Several big names changed addresses this past summer. Ilya Kovalchuk signed a deal with the Devil (twice), Paul Martin stayed within the Atlantic Division by going to Pittsburgh, and Dan Hamhuis spurned both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to sign with his home province Vancouver Canucks. In addition to these three players, many more packed their respective bags this past summer. I figured it was time for a (very) early season update on how some of these new players are fairing with their new teams.

The Great

Paul Martin – Pittsburgh

Penguins fans have quickly found out what those in New Jersey knew for many years – Paul Martin is an elite NHL defenseman. He is big and mobile, strong defensively, and he makes a terrific first pass out of the zone. He also has the ability to log minutes in all situations, play the shut down role, and also jump into the rush to create offense.

It doesn't surprise me that both Kris Letang and Alex Goligoski are both playing well (and importantly for poolies producing a lot). Martin has a calming influence on whoever he plays with, and his ability to eat up a lot of minutes makes things a bit easier for the other defensemen on the roster. He doesn't have a big shot but he still will produce 45-50 points this season just because he is such a smart, cerebral player.

The Good

Dennis Wideman – Florida

Wideman's stats with Florida aren't mind-blowing (one goal and one assist through four games), but he is logging close to 25 minutes per night and he currently boasts a plus-4 rating. Wideman is a smooth-skating defenseman prone to mistakes and turnovers in his own zone. He was either feast (50 points, plus-32 in 2008-09) or famine (30 points, minus-14 last season) in Boston, but I expect him to be a solid defenseman once again for Florida.

He is arguably their most important defenseman because of how he creates offense and plays transitional hockey. The Panthers won't score a lot this season but I'd bet Wideman will be a big part of whatever offense is generated. He is better than many think and could probably be acquired for below value right now in many fantasy leagues out there.

Matt Cullen – Minnesota

Cullen has eight points in five games for the Wild, and his versatility is coming in handy for the team already. He plays the point with Marek Zidlicky on the first power play unit. He centers the second line with Martin Havlat and Guilliame Latendresse, and he is a big part of the penalty kill with his speed and anticipation.

Even if his production levels off, I'd expect Cullen to score 20-25 goals and add 30-35 assists playing in the top six for Minnesota. In leagues that count shorthanded points, power play points, and faceoff wins, his value is even higher.

The Unknown

Dustin Byfuglien – Atlanta

The move back to defence was criticized by many (not me). After dominating with his size and strength in front of the opposing net during the playoffs, many wondered why Atlanta was taking Byfuglien and putting him on the blue line. I thought it was a great move for two reasons:

a) His real value as a forward comes on the power play

b) Defence is his natural position and he is more comfortable and confident playing there

It is hard to get a read after five games, but so far so good. Byfuglien has a goal and he is logging close to 22 minutes per game in a variety of situations. He leads the Thrashers in hits and he is tied for third in shots on goal. I'd expect him to finish with at least 10 goals and close to 40 points – very respectable totals for a defenseman.

Sergei Gonchar – Ottawa

Six games, no goals, two assists, and a minus-4 rating – it hasn't been the best of starts for Gonchar in Ottawa. He is playing a ton (over 27 minutes of ice time per game). The biggest surprise through six games has to be his shots on goal total (seven). Gonchar is known for his shot, and he needs to find a way to fire the puck with considerably more regularity.

I think now represents a great time to acquire Sergei below value. Ottawa isn't a potent offensive club but they have enough weapons to put together at least one dangerous power play unit. Expect his production to increase as the transition to a new team and system continues.

The Bad

Antero Niittymaki/Antti Niemi – San Jose

One of the most overlooked fantasy moves this summer was San Jose moving on from Evgeni Nabokov and going with the Finnish duo of Niemi and Niittymaki. So far, not so good. The two have struggled behind a porous defensive group. Dan Boyle unfortunately cannot play 60 minutes each night.

Nabokov wasn't the best goalie, but his consistency and athleticism allowed San Jose to stick him between the pipes without much worry each and every night.

Back to Niemi, he is playing exactly like he did last year with Chicago during the regular season. Juicy rebounds are a major issue, and the Sharks lack a Duncan Keith or a Brent Seabrook to clear them away.

I found it bizarre that a supposed cup contender seemed content on going with this duo between the pipes. I guess you could say the same about Philadelphia with Michael Leighton and Brian Boucher (and now Sergei Bobrovsky). Niemi has a cup ring but he isn't a cup calibre goalie. If that doesn't make sense to you, watch him play more.

Simon Gagne – Tampa Bay

On the stat sheet, Gagne has been bad. Five games, zero points, and a minus-6 rating. However, he has looked pretty good on the ice in the two Tampa Bay games that I have caught. He has 15 shots on goal so it isn't like the chances aren't there. A major buy-low candidate at the moment in all pool formats.

Olli Jokinen – Calgary

Enough said.