

March 01, 2013

Written by Jeff Angus

Thursday, 28 February 2013 22:01 - Last Updated Friday, 01 March 2013 11:53

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[Andrew Ladd](#) had a great game for the Jets, and now has 20 points in 20 games this season. I am surprised with that kind of production – he seemed to be settling in as a 50-60 point guy. He only has four PIM so far (great in real life as a captain, but not so much for fantasy hockey) though.

*

Nate Gerbe scored twice – his first two goals of the season. He hasn't been given much in the way of offensive opportunities this season.

[Tyler Ennis](#) also had two points – the two pint-sized forwards each had three shots on goal as well.

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[Brian Campbell](#) had a goal and an assist for Florida, and he also played close to 34 minutes.

Drew Shore scored his second of the season, and although he finished minus-2, he continues to have a strong rookie season.

[Jonathan Huberdeau](#) had no points, but he did fire a team-high eight shots on goal.

Florida's goaltending continues to be a disaster – [Scott Clemmensen](#) was pulled after allowing three goals on the first 10 shots he faced.

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[Corey Crawford](#) left the Chicago game (a 3-0 win) with an undisclosed injury... related to his previous injury, perhaps? The Hawks are saying no... but their track record of handling injuries isn't exactly stellar.

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[Ray Emery](#) was great in relief, stopping all 15 shots he faced.

[Andrew Shaw](#) scored another goal – he reminds me a lot of Alex Burrows – not the biggest or fastest guy, but he knows how to play with star linemates and he is a really smart and instinctual player. That is why he is able to produce regardless of what role he is in.

*

[Jamie Benn](#) may be facing a suspension for a vicious cross-check to the back of [Ryan Jones](#) .

Dallas had discipline issues all game long against the Oilers, and the Benn incident was merely the icing on the cake.

{youtube}DzU-feqQCBY{/youtube}

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Edmonton got great performances from the usual suspects – [Justin Schultz](#) scored his first in seven games, and his first even strength goal of the season as well.

*

[Mikkel Boedker](#) had two helpers and was flying all game long last night – he was far and away the most dangerous forward on the ice for either team (and that includes Parise and Koivu).

[Dany Heatley](#) turned back the clock with a two goal performance. I don't think it is a sign of things to come, but you never know....

Jason Zucker, another impressive rookie, scored his third of the season. He played only 7:05, which will make it tough for him to keep producing unless that gets bumped up to 10-12 minutes per night.

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[Jared Spurgeon](#) scored a goal as well – it is incredible how he is able to play defense while giving up five or six inches and a lot of weight to almost every forward he goes up against.

*

Colorado and Calgary was a game between two clubs with some defensive issues... and that led to a total of 11 goals scored and some impressive offensive performances.

I really liked [Jay Bouwmeester](#) 's game – a goal and a team-high five shots on net. He was more involved offensively than I am used to seeing.

[Jiri Hudler](#) is having a quietly good season in Calgary, and he had three helpers last night.

[Matt Duchene](#) had a goal and an assist. He was great and showed no signs of the groin issue that kept him out for a few games.

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[Gabriel Landeskog](#) had three points and six shots on net – he is starting to find his groove after missing time with a head/neck injury.

It will be interesting to see where Ryan O'Reilly slots back in – I assume he will go with Landeskog and another winger (with [Steve Downie](#) out for the season).

[Paul Stastny](#) had two points, finished plus-3, and had five shots on net. He is a guy who gets forgotten about... does he have the ability to get back to being a 65+ point guy?

*

Great goaltending battle between [Jonas Gustavsson](#) and [Antti Niemi](#) last night (I know, I was surprised too). Niemi has been great all season, while the Monster finally got into a game after battling through a nagging groin injury for most of 2013.

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[Uh - wow.](#) Apparently Calgary would have had to waive O'Reilly if Colorado hadn't had matched the offer - essentially they would have lost O'Reilly to waivers and the picks to Colorado.

The unsigned forward spent part of the NHL lockout playing with his brother, Cal, for Magnitogorsk in Russia. According to Metallurg coach Paul Maurice and KHL spokesman Shawn McBride, he appeared in games on Jan. 21 and Jan. 23 – both after the shortened NHL schedule was back underway – which meant that waivers were required before O'Reilly could return to the NHL as a free agent midway through the season.

Edit: It appears that the CBA changed this rule. From Bill Daly:

Daly - "No, he would not be subject to waivers. He would have been under last year's rules, but that was changed in collective bargaining."

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[Robin Lehner](#) looked great for the Senators last night – it was his first NHL start of the season. Lehner let in only two goals on 46 shots, keeping the undermanned Sens in it against a bigger, stronger, and more skilled Bruins team.

[Peter Regin](#) took 10 faceoffs. [Peter Regin](#) lost 10 faceoffs.

