

January 19, 2012

Written by Jeff Angus

Wednesday, 18 January 2012 23:57 - Last Updated Thursday, 19 January 2012 12:27

The Preds claimed winger Brandon Yip off of waivers from Colorado. After a promising stretch of play two years ago, he's been a disappointment for the Avs. Yip couldn't beat out the likes of Kobasew, Porter, and Van Der Gulik for ice time.

He now becomes one of many third/fourth line wingers in Nashville. I wouldn't say this changes his fantasy value at all. Perhaps a short-term boost if the team wants to see if he can play a scoring role for them. A low risk move for the Preds.

As per Dobber's tweet today - Kyle Palmieri has 36 goals in his last 37 AHL games. Wow.

How about them apples? Peter Mueller had two goals and a helper last night - he also had five shots on goal, in just under 20 minutes of ice time. GREAT to see. He is a fantastic offensive talent. Glad I have three IR spots in one of my leagues, he's been camping out there for a long, long time.

Not a great night for Mike Smith - the red hot Ducks thrashed him for six goals on only 21 shots.

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Multi-point games of note - Visnovsky, Bonino, Cogliano, Jason Blake (hot streak starting?), and Beauchemin (two goals and a helper).

Dobber's **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.

When do the panic moves start in Buffalo? Jhonas Enroth got the start last night, and was shelled for six goals.

Toews scored his 25th and 26th goals of the season – more than making up for Pat Kane's shortcomings in the scoring department.

Pominville scored the only two Buffalo goals – he and Vanek are the only two Sabres really doing anything over the past while. So much talent, so little to show for it.

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Rookie Jimmy Hayes continues his strong play – two points in less than 10 minutes of ice time. Really good skater for someone his size (6'5").

Rookie Andrew Shaw also had two points, but he played over 20 minutes (including almost four on the PP). Talk about seizing the opportunity... Huge short-term buy recommendation.

Shaw had 54 points and 135 PIM last year in the OHL, and scored 12 goals in only 33 AHL games this season before getting the call up.

Michal Neuvirth had a great game, stopping all 31 shots he faced. A rare start for him as the Caps wanted to give the red hot Vokoun a rest. Vokoun is a notorious second half monster too... Neuvirth will likely go back to waiting around for another start.

Mathieu Perreault scored for the Caps last night – he played about six minutes. Seems right.

It probably won't happen for a few years, but John Carlson could make his way into darkhorse

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Norris talk if the Caps make a run down the stretch. He plays tough minutes every game and makes few mistakes, while contributing offensively as well (on pace for 10 goals, 40+ points).

[Should Cody Hodgson be playing more?](#)

“Despite Hodgson's power-play proficiency, when Sami Salo went down with a concussion, Vigneault elevated Alex Burrows - who has never been a power-play producer really - to the first unit. Burrows has manned the right point despite being a left-handed shooter, more well known for potting garbage goals than the velocity on his slap-shot.”

Harrison Mooney from Puck Daddy takes a look at Matt Martin's hit-tastic season [right here](#).

“Martin has been the NHL's hits leader since November, and presently leads the league with 192. That's 20 more than Clutterbuck and 30 more than regular runner-up Dustin Brown.

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He looks poised to dethrone Clutterbuck as hitting champion for the first time since the Wild winger came into the league, but more importantly, he's currently on pace for 358 hits, two more than the record

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Oh man, can he top it?

Don't think Martin is just running around making hits, by the way. He's developed into a real heart and soul guy for the Islanders. In addition to the frequency with which he steps into his opponents, he's also stepped into a third line role for New York."

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I am a big fan of the hit statistic. It has its limits (subjectivity from rink to rink is quite large), but at least it is consistently measuring a positive statistic, unlike PIM. I'd rather reward a player for throwing two hits than for taking a lazy hooking penalty and being "rewarded" two PIM.

