

The King of Kings

Written by Dobber

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Why do I get the feeling Anze Kopitar is going to have a monster season?

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On one hand, he is coming off a big rookie campaign in which he made it quite clear he is one of the best up-and-coming stars in the game; on the other hand, he missed a chunk of time with back problems – always a red flag in the fantasy world. On one hand, he shot out of the gate with five points in two games; on the other hand, he had 56 points in 70 contests after that.

Sophomores generally do not repeat their rookie year. They either take the next step in their development or they fall into that famed 'sophomore slump' you hear so much about.

Kopitar, who was obviously a better rookie than most, is going to take the next step in his development. So what is it that's giving me this feeling 'the next step' is going to be more like a giant leap?

While it is difficult to describe a gut feeling, there are some tangible things you can point a finger towards. The Kings are a better team up front, for starters. Kopitar's line (he will likely play with Mike Cammalleri and Dustin Brown) will no longer be keyed on as much, because there is a second line of Ladislav Nagy, Michal Handzus and Alexander Frolov who comprise just as potent a trio.

Secondly, his pre-season has been spectacular. He had five points in three games before the team went overseas...and in their exhibition match against Salzburg, Kopitar tallied three goals en route to a 7-6 victory.

A full year in North America has to make this kid a lot more comfortable with everything, both on and off the ice. The next step in his progression would be to post 75 points. That falls far short of what my instincts are telling me. Sometimes I just go with my gut and in this case, I plan to...

When Jason Bacashihua was cut Tuesday night, the Blues handed the backup job to Hannu Toivonen. Given Manny Legace's injury history and St. Louis' defensive system, Toivonen will make a great pickup as your No. 3 goalie. He'll be under the radar...

Farm Report: Patrik Berglund had a tremendous camp for the Blues, but was cut on Tuesday. He'll make the team next season and contend for the Calder Trophy...Minnesota's Benoit Pouliot has picked up his play recently and really impressed coach Jacques Lemaire. However, Dominic Moore's strong play will be Pouliot's undoing this year.