

Jarome Iginla vs. Martin St. Louis

Written by Steve Laidlaw

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Cage Match - Iginla vs. St. Louis: Now that the All-Star Break has passed it is time to gear for your championship run. Whether you are playing head-to-head or rotisserie identifying the most productive players over the final 30 or so games is crucial. This means it is time to start loading up on proven options. Sure there are other strategies out there but like that classic TLC song says, "Don't go chasing waterfalls, just stick to the rivers and the lakes that you're used to."

Poolies are always after the next big thing. They are always chasing waterfalls. That sort of behaviour is endemic in fantasy hockey. But when you are gearing up for your stretch run, you want the most proven assets out there. That is why in this week's *Cage Match* I am going to remind you of a couple of players as old as the Great Lakes but no less fantastic. It's Jarome Iginla vs. Martin St. Louis – the loser will cry you a river.

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The great part of looking at veterans is there is a great deal of historical evidence that backs up your decision. So to start things off let's take a look at the patented three year average chart to see how these two stack up.

GP

Goals

Assists

Plus/Minus

PPP

PIM

SOG

Iginla

82

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36.7

44.7

Minus-1.3

27.7

45

278.3

St. Louis

82

30

61

Minus-1.3

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34.3

12.7

252.7

The first thing you will notice is that these two have been warriors over the past few seasons. They simply do not miss games. These are exactly the sort of players you want on your fantasy squad because you know you can count on them to play.

As you would expect, Iginla has an advantage in goals although this is trumped by St. Louis' assists advantage. Plus/Minus is a wash. Neither one plays for a particularly strong team but neither one will really hurt you in that category. PPP favours St. Louis by a solid margin however Iginla holds down PIM and SOG. Coming into the year there was strong evidence to take Iginla above St. Louis because he does provide a strong base of production across the board. Some prefer to take the sheer point production of St. Louis though as peripherals can be easier to fill in the late rounds.

Is this what we have seen this season though?

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GP

Goals

Assists

Plus/Minus

PPP

PIM

SOG

Iginla

50

18

21

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Minus-6

12

30

153

St. Louis

43

12

31

Even

7

14

106

The table above suggests that both players are slumping although for different reasons. Iginla has suffered from a real power outage in Calgary. The team is 27th in the league in scoring this season at 2.33 goals per game. Even during the worst of times Calgary has not sunk that low in team scoring. In fact, last season they were a top ten scoring team despite a mediocre power play and seemingly endless line of troglodytes at the center position. This season, the Flames have lost Alex Tanguay and Mark Giordano for extended periods and that has hurt their offence. With those two having just recently made their returns along with the addition of Mike Cammalleri the Flames should be in for a significant boost.

There is the argument that Iginla is in decline but this is flawed. The truth is Iginla's big decline came following the 2007-08 season. That season he produced points on 43.4% of Calgary's goals. Since that season Iginla has produced points on 35.5%, 34.3%, and 35.7% of Calgary's goals in each respective season. This season he has scored on 32.8% of Calgary's goals which is well in line with the past three years. Perhaps he is declining but the evidence leans towards a problem with the team, not Iginla.

I have also heard criticisms regarding the acquisition of Cammalleri. This acquisition is undoubtedly a positive one for the Flames. Cammalleri and Iginla combined to score 74 goals and 171 points when they were partnered back in 2008-09 and this was with a rotating group of Craig Conroy, Olli Jokinen, Matthew Lombardi and Daymond Langkow at center. I am not going to argue that what the Flames have at center is any better but rather I am simply pointing out that these two can produce with what can only be described as large, stationary, conical and quite possibly orange playing in between them.

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Cammalleri injects a great deal of speed and creativity into the Flames lineup and should provide a boost over the final couple months of the season. After six games the results have hardly been there. Cammalleri has but two goals in those games, while Iginla has just one goal and two assists. This is far too small a sample size to draw any conclusions however.

It is also worth mentioning that we are in the midst of the third quarter of the season, which has historically been Iginla's worst stretch. Since 2007-08 Iginla is averaging just 0.87 points per game over the third quarter. Every other quarter he has averaged well above a point per game. That means there is still plenty of time to buy low on Iginla so you can have him for that fourth quarter explosion.

It is also worth mentioning that the fourth quarter would be Iginla's best quarter if not for the 2009-10 season. He scored just 12 points in 20 games down the stretch for the Flames that season. I blame this on wear and tear from the Olympics as well as disinterest from a lack of a playoff run. Remember, this was also the year that Phaneuf was traded and Calgary essentially scuttled their season. Having lingered in the playoff race through the injuries the Flames are now primed for a stretch run.

