

Top 100 Roto Players - February

Written by Chris Boyle

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Rotisserie owners rejoice, here is a comprehensive list of the top 50 fantasy hockey roto performers through March 1st and my debut article for dobberhockey.com

In order to establish a ranking the yahoo default league scoring has been used to judge who had the best roto performance among all NHL players through March

Skaters : Goals/Assists/Plus-Minus/Power Play Points/PIMS/Shots on Goal

Goaltenders : Wins/Goals Against Average/Save Percentage/Shutouts

Now these rankings are not on a projected basis or positional importance. They are based on

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who actually performed the best in the roto categories amongst all NHL skaters through the first five months of the season.

The 2009 season has been a slugfest between Alexander Ovechkin and Evgeni Malkin as they have occupied the top two positions for four of the five months. The changing of the guard is also in full swing as seven of the top ten were players drafted after 2003. Names like Getzlaf, Perry and Parise have replaced legends Sakic, Iginla and Brodeur at the top of the list. It has also marked the year of the backup goaltender as players like Pekka Rinne, Tim Thomas, Scott Clemmensen and Craig Anderson have made appearances.

Please remember this is the result of weighing all categories equally, which rotisserie rankings do. Being number one in goal scoring is the same as being number one in penalty minutes. The top 100 favors skaters as they occupy 60 percent of the scoring categories, but dominant goaltenders are recognized.

On to the top 50

1. Evgeni Malkin – Pittsburgh Penguins - C

After chasing the top spot for four months Evgeni Malkin finally supplants Ovechkin for the number one ranking. Malkin has been spectacular all season and as a six category stud has remained remarkably consistent. Although he trails Ovechkin badly in SOG, his 25 assist advantage pushed him just past the Great Eight into first for March. This battle is so tight it will likely not be settled until Game 82. I don't think an ugly contest could separate these two.

2. Alexander Ovechkin – Washington Capitals - LW

After a slow start to the season Ovechkin caught fire in November and it led him to a 3 month reign at the top of my rotisserie rankings. Although he was finally displaced in February, Ovechkin did not go down with a whimper, his monster offensive month included 19 points in 12 games and a ridiculous 83 shots. Ovechkin is a factor in every category and if your league includes shots on goal then Ovechkin guarantees you a victory in that category. His February included a 12 shot night, a stat that has gone unmatched since Jenna Jameson retired

3. Tim Thomas – Boston Bruins - G

I was tempted to list this entry as Tim Thomas/Claude Julien, as I feel the latter's contribution has been severely underrated. But Thomas' miraculous season continues. Thomas is the ultimate value pick. He was likely a late round selection/waiver addition this season, when

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added to the monster numbers he has produced at that reduced rate he has likely been the deciding factor in plenty of fantasy championships. These factors make him my fantasy MVP in 2009. 2010? Now that is a different story

4. Ryan Getzlaf – Anaheim Ducks – C

Getzlaf's fantasy rise has been meteoric, but I still feel he is underappreciated in fantasy. Although he is not a 6 category stud yet, Getzlaf's a season away from joining Malkin, Ovechkin and Crosby among the 6 category fantasy rotisserie elite. Getzlaf's plus/minus is a reflection of a poor Duck's team and he is just going to miss the benchmarks I set for goals and shots on goal. Now if only he can avoid taking Propecia and testing positive for a banned substance his keeper owners will be set for a decade.

5. Sidney Crosby – Pittsburgh Penguins - C

The world of fantasy hockey revolves around the now, because of this Crosby has been pushed aside by the rise of Evgeni Malkin and Alexander Ovechkin, but because of age, I believe it is premature. If this is a Crosby down year, I think I can deal with a top 5 finish. At only 21, Crosby is a 6 category stud and has yet to hit his peak. A return to number one in the near future is not out of the question.

