

Monthly Mock: Mocktober

Written by Matt Bugg

Saturday, 04 October 2008 01:11 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 October 2008 12:28



It's October, and that means the 2009 NHL Entry Draft is just nine months away. Each month in this space until June, Bugg Bytes will toss up a brand spankin' new mock draft. Prepare for a bumpy ride as the regular season, international tourneys and playoffs wreak havoc on the stocks of players.

1. Atlanta Thrashers

Victor Hedman, D

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12/18/1990 6'6, 220 lbs

2008-09 Team: MoDo (SEL)

2008-09 Stats: 6 GP, 0-3-3

Why They'll Pick Here: It should be obvious. The Thrashers have a great young defense and a superstar forward, but shockingly little depth elsewhere. Among the sad-but-true facts that litter the roster, Atlanta's defacto number one center (Erik Christensen) has never broken forty points in the NHL.

Who They'd Take: The Thrashers have dedicated themselves to building from the blueline out. They may lose Kovalchuk in the next couple of years, but forcing opposing forwards to deal with Tobias Enstrom, Zach Bogosian and Victor Hedman before they even get a shot on Kari Lehtonen would help cushion the blow. Hedman is an unbelievable talent, just as capable of ragdolling his opponents as he is of rushing the puck up ice.

2. New York Islanders

John Tavares, LW

6'0, 198 lbs 9/20/1990

2008-09 Team: Oshawa Generals (OHL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP, 5-5-10

Why They'll Pick Here: You know a team's offensive depth is bad when fans rue the loss of Ruslan Fedotenko as a major loss in the top six. No Islander broke 50 points in 2007-08, and with two of the top six scorers on the team now departed, the odds anyone does this year look even worse.

Who They'd Take: Ten points in five games later and Tavares is still a safe bet to go top-two. It'll all depend on the needs of the team picking first. Tavares would help revive the Isles like Pat Lafontaine did in the early 90s. It may not be Gillies-Trottier-Bossy, but Tavares-Bailey-Okposo would be a handful.

3. Vancouver Canucks

Magnus Svensson-Pääjärvi, C/LW

4/12/1991 6'1, 198 lbs

2008-09 Team: Timrå IK (SEL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP, 0-2-2

Why They'll Pick Here: The Canucks will have a very similar roster to the one they iced in 2007-08, but it's the teams that were once below them that have improved. We still expect St. Louis, Columbus and LA to fight for first overall, but let's say for fun the Nucks slide to 7th-reasonable considering they were 10th last year, and Phoenix, Florida and Tampa have improved- but they win the lottery.

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Who They'd Take: With the Sedins slipping closer to free agency, the addition of a top-end Swede forward might entice them to stay. And it wouldn't be just a token pick, either; as explained in this column a couple of weeks ago, 'MSP' has size and skill not seen together in Sweden since Peter Forsberg.

4. Los Angeles Kings

Landon Ferraro, C

8/8/1991 6'1, 180 lbs

2008-09 Team: Red Deer Rebels (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP, 3-5-8

Why They'll Pick Here: Erik Ersberg, Jason Labarbera and Jonathan Bernier are being sold by the LA faithful as capable starters right now. While two of the three are young enough to still realize that potential, 2008-09 is right now. Besides, Terry Sawchuk couldn't help this D; freakin' Sean O'Donnell will be a top-three defender.

Who They'd Take: The Kings don't covet bloodlines like some other teams, but what they do covet are leaders. Ferraro was a bit of a disappointment last year, but a summer growth spurt has given the smart, feisty pivot new life. Capable of controlling the game and boosting his teammates like Eric Staal, Ferraro and Kopitar would give the Kings a one-two punch down the middle like few others.

5. Toronto Maple Leafs

Brayden Schenn, RW

8/22/1991 6'0, 196 lbs

2008-09 Team: Brandon Wheat Kings (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 4 GP, 2-2-4, 7 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: The Leafs, for the first time in their history, may be underrated. Most expect the club to contend for first overall. Newsflash: they aren't that bad. We're not saying they'll make the playoffs, but this is a team that will revel in the role of spoiler and could be prone to one or two hot streaks.

