red giant- Definition: (n.) a luminous giant star often appearing red in color and capable of engulfing its surroundings as it reaches maturity.

Who could that be? Lets see. Red. Rock the Red. Sounds like a Capitals player. Maturing. Must be a young player. Engulfing. A player who is taking the league by storm as he grows. A luminous giant star. Sounds like the definition of one Lars Nicklas Backstrom .

Backstrom is maturing rapidly from a large to a giant star after debuting as a rookie with 69 points last season. He started slow as a rookie and that trend continued this season. Still, the period shortened. In 2007, Nicklas started with just nine points in his first 21 games and 14 points in his first 27. He finished strong with a point-per-game pace the rest of the way. This season, the early slow star was much shorter. After 12 games, Backstrom only had a measly 4 points. Sophomore slump? Well, we factor in his rookie history for an early slow start and the slow start and partial absense of AO and it makes sense that this might happen. What happens next? Nicklas goes on a nine-game streak featuring 16 points and the rest was history. Since the early slump, Backstrom has scored 38 points after Tuesday's game in just 29 games. The future is now.

It is really no surprise. After such hype, comparisons to Forsberg and being drafted 4th overall in 2006, Nicklas is just doing what we expected. Perhaps his scoring is accelerated being is such a "star"-studded galaxy in Washington. He has a growing Green star on defense, an often volatile, surging and flickering giant in Semin and perhaps the biggest star of all the NHL universe classified as AO. The conditions are perfect.

Now, we have a Red Giant forming over the last month scoring 21 points in 14 December games. This is by far his best month of his career coming right after a November which was previously his best. How does this star compare to the rest of the league? Well, Backstrom was a top-10 point scorer in the league coming into Tuesday. Depending on the rest of the league, he may have reached top five with his two-point performance. Regardless, based on Monday numbers, this would time him with a player named Thornton and put him ahead of other huge stars like heatley, Iginla, Zetterberg, Kovalchuk, Datsyuk, Spezza and Hossa to name just a few. Could his trade value already be at that level? I'd take him over a few of those players already in a keeper.

His upside is amazing. Perhaps 90 points this season and 100 or 110 in the future. Insane to

project anything above 100, but the star power is that to rival Pittsburgh's for a supporting cast. If Semin could stay healthy, we may be looking at triple-century numbers one season. Oh it could happen. But, pardon the pun, the stars would have to align. Still, I think 100 is inevitable one season if he remains with these teammates. Their talents are just too immense when combined.

One quick note...

The *Status* Report:

Sin Binner:
Boris Valabik , **D*, ATL***

Boris Vill Crush you!!! If you are missing a Shane O'Brien type impact on your defense, perhaps the "Slovakian Tank" would fit nicely. He has only played in 18 games and already has five points a 51 PIM. He is fun to watch as well when he fights. At six-foot-seven, he has to keep his balance, but can really level a guy when he gets on a good roll. Take a look at what he did to Shawn Thornton .

[youtube:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57m0aeRfIUo]

Still, he has to keep a lookout for his taller nemesis, Zdeno Chara who would avenge Thornton.

[youtube:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCOTo3DqUI8]

Regardless of if he wins or loses the fights, he is willing to dance (literally... look at how he skates around with his partner before they really tango) and that can be big from a hard to fill position. Plus, it looks like he may score points a bit more than O'Brien. He is a nice alternative as long as he is up. Although, Crosby doesn't like him as is evident from his low blows.

[youtube:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAle37zwhyA]

Harsh kid. Harsh.