

**May 04, 2012**

Written by Jeff Angus

Thursday, 03 May 2012 22:15 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 May 2012 22:17

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Whatever was ailing [Ilya Kovalchuk](#) appears to be a thing of the past... he delivered his best performance of the postseason last night, playing a significant role on three of the four Devils goals.

His play on the OT goal was spectacular – he made a blunder at the blue line, but chased the puck down, and caught the Flyers on a bad change with a beautiful pass, which sprung [Alexei Ponikarovsky](#) in on goal.

Before the playoffs, many were expecting the winner of the Flyers/Penguins series to a bit run down. The Flyers looked every bit run down last night – [Claude Giroux](#) and [Scott Hartnell](#) , especially.

[Daniel Briere](#) 's playoff legend continues to grow – two points and three shots – he also won 11 of 16 draws (New Jersey was the dominant team in the circle all night long).

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[Matt Carle](#) continues to build his case for a nice contract this summer – he led the Flyers in ice time with 31 minutes played, and he scored a goal to boot.

Kovalchuk played 22 minutes – about his season average. Only difference – this time, it was split over four periods instead of three.

[Marek Zidlicky](#) played a strong game – two helpers, and he battled hard defensively. Not something that gets said about him all that often.

The Marlies beat Abbotsford 5-1 last night. Some of the standout performances:

Three points for [Nazem Kadri](#) . He also led the team with four shots on goal.

[Jake Gardiner](#) had two helpers.

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[Zach Parise](#) played less than Kovalchuk – the Devils really balanced their ice time.

[Ben Scrivens](#) stopped 37 of 38 shots fired his way.

Defenseman [Korbinian Holzer](#) had two points and was a plus-3. He should find a spot on Toronto's back end next year, especially if they decide to get rid of Mike Komisarek (buy out, waivers, you name it, and the Leafs should try it). Already a member of hockey's 'all-name team', too.

One of my first pieces on DobberHockey - [Zach Parise](#) and the '[It Factor](#),' from December of 2007.

Parise was dominant last night. He has a combination of will and skill that only a handful of other athletes (let alone hockey players) possess. His tenacity is unrivaled. It only takes one team to set a market price for a player, but I could see more than a few teams going north of \$8 million for a long, long time with a contract offer for his services this summer (even with the uncertainty over the next CBA).

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If you managed to buy low on him after a bit of a disappointing regular season, kudos. His numbers have so obviously been negatively affected by [Ilya Kovalchuk](#) . I have no idea whether or not Parise will re-sign with the Devils (I would have said zero chance a few months ago, but a long playoff run could change that).

The World Championships often get lost in the madness that is postseason hockey, but there are some great players in attendance each year. From a fantasy hockey perspective, it sometimes provides a glimpse at some breakout candidates for next season. I recall [Brent Burns](#) really arriving as a star defenseman a few years ago at this tournament.

Could [Teddy Purcell](#) be that guy this year? He already has his “breakout” during the 2011-12 regular season, but a strong tournament could carry that positive momentum forward. The Lightning will be back in playoff contention if/when they make a trade for [Roberto Luongo](#) , too.

Alex Burrows will be skating on a line with [Ryan Nugent-Hopkins](#) and [Jordan Eberle](#) . As a fan of all three players, I’m interesting to see how it works. Burrows will likely fill a similar role as he does with the Sedins – forecheck hard, get the puck to his linemates, and skate to open ice.

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[Jack Johnson](#) was named captain of the US team for the second consecutive year. His splits between LA and Columbus are quite telling – as a few speculated after the trade, a change of scenery may just be what he needed. He seems to have embraced the move to Columbus, and he is now “the guy” there on the back end.

If and when [Rick Nash](#) is dealt, Johnson could become “the guy” there for the entire organization. Johnson is a below average defensive defenseman at time, but development isn’t always as easy as a few seasons, especially for defensemen. I think the added responsibility that wearing the C for his country entails could be another reason why next season could be a big, big breakout for the former Michigan star.