Who They'd Take: It's perfect for marketing the new Leafs, and it fills a need. Expect to see this storyline everywhere this year. Like his sibling, Schenn offers the same traits as his brother: a physical, never-back-down attitude and an enviable work ethic. Obviously more offensively skilled than Luke, Brayden is a Wendel Clark-esque talent.

6. Minnesota Wild

Matt Duchene, C

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1/16/1991 5'11, 196 lbs

2008-09 Team: Brampton Battalion

2008-09 Stats: 3 GP, 1-2-3

Why They'll Pick Here: Because even the trap can't save this team. Icing a roster that hasn't been this thin since the days of Scott Pellerin, the Wild are in the midst of a youth movement that has little veteran star power to ease the growing pains.

Who They'd Take: You know it's a good draft year when a 30-goal rookie doesn't crack the top five. Duchene is as hard a worker as you'll find; his pesky stick frees more pucks than any other player in major junior. Great speed and a wicked shot allow him to cash in on created opportunities. He'd be the picture-perfect addition to Minnesota's sit-back-and-wait system.

In Five Years:

Gaborik-Duchene-Bouchard
Pouliot-Gillies-Sheppard

Cuma-Burns
Schultz-Stoner

Harding

7. St. Louis Blues

Richard Panik, RW

2/7/1991 6'1, 189 lbs

2008-09 Team: Trinec Ocelari HC (Cze)

2008-09 Stats: N/A

Why They'll Pick Here: The Blues are going to be one of the league's most entertaining teams if the pre-season is any indication. They aren't going to win a lot, mind you, but they're going to be fun to watch. Manny Legace had an unrepeatably year in 2007-08, and he still only won 27 games.

Who They'd Take: The Blues will try to keep up in a Western Conference arms race that has seen LA, Chicago, Edmonton and Phoenix boast some of the best talents in the league. Some compare Panik to Jagr, but we say he's more Sykora. Regardless, the Slovak winger is a pure finisher who has superstar upside.

In Five Years:

Eller-Berglund-Panik
Perron-Oshie-Boyes

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EJ-Pietrangelo
Cole-Wagner

Bishop

8. Calgary Flames

Anton Lander, C

4/24/1991 5'11, 176 lbs

2008-09 Team: Timrå IK (SEL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP 1-1-2

Why They'll Pick Here: The Flames made a big deal of adding speed in the form of Mike Cammalleri, Curtis Glencross and Rene Bourque. They also added another big body in Big Bert. But while Kristian Huselius and Alex Tanguay floated their way through most games, the pair combined for 124 points. 'Cammy', Glencross and Bourque would have to match or exceed career years to replace it.

Who They'd Take: The Flames have realized they need offensive support to compete in the Northwest, and Lander would certainly help. Similar in style to much-beloved Flame alum Kenta Nilsson, Lander's great vision would be a great match for Iginla.

In Five Years:

Cammalleri-Lander-Iginla
Boyd-Backlund-Nemisz

Phaneuf-Negrin
Regehr-Pelech

Irving

9. New Jersey Devils

Jared Cowen, D

1/25/1991 6'6, 218 lbs

2008-09 Team: Spokane Chiefs (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 4 GP 1-1-2, +4, 2 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: The Devils have gotten unsurpassed mileage out of the trap, Martin Brodeur and a hodgepodge cast on defense. But something eventually has to give. Brodeur has quietly posted two of his most impressive seasons ever, but he's now 36. Were the playoffs an aberration or the beginning of the end?

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Who They'd Take: The Jersey blueline has been oddly vacant of starpower after a decade of Stevens and Niedermayer. Cowen is more of the former, boasting a Canadian brand of hockey. His 6'6 frame allows him to punish forwards along the boards like Stevens did to intruders in open ice. Now all they need is a high-end puck mover.

In Five Years:

Tedenby-Parise-Bergfors
Elias-Zajac-Zubrus

Cowen-Greene
Eckford-Corrente

Brodeur?

