

Ah, June 1987. Margaret Thatcher had just completed the election hat-trick by winning a third straight term as PM of the UK. The Iron Curtain was close to falling, with Ronald Reagan making a historic plea to Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. On the 24th, the author of this column was born. And on June 13th, the hockey world watched as a superstar Canadian center went first overall in an NHL Entry Draft dominated by defensemen.

Some things never change.

The consensus top-ranked player for 1987 was 18 year-old Pierre Turgeon. A star for the Granby Bisons of the QMJHL, the dazzling 6'1 pivot had just completed a dominant 69-goal, 154-point season. Winner of the Mike Bossy Trophy as given to the top pro prospect in the Q, Turgeon was considered a can't-miss talent in the mold of Jean Ratelle. While known as more of a playmaker than a scorer, 116 goals in just two years of major junior hinted at a player who could also fill the net. He was to be a savior to whoever drafted him, and the Buffalo Sabres needed a savior. It was a match made in heaven.

Second to Turgeon- and according to some even better- was London Knight Brendan Shanahan. After scoring 62 points and 70 PIM as an OHL rookie in 1985-86, the 6'3 winger

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tapped into his inner demon just in time for his draft year, posting 92 points and 128 PIM.

Also of note was Portland Winter Hawk Dave Archibald. A minor hockey scoring star in British Columbia, Archibald was known as much for being the youngest player ever to score a point in the WHL (14 years, 5 months) as he was for his laziness. Still, a 50-goal, 107-point season had teams eagerly lining up to draft the potential franchise winger. While merely above-average in the skills department- and below-average in the playmaking department- Archibald's main draw was a crackling wrist shot that rivaled some of the best in the NHL. He was the definition of one-dimensional.

However, 1987 was memorable for its plethora of elite blueliners. Teenage phenom Glen Wesley was the crop of the class; as a 16 year-old rookie for the Portland Winter Hawks, the 6'0 rearguard had registered a stunning 68 points. By the summer of '87, Wesley had two other PPG seasons under his belt- including a 91-point effort in 1985-86. A cerebral player with superb playmaking ability, Wesley's game-breaking ability earned him comparisons to Boston Bruin Ray Bourque. It was ironic, then, that Boston was rumored to be sniffing around Wesley with the 3rd overall pick.

The WHL was home not only to Wesley, but to two other top-ranked defenders: Wayne McBean and Chris Joseph. While no slouches in the scoring department- both registered 50+ points in their draft year- McBean and Joseph were highly valued for their rough-and-tumble games. While Joseph was by far the better skater, he lagged behind McBean in size and pure muscle. Either were considered safe picks, with Pittsburgh reportedly coveting Joseph due to his skating ability. On the outside of the top three was Peterborough Pete Luke Richardson. Not as flashy or as sexy as Wesley, McBean or Joseph, the youngster's mature stay-at-home game nevertheless made him the most NHL-ready defenseman available.

Here's how 1987 went down:

#1- Pierre Turgeon, C (Buffalo)

Height/Weight: 6'1, 195 lbs 1986-87: 58 GP, 69-85-154

Projection: Superstar center, 100+ points

#2- Brendan Shanahan, LW (New Jersey)

Height/Weight: 6'3, 220 lbs

1986-87: 56 GP, 39-53-92, 128 PIM

Projection: Top-line power winger, 45-45-90, 120+ PIM

#3- Glen Wesley, D (Boston)

Height/Weight: 6'1, 201 lbs

1986-87: 63 GP, 16-46-62, 72 PIM

Projection: Poor man's Ray Bourque, 15-40-55

#4- Wayne McBean, D (Hartford)

Height/Weight: 6'2, 190 lbs

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1986-87: 71 GP, 12-41-53, 163 PIM

Projection: " Future cornerstone of the Hartford blueline " - Back of his hockey card

#5- Chris Joseph, D (Pittsburgh)

Height/Weight: 6'1, 213 lbs

1986-87: 67 GP, 13-45-58, 155 PIM

Projection: Paul Coffey with a little less offense but a lot more sandpaper and defensive

awareness

#6- David Archibald, RW (Minnesota)

Height/Weight: 6'1, 202 lbs

1986-87: 65 GP, 50-57-107, 40 PIM Projection: Franchise winger; 50 goals

#7- Luke Richardson, D (Toronto)

Height/Weight: 6'4, 210 lbs

1986-87:59 GP, 13-32-45, 70 PIM

Projection: Top-pairing shutdown blueliner

20 years later, and it's safe to say we know where each of the above will place in history. Turgeon and Shanahan most obviously turned out; Ooh-la-la Pierre broke the century mark twice enroute to 500 career goals and 1300 career points while Shanny is still going strong enroute to 700 goals. His 102-point season in 93-94 will likely end up his career high.

Glen Wesley actually covered the bet. Before earning the role of Father Time with Carolina, Wesley made a fine partner for Bourque in Boston and racked up 307 points over seven seasons- an average of 44 points a year. His career high was a whopping 58 points in 1993-94.

Luke Richardson came close to his projection; alas, while he was a valuable top-four presence for Toronto, Edmonton and four other squads, he never became an all-star. The three players chosen prior to Richardson all busted; Wayne McBean had the most successful career of the three, bagging Alyssa Milano while with the Isles. Chris Joseph is a firefighter in Edmonton. There is a cash reward if you know the whereabouts of David Archibald.

So why is all this retro junk important? Well, according to Ducks GM Brian Burke, 2008 drops off after the top seven. 2008's top seven features:

Steve Stamkos, C

Height/Weight: 6'1, 180 lbs 2007-08: 53 GP, 46-41-87

Projection: Superstar center, 100+ points

Kyle Beach, C/RW

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Height/Weight: 6'3, 203 lbs

2007-08: 54 GP, 26-31-57, 189 PIM

Projection: Top-line power winger, 80+ points, 120+ PIM

Alex Pietrangelo, D

Height/Weight: 6'4, 210 lbs

2007-08: 54 GP, 12-31-43, 90 PIM

Projection: Poor man's Nicklas Lidstrom, 15-40-55

Zach Bogosian, D

Height/Weight: 6'2, 200 lbs

2007-08: 52 GP, 10-46-56, 61 PIM

Projection: Future cornerstone of the team that drafts him

Drew Doughty, D

Height/Weight: 6'0, 213 lbs

2007-08: 50 GP, 12-34-46, 62 PIM

Projection: Scott Niedermayer with a little less offense but a lot more sandpaper

Nikita Filatov, LW

Height/Weight: 6'0, 159 lbs

2007-08: 23 GP, 24-23-47, 62 PIM Projection: Franchise winger; 50 goals

Luke Schenn, D

Height/Weight: 6'3, 209 lbs

2007-08: 49 GP, 5-20-25, 94 PIM

Projection: Top-pairing shutdown blueliner

So let's temper ourselves, shall we? As great as '08 is, it's always nice to have a reality check before you trade half your franchise for Glen Wesley.

PS- Who ended up the best player in '87? That honor goes to a 5'11, 165 lbs center with

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below-average skating ability but an elite shot and work ethic who starred in the WHL:

Joe Sakic, C (Swift Current)

1986-87: 72 GP, 60-73-133, 31 PIM

Projection: ?

Sound like anybody in this draft?

Jordan Eberle, C (Regina) Height: 5'11 Weight: 170 lbs

2007-08: 64 GP, 40-29-69, 16 PIM