

Sakic's Ripple Effect on Fantasy Hockey

Written by Dobber

Sunday, 31 August 2008 10:39 - Last Updated Tuesday, 02 September 2008 11:24



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When Joe Sakic signed on with the Avs for another season, some pieces fell into place on a lot of fantasy rosters. When Teemu Selanne and Mats Sundin announcements are made, you will see the same ripple effect.

Had Sakic retired: Rookie T.J. Hensick and the inconsistent Ty Arnason would have shared the second-line center job. Wojtek Wolski and Marek Svatos would have been their wingers, and with a weaker power play, John-Michael Liles would have struggled to reach 40 points.

Now: Hensick deserves to make the team, but now there is little room. If he does make the roster, Arnason will be a frequent healthy scratch. New coach Tony Granato may not like Arnason as much as Joel Quenneville did. What you will find is Hensick's ice time suffering early on, and perhaps a demotion. If he plays his way into a substantial role, then Arnason will be the one who suffers. Seeing as Arnason is coming off of his worst full NHL season, it is reasonable to assume that a press box is in his future.

Sakic will play with Ryan Smyth and one of Svatos and Wolski. One of Svatos and Wolski will play with Paul Stastny and Milan Hejduk. Any way you look at it, Svatos and Wolski see better linemates. The power play is much improved, so suddenly Liles will be flirting with 50 instead of 40.

The same thing will happen to whichever team signs Mats Sundin – assuming he signs with a team and does not retire. Things are looking grim on that front for Montreal and Philadelphia, which means Toronto, Vancouver, New York and retirement are in the running.

In Toronto, I like Mikhail Grabovski as a dark horse. Bring Sundin on board and I no longer like Grabovski. In New York, I like Markus Naslund a lot more with Sundin on his team than I do without Sundin. In Vancouver, I don't see Pavol Demitra getting 65 points. Inject Sundin onto the roster and suddenly I see Demitra getting there easily.

As for Selanne, he will play this season and it will be for Anaheim. The problem is – the Ducks don't have cap space. To get cap space, they will trade high-priced rearguard Mathieu Schneider. To trade Schneider, they will need to find a team with cap space. If that team has cap space, they are saving it for Sundin. The ripple effect here? When Sundin makes a decision, the teams that are out of the running can bring in Schneider, which would then mean Selanne can sign on the dotted line.

In the meantime, you can look at your Anaheim players as if their teammates will indeed include Selanne.

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Meanwhile...

The Andrej Meszaros trade also had a ripple effect. In Ottawa, bringing in two rearguards and losing just one will make it difficult for Brian Lee to make the team and it will make it near impossible for Brendan Bell to. Lee will be fine, but initially his power-play time will be shared a little more.

In Tampa, the story gets much more interesting. The team lost two d-men and gained one, which means there are fewer players on the depth chart ahead of Andrew Hutchinson and Janne Niskala. Before the trade, I thought Hutchinson would be a defenseman to watch, but wait and see. Now...I think he is a legitimate sleeper pick who at the very least will have a strong first half.