A new year, a new top five? Not necessarily, but that doesn't mean recent events such as the CHL Top Prospects Game and the release of both Bob McKenzie's and Central Scouting's Mid-Term rankings hasn't changed things further down the order.

1. New Jersey Devils- D Adam Larsson (Skelleftea/Elitserien)

Coaching changes are often like adrenaline shots, but in the case of the New Jersey Devils, you can't revive something that doesn't have a pulse. Under Jacques Lemaire's guidance- again- the Devils have seen their offensive stars begin to produce, but the wins haven't followed.

In the team's sights should be Adam Larsson. Although mercurial during the World Juniors- culminating in a dominant final game- Larsson has continued to be a defensive rock no matter the stage. Once a pantheon of defensive talent with Scott Stevens, Scott Niedermayer and

eventually Paul Martin carrying the torch, New Jersey's steady decline has stemmed from a shallow blueline. Larsson is the answer, and even if he never becomes a 60-point producer, he will nevertheless make a difference in the NHL for upwards of thirty minutes a night.

2. Edmonton Oilers- C Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (Red Deer/WHL)

If you've been to edmontonoilers.com lately, besides headline after headline trying to make light of a steady string of losses, you've likely seen videos and articles gushing about Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. It's as firm a hint as any that the Oilers and head scout Stu MacGregor are leaning in the diminutive center's direction. A highly-skilled, highly competitive forward who offsets his size with passion and good defensive acumen, 'RNH' may not be scoring goals in buckets, but the Oilers have accumulated enough scoring wingers that a speedy playmaking pivot now makes sense. Should he continue to develop physically- his brother topped out at 6'0 190 lbs- Nugent-Hopkins projects favorably with Detroit Red Wings maestro Pavel Datsyuk.

3. New York Islanders- D Ryan Murphy (Kitchener/OHL)

Lacking offensive support for centerpiece John Tavares, which would help the Islanders more- a Swedish power forward or a 6'4 two-way center? How about neither? A goal often begins in a team's defensive end, and there may be no prospect in the world better at dominating the transition game than 5'10 Ryan Murphy. Although not the ideal size for a top-pairing rearguard, the Isles have shadowed the Wings in recent years by taking the most skill and hockey sense no matter the package. Based on that metric, Murphy is a close second to Larsson and the Islanders may be the team to recognize to that.

4. Ottawa Senators- C/LW Sean Couturier (Drummondville/QMJHL)

Being a one-line team is a great strategy when you have the horses to play that way. But when you trade one-third of one of the best lines in hockey and watch another one lose effectiveness with age, it's probably time to change your game plan. Not Bryan Murray. Stubbornly unwilling to re-make his team in the wake of Dany Heatley's departure, Murray's Senators have continued to ice a team meant for a run-and-gun style a) despite not having the talent b) hiring coaches with contrasting philosophies.

Should the Sens remain in the bottom five, Sean Couturier is likely the best choice. A defensive juggernaut who rules the face-off circle, Couturier may or may not have enough offensive skill to avoid a Chris Gratton-esque trajectory, but he can fit anywhere the rebuilding club needs him.

5. Boston Bruins (from Tor)- W Gabriel Landeskog (Kitchener/OHL)

Infinitely blessed at center thanks to Marc Savard, Patrice Bergeron and Tyler Seguin- well, eventually- the Bruins can now begin selecting the best player on the board. If Toronto continues to flounder, that player may very well be Gabriel Landeskog. A pure power forward who dominates the puck possession game, his ankle injury prevented Landeskog from driving his stock even higher at the World Juniors. However, as the injury isn't a permanent one nor

does it affect his ability to play the way he does- with his body- the injury will mean little in the long term.

