

Non-Playoff Teams Summer Outlook II

Written by Dobber

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Part two in a seven-part review takes a look at the teams that failed to reach the postseason and what kind of impact each of them will have on your keeper-league squad. This week, we take a look at Carolina and Florida.

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Carolina Hurricanes

Possibly on the way out...

Trevor Letowski and John Grahame are unrestricted free agents. Glen Wesley and Bret Hedican are as well, but they will likely retire. The team will also probably buy out Jeff Hamilton. Speculation is that Tim Gleason could get an offer sheet as a restricted free agent, but Tuomo Ruutu and Patrick Eaves (also RFA's) are probably safe. As a result, the Hurricanes will have a whole new look on the blue line, as well as some other key parts replaced.

The team will be looking to add...

Joe Corvo is part of the new look on the back end and the Hurricanes will probably add to that with a couple of physical defensemen. Michael Leighton, by far the best AHL goaltender, will probably be the new backup and is a Cam Ward injury away from stealing a whole lot of wins for the 'Canes next season. The forward lines are all set thanks to re-signing Sergei Samsonov.

General fantasy outlook...

One word for you: Corvo. Talk about an ideal situation. Sixty points wouldn't surprise me for Corvo in Carolina as he is a bona fide quarterback. Frantisek Kaberle started producing better when he arrived, as well. So look for Kaberle to get back to the 40-point mark. With Corvo running the power play, look for Eric Staal to flirt with 100 again. The return of Justin Williams doesn't hurt that outlook, either. This will be the year that Rod Brind'Amour and Ray Whitney finally slow down, although both should still clear 65 points. They'll get back into the playoffs, as long as they stay healthy.

Florida Panthers

Possibly on the way out...

Rumors are rampant that Olli Jokinen is as good as gone, but how long has that been the case? Count on him staying, no matter how badly Mike Keenan wants him in Calgary. All of Florida's depth defensemen are unrestricted free agents – Branislav Mezei, Steve Montador, Jassen Cullimore, Magnus Johansson. Jay Bouwmeester and Rostislav Olesz are candidates for offer sheets. There is talk that Jozef Stumpel will be bought out.

The team will be looking to add...

The Panthers hope that last season's cup of coffee wasn't a mirage and that Shawn Matthias is truly that good – and that ready. Inserting him into the lineup and making Anthony Stewart a regular may be all that this team will do up front other than a depth move. On defense, they will match any offer Bouwmeester gets and they currently have six NHL rearguards ready to go. They will add a No.7 defenseman.

General fantasy outlook...

The Panthers won't do a lot, unless a blockbuster Jokinen trade occurs, but that doesn't mean you can write them off. Stephen Weiss and Nathan Horton are entering sixth and fifth years, and Olesz is entering his fourth. All three could shock the hell out of you – and the Panthers will need that if they are going to make the playoffs. A new coach will probably mean more offense – so it may not be a bad idea to sneak one of the above three off a sleeping owner for cheap.