[Zack Smith](#) had a good game – picked up a helper to go along with a shot on goal and two hits. He's a sneaky good multi category guy.

[Patrick Wiercioch](#) has work to do defensively, but man can he move the puck well for a big guy. He had four shots on net and saw ample time on the PP.

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[With Kevin Bieksa, the good outweighs the bad.](#) My look at his career to date, and why he is a difficult defenseman to analyze.

Bieksa relies a lot on his active stick to make defensive plays, and he is very good at it. Having a good stick is essential for any NHL defenseman, especially one who is giving up size and strength to most opposing forwards. I realize that sounds like something Pierre McGuire would discuss, but it does have a lot of merit.

*

[Five AHL players who deserve a shot,](#) including Boston's Ryan Spooner.

The rich get richer – Boston has a few talented young forwards in the system, but none are closer to making the NHL than Spooner. The former OHL star isn't very big, but he is a really

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smart player. As a rookie pro this season, he has been Providence's most dangerous forward on many nights. And his lack of size won't be a huge issue on Boston, as the team has enough size to open up lots of ice for the smaller skilled guys (like Spooner).

*

“Nasty” [Nazem Kadri](#) had a hat trick for the Leafs last night (to go along with five SOG). Kadri has been the best Leaf this season on many nights, and he is quickly becoming one of my favorite players in the league to watch. His skill level is ridiculous, and it goes to show how much can change with proper coaching and some confidence.

He did it in only 15:46 of ice time too.

James van Riemsdyk scored his 12th of the season – he is looking like a future 40-goal scorer this year. He is using his size more consistently than he ever did during his career with the Flyers.

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[Cody Franson](#) picked up another helper and had a great game. Like Kadri, he is playing with a ton of confidence this season.

[Dion Phaneuf](#) also had a great game, and he has been playing really well lately. He logs a ton of tough minutes and flies under the radar a bit, which is pretty crazy considering he is the captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

[Josh Bailey](#) scored for the Isles, and he led all forwards in ice time. It was his first goal of the season (he missed the start with a knee injury).

[Kyle Okposo](#) , who has been awful for much of 2013, had three points last night. A sign of things to come, or a blip on the radar?

Back to Bailey – he now has three points in his last five games, and the 21 minutes he played was much higher than his season average of 14:44 per game.

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[Sidney Crosby](#) had only one point last night, but he won 21 faceoffs. He pretty much wins that category every week for his owners.

Zack Boychuk and [Simon Despres](#) were scratches for Pittsburgh.

Carolina looked great – Tlusty and [Eric Staal](#) had three points each (Tlusty's coming out party isn't getting the attention it deserves), and Semin added two assists (funny how he is playing the role of playmaker this year).

I am always interested in the PP ice time for Carolina defensemen:

- Corvo: 34 seconds
- Faulk: 3:24
- McBain: 4:04

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The issue with [Jamie McBain](#) (who returned last night after missing a few games with an injury) has been a lack of ice time, as it seemed to go to Corvo and Pitkanen ahead of him. Well, he led all blue liners on Carolina last night.

[Jordan Staal](#) didn't have a point against his former club, but he played close to 22 minutes, including a lot on both the PP and PK.

[Jeff Skinner](#) scored a goal, although he played only 13:08.

I focus on ice time a lot in my ramblings, as I feel that it is a great indicator of things to come and as an evaluation tool (trends are easy to spot with ice time, and it tends to reflect on performance).

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Gee... I wonder if [Rick Nash](#) was excited to get back to playing? He had a goal, an assist, and a ridiculous 12 shots on goal for the Rangers last night.

[Ryan McDonagh](#) had two assists in his return to the New York lineup.

[Derek Stepan](#) also scored. He is playing great hockey right now.

[Brad Richards](#) had a helper and seemed to play his way out of Tortorella's dog house – he won 17 of 20 faceoffs, and that definitely helps.

There aren't many players who use their speed more effectively to create offense than [Carl Hagelin](#).

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[Mathieu Garon](#) got the start for the Bolts – he let in four goals on 42 shots.

*

Wow.

{youtube}OjRJNHMkZSk{/youtube}

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I had an entire write-up on Calgary offer-sheeting Ryan O'Reilly, but Colorado matched the two-year, \$10-million pact (and it was announced after Calgary got out to a 2-0 lead in Colorado last night... coincidence?).

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A good read on Chris Kreider and his early-season struggles [from the NY Post.](#)

"You control what you can control," he said. "You want to play within yourself. You get in trouble when you try to do stuff that's not a staple of your game, so I think continuing to move my feet and focusing on that, good things will happen."

"I'm always ready to have a breakout [game]," Kreider added. "Everyone's looking for that next big game where they can make an impact and help the team win. That's the only mentality you have."