6. Marian Hossa – Detroit Red Wings – RW

The only player this year to finish a month in the number one spot outside of Malkin and Ovechkin. Hossa has been an underrated fantasy performer for years. Outside of PIMs he regularly contributes in five categories. Hossa is the Brian Westbrook of fantasy hockey, he may get surpassed by the sexier names, but at the end of the year he is generally one of the most productive roto producers

7. Niklas Backstrom – Minnesota Wild – G

The biggest lock in fantasy hockey is the expectation that a Minnesota Wild goaltender will finish in the top 10 in goaltending efficiency. With Backstrom re-signing with the master of defense, Jacques Lemare, his rank among the elite is all but guaranteed.

8. Zach Parise – New Jersey Devils – LW

Breakout. Zach Parise has vaulted into the fantasy elite in 2009. A five category contributor who is just scratching the surface of his potential. It is unlikely he will ever become a 6 category monster, because there is nothing to suggest a spike in PIMs looking back at his NCAA and pro career.

9. Corey Perry – Anaheim Ducks – RW

Everybody praises Brian Burke with some shrewd moves to secure the 2007 Stanley Cup, but that Cup never materializes without the 2003 Draft Bonanza that landed Corey Perry and Ryan Getzlaf. Perry is blessed with great hands as well as vision and like Getzlaf is on the verge of becoming a six category horse. In a roto keeper league he is virtually untouchable.

10. Jeff Carter – Philadelphia Flyers – C

Talk about a changing of the guard. Seven of the top 10 players were all drafted after 2003. Jeff Carter finally broke through in 2009 and worked his way among the fantasy elite. Another stud

from the class of 2003 who has the opportunity to become relevant in six categories. Carter has dropped from his peak ranking in December, but he still held on to the top 10 and has an outside shot at 50 goals. Why is it again that Leaf fans are angry at Sundin and not Kaberle? If Kaberle had waived his NTC, Carter would be wearing the Blue and White and playing with Jason Blake and Lee Stempniak. Fantasy owners owe Kaberle a debt of gratitude.

11. Pavel Datsyuk – Detroit Red Wings – C

A charter member of the Pascal Leclaire All-Stars, Datsyuk is another underappreciated fantasy stud. He is continually shopped in my keeper league with zero results. How can a 30 year old player who year after year dominates 5 categories be so underappreciated? Originally I thought it was because he was ugly, but Malkin is not ostracized in the same manner. I find in keeper leagues that 30 year olds can be had at a bargain rate because owners overrate youth. Outside of ugly, it is all I could come up with.

12. Marc Savard – Boston Bruins – C

Savard is a consistent three category contributor who dominates the assist category yearly. Although his power play points and PIMs have dropped it has been offset with the team oriented plus/minus stat in 2009. Savard is not the superpest he once was so his PIMs are unlikely to regain their previous form, Savard's numbers at 31 are on the downswing but his penchant for monster assists numbers will keep him relevant in fantasy.

13. Steve Mason – Columbus Blue Jackets – G

Steve Mason is putting up one of the greatest statistical rookie seasons in NHL history. His debut is on par with Tony Esposito, Ken Dryden, Patrick Roy and Ed Belfour. I think Ken Hitchcock has some responsibility for his numbers, but even so, there have been plenty of defensive coaches over the history of the game and not many 20 year olds who are mature enough to remain consistent and handle the heat of the NHL. I thought Mason was overrated, not anymore.

14. Jarome Iginla – Calgary Flames – RW

Iginla is on the tail end of his fantasy prime, a prime that saw him peak as a six category contributor. Iginla is still capable of bouncing back in the next couple of years, is it likely he returns to 50 goals, 50 assists, +27, 85 PIM, 33 power play points and 300+ shots on goal from a season ago? The jury is out, but I would not write him off as he has shown outstanding resiliency throughout his career.

