Having recently graduated from university I've found myself feeling a bit nostalgic so I hope you can indulge me a bit while I hop in my Delorian and crank'er up to 88 MPH!

It's the 2006-07 NHL season and I am a bright eyed and bushy tailed freshman. The world is my oyster, even as a sports fan. After all, the Oilers did just make it to the Stanley Cup Final losing in game seven (Gosh Darnit!) so what could go wrong? Yes I certainly felt like I was on top of the world and fantasy hockey players did too.

We had just finished the first season post lockout and scoring was up. In 2006-07 it would only continue. That season Crosby lived up to the hype leading the league with 120 points and there were 28 80-point scorers of which seven scored at least 100 points. Yes 2006-07 was certainly one for the books. Sure the Oilers sucked but Olli Jokinen had us rhyming "Holy Moley",

Lecavalier was the best he ever was, the Sens had the best line in hockey, Jagr and Sakic were not only playing but they were bloody good too, and Selanne and St. Louis were also freaking awesome (well I guess they still are). And oh yeah, this was also the last year that Hossa and Briere were elite fantasy options.

I suppose that that is really the whole point of this whole trip down memory lane. What happened to Hossa and Briere and where do they stand now? This week's Cage Match will provide you some insight on that.

Hossa vs. Briere

Fight!

In 2006-07 Marian Hossa scored his first and only 100-point seasons and it was a goal heavy 100 points coming from the abundance of shots he fired on net that year. Hossa was paired with Ilya Kovalchuk forming one of the most dynamic duos in the league. (Batman and Robin were so jealous.) Briere, meanwhile, scored an assist heavy 95 points (a career high) while helping his Buffalo Sabres to the President's Trophy. It was all down hill for both of them, however.

Neither Hossa or Briere would finish the ’08 season where they did the ’07 season. Briere fled small market Buffalo for Philadelphia with dollar signs in his eyes and dreams of winning the Cup. Hossa, on the other hand, left for Pittsburgh at the trade deadline putting him on the fast-track to Cup City. Subsequently these moves also spelt the end of fantasy dominance for both players leaving their owners much like Jack on Lost, all bearded and dishevelled screaming, “We Have to Go Back!” But neither would listen.

They would both go on to struggle with both injuries and depth chart issues post 2006-07 and I like to think that was karma getting back at them a bit for their decisions to move. Here are their averages since 2006-07:

GP

Goals

Assists

Plus/Minus

PPP

PIM

SOG

Hossa

67

29.5

31.75

Plus-11.5

19.5

37.25

243.75

Briere

65

25.5

29

Minus-1

19.75

63

168.75

They have both played a similar number of games on average but it is worth noting that Briere has only one season where he played below 75 games over this four year period. Hossa on the other hand has faced much more nagging injuries playing fewer than 75 games each of those four seasons. Age seems to have been much kinder to the 32-year-old Briere than it has been to the 31-year-old Hossa.

Hossa is the better option if you are looking for goal scoring. The above numbers should speak for themselves but also consider he has three 40-goal seasons to Briere's zero. Hossa also has a huge advantage in SOG, which subsequently leads to his advantage in goal scoring.

Assists are much closer. Briere is generally considered to be the better playmaker but the numbers don't lie. These two are close and I am calling it draw.

Plus/Minus easily goes to Hossa. He is known as one of the better two-way forwards in the game, a skill that has gotten in the way of his point production in recent years. Hossa has only one full season where he was a minus player and that was in Atlanta. Briere on the other hand has been very volatile in his career ranging from highs of plus-20 to lows of minus-22 and everywhere in between. You would think playing on an elite team like the Flyers would help, and that was certainly the case this season but you just cannot trust Briere in this category.

PPP, much like assists, are very much in doubt. Both players have suffered in this category playing on deep teams. Neither one sees the abundance of PP ice time they once did. They both play roughly half of their teams' PP minutes with Briere getting 3:03 minutes per game and Hossa receiving 2:42 per game. Neither one has an advantage here.

PIM belong entirely to Briere. As much as SOG is a landslide for Hossa, PIM are a landslide for Briere. He is not a bruiser (Duh!) but he does take a lot of stupid penalties, which is money in fantasy leagues. Briere is a PIM per game option and the best part is that because they are all

minor penalties it is something you can depend on game to game rather than with enforcers where they may not fight for five straight games.

Father time is certainly creeping up on these two but they should still have enough left in the tank to remain top secondary options and if Selanne and St. Louis are any indication there is certainly hope for a resurgence. At this point I have to prefer Hossa. His nagging injuries have been annoying but beyond the PIM his numbers are consistently just ahead of Briere's. It is important to note this difference because this season's numbers tell a different story.

GP

Goals

Assists

Plus/Minus

PPP

PIM

SOG

Hossa

65

25

32

Plus-9

19

32

205

Briere

77

34

34

Plus-20

15

87

246

Briere blew Hossa out of the water last season, but this is not the consistent trend. Briere's Goal, Plus/Minus, and SOG totals were all career highs so I wouldn't count on him repeating them. I remain steadfast in my belief that Hossa is the better option.

Basically, you need to ask yourself how healthy Hossa can be because if Hossa matches Briere in games played he wins the match outright. If he stays limited to