I have been looking forward to publishing this piece for a while. Selecting Canada's roster for any international hockey competition is never an easy task. There were a number of quality forwards, defensemen, and goaltenders that didn't make the cut. I made sure to cover the "why" for each selection and omission. There may be a surprise or two as well....

Other teams to check out:

Harrison Mooney's Team (Puck Daddy)

Ray Ferraro's Team (TSN)

Scott Burnside/Pierre LeBrun's Team (ESPN)

Farhan Devji's Team (Freelance Writer)

The 2010 Gold Medal Winning Roster:

Forwards

On My 2014 Team?

Brenden Morrow

No

Patrick Marleau

No

Jarome Iginla

No

Dany Heatley

(Heck) No

Jonathan Toews

Yes

Mike Richards

No

Joe Thornton

No

Eric Staal

Yes

Corey Perry

No

Patrice Bergeron

Yes

Ryan Getzlaf

No

Rick Nash

Yes

Sidney Crosby

Yes

Defensemen

On My 2014 Team?

Duncan Keith

Yes

Shea Weber

Yes

Brent Seabrook

Yes

Drew Doughty

Yes

Chris Pronger

No

Dan Boyle

No

Scott Niedermayer

No

Goaltenders

On My 2014 Team?

Roberto Luongo

Yes

Martin Brodeur

No

Marc-Andre Fleury

No

My Roster:

The Forwards:

The forwards are listed in proper line combinations, as there are several players playing out of position (the problem that tends to arise is many of Canada's top forwards play center in the NHL, and they have to adjust to the wing at tournaments such as the Olympics). Claude Giroux and Jonathan Toews are both more than capable of playing on the wing. Jamie Benn was a winger in the WHL. I have no doubts that John Tavares and/or Steven Stamkos can transition over to the wing either.

Jamie Benn – Sidney Crosby (A) – Rick Nash

John Tavares – Steven Stamkos – Martin St. Louis

Eric Staal – Jordan Staal – Jonathan Toews (A)

Jordan Eberle – Patrice Bergeron – Claude Giroux

Tyler Seguin

The Why

I consider Crosby, Nash, Stamkos, and Toews as absolute locks. Benn will play his way onto this team – he's a responsible two way player , and he has one of the best wrist shots on the game. He can play both wing and center, and I'd be very curious to see how his puck protection skills would mesh with Crosby's.

Nash always plays great for Canada internationally, and playing under the spotlight in New York has revitalized his effort level in the NHL. He will be a load to handle on the big ice – for a 6-4 power forward Nash can absolutely fly.

Tavares will be a p

uck hawk with snipers like Stamkos and St. Louis on his line. He is the most prolific scorer from within 10 feet in the league, and there will be a lot of scoring opportunities off of deflections and rebounds with Stamkos and St. Louis flying around. St. Louis will be the elder statesman on this team, and he was a surprise omission back in 2010. I don't see how Stamkos makes this team without St. Louis, and I don't see his age being an issue. He keeps himself in phenomenal shape.

Staal-Staal-Toews is my idea for a two-way/checking line. Eric can play the left side, Jordan covers a ton of ice with his wingspan and rangy skating style, and Toews is arguably the smartest hockey player on the planet. This line could end up being Canada's best – size, skill, and defensive awareness.

The fourth line features a bit of a mishmash of players. Patrice Bergeron is so good – as a Canuck fan it took the 2011 Stanley Cup Final for me to find that out. His offensive game is vastly underrated and he is capable of shutting down any player in the league. Eberle has already scored enough big goals for Canada to last him his entire career, and I could see him finding a spot on this team as a power play specialist. Giroux is versatile and can play anywhere – he is struggling a bit without Hartnell/Jagr on his wings in 2013, but he will be on this team. Giroux, Bergeron, and Eberle are all right-handed shots, and that may be overkill on one line.

Tyler Seguin (another righty shot) is a great skater and on the big ice his ability to fly up and down the ice will come in handy. There are a ton of contenders for the final few forward spots on this team. Speaking of….