15. Patrik Elias – New Jersey Devils – LW

Welcome back Patrik Elias. After a 2 year vacation Elias has returned with a vengeance. Although he has declined slightly from his peak in December, Elias has been productive in five categories in 2009. Elias is the type of player who gives me fantasy headaches, when he is at his best he can carry your team, but he is just as likely to disappear for seasons at a time. 2009 has been a renaissance for Elias, but I was always a bigger fan of baroque, so seeing as his historical pattern has been 2 bad years for 1 good one. I think I will pass in 2010.

16. Mike Richards – Philadelphia Flyers – C

Richards continues to get better every season. Outside of PIMs, Richards has improved in

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every category from his breakout campaign of 2008. Richards is a pitbull and should continue to be a dominant rotisserie force in the near future. He has the potential to be a six category guy.

17. Mike Green – Washington Capitals – D

Green's ranking would be ten places higher if he had not missed 13 games earlier in the season. Six category contribution from a defenseman is unheard of in fantasy. 30+ goals is the Orr, Coffey and Bourque stratosphere, the fact that he has almost passed all the category limits in 55 games goes to show how special his 2009 season has been. The amazing thing about Green is that he could have been plucked off a waiver wire 16 months ago and today he is fantasy's most dominant rearguard. Mike Green is proof of the importance of owning your waiver wire early in the season.

18. Henrik Zetterberg – Detroit Red Wings – LW

One of the reasons I love roto pools is because it tends to recognize well rounded players like Henrik Zetterberg. Zetterberg has had four straight seasons of five category excellence and owning him is rewarded in fantasy and reality. His one weakness is PIMs, and just another reason why I feel the category is ridiculous. It seems ridiculous to think that Zetterberg's biggest weakness is his lack of ability to put his team at a numerical disadvantage, but that is his weakness. It is like if I listed on my resume that the biggest drawback to hiring me is my lack of assault charges. It is a bizarre mindset, but as long as it is a default setting I have to recognize it.

19. Daniel Sedin – Vancouver Canucks – LW

I guess there is a reason that Daniel was drafted ahead of Henrik. He is well rounded and the more desirable of the twins. One wonders what type of fantasy impact he is capable of should he leave the restrictive nature of the Canucks system. On a team like the Capitals or Red Wings he would have the potential to crack the top 10, but as long as he remains on an Alain Vigneault coached team his owners will have to be happy with a top 20 ranking.

20. Ilya Kovalchuk – Atlanta Thrashers – RW

Kovalchuk's 2009 campaign is proof positive that fantasy pools are not won in November. November is the time to bargain shop as players of this ilk will always produce. If they start slow they usually follow it with a torrid finish. Kovalchuk wasn't among the top 50 players through the first 2 months of the season, but since March 1st, he has 15 goals and 13 assists for 28 points in 16 games. It is not a stretch to think that by the end of the season he can crack the top 10.

21. Dany Heatley – Ottawa Senators – LW

Heatley has dropped significantly this year from a six category contributor to four. Heatley is an example of why the plus/minus category is more of a team reflection than individual. In his previous 3 seasons with Ottawa contending, Heatley averaged a +31, this season he is a -9. Twenty Eight year old four time 40 goal scorer do not grow on trees, so don't overreact to his off year

22. Mikko Koivu – Minnesota Wild – C

Koivu announced himself to the fantasy world with a 5 point night in October, the outburst gave him 9 points in his first 3 games and lead a procession of owners to the waiver wire. Koivu has

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five category potential, but as long as he plays on the Wild he will likely settle into his current zone. I wonder if I would have traded him in my keeper league had Gaborik been around, well the answer is yes because I got Jonathan Toews, but I would have thought about for 10-15 seconds longer.

23. Vincent Lecavalier – Tampa Bay Lightning – C

In all realities Lecavalier should be in the top 5 of this category. Here is hoping he gets dealt to la belle provence in the offseason so he can return to his 50 goal form. Outside of the +/- category that has been the bane of his fantasy existence, Lecavalier should be a five category horse and I fully expect a return to the upper echelon next season. I will be shocked if he remains in Tampa, when an ownership group is giving away hockey tickets for free, it makes it hard for them to pay one guy \$100M.

