

**May 03, 2012**

Written by Jeff Angus

Wednesday, 02 May 2012 20:37 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 May 2012 10:36

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Watched most of the Caps/Rangers game. Some thoughts:

Alex Ovechkin surprisingly played more than Jay Beagle last night (by about 30 seconds). Imagine writnig that a year ago...

Matt Hendricks had his best game as an NHLer (I haven't seen them all, but there is no way he has topped last night's performance). He had a massive 11 hits and created a lot against some good opposing players.

Ryan McDonagh played 50 minutes for the Rangers. All of their top four guys were well over the 40 minute mark.

Ovechkin was mediocre in regulation, and good in OT. He missed a few chances that he would have buried a few years ago, and he deferred to others at times too. A confidence-related problem with him, right now.

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Pekka Rinne played like the Pekka Rinne we all expected him to. I'd wager Alex Radulov has played his last game as a Pred, even if Nashville loses another game.

The Preds played a balanced game - Weber and Suter were both close to 30 minutes, but the rest of the team was between 10 and 20 (except for Matt Halischuk, who left with an injury).

Some random thoughts – I like [Matt Frattin](#) a lot. If the Leafs can somehow add another center this summer (or [Joe Colborne](#) comes into camp ready to earn a spot in the top nine), I could see Frattin popping 20 in next year. He has hockey sense, great speed, and a good nose for the net. He appeared snake bitten at times, and also seemed to force the issue, as rookies often do. The Leafs have a keeper in him, though. That is for sure.

It will be interesting to see what Toronto does with their goaltending? Do they try to add a veteran stop gap? Do they bring in a bridge like [Josh Harding](#) ? I think it depends on how confident they are with [James Reimer](#) as their long term solution.

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Back to the Sharks – their owners are calling for changes after another playoff exit. Todd McLellan could go – I think he’s a terrific coach who had an underperforming team, but I guess it goes both ways.

San Jose has some core guys they could build around – most notably [Logan Couture](#) , [Joe Pavelski](#)

, and

[Brent Burns](#)

. I don’t see

[Joe Thornton](#)

or

[Dan Boyle](#)

going anywhere, either. Their depth over the past few years has been decimated. They used to roll four lines, now their third and fourth lines are among the weakest in the league.

[Antti Niemi](#) has a ring and his name on the Cup, but I don’t think the Sharks have the utmost confidence in him, either. Do they go with [Thomas Greiss](#) ? Do they bring someone else in?

Assuming Marleau is moved.... Where does he go? Calgary? Toronto? Columbus? Teams need centers, and for all of his faults, Marleau is a proven top line producer who should be counted on for 25+ goals and 60+ points. For whatever reason (heart, motivation), his play tapers off in the playoffs. San Jose has probably missed their real chance to win, but with some smart moves they could be back contending in a couple of seasons.

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Big news yesterday with Calgary's massive KHL signing. Nearly \$4 million for an unproven European veteran? Huge risk here, but I suppose you have to applaud Jay Feaster for making it. The center market is paper thin (the Leafs knew this when they threw a ton of money at [Mikhail Grabovski](#)).

Cervenka will be a center somewhere in Calgary's top six. A solid sleeper pick, but the fact that he's coming in to a Canadian market may inflate his value above where it should be. The money is a ton for a guy who has never played any professional hockey in North America, but the risk is low (one-year deal).

What does this mean for [Olli Jokinen](#) ? He is a UFA and is coming off of a great season, and teams will probably be lining up for him (yes, that is how thin the available crop of centers is). The Flames have [Mikael Backlund](#) , as well as [Matt Stajan](#) (don't laugh – Stajan had a strong finish to the season and could be in the mix for a top six spot).

Marc Bergevin is an interesting hire – I like when hockey teams make bold moves (as long as they are smart guys). Bergevin was well liked as a player and seems to have the right personality for the Montreal market (although we said the same thing about Shanahan, and look at the gong show that now is).

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Montreal's off-season – get PK Subban and [Carey Price](#) locked up, bring in some talent, and find a way to get rid of [Scott Gomez](#) .

The team has a solid foundation in place, but this could be a make-or-break type of summer if they make the right or wrong moves.

Florida has the best prospect group in the league, and one of their better defensemen was recently named WHL Defenseman of the Year. [Alex Petrovic](#) finished 15<sup>th</sup> among WHL defensemen with 12 goals and 48 points, but wins the award more for what he did on a Red Deer team that was decimated by injuries.

Sticking with WHL awards – Oiler goaltending prospect [Tyler Bunz](#) was named WHL Goaltender of the Year. Bunz won 39 games in Medicine Hat – he was also the final cut from the 2012 World Junior roster for Canada. Edmonton doesn't have a rock solid long term goaltending solution (I think they owe [Devan Dubnyk](#) a legitimate chance to be that guy), but keep an eye on Bunz. He'll be turning pro, but could start off in the ECHL, much like [Olivier Roy](#) , another Oiler goaltending prospect.

[Elliott Friedman's latest 30 thoughts is here.](#) Some parts I wanted to expand on:

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*“Bergevin's strength is in scouting and player development. He's got a good eye for talent and those he's worked with ( [Troy Brouwer](#) , for example) praise his ability to draw it out. That will be very important. He's also been in several different roles (including assistant coach) which gives him a lot of different perspectives.”*

I think PK Subban will be a guy Bergevin focuses his attention on – could be the cornerstone defenseman for the Habs, but he has hit a few roadblocks in the past couple of years.

*“The annual “Trade Marleau” watch is underway after the Sharks fell in the first round. Here's the problem: The players San Jose got in the Heatley/Setoguchi deals came in 25 goals below the players they gave up. Whatever you think of Marleau's playoff performance, if you don't make up for the 30 he scores in the regular season, do you even get to the playoffs?”*

For all the flack the Sharks of past seasons have received, they were a team that never struggled to score goals. They simply couldn't get enough of the easy ones this year – [Dany Heatley](#) wasn't a perfect player by any means, but he scored a lot of goals against the flow of play (one-timers, bank shots, that sort of thing). I agree that a change is needed with that core group there, and moving [Patrick Marleau](#) probably makes the most sense. However, the Sharks need to find a way to replace his offense.

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This isn't fantasy hockey related, but it is of considerable interest to me – John Collins, the NHL's COO and the man behind many of the recently successful ventures (Winter Classic, HBO, etc), offers some interesting thoughts in [this interview with Puck Daddy](#).

The Leafs hope the big man is ready - so do a few of their wingers:

{youtube}L8JexJ610fc{/youtube}