

August 18, 2012

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 17 August 2012 12:23 - Last Updated Saturday, 18 August 2012 12:50

A frame-by-frame breakdown of [David Booth's beauty goal](#) from April - part of my top 10 moments of last season for the Canucks.

Breaking news: [Matt Carle](#) will wear number 25 next season for the Lightning. I wanted to work a \$ sign into Carle's name somewhere, but it doesn't work. He's a rock solid two-way defenseman, but the Lightning paid a premium for his services. It will be interesting to see how he handles top duties.

[Scott Hannan](#) to the Predators – one year and \$1 million. What he brings – grit, leadership, a veteran presence. All required on a blueline with a few youngsters – Josi, Blum, and Ellis.

However, Hannan can't really move the puck and is a black hole offensively. He could be a stabilizing presence for Ellis, though. This was a needed move by Nashville.

[Alex Friesen](#) could be the next Mike Peca for the Canucks – [I profiled the diminutive but feisty center yesterday for the CanucksArmy.](#)

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I asked some questions of Brock Otten, my go-to guy for OHL information:

“Is his offensive game going to transfer, or is it more a case of him being an overager in the OHL?”

He's been terrific offensively the past three years, not just last year as an overager. I don't think he's skilled enough or a good enough goal scorer to be a top-six player, but he's smart enough, quick enough, and able to handle the puck well enough to put up modest points on a checking line. So I guess you could say I don't anticipate his offensive game to transfer to the point at which he's putting up 71 point seasons in the NHL (what he scored in the OHL this year), but I think he'll still be able to help out a team offensively and contribute.”

[The Hockey Writers](#) – can Mikael Granlund be the next Finnish superstar?

“It's true that he is undersized at 5'10” and his footwork and speed aren't desirable for his position. Those are things that he will have to overcome while playing in the NHL, but the truth is those are only minor glitches when you evaluate his game in its entirety.

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The most prominent strength in Granlund's game is his vision. Being able to pick apart defenses is a crucial aspect for any playmakers game and it's something that Granlund excels at. He finds the crevices and exploits them beautifully by maneuvering himself into solid positioning in the offensive zone. When he gets that space he has the puck handling ability to create chances for not only himself but his teammates which creates chaos for the opposing team."

Yesterday I posted NHL.com's top Colorado prospects. [Today it is the top 10 list from Corey Pronman, who is very high on a certain OHL forward.](#)

"[Michael Sgarbossa](#) , Center

The Good: Sgarbossa has high-end hockey sense and good puck skills which led to praise from scouts this year such as "the ability to take over games" and "the kind of player who makes everyone around him better." The OHL scoring leader this season also has a feisty side to him, as he plays with a great on-ice drive, and shows a lot of competitiveness on the forecheck and in battles. He's a solid skater who isn't an explosive player but has a fine top gear and a good first step. Sgarbossa is a solid finisher as well. He has a great off-ice regimen, and is physically ready to make the next step."

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Sgarbossa, in addition to sounding like an Italian desert, is an effective offensive player (to say the least, he led the league in scoring). Colorado made out very well acquiring him from the Sharks along with Jamie McGinn.

Nail Yakupov has officially touched down in Edmonton to finish his summer training and prepare for the lockout/training camp/the season.

The Flames were profiled by NHL.com yesterday. Since I catch flack for posting mostly negative news regarding them, [here are a few stories of the positive variety.](#)

"NOTES: Baertschi set Red Mile hearts aflutter in a five-game emergency call-up, and he'll have a chance to earn a permanent spot in training camp. Calgary is pretty deep up front, with Comeau, Backlund and Jones trying to hold off challenges for roster spots from [Akim Aliu](#) , [Lance Bouma](#) and [Roman Horak](#) , who played 61 games for the Flames last season. Glencross has scored 50 goals in the past two seasons, and he could easily move into the top six if Baertschi isn't ready.

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Calgary has eight defensemen on one-way contracts plus Brodie, so he could end up in the minors. [Derek Smith](#) and [Brett Carson](#)

are not listed -- Smith is just starting a two-year, one-way deal. There is a lot of depth, and just like with the forwards there should be plenty of competition during camp."

I think Baertschi will be ready for a top six role, but I am more interested in seeing how [Mikael Backlund](#) does.