24. Patrick Marleau – San Jose Sharks – C

With the departure of Ron Wilson to Toronto, Patrick Marleau returned from screwing over fantasy owners in 2008 to become relevant again. I try to stay away from inconsistent players as much as possible, but at his bargain basement price before this season he would have been irresistible. Joe Thornton could make Homer Simpson productive and when there is any opportunity to flank the Tin Man, you have to take a look.

25. Pekka Rinne – Nashville Predators – G

Rinne has been impressive in his rookie season for the Predators. With great size and athleticism he has been dominant and has dislodged last year's sensation Dan Ellis from the crease. Rinne is taking a legit run at the Calder trophy and will likely wage a fierce battle down the stretch with Steve Mason, Bobby Ryan and Kris Versteeg for the honour. Nashville has been a revolving door of one year fantasy wonders lately and Rinne will have alot to prove next season.

26. Rick Nash – Columbus Blue Jackets – LW

Every year I wait for Rick Nash to breakthrough, yet every year I am left wanting. His progression has been slow and steady but every season he does seem to add something to his game. As long as Ken Hitchcock is the coach Nash may struggle to unlock his true fantasy potential, but his career trajectory does suggest that six category production is possible. As Brassard, Voracek and Filatov improve so to will the powerplay. Of course Nash could flee to Free Agency in 16 months altering all possible projection scenarios.

27. Eric Staal – Carolina Hurricanes – C

Two categories? It shows the power of dominating one category and remaining relatively productive in the other five. If you removed SOG, misdemeanor disorderly conduct and obstructing legal process as categories then Staal would have crashed out of the top 50. The fantasy world continues to wait for a repeat of 2005-06 when Staal was a top 5 rotisserie player, at 24 he is still young enough to return to dominant form and earn the early draft reach that most owners take when selecting him.

28. Alexander Semin – Washington Capitals – LW

If Semin was not injured he would be in the top five of this list. But Semin is a yearly contributor

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to the Marian Havorik All-Stars (a team of constantly injured superstars. Martin Havlat+Marian Gaborik + Marian Havorik, other members include Tim Connolly and Kari Lehtonen). Semin has averaged 60 games a season over his career. If you can acquire him for cheap he has the potential to pay monster dividends, but at full price I think I will pass.

29. Dustin Brown – Los Angeles Kings – RW

Brown has flown under the radar for years as an up and coming fantasy producer. He does not dominate any category but remains productive throughout five. With the improvement of the Kings, Brown's plus/minus numbers should rise, improving his value. Brown is a shot whore and if your league uses SOG as a category, then Brown is a nice add.

30. Sheldon Souray – Edmonton Oilers – D

I will be the first to admit that I cut bait on Souray following his career 2007 season, and although he has rebounded in 2009 I do not regret the decision. With his injury history and his abysmal plus/minus record I was ultimately rewarded when he bowed out after 26 games in 2008. Souray when healthy is a top five defenseman, but he is as brittle as he is pretty. When you load up on injury prone players and they get injured, it is not misfortune, I prefer risk aversion and will always take the player with a higher upside for the guarantee he will remain healthy.

31. Shane Doan – Phoenix Coyotes – LW

Doan's greatest value comes from the position he plays. With elite level right wingers going five to six deep Doan's three category production is valuable in rotisserie pools. His hidden production is underrated and he is easily overlooked for sexier names like Martin Havlat, Ales Hemsky and Nikolai Zherdev. He lacks the TUP (tremendous upside potential) of those three, but it is foot soldiers like these that help win roto pools.

32. Jamie Langenbrunner – New Jersey Devils – RW

Unless you are in a 20 team league it is unlikely that Langenbrunner was even drafted. With Elias hopping in the rejuvenation machine, Langenbrunner has drafted his way to a strong season. Since January 1st Langenbrunner has 17 goals and 16 assists for 33 points in 29 games. He has also registered a +17 and 96 shots which is elite right wing production.

