

15 Points to Consider

Written by Jeff Angus

Wednesday, 01 December 2010 01:11 - Last Updated Thursday, 02 December 2010 15:29



Elliott Friedman's weekly *30 Thoughts* column on the CBC website is currently the best read in hockey. Friedman is insightful, articulate, knowledgeable, fair, and most importantly, interesting. He has sources and contacts in the hockey world that most could only dream of. He has an ability which is rare in this day and age - providing a balanced and reasonable opinion on the league, the players, and all 30 of the clubs.

Each week I will post my own observations (I couldn't completely steal Friedman's idea so I'll pick a number other than 30) – with a heavy emphasis on the fantasy side of hockey, of course. Prospects, goalies, sleepers, busts, it will all be covered each week.

1. The Canucks are 7-0-1 with Jeff Tambellini in the line-up. He hasn't only brought a ton of

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energy, but his presence on the second line has strengthened both the third and fourth lines, respectively. He allows the Canucks to drop Mikael Samuelsson down to line three, which then moves either Jannik Hansen or Raffi Torres to the fourth line. I am surprised more teams don't play an offensively gifted AHL player (like Tambellini, although he has proven to be too good for the AHL) with two talented linemates in the top six, which leads to a trickle-down effect strengthening every other line. Mathieu Perreault in Washington immediately comes to mind.

2. I wonder where Sam Gagner would be if Edmonton had let him develop for a few more years in the OHL/AHL? How about if he was drafted by Detroit? Hindsight is always 20/20, but he looks no better than he did three or four years ago. The same goes for Andrew Cogliano, but he doesn't have (nor did he ever have) the offensive talent that Gagner possesses.

3. What does the Tomas Fleischmann acquisition by Colorado mean about Peter Mueller's chances of returning this season? Scott Hannan will help the Capitals a lot on the penalty kill and in the toughness department, but he is one of the worst puck-moving defensemen in the league. The puck often dies on his stick – I am curious to see how he adapts to Washington's transitional game. Ovechkin [hated playing against him](#), though, and that has to mean something.

4. Chris Stewart's injury is exactly why I would never want my star player fighting. Sure, it can get the team going (and help fill the PIM category), but there are too many variables that could lead to injury.

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5. Alex Edler is on the cusp of becoming an elite defenseman. He hits hard, logs tough minutes, and puts up points (I'd be surprised if he doesn't finish the season with close to 50).

6. Eric Staal is the second most underrated star in the league (after Martin St. Louis, of course). Staal puts up points regardless of who he is playing with. When I watch Staal play, I think that he is how Jason Spezza would play if he was a bit harder on the puck and a bit less injury prone.

7. Henrik Sedin is on pace for six goals. He had 29 last year. Am I shocked? Not really, to be honest. Sedin is allergic to shooting the puck, and he is arguably the best in the league at passing it. I'd expect him to finish with 15-18 goals and a hell of a lot of assists.

8. David Jones has five goals in five games. I think I remember telling you to pick him up...

9. The Thrashers have won six straight. Ondrej Pavelec creeping into (very) early season Vezina discussions, and Dustin Byfuglien is my choice for the Norris. Up front the talent is spread out a bit, but the Thrashers are much more viable from a fantasy perspective to load up on (relatively, of course).

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10. Rumours are circulating that the Bruins may release Tyler Seguin to play in the upcoming World Junior Championship. If I owned Seguin in a fantasy pool, I'd encourage this. Edmonton should do the same with Hall. Injuries represent a risk, but in terms of development there would be nothing better for either player than to dominate against the best in the world at his age.

11. If you haven't read my column from last year on using the World Juniors as a fantasy hockey tool to improve your squad, [check it out](#).

12. The Sharks have an abysmal defense. They also miss Evgeni Nabokov. Nabokov got a lot of heat from fans from struggling during the postseason, but he was a huge reason as to why the team consistently made it into the playoffs in the first place.

13. I like to gloat when I am right, so it is only fair that I own up to the (few) things I am wrong about. Kudos to Jonas Hiller and the Ducks for playing some great hockey over the past few weeks. Toni Lydman has been a very positive influence on the back end, Cam Fowler is making more than a few teams look silly for passing on him this past summer, and the aforementioned Hiller is playing out of his mind.

14. The Canucks lead the league in power play percentage. The main reason why? New assistant coach Newell Brown. Great to be an owner of any player who skates on the top unit

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(Sedin, Sedin, Kesler, Ehrhoff, Edler).

15. One final fantasy tip – always have two good goalies. Always. This rule is about as cut and dry as it gets.