

Hockey Stock: Inside Trading on the DSE

Written by Ray Irwin

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In the real world, the stock market is one of the most important ways a company has to raise money in order to grow it's business. Similarly, fantasy hockey is equally liquid and a successful owner demonstrates the ability to be parts active and patient in order to develop a

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team (or portfolio of players if you will) that is championship calibre.

In this weekly segment of Hockey Stock, I'll identify a handful of bulls and bears – players who fantasy owners looking to play the hockey stock market should consider making moves on. Realizing that not all leagues are created equal I will try to cover a variety of players and some of my advice may make more sense in one league than another.

Welcome to Hockey Stock: Insider Trading on the DSE.

Joffrey Lupul, ANA – Lupul hasn't played since December 8th, 2009 but is practising with the Ducks again with an eye to return sometime after American Thanksgiving. His 6% ownership rate in Yahoo! leagues is far too low for a left winger who is just entering the prime of his career, even if there are questions about his health. “Loops” has the ability to score 30 goals in the NHL despite his career high of 28 coming half a decade ago. If your league has IR positions, pick up Lupul immediately and stash him on injured reserve. When he does return, don't be surprised to see him start slowly as he gets back into game shape but when he does he could be a valuable addition to teams looking to make a second-half run.

BUY LOW

Nikolay Zherdev, PHI – When a player of Zherdev's immense skill starts the year with just 4 goals and no assists in 13 games and has spent two games as a healthy scratch, he is an obvious buy-low candidate. The benching was a clear sign that Zherdev needs to pick up his

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intensity – a knock that has dogged him throughout his career. The Flyers have plenty of offensive firepower, but it's my expectation that Zherdev will get rolling eventually and could be a nice addition to fantasy teams looking to boost the RW position of their clubs.

BUY LOW

Devin Setoguchi, SJS – Setoguchi may not be a fantasy stud this season as he's struggled to find consistency and has subsequently dropped to the Sharks third line. Setoguchi was a fantasy darling in 2008-09 when he scored 31 goals in his first full NHL season. That number dropped to 20 last season and he has had a horrendous start to 2010-11. It's important to remind ourselves that the speedy winger with a tremendous shot is still only 23 years old and will almost certainly return to form as a dangerous top-6 forward. See if the Setoguchi owner in your league is losing faith and watch your investment pay off in the coming seasons.

BUY LOW

Mike Knuble, WAS – There's a lot to like about Mike Knuble. The big right winger has been a staple of consistency during his NHL career, and fantasy owners have grown accustomed to count on him to quietly bang home around 25-30 goals and 50-60 points per year. Now 38 and in the midst of his worst scoring slump since 2002-03, Knuble has been moved off the coveted top line in Washington and now finds himself playing alongside Brooks Laich and Tomas Fleischmann. Laich plays a similar style to Knuble, so one has to wonder how long the new line will stay together. Knuble's slump hasn't been a result of a lack of effort or scoring chances, and I'm willing to bet that he gets back on track soon. He potted just his first of the year on Tuesday which should help shake the monkey off his back. Knuble may be long in the tooth, but owners of fantasy teams in deeper single-year leagues who are looking to make a run at a championship this season might be able to acquire him for next to nothing – his ownership in Yahoo! leagues is just 55%.

BUY LOW

Clarke MacArthur, TOR – There's a Toronto Maple Leafs fan out there who thinks MacArthur

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is is a potential 80 point NHL player. He's started the year off hot, scoring 7 goals and 11 points in 13 games and has a tidy +6, making him a solid fantasy player so far in 2010-11. MacArthur has a proven junior and AHL track record, putting up points at both levels so it isn't a stretch to believe he'll be a decent scorer in the NHL. I expect his point totals and +/- will both drop as the season wears on, and there may not be a better time to sell high on MacArthur than now. I peg his potential long-term as a 55 point guy in the NHL if he plays in a top-6 role but ultimately he may be better suited as a 3rd line forward. **SELL HIGH**

Ales Hemsky, EDM – In talking about Hemsky, I am assuming there is a trade market for him. In the leagues I am in, there always has been. Fantasy owners have long been intrigued by his skill level and so they should be. The fact is though that Hemsky plays for an awful team in Edmonton and his owners should more than pleased with his 10 points in 14 games to date. Long term, we have to question his place on an Oilers club that is building with youth. Is Hemsky part of that movement? I think there's a good chance he's not which opens up questions about where he ends up and how he performs there. **SELL HIGH**

Ryan Howse, CGY – I'm a huge Howse fan and in the summer was telling anyone who would listen that I could see him scoring 60 goals this year with the Chilliwack Bruins of the WHL and play a role for Team Canada at the WJC's. To date, Howse has 16 goals and 26 points in 17 games and has developed into a solid defensive player as well. He's an excellent skater who is extremely strong on his skates as Howse has a lower body that is similar to Sidney Crosby – thick, strong legs that make it extremely difficult to knock him off the puck. The Flames future depends largely on the development of their prospects and Howse is an important component of that plan. While his NHL upside is still in question, there is no doubt that Howse can score and his ability to play in both ends could make him a darkhorse to make the NHL out of camp next September. If you are in a keeper league that allows midseason additions to a farm team, jump on this Flames prospect. **BUY LOW**

Kevin Connauton, VAN – Connauton arrived as a legitimate fantasy prospect in 2009-10 with the WHL's Vancouver Giants when the defenseman scored 24 goals and 72 points in 69 games and has continued to impress with a solid start to his pro career with 3 goals and 6 points in 13 games with the AHL's Manitoba Moose. Connauton has offensive ability that is absolutely top-shelf but needs a ton of work to his defensive game and needs to build strength in order to handle NHL forwards. With the Canucks set on defense for the next handful of seasons it won't be a surprise to see the team take it's time with the young defenseman but if he progresses quickly the lack of a true powerplay quarterback in Vancouver could expedite his arrival. Either way, don't sleep on Connauton but don't expect him to have a fantasy impact for a few years.

BUY LOW

Alexander Avtsin, MTL – I love it when uber-talented prospects fly below the radar. This was really the case last year when many wondered if/when Avtsin was going to come to North America and savvy fantasy owners bought in at that point. Avtsin has garnered some attention since he agreed to jump the pond in the summer, but in my opinion not nearly enough for a player with his talent. If Avtsin were American, Swedish, or Canadian, he would have likely gone in the first round of the 2009 NHL Entry Draft instead of the 4th round. I wouldn't be surprised to see Avtsin play a handful of games with the Canadiens at some point this season.

BUY LOW

Mikko Koskinen, NYI - The Islanders took Koskinen early in the 2nd round of the 2009 NHL Entry Draft after the hulking (6-6, 205lbs) goaltender dominated the SM-Liiga the season before.

Koskinen sort of fell off the map after suffering a season ending injury (torn labrum) last season. Now, with band-aid boy Rick DiPietro struggling to regain his form in Long Island one has to wonder when the Islanders top goaltending prospect might get a shot. It shouldn't take a rocket scientist to realize that through attrition alone Koskinen could find himself on the fast track to the NHL.

LOW

BUY