

NHL playoff dark horses Pt. 1

Written by Dobber

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The season has less than a week left in it and people are starting to prepare for their playoff pools. Here are some players who are at the bottom of everybody's lists (if they even appear at all), who you should take a flyer on in the later rounds:

(Original posted by [The Hockey News](#) on March 31)

Samuel Pahlsson, Anaheim – The lanky Swede got well-deserved Conn Smythe consideration a year ago. Not just because he shut down the other team's top center, but because he chipped in offensively with 12 points in 21 games. His 15 points so far this year will ensure your competitors ignore him at the draft table. If you like the Ducks to go far this year - as many do - Pahlsson would be a perfect final selection.

Ryan Carter, Anaheim – As a rookie, his name is virtually unknown. The fact Carter has been sidelined for the past five weeks with a broken wrist also helps to make sure his name is nowhere near anyone's draft list. But the former college star really clicked with Teemu Selanne and Chris Kunitz for a handful of games before the injury – he had four goals and five points in seven games prior to getting hurt. The team has struggled to get a second line going and Carter is expected back very soon.

David Krejci, Boston – Marc Savard is out with a fractured bone in his back and although the team continues to hold out hope for a quick return, that may not happen. Meanwhile, Krejci has eight points in four games with Savard sidelined, so if you think the Bruins will sneak out of the first round, the rookie is a solid candidate to give you 10 points.

Patrice Bergeron, Boston – He has been out for all but 10 games with a terrible concussion, but he is back skating and doing full workouts. He has not received clearance to take contact in practice, but that could happen at any time. Bergeron is worth nearly a point per game and a lot of poolies will shy away from him next week. He is the type of player who will give you zero points because he does not play at all, or give you a dozen points and take the team two rounds. For what it's worth, I think he'll play.

Justin Williams, Carolina – Out since December with a torn ACL, Williams is back skating hard and trying to return before the end of the season. While that is unlikely, he should be back for the second round of the playoffs - if the team gets that far. In fact, if the Canes go down 3-1 or 3-2 in the first round, it would not surprise me if he came back earlier. He is a point-per-game player your competitors will stay away from.

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Tuomo Ruutu, Carolina – The talent is there and he has the demeanor of a playoff warrior. Ruutu has nine points in 14 games as a member of the Hurricanes and five in his past six. He has the ability to surprise everyone and lead his team in post-season scoring. It wasn't so long ago, remember, when he was supposed to be the top scorer in Chicago.

David Jones, Colorado – The Avs frequently try the rookie Jones on a line with Joe Sakic, Peter Forsberg, or both. He has performed moderately well there with five points in his past 10 games. He is a minus-5 in his past eight contests, which coaches frown on – particularly in the playoffs – so only consider him if your pool is a deep one and you like the Avs to go far this year.

Loui Eriksson, Dallas – The highly talented Swede has 11 points in his past 15 games for the Stars thanks, primarily, to playing with Mike Ribeiro and Brenden Morrow. If his stats can remain a shade below those of Antti Miettinen, your competitors will be choosing Miettinen and Niklas Hagman before giving Eriksson consideration. Meanwhile, both Miettinen and Hagman put up most of their points in the first half. Eriksson has replaced them on the Dallas totem pole and is the far superior player to own for your playoff pool.

These are some great dark horses, but I caution you not to load up on them. Finish selecting your team with two dark horse candidates – three at the most, depending on the size of your roster.