

## A 30-minute Meditation on Alexander Frolov

Written by Brent Lemon

Wednesday, 21 July 2010 18:28 - Last Updated Saturday, 24 July 2010 00:13

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The Ilya Kovalchuk drama is exhausting. Serious, it's worse than the Phoenix Coyotes' ownership catastrophe of last summer.

But once Kovalchuk finds a home (in the NHL), I have no doubt that poolies' interest in him come draft day will only be heightened. Yet it doesn't take a genius to draft an elite player like a Crosby, an Ovechkin or a Kovalchuk. Winners are usually built through the tricky middle rounds. And with that in mind, my thoughts recently turned to another Russian free agent. While Alexander's Frolov's stock has fallen of late, he may well surprise some this year, and it's guaranteed that you won't have to waste a high pick to land the winger.

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I was in Burlington the other day, visiting the in-laws. Now I got pretty lucky when it came to the in-law lottery, but having grown up in Scarborough, I feel obligated to poke fun at upper-middle class Burlington whenever I visit. Seriously, the place is wall-to-wall Beemers, Range Rovers, and Lexuses (Lexi?). If I was braver (or larger) I'd love to inquire about some Grey Poupon at a red light, à la Wayne Campbell. And have you seen the McDonalds at Appleby and Upper Middle? The exterior is done in a style that only be described as 'post-modern-ultra-posh'.

All that said, Burlington is also home to Bronte Provincial Park, a jewel of a spot. The park has a massive outdoor pool that can only be described as an artificial lake (this is Burlington after all). And the park also has a nice little inline trail.

Which is exactly where I found myself the other day, enjoying a 30 minute skate, thinking about what else? Fantasy hockey.

Here's a slightly edited version of my thoughts...

One of my favourite ways to get ahead in my pools is to take calculated risks in my draft. I always pick a skater (or two) who may be down on his luck, but who I think has a good chance of rebounding. There's no doubt that to win your pool your 'best players have to be your best players' (as any of the personalities on HNIC might say), but many Stanley Cup champions have to point to role-players whose uncharacteristic productivity was vital to the team's victory, and I like rolling the dice on guys who might do that for me.

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*Nice day. Man, do I ever need to brush up on my skills...that last puddle nearly landed on my butt. Why am I rollerblading right after a thunderstorm anyway?*

A change of scenery is often the catalyst for improved productivity when it comes to environmental or personality problems...which brings me to none other than Alexander Frolov.

There hasn't been much buzz around Frolov this summer. With all the Kovalchuk clamor, maybe that's not surprising. And some might point out that Frolov hasn't done much to deserve any hype either. As a result, he's only figured in a few 'best-of-the-rest' type free agent pieces circulating the web.

Certainly, if Los Angeles Kings' GM, Dean Lombardi, is in your pool (and how cool would that be?) it's unlikely that he'd draft him. But some think that the 28-year-old could easily return to 70-point form. Wouldn't it be nice if he did that while on your squad?

Drafted 20th overall in 2000, the Moscow native's best point total came in 2006/07 when he

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collected 71 points, but he has declined in increments since, posting 67, 59, and 51, points in the following seasons, all while playing the entire or almost the entire season.

*Ha. Here I am in a beautiful park thinking about fantasy hockey. Frolov was the reason why the legendary hockey writer, the late Jack Falla, gave up fantasy hockey. Falla caught himself preoccupied over trading Frolov's "ex-Commie-butt" while visiting the Sistine Chapel in Rome, Italy. Ah, the irony.*

Distilled down into a single word, Frolov's hockey performance can only be described as 'inconsistent'. Kings' fans were driven mad by his ability to dazzle one moment, and then disappear the next.

As a result of his inconsistency, Frolov found himself increasingly bounced around the Kings' lineup, and he saw his ice-time reduced in 2009/10. And while he scored 32 goals the season before, he only potted 19 last year – his lowest total in his seven years with the Kings.

The man is ripe for a relocate.

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*Swerve. Deer poop? Massive pile. A page-27 Burlington Post sidebar, "tragedy struck yesterday afternoon as a 33-year old man died while attempting to avoid what may, or may not have been a massive pile of deer poop. Clearly his inline skating abilities were sub-par. Fortunately, no Lexuses were harmed in the incident."*

Frolov is a big boy at 6'2 and 210ish pounds. He's also displayed a penchant for scoring. He's had two seasons of 30-plus goals and three more of 20-plus goals. Yahoo Sports editor, Sam McCaig, describes Frolov as a potential 40-goal scorer with "a ton of talent".

He can also play the puck-possession game – something many teams are interested in. He'd make a hell of a L3 on your squad, and if he returns to 30-goal form, from which he's only one season removed, he'd look good as an L2 on most fantasy teams.

*What the hell is that grinding noise? A maple leaf jammed in my right foot's housing. How Canadian.*

But where is Frolov going to play?

According to TSN.ca, Frolov has already received an offer from SKA St. Petersburg of the KHL.

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Frolov has to be considered a flight risk, but that's likely to be resolved long before your draft comes around.

As far as the NHL is concerned, the New York Rangers are the club that has the most rumour buzz concerning Frolov. Now there's a nice thought – Frolov playing on Gaborik's wing. Should he go to the Rangers (and few would argue that good ol' Slats isn't crazy enough to find a way) you'll see a bounty of Frolov pieces in a hurry. Frolov's resume is such that no team is going to sign Frolov as a checker (well, maybe Columbus); it's his scoring potential that will get him signed somewhere and that means that he should see quality minutes and play with quality linemates.

*Another person up ahead. Young woman nodding. Was my return nod nonchalant enough? Wow, look at her blades...top-end Bauers. Sweet. Ha. My wife wouldn't approve my interest in the blades over the body...hockey's more of a threat than other women...*

In the end, Lombardi said didn't want to sign Frolov because the money the 28-year old Russian wanted didn't make sense for the Kings under the salary cap. But in most fantasy leagues, it not the contract but the player's reputation that determines his value on draft day.

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So we poolies may find ourselves in precisely the opposite situation as the Kings' GM. Frolov is not highly regarded by many, and his value in your pool will likely reflect that. Yet, he's got potential to bounce back, and a trade may be just the sort of spark to get Frolov scoring again.

He might be a steal, assuming he doesn't bolt for Russia.

*Man, am I ever out of shape...*