

April 08, 2012

Written by Chris Nichols

Saturday, 07 April 2012 22:07 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 April 2012 17:25

Angus here - my fifth annual Prime Cuts roster will be released tomorrow.

Buy the updated Playoff Draft List [here](#) . See a video on list customization [here](#) . NOTE: updated as of 6:20 ET Sunday with an adjusted draft list of Dobber's picks, plus updated injury notes.

Playoffs start Wednesday. Cannot wait!

Rangers (1) vs. Senators (8)

Bruins (2) vs. Capitals (7)

Panthers (3) vs. Devils (6)

Penguins (4) vs. Flyers (5)

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Canucks (1) vs. Kings (8)

Blues (2) vs. Sharks (7)

Coyotes (3) vs. Blackhawks (6)

Predators (4) vs. Red Wings (5)

Back-to-back Presidents' Trophies for the Vancouver Canucks. And how many times was Alain Vigneault fired by some fans and media this year?

All in all, it's quite incredible how much was on the line in terms of playoff match-ups tonight. At the start of the last game, league-wide, for the entire regular season, 25% of the playoff picture was still up in the air. Pretty cool. Throw in that same final contest going to overtime after the Sharks erased an 0-2 hole beginning the third period... tough for hockey fans to ask for anything more as a finale.

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If I could give you one tip as you draft your playoff pool, I'd just say this: don't be afraid to go with your gut. Some of the best team and player picks I've made over the years have gone against the grain of conventional wisdom. And by conventional wisdom I mean the incoherent babblings from the collection of half-wits who clog up too much of the media flow directed into our homes and smartphones.

If you haven't seen them yet, here is Thursday's [Eastern Playoff Pool Stats Pack](#), along with the [Western version](#) from Friday.

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Among the fun with all 30 NHL teams in action Saturday, let's take a moment to reflect on and revel in the accomplishments of Evgeni Malkin. After undergoing surgery last winter on a torn MCL and ACL in his right knee, his '11-12 campaign has been nothing short of exceptional. He's erased any doubts about his health and let's not forget that there were questions about whether or not he should still be considered among the truly elite handful of players in the league.

This guy worked his ASS off to get into the best shape of his life before the season even began; not only to make sure he wouldn't lose a step post-surgery, but also to get that elusive golden

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touch back with the puck. Mission accomplished and then some. Goal No. 50 today against the Flyers, along with bringing his seasonal total to 109 points. A number of poolies had a serious quandary of whether or not to make him the usual early first round pick this past fall... those who took the leap of faith were handsomely rewarded. #hartwinner

His re-ascension to legitimate superstar status is also a good life lesson, in that even the best in any field usually carry that fierce work ethic in addition to having mad skills. Never lose that hunger to always keep improving. The work ethic alone can carry you a long way, never mind the skill-set.

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Bit of an unusual hockey evening for me. Having finished the big playoff stats push, I basically just got to – aside from a scaled down [Live NHL Recap](#) and writing this Ramblings - sit back tonight and watch games as a fan. Kinda cool, actually. Since I didn't make my usual notes over there I won't be going into every single result here.

With regular season pools officially over now, how did you fare in your leagues? Would you like to tell your season's fantasy tale – be it a happy ending or one of sadness – to the readership at Sportsnet.ca? At the conclusion of each regular season, poolies can write in to chris.nichols@sportsnet.rogers.com and do just that. Keep it relatively brief and include what went right and/or what went horribly,

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train-wreckishly wrong. Bad draft? Mutilated by injuries? Great free agent pick-ups early on? Share your perspective. Reader submissions will be included in future editions of Hockey Hearsay – which still runs 12 months a year on weekdays - beginning next week. Include your first name and hometown too.

Steven Stamkos sniped his 60th goal of the season in Winnipeg. He finished the year with 10 goals in his final nine contests to accomplish that feat too, which might be the most under-noticed part of this amazing feat. Teddy Purcell had a hat trick tonight and wrapped up his season with 38 points in his last 31 games. Did Dwayne Roloson play his final NHL game in that tilt? Maybe. He'll be missed.

Complete speculation, but my guess from his own intonation of late is that this will finally be it for Teemu Selanne. Retirement. Hall of Fame. And he could still play for years more, if he wanted. Bobby Ryan, incidentally, told a reporter after the game his gut says Selanne will be back for another year.

I was somewhat surprised at the underwhelming coverage of Anaheim's apparent signing of goaltender Viktor Fasth out of Sweden. I'm not sure that's the best NHL fit for him in terms of playing time, but he should get a chance to show he can not only play in this league, but perhaps even excel.

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Speaking of netminders, the Hawks signed Ray Emery to a one-year extension for just a shade over a million bucks and why not? He did a solid job for them and the fact that he's even still playing in the NHL – let alone the challenge he presented to Corey Crawford's No. 1 status – has been pretty compelling. He was the Hawks' nominee for the Masterton and not only is he a good goalie who has been humbled by life, but he has also thrived on overcoming the physical hurdles thrown in his way.

If Matt Cooke, who has basically just stopped being an idiot on the ice and has concentrated on, you know, actually *playing the game*, gets more votes as the Pens' Masterton nominee than Emery something is wrong with this world.

Actually... look at how rich the Kardashians are. There's already something wrong with this world.

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Neither Marcus Foligno nor Corey Tropp were in the Sabres' lineup this afternoon since the playoff-eliminated team sent the pair back down to help the Amerks. Foligno in particular definitely left an impression in the minds of poolies though. He was so dynamic on that line with Tyler Ennis and Drew Stafford and you'd think the trio would have a leading edge to be reunited for the preseason.

Henrik Lundqvist was voted the Rangers' MVP for the sixth straight year.

This was Nicklas Backstrom's fourth game back and his first points in that time.

Apparently the Florida Panthers had a pregame thing where they ran a bunch of negative blurbs on the scoreboard that had been written about the team by the media going into and during this season. Kind of a not-so-subtle neener-neener moment for the franchise. Hey... scoreboard is all that matters. Literally in this case.

From the @NHLFlames Twitter feed: "I walked to the bathroom and did my hair." - Akim Alui on waiting out his 10 minute misconduct.

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HNIC Hotstove had a note on Rick Nash, in that he'll take nearly a month to decompress now that the season is over. He'll then meet up with Columbus management. He's not expected to change his mind on wanting out, but we'll see at that point.

Stephen Gionta was called up and began on the fourth line for the Devils. He notched his first NHL goal in 13th career game and first of this season. He has 6-10-16 in 56 GP with Albany.

Jeremy Welsh made his NHL debut with Carolina and opened with Jeff Skinner and Tuomo Ruutu on the second line. Welsh played 16:42, had a pair of minors and was 4-9 on faceoffs.

The Stars started Reilly Smith with Jamie Benn and Michael Ryder today, while Scott Glennie was opposite Loui Eriksson with Tom Wandell down the middle since Mike Ribeiro didn't play.

Wild goalie Niklas Backstrom has been playing with an ankle injury since December and will undergo surgery next week.

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Should you be so inclined, [follow me on Twitter](#) for NHL and fantasy info as a safe mobile notifications options with minimal self-involved dreck in 140-character spurts.