

My **Midseason Guide** was released January 6 and then an addendum was added Friday the 13th, [get it here](#) . Prospects, second-half projections, the trading block – and so much more.

Uh oh – Taylor Hall and Jeff Skinner. Down and out. Footage below. Hall took an UGLY one, a fluke in which Corey Potter in warm-ups leapt over him and his foot landed on his forehead. There goes that pretty face! Thank goodness it could have been so much worse, but man was it scary. And Skinner had his head down and got hit hard by Orpik. I thought the hit was clean, but it was close and will certainly be reviewed. Just terrible timing, as Skinner had just returned. And back-to-back concussions always make their fantasy owners cringe.

I'm sorry, I'm still on the fence about Marchand getting suspended there. And then I saw Foligno hit Phaneuf in almost the same way and I just didn't see anything wrong with it. So... Foligno will either be suspended for five games, or he'll get zero, or who knows... When you get a suspension-happy NHL and a select few fans and media who whine real loud all the time, what you are left with is uncertainty. There is no black and white when a game goes at 100 miles an hour. There is a lot of gray, but these select few demand that it be black and white.

Nathan Horton has 11 points in his last 11 games. He scored twice last night, yet was a minus-2.

I've had several people email me, or PM me wondering why I think Martin St. Louis will have a strong second half. After all, this season is a write-off for the Lightning, he's getting older and he's not seeing as much time with Stamkos. But the answer is simple – his stats always correct themselves. Every time you want to write him off, he steps it up. His last five seasons: 102 points, 83, 80, 94, 99. So this year he's on pace for 70. He's going to get 80 minimum, less his six games so 74. At worst he improves by four points in the second half, which is eight points over a full season or 10%. To stay in his proven range. I mean, we all lose bets, but the smart money will take the odds and bet on him doing what he has done for the last five years. It's not a big leap.

His plus/minus hasn't been great, but Matt Gilroy has quietly been putting up points for TB. He has eight points in his last 12 games.

Well, Brad Marchand is back next game, let's take a look at how Benoit Pouliot did: 5 GP, 1-1-2, plus-2, 7 SOG. That's below expectation in my books. He saw 18 minutes last night, but he won't see that again once Marchand returns. To me, another two points and four shots would have made all the difference.

Teddy Purcell has 12 points in his last 31 games and is minus-2 in that span. A promising start, but a terrible run that warrants a healthy scratch. Something like that often gets a young player to start rolling.

So Tim Thomas owners – getting nervous? You probably shouldn't, but I don't really blame you when one of the best (if not THE best) up and comers in hockey is the backup. Thomas has lost four of his last six games and has allowed four goals in three of those losses. Meanwhile, Rask has won seven in a row.

Craig Smith was back in the lineup, but was minus-2 in 10:50 of ice time. The good news is that he was out in the last minute with the goalie pulled, which speaks to the coach's expectations of him in the long term. But short term, I think for this year and probably next, he will be a second-half flop. Just doesn't have the legs to handle this workload yet.

Matt Read, however, does. It would seem. Notice how I rarely talk about one without the other, when it comes to Read and Smith? That's because both jumped on my radar in May of last year and both jumped on everyone's radar by early October. Both came from college hockey and both players have a high skill set. But Read, maybe because he's a little older and closer to his prime...or perhaps just better skill in terms of teammates, is still going. He has seven points in his last seven games and is plus-5.

The Wild really fell apart without Koivu. Matt Cullen was minus-2 in his spot. A lot of blame should go to Marek Zidlicky. He was minus-3, his ice time went down below 17 minutes and the team now relies on Spurgeon to run the PP more. Zidlicky is still looking for his first goal.

January 18, 2012

Written by Dobber

Wednesday, 18 January 2012 02:08 -

Josh Harding has given up four or more goals in three of his last four games. Last night's debacle was the game after his strongest start in a month.

Cal O'Reilly has been sent to the minors. He may get one more chance, but that would be about it. The problem here was, when he was rolling about 13 months ago he got injured. Were it not for that injury, we could be talking about an established NHL player coming off of a 50-point season. If he was established and coming off of 50 points, then he would get a lot more ice time, premium linemates, and would never have been waived. Injuries don't lose jobs? Sure they do, when you don't have a secure hold on the job to begin with.

Kyles Palmieri and Cumiskey were sent to Syracuse by the Ducks.

Here is a [Nicklas Backstrom update](#) . It doesn't tell you much, but he still hasn't skated and it's been 11 days.

Interesting statistical analysis of how players have recovered from abdominal surgery over the last 28 years [here](#) . It basically indicates that players come back and play better and they play more games, hinting at what is in the future for Mike Green. A quick, easy read and very enlightening.

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RJ Umberger's concussion now has him "week to week". Derick Brassard seems to be taking full advantage.

Ryane Clowe [missed last night's contest](#) with a UBI. He is "day to day". This article hints at perhaps a concussion. You know, one of those that the player hides for a week and keeps playing...and then suddenly misses a month? Yeah, that kind. Just a bad feeling. Especially since I acquired him in one of my leagues a week or two ago.

Studs and Duds for this morning [here](#) .

Taylor Hall – oh man, this looks ugly:

{youtube}KEc6KL85M_o{/youtube}

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Does Brooks Orpik get suspended for this? Or did Skinner have his head down...

{youtube}-2cUss_yPUY{/youtube}

Here is the Foligno hit on Phaneuf. Suspendable? Similar to Marchand? Not even close?

{youtube}GDY8EpJYUY0{/youtube}