10. Colorado Avalanche

Olivier Roy, G

7/12/1991 6'0, 167 lbs

2008-09 Team: Cape Breton Eagles (QMJHL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP, 5-0-0, 3.20 GAA, 0.897 Sv%

Why They'll Pick Here: Goaltending, goaltending, goaltending. And defense, defense, defense. Colorado's only saving grace is its popgun offense, and slumps by any of the young kids would be the death knell for the Avs. Look out for one or two, plus troubles elsewhere.

Who They'd Take: No, they aren't related. But Olivier Roy is damn good anyway. One of the best teens ever in how he plays the position, Olivier- like St. Patrick- relies on his positioning instead of wild movement. Fans can finally stop joking about the Avs having no goaltending.

In Five Years:

Wolski-Stastny-Hensick
Svatos-Galiardi-Jones

Leopold-Cumiskey
Shattenkirk-Williams

Roy

11. Nashville Predators

Nazem Kadri, C

10/6/1990 6'0, 177 lbs

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2008-09 Team: London Knights (OHL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP, 2-3-5, -2, 2 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Like the Leafs, the Preds will be a hard-working unit that has just enough kid power to be fresh. However, the Preds have a couple of years on the Leafs in being a team, and that means they should scrape closer to a playoff spot.

Who They'd Take: Alex Radulov's departure is not all bad news; without him, the Preds should falter in the standings, and that means they'll have a chance at a much better player. Kadri is one such forward. Called a franchise forward by some, Kadri will likely be on the lower end of that range ala Ales Hemsky. A dazzling puckhandler, the level of his stardom is irrelevant as his moves can put butts in the seats.

In Five Years:

Erat-Kadri-Hornqvist
Santorelli-Wilson-Pihlstrom

Weber-Suter
Hamhuis-Blum

Pickard

12. Columbus Blue Jackets

Collin Bowman, D

13/6/1991 6'2, 192 lbs

2008-09 Team: Kelowna Rockets (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 4 GP, 1-3-4, -2, 8 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: The Jackets have rapidly gained respectability under head coach Ken Hitchcock. Everyone is buying in, and the pieces that make up the system are getting better and more mature. The Jackets had no business being in the bottom ten last year if it weren't for Pascal Leclaire's injury. A healthy return to form and the emergence of Derick Brassard and Jakub Voracek will compliment free agent additions R.J. Umberger and Kristian Huselius.

Who They'd Take: You heard it here first: Collin Bowman will be a top twelve pick. Tutored by Luke Schenn last year on the Rockets blueline, Bowman's pedigree is actually offense. Regardless, the mentorship has turned him into one of the best two-way D in the Dub. Now showing sudden sparks of physicality, the Larry Murphy-esque defender will boom up the boards until June.

In Five Years:

Nash-Brassard-Voracek

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Mayorov-Filatov-Legein

Russell-Bowman
Methot-Plekhanov

Mason

13. Florida

Jacob Josefson, C

12/3/1991 6'0, 190 lbs

2008-09 Team: Djurgårdens IF Stockholm (SEL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP, 2-0-0

Why They'll Pick Here: It was addition through subtraction for the Panthers. Olli Jokinen's presence was more distraction than asset, and the team seemed complacent as a whole. Now, Nathan Horton and Shawn Matthias are leading the charge, and the Panthers haven't looked this ratty since the mid-90s. Solid goaltending and a deep, mobile D make this a team to seriously watch in a bad division.

Who They'd Take: The Panthers are enduring their second or third rebuild this decade, but this one looks to finally be paying off. Already sporting a talented young nucleus of Horton, Olesz, Ballard, Matthias and Michael Frolik, Josefson is a homerun pick that could make fans forget about Olli Jokinen. While not as big, Josefson is far grittier and far more willing to crash the net than 6'3 Olli ever was.

In Five Years:

Booth-Matthias-Horton
Olesz-Josefson-Frolik

Bouwmeester-Ballard
Bonyton-Robak

Markstrom

14. Chicago Blackhawks

Ryan Ellis, D

13/1/1991 5'10, 173 lbs

2008-09 Team: Windsor Spitfires (OHL)

2008-09 Stats: 4 GP 3-3-6, 2 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: 14 would be three picks higher than last year. Can they do it even with

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the void at second line center that was Robert Lang? Well, two or three rookies should be able to replace the offense. And the team has only gotten better in net. Last but not least, Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews will only get better.

