For a second consecutive game the Kings have won it in overtime. They now hold a commanding 2-0 lead over the Devils heading back to LA for games three and four on Monday and Wednesday night.

They've also now won 10 consecutive road contests, which is an unbelievable feat in this day and age.

According to whowins.com , the Kings have an 89.4 percent chance of winning the series. Give me the other 10.6 percent!

Both goalies had pretty solid games (Martin Broduer .932 SP and Jon Quick .970 SP). It's just that Quick gave up one less goal. This is going to be a tight series where each game could possibly come down to a single overtime goal.

How much has Jeff Carter and Mike Richards influenced this series? I don't know the true reasons behind why Paul Holmgren moved both of those pieces from Philadelphia, but he's got

to be annoyed with the success that the duo is experiencing.

The one area that I thought would determine the series, special teams, is heavily leaning towards the Kings direction. The Devils are 0-6 on the PP, which is probably where the series is being lost. If even one of those PP opportunities were capitalized on, the series would have a completely different complexion.

The NHL will set next year's cap at $70.3 mil. I understand that the NHL were forced by the player's union to have the player salaries match league revenue, but couldn't they have slowly raised the cap or at least raised it in a pre-determined amount so it didn't get this out of hand? They could have put that extra money into escrow and be given out to the players as "bonuses". With the salary cap being raised to $70.3 mil next season, the cap has rose from $39 mil to $70.3 mil in a matter of only seven years, which has caused player salaries to spiral out of control. Imagine any other major corporation nearly doubling their employee salaries in seven years, how quickly would that company fold? I wouldn't be at all surprised to see this unsustainable direction take a u-turn and we head towards another lockout bringing us back to square one again. Two steps forward, one step back.

The Preds and Ryan Suter have "begun" contract talks . How hard can it possibly be? David Poille: "Okay, Ryan I would like you to write down on this sheet of paper, how much money do you want, and how long of a contract do you want it for." Suter takes a few minutes to ponder his actions and replies "Here you go Dave." Poille looks at the paper and replies "Ryan, there's no way in our budget we can afford that number given our small market and our inability to generate high-end income." Suter replies "But Detroit, Colorado, St. Louis, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Islanders can offer me something like that." Poille replies, "Okay, looks like we'll see you in another uniform next year then." Suter quietly exits the room. Poille mutters to himself, "Time to see what type of low-end draft pick I can swindle from another team for his negotiation rights. Damn I should have went to Dobberhockey.com and listened to Ryan Ma…"

Ok I added that last part in, but you get my point. The Preds tried to swing for the fence, but struck out swinging (visit Dobberbaseball btw) and now will have to face the consequences for it. If Poille was given a “redo” I wonder what he would have done differently?

Last week, I brought up the concept of competition against the NBA. It’s interesting to see the top “non-home” viewership market for Game 1. Buffalo, Minnesota, Pittsburgh and Oklahoma City top the list.

Tomas Holmstrom is also contemplating retirement after Nicklas Lidstrom ’s announcement earlier in the week. It’s either the Wings or nothing he says.

There have been a lot of inklings about Detroit wanting to sign potential free agent Suter. I could potentially see that move really backfiring, and I’ll go out on a limb to say that the Red Wings will struggle offensively next season with Suter and without Lidstrom.

If you look at this season, the Red Wings were 46-20-4 (65.7 win percentage) with Lidstrom in

the line-up and were just 2-8-2 when he wasn't. Lidstrom didn't particularly have a great offensive season, but for me his true value lies in his time spent on the ice where he's chewing up the big minutes and creating plays. He's the calming presence when they get into trouble and he's the one that gets the puck out of their defensive zone and into the offensive zone. Lidstrom is the anchor and puck mover on the PP and also the link up player between the blue-line and the forwards. Suter doesn't fit the bill of many of those qualities that Lidstrom leaves behind.

If you've followed my columns and forum posts in the past, then you've probably read about me and my thoughts about "stir stick" blue-liners. Mike Green , Duncan Keith , Shea Weber , Erik Karlsson
,
Dustin Byfuglien
,
Dan Boyle
,
Brian Campbell
,
Kris Letang
,
Marek Zidlicky
and Lidstrom are "stir stick" blue-liners. They are the ones that create the offense and get it revving.
Brent Seabrook
, Dan Girardi,
Ian White
, Niklas Kronwall, Kevin Bieska and Suter are great support types, but I wouldn't trust them to be a number one blue-liner to run a team.

If someone came up to me and said that Detroit would miss the playoffs next season, I wouldn't be completely shocked by it.

Puck Daddy does an awesome job of listing Lidstrom's career accomplishments.

If Doan were to retire as a Coyote, would you ever find something like this in Phoenix? I wonder how many people on Phoenix would even know who Doan is.

In a very quiet move, the Wild signed SEL goalie Johan Gustafsson to an entry level contract. He finished fourth amongst all SEL goalies in terms of SP with a .932 average as a 20-year old. He'll probably stay another year in Sweden to refine his game, but if you are in a deeper keeper league with plenty of roster spots to stash players, keep an eye out for Gustafsson.

Last week I stated that I didn't think that the Avs needed David Jones , but it appears that I was wrong. Adrian Dater pens that the Avs have had discussions with Jones' agent for a new contract. I don't see where he would fit into the Avs lineup, if they went after a "big fish" free agent like Alex Semin or Zach Parise , but maybe they have different plans.

