

Sabres Scoring at the Perfect Time

Written by Dobber

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The Buffalo Sabres have been solid when it comes to defense this season, but as the season winds down they seem to have found the other element of the game of hockey – offense. With Ryan Miller’s MVP-type season obviously the main – check that, “only” – reason that the Sabres rule their division, there have been some concerns over their firepower. Another eight games of this new offense and all fears should be washed away.

In the last six games, Buffalo has scored six or more goals twice, something that they haven’t done prior to that since January 18 and only four times previously all season. In fact, they have 25 goals in those six games, understandably coming away with 11 of a possible 12 points. This

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will open up some eyes, for those of you who will be in playoff pools. If it doesn't, it should.

The Sabres will probably play either Montreal, Boston, Philadelphia or Atlanta (unless the Rangers can pull off a Hail Mary and get back into the mix). You can't say with authority that Miller alone could not single-handedly take down any of those squads. And now that the team is finding the net on a regular basis, they should make for some appealing dark horses. Don't be fooled by their end of season statistics.

Take Derek Roy, for example. He'll end with around 67 points. Not bad, but will still fall short of his two best regular season totals. However, he has 20 of his points in his last 17 contests. Jason Pominville, who has 14 in his last 10, is another fine example as his end total will be close to 62.

Tim Connolly, who as of Sunday was out with a suspected foot injury, is actually injured at the perfect time. If he misses several games, it will be the perfect break for him, as he is unused to playing full seasons (see his career injury log for details). He has 42 points in his last 38 games and yet he just might end the year with fewer than 70 points. That would see less knowledgeable poolies to shy away from him even in the middle rounds of a lot of office pools.

But that would be a mistake. Because:

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1. Buffalo could easily go at least to the second round. Could, and perhaps “should”.
2. Connolly has been above the point-per-game threshold for half a season, yet his numbers won't show it.
3. Connolly will be well rested.

Other Sabres I'll be looking at in all of my playoff pools – the three T's:

Tyler Myers – Naturally, the power-play quarterback should be picked. They tend to up their points-per-game in the postseason if the team wins. Since Buffalo should win (at least one round), Meyers should be good for six points in 11 games at minimum.

Tyler Ennis – He'll ride the pine for the first couple of playoff games, but if the team is losing or there is an injury, he will get in and play. And he will produce. Three points in just two career NHL games and he is the first call up now.

Tim Kennedy – An excellent dark horse whom you could get in the final round easily. Not only will he fall short of 30 points, most office pool players are too casual to have heard of him. Yet his ice time is of the top six variety these days and he has five points in his last seven games. He has a lot of untapped offensive potential.

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Of course I would consider Thomas Vanek, but even poolies who don't like the Sabres will be grabbing Vanek in the middle rounds. His reputation overvalues him. So I would let someone else scoop him unless he gets to the late rounds. In three years since he tallied 84 points, he hasn't even topped 65. He has 11 points in his last 18 games, despite the fact that his team is scoring. Plus, he is battling a lower-body injury.

While everyone in your playoff pool fights tooth and nail over who gets Ruslan Fedotenko, Mike Knuble, Dan Cleary or Devin Setoguchi – let them. You could build a nice core of Sabres without fighting anyone for them, and I'll all but guarantee you get at least 10 games out of them. Make them a secondary team you build your hopes around once the good players on your primary team are gone.

Pick up [Dobber's Interactive Playoff Draft List Here.](#)