Need to Play Way Back Onto Team:

Mike Richards

Richards is still a very good two-way forward, but he won't be on this team. Too many talented young Canadian forwards have developed over the past few years.

Corey Perry

Perry needs to play his way back onto this team, and it is very likely he does just that in Anaheim (or elsewhere, as he is a free agent this summer). His game has regressed a bit in recent years, but he is still one of the most prolific scorers in hockey.

Ryan Getzlaf

Getzlaf also needs to play his way back onto this team, and it is also very likely he does just that in Anaheim (or elsewhere, as he is a free agent this summer). He isn't a great skater, and he isn't as comfortable on the wing as some of the other natural centers on the roster above, and those two things will work against him.

Patrick Marleau

Great skater, smart player, respected voice in the room – Marleau will have a spot on this team if he has a great next year of hockey in the NHL. Like Richards, he hasn't regressed as much as other players have caught up to him.

Jarome Iginla

Is Iggy done? Jarome has looked like a shadow of his former self to start the 2013 season, but that could be due to the overall struggles in Calgary more than any decline in his own game. I don't see him making this team, but as a 13th forward he could bring a lot of experience (three Olympics, including two gold medals). It is crazy to think that Iginla was such an integral part of the 2002 team. 12 years is a long time ago.

Joe Thornton

Thornton's experience and veteran presence may be a nice bonus for this team, but I see the likes of Crosby, Toews, Nash, and Stamkos emerging as the new generation of leaders. Jumbo Joe doesn't get enough credit for his overall game, but his lack of foot speed may hurt his chances at playing in Sochi.

The Contenders:

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins

The Nuge is a slick distributor and he was dominant for Canada at the 2013 WJC. Is he ready for the Olympics? I think he will be by the time 2014 rolls around.

Jeff Skinner

Skinner has taken another step forward with his game in 2013 – he plays a lot like Crosby, and I wonder how those two would look skating on the same line together?

Logan Couture

A poor man's Toews, Couture can do it all – score, pass, hit, run the power play, and play responsible defensive hockey. His versatility could come in handy when Canada is selecting the final few forwards for the Sochi roster.

Matt Duchene

Duchene is one of the best skaters in the game, and he is an incredible offensive talent. However, his game in the NHL has gone off the rails over the past few years (mostly due to injury).

Jeff Carter

Carter, a great skater for a 6-3 forward, is a natural goal scorer, but this team already has enough of those.

James Neal

See above.

Jason Spezza

Spezza's recent back surgery puts a bit of a damper on his Olympic hopes, although the tournament is still a year away. Like Thornton, he isn't a great skater, and also like Thornton, he doesn't get enough credit for his overall game. He does so much for the Senators, they are really going to miss him over the next few months.

Taylor Hall

A small part of me wanted to include Hall on the above roster. Imagine Doughty and Pietrangelo zinging breakout passes to Hall while he is skating in full stride? Hall needs to beef up his resume a bit more before Canada should consider him for a scoring spot with this team.

Brad Marchand

I made the joke on Twitter last week – if Canada picks Brad Marchand , I'll start cheering for the Americans. I respect his ability to play hockey – he is really talented with and without the puck, and he was dominant in Boston's Stanley Cup run – but he plays the game with a lack of respect for opposing players. I doubt Canada would want to bring that on board (although they have made some curious selections in the past).

The Defensemen:

Duncan Keith – Brent Seabrook

Dan Hamhuis – Shea Weber

Alex Pietrangelo – Drew Doughty

Kris Letang

I consider Keith, Weber, Doughty, and Seabrook as locks at this point (and all would be holdovers from the 2010 team). Dan Hamhuis may be a surprise to some of you, but I think he is the perfect fit for this team, for a few reasons:

- He plays the left side. Weber, Seabrook, Doughty, Letang, and Pietrangelo are all right-side, right-shooting defensemen.
- He can play any role. PP1, PK1, shutdown defenseman, offensive facilitator – Hamhuis has zero weaknesses in his game.
- He is a zero maintenance player. He brings it every single game.
- He is a fantastic skater. Backwards, turning, closing gaps, his mobility will be a huge

bonus to Canada on the big ice.

