It is time to meet your AHL scoring leader. His consistency and longevity on top of the leaderboard should earn him more attention in fantasy circles. Now, the AHL Rookie of the Month is finally getting what he deserves.

Although old for a freshman, Teddy Purcell was a point-per-game producer with the University of Maine last season. As a result, he was one of the top non-drafted players in hockey. LA snagged him, and he has rewarded them ever since.

The right winger has not gone longer than one game without a point all season. He has 33 points in only 24 games and leads the league by one point over AHL veteran Martin St. Pierre. It is likely St. Pierre will take the lead because he had 99 points in only 65 games last year. Nevertheless, Purcell is a standout in his first year. He is smoking the others in the AHL rookie ranks. The next closest is Bobby Ryan with 24 points and Sergei Kostitsyn with 22. Brassard would put up a fight, but he can’t stay healthy.

At 6-foot-3, Purcell has the frame, to go with the skill, to break through to the next level. LA may take their time with him but can’t for long at this pace. Purcell has been steady and outstanding. He deserves this recognition… and a spot on your fantasy farm.

The *Status* Report:

Buy Low:
Tuomo Ruutu, C/W, CHI

He hasn't exactly had the best year to date, but his stock has really fallen in the last few games. Tuomo has zero points in his last four games and has been a whopping minus-six during that span. He has not only been no help, but he has been hurting fantasy teams. He has only produced two PIM in that time as well. Many owners are frustrated he has been healthy but is not producing. Still, health is a good sign. I can't help but think he just needs a bit more time to get his feet under him after so many changes and so few games played in the last few years. If he can even get back to his rookie year performance (44 points) and put up the PIM-per-game we expect, he will be a solid value at his current bargain price. I'm not sure if Ruutu can become the star we once expected, but he has stayed healthy this year and has a great team to grow with. You might as well take the risk on him because there should be very little to lose at this point.

Sell High:
Shawn Horcoff, C, EDM

I think Horcoff is about at the top of his value right now. He is a solid player, but I really don't expect more than 70 out of this guy year to year. Overall, I think he will be a 60-point player most years in the future, and I feel this will become especially likely as the flashy younger talents starts to steal his gigs on the top lines in Edmonton. He has 11 points in his last 7 games. This is the perfect time to cash in.

Hold:
Dustin Byfuglien, D/F, CHI

You shouldn't be in a hurry to trade a defenseman who is playing as a forward. That has value written all over it. Still, some may feel Byfuglien is just a flash in the fantasy pan, but he has all the signs of a sleeper prospect. He was skipped over in his draft year due to his extremely poor conditioning, but he has since really turned his fitness around. He is listed at 246 pounds now, and I read he was originally around 275 in his draft year. That kind of weight change can really change a person. Plus, he probably added a ton of muscle. He has always had a booming shot, and if he were always in shape, he would have been on the radar back in 2003.

From the Dust: *The player who may have some value after all.*

Jaroslav Hlinka, C/LW, COL

Our preseason dandy turned dud is actually showing some signs of life recently. Last year's Czech Extraliga scoring champ has been seeing a little more ice time and has rewarded the Avalanche to the tune of five points in his last ten games. Nothing to write home about (not that you should be telling Mum about fantasy hockey anyway), but he is someone to watch. He may even be serviceable in deeper leagues right now. He has done this while still receiving less than 12 minutes per game. In December, he is actually producing a point every 20 minutes. He's even turned around his horrific plus/minus recently. He is no youngster at 31, but I can't help but think he is an injury or two away from producing like a 60-point player. He did, after all, lead the NHL in assists for much of the preseason. Hmm, or maybe I should just stop taking fantasy advice from Mum.

Cactus of the Week: *The player you shouldn't touch right now.*

David Vyborny, RW, CBJ

Vyborny has been in a downward spiral for over a year now. His production dropped after Hitchcock arrived last season, and this year he is only producing at a 31-point pace. Now he is injured.

Last 7 Days: Injured Reserve Retroactive to Dec. 1, 2007 (hip)

I believe this is something that hasn't happened since January 29th of 2002. That year he missed a career high seven games. This year, it will be worse. He has been an iron man, but good health can also be deceptive. It makes him look more productive than he really is. Also, David is approaching his 33rd birthday and is leaving his prime. The new NHL is a younger man's league. Considering he has a career high of only 65 points in a healthy season, I don't see much light on the horizon for Vyborny. Injuries become more frequent as players get older, and talented youngsters, like the one listed below, will quickly take his place.

Fantasy Flashback: *Your weekly reminder that fantasy hockey is a rollercoaster.*

Nikolai Zherdev, CBJ

My oh my, how things change. At this point last year, fantasy owners had been kicking

themselves for waiting out Zherdev's contract disputes or trading for this enigma. Many had thought they were getting a great discount on the young talent, due to the threat of him leaving for the RSL. Unfortunately, owners soon started to wish he HAD left. If you held on to him until now, you are finally reaping the rewards.

2006-07: 30GP, 6G, 7A, 13P, -10, 10PIM, 85SOG
2007-08: 30GP, 12G, 12A, 24P, +2, 14PIM, 97SOG

Thanks to the magic Hitchcock has used on Zherdev, he has improved across the board. Nikolai has even played every game this year, whereas it took him much longer to get to 30 games last season. In his latest stretch, Zherdev has potted 13 points in 12 games. This may even be a good time to trade him. Fears of a Kovalev-esque career still lurk in my mind. If you can get a more reliable 80 to 90-point talent, I'd go for it.

Please send your questions to jstatus@dobberhockey.com

Comment on Teddy Purcell, and/or welcome J Status here...