

Flames Looking for a Spark

Written by Jeff Angus

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The Calgary Flames are struggling right now, as you may or may not know. If you are a Miikka Kiprusoff fantasy owner, chances are you are well aware of their inconsistent play. Kiprusoff, fresh off signing a huge, long-term deal, has looked very, very average this season. He is getting a lot of minutes, which may be one reason for his poor start. The Flames never really addressed their back-up position this off-season, and it has showed. Kiprusoff is an elite goalie and if you believe in the law of averages, will bounce back. The weak goals he has continually let in are extremely troubling, however.

Calgary's play outside of the crease is not as big a significant consequence for fantasy owners, however. Iginla is having a terrific year, and Huselius and Tanguay are producing (although both have drawn the ire of Keenan more recently). Huselius is a fantastic talent, and I believe he has 90-point upside. He has looked lost at times this year, and is an unrestricted free agent

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after this season. Provided he picks up his play a bit, teams will be very interested in his services. Calgary's inability to play a structured system has cost them in the standings, but most fantasy owners have failed to notice. As long as the top dogs keep producing, why worry?

In other Western Conference-related news, what a difference a goaltender makes. Phoenix has looked night-and-day better since snatching Bryzgalov off waivers last week, and there are rumors they are already looking to lock up the big Russian to an extension. Bryzgalov is obviously a huge upgrade on whoever they had in net before, and if Phoenix can play hard in front of him, may be a valuable fantasy goalie in both one year and keeper leagues.

Ryan Kesler has been arguably the best Canuck skater this season. He has made routine work of shutting down the likes of Sakic, Gaborik and Iginla, while contributing five goals. His skating has always been world-class, and now the hands are starting to develop. Similar to Max Afinogenov in Buffalo, watch out to see how far Kesler's offensive development will take him. He will never have the offensive vision to be a 30- goal scorer, but his speed and skating will take him a lot further offensively than many expect.

Angus' Prime Cut in the West from November 14th to November 27th, 2007

Hard to argue against a guy who is on pace for over 40 goals, nearly 20 of which would be short-handed. Patrick Sharp has been phenomenal for the Blackhawks this season, and he may be more than just a flash in the pan. Sharp has always had the talent to produce at the pro level, but has lacked the ability to finish off scoring plays. He is extremely streaky, so don't expect him to have anything more than 25-30 goals. Even with that, he is proving to be one of the most valuable third-line wingers in the game, and has been an absolute menace on the penalty-kill. His versatility has enabled him to line up on lines one through three in Chicago, and on both special team units. If he can continue to produce (especially shorthanded), Sharp will become a very, very valuable fantasy winger.

See Angus' blog, ask him a question, or [comment on the Flames here...](#)