With the holiday season coming up, and jewelry commercials saturating all forms of media and consciousness, I thought I'd talk about NHL players have been certifiable gems thus far this season, as well as some that have been absolute fool's gold.

Let's try not to address the same tired old players that you've heard about time and time again. Everyone and their mother knows that Nik Antropov, Matt Cullen and Mike Richards are producing at an amazing rate. These columns will address players that you haven't yet read about in other articles.

*****The following statistics are accurate as of Wednesday morning, December 12, 2007*****

In Part I, I'll discuss some players who (if you managed to snag them in the draft or off of the waiver wire in the early goings of the season) have paid nice and somewhat unexpected dividends. These guys have (in many cases) rewarded their savvy fantasy managers with a good position in the standings heading into the holiday season.

Shawn Horcoff – 33 Points in 32 games. He's averaged just over a point per game which puts him on pace for a career season.

On top of his raw point total, further analysis shows that this guy has more goals (he currently has 15) than the likes of Dany Heatley, Sidney Crosby, Michael Cammalleri, and Zach Parise (who all have 14), Ryan Getzlaf (who has 13), Marion Hossa (who has 12), Evgeni Malkin, Jonathan Toews, and Daniel Sedin (who all have 11). He is the third ranked natural center in goals in the league. Only Vincent Lecavalier and Olli Jokinen have more goals than him thus far.

In addition, his plus/minus rating is a team leading plus-6 rating; he has 20 penalty minutes on the year, and has taken 69 shots on goal. He's been one of the most well-rounded centers in the league through the first third of the season.

His production might taper off a bit through the rest of the season, but he is almost a lock to return to 70-plus points this season (after a disappointing 51 point season last year). Many people are recommending him as a sell high candidate, and in keeper leagues that is very advisable because of the depth the Oilers have in terms of prospects at center. In one year roto leagues however, I'd hold onto him for now. He's currently riding an 8 game point streak in which he has 13 points, and for some reason people have a low opinion of this guy and you might not be able to convince many experienced fantasy players that he is worth their time of day. Remember, they don't have to be pretty to watch, but if they put up the numbers they are worth your time.

Rod Brind'Amour – 32 Points in 31 games. Many people out there continue to think that he'll slow down… he's got to right? Apparently he didn't get the memo. He's once again on pace for 70-plus points, and has a great shot at breaking 80 for the second straight season.

Like Horcoff, Brindy is also a well balanced center who will get you goals, assists, shots on goal, and penalty minutes. He's also one of the most defensively responsible forwards in the NHL so his plus/minus will also always be good. If your league counts faceoff wins, this guy should be as valuable (or possibly more valuable) than the likes of Malkin, Heatley, and Lecavalier.

As Dobber said in his preseason guide, he looks to have at least a couple of years left in him, but if you own him in a keeper league, perhaps his consistent production since the lockout is enticing enough to other owners to trade him for a great prospect.

Nikolai Zherdev – 24 Points in 30 games. He's here (not in Russia), he seems to be playing hard, and he's not disputing his contract. What else could you want as a Zherdev owner? How about a 60-plus point season (for the first time in his NHL career)?

He's got 12 goals and 12 assists and 97 shots on goal. These might be the supporting stats that you need to finally dump this guy if you own him in a long term league. He does have great potential, and you might be loving him right now, but just remember how he made you feel for the last 2-3 years. He's the epitome of a player that can get you points one year and not even play the next. Trade him while you can and get a more reliable (but still promising) guy in return.

In one year leagues, pat yourself on the back. You took a chance on him when no one else wanted to touch him with a ten-foot pole.

Ed Jovanovski – 17 Points in 27 games. Only eleven defenders have more points than him so far this season, and only three defenders have more shots on goal than his 79 so far this year. He's on pace to break 50 points for the first time in his career. Not bad for a guy that you likely drafted fairly late (if he was even drafted at all).

While his plus/minus is a biting minus-8 on the year, much of that is from the beginning of the season as he was minus-1 during the last month of play. Ilya Bryzgalov coming to town will only help this stat, so don't let his plus/minus scare you. The only legitimate concern you might have about Jovocop is his health. He has been far less fragile so far this season then he had proven to be previously though, and I think that he has a great shot at playing at least 75 games this year.

Either try and dish these guys if you think they will slow down or get injuried (or in Zherdev's case stop trying), or just ride the heat wave. These guys have been golden so far this season and show signs of continuing their pace through the end of the season. Enjoy every bit of production you get out of them.

Comment on the stats of Leprechaun's gold here ...