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Sam Gagner? Sam Gagner! The much-maligned and highly-inconsistent Edmonton forward scored four goals and totaled eight points to lead the Oilers to an 8-4 win over the Chicago Blackhawks Thursday evening. The last time anyone accomplished this feat was Mario Lemieux – in 1989. With Thursday's performance, the 2007 first-rounder accounted for roughly 27 percent of his season point total in one game. He's owned in just eight percent of Yahoo leagues, if you're willing to take a chance on him in a deeper format. Every now and again, Gagner displays glimpses of being able to turn into an impact player. But he's a better bet to continue to disappoint.

Vancouver's Cody Hodgson was named NHL Rookie of the Month. It was a well-deserved honor for the 2008-09 CHL Player of the Year, who has evolved into the type of player Vancouver fans thought they were getting when the team drafted him 10th overall in the 2008 Draft. Hodgson hasn't gone more than one game without scoring a point since Dec. 17. That's amazing consistency for a player who has yet to turn 22 years of age.

Speaking of talented rookies, Philadelphia winger Matt Read scored his 16th goal of the season – tops among all first-year players -- Thursday evening in the squad's 4-1 victory against visiting Nashville. Philly's rookie duo of Read and Sean Couturier have been extremely impressive as of

late, and both have overshadowed fellow first-year player Brayden Schenn (who has just six points total on the season).

I stumbled upon this on Twitter a couple of days ago... Stephen Burtch of SB Nation's *Pension Plan Puppets*

blog put together a couple of analytical pieces on shutdown defensemen. They're not fantasy-related, but I found them to be interesting pieces. Here's

[part one](#)

, in which Burtch explains a statistical formula he developed and runs some numbers on who does "best job on defense while carrying a heavy defensive workload." Here's

[part two](#)

, in which he tries to determine who the best defensemen in the league are and assesses how Leafs blueliners have fared since 2007-08 in that regard. Thoughts?

Pekka Rinne has been a durable and extremely reliable netminder this year for Nashville, but he received a much-deserved rest Thursday. Rinne and Ottawa netminder Craig Anderson entered Thursday tied with an NHL-high 46 starts on the season and Rinne is on pace to exceed 70 starts this season. As a result, Anders Lindback got the start the Preds, drawing the tough assignment of taking on the host Philadelphia Flyers. Though Lindback took the loss and saved 24-of-27 shots, one has to wonder what kind of fantasy value the 23-year-old Lindback would have if he had a No. 1 goaltender job. I usually am impressed when I see Lindback in action.

Claude Giroux scored his first goal since the Winter Classic Thursday evening against Nashville and his 19th of the season. The Flyers centerman scored on an empty-netter with 1 minute, 5 seconds left in regulation. Despite his month-long goal-scoring drought, Giroux's fantasy owners have little to complain about, as he is still on pace to set a career-high in goals. Giroux totaled 25 in last year's breakout campaign.

The Carolina Hurricanes received a big-time performance from goaltender Cam Ward Thursday evening. Ward turned away 47-of-47 shots to lead Carolina to a 3-0 road win over the Tuukka Rask-led Boston Bruins. Ward has stepped up his game as of late, compiling a .944 save percentage in 11 January starts prior to Thursday's impressive shutout. Carolina's franchise netminder is flying under the radar a little bit this year because he plays for the a team that currently sits in 15th place and his numbers are a bit down from year's past, but only Ottawa's Anderson and Nashville's Rinne and has seen more action in games this season.

Another top-notch goalie, Dallas's Kari Lehtonen, got a rest Thursday night. Backup Richard Bachman saw his first action since Jan. 21 and notched his first start since Jan. 17. He promptly got beat up by host San Jose, giving up five goals on 37 shots.

Antti Niemi was not the goalie on the other side of the ice against Dallas. Niemi was declared out of the lineup due to an unspecified injury. According to the San Jose Mercury News, Niemi "took a shot" in Wednesday's practice, but the injury isn't considered to be serious. That being said, it is bad timing for the Sharks netminder, who is coming off two straight shutout victories. Thomas Greiss, a fantasy sleeper of mine from a couple years back (for the five or 10 minutes that existed between the Nabokov era and the Niemi and Antero Niittymaki acquisitions), saved 19-of-21 shots for the Sharks in their 5-2 win over Dallas.

Brent Burns has been unable to put together a 2012 season similar to the one he had last year in Minnesota, but the Sharks defenseman tallied three assists in Thursday night's win over the

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Stars. It was his first points since Jan. 17. I expect Burns to pick up the pace a bit in the season's second half.

Ryan Clowe's fantasy owners should be glad, as the Sharks forward was back in the lineup for the first time since Jan. 15. Clowe played 15 minutes and scored a goal in his return from a broken nose/facial injury. I own Clowe in a lot of leagues, as he was one of my favorite draft-day targets in each of the past few years, particularly in leagues where penalty minutes count.

It was a productive night for two of New Jersey's superstar forwards. Zach Parise tallied two goals and Ilya Kovalchuk added three assists to help lead the Devils to a 5-3 comeback victory over host Montreal. What a disappointing loss for the Habs. The squad jumped out to a 2-0 lead and led 3-1 early in the second period before faltering down the stretch.

Vancouver's David Booth tallied his fourth point in five games Thursday evening in a 4-3 shootout loss to the visiting Detroit Red Wings. Booth has been fairly productive since returning from a knee injury in mid-January. Keep an eye on this, as Booth is playing on a second line centered by Ryan Kesler.

Devan Dubnyk made his fourth consecutive start in net for Edmonton Thursday evening. It seems he has gained a firm upper hand over the struggling Nikolai Khabibulin in the bid for playing time.

Wojtek Wolski has accepted a two-week conditioning stint in the AHL, as the New York Rangers try to figure out what to do with the unproductive winger. Was it really just two years ago that Wolski totaled 65 points in 80 games with Colorado and Phoenix. Wolski has seen action in just nine games this season and has yet to score a goal. The Rangers are his third organization since Wolski made his NHL debut in 2005-06.

Here's each and every one of Sam Gagner's eight points...

{youtube}0MIOoT5BMXU{/youtube}

P.K. Subban is a lightning rod for criticism and conjecture, but there's no denying he makes his presence known on the ice. Here's a devastating hit he delivered to Devils rookie defenseman Adam Larsson late in the third period Thursday evening. Larsson was down on the ice for a while, and he reportedly suffered a bruised back on the play...

{youtube}3C7VqecXtXo{/youtube}

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