

**April 05, 2012**

Written by Jeff Angus

Wednesday, 04 April 2012 23:09 - Last Updated Thursday, 05 April 2012 13:05

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**FREE** baseball contest closes at 1pm today, but you can get a team up in minutes. Win a share of **\$500** - in your pocket tomorrow - and there are only 128 entries as of 11:30. Now, I'm no math major (I actually only got my minor in it - this is Dobber), but quickly punching on the calculator and I see that the odds are SWEET that I win some coin. [Put in your team NOW](#) !

The [Playoff Draft List](#) is now available for download! Enjoy playing around with it...

What does Montreal need to do to get back to playoff contention? They need to get better up front and on defense, but by how much?

Assuming Cole scores 30 again may be a stretch, but he's a rock solid top six winger, as is Pacioretty. The jury is still out on Bourque - he has been sub par since the trade, but a full summer of training could get him back on track.

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[Lars Eller](#) looks poised to take a big step forward, and the Habs need his size in the mix, as Desharnais and Plekanec are both small.

On the back end, Subban and Gorges are two worth building around. The young guys have shown themselves quite well (Emelin, Diaz, and Weber), but all three won't be in next season's opening night roster. And then there is [Andrei Markov](#) - what to do there?

[Carey Price](#) is going to continue to hide many of the blemishes on the roster in front of him, but as we saw this season, evn great goalies can only do so much.

14 games on the schedule tonight - lots to talk about in the meantime...

Michal Neuvrith will get the start for the Caps tonight.

[Anton Khudobin](#) is starting for the B's tonight - if you are desperate for late-season goalie points, he makes for a good spot starter.

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Chara and Bergeron are sitting the B's game out - rest day.

Kings prospect [Jordan Weal](#) has joined the AHL's Manchester Monarchs for the stretch run. Weal had 41 goals and 116 points with Regina of the WHL this past regular season.

Tom Renney was fined \$10,000 by the NHL for coaching a terrible hockey team for three straight years. Wait, that can't be right, can it? Nope – he was fined for calling out the refereeing after a game against LA.

This should be news to no one, but those of you on the East Coast don't get to see LA play all that much – [Dustin Brown](#) is the worst diver in the league, and it isn't even close. Or is he the best since he is so good at it? He had three blatant dives in the Oiler game, and I don't blame Renney one bit for his comments. You would think refs would catch on to Brown's act by now.

It is odd to see a captain and strong two-way, clean player dive so much. I'm not anti-LA or anti-Kings. There are other leaders around the league who dive – Ryan Kesler in Vancouver is

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another.

[Cory Schneider](#) is starting for the Canucks tonight. GM Mike Gillis on radio yesterday confirmed that [Roberto Luongo](#) will start in game one of the playoffs. He's at least earned that much. Will be interesting to see how long his leash is...

Oliver Ekman-Larsson is already one of the best defensemen in the league. People outside of Phoenix probably wouldn't believe me, but he is. He can do it all. Smooth, composed, and strong in all areas of the game.

The quest for 60 continues – Stamkos was blanked in Montreal last night. He had four shots on goal, but didn't do much else. He was miserable on the draw, losing 12 of 17 faceoffs taken.

JT Brown played 15 minutes, finishing with three shots on goal. As most non-playoff clubs do at this time of the year, the Lightning want to see what they have with their recent college signing.



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It took over 45 minutes for scoring to occur in the Wings/Blues game, but the third period was a wild one. The teams traded consecutive goals before the Wings won in a shootout.

[Todd Bertuzzi](#) was Detroit's best forward – he played 15 minutes, set up two goals, and scored a beauty in the shootout to win the game.

The Wings continue to give Nyqvist ice time – 15 minutes last night, roughly.

[Jonathan Ericsson](#) played close to 27 minutes – the Wings wanted to use his size with Lidstrom against the big Blues forwards. He looked quite good. When he's good, he uses his size well and makes smart, effective passes. When he is bad...

[Ryan Reaves](#) had 15 PIM (including a game misconduct) and three hits in about seven minutes of ice time. He knows his role.

[Cam Charron took a look back](#) at the 2008 season for the Canucks – a team that wasn't very

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good, and they tried to cover up holes with patch work options. Reminiscent of the Calgary Flames of this and last season.