The Flames brought Czech forward Roman Cervenka over from the KHL. Why? [Read this.](#)

"Cervenka's more of a one-on-one type, skill-oriented player," assistant general manager/director of player personnel John Weisbrod told NHL.com. "He's played with high-caliber players to much success, and he was at a point in his career where he seemed genuinely hungry to make his run at the NHL. He really wants to play in the best league in the world. I think he is going to put his best foot forward, and we'll see how it pans out."

A worthwhile risk to take for Calgary, but still a risk. Losing [Olli Jokinen](#) will hurt. Cervenka could be a huge sleeper pick if he somehow manages to adjust to the NHL quickly. He is a

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playmaker and could step in and play with the likes of Tanguay and Iginla.

[One sleeper for next year who is less of a risk](#) – [Travis Zajac](#) . He will take on a big role with the Devils once again, likely riding shotgun with [Ilya Kovalchuk](#)

“Speaking of the power play and penalty kill, in the 2010-11 season, Zajac took 24 penalty minutes, or 0.3 penalties per game. While it's not worthy of the Lady Byng trophy, 24 minutes over an 82 game season doesn't keep him off the ice for long. In addition, Zajac was able to draw 32 minutes of power play time, or 0.4 penalties per game, for the Devils. Throughout the season, he drew 4 more penalties than he took, leaving the Devils with an extra 8 minutes on the man advantage due to his play alone.

Beyond Zajac's numbers are assets that cannot be calculated. Before he was injured during the summer of 2011, Zajac broke the Devils "Iron Man" record for most consecutive games played originally set by Ken Daneyko. Now that he is fully recovered, he can start the season with the rest of the team, which will help his numbers improve - especially if he gets the opportunity to play with Kovalchuk on a regular basis. E.J. Hradek of NHL.com believes this could be the year Kovalchuk becomes the first Devil to reach the 50-goal mark with Zajac being his set-up man.”

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The rest of the column has other stats that point to past successes Zajac has had with the Devils. I think he may negatively impact [Adam Henrique](#) a bit, but there should be enough ice time to go around for New Jersey's offensive players.

I am looking forward to playing NHL 13 in a few weeks – the new skating engine looks fantastic. I don't really play any of the game modes – usually just play one-on-one against friends. I have enjoyed every edition, but this one looks to have improved a few of the weaknesses with past versions (realistic skating is a huge thing).

I'll kick off the weekend with a few sleepers:

[Brendan Gallagher](#) , **Montreal Canadiens** – the undersized winger will make Montreal out of camp. His work ethic is unmatched and he has a ton of skill as well. Learning from [Brian Gionta](#) will be great, as well. Gallagher is sound defensively and could step in to an energy role before he is counted on to produce consistently. I could see him becoming a 20-25 goal scorer in a few years.

Sami Vatanen, Anaheim Ducks – Vatanen made my top 10 defensive prospects keeper list, and he moves up with the Justin Schultz signing in Edmonton. He is a terrific skater and polished defensively, too. I'd expect him to come in and earn a roster spot out of camp.

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Jeremy Welsh, Carolina Hurricanes – the rangy center is being pencilled in on line three behind the Staal brothers. He scored 27 goals in only 40 games for Union College last season. The 6-3, 200 pound center is a goal scorer and will benefit from having a stud defensive center like [Jordan Staal](#) ahead of him on the depth chart.

I have [published five fitness tips for August over on my blog](#) . Don't forget to ["LIKE" my Facebook page here.](#)

Made my keeper selections for my H2H keeper yesterday. Final keeper spot - opted for Timonen over a few forwards - Ladd and Booth. Defensemen are valuable in our league (start six), and Timonen is incredibly consistent.

My keepers:

C - Crosby, Little, Krejci

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LW - Ott, Eriksson, Sharp

RW - Gaborik, Purcell, Simmonds

D - Chara, Edler, Giordano, Hedman, Timonen, Karlsson

G - Luongo, Schneider

Farm (keep eight) - Calvert, Ekman-Larsson, Hagelin, Nikitin, Brendan Smith, Conacher, Barberio, Eakin

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I like my balance. Obviously banking on a Luongo trade. Lots of dual eligible forwards - Little, Ott, Eriksson, Sharp.

Highlights of Sami Vatanen:

{youtube}-DwiUsXstSY{/youtube}

[Brendan Gallagher](#) 's gloveless goal:

{youtube}2WHDblISzXc{/youtube}