33. Rob Blake – San Jose Sharks – D

Blake rose as high as seven in the November rankings, with Barry Melrose's mullet back coaching in the NHL I started flipping channels looking for the OJ chase. But the veteran has shown every one of his 40 years since the turn of the calendar, since Jan 1st Blake production has plummeted producing just 14 of his 39 points and my Ace of Base album is back where it belongs. With 2009 expectations being zero, Blake has been a pleasant roto surprise.

34. Patrick Kane – Chicago Blackhawks – RW

Patrick Kane has been traded five times in my roto keeper league. That sounds ridiculous, but he was flipped in packages for Malkin, Nash/Kipprusoff and Getzlaf/Hodgson. Those names go a long way towards projecting his potential. Kane will be a five category guy and if you don't believe in PIMs will be a roto stud for the next 15 years.

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35. Ryan Smyth – Colorado Avalanche – LW

I think Barry Melrose was fired because the NHL couldn't maintain two mullets of this magnitude. With Melrose fired Smyth has 44 points in 44 games and has allowed Avalanche fans to forget the fact that Peter Budaj and Andrew Raycroft play goal. At 33 Smyth is exiting his prime and his roto future is limited.

36. Zdeno Chara – Boston Bruins – D

Do you think the Senators would like a mulligan on the Chara decision? Wade Redden? Really? Chara is among the elite roto defensemen in fantasy and his value is strengthened if your league includes PIMs.

37. Martin St. Louis – Tampa Bay Lightning – RW

Sergei Puckisin got off to a slow start in 2009, but since November he has been one of the most productive right wingers in fantasy. Puckisin has been fantastic and his +6 rating is astonishing on such a brutal team. I remain a big fan as an owner since 2004, but with my recent acquisition of Corey Perry, Puckisin will be on the fantasy unemployment line in 2010.

38. Jason Blake – Toronto Maple Leafs – LW

While compiling the top 100 list I was shocked that Blake cracked the top 40. You would think a 40 goal scorer who recovered from cancer the next season would be given more slack, but Blake returned with little fanfare and has produced a solid season.

39. Devin Setoguchi – San Jose Sharks – RW

Anytime a winger rides shotgun with Joe Thornton I have a hard time deciphering whether he is Jari Kurri or Warren Young. Setoguchi could be a fantasy stud, or he could be Jonathan Cheechoo 2.0. He is a gamble, but a productive gamble.

40. Scott Hartnell – Philadelphia Flyers – LW

PIMs in fantasy hockey. Scott Hartnell, nuff said. His high PIMs inflate his roto ranking, but if your league uses the category then his contribution cannot be ignored.

41. Nicklas Backstrom – Washington Capitals – C

One wonders if Backstrom followed Ovechkin to Russia for his grandfathers funeral because he did not begin to produce until he returned. But his ranking goes to show that fantasy titles are not decided in November, it isn't where you start the season, it's where you end. Ask the Sens Army about that.

42. Dion Phaneuf – Calgary Flames – D

As likely the second defenseman drafted after Mike Green, I wonder at how many 2010 fantasy drafts will Phaneuf be referred to as sloppy seconds. It also makes you wonder how much Yoko has to do with his dropoff in every category? Phaneuf's PIMs have dropped from 182 to 90!!!! Unfortunately the Flames don't visit the Rangers this season, because there is a good chance that Phaneuf could have piled up 30-40 minutes in one game.

43. Joe Thornton – San Jose Sharks – C

I don't know if there is a player who suffers from a larger drop off between pool formats. A

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perennial 90-100 pt player who is coveted in points leagues, but is a borderline top 50 player in roto leagues. Thornton is an assist machine, but he does not impact the other five categories to be a significant roto factor.

