

Ballard to the Canucks

Written by Jeff Angus

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Fantasy Analysis: Florida has dealt defenseman Keith Ballard and winger Victor Oreskovich to the Vancouver Canucks in exchange for wingers Steve Bernier, Michael Grabner, and the 2010 1st round draft selection (25th overall).

The Canucks get: A feisty, mobile, two-way defenseman capable of logging heavy minutes and putting up 30-40 points. Ballard can play in all situations, and he loves to throw massive body checks, something lacking on Vancouver's back end in 2009-10. Oreskovich is an interesting player – he took a year and a half off of hockey but decided to return to it last year. He is massive and very mobile, but the rest of his game needs serious work. The Canucks will be overhauling the defense this summer, so don't expect Ballard to be the last player moved in (or out). A great part of his game is durability, as he has played in all 82 games in four of the last five seasons. The Canucks have had their share of injury woes with regards to defensemen over the last few years.

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The Panthers get: A late first round draft pick (the Panthers selected Quinton Howden with it), a superb young winger in Grabner, and an inconsistent depth forward in Bernier. Grabner is the key to this deal for the Panthers. He has incredible speed and a great shot. Look for him to slot in on one of the top two lines. Bernier was highly touted coming out of junior, but he has yet to develop into the bruising goal scorer that many had expected or hoped.

Fantasy Players Impacted: The Canucks have more moves to make on the back end, so it is tough to say where Ballard slots in with regards to the two power play units. The Canucks were the league's second most offensive club last season, so even if he plays more of a two-way role, expect Ballard to return to the 35 or 40 point level. Ballard found out about the trade while golfing with soon-to-be-UFA Paul Martin, who the Canucks will surely target come July 1st

. Those two would make a fantastic pairing in Vancouver's top four.

This deal is great for Grabner, as he goes from a team incredibly deep at forward to one lacking high-end talent. He could hit the 25 goal mark if he sees consistent time with the man advantage. Bernier may enjoy the change of scenery (although the Panthers become the fourth club he has played for at the NHL level), but he doesn't have the head or hands to be a regular offensive contributor at the NHL level. This deal may hurt Florida's young offensive wingers like Michal Repik (although there isn't much past him).

I expect Vancouver and Florida to be two of the busiest clubs this off-season, so evaluating this deal on its own is probably not ideal. The Canucks need to retool their bottom two lines, while Florida's new GM Dale Tallon wants to continue with the sweeping changes.

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Players this helps, in order:

1. Vokoun (I kid...) Grabner
2. Raymond (solidifies his spot in the top six)
3. Ballard
4. Samuelsson
5. Biekša (obvious trade bait, needs more PP time elsewhere)

Players this hurts, in order:

1. Repik