6. Calgary Flames- C Ryan Strome (Niagara/OHL)

As their neighbors to the north have discovered, the Calgary Flames are facing a slow, tedious rebuild that may very well take several years- and it begins by reloading a team's prospect pool. Blessed with a solid group of prospects on the blueline, offense is by far Calgary's biggest need and there may not be a better option than Ryan Strome. Although he had a relatively quiet appearance during the CHL Top Prospects Game, Strome may have had the best game a player can have during a 7-1 loss. An excellent skater, puckhandler and stickhandler, Strome's body isn't quite where it needs to be in order to win puck battles against bigger opponents, but his heart- and stick- are more often than not in the right place.

7. Florida Panthers- D Dougie Hamilton (Niagara/OHL)

Building from the net out may not exactly have been Dale Tallon's focus in Chicago, but it's impossible to discount the importance of the team's defensive core enroute to the 2010 Stanley Cup. As such, don't be surprised to see Tallon once again focus on that department- this despite selecting Erik Gudbranson 3rd overall. Incredibly, 6'4 Dougie Hamilton may be a better prospect. A smooth, agile skater for his size who takes care of his end, Hamilton has shown flashes of offensive brilliance, including a goal during the TPG. He'd be the perfect companion to Gudbranson and offensive defender Dmitri Kulikov.

8. Buffalo Sabres- D Duncan Siemens (Saskatoon/WHL)

Like the Panthers, the Buffalo Sabres have made a decided shift in their approach from a deep, skilled team to a lunch pail group that can control puck possession. Duncan SiIemens would be just another weapon in a blueline that's welcomed Norris finalist Tyler Myers and top prospect Mark Pysyk over the last few drafts. Beyond his size and simple north-south game, Siemens' abrasive style of play is something the Sabres are sorely lacking.

9. Columbus Blue Jackets- C Jonathan Huberdeau (Saint John/QMJHL)

Instantly noticeable during the Top Prospects Game, Jonathan Huberdeau defended his Central Scouting ranking in style with a goal and an assist. However, while the lanky pivot showed off the deft puckhandling and advanced vision that earned him his #4, Hubderdeau's skating still stood out as a sore spot and his reliance on attempting to dangle through traffic led to several near-turnovers. Huberdeau will need to iron out those sore points, but if he continues to play at his current level, it will be difficult to keep him out of the top ten- especially for the Jackets, who look to have hit a homerun with Ryan Johansen but still otherwise lack depth at center.

10. Los Angeles Kings- LW Brandon Saad (Saginaw/OHL)

Boasting a top U25 player at each position, the LA Kings have nevertheless continued to

struggle. Head coach Terry Murray is no doubt on the hot seat, but should a coaching not work- or not occur- the Kings will once again find themselves picking in the top ten. Well-stocked down the middle and on the blueline, Los Angeles should turn their focus in Minneapolis on grabbing a high-end winger to replace rapidly declining veteran Ryan Smyth. Enter Pennsylvania native Brandon Saad. A tantalizing mix of top-end speed and size, the 6'2 210 lbs forward would look awful good next to 6'3 Anze Kopitar and hard-hitting Dustin Brown.

11. St. Louis Blues- LW Sven Bartschi (Portland/WHL)

Another team in need of talent on the wings, while the Blues have yet to find that magical #1 center they've been seeking since Doug Weight's departure, they've invested so many picks in that area that other needs have since emerged. Although a little smaller than most teams would like in the top half of the Draft, the Blues were more than happy to overlook such concerns in order to grab right wing Vladimir Tarasenko. An extremely similar player minus playing the other wing, Bartschi would also be BPA outside the top ten.

12. Carolina Hurricanes- C/RW Rickard Rakell (Plymouth/OHL)

Which Carolina Hurricanes-related streak will we see broken at the 2011 NHL Entry Draft first- passing up a Plymouth Whaler, or selecting a European in the first round? 6'1 185 lbs Rickard Rakell may not have the gaudy stats of teammate Stefan Noesen, but the Swedish forward has shown a versatility and pro-level style of play that earned high praise from scouts interviewed by TSN's Bob McKenzie. In fact, with the way Rakell speed and skill with good boardwork and two-way play, it would be fitting to call his game North American- a plus for a team that hasn't selected a European in the first round since 2001.

