At the beginning of each season there are a few players who produce above their ability. Poolies have to decide whether or not that player is for real or simply on a hot streak. There are currently a handful of players who have been performing beyond expectations, some since the beginning of the season and others who may just be on the aforementioned hot streak. Who is real and who is not? I will discuss who can keep it up and whether or not these players can be of value in a salary cap league.

Brad Marchand – It feels kind of strange to include the pesky Marchand on this list after his incredible breakout roto-season, but I was one of those GM's who sold “high” in the off-season citing an inevitable trip back down to earth. Apparently he didn't book a round trip and Marchand's production has sky-rocketed in the new season. Marchand is on pace for 35 goals,

70 points and 140 penalty minutes. He's also in the top portion of the league with a +24 and should hit in the vicinity of 200 shots on goal season's end. Marchand has been one of Boston's most consistent players and the style of game he plays earns him his minutes, which bodes well for continued production. I never would have told you Marchand could hit 70 points in the NHL, I still don't know if he will, but 60 points and 30 goals with the peripherals that he adds gives him fantastic value.

Is he worth it in cap league? - Hell yes he is. With one more year left at $2.5 million, Marchand provides great value this year and next. His points may fluctuate as other more offensively talented players join the organization, but he's

Jannik Hansen – There has been question as to whether or not Hansen has any value as a fantasy player. As an avid Canucks fan I am one of the first to tell you no, not in a typical roto-league, at least.. He is a great third liner who brings energy, grit and the occasional goal. All of a sudden he's on pace for 24 goals and 46 points. Whoops. Now, I don't think these numbers are something he will maintain as injuries to Higgins, Raymond and Booth contributed to an increase in ice-time and role. Hansen even saw some time with the twins (though very short) as Vancouver reunited Kesler and and Burrows, a time in which Hansen potted four points.

Is he worth it in a cap league? - His $1.35 million cap hit suggests he can slide into your lineup easily which gives him value as a depth player. Hansen, though, isn't a top-six forward. He can score and can make a great pass, but he is best suited as a third line checker who brings energy and never takes a night off. He can produce in spurts but a lot of that will rely upon his role and ice-time. Hansen's ice-time has been spent mostly with the Sedin's, Kesler, Higgins, Malhotra and Cody Hodgson. The key name in all of this is Hodgson who is Hansen's regular pivot on the third line. Hodgson and Hansen have spent over 25% of their even-strength time together and have combined for nine points. Hodgson is a huge upgrade in terms of offense for that third line. I definitely see a boost in Hansen's production, but not to the 45-50 points he's on pace for. I'd happily label him as a 35-40 point player, but one with low peripherals. Anything more would be a bonus.

Joffrey Lupul – Lupul is a player I've never had any desire to own. A player who has jumped from team to team is a warning sign alone. The fact that he's never played with any consistency, combined with all the injuries that have held him back, make him even more of a risk. This year I wish I had the presence of mind during my league's free agency to take a chance on this kid. Lupul has a ton of talent and was virtually guaranteed a shot on the top line after his early success in Toronto to end the season. I'm also glad I didn't put any money on him slowing down by this point as he continues to pick up the points, including a four point effort just the other night. At 28 years old, Lupul is just coming into his prime and his in the right situation to succeed.

Is he worth it in a cap league? - His cap hit of $4.25 million isn't an easy fit, especially as a last minute thought. That being said, his production is worthy of a $3 million raise and his peripheral stats make him a great rotisserie pick. Lupul may not be the guy who you can slide into your last roster spot who can produce for cheap, but he makes one of the better fill-ins for a

guy like Crosby who is out for the foreseeable future. Lupul is the prime replacement for an injured superstar and is an easy fit for almost any top-producer making the big bucks. Lupul isn't a 90 point player but we've seen players in that perfect year reach plateaus we as armchair GM's never thought possible. Could he hit 90? Yea, but I wouldn't bet my house on it. Point-per-game status is well within reach and I fully expect 80-85 points. It is that year for Lupul, but I definitely look to sell high at the end of the season as I see a healthy, rejuvenated player who is one or two injuries away from the sequel to the first half of his story.

Dan Hamhuis – Hamhuis was a fantastic junior scorer and translated that into a 13-goal, 51-point sophomore season in the AHL. Hammy then posted 38 points in his second season for the goal starved Predators. Unfortunately for poolies, but not his team, Hamhuis is a defensive stud and will see most of his minutes spent shutting down the opposition's top line. He is, however, seeing consistent minutes on the second unit power play in Vancouver and has been Salo's replacement on the first unit when Salo's been hurt. Hamhuis has elite hockey sense, and his ability to make quick, smart decisions is worthy of number one defenseman status.

Is he worth it in a cap league? - It all depends on your cap situation, but my quick answer is no. If he made a million bucks less my answer would be different. Hamhuis is far too valuable in a shut-down role to ever see the ice-time necessary to make a big fantasy impact. He is solid in the penalty department but he has low shots on goal totals, power play points and has never cleared 27-points since his 38-point performance. Vancouver's second unit, consisting of Burrows/Hodgson/Higgins/Bieksa is a huge improvement on last year's, so his power play

points should be up. Playing for Vancouver will help his totals across the board, but Hamhuis is paid for his defensive prowess, not his ability to score. He makes a good depth option, especially if you catch him during a hot streak or when Vancouver's power play is hot, but I wouldn't roll with Hamhuis as a starter in my cap league.

Next week's article will return to look at Eric Staal and Rick Nash and compare their salary cap value to the elite three.