

'Big Joe' Thornton □ Like Clockwork

Written by Dobber

Sunday, 16 November 2008 09:21 - Last Updated Monday, 17 November 2008 05:57



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Joe Thornton is not quite at a point per game and his fantasy owners are deeply disappointed. They shouldn't be, because everything is proceeding according to plan.

Big Joe is a top-six fantasy player (according to the [DobberHockey player rankings](#)) in leagues that do not have positional requirements and count strictly points.

Last season, Thornton had 24 points in his first 21 games, which was one of his faster starts, as his production only improved by about five percent after that.

However, in 2006-07, he had 23 in his first 21 and finished the year with 114 points, which is a 27 percent increase over his original 89-point pace. In 2005-06, it was the same story. Although it was the fastest start of his career (28 points in 18 games), his final 21 games that year saw him post 36 points.

All this goes to show that regardless of whether the 29-year-old starts this first quarter of the season on a 75-point pace or he starts it on a 90-point pace, he still shines brightest down the stretch.

In four of his last five seasons, Thornton has tallied at least 92 points and you can take it to the bank that he will do it again this campaign. I always make it an annual event in December to try and pry him off of his owner's hands and this year will be no different.

Statistics don't lie...

Meanwhile...

It is interesting to see that, heading into Sunday's action, Jordan Staal has 11 points in 17

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games while his older and more talented brother Eric has 10 in the same amount of games. This is the furthest into the season that Jordan has been the top-scoring Staal. I have a hard time believing that the elder brother will fail to reach 75 points. I also think that Jordan will top his career high of 42 points, but for this year I doubt he'll get to 60...

Chicago rearguard Aaron Johnson is the only player in the NHL top five plus/minus leaders who is not a member of the Capitals. An offensive blueliner in junior, Johnson was praised for his defense in his first season of Columbus but fell out of favor the following year. I doubt he'll push his plus/minus much higher than plus-15, but he is looking like a solid option if you need a depth rearguard who will post 30 points and not hurt you in the other categories...

Pittsburgh's Ruslan Fedotenko has eight points and is a plus-2 in his last nine contests. He's streaky, so this won't last, but he is worth a temporary pickup and should finish the year with 45-plus points and remain on the positive side of the plus/minus ledger...

Boston's Chuck Kobasew has six points in five games this year. The Band-Aid Boy had two points in the first game of the season before fracturing his ankle. He has four points in four games since returning and is definitely under the radar right now...