13. San Jose Sharks- RW Tyler Biggs (USNTDP)

If it's not a case of clear robbery- see Heatley, Dany and Thornton, Joe- the San Jose Sharks under GM Doug Wilson have failed to get over the hump with a variety of free agent and trade acquisitions. With their window on a Cup rapidly closing as RFA salaries escalate, the Sharks will once again have to focus on their bread and butter- the draft- if they're to have success.

Tyler Biggs is the type of rough customer San Jose should have circled in pen. Built like a brick wall at 6'2, 210 lbs, Biggs has the body to play in the NHL very soon- a plus for a team desperate for cheap entry-level deals. And, as his ranking in the Central Scouting mid-terms attests, he has the skill to make a living in the top nine. Biggs is a work in progress but could reward a team that likes taking risks; Logan Couture and Devin Setoguchi were just that on draft day, and with some patience, Biggs could one day be as successful.

14. Minnesota Wild- RW Nicklas D. Jensen (Oshawa/OHL)

Another surprise riser on McKenzie's much-anticipated annual list, Dane Nicklas Jensen has managed to parlay both his consistent play and recent hot streak into increased recognizance. As we've said before, there really are few differences between Jensen and a player like Gabriel Landeskog. Physically less filled out, Jensen is a bit taller and is already a man among boys.

Jensen has the tools to be a special player; for a team like Minnesota that values size and intangibles over flash and dash, he's the perfect selection.

15. Atlanta Thrashers- RW Ty Rattie (Portland/WHL)

The Atlanta Thrashers continue to ride the rollercoaster that is being a young and inexperienced team, winning or losing as players like Alex Burmistrov, Evander Kane and Nicklas Bergfors do good or bad. Although the cupboard is full both in goal and on the back end, forward is a never-ending need for NHL teams and a high-risk player Ty Rattie would make sense at 15.

Nearly unparalleled in the class when it comes to his fluid stickhandling and creativity, Rattie nevertheless is rough in certain places that may prevent a meaningful career. Thanks to the current success of their youth movement, Atlanta has the time to invest in him, and could justly rewarded with a special player.

16. Colorado Avalanche- LW Matt Puempel (Peterborough/OHL)

Although the Colorado Avalanche continue to draft flawlessly when it comes to the center position, one almost cringes at the thought of being a winger in their system. After all, the oddest fates have befallen bright young talents like Peter Mueller and Tomas Fleischman- and may cost one or both entire seasons and even perhaps careers.

Enter Matt Puempel. A likely draft faller more than ever due to an inability to permanently break through as an elite talent, Puempel will go to the team that does the most homework in the OHL and there may be no team that does more than the Avs. From Chris Stewart to Ryan O'Reilly to Joey Hishon, Puempel has the drive and hockey sense to be a monumental steal.

17. Chicago Blackhawks- C Mark McNeill (Prince Albert/WHL)

18. Anaheim Ducks- D David Musil (Vancouver/WHL)

19. Montreal Canadiens- RW Joel Armia (Assat/SM-Liiga)

20. New York Rangers- C Victor Rask (Leksand/Allsvenskan)

21. Phoenix Coyotes- C Mika Zibanejad (Djurgården/Swe Jr)

22. Nashville Predators- D Jonas Brodin (Farjestad/Elitserien)

23. Boston Bruins- D Jamie Oleksiak (Northeastern/NCAA)

24. Washington Capitals- RW Tomas Jurco (Saint John/QMJHL)

25. Tampa Bay Lightning- LW Shane Prince (Ottawa/OHL)

26. Pittsburgh Penguins- LW Matt Nieto (Boston University/NCAA)

27. Dallas Stars- RW Stefan Noesen (Plymouth/OHL)

28. Detroit Red Wings- C Michael St. Croix (Edmonton/WHL)

29. Vancouver Canucks- D Nathan Beaulieu (Saint John/QMJHL)

30. Philadelphia Flyers- C Daniel Catenacci (Sault Ste. Marie/OHL)