

Unrestricted Free Agency 2009 Part 1

Written by Dobber

Sunday, 26 April 2009 11:33 - Last Updated Monday, 27 April 2009 03:35

and Salmela will at least get an offer.

Of Fantasy Note – There is plenty of cap room here for this team to bring in a top six forward. If that forward is a pivot, do not expect Rich Peverley and Todd White to repeat what they have been doing. If that forward is a winger, then Peverley is a good bet to top 55 points and White should at least hit 60. With Perrin and Crabb gone, look for Spencer Machacek to make the team.

Buffalo Sabres

UFA's – Maxim Afinogenov, Andrew Peters, Matt Ellis, Dominic Moore, Jaroslav Spacek, Teppo Numminen, Mikael Tellqvist

RFA's – Drew Stafford, Clarke MacArthur, Patrick Kaleta, Mark Mancari, Andrej Sekera

Outgoing – Afinogenov is gone and I think you can expect Moore and Spacek to also find new teams. Tellqvist will re-sign if the team buys Patrick Lalime out. Numminen was a frequent healthy scratch down the stretch and was dressed for what seemed to be a “goodbye” game in Game 82, so I would guess he will retire.

Of Fantasy Note – On a new team, Afinogenov will still need Sergei Samsonov-like luck and the faith of his coach. A large contract would go a long way to getting him the ice time, as coaches rarely want to make GM's look bad. But he needs multiple opportunities on a line with a star centerman to get back to his 70-point ways. He also needs the coach to ignore his defensive gaffes. Those are some big “ifs” so take a pass. With Spacek gone to a new team, the Sabres will be looking for a power-play specialist. If Tyler Myers makes this team – and he has an outside shot – do not expect points for a few years. There will be room for Nate Gerbe to crack the roster.

Columbus Blue Jackets

UFA's – Michael Peca, Manny Malhotra, Jason Williams, Chris Gratton, Craig MacDonald, Mike York, Christian Backman, Aaron Rome, Fredrick Norrena and Wade Dubielewicz.

RFA's – Jiri Novotny, Alexandre Picard, O-K Tollefsen, Marc Methot, Dan LaCosta

Outgoing – I don't think they'll bring any UFA's back. Malhotra had a very weak postseason to follow a strong regular season. Some other team will ignore the latter and focus on the former when they give him a contract. Williams has a shot at signing another one-year deal, as Hitchcock likes his versatility. But he's a 14-minute third liner and power-play specialist.

Of Fantasy Note – The team has the cap room to bring in a second-line center and a backup goaltender. Otherwise, look for Nikita Filatov to crack the lineup. That being said, he is going to be occasionally scratched and his minutes will be held to 10 or so – and fewer than that in the first half. One of Michael Blunden or Stefan Legein should make the squad as a fourth liner, probably the former. Regardless of who the team brings in as a scoring center, expect 50-55 points from Antoine Vermette.

Colorado Avalanche

UFA's – Joe Sakic, Ty Arnason, Ian Laperriere, Ben Guite, Brian Willsie, Matt Hendricks, Per

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Ledin, Chris Durno, Daniel Tjarnqvist, Lawrence Nycholat, Aaron MacKenzie, Darcy Campbell, Andrew Raycroft

RFA's – David Jones, Cody McLeod, Cody McCormick, Philippe Dupuis, Kyle Cumiskey, Mike Vernace, Peter Budaj

Outgoing – If Sakic wants to return, the Avs will take him back, although if they are truly rebuilding they should probably pass. Arnason is gone, as is Raycroft – who lost his last nine starts.

Of Fantasy Note – If Sakic returns he will be high on everyone's list again – but don't fall for it. He'll be 40 years old heading into training camp and he is going through back, groin and abdominal problems. Pick him and you'll set yourself up for a heartbreak. The team does not have a lot of cap space, perhaps as much as \$10 million, but if they were smart they would spend a larger chunk of that on a goaltender. Do not expect Budaj to get another chance as the No.1 goalie, it's time to cut him loose in keeper leagues (if you haven't already).

Dallas Stars

UFA's – Jere Lehtinen, Joel Lundqvist, Brendan Morrison, Mark Parrish, Landon Wilson, Chris Conner, Steve Begin, Sergei Zubov, Darryl Sydor, Tobias Stephan, Brent Krahn

RFA's – Mark Fistric, Matt Climie

Outgoing – Dallas has a tough call to make with Zubov, but I think they'll cave and keep him. It's hard to imagine Lehtinen going anywhere, but it could happen. The Stars will probably not re-sign Morrison, but another team will for a cheap rate that reflects his season and it will be a steal because he found his mojo down the stretch.

Of Fantasy Note – With Stephan possibly gone, there is a good chance that 21-year-old Richard Bachman will step in as backup. Bachman is a former WCHA player of the year and if Marty Turco has another stumble, this kid could surprise you with a lot of strong starts. Look for Matt Niskanen to flirt with 45 points, whether the re-sign Zubov or not.

Edmonton Oilers

UFA's – Ales Kotalik, Jason Strudwick, Mathieu Roy, Dwayne Roloson, Dany Sabourin

RFA's – Kyle Brodziak, Liam Reddox, Gilbert Brule, Rob Schremp, Ryan Potulny, Ladislav Smid, Denis Grebeshkov

Outgoing – It's hard to imagine the Oilers finally letting Roloson go, but he was 2-9-0 down the stretch and he'll enter next season as a 40 year old. They'll bring him back if they can't land a younger goalie via the open market. Kotalik is friends with Ales Hemsky and he played well once moved to the second line. I'd be surprised if the team doesn't re-sign him. Of interest are three fading prospects and how they are RFA's – Brule, Schremp and Potulny. If they aren't given a qualifying offer, any one of those players could find new life elsewhere.

Of Fantasy Note – Whether they sign Roloson or not, Jeff Deslauriers will not be the No.1 goalie. A lot of money is already tied up for next year, so if they end up spending too much dough on goaltending this summer, then they will need to fill out the roster with cheap options.

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This will mean an opportunity for the likes of Brule, Schremp or Potulny (if they re-sign).

Florida Panthers

UFA's – Richard Zednik, Radek Dvorak, Ville Peltonen, Janis Sprukts, Jay Bouwmeester, Nick Boynton, Jassen Cullimore, Craig Anderson

RFA's – David Booth, Anthony Stewart, Tanner Glass, Steve Eminger

Outgoing – Booth is a prime candidate for an offer sheet from another team. Watch for that situation. Peltonen is almost certainly gone. I would be surprised if Zednik or Dvorak are re-signed. As for Bouwmeester – he is far too much in demand to stay in Florida. Look for them to trade his negotiating rights in late June for a couple of good draft picks. Anderson wants to be a No.1 guy and it wouldn't shock me to see him go to one of the teams I outlined above that are in the hunt for a goaltender (Colorado, Edmonton). Don't be shocked to see Brett McLean bought out.

Of Fantasy Note – There will be lots of room for Michael Repik this campaign, look for him to make the team. Vokoun will be the undisputed No.1 goalie again, thanks to Anderson's departure. Michal Frolik will be a No.1 winger as a result of all the wingers who aren't coming back.