

Perry vs. the World

Written by Steve Laidlaw

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I am starting to notice a trend forming here at DobberHockey. And whenever I see that I immediately backpedal to take stock of the situation and prepare to take advantage of it. Many of the experts, myself included (feel free to debate the validity of my expert status another time) have Corey Perry pegged for a fall. There is a lot of evidence for this assertion but it is very important to consider just how to use that to your advantage. That's why this week's *Cage Match* is not your typical *Cage Match*. It is not player vs. player. Instead it is Corey Perry against the World, because that is what it is starting to feel like.

Here's my bit on Perry from the Dobberhockey Fantasy Guide:

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Perry has so much going for him it seems foolish to put him on this list, but he will go as high as first overall in some fantasy drafts and I worry about that. I worry that Selanne cannot repeat the magic. I worry that Getzlaf is becoming injury prone. I worry that Fowler will have a sophomore slump. I worry that Visnovsky will not stay healthy. I worry that Perry's 17.2% shooting was well above his norm. I worry that only half of all players to score 50 goals in a season follow up that season by scoring even 40 goals the following season.

Clearly I have my doubts about Perry repeating his magical 2010-11 season. Meanwhile, Ryan Ma is projecting a similar decline in his *Not With a 10-Foot Pole* column and Jeff Angus is *Fearlessly Forecasting* that Perry will score less than 40 goals this season. That's three Dobberhockey writers making some very serious criticisms of Perry. Assuming you buy those criticisms how can you apply that information?

Context is key. You'll note that I did not actually make any projections for Perry in my piece but rather just indicated he is due for a decline. Allow me to rectify that now with a ranged projection. I feel that Perry is good for somewhere between 35-40 goals and 80-90 points. To further frame this for you allow me to elaborate.

Perry registered 48 and 49 assists in the last two seasons respectively so I am basically conceding that he is good for around 50 assists but no higher. Meanwhile I am lowering his goal total for all the reasons outlined earlier.

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So you've got your projection, now what do you do with it? I think that first you should question whether you agree with it. I reviewed the projected stats of four different fantasy guides (including Dobberhockey's own) and found their projections to be more optimistic about Perry's production this season. The average of those projections worked out to be 44 goals and 93 points with no guide projecting lower than 41 goals or higher than 46. The low and high for assists were 47 and 50. Essentially these guides are putting a lot more stock in Perry's production last season. It is worth noting that much like I did, these guides are booking Perry for around 50 assists. It really does seem to be a good bet.

Now also consider that Perry exists outside the world of fantasy hockey and all the statistical analyses that go with it. He is all about winning and a big part of how he goes about that is scoring. He has made a wonderful career for himself by proving people wrong. Questionable skating led to him slipping in his draft year but he has now become the preeminent power forward in the NHL. Tasting a little success like winning the MVP trophy will not change Perry because he is simply driven to succeed. He will keep on doing what he does, the rest of us be damned. So maybe 50 goals and 17.2% shooting are just how he rolls now. I think it is unlikely but we need to come to terms with the possibility that it is true.

Even if you cannot fathom a world where that is true please at least consider that going into last season Perry was a borderline top 10 skater in your standard 6x4 league because of his position (RW) , his fantastic peripherals and his solid point production with upside for more. Now that he's shown he can hit that upside you should be a lot more confident about that top 10 status.

Furthermore, a lot of the players you'd have considered ahead of Perry have come back to the pack. Sidney Crosby's brain is the biggest question mark in fantasy hockey. Malkin's knees are

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a close second and third. New Jersey is a swamp so both Kovalchuk and Parise are seriously questionable (Side Note: Look no further than Parise for a good comparable for Perry in terms of regression.) Heatley has fallen completely off the fantasy radar and determining Mike Green's true value has been harder than finding Where's Waldo and his god damned scrolls.

That leaves just Daniel Sedin, Ovechkin and St. Louis as skaters you would definitely take ahead of Perry, along with Stamkos and Henrik Sedin as guys who are in the conversation. For what it is worth I do not see the overall stats of a H. Sedin or Stamkos as good enough from the center position to definitively choose them over a right winger like Perry. For the sake of argument let us do the math. I will compare the averages for the last two seasons for each player (Note: Perry's two year averages are in line with my projected numbers for this season so you can take them as such.)

Goals	Assists	Plus/Minus	PIM	PPP	SOG	
H. Sedin	24	79	plus-30.5	44	31	161.5
Stamkos	48	45	plus-0.5	56	38.5	284.5
Perry	38.5	48.5	plus-4.5	107.5	27	280

Henrik gives you major advantages in Assists and Plus/Minus with a small advantage in PPP

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while yielding a major disadvantages in SOG, PIM and Goals. There is in general a slight bias given towards the points based stats (Goals, Assists, PPP) and Sedin takes 2/3 but overall the stats are split and with Perry on RW I'll take him and fill out my center position later.

Stamkos gives you serious advantages in Goals and PPP while yielding a major disadvantage in PIM. Here we see Stamkos with a 2-1 lead in categories as well as a 2-0 lead in the biased points based stats. That could be enough to warrant you choosing him ahead of Perry but never the less that still lands Perry in the top five for skaters.

So what we are seeing here is the power of context. It may seem like the World (or at least those of us at DobberHockey) hate Corey Perry but that is simply not the case. Ma and Angus will have their own interpretations of what they mean by projecting a decline for Perry but for me it is more about the raw numbers than the actual draft position. In the DobberHockey Fantasy Guide I most certainly am railing against the thought of drafting Perry first overall but I definitely think he is a top five forward and that is still a significant improvement for him compared to this time last year. Remember to be an active reader when reading our articles (this one included). Try to frame the information as it applies to you and your leagues. I am not so sure we can choose a winner in this week's Cage Match. I believe that by thinking critically both Perry and the World can win this one. I would bet my house that Perry's numbers decline this year but I would also bet on him as a top five fantasy skater. That kind of context is important.