Just eyeballing some of the early season scoring leaders, the old guard is already starting to take their positions. There are a few pleasant surprises though, and some unpleasant ones when scanning the bottom of the NHL stats list. Nicklas Backstrom, Alexander Ovechkin (Washington), Dany Heatley and Joe Thornton (San Jose) are sure to be in the Top 10 by season's end. Here are some thoughts on some other names you see up there.

Anze Kopitar, LA – This is his fourth season so a breakout is not only feasible, but likely. His nine points in four games is a great start. He'll beat his career high of 77 points.

Alexander Semin, WAS – Ho hum, a sizzling start just like last year. He's a dynamite player, but he's scheduled to twist his ankle sometime in early November. When he returns after missing a dozen games, he'll slip to being a point-per-game guy.

Matt Carle, PHI – He has eight points already this year. At what point, does a final number become unrealistic? Is 70 points unrealistic for him this year? Sixty? I think reaching 65 points is out of range for the offensive rearguard, so let's use that as a cap. We'll use 35 points as a floor. To come up with an end number, we'll take a range in the middle, erring on the side of caution – so expect 45 to 50 points. That means another 37 to 42 points in 77 contests.

Jeff Carter/Mike Richards, PHI – They'll be there. If not in the Top 10, then pretty damn close to it.

Rene Bourque, CGY – He'll slow to about a 65-point pace. However, he is a lock to get hurt, as he is an esteemed Band-Aid Boy and anything over 55 points in 70 games would be a bonus.

Brooks Laich, WAS –He'll improve upon his career high of 53 points, as he is 26 and just entering his prime. However, anything over 60 points is extremely unlikely this year.

Keith Tkachuk, STL – He's not seeing a whole lot of ice time (15:25 was his season high) and 55 points is about the norm for the veteran.

Kris Versteeg, CHI – I'm starting to realize that betting against this guy is the wrong move. He'll slow, but not until the second half. Look for 40 in 40 by January, and then 22-26 in 40 in the second half for a total of 62-66 points.

Eric Belanger, MIN – He has five points in four games, so he's already one-seventh of the way to his final total of the season.

Drew Doughty, LA – His five points in four games is an excellent start and he also stands to benefit from the emergence of Anze Kopitar and a stronger King's team. Doughty will definitely top 40 points and will take a healthy run at 45.

Jussi Jokinen, CAR – Add his five points in five games to what he did in the playoffs and you get 16 points in his last 23 contests. It looks like he has found his role with the Hurricanes. I don't think he can sustain a 60-plus pace like that, but I do believe that something around 55 points is very possible.

Kyle Quincey, COL – Three of his five points have come on the power play and he has seen a minimum of 23:35 in ice time. He has certainly picked up where he left off in Los Angeles and I have little doubt that the born-again offensive rearguard will top his career high of 38 points.

On the other end of the spectrum, some 50- to 70-point players are struggling to put up their first point…

Ryane Clowe, SJ – He's a streaky player who will one day very soon put up nine points in eight games (or thereabouts). That's what you can expect from Clowe. You can also expect an injury, as he has been fragile throughout his career. In the end, he should still get to 50 points.

Nathan Horton, FLA – I still have faith in him breaking out this year, but to not have a point yet is quite concerning. For now, I'm believing in 65 points for him and he makes an excellent "buy

low" candidate. However, if he can't get to even four points by the 12-game mark, I will obviously have to re-evaluate. But that's the beauty of "buying low" with players, you can never be too sure.

David Krejci, BOS – Krejci is still recovering from surgery and he missed the entire training camp. In essence, this is his training camp. Give him four more contests to get rolling and then expect him to gradually ramp it up to a point per game. He'll finish in the high 60s.

David Backes, STL – After finishing last year a close to a point per game in the second half, more is expect of Backes. He is seeing more ice time than pretty much any St. Louis forward so it is only a matter of time. He'll top 60 this year, mark it.