

During the 2009 NHL Entry Draft, GM Glen Sather completely went off the board by selecting, high-schooler, Chris Kreider with the 19

th

overall pick,

which left many prospect watchers scratching their heads

. Three years on and Sather is looking like a complete genius. Kreider picked up a goal along with an assist in game one as the New York Rangers edged Washington 3-1. The 20-year old has two game-winning goals despite averaging just 11:08 per contest for the Rangers, which makes him someone to strongly consider for keeper leagues.

Another player that's really impressing me is Brad Richards. If you've been playing fantasy hockey for a while, then you're probably well aware of his inconsistent regular season stats. But when it comes to playoff time, the guy is absolutely clutch (68 points and 256 SOG in 71 career post-season contests)! There aren't very many players in the modern era that have posted numbers similar to Richards. Daniel Briere, Henrik Zetterberg, Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin are the only ones that really come to mind. Perhaps Joe Thornton and Patrick Marleau should take a page from his book.

Henrik Lundqvist didn't have to work too hard to pick up the W tonight, as he faced only 18 SOG from the Caps. If the Rangers can keep that going, this series will be done and dusted fairly quickly.

On the flip side Braden Holtby wasn't very impressive, as he allowed three goals on just 14 shots, which was a far cry from the numbers he posted in the opening series (2.00 GAA and .940 SP). I would strongly argue that he's the key to the series for the Caps.

Alex Ovechkin has played “alright” this post-season (tied for 21st in points these playoffs, and fifth in SOG with 29), and he got the Caps through the first round against a very tough Bruins team, but somehow I still feel a bit empty. Is it because I expect too much from him? Anyone else feel the same?

Dennis Wideman is another player that I’ve been unimpressed with. 46 points in 82 regular season games, but has just a lone point in eight contests during the playoffs. I understand that he didn’t have Mike Green to compete with for much of the season, but that’s a massive drop off from 0.56 points-per-game pace down to just 0.13.

Some [info](#) and some [more](#) regarding where the Caps have given up most of their goals during these playoffs, interestingly enough it’s actually posted on the

[Washington Post](#)

website. That’s like posting top-secret military plans on the CIA website for all to see. Surely John Tortorella would have access to this vital information and start sending Ryan Callahan, Brian Boyle, Artem Anisimov and Ruslan Fedotenko towards the opposition net.

Biggest news coming out of the Blues/Kings series is Dwight King’s hit from behind to Alex Pietrangelo. AP got up and skated off the ice on his own accord, which didn’t look too serious at the time, but he didn’t see much ice-time after that, which could mean that something more serious could be lingering in the background. If Pietrangelo’s out for a significant amount of time, the series could swing LA’s way given the importance of AP to the Blues’ lineup.

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Roman Polak (10:02 in the third), and Kris Russell (8:34 in the third), both filled in admirably while AP was out.

Kevin Shattenkirk was just minus one in the entire Sharks/Blues series, copped a minus three in last night's contest.

Chris Stewart saw a whopping 8:40 in ice-time during the 3-1 loss to the Kings. With the offensive depth that they have plus Jaden Schwartz, Vladimir Tarasenko and possibly even Ty Rattie challenging for a spot next campaign, you would have to think that Stewart's days in St. Louis are over. A team like the Pens could possibly claim him as a reclamation project and sign him to a cheap(ish) deal and give him a top-six role amongst the league's best.

Brian Elliott stopped 26 of the 28 shots that he faced for a .929 SP. Something tells me that it won't be enough to get the job done. He'll need it to be at least .933 or even .940 to win this crazy goaltending battle.

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Jon Quick stopped 28 of 29 for a .966 SP, which got it done. He now boasts a ridiculous stat-line of 1.49 GAA and a remarkable .955 SP during the playoffs.

Dustin Penner had 17 points in 65 regular season contests, but has four points in six post-season games.

For all you youngsters out there who have your coach barking at you to eat a nutritious breakfast, like All-Bran or Wheaties, tell them to lay off your case. You want to eat pancakes just like Penner.

Speaking of pancakes, if the fans in St. Louis wanted to throw Penner off his game, surely there'll be someone out there who'd throw pancakes. Detroit has Octopi, Florida has rats, St. Louis could throw "blueberry" pancakes.

A King that's really flying under-the-radar at the moment is Willie Mitchell. He garnered 24:02 overall, 4:54 of which was on the PP, in ice-time during last night's game one victory. He's averaging a whopping 25:12 and 4:25 during these playoffs. His 4.67 blocked shots per game are also tops amongst all players as well. He's actually the pillar that's propping up the Kings' defensive corp.

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The Kings are now a remarkable 4-0 on the road. Generally speaking, the road games are where the playoffs are won and lost. Even if the Kings play half as well as they have on the road in the remainder of this post-season, you can hand them the cup.

Pete Deboer [tinkered with his lines](#) in practice yesterday, but isn't committed to them for game one.

Ponikarovsky – Zajac – Kovalchuk

Parise – Elias – Zubrus

Sykora – Henrique – Clarkson

Carter- Gionta – Bernier

Looks pretty balanced to me.