Lowetide is a great Oilers blog, and I really enjoyed [the take](#) on Nail Yakupov. To draft, or not to draft? Do the Oilers “play it safe” and go for Ryan Murray? Especially interesting are the 50+ comments below the column – great insights on both sides of the debate.

Personally, I’d take Yakupov. Give all of the young studs a decent vet defenseman to play with (or hope for Justin Schultz this summer), and then trade one of them if and when they all become very good NHL players. Better to overpay from a position of strength to not have one at all.

[Could the NY Islanders be moving to Brooklyn?](#) The Barclay Center, the arena in discussion, only seats 14,500. As Winnipeg has proven, capacity isn’t the be-all, end-all (although that

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experiment is still very young).

[Canes Country takes a \(very\) in-depth](#) look at the best way to construct a team. If you have a few minutes today to spare reading something (besides these ramblings, of course...) this is it. In the end, there may not be a "best way" to build a team – great teams have used different methods (free agency, Europe, the draft, trades) to construct contending teams year after year.

*"While I was not able to find any relationship throughout the league between success and player acquisition, I did notice a difference between the two conferences. The Western Conference seems to focus more on **drafted** players. They have 8 teams that have over 40% of their roster comprised of players they drafted, while the East only has 4 at 40% or above. The West average for **drafted** players is 39.9%, compared to the East average of 34.6%. I wonder why this is. Do Western Conference teams draft better/have better scouting or do they do a better job at developing players?"*

[Kirill Petrov](#) is staying in the KHL forever for at least one more year. Apparently the Isles made a push to get him over, but his mother is quite sick and he wanted to stay home to be with her. Additionally, he is scared off by the uncertainty of no CBA for the future.

The Joe Sacco extension was definitely great news for Ryan O'Reilly owners. What does it mean for [Matt Duchene](#), though? He shuffled back and forth from wing to center under Sacco, and never really seemed to find a permanent home. His production was lousy, and his play was a far cry from the dominant form he showed during his first two NHL seasons.

[Mile High Hockey](#) compares Duchene to previous second overall picks, and how they produce during their first three NHL seasons.

*"Duchene took a step backward last year and may have cost himself some significant money in the process (he's due a contract extension this summer). But, while his wallet may be lighter, we're mostly concerned with what's going to happen on the ice. In the end, the numbers here lead me to conclude that Duchene still could turn out to be a high-impact player; we've certainly seen the flashy talent on the ice. But right now he's not quite on a statistical path of some of the upper-tier scorers among his peers - Malkin, Toews, Spezza, Gaborik."*

[Who would you rather build a team around](#) – [Max Pacioretty](#) or [Phil Kessel](#)? A very deep analysis of the two stars was undertaken. Some tidbits from it:

*“Right away there are some major differences. Kessel is more heavily relied upon by the Leafs than Pacioretty is for the Canadiens.*

*Kessel plays against marginally tougher opponents, but Pacioretty has marginally tougher zone starts. Perhaps due to the weaker competition, Pacioretty also finishes his shifts in the offensive zone more often. Oddly enough, Kessel faced tougher competition and tougher zone starts as a 23 year old than he did at 24, which may explain some of his jump in production this year. He also didn't suffer from poor shooting luck this year like he did last season.*

*Pacioretty's possession numbers are superior to Kessel's in both years by a fairly wide margin. Pacioretty's half season in 2010-11 had even more impressive relative possession numbers, but the sample size isn't very large. All signs point to Pacioretty being a possession beast though, something Kessel hasn't been able to achieve in Toronto.”*

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Caps fans – think you were nervous on Wednesday night? [Braden Holtby's parents take the cake.](#)

Some quotes from Roman Cervenka in this [NHL.com piece.](#)

*"There were some other offers, but the Flames have been working on it for a long time," Cervenka said. "They have visited me in Russia, which meant a lot to me. The others probably expected me to play at the World Championship and thought we could have some talks there, but that did not happen. This season was over for me and I had already decided about 90 percent for Calgary. I just wanted to hear other offers, too."*

Great snipe from Kovalchuk:

{youtube}hbYWYoUP8eQ{/youtube}

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