

## San Jose Sharks Find Right Line Combos

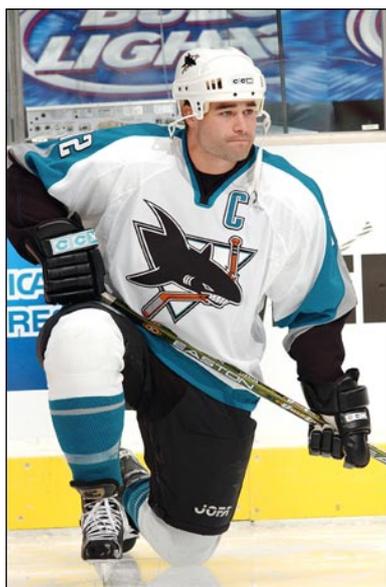
Written by Dobber  
Friday, 26 January 2007 11:37 -

---

By Darryl Dobbs - Originally posted on January 10 by The Hockey News, ESPN.com and MSN.ca It took an 8-0 spanking at the hands of the Phoenix Coyotes on December 28, but San Jose has finally found the right mix of forward lines to put on the ice. Since the embarrassing game, the Sharks have tallied 18 goals in three games, or a 6.00 average. Before the run, the team averaged just 2.87.

The first thing the team did was send sophomore forward Steve Bernier and rookie defenseman Matt Carle down to Worcester of the American league. The two were a combined minus-8 in the Phoenix game and had been slumping of late. A trip to the minors would do well for their confidence.

The second thing done? Put the summer's prize acquisition, Mark Bell, up in the press box.



The final piece of the puzzle was to reshuffle the line combinations for umpteenth time this season and hope that the goals will follow. They certainly did follow – the new top line of Joe Thornton, Patrick Marleau and Mike Grier have combined for 23 points. Thornton, coming off an Art Ross Trophy season, has been a bit of a disappointment. In just three games, however, he has pushed himself up amongst the NHL scoring leaders where he should be. Marleau, normally the team's second-line center, was moved to the wing to play with Big Joe. Grier, normally a third- or fourth-line plugger, is just along for the ride.

## San Jose Sharks Find Right Line Combos

Written by Dobber

Friday, 26 January 2007 11:37 -

---

The other lines have not been doing to badly either. The line of Rookie Joe Pavelski , Jonathan Cheechoo and Mark Smith have done fairly well – at least the Pavelski/Cheechoo part of it (Smith has been pointless). The pair have combined for eight points in those three games. On the third line, meanwhile, Ryane Clowe has five goals in the two games since his return from a serious groin injury.

The team is firing on all cylinders. Thornton is back in the hunt for a 100-point season, Cheechoo is climbing out of his season-long funk, Marleau is back up over a point per game and coach Ron Wilson now has some good offense to go along with the stellar defense...

Stud defenseman Jay Bouwmeester seems to have turned the corner. For the second season in a row, he has been heating it up late - this year it seems to be happening a little earlier than last year. He had 16 points in 46 games to start last season. This season it was 10 in 29 contests. He had 30 points in 36 games to end last season. This season he has had 10 points in his last 15 games. Expect this turnaround to not only continue, but gather momentum. Bouwmeester will one day be a 65-point rearguard, he just needs to do a little more with his first 30 games...

Stick this guy on your radar – Lawrence Nycholat. He is a 27-year-old career minor leaguer who



was recalled on December 23<sup>rd</sup> (nice Christmas present) and has six points in his last seven games heading into Tuesday night. There is no question he is an offensive rearguard – he has 28 points in 29 AHL games this year. Nycholat is getting top power-play time on a team that needs a true quarterback. Watch him...

## San Jose Sharks Find Right Line Combos

Written by Dobber

Friday, 26 January 2007 11:37 -

---

**Injuries, from a fantasy pool perspective:** It is looking like Toronto's Alexei Ponikarovsky will be back this weekend. He had been out with a shoulder injury. His return may mark the end of Alexander Steen's hot streak, but than again his chemistry with Mats Sundin may be hard to break up. Darcy Tucker (foot) should be back in the lineup within a few days after that and his arrival will spark the end of Boyd Devereaux's and/or John Pohl's hot production...