

## Olli Olli Oxen Free

Written by Russ Miller

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In my youth, this phrase was heard in the neighbourhood more than a few times. It was used during games of Hide and Seek to let everyone know that it was safe to come out from their hiding spots. Let's hope that the newest Ranger, **Olli Jokinen** hears the call and emerges from wherever his 30-goal talent and passion have been hiding for the last few seasons. For those of you who own O.J. in your pools, you have to be optimistic that he finds his return to the Eastern Conference welcoming! He hasn't been the same since leaving the Panthers in 2008.

For those of you musing whether or not the Zednik near-death experience (Jokinen's skate accidentally cut Zednik's neck) affected Jokinen's point production, here are the numbers: In the 157 games since the incident, Jokinen has 45 goals and 105 points or an average of 24 goals and 55 points pro-rated over 82 games. In the preceding 222 games, he recorded 106 goals and 238 points. That's an 82 game average of 39 goals and 88 points.

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Bringing in Jokinen could turn out to be a very good move by Glen Sather. In his debut in Broadway Blues on Tuesday, Jokinen lined up between Marian Gaborik and Vaclav Prospal. The Rangers are better off with Jokinen in their top six vice Chris Higgins.

While Mike Keenan is widely credited for Olli Jokinen's emergence as a player, it was Jacques Martin who managed to coax the best out of the big Finn. Under Keenan's tutelage, Jokinen recorded seasons of 29, 65 and 58 points. After Jacques Martin took over behind the bench, Jokinen averaged 37 goals, 84 points and 348 shots on goal over their three seasons together.

The Rangers desperately need Jokinen to return to his 30-35 goal form, as New York's offense has been very predictable of late. Marian Gaborik has scored five of the team's last six goals.

File this under the heading Bad Idea; the Rangers threw out five forwards on the power play last game and were promptly burned for a sweet short-handed marker courtesy of Anze Kopitar.

**Chris Drury** has been relegated to playing on the fourth line with Brian Boyle and Aaron Voros. Drury has logged less than 15 minutes of ice time in four of his last eight games. This is a player who will be paid over \$8-million dollars this season! Just another in a long list of not very good bang for your buck signings by the Rangers management.

### Razor Sharp

Since returning from injury, **Ray Emery** has played well and although his 5-3 record doesn't stand out, his ancillary numbers do. In those eight contests, he has a goals-against-average of 2.14, a save percentage of 0.919 and two shutouts. The Flyers sit atop a pack of eight teams currently vying for the final three playoff spots in the Eastern Conference and could be poised to go on a little run.

Here are the three free agents I won bids on this week in the Dobber Experts League:

How hot is Tampa goaltender **Antero Niittymaki**? How about four wins and one overtime loss in his last five games? Over that period, he has a goals-against-average of less than one (0.95) and a 0.967 save percentage to go along with one shutout.

The change of scenery has worked wonders for **Benoit Pouliot**. Before the trade to Montreal, Pouliot had played parts of four seasons, registering a total of nine goals and 18 points in 65

games. Since coming to the Canadiens, the former fourth overall pick from 2005 has registered 11 goals and 14 points in only 19 games.

Senators **Erik Karlsson** has four points in his last three games and the 19-year-old defender has averaged more than 21 minutes of ice time in his last six contests. If I was forced to find a comparable NHL defenseman, I would choose Tobias Enstrom. The same questions were there concerning Enstrom's lack of size when he broke into the league. Enstrom surprised nearly everyone with a 38 point rookie effort, although he was three years older than Karlsson when he embarked on his first NHL campaign. Now Enstrom is in his third NHL season and on pace for 57 points. Does Karlsson have what it takes to follow the same pattern? Only time will tell, but the early returns look promising.

### Top Gun – Canadien Style?

Looking at the numbers of the two top dogs in Montreal, it's easy to see who the Top Gun should be. In Jaroslav "Iceman" Halak's last five games, he has a 3-1-1 record, 1.58 goals-against-average and a stellar 0.955 save percentage. By contrast, future stud Carey "Maverick" Price hasn't put in the greatest performances of late. He has a 1-3-1 record with a 3.40 goals-against-average and a 0.896 save percentage. Montreal is currently sitting uncomfortably in the seven slot in the Eastern standings and still very much in the mix for a playoff berth. Look for Jacques "Jester" Martin to call on the more consistent Iceman, at least until he turns in a poor performance.

### Canada vs USA Olympic Goaltenders

Is New Jersey Devils Lou Lamoriello (GM of 1998 USA Olympic men's hockey team) guilty of some international gamesmanship by trying to tire out Canadian Olympic Team goaltender **Mart in Brodeur**

heading into the Games? Brodeur has played in 52 of New Jersey's first 55 games. No, not a chance, but Brodeur's play of late does seem to indicate that he might be tired. In his last six games played, Brodeur has two wins, a goals-against-average of 2.59 and an unflattering 0.886 save percentage. Prior to this recent run of sub-par games, Marty was sporting a 2.17 goals-against-average and a save percentage of 0.923.

Not including last night's loss, fellow Olympian, Team USA's **Ryan Miller** also had only two wins in his last six games played. His save percentage over those games was 0.905 and goals-against-average was 2.77. Now those numbers may not seem too bad, but compared with his season totals of 0.932 and 2.12, that qualifies as a bad stretch.

### Short Cuts

Mike Knuble has 15 points in his last 14 games...Kris Letang has six points in his last seven games played...Bryan McCabe has no points in ten games... Of Alexander Ovechkin's 48 games played this season, exactly half of them have been multi-point efforts. He has been held pointless in only nine matches to date this season...Has Ilya Kovalchuk been able to ignore all the trade discussion going on? Does two points in his last six games sound right for the Russian