Who They'd Take: The Hawks have learned that their young stud forwards need a D capable of moving the puck in transition, and they brought in Brian Campbell to help. Ellis is a top-seven pick based purely on talent, and plays the game exactly like Campbell: fast, risky and entertaining. At 5'9, bigger forwards tend to overpower him, but his skill- and awesome shot- are undeniable.

In Five Years:

Makarov-Toews-Kane
Aliu-Bolland-Skille

Seabrook-Campbell
Keith-Ellis

15. Ottawa Senators

Toni Rajala, RW

3/29/1991 5'8, 160 lbs

2008-09 Team: Ilves Tampere (Fin J20)

2008-09 Stats: 7 GP, 5-3-8, +7, 0 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: A once-proud blueline has been decimated by time, bad luck and poor decision-making. Meanwhile, the team has never really had a good goalie, and that persists into 2008-09. Oh yeah, and the depth up front has gotten so shallow that the unbeatable trio of Heatley-Spezza-Alfie will not start the year together. But we remain confident the Sens can challenge for a playoff spot; there's just too much raw talent here for the team not to win at least a few games.

Who They'd Take: At the 2008 Draft, the Sens showed they aren't afraid to make risky picks to help replenish a surprisingly shallow pipelines. Rajala would be a huge steal at 15; a top-five pick based solely on talent- he could be the best Finnish player ever- a 5'9 frame is the only thing holding him back. As Alfredsson heads into his later years, Rajala would be the perfect replacement.

In Five Years:

Heatley-Spezza-Rajala
Foligno-Zubov-O'Brien

Lee-Volchenkov
Lyamin-Karlsson

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Elliott

16. Pittsburgh

Jordan Schroeder, RW

29/9/1990 5'9, 180 lbs

2008-09 Team: U. Minnesota (NCAA)

2008-09 Stats: N/A

Why: A 17 year-old starring on a highly ranked NCAA program's top line? At 23, what's the catch? Size. At 5'8 and 150 pounds, speedy winger Jordan Schroeder is a high-end playmaker that any team would love to have. While not the potent finisher the Pens would ultimately like for Sid the Kid, Schroeder's elite vision and hands would compliment Evgeni Malkin just fine.

In Five Years:

Pylon-Crosby-Pylon
Staal-Malkin-Schroeder

Orpik-Whitney
Letang-Goligoski

Fleury

17. Carolina Hurricanes

Simon Despres, D

27/7/1991 6'3, 208 lbs

2008-09 Team: Saint John Sea Dogs (QMJHL)

2008-09 Stats: 7 GP, 0-2-2, 8 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: The Canes have developed a reputation as a fountain of youth for players. Sergei Samsonov and Joni Pitkanen look better than they ever have, and Eric Staal is returning to his 100-point form. So what's the problem? Carolina has essentially lost three top six forwards, with Erik Cole and Cory Stillman elsewhere and Justin Williams on the shelf for months once again. They've done little to replace them, and all it would take for a serious dive is for Rod Brind'Amour to suddenly lose his mojo.

Who They'd Take: The Canes haven't drafted a defender in the first round since Jack Johnson in 2005. Bad memories, maybe? This pick also goes against the team's trend of taking WHLers

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in the first round. However, Carolina's pipeline is now rife with forwards. Taking a d-man- especially a cerebral 6'3 one who can skate- would be a good use of the pick. Despres' biggest knock is comfort; he doesn't like to gamble, despite having the wheels, size and hands to move the puck like Ray Bourque.

In Five Years:

Bowman-Staal-Dalpe
Terry-Boychuk-Reed
Sutter

Pitkanen-Gleason
McBain-Despres

18. Phoenix Coyotes

Dmitri Kulikov, D

29/10/1990 6'1, 195 lbs

2008-09 Team: Drummondville (QMJHL)

2008-09 Stats: 7 GP, 2-6-8, 4 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Unlike other pretenders, the Coyotes have the personnel to be a successful run-and-gun team. Shane Doan, Peter Mueller and Kyle Turris will be joined by Olli Jokinen, Mikkel Boedker, Kevin Porter and Viktor Tikhonov. Meanwhile, youngsters like Enver Lisin and Martin Hanzal are finding their stride. In goal, Ilya Bryzgalov is good enough to turn back the tide almost every night.