- I still maintain that the main reason Vancouver lost to Boston in the 2011 Final (asides from the inconsistent refereeing and Tim Thomas channelling his inner Patrick Roy) was the injury to Hamhuis. He's a do-it-all defenseman.

I do get to see Hamhuis play a lot, and that may skew my opinion of him relative to other steady defensemen (other names that come to mind include Marc-Edouard Vlasic and Jay Bouwmeester
).

I am curious if Pietrangelo/Doughty/Letang (one or all of) could make the transition to play on the left side. In general defensemen who shoot right play on the right and those who shoot left play on the left, as it allows them to handle passes on their forehand, and they don't have to retrieve pucks off the boards on their backhand. The odd defenseman enjoys playing on his off-side (Buffalo's Christian Ehrhoff is an example, and Dion Phaneuf in Toronto is another).

The Contenders:

Dan Boyle

Boyle was solid back in 2010, but I think he has been passed over by younger and better

defensemen. The fact that he shoots right doesn't help him much, either.

Marc Staal

Staal appears to be over the concussion issues that have plagued him in recent years. He is one of the best shutdown defensemen in the game, and he's a great skater, too. I see him competing with Hamhuis (they are very similar defensemen).

Justin Schultz

If Schultz keeps improving as fast as he has in the past year, he could be on this team. His defensive game isn't great, but it isn't bad for a rookie defenseman on a mediocre defensive club. He is a sensational skater, and his offensive exploits speak for themselves. The thought of him handling the point on a power play with Crosby and Stamkos on it should make any hockey fan giddy.

Brian Campbell

Campbell plays the left side, he is the best skating defenseman in the league and he would bring experience and leadership to this back end. He has been playing great hockey since coming to Florida, and people (for the most part) have begun to respect him for what he is – an overpaid, but very good NHL defenseman.

Jay Bouwmeester

Like Campbell, Bouwmeester has received a heavy dose of criticism for being overpaid. However, he has brought the exact same game to Calgary that he displayed in Florida – offense if given prime PP minutes, great skating and outlet passing, and the ability to eat up a lot of tough minutes. Bouwmeester would make this team primarily for his defensive play and skating.

Marc-Edouard Vlasic

The man with two first names has quietly developed into one of the best defensive defensemen in the game. He plays a lot like Hamhuis, relying on great mobility and instincts to shut down opposing stars.

PK Subban

Subban is a right-shooting, right-side defenseman, and he isn't as good as Doughty, Seabrook, Letang, or Pietrangelo (right now, at least). A lot can change in a year, though.

Mike Green

Green was a contender to make Canada's Olympic team about three coaches ago in Washington. He has been better this year, but his game still has a ways to go if he wants to be playing in Sochi in 2014.

The Goaltenders:

Roberto Luongo

Carey Price

Martin Brodeur / Cam Ward / Marc-Andre Fleury / Mike Smith

First off, Scott Burnside picked Corey Crawford . Really, Scott? Nothing against Crawford, but that could be the worst selection I have seen on any of the projections from those in the hockey media.

Luongo and Price are 100% locks. Luongo is playing the best hockey of his career right now, and he has at least three or four more years of elite hockey left in him. Price is a great goalie stuck on a not-so-great team. He has won almost everything possible (except for the Stanley Cup), and he is well-known for his big game heroics. Ice water in the veins applies perfectly to Price.

As for the third goalie, Canada could go any number of directions. They could bring Fleury back, but that choice wouldn't be based on his recent play (especially in the 2012 postseason). Cam Ward is a solid, if inconsistent, goaltender. And Smith has been playing great hockey in Phoenix, but how would he fare outside of Dave Tippett's system?

And the ageless Brodeur will still be playing in the NHL next year, but would he be willing to swallow his ego and come over as the third goaltender? Canada would probably be better off giving the experience to a new and/or younger guy.

Let's hear your thoughts – how would you construct Canada's 2014 roster for the Winter Olympics in Sochi?