

## Something's Bruin in Beantown

Written by Russ Miller

Thursday, 27 November 2008 06:40 - Last Updated Friday, 28 November 2008 04:44

---



The Boston Bruins are one of the hottest teams in the league right now. Are they for real? We're a quarter of the way into the season, so you better believe it. Heading into last night's action, the Bruins were tied for second in points in the NHL and tied for first in the Eastern Conference with the New York Rangers who had played three more games. Before Boston's loss to the Sabres last night, the Bruins were an impressive 9-0-1 in their previous ten games.

That the Bruins are second only to Minnesota in goals against average is no surprise, but for Boston to be sixth in goals scored per game was a shocker. Their power play ranked ninth and the penalty kill was 12th in the league. There is one negative though, the Bruins give up an

## Something's Bruin in Beantown

Written by Russ Miller

Thursday, 27 November 2008 06:40 - Last Updated Friday, 28 November 2008 04:44

---

average of 31.7 shots per game, seventh most in the league.

Thankfully, the goaltending has been outstanding, especially Tim Thomas with his 0.944 save percentage and 1.80 goals-against-average. After starting the season with two sub-0.900 efforts, Thomas has posted 0.917 or better in 12 consecutive contests.

Even Manny Fernandez looks like he's finally recovered following his write-off season after knee surgery last year. He has a record of 5-1-1 with a 2.55 goals-against-average and 0.910 save percentage.

Marc Savard's offensive performance has been nothing short of magnificent. Before last night's contest, Savard was in a three way tie for second place in the scoring race with 27 points in 21 games. Even more impressive is that he was third in the NHL with a plus-13 rating and plays 19:21 per game, including a team leading 3:53 on the power play. Savard had 11 points in his last six games and was a plus-7 in those games.

Savard has twice crossed the 95 point threshold, so we knew he had talent, but after last year's disappointing 78 points in Coach Claude Julien's defence first system, many thought that Savard's 90 point days were behind him. While not likely to maintain his current 105-point pace, 95 points and 100 penalty minutes are certainly within his reach.

One of the keys to the Bruins winning ways is their physical play. At last glance, Milan Lucic was leading the NHL in hits with 82. Aaron Ward had 60 and Chara dished out 56 hits.

I would have thought that the Bruins would be struggling now with Andrew Ference out with a broken leg, but Chara (26:27) and Wideman (24:57) eat up an enormous amount of ice time. A top four of Chara, Wideman, Aaron Ward and Mark Stuart is not what you would envision as a dominant foursome. Including last night's game, Matt Hunwick and Phil Kessel have five and seven game point streaks respectively.

When Marco Sturm makes his way back into the lineup, Boston will gain another offensive weapon. Sturm has scored 20 goals or more in each of the last six seasons.

### Edgy Bits

The New York Rangers have allowed seven short-handed goals against so far this season, while Philadelphia has scored eight short-handed markers. Simon Gagne has four goals and one assist while short-handed.

Jeff Carter and Thomas Vanek are tied for the lead in goals. Simon Gagne is second in NHL scoring and only two goals behind the leaders. It should be noted that Danny Briere has only played in eight games so far this season. I don't see Carter as playing over his head, but when Briere comes back, lines will change and that may alter the production of some players. With a career high of 79 points, Gagne is definitely playing well over his head with 30 points in only 20 games (123 point pace). He is headed for a new career high, but if you don't trust his health, then the time to strike is now, while the iron is hot - trade him ASAP.

## Something's Bruin in Beantown

Written by Russ Miller

Thursday, 27 November 2008 06:40 - Last Updated Friday, 28 November 2008 04:44

---

Is Vincent Lecavalier really the NHL's version of Che Guevara? Is the Tampa franchise player responsible for leading two player revolts in Tampa and getting two coaches fired in the process? I'm betting that Rick Tocchet will succeed in Tampa if left alone by the wacky hands-on guys they call the ownership group.

After going 1-4 in their first five games following Brodeur's injury, the Devils have rattled off five straight victories. With a goal last night, Gionta has a goal in five straight games.

For those of you worried about Andrei Kostitsyn's seven points in 19 games, last season he started the season with eight points in 21 games and then scored 45 points in his final 57 games.

If ever there's a case for leaving young players in the minors to gain confidence, it's Bryan Little. He recently managed to string together a six game, nine point streak and has 12 points in his last ten games.

Alexander Ovechkin has scored ten goals and 21 points in his last nine games. Yeah, he's that good.