Fantasy Impact: The Calgary Flames have signed free agent Czech forward Roman Cervenka to a one-year contract worth a reported $3.775 million, which is the maximum allowed for a first contract going to a 26-year-old, including bonuses.

The Flames get: a late blooming center who clicked really well with countryman Jaromir Jagr when they played together for their country. He was never drafted, but did play in the WJC when he was 20 with the likes of Rusty Olesz and Michal Frolik. He didn't really come into his own until he was 23 and finished second in Czech League scoring ahead of the likes of Martin Straka, Robert Reichel and David Vyborny.

At 24 he caught the attention of the NHL by leading the Czech League in scoring by a wide

margin. He had two points in five games at the Olympics that year, but that was a year in which three points would have had third on the Czech Team in scoring. He decided to sign in the KHL, where he played with countryman Jagr and led the team (Omsk) in scoring with 61 points in 51 games - 11 more points than Jagr. That really caught the NHL's attention.

This past season, without Jagr, his production dropped to 39 points. He still led Avangaard Omsk in scoring, but the dropoff raises an eyebrow.

Cervanka is an average to smallish player at 5'11, 200 pounds. He's more of a goal scorer than a setup guy. Without an assist-machine on his wing, he'll struggle. We've seen top-scoring Czech players come over in the past - see Dopita, Jiri and Balastik, Jaroslav for details - and fail. Although to be fair, a single five-goal game that Dopita had comes to mind, and Balastik didn't give North America enough of a chance - his 22 points in 66 games as a rookie should have convinced him to give it a couple more years.

The difference with Cervanka is the simple fact that he's being paid a boatload of money. Not just the number itself, but the relative number compared to other players on the team. When management sticks their neck out for a player like this, he would have to fail miserably for a long, long time before he gets knocked down the lineup. I mean, we're talking 15 games, one point and minus-15... and he'll still get PP time. Don't believe me? See Leino, Ville.

Fantasy Players Impacted: Cervanka is draftable in a late round. He'll start slowly and is

probably going take the same length of time that Leino took to get going - if the Flames let him. The contract makes me believe that his production will come, though it will perhaps take 20 or 30 games. Worth holding down on a spot on your bench for, just to see.

In the meantime, his presence probably ensures that Olli Jokinen goes bye-bye. If he can find the right linemate - and at this point Alex Tanguay is the only player who fits the bill (pass first) - he'll have a decent second half. Remember, Leino was pretty much written off in fantasy hockey until he was nearly a point-per-game player in the postseason for his second NHL team, the Flyers.

Fantasy Players this helps, in order:

1. Cervenka

Fantasy Players this hurts, in order:

1. Jokinen