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The may have finished 5th in NHL scoring last season, but the Hurricanes are going to score even more in 2008-09.

No, the Hurricanes will not explode because Eric Staal suddenly finds himself a kazillionaire. Actually, the reason dates back to February 11, 2008. That was when the team acquired Joe Corvo. Up until that point, Carolina had averaged 2.88 goals per game. After that it was 3.46.

That prorates to an extra 34 goals in the season ahead. Will they do it? I believe that they can.

Carolina GM Jim Rutherford has known for several years that this team needed a dynamic power-play quarterback. He didn't realize how much until he saw what this team did after Corvo came to town. So impressed was he, that he added a second one in Joni Pitkanen. So now the 'Canes have two threats on the back end.

There is little doubt in my mind that Corvo will set career highs this season. The 31-year-old had 21 points in 23 games with Carolina to finish with his current best of 48. Write this down and throw it in my face if I'm wrong: he will beat that number by the trade deadline (end of February).

As for Pitkanen, who will turn 25 in a few days, all that is stopping him is his health. He has missed an average of just fewer than 15 games per season in his NHL career. A potential 60-point defenseman is of little use to poolies if he can't play 70 games. Still, his presence in the lineup for the 65 to 70 games that he will actually play will help boost the final numbers for some of the forwards. This eighth-ranked power play from last year will be Top 5 this season.

That bodes well for the team's top six, which is further bolstered by the return of Justin Williams and Rod Brind'Amour, neither of whom was in the lineup while they scored at a 3.46 goals-per-game clip. That's right, this team that was scoring as well or better than any other team in March did so without two of their four best players in the lineup.

Both Brind'Amour and Williams were out with knee injuries for a huge chunk of 2007-08, but judging by beat writer Chip Alexander's observations (link: http://blogs.newsobserver.com/canes/friday-finish-workout-observations) both are back to their old selves.

And then there is Staal. He who has added a few pounds, but has reduced his body fat. Soon to be 24 and entering his fifth NHL season, he is entering that window of a superstar's career where things really take off. His 100 points back in 2005-06 may have only been a teaser.

Bottom line: at the draft table if you are agonizing over Player A (a Hurricane) and Player B (not a Hurricane), take the Hurricane. Trust me.