Brian Elliott signed a two-year extension yesterday. Great news for Elliott owners, expected news for Halak owners, and not-so-great news for Jake Allen or Ben Bishop owners. Elliott is performing well above his career baseline this season, but the deal is hardly a risk (cap hit is less than \$2 million per).

Taylor Hall won't play tonight after the skate-to-the-face incident from the pregame on Tuesday night. Scary situation, and I can't imagine how bad ass the scar will be (30 stitches were needed to close it).

Sounds like Kris Letang may play tonight. Great news for Pens fans and poolies everywhere.

Alex Pietrangelo has points in seven straight games. He really is the total package – big, rangy, mobile, skilled, and confident. Reminds me a bit of a less physical Pronger. He's going to be one of the best defensemen in the league over the next decade. The Blues certainly kept the

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right defenseman (compared to Erik Johnson, although it is still too early to make a 100% definitive call).

Brad Marchand will be back tonight after serving his five game suspension.

The 'Canes have recalled Zac Dalpe. He hasn't done much this season, especially compared to some lofty expectations (from people like myself and Dobber, as well). His long-term value is still high, but he wasn't as ready as I thought he was this season.

Carolina and Florida swapped four minor prospects. [Only one real name of note – Evgeni Dadonov to Carolina from Florida.](#) He was a victim of the numbers game (and of not playing well) for the Panthers, and likely asked for a fresh start and a chance to play in the NHL.

"The Chelyabinsk, Russia, native has earned nine points (5 goals, 4 assists) in 20 games with the Panthers' American Hockey League (AHL) affiliate, the San Antonio Rampage.

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Drafted by the Panthers in the third round, 71st overall, in the 2007 NHL Entry Draft, Dadonov has skated in 55 career NHL games for Florida, totaling 10 goals, 10 assists (20 points) and 16 penalty minutes. He established career highs in NHL games played (36), goals (8), assists (9) and points (17) in 2010-11, and represented Florida at the 2011 NHL All-Star Game in Raleigh as one of 12 rookies selected to participate.”

The Canucks have unsurprisingly recalled defenseman Chris Tanev. Tanev has been excelling in the AHL lately and is a huge upgrade in the mix on Andrew Alberts or Alex Sulzer.

Sami Salo is getting close to returning, but it wouldn't surprise me to see the team keep him off the ice until after the All-Star Break. The PP unit is really missing him – Alex Burrows has moved up to play the point, and teams obviously don't respect his shot nearly as much as Salo's.

The reason Burrows is playing PP1 is that it allows David Booth onto PP2, along with Hodgson, Higgins, and Bieksa/Hamhuis on the back end.

All but confirmed – Toronto @ Detroit for the Winter Classic next year.

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I'm stealing this from someone on Twitter, and I don't remember who wrote it.

"The Avalanche are receiving great goaltending from JS Giguere recently, and it didn't cost them a 1st or 2nd round pick, either."

The Weber/Suter debate will continue to rage on until something happens with either/both of them. Here is some more reading material. [Who is more important, Suter or Weber?](#)

"It's generally assumed that, if General Manager David Poile can't agree to terms with Suter (an unrestricted free agent on July 1) by February 27, the Preds should trade him and get a huge return. But Suter is a rental. What could Poile really get out of him? A lot, sure, but a goal scorer who's locked up long term? Probably not. And if not the goal scorer, are you really addressing a need? Furthermore, teams that are "sellers" will have no interest in Suter seeing as how he's just a rental. Thus, Poile can strike Columbus, Anaheim, Edmonton, the Islanders, Carolina, Montreal, Buffalo and Tampa off his list of potential trade partners before he even makes a phone call. That doesn't leave a whole lot of meat on the bone.

But what if he moved Weber? He's a restricted free agent this summer, which means he's more than likely locked up for next season (pending an offer sheet from another team, which is rare) and he's the blueliner with all the awards and accolades. Short and sweet? Weber's the big name in Music City, not Suter. Therefore, Weber would bring an even bigger return. A king's ransom, if you will.

