This year, in NHL camps there are more Russians than usual - a total of 48 Russian players are training with the different NHL franchises. So far there have been several impressive showings.

Nine teams don’t have Russians on board, they are Buffalo, Tampa Bay, Nashville, St. Louis (they do have one of the most exciting NHL prospects though in Vladimir Tarasenko), Minnesota, Calgary, Colorado, San Jose and Dallas (Sergei Korostin, where are you?).

This year there are some pleasant surprises at the different camps. The first, for me at least, is Chicago's Igor Makarov. The guy is talented and he definitely needed a deep change of scenery after a couple of seasons in Russia in which he really showed close to zero. Now he’s trying to get a spot with the Hawks and it looks like he’s giving his best effort and even Joel Quenneville had to admit that he’s playing very well. Will he get a regular spot? That’s a tough question, but now no one can say that he didn’t do all he could.

Another prospect I'd like to see with an NHL jersey on is, oddly enough, Makarov's team mate: Ivan Vishnevskiy. The talented blue liner has good skills and is very dangerous when he can wind up his strong slapshot, but he didn't have many chances to prove himself in the NHL. The native of Barnaul, Russia, played a mere five NHL games so far in his career.

I would love to see Anaheim's Igor Bobkov too, but right now I definitely think he's going to spend his first year in North America playing in the juniors for the London Knights.

I think I am not the only one who wonders what kind of season to expect from Rangers' rearguard Pavel Valentenko. He left Russia as promising prospect in 2007 to join the Montreal Canadiens. He wasn't NHL ready yet and thus he was sent down to Hamilton. He showed nothing special there and decided to bolt back to Russia. Shortly thereafter his rights were traded to New York. But in Russia he had hard time standing out, partially because of a serious shoulder injury, and so Dynamo Moscow walked away from him. Will he make the Rangers' lineup? I doubt it, but maybe he'll play a year in the AHL and progress.

Isles prospect Kirill Kabanov is back to his old tricks. I thought that he was over his troubles, but apparently nothing changed after he was late for the first day of camp and was held off the ice for the duration as punishment. Will he play with the Islanders this year? That doesn't help matters.

And finally, my favorite prospect Alexander Avtsin. He is apparently doing well in the Habs' preseason camp, but unfortunately they decided not to play him in their first preseason game against the Bruins. Hopefully the Habs will play him later.

That's all for now, as usual should you have a question I'll be happy to reply.