Who They'd Take: The Keith Ballard trade left the Coyotes without an impact defenseman. Look to Kulikov, the second overall pick in the 2008 CHL Import Draft. While most teams have run away from Russians, Phoenix has drafted a ton of them- including Viktor Tikhonov in the first round this past June. Kulikov is a slick offensive defenseman with great wheels. His technical skating and puck-handling are top-notch, and his vision fuels well-timed pinches. In his own end, Kulikov can be a tough customer with vicious hits.

In Five Years:

Boedker-Turris-Pylon
Carcillo-Mueller-Tikhonov
Maclean-Hanzal-Lisin

Michalek-Morris
Yandle-Kulikov

19. Tampa Bay Lightning

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Tyson Barrie, D

26/7/1991 5'9, 165 lbs

2008-09 Team: Kelowna Rockets (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 4 GP, 1-4-5, -2, 4 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Perhaps no team in NHL history has revamped both their lineup and farm team as quickly as the Lightning. In a season and a half, Tampa has a bona fide top six in Vaclav Prospal, Vincent Lecavalier, Marty St. Louis, Ryan Malone, Steve Stamkos and Radim Vrbata. On the back end, Tampa's D is close to 2003-04 good. But net is still a problem, and what holds this team back from the second round.

Who They'd Take: Here's another storyline, and kudos to a pal for pointing it out: Len Barrie is the new owner of the Lightning. His son, Tyson, happens to be draft-eligible and a projected first round pick. Beyond that, it's a perfect fit need-wise. Barrie plays exactly like the recently-departed and much-missed Dan Boyle. Like Boyle, Barrie measures under six feet, but makes up for it with a stellar rushing game that can both ignite and finish the attack.

In Five Years:

Cunti-Lecavalier-Tyrell
Malone-Stamkos-Killorn

O'Brien-Meszaros
Mihalik-Barrie

Helenius

20. Buffalo Sabres

Louis Leblanc, C

26/1/1990 5'11, 170 lbs

2008-09 Team: Omaha Lancers (USHL)

2008-09 Stats: 3 GP, 0-2-2, -2, 2 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Pure talent has been replaced by pure hustle in Buffalo, and as a result the Sabres are nowhere near as bad as most predicted they would be. However, while Thomas Vanek has found great chemistry with Derek Roy and Jason Pominville, the Sabres still lack great depth up front and starpower on defense.

Who They'd Take: The Sabres love projects, but not just any projects. They covet skill, awareness and skating ability at any cost. Leblanc is going to be one of the more interesting names bandied about; his hockey sense is reputedly among the best in the class, and so are his hands (I say reputedly as I and many others have yet to see him). However, his quest to attend an Ivy League program has taken him on a strange circuit and off the radars of scouts.

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In Five Years:

Vanek-Roy-Pominville
Leblanc-Zagapan-Stafford

Sekera-Weber
Card-Myers

Miller

21. Boston Bruins

Jeremy Morin, LW

16/4/1991 6'0, 185 lbs

2008-09 Team: USNTDP U18

2008-09 Stats: 2 GP, 4-2-6

Why They'll Be Picking Here: Boston picked four spots earlier last summer, and while goaltending is as big a question mark as ever, the Bs replaced Glen Murray with Michael Ryder and will get to enjoy another year of development by whiz kids David Krejci and Milan Lucic. The continued maturation of Phil Kessel and contributions by coveted and controversial free agent Blake Wheeler seal the deal.

Who They'd Take: The Bs should have heard plenty by now about Morin's exploits while in the East Coast Junior Hockey League. As talented a finisher as they come, Morin seems to have reversed his decision to jump to the OHL, as we thought he would last month. Now he's back with the USNTDP, and that will mean slightly weaker competition. Look for him to make big noise as he fights for a spot on the World Junior roster. Long-term, he'd be the perfect winger for Patrice Bergeron.