Obviously it's a tremendously delicate situation. If you're Poile and you trade Suter, you've not only broken up the best defensive pairing in hockey but you're going into the postseason (you hope) with a superstar defenseman who has yet to prove that he can be dominant without a top-notch partner. And, if you trade Weber, you've still broken up the best defensive pairing in hockey and you've traded away the face of your franchise. But, if you keep both (without re-signing them), you give your hockey team the best chance to win now but possibly sacrifice long term success by watching them walk away for nothing."

I see about 10 Preds games a year. If I had to pick one from scratch, all things being equal, it would be Weber. However, polling several of my Preds friends and followers, and I discovered the answers were more split (and may have even favored Suter a bit).

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Ideally, the team keeps both, but with cap/budget constraints, as well as three blue chip prospects in the pipeline.... Perhaps moving one of them for some offensive help may be the best long term move.

I wrote a piece a few months ago on the unpredictability of drafting goaltenders. [Michael Farber from Sports Illustrated tackles the same subject here.](#)

From the same article, but a different subject, is this really interesting excerpt:

*"**Alexander Ovechkin** swerves inside the Predators' defense early in the third period of a scoreless game, freeing himself for a 25-foot snap shot from the edge of the left face-off circle. With the puck and maybe the game on his stick, the Capitals' winger, with time to pick a spot, violates the third rule of sport: Rule 1: Do not pitch to Albert Pujols with an open base; Rule 2: Do not try to fathom Tim Tebow's mojo; and Rule 3: Do not test Pekka Rinne's glove. Ovechkin's snapper disappears into Rinne's oversized mitt.*

"The only [athlete] with a better glove," Nashville assistant G.M. Paul Fenton says, "was Brooks Robinson."

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Rinne's white Reebok trapper is a repository of broken dreams. His glove saves are pure, untainted by any Patrick Roy posing for the cameras. They are models of efficiency, even if an overreliance on his glove implies an abiding, and maybe excessive, pride.

Rinne instinctually tries to catch everything. He often scoops pucks like grounders instead of knocking them to the corner with his stick and reaches across his body for a glove save when he could simply fend off the puck with his blocker. Predators goalie coach Mitch Korn shrugs.

"When someone can do something really, really special," he asks, "why would you try to coach him out of it?"

Korn tracks goalie touches, and he says the Predators retain possession 88% of the time when Rinne handles the puck. Although Korn concedes there are no objective standards for his homemade stat, he adds, "If a forward or defenseman kept possession 88 percent of the time, he'd be a superstar." When Rinne flew across the crease to foil the Canucks' Kevin Bieksa in overtime of the second game of their playoff series last spring, which Nashville would ultimately win 2--1, coach Barry Trotz suggested NFL Films set the save to music."

[An interesting read on some notable NHL rookies](#) – with a focus on difficulty of ice time.

"Mike Yeo, head coach of the Minnesota Wild, appears to have a lot of faith in Nick Johnson, a player the team picked up on waivers before the season. Not only is he playing, by far, the toughest minutes of any of the top rookies in the NHL (he's currently 11th among rookie scorers) his Qual Comp [is the highest of any forward on the Wild roster](#) . Perhaps that faith shouldn't be much of a surprise given the connections both have to the Pittsburgh organization (Johnson was drafted by the [Penguins](#) , while Yeo was a former assistant).

Of course, age once again needs to be taken into account. While Johnson is playing tougher minutes than all of these other rookies, he's also by far the oldest player on the chart having already turned 26 back in December. A 26-year-old rookie and an 18-year-old rookie aren't exactly the same thing.

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Taking into account performance, assignments and age I'd still choose Henrique as the top rookie in the NHL this season (so far), with Nugent-Hopkins, Read and Craig Smith coming in just behind."

Rene Bourque answers the bell after the elbow to Backstrom earlier in the season, and he does pretty well for himself:

{youtube}VQtKAODiSsM{/youtube}