It is not often that a defenseman can record 50 points in his first professional season and still fly under the radar at DobberHockey. However, that is exactly what has happened with New Jersey rookie Matt Taormina. He has been playing on the top power play unit with the likes of Ilya Kovalchuk, Travis Zajac, and Zach Parise. It didn't take long for Taormina's name to start popping up all over our forums.

In his final season of high school hockey, Taormina was named NAHL rookie of the year playing for Texarkana. He scored 14 goals that season, including an extremely impressive five shorthanded goals (as a defenseman even a single shorthanded goal would be impressive). He had a solid four year college career at Providence. He didn't miss a single game during his time there, and in his final two seasons he scored a combined 14 goals and 47 points in 70 games. The Lowell Devils signed him to a professional contract before the 2009-10 season (he couldn't get an NHL contract at the time), and after scoring twice in the first two games, he started to gain a bit of interest from New Jersey management.

His 50 points last season placed him seventh among all AHL defensemen, and second among rookie AHL defensemen, trailing only Montreal's PK Subban. He led the team in shots on goal as well with 191.

A lot of talk this summer was focused on New Jersey rookie defensemen, as the team had an open spot and not much cap space to use on it. Alex Urbom, Tyler Eckford, and Matt Corrente were all considered strong contenders to make the team. Taormina was completely overlooked in these discussions.

The progression of an undersized but skilled defenseman can go one of two ways. The player can utilize his talents and his hockey sense to take the next step (Dan Boyle, for example), or the size can prove to be too much of a factor at the NHL level (countless examples of this, one being Cory Murphy). Taormina is a great skater and he reads the play very well. He is undersized at 5'11" (he looks shorter than this to me) and 185 pounds, but speed and smarts reign supreme in the NHL nowadays.

If Taormina isn't already snatched up in your league, I'd recommend taking a chance on him. Playing set up man to Kovalchuk is one of the best gigs a defenseman can get in hockey. Tobias Enstrom was a great fit in Atlanta, and the Devils prefer Taormina to Greene in that position. With four forwards on the ice at the same time, it is also a lot of defensive responsibility placed on the rookie's shoulders. I want to see more of him before I give a definitive upside. I have only seen one game of his (in addition to a few AHL highlights), and he appears to have the talent and head for the game. The big reason for his fantasy relevance is the opportunity that the Devils have given him out of the gate.

Most thought that Andy Greene would be the de facto power play quarterback in New Jersey this season. Looking at the preseason roster, he was the only member of the defensive group who could be classified as a puck mover. Taormina was overlooked once again. If he sticks with the first power play unit all season, consider his days of flying under the radar over.