

Thrash Talking

Written by Russ Miller

Thursday, 20 August 2009 15:01 - Last Updated Saturday, 22 August 2009 09:30



When the Atlanta Thrashers traded for Pavel Kubina in July, I was puzzled. Didn't they already have three offensive-minded blueliners under contract in Tobias Enstrom, Ron Hainsey and highly regarded rookie Zach Bogosian?

The way in which Enstrom and Bogosian finished the season made the Kubina acquisition all the more baffling to me. Enstrom had 20 points in his last 22 games and logged the most ice time of any Thrasher. After missing 28 games with a broken leg early in the season, Bogosian finished his rookie season on a positive note, recording 11 of his 19 points over his last 16 games played. That's a 56 point pace for the defenseman. Even more amazing is the fact that only three of those 11 points were on the power play.

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Ron Hainsey was the most prolific point producer from the back end for the Thrashers last season with 39 points. He has averaged 35 points over the past three seasons. There is reason for concern however. Over the same 22 game period to finish last season, Hainsey recorded only nine points, where Enstrom had 20 points and Bogosian scored 11 points.

Could the addition of Pavel Kubina signify Hainsey's transition to a lesser offensive role? I doubt it, but Kubina did log the second most power play ice time for Toronto last season and recorded his second consecutive 40 point season.

So what does all this mean for the Thrashers suddenly offensive defence corps? Unless there is a trade, I suspect the pecking order for power play duties amongst defensemen will be Hainsey, Kubina, Enstrom and finally Bogosian. That leaves little man advantage time for Anssi Salmela, so he's best avoided with the team so deep in back end talent.

Little Feat

Bryan Little had a great start to 2008-09, jumping out of the gates with 32 points in his first 38 games, which would have been a 69 point season if he was able to maintain that pace. Unfortunately, Little had an abysmal second half with only 19 points in the last 41 games, which equates to a measly 38 point pace over 82 games.

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Little should even out his scoring this season, but I don't think we'll see any great increase or decrease in points. He should end up with between 50-55 points, playing on a line with Rich Peverley and Slava Kozlov.

White Night

Todd White's 73 points last year were 13 more than his previous best. The odd part is that a career year from a 34-year-old is almost unheard of for NHL players. The question is can he even come close this season? My Magic 8-Ball says "Don't count on it".

During a 20 game stretch from the middle of February to the end of March, White had 25 points. Kovalchuk was in on 64 per cent of White's points over that period. The Todd was second only to Kovalchuk in average power play ice time on the Thrashers.

In my article last week, I stated that he would likely be gone before he falls to where I would take him in my draft. I stand by what I wrote, but don't confuse that with me not taking White if he were to drop to where the low 60 point players are being taken.

Slava's Swan Song?

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This season could be the 37-year-old Kozlov's last in the NHL. Kozlov did not fade down the stretch last season; in fact he got stronger with 22 points over the last 17 games.

Kozlov received the third most average power play ice time. This old man has been very durable, missing a total of only ten games over the last six NHL seasons. While I doubt he'll match last year's 76 points, perhaps he shouldn't be completely stricken from your draft lists.