In Five Years:

Krejci-Kessel-Lucic
Morin-Bergeron-Wheeler

Stuart-Lashoff

Rask

22. Edmonton Oilers

Andrej Nestrasil, LW

22/2/1991 6'2, 194 lbs

2008-09 Team: Victoriaville Tigres (QMJHL)

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2008-09 Stats: 7 GP, 4-3-7, 8 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Because not only does Edmonton have the inside track on the division crown, but they have the type of roster that could seriously upset a team in the first round. Mathieu Garon has been questioned by some, but there's no second-guessing the addition of Stanley Cup champion Erik Cole and star defender Lubomir Visnovsky. The Kid Line of Robert Nilsson, Sam Gagner and Andrew Cogliano will be producing offense that could rival that of the top line's. And last but not least, Sheldon Souray can't possibly have a worse season than his debut in Oilers colors... can he?

Who They'd Take: Time to start the hype train again. Last year it was Jordan Eberle. In 2009, look out for Czech winger Andrej Nestrasil. A participant in his home country's U18 league when he was 14, Nestrasil has quietly become one of the top young Euro prospects in the world. Or, well, it was quiet. The eighth overall pick in the 2008 CHL Import Draft, Nestrasil had a slow start for Victoriaville of the QMJHL before potting a hat-trick last weekend. A Vanek clone right down to the way he uses his long reach to come up with unique dekes, the 6'2 winger would be the perfect linemate for Oilers star and fellow countryman Ales Hemsky. Oh, and he wouldn't cost \$70M either.

In Five Years:

Penner-Gagner-Eberle
Nestrasil-Horcoff-Hemsky

Visnovsky-Gilbert
Peckham-Chorney

Dubnyk

23. San Jose

Taylor Doherty, D

2/3/1991 6'6, 215 lbs

2008-09 Team: Kingston Frontenacs (OHL)

2008-09 Stats: 3 GP, 0-0-0, -4

Why They'll Pick Here: San Jose revamped a tame blueline in just one summer with the additions of Dan Boyle and Rob Blake. Up front, Joe Thornton continues to hum along at an MVP-calibre pace, Patrick Marleau may have finally turned the corner, and a young supporting cast of Joe Pavelski, Ryan Clowe, Devin Setoguchi and Torrey Mitchell will provide the hunger. Playoffs are another story, but this team and Vezina-calibre goalie Evgeni Nabokov should prove dynamite in the regular season.

Who They'd Take: Because 6'8 defenders don't come along often. And unlike fellow CHL behemoth Jared Cowen, Doherty has a touch of an offensive game. It's just everything else that

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needs work. A good skater with some room, the typical challenges for big men apply. The Sharks would have a unique weapon not found on many other rosters in Doherty.

In Five Years:

Clowe-Thornton-Setoguchi
Michalek-Pavelski-Morris

Boyle-Vlasic
Doherty-Petrecki

24. New York Rangers

Tomas Vincour, RW

19/11/1990 6'2, 205 lbs

2008-09 Team: Edmonton Oil Kings (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 6 GP, 1-3-4, Even, 2 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Good question, actually. Can a team that lost Brendan Shanahan and Jaromir Jagr really be better the next year? Markus Naslund and Nikolai Zherdev aren't miracle workers, and they don't have to be. Islands of stardom in Chris Drury, Scott Gomez and Wade Redden should help a very deep, very young and very determined roster get to the next level.

Who They'd Take: The Rangers have changed their philosophy, turning to gritty, high IQ players at every position. They're reaping the benefits in Drury, Dubinsky, Callahan and Staal, and they could cash in again with Czech winger Tomas Vincour. Under-appreciated thanks to a bad team, Vincour is an immovable object in front of the net as he bats at rebounds and loose pucks. Not a slick sniper, Vincour would add an interesting weapon regardless for when the Rags eventually do acquire a sniper that can put Scott Gomez's passes on target.