44. Derek Roy – Buffalo Sabres – C

Is it acceptable to refer to a player from Buffalo as "on fire"? I grew up in Toronto with 20 channels, 3 of which originated in Buffalo. Outside of Commander Tom, the brilliant calls of Ted Darling (Baraaaaaaaasso) and the Bills losing Super Bowls, I was always fascinated how 85% of the Buffalo newscasts began with a fire in Cheektowaga or Tonawanda. Well the diminutive forward has been on fire in four categories and has been a point per game player since late 2008.

45. Mike Cammalleri – Calgary Flames – LW

Cammalleri has rewarded patient owners with a great bounceback season in 2009 as he and Jarome Iginla have developed some fantastic chemistry. He has five category potential, but the UFA may have to play his trade elsewhere with the acquisition of Olli Jokinen. The Flames face a future cap mess and Cammalleri may be the one who takes the hit.

46. Martin Havlat – Chicago Blackhawks – LW

I cannot give a proper assessment of Martin Havlat. He is my fantasy kryptonite, to many seasons I held onto him and his TUP before I finally dumped on another unsuspecting owner. Havlat is a founding member of the Marian Havorik All-Stars and a player who I will never own again.

47. Shea Weber – Nashville Predators – D

Weber exploded out of the gate in 2009 and was justifiably placed in the same atmosphere as the S.S. Phaneuf. He has faded badly in the second half and will be likely to maintain a position in the top 50, but I think we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg, if Weber can remain healthy he will spend the next 10 years in the top 25 of this list.

48. Simon Gagne – Philadelphia Flyers – LW

I love Simon Gagne's game, but I am a tad gun shy for large forwards on the Philadelphia Flyers with concussion issues. Let's hope Gagne can avoid joining Lindros and Primeau from staggering around the ice like two drunks and destroying his five category potential

49. Ryan Clowe – San Jose Sharks – LW

Ryan Clowe (see 39 - Devin Setoguchi)

50. Scott Gomez – New York Rangers - C

I remember a time where the six million dollar man meant Lee Majors in a kick ass sweatsuit, bionic vision and the ability to kick big foot's ass. Now the seven million dollar man represents an overpaid and underachieving Scott Gomez.

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51. Jason Spezza, OTT
52. Thomas Vanek, BUF
53. M. Samuelsson, DET
54. Joe Pavelski, SJ
55. Rene Bourque, CGY
56. Tomas Vokoun
57. Jonathan Toews, CHI
58. Phil Kessel, BOS
59. Chris Pronger, ANH
60. Dan Boyle, SJ
61. Alexei Kovalev, MON
62. Travis Zajac, NJ
63. Jason Arnott, NSH
64. Bill Guerin, NYI
65. Brian Gionta, NJ
66. Ray Whitney, CAR
67. Olli Jokinen, PHO
68. David Krejci, BOS
69. Johan Franzen, DET
70. D. Alfredsson, OTT
71. Ryan Miller
72. David Booth, FLA
73. Brad Richards, DAL
74. Nicklas Lidstrom, DET
75. S. Niedermayer, ANH
76. Patrick Sharp, CHI
77. Anze Kopitar, LA
78. Jason Pominville, BUF
79. Nikolai Zherdev, NYR
80. Henrik Sedin, VAN
81. David Backes, STL
82. Brad Boyes, STL
83. Ales Hemsky, EDM
84. Milan Hejduk, COL
85. K. Huselius, CLS
86. Brandon Dubinsky, NYR
87. Ed Jovanovski, PHO
88. Milan Michalek, SJ
89. Andrei Markov, MON
90. Ty Conklin, DET

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- 91. Scott Clemmensen, NJ
- 92. Dominic Moore, TOR/BUF

- 93. P. O'Sullivan, LA/EDM
- 94. R.J. Umberger, CLS
- 95. Dennis Wideman, BOS
- 96. Pavel Kubina, TOR
- 97. Jay Bouwmeester, FLA
- 98. Markus Naslund, NYR
- 99. Petr Sykora, PIT
- 100. Michael Ryder, BOS