There's a bit of a hold up on Ryan Smyth 's contract status. Kukla's Korner , thinks that the holdup is the money aspect. Remember the Oilers and Smyth was squabbling over $100k a few years ago, but this time around I think the margin is much larger and isn't as favourable to Smyth's side of things. There hasn't been a lot of press about the numbers that the Oilers are offering, but I've been reading somewhere around the $2 to $2.5 mil mark but Smyth is wanting $3 mil. Copper N Blue did a pretty good write up a couple of weeks ago, and compared it to similar players around his age and point production and $2-2.5 mil seems pretty reasonable. So the big question is if you were in Steve Tambellini's chair what would you offer? Keep in mind he's a pretty good role model to show the young kids what it takes to be a heart and soul player of a team.

Earlier this week there were rumors about Bob Hartley taking over the head coaching gig of the Canadiens , but it turned out that he's taking over the Flames gig instead. Adam Proteau of THN, doesn't think it'll make much difference to an organization at a "

competitive crossroad
" and I concur. Another season of hanging on to aging assets (declining in value), and settling to finish out of the playoff picture is just prolonging the inevitable. The Oilers figured it out three seasons ago, how long will it take the Flames?

David Moulton thinks of an alternative to increase goal scoring in the NHL. I agree with him, having more offense and less time skating around waiting for the "right" opportunity certainly wouldn't be a negative thing. Just one more goal per game would go a long way in increasing fan excitement and experience.

Biggest news at least on the fantasy front is Blues' prospect Vladimir Tarasenko deciding to choose the NHL over the KHL . The big question is whether or not he'll have success in the "Ken Hitchcock" system. Hitch hasn't been kind to young Russians in the past (Nikita Filatov /Nikoali Zherdev), but Tarasenko should be a different kettle of fish.

Me playing Hitch.

Berglund- McDonald – Steen

Backes – Oshie – Perron

D'Agostini – Schwartz – Tarasenko

Sobotka – Crombeen – Reaves

Pietrangelo – Shattenkirk

Polak – Russell

Cole - ??

Halak

Elliott

I don't really see a space or the need for St. Louis to re-sign RFA Chris Stewart . There's no point sticking him on the third/fourth line and giving him just 12-13 minutes a game and expecting a miracle.

To me it would make more sense for the Blues to go after Suter. They have tons of cap space, a solid young developing forward line, an opening in on the blue-line, two solid goalies and Ken Hitchcock who employs a similar "defense first" game plan as Barry Trotz. AP and Shatty can take care of the "stir stick" stuff, while Suter supplements as the rock on the blue-line. Makes sense to me.

I'm currently working on my Projections, Projections, We All Love Our Projections article for later this summer and there have been some interesting finds.

Just try to convince me that TOI, SOG and point production is not related.

Correlation Factors

Correlation

Forwards: TOI and Point Production

0.89

Forwards: SOG and Point Production

0.90

Defenseman: TOI and Point Production

0.90

Defenseman: SOG and Point Production

0.81

Best and worst second-half vs. first half forward producers disregarding major injuries.

Best Second-Half Forwards

Point Differential

Worst Second-Half Forwards

Point Differential

Teddy Purcell

+23

Daniel Sedin

-25

Eric Staal

+20

Kris Versteeg

-21

Evgeni Malkin

+19

Thomas Vanek

-19

Ilya Kovalchuk

+15

Ryan Smyth

-18

Gabriel Landeskog

+12

Zack Smith

-16

Notable most and least efficient forwards in terms point production compared to ice-time

Most Efficient Forwards

Seconds per Point

Least Efficient Forwards

Seconds per Point

Sidney Crosby ***

659

Nino Niderreiter

33381

Evgeni Malkin

868

Magnus Paajarvi

4052

Claude Giroux

1070

Dustin Penner

3285

Jordan Eberle

1083

Sean Couturier

2419

Joffrey Lupul

1100

Patrik Berglund

2326

I'll do a more in depth analysis of the numbers in the actual column itself, but it's **absolutely crazy** the efficiency that Crosby operates at. Besides Malkin, it's nearly twice as efficient as anyone else in the league!

Best and worst second-half vs. first half defensive producers disregarding major injuries.

Best Second-Half Defenseman

Point Differential

Worst Second-Half Defenseman

Point Differential

Alex Pietrangelo

+17

Brian Campbell

-13

Jeff Petry

+11

Dennis Wideman

-12

Sheldon Brookbank

+10

Jon Carlson

-12

Willie Mitchell

+10

Dion Phaneuf

-12

Jake Gardiner

+10

Shea Weber

-11

Best and worst second-half vs. first half goalies disregarding major injuries.

Best Second-Half Goalies

Win Differential

Worst Second-Half Goalies

Win Differential

Ryan Miller

+11

Jimmy Howard

-13

Devan Dubnyk

+10

Tomas Vokoun

-9

Jonas Hiller

+9

Jonas Gustavsson

-7

Evgeni Nabokov

+9

Brian Elliott

-7

Jaroslav Halak

+8

Jose Theodore

-6

More on this when the column comes out in July.

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

{youtube}IX1uvEsDnag{/youtube}