In Five Years:

Cherepanov-Gomez-Vincour
Dawes-Dubinsky-Zherdev

Staal-Redden
Sanguinetti-Sauer

Lundqvist

25. Philadelphia Flyers

Zack Kassian, RW

24/1/1991 6'3, 205 lbs

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2008-09 Team: Peterborough Petes (OHL)

2008-09 Stats: 2 GP, 1-2-3, Even, 9 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Once again, the Flyers have a lot going for them. Philly is deep almost to the point of it being detrimental, with guys like Claude Giroux Calder-worthy on other teams but fighting for ice-time on the orange and black. The Flyers have the right mix for right now-starpower, leadership, grit, and skill.

Who They'd Take: The Broadstreet Bullies are back and meaner than ever. A pick like Kassian would further solidify their reputation as a team not to be ****ed with. An intimidating 6'3, 203 lbs, the younger brother of Wild pugilist prospect Matt Kassian has worlds more skill but just as much meanness. See: a checking to the head major that lead to a seat in the corner for last weekend's games.

In Five Years:

Lupul-Richards-Kassian
Hartnell-Carter-Giroux

Timonen-Coburn
Parent-Eminger

Biron

26. Anaheim Ducks

Drew Shore, C

29/1/1991 6'2, 188 lbs

2008-09 Team: USNTDP U18

2008-09 Stats: 4 GP, 4-4-8

Why They'll Pick Here: As much as love to hate them, the Anaheim Ducks have a lot of the pieces back from their successful Stanley Cup run two seasons ago. Age and rust are going to play a big factor in the team's success, so we'll pencil them in here and see if one of the most dominant teams in recent memory can find its rhythm again.

Who They'd Take: Despite rampant stereotyping, the Ducks are actually one of the most diverse-drafting teams in the league. Last year, they grabbed players from every CHL league, Junior A, the US National Team and Europe. The only requirement is smarts. Drew Shore certainly qualifies. Big enough at 6'2 to play the gritty game the Ducks like, Shore is a tremendous playmaker who is quickly discovering his shot. At a recent tournament, he scored four goals and four assists in just four games.

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Ryan-Getzlaf-Perry
Kunitz-Shore-Tangradi

Mitera-Salcido
Mikkelson-Gardiner

Hiller

27. Dallas Stars

Evander Kane, C

2/8/1991 5'11, 160 lbs

2008-09 Team: Vancouver Giants (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 5 GP, 4-3-7, +3, 10 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: They may not have as many Norrises on their blueline as the Ducks, the Stars get results just the same, and they get bragging rights over the Ducks thanks to last year's playoffs. It's a strange mix for the Stars, but it works and works well.

Who They'd Take: The Stars have done an awesome job of restocking a once-vacant prospect pool in just two years. And while a number of unknowns have become gems, Dallas lacks an impact, bleuchip youngster with a good resume. They'd get that in Kane. An aggressive yet highly skilled forward, the poor man's Iginla (and we're not just basing that on skin color) has the kind of hustle that winning teams need. One only needs to count his gold medals from various tournaments to see that. However, the biggest barrier may be Gilbert Brule Syndrome. Can Kane play his gritty game against men?

In Five Years:

Morrow-Ribeiro-Brunnstrom
Benn-Kane-Korostin

Niskanen-Grossman
Daley-Vishnevskiy

Bachman

28. Washington Capitals

Erik Haula, LW

23/3/1991 6'0, 170 lbs

2008-09 Team: Shattuck-St. Mary's (USHS)

2008-09 Stats: 6 GP, 1-3-4 (Ivan Hlinka U18)

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Why They'll Pick Here: Jose Theodore may have as many fans Ollie Kolzig these days, but even he doesn't have to play faultless to be a member of an Eastern Conference finalist. The Caps have enough talent in every area to make up for what might be uneven goaltending, and there's no guarantee that it's even an issue. Watch and enjoy the ride.

Who They'd Take: With a terrific stockpile of young talent at every position (see: Ovechkin, Backstrom, Semin, Green...) the Caps have some room to gamble. 5'10 Finnish winger Erik Haula was, for a brief period of time, hyped along with Toni Rajala as the new hopes of Finnish hockey. But while Rajala has maintained his star status, Haula is headed for Shattuck St. Mary's, the hockey factory that has seen Crosby, Zajac, Stafford and others cross its doors. It's a strange choice but the extra acclimatization period to North American hockey may give Haula an edge over Rajala. A playmaker more than a finisher, Haula could be the perfect future linemate for an all-Euro line of Haula-Anton Gustafsson-Alex Semin.