*"I was parsing through Behind The Net and something caught my eye: when we talk about the Minnesota Wild this season, or the Dallas Stars last season, or the Colorado Avalanche from 2010, we're talking about teams that had dominant first halves of the season but collapsed from January-on. Surely, there has to have been a team like that almost every year in recent history that had a good first half and a lousy second half."*

McDonald led the Blues with six shots on goal. [Patrik Berglund](#) was next with five.

Now that everyone is healthy, [Jamie Langenbrunner](#) (11 minutes of ice time) appears to be the odd man out.

Like Dobber, I am also a big [Matt Frattin](#) fan. I see him developing into a consistent 20-30 goal scorer. He's a great skater, he has a good shot, and he sees the ice well. He went through a few significant slumps this season, but he is coming on as of late. I'd keep him in mind as a sleeper for next year, even if you are in a one-year league.

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Baseball season begins! Pick up the Fantasy Baseball Guide (and Baseball Prospects Report, if you want a kickass bargain) at [DobberBaseball](#) . My Interactive [Playoff Draft List](#) will be released early tomorrow and updated Sunday –includes my playoff picks, and the ability to play around with multiple playoff scenarios.

Great chance at winning cash here - head over to [DobberBaseball](#) and put in your team for FREE, first three prizes are in around the \$100 mark. Not bad, considering only about 200 people will be in the contest. Think about that for a minute - a hundred bucks, 1.5% chance if you closed your eyes pulled names from a HAT! Let alone actually using some of your baseball knowledge and picking your team. It's a one day fantasy baseball pool .

We have some awesome prizes for our 2012 playoff pool – check out the column on the main page for more information. [Cool Hockey](#) and [The Fan Zoo](#) have contributed to make this contest one you really will want to win (and won't be too sad to come in second place, either).

I know how good Lundqvist has been this season, but it will be a crime if [Jonathan Quick](#) doesn't win the Vezina.

Several CHL prospects are beginning to sign tryout contracts with their respective AHL affiliates – [Nicklas Jensen](#) has signed one with Chicago (Canucks AHL club), and [Christian Hanson](#)

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has done the same with Connecticut (Rangers AHL club).

[Jonathan Toews](#) [still isn't symptom free.](#)

*““There are always little things here and there that trigger it,” **he told reporters.** “It’s not a perfect thing that I know what to expect at every given part of the day. It always seems to be different. I’m just trying to make sure every part of my life is back to normal first.””*

Gustav Nyqvist was named to the AHL-All Rookie team recently, and for good reason. The Wings prospect has been sensational down in Grand Rapids.

[Cory Conacher](#) , Tampa’s diminutive wing prospect, was also named to the team.

Plymouth forward Stefan Noesen has been named as the CHL player of the week. Noesen recorded 12 points in the Whalers opening round four game sweep.

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Noesen, Ottawa's 1<sup>st</sup> round pick from 2011, was born in Plano, Texas (the home town of Lance Armstrong).

[Jakob Silfverberg](#) 's fantastic season continues – [he is carrying his SEL club](#) to the league final.

*“Despite missing six regular season games, the 21-year-old forward led his team and ranked second in the league in scoring with 54 points (24 goals, 30 assists). He was the consensus league MVP in the regular season, winning the Golden Helmet award.”*

*“Now, Silfverberg may be hockey's hottest name outside of North America. He has dominated the Swedish playoffs to a degree that has not been seen in a player his age in many years. One would have to go back to a 19-year-old Daniel Sedin's playoff for Modo Hockey Ornskoldsvik in*

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*the 2000 playoffs (8 goals, 14 points in 13 games) to find a youngster who has dominated the Elitserien postseason to the same degree that Silfverberg has this spring.”*

Vancouver has recalled [Byron Bitz](#) – [Zack Kassian](#) sustained an upper body injury (looked to be ribs) against Anaheim on Tuesday night.

Worth watching for a gorgeous deke by Lapierre at the end – he’s been in playoff mode for the past three weeks, and looks poised for another big spring run:

{youtube}LU1RDqtayY8{/youtube}

Another full-length shootout worth watching for the final goal – Bertuzzi taking the puck upstairs with authority:

{youtube}Qfg8ujw1RSU{/youtube}

[Carl Gunnarsson](#) is done for the season with a shoulder injury... and I can see why:

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{youtube}EI2h9PCBz1Q{/youtube}