St. Louis on the other hand, well he is doing pretty much everything you would expect him to do except he has actually missed some games this season. He is still scoring at a point per game pace, though. He may have deviated from his usual durable self but it doesn't mean anything else is wrong. Theories that St. Louis and Stamkos have been separated from each other have largely been overblown. As Frozenpool will show us, St. Louis is still skating over two thirds of his shifts alongside the league's leading goal scorer, including virtually every power play shift.

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EVEN STRENGTH LINE COMBINATIONS	
8.6%	Line Combination
35.1%	DOWNIE,S - ST. LOUIS,M - STAMKOS,S
30.4%	LECAVALIER,V - ST. LOUIS,M - STAMKOS,S
24.3%	CONNOLLY,B - LECAVALIER,V - ST. LOUIS,M
8.2%	DOWNIE,S - LECAVALIER,V - ST. LOUIS,M
6.1%	LECAVALIER,V - SHANNON,R - ST. LOUIS,M
POWER PLAY LINE COMBINATIONS	
Free	Line Combination
46.5%	LECAVALIER,V - MALONE,R - ST. LOUIS,M - STAMKOS,S
26.7%	DOWNIE,S - LECAVALIER,V - ST. LOUIS,M - STAMKOS,S
11%	LECAVALIER,V - MALONE,R - PURCELLE,E - ST. LOUIS,M - ...
8.8%	LECAVALIER,V - PURCELLE,E - ST. LOUIS,M - STAMKOS,S
7.1%	LECAVALIER,V - ST. LOUIS,M - STAMKOS,S

If there is anything wrong with St. Louis it is his almost inexplicable lack of power play production but that is likely something systemically wrong with Tampa Bay than with St. Louis himself. The Lightning power play ranks 27th in the league, clicking at 13.5% after finishing 6th in the league last season at 20.5%. This day and night shift cannot be simply explained by personnel issues. The Lightning still roll out the same front loaded power play as they did last season and still have a glaring need for a puck moving defenseman/power play quarterback or two. St. Louis plays the point for the Lightning and is wonderful at it but he could still use some help from management and the coaching staff.

No one really has an answer for why the Tampa Bay power play is performing so miserably this season although one article opined that the [struggles may stem from a sheer lack of opportunities](#)

Another excuse for their miserable power play is the fact that they struggle to score on the road, scoring on a league worst 8.6% of road power play opportunities, while they boast a very respectable 20% success rate on power plays at home. This is more of an observation rather than an excuse though. The good news here is that the Lightning has 19 games remaining at

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home this season, with only 14 left to play on the road. Perhaps they cannot overcome their road woes but perhaps they will not have to.

I do not watch enough Lightning games to confirm this but I would hypothesize that teams have simply figured out the whole [Stamkos one-timer from the top of the circle shtick](#) . After Stamkos terrorized the league for 41 power play goals over the past two seasons, the majority of which came on that same one-timer, perhaps teams are now simply keying on this and forcing the Lightning to figure out other ways to score.

St. Louis has otherwise been highly productive, particularly since returning from injury. Since that time he has been held scoreless in just three of 16 games and has 21 points in that span. This falls in line with St. Louis' traditional production. St. Louis typically boosts his performance in the third quarter of the season. His point production during the third quarters of the past four seasons has been 1.16 points per game. This is then followed by a precipitous drop to 1.01 points per game in the final quarter of the season. Last season St. Louis broke the mold as Tampa Bay raged towards the playoffs but with the Lightning possibly out of playoff contention it stands to reason that St. Louis will once again fall to a much lower level of excellence for the final stretch of the season.

If the power play woes in Tampa Bay continue then Iginla holds a significant edge over St. Louis for the final quarter of the season. It would seem that the smart play would be to milk St. Louis' hot streak until around mid-February so people get the chance to remember just how awesome he is and then trade him in for Iginla just before the trade deadline. Iginla does appear to be the stronger bet for across the board production and moreover with the Lightning struggling to perform on the power play Iginla may in fact hold even more cards than the three-year averages would suggest.

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So Iginla is the smart choice in one-year leagues but what about in keepers? Iginla turns 35 this summer. St. Louis turns 37. These two can only have so much left. Surely they are capable of going Selanne on us. They have that sort of skating and hockey IQ but it still stands to reason that you should take them on a year-by-year basis. This year Iginla looks like the winner so that is who I would go with in a keeper. Keep in mind that he is a UFA after next season so he could be headed for greener pastures. Iginla wins this *Cage Match*. That means St. Louis needs to cry you guys a river but [it's not](#)

[like he hasn't done that before](#)

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