In Five Years:

Ovechkin-Backstrom-Bouchard
Haula-Gustafsson-Semin

Green-Alzner
Schultz-Lepisto

Varlamov

29. Montreal Canadiens

Jimmy Bubnick, C

19/1/1991 6'2, 190 lbs

2008-09 Team: Kamloops Blazers (WHL)

2008-09 Stats: 6 GP, 4-3-7, +1, 2 PIM

Why They'll Pick Here: Bold prediction: the Habs not only go all the way to the Eastern Conference Finals, but they edge out the Caps. Washington may have this guy named Alex Ovechkin, but the Habs have a truly special group of players ready to leapfrog the haphazard Pittsburgh Penguins. They also have just enough leadership and experience to beat the Caps, who will be fighting the Pens every year after this for a Finals berth.

Who They'd Take: The Habs have a unique strategy when keying on a position they lack: use the majority of their picks in a singular draft on that position. Faced with a dearth of high-end d-men at the 2007 Draft, Trevor Timmins and friends invested six of nine picks on the position. In 2008, seeing a lack of wingers, Montreal utilized three of five picks there. What's next? Certainly not a goalie; organizational depth is fantastic in that regard. Instead, look down the middle. While the Habs have taken one or every year, they lack an impact player to play behind- or in front of- Tomas Plekanec.

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Keep an eye, then, on Jimmy Bubnick. The 6'2 center began his major junior career as a checking forward with both the Kamloops Blazers and Canada's U18 team. A very coachable, very intelligent forward, Bubnick has been given the leash to lead the offense in Kamloops, and he's responded with four goals and seven points in four games. Not a bruiser despite a fairly solid frame, Bubnick thrives at driving the net with his long reach and decent hands. A quick release completes the package. Kostitsyn-Plekanec-Kostitsyn is pretty good, but imagine an all-power line of Pacioretty-Bubnick-Latendresse backing them up.

In Five Years:

S. Kostitsyn-Plekanec-A. Kostitsyn
Pacioretty-Bubnick-Latendresse

Komisarek-O'Byrne
McDonagh-Carle

Price

30. Detroit Red Wings

Andrei Kuchin, RW

11/2/1991 5'9, 180 lbs

2008-09 Team: Vityaz Podolsk

2008-09 Stats: N/A

Why They'll Pick Here: Because there's no question who the Cup favorites are. After manhandling a loaded Pens squad, the Wings saw one of their best opponents come over to the other side. Poor goaltending or an injury to the seemingly unbreakable Nik Lidstrom are the only things standing in the way of a Detroit repeat.

Who They'd Take: The Detroit Red Wings are all about skill and hockey sense, no matter how big or how unrefined the package it comes in is. If you can skate, can dangle and can read the play, the Wings will gladly have you. Mattias Ritola, Zack Torquato and Logan Pyett are recent picks of varying pedigrees who fit this philosophy, and of course Hank Zetterberg and Pavel Datsyuk sit at the front of the class. Allowing the Wings to select 17 year-old phenom Andrei Kuchin would be a crime, regardless of how lazy or diva-ish he is said to be. And that- besides the transfer agreement- is the biggest barrier right now.

But the Wings will do their homework, if they haven't already. Kuchin's bad rep is a lot of smoke; a tough coach severely limited his ice-time in 2007-08, and while it maybe would have been ideal for the talented sniper to join the CHL, Kuchin has instead dedicated himself to trying to make his mark at home. Lazy? Selfish? Yeah right. A speedy, heady winger with dazzling hands, Kuchin's wrist shot accuracy is the best in the draft. A line of Zetterberg-Datsyuk-Kuchin would require the UN being called in to sanction it.

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In Five Years:

Zetterberg-Datsyuk-Kuchin
Axelsson-Franzen-Emmerton

Kronwall-Ericsson
Kindl-Smith

Howard