Russ is on hiatus for the summer, so I'll be filling in for him. You Dobberities won't miss out on the Eastern Conference half of the information for your fantasy leagues in these series of columns.

As many of the Dobber writers have alluded to, offensive production essentially boils down to opportunity. A top-line player will receive every possible chance to succeed, while a top-six player will receive decent even strength/second unit power-play ice-time for production. A depth player will most likely receive checking line time and definitely won't receive ample optimal scoring time. Their big break will only come if there are injuries or sudden collapses of young players from their team's top-six.

We all like to be optimistic with our projections, but there really isn't a point in projection 80 points for a player who won't even crack a team's top-line let alone top-six. If you haven't read my projections article, definitely go and take a gander. I know I had an eye-opening experience

when digging up all the stats. **Note: Take the line combos with a grain of salt. They are just arbitrary and are used primarily to separate a team's top-six from the bottom-six** . I really don't want to get into arguments about player X had chemistry with player Y; therefore they'll be on a line together during the season. I must add that I'm not as informed about the East as I am with the West, so if there are any controversial items, be sure to make comments at the bottom of the page to open up some discussion.

The following table was the same from last week's column, so make sure you pay attention to the numbers.

Offensive Player's scoring position on team

West

East

League

Median

Max

Min

Top

74.6

74.1

74.3

70

112

51

2 **nd**

62.8

64.5

63.7

61

101

41

3 **rd**

55.1

54.5

54.8

53

84

37

4 **th**

47.7

45.1

46.4

47

67

33

5 **th**

42.7

38.2

40.5

38.5

53

32

6 **th**

36

34

35

34

53

22

Enough of the stats, now onto the good stuff.

New Jersey – Top-six fairly locked, but faces decent competition from bottom-six

Top Six

Ilya Kovalchuk (?) – Travis Zajac – Zach Parise

Patrik Elias – Jason Arnott – Jamie Langenbrunner

Cavalry

Dainus Zubrus, David Clarkson, Mattias Tedenby amd Jacob Josefson

Bottom Feeders

Vladimir Zharkov, Rod Pelley, P. Letourneu-Lebold

The Devils will need to wait till the whole Kovalchuk situation settles before they can move forward. If the top-six stays status quo, they'll boast a very talented top-six who will compete with the best of them in 2010-11. The only major problem is point scarcity, where players will steal points off each other, and create a balanced score sheet rather than a clear cut split of top-three bottom three.

Arnott has a well known band-aid boy history, as he's averaged just 69 contests during the last four seasons. The positive is that he has also averaged 0.83 points-per-game during that same span, which is pretty impressive. When Arnott succumbs to an injury, look for Elias and possibly even Josefson to get a brief audition as the number two center. Clarkson pretty much will revert back to his checking third-line forte. He might lose out on a few extra points, but his PIMs should be back towards the 175 mark, which will be gold for roto league owners.

Zubrus saw his ice-time drop from 17:18 pre-Olympic (pre-Kovalchuk) to 15:11 post. He's the biggest loser from the Kovalchuk signing. The Devils are in serious cap trouble, and will need to fill out their rosters with cheap talent. Tedenby, Zharkov, PLL and Pelley should round out the roster.

Last year's pre-season top-six:

Parise, Zajac, Elias, Zubrus, Rolston and Langenbrunner.

End of year finish:

Parise

82

Zajac

67

Lagenbrunner

61

Elias

48

Rolston

37

Zubrus

27

Rangers – Top-five fairly set, weak competition from cavalry

Top Six

Vaclav Prospal – Brandon Dubinsky – Marian Gaborik

Alex Frolov– Chris Drury – Ryan Callahan

Cavalry

Derek Stepan**, Erik Christensen, Sean Avery and Artem Anisimov

Bottom Feeders

Brandon Prust, Derek Boogard, Donald Brashear, Brian Boyle, Mats Zuccarello-Aasen and Evgeny Grachev

When playing together, the duo of Prospal and Gabby accounted for 36 percent of the total scoring shifts for the Rangers. The difficulty is trying to figure out who's the best candidate to complement the talented duo. Dubinsky is the most likely candidate as he appeared in 26.9 percent of Gabby's ice-time, which is followed closely by Erik Christensen's 25.9 percent. It's a toss-up, in my opinion, who wins out. Newly signed Frolov could also play a major role in that battle if they decide to shift Prospal over to the center position. Drury has always been over-rated, as he carries a "big name" but never seems to produce as one.

Avery is finally back to pesky ways of tallying 30 points while accumulating the PIMs. 30, 170 seem reasonable to expect from him this campaign. Callahan is probably a third liner in 29 other clubs, but he's a top-sixer on a very shallow NY team. The bright side is that he's had consecutive 200+ SOG seasons and might be a candidate to make it three consecutive. A major sleeper candidate coming out of the Rangers camp might be youngster Stepan. If you

want to read a great article about him click here .

I'm not as high on Grachev as Dobber is, 28 points in 80 contests with the Wolfpack last season tells me that he's not ready for the NHL. Prust, Boogard and Brashear would be a hilarious fourth line if they decided to ice them together.

Last year's pre-season top-six:

Avery, Dubinsky, Gaborik, Prospal, Drury, and Callahan.

End of year finish:

Gaborik

86

Prospal

58

Dubinsky

44

Callahan

37

Drury

32

Avery

31

Islanders- Top-three set, pretty much a gong show for the rest of the spots.

Top Six

Matt Moulson – John Tavares – Kyle Okposo

Rob Schremp – Josh Bailey – Trent Hunter

Cavalry

Blake Comeau, Jesse Joensuu, Frans Nielsen, Kiril Petrov, Kiril Kabonov, and Nino Neiderreiter

Bottom Feeders

Pierre Parenteau, Zenon Konopka, Trevor Gillies.

The top-three of Tavares, Okposo and Bailey are pretty much set, but the rest of the positions in the top-six are completely up for grabs. Hunter has the inside track for an offensive gig, but has been bitten by the injury bug the last two seasons, which certainly hampers his upside for the upcoming