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Of the eight remaining teams in the post-season, all of them were at or near the top 20 teams in terms of defense (goals against average). If you knock out Washington and Philadelphia, six of the eight teams were in the top 10.

The fantasy implications of this can be disastrous as more teams will try to “replicate” the path of champions as opposed to doing the opposite. We could very well be heading back towards the “dead puck” era if you follow the trends as highlighted over at [Hockey Reference](#) . My guess, 2.65 goals per game per team next season, which means fewer “high end” point-per-gamers and fantasy studs. So you can essentially throw those borderline player x “can be a point-per-game player” projections out the window.

[Illustrated guide](#) to the first round of the playoffs.

After averaging just 7:08 per contest in the opening series against the Pens, it appears that James van Riemsdyk will garner more responsibility against the Devils according to [csnphilly](#) .

If you’re big in trying to be “ahead of the curve”, consider the Avs (\$42.8 mil), Preds (\$32.3 mil), Coyotes (\$29.4 mil), Blues (\$28.5 mil) and Sens (\$27.8 mil) who are in the top-five, in terms of available cap space heading into 2012-13, according to [Capgeek](#) . Interesting enough, four of the five teams made the post-season this year, and Colorado was pretty close at the cusp as

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well. Who says you need a "big budget" in order to win a cup?

So much for the theory of home-ice advantage during the playoffs, the home team is 18-33 on home ice (35.2 percent win rate), which is a stark contrast to what occurred during the regular season 687-399-144 (55.9 percent win rate).

Another big stat to pay attention to, the team that scores first is 33-17 during the playoffs (66.6 percent), which is in line to the regular season numbers (828-451-155, 57.7 win rate). So flick on the tele, watch for the first goal, then head over to HBO for Game of Thrones.

Daniel Alfredsson is pondering retirement in the off-season; read it [here](#) . Money won't be a factor as he's only due \$1 mil in salary this season, so if he does decide to return, it'll be for the love of the game. Retire on a high note (59 points in 75 games and 1172 points in 1242 career contests), or have another crack?

Hart finalists are out, which are Lundqvist, Malkin and Steven Stamkos. There's a couple of ways you can go about this. If you go by what the award actually stands for, "[player adjudged most valuable to his team](#)"

, then you almost have to give it to Stamkos don't you? I mean where would the Lightning be without Stammy's 60 goals, which accounted for 25.9 percent of the Lightning goals this campaign? You take that out and they'd be where Minny, Islanders or Columbus are.

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Is Lundy the most valuable Ranger? More important than Dan Girardi? Would Biron have completely collapsed the Rangers?

Can't really fault what Malkin did this season for the Pens, but would Pittsburgh completely collapse if Malkin weren't there? His 50 goals accounted for 18.3 percent of the Pens' goals this campaign, is that enough to justify him over Stamkos?

An interesting [take](#) on goalies from Adam Proteau of THN, but I'll take it a bit further and look back to the lockout. 2005-06: Cam Ward (still remains) and Dwayne Roloson (gone), 2006-07: J.S. Giguere (gone) and Ray Emery (gone), 2007-08: Chris Osgood (gone) and M.A. Fleury (still remains), 2008-09: same as 07-08, 2009-10: Antti Niemi (gone) and Michael Leighton (gone), 2010-11: Tim Thomas and Roberto Luongo (both possibly gone). I guess this just highlights how fickle the goaltending position is in the NHL. You can win a cup and three years down the road and you're in a different uniform.

One of the reasons why I think the Devils will take out the Flyers, **Martin Brodeur**. According to the [blog](#) over at Fire and Ice. Brodeur will start in his 178th

consecutive playoff game on Sunday, a streak which was started way back in 1994. Since then, the Flyers have utilized 12 different goalies during the playoffs, Martin Biron, Sergei Bobrovsky, Brian Boucher, Sean Burke, Ilya Bryzgalov, Roman Cechmanek, Robert Esche, Ron Hextall,

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Michael Leighton, Antero Niittymaki, Garth Snow and John Vanbiesbrouck.

This [column](#) over at azcentral gave me a chuckle.

“The franchise sold 50 season-ticket packages on Monday alone and is already ahead of its renewal rate for all of last year, he said.”

If a Canadian team (in Quebec or southern Ontario) made the second round of the playoffs, how many season-ticket packages would that have sold? 10 times, 50 times, 100 times the amount that the Yotes have?

Ooh, [Columbus gets a new HD scoreboard](#) , I wonder if that's enough to convince Rick Nash to stay? Now he can watch the opposition score on his team in high-def.

[World Championship rosters](#) are out for anyone that cares. I've always wondered why there isn't a bigger deal made out of the WC as there are for the Olympics or WJC. Canada, on paper, looks like they'll dominate and do it convincingly.

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Make sure you head over to [Dobber Prospects](#) and give that a good gander. Brendan Ross and Matt Bugg are two of the most knowledgeable people in terms of hockey prospects.

Should you be so inclined, follow me on [Twitter](#) if you think that my article/tweets are useful.

King hit on Pietrangelo plus game-winning goal from Matt Greene. Suspendable?

Kreider's bullet on Holtby

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