

Non-Playoff Teams Summer Outlook V

Written by Dobber

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Part five 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 Colorado and Columbus.

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Colorado Avalanche

Possibly on the way out...

Tyler Arnason, Brett McLean, Antti Laaksonen, Mark Rycroft, Patrice Brisebois, Ossi Vaananen and Ken Klee are all potential unrestricted free agents. However, Pierre Turgeon is the UFA that will make an impact on the team. His \$1.5 million contract off the books creates a lot of elbowroom and made it easier for the team to re-sign Joe Sakic. The possibility of buying out goaltender Jose Theodore has been all but ruled out.

The team will be looking to add...

Finally, Jordan Leopold will be able to join the team at 100 per cent health. Acquired for Alex Tanguay on draft day last summer, Leopold battled injury all season long. Now that he is healthy, he will join John-Michael Liles on the No.1 power-play unit. Liles spent some time in the doghouse late in the season, so it is possible that the squad could be looking for a quarterback. If not, it will be Leopold and Liles patrolling the back end with the man advantage. The team may be looking to acquire a scoring right winger in case Marek Svatos does not recover from his sophomore jinx. Look for prospect T.J. Hensick to take a run a roster spot this fall. He is a small, scoring pivot that may have to move to a wing to see decent ice time.

General fantasy outlook...

Until the goaltending is solidified and the defense corps step up and take charge, the team will continue to battle for a playoff spot. From a fantasy standpoint – they'll be doing it with offense, which is a good thing. Goals will be even more plentiful and Liles and Leopold can combine for 100 points this year. They have the ability to, but they really need to take the next step. It would have a huge impact on the power play, which would help everybody.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Possibly on the way out...

One player is a biggie, and he didn't even play that often last season. Bryan Berard's departure opens up \$2.5 million in cap space.

The team will be looking to add...

The team will have about five or six million to spend this summer, after they've signed all their restricted free agents. They will use a chunk of that to try and land a quarterback. The right man back there would turn Rick Nash into a 90-point player and Nik Zherdev into a...well, a player. Power plays are so important in today's NHL, that a PP that is ranked sixth instead of 26th (like Columbus was ranked) would mean a world of difference to the numbers of the top four or five players. Watch for this. If the Jacket's don't land a quarterback, you may be in for another sub-70-point season from Nash.

General fantasy outlook...

Ken Hitchcock's coaching will put the club in contention for a playoff spot, but not much better. They will be a defensive-minded team, but if Pascal Leclaire cannot stay healthy even that will be suspect. The offense will rely desperately on a new quarterback. Diminutive forward Geoff Platt should finally crack the lineup full time, and he bears watching.