

July 13, 2012

Written by Jeff Angus

Thursday, 12 July 2012 18:18 - Last Updated Friday, 13 July 2012 01:48

The big news from yesterday – goaltender [Jonathan Bernier](#) has asked for a trade (he actually originally asked at the trade deadline, but the Kings refused). Their refusal makes sense – he was a great insurance policy down the stretch, and Quick hadn't re-signed yet.

The Kings shouldn't be in a rush to move him. They have no glaring roster holes, and Bernier is going to be an RFA for a while (he's still only 23).

The Phoenix Coyotes have made a very Phoenix Coyote-like move, locking up the underrated and largely unknown [Nick Johnson](#) to a one-year, two-way contract. Johnson spent last season with the Wild after developing for a few years in the Penguins organization.

[I set up a Facebook page for my blog.](#) Like it, well... because!

Dallas locked up backup goalie [Richard Bachman](#) to a one-year, one-way deal. He will serve as the back up to [Kari Lehtonen](#) .

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[Brenden Dillon](#) was a standout at Dallas's developmental camp, and he could find himself alongside [Trevor Daley](#) on the second pairing come October (or November, or December...).

Dillon projects as a two-way, physical defenseman. He had solid point totals as a rookie pro in the AHL last year.

Congrats to DobberHockey member Vintage Vibe. His family owns the ECHL's San Francisco Bulls, and the Bulls announced an affiliate agreement with the San Jose Sharks earlier this week.

Best news of the day – [Teemu Selanne](#) is back for one more season.

One of the best columns I have read in quite some time – Fear the Fin dispels some of the myths about [Patrick Marleau](#). Lots of data and statistical analysis is used, and it makes for a really interesting read.

“The word random to describe these distributions is somewhat misleading. It's not by chance that the frequency with which Marleau scores goals follows a Poisson distribution. He is one of the best goal scorers in the world, he just happens to play against some of the best goaltenders/defensmen in the world also. The salary cap, UFA, and league parity has driven the balance of talent. This balance of skill is similar to 2 equally strong men in an arm wrestling match, they may appear to balance each other out so that neither has the strength to tip the battle, but this doesn't indicate that both men aren't strong, or that strength doesn't win the match.”

James van Riemsdyk went on record yesterday saying that he would be comfortable playing center with the Leafs. I don't think he projects as a center. He uses his size well off the wing and along the boards, and isn't really a possession-type of player, which is what the Leafs need up the middle.

[Mikhail Grabovski](#) may not be an elite center, but he's one of the 30 best in the league. The Leafs need to maximize his value and give him the top minutes in all situations. If that is with Lupul and Kessel, then so be it.

It would also allow [Tim Connolly](#) and [Tyler Bozak](#) to play the 2/3 spots, which they are better suited for. [Joe Colborne](#) could surprise with a strong training camp, as well.

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With [Derek Roy](#) out until November, the Stars are once again faced with the task of having absolutely zilch up the middle. [Jamie Benn](#) will likely center Eriksson and Jagr on line one, which leaves [Tom Wandell](#), Verne Fiddler, and a few other contenders for the L2 spot. This season will be a transitional one for the Stars, who have brought in some veterans to bridge the gap between the present and future.

They have some intriguing prospects up front with [Matt Fraser](#), [Scott Glennie](#), and Alex Chiasson, but all three are probably a year or so from full-time duty.

Don't forget about 2012 1st round pick Radek Faska, either. He was billed as one of the most NHL-ready players at the draft, and could make the team out of training camp.

New Edmonton Oilers coach Ralph Kruger expects Nail Yakupov to have an immediate impact at the NHL level, and I agree. Another interesting note:

"It sounds like Krueger will use 4 forwards on the first power play unit, and two defensemen on the second unit – he specifically mentioned the benefits of having a full defensive pairing on the ice when the power play expires. On the other hand, he also said that he expects to alter both personnel and strategy as the season moves along, so as to continue catching the opposition off guard."

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Here is my weekly piece for the Canucks Army – an updated profile of Canucks prospect [Kevin Connauton](#)

, who should see some time in Vancouver this season. His sophomore campaign in the AHL with the Chicago Wolves was a successful one, at both ends of the ice.

“He isn’t a superstar prospect, but Connauton has developed from a one or two-trick pony (big point shot, great skater) into a top four defenseman at the AHL level and a legitimate NHL prospect.”

Hockey Prospectus takes a look at the top 10 prospects in the Columbus organization. Number two is defenseman [David Savard](#) :

“The Good: Savard is a tremendous puck-moving defenseman who consistently shows high-end ability in that area of the game and projects as a legit top-pairing power play defenseman. He’s got such good instincts moving the puck in transition, controlling the point, and making good reads on defense. He logged a ton of minutes in the AHL and is right on the cusp of becoming an NHL regular.

The Bad: Despite his good frame, Savard’s strength level is a little behind where a player of his size and age should be. His skating is notably below average and he can get burned by faster

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players. Scouts felt in his NHL stints he wasn't up to the pace of that level of play."

I am a big Savard fan, personally. Even with the [Jack Johnson](#) acquisition, Savard will play a big part on Columbus's top power play unit in the near future. He moves the puck well and he really works the point like a quarterback.

Panthers prospect Nick Bjugstad is returning to Minnesota for another year. He will likely turn pro next summer.

Chicago coach Joel Quenneville is speaking very highly of top prospect [Brandon Saad](#) .

"And in the case of Saad, for whom Quenneville had very high praise – "he looks like he's ready to play. He can maybe not just make our team, he can do more than that" -- it's very good."

Unsurprisingly, the Red Wings have big plans for [Brendan Smith](#) . The talented young defenseman could be a mainstay in the top four on the back end by the end of the 2012-13

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season.

"The other few years I wasn't too sure (about making the NHL), and I was fighting for a spot, but they've pretty much told me I'll be there (this season)," said Smith, the team's first-round pick in 2007 out of Wisconsin. "I just have to keep working, keep getting bigger and stronger."

A very thorough look at [Wojtek Wolski](#) – worth the read.

"That's a glowing review, but I'm not quite as confident about that 50-point figure– so much depends on deployment. For example, Chris Robert of Litterbox Cats tells us that Wolski's production depends very much on his linemates:

Wolski scores 70% of his points in the 55% of the time he's playing a top 6 role. When he's placed in the bottom 6 45% of the time, he only scores 30% of his points."

I would hazard a guess that most NHLers have a similar statistical breakdown to Wolski's – it is

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easier to produce when playing with better players.

Expanding on an idea I had last week – why don't the Caps have an "easy minutes" offensive unit, and a "harder minutes" offensive unit? Could split them up as follows:

Easy:

Wolski-Ribeiro-Ovechkin

Harder:

Laich-Backstrom-Brouwer

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Just some food for thought. Maximize the assets of your skilled, offensive players. This wouldn't be the best thing for Nick Backstrom's fantasy value, but he'd still find a way to be very productive. He's much better defensively than Ribeiro, which is why he would be the one to see tougher minutes.

Sabres prospect defenseman Brayden McNabb hopes to land a roster spot this fall. He has fantasy value, especially in leagues that count hits and PIM.

"Sabres General Manager Darcy Regier said previously that he has McNabb penciled in to start the year in Rochester, where the lefty had 30 points in 45 games last season. But McNabb believes his game is NHL-ready and just needs an opportunity.

"I think it is [ready]," he said. "I played 25 [games with Buffalo] last year and I felt really good. I've been working really hard this offseason and I'm ready for the challenge."

PK Subban... zoo keeper?

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