*

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So.... [Jay Bouwmeester](#) is playing pretty tough minutes for Calgary. [Look at this graph](#) if you don't believe me (one axis is offensive zone start percentage, and the other is quality of competition).

*

[Scott Hartnell](#) is a vital part of Philadelphia's success – [NHL.com](#)

The trickle-down effect:

Giroux, who went pointless in eight of the 16 games Hartnell missed, has two points in each of the past three games, continuing a hot streak that started when now-injured [Matt Read](#) was the left wing on the top line.

*

Some love for Florida's Drew Shore, [who is quietly having a very good rookie season.](#)

Right now, you're all saying Who? and I'm saying Exactly. Shore is overshadowed by another rookie on the Florida Panthers, [Jonathan Huberdeau](#) , who is currently one of the favourites for the Calder trophy, along with

[Cory](#)

,

Vladimir Tarasenko,

[Alex Galchenyuk](#)

,

[Nail Yakupov](#)

, and

[Justin Schultz](#)

.

Shore is fresh out of the NCAA and is quietly putting together a solid season for the Panthers. He has 9 points in 17 games, good enough to tie for seventh in rookie scoring. Moreover, he's third in assists and second in shots, and will likely pick up more goals as the season progresses and his terrible shooting percentage approaches normalcy. Considering he wasn't necessarily expected to make the Panthers this season, he has to be considered a big success so far.

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[Kari Lehtonen](#) is the goalie in Dallas for the foreseeable future, but it is still great to see former 1st round pick [Jack Campbell](#) [start to find his game again](#) in the AHL after some struggles.

[Jack Campbell](#) has started all the games while Nilstorp has been in Dallas and rattled off a recent five game win streak. Campbell is 6-2-1 in February with a 1.65 GAA and .932 SV%. After early season jitters and the uncertainty of being the backup, it seems that Campbell is really pushing the coaching staff to make Texas a 1/1A type goaltending situation.

*

[Anze Kopitar](#) pulled a [ridiculously nice move out](#) of his arsenal against the Wings on Wednesday evening. It was similar to the OT goal he scored in the Final against the Devils last June.

*

[A very interesting look](#) at how the top CHL defensemen have fared in the NHL over the past 10-15 years.

The OHL stands out as producing the highest number (19) and percentage (28.8%) of Impact+ players, and the lowest bust rate (54.5%). Also, from 1999 to 2008, there have been 66 unique defensemen in the top-10 of scoring. This means that no one player was double-counted if he was a top-10 scorer in multiple years. Some notable graduates include [Drew Doughty](#) , [Alex Pietrangelo](#)

,

[Mark Giordano](#)

,

[Michael Del Zotto](#)

, and P.K. Subban.

*

[This current slump isn't the first of Nugent-Hopkins' career.](#)

But it wasn't all roses for the Nuge in 2011-12.

He was prone to some serious offensive lapses. Nine straight games passed without Nugent-Hopkins scoring a goal before he was injured against Chicago on January 2nd. In fact, Nugent-Hopkins suffered through a 21-game stretch of almost total scoring futility, finding the back of the net just twice from December 9th to March 12th - a period which was divided by his injury.

He scored on just 5% of his 40 shots in that run.

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The Hockey Writers [with a good interview](#) with Winnipeg forward [Blake Wheeler](#) . Nothing really super insightful, but it is a solid read on his career to date:

They're awesome and I think the best thing about our fans is how knowledgeable they are. They aren't just screaming and going crazy all the time, if we're not playing well it's quiet in there. They are a very knowledgeable fan base and they make it a lot of fun to play in front of them because they really know and understand the game. They are cheering for the right reasons and it makes it a really fun, great atmosphere in the building.

*

As expected, there have been [some growing pains](#) for [Anders Lindback](#) in Tampa this season. [Mathieu Garon](#) is the beneficiary with more playing time (for now):

"He has to go through the process," Lightning coach Guy Boucher said." You can't buy a process, because if you buy the process, everybody would be great. It's just the process of time

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and experience, it's mistakes, it's correcting and it's preparation. That's what it is, right now for him he's going through the exact process all young goalies have to go through."

*

What is going on in Calgary, you may ask? Sports Illustrated [attempts to answer that question.](#)

At some point, hopefully soon, a good friend of Jay Feaster will pull him aside, show him a calendar and make sure that Calgary's GM has a firm grasp on the year in which he's living and working.

Feaster's dogged determination to wear [Jarome Iginla](#) and [Miikka Kiprusoff](#) down to the wire for a team that has no real chance at the playoffs is enough to make you wonder.

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What a difference a year makes... a nasty hat trick by [Nazem Kadri](#) last night:

{youtube}xKFRygvVCP4{/youtube}

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As always, thanks for reading! And have a great (and hockey-filled) weekend. Feel free to comment below with any suggestions, topics to discuss, or ideas for future columns. I am always open to feedback.

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