to make plays at full speed, a trait shared by his line mate Stamkos.

The roster (to date):

Alex Ovechkin – Henrik Sedin – Martin St. Louis

Jussi Jokinen – Steven Stamkos – Chris Stewart

Steve Downie – Brandon Sutter – Eric Fehr

TJ Galiardi – Jay McClement – Ian Lapperiere

Duncan Keith – Mike Green

Tyler Myers – Joni Pitkanen

Keith Yandle – Mark Giordano

XXX

Tuukka Rask

Coming next week - the starting goaltender, as well as a list of those who just missed the cut.