You draft players to your fantasy squad, not coaches. But coaching obviously can alter a team's on-ice personality and impact their performance. So what happens to a team when a defensive-minded coach takes over?

Let's take a look at how Jacques Lemaire's return to New Jersey has affected your beloved Devils.

A Tale of Two Teams

Let's start with some team stats. The 2009-10 New Jersey Devils have amassed 22 points thus far, and sit in 4th place in the Eastern conference, two points behind the leading Pittsburgh Penguins.

So far this season, Lemaire's Devils have earned the following statistics:

- Goals For Average: 2.40 (25th)
- Goals Against Average: 2.40 (1st)
- Shots on Goal per Game: 30.4 (16th)
- Shots Against per Game: 27.4 (5th)
- Penalty Minutes per Game: 10.5 (26th)

In 2008-09, Brent Sutter's Devils finished the season with 106 points and in 3rd place in the Eastern Conference. They racked up the following statistics:

- Goals For Average: 2.90 (tied for 15th)
- Goals Against Average: 2.52 (4th)
- Shots on Goal per Game: 32.9 (4th)
- Shots Against per Game: 29.5 (15th)
- Penalty Minutes per Game: 12.9 (22nd)

Even with this cursory glance, it is obvious that the team has improved its defensive stats, but equally obvious is the decline in offensive numbers. For example, if the current goal-scoring pace continues, then the Devils will score 41 fewer goals this season. That's not encouraging news if you are the proud owner of one of the stars who may have scored the lion's share of those "lost" goals.

Falling Stars?

But before we panic, let's take a deeper look into the numbers to see exactly how the change in the team's priorities has affected its scoring stars.

Here's a breakdown of the top four point producers from both seasons, starting with the 2008-09 skaters.

Players

2008-09	GP	2008-09 Goals	2008-09 Points	2008-09 Shots	2008-09 +/-
Zach Parise	82	45	94	364	+30

Patrik Elias

77

31

78

247

+18

Jamie Langenbrunner

81

29

69

229

+25

Travis Zajac

82

20

62

185

+33

These were impressive numbers, and in particular, Zach Parise emerged as a legitimate star last year.

In 2009-10, the top-four names have changed slightly from the season pervious (but Elias has

only played one game so far). The numbers in parenthesis are end-of-season projections based on individuals' games played last year.

Players

2009-10

GP

2009-10 Goals

2009-10 Points

2009-10 Shots

2009-10 +/-

Zach Parise

15 (82)

7 (38.27)

17 (92.93)

67 (366.27)

+5

Travis Zajac

15 (81)

6 (32.40)

13 (70.20)

43 (232.20)

+4

David Clarkson

15 (82)

4 (21.86)

12 (65.60)

40 (218.67)

+1

Jamie Langenbrunner

15 (81)

2 (10.80)

11 (59.40)

38 (205.20)

+5

Interestingly, the numbers are often not as bad as you might have feared after looking at the team stats. Parise potted 94 points last year, and is on pace for 93 this year. Even better, Zajac is on pace to *increase* his point total by eight, while David Clarkson is already one of this year's surprise good news stories.

The 2009-10 scoring pie might be smaller, but the Devils' top scorers appear to be carving off proportionally larger pieces for themselves.

So what then does this mean for Elias? Well, based on the above pattern, it would seem likely that Elias will carve out his piece of the pie too. Also remember that Elias is a typically a strong second half performer.

Your Fantasy Take-Aways

While you can't draft or cut them, coaches matter to teams, and Lemaire's return to New Jersey worried many poolies. But the 2009-10 scoring story is mixed thus far.

1. The Devils aren't scoring as often as they were last season and they are taking and allowing fewer shots this year as a team.

2. Yet, when it comes to the big offensive stars, their individual scoring numbers aren't as affected. Parise and Zajac are taking shots and picking up points much like they did last year. While Lagenbrunner has fallen off slightly, Clarkson has pleasantly surprised most of us.

3. Consider going after Elias right now while his future is seemingly uncertain and likely undervalued due to the reduced Devils' scoring. Based on the other scoring stars' performance, Elias will likely produce just like he did last year under the old regime.

Coaches will certainly impact teams and your fantasy players, but like most other things, what may appear obvious on the surface can be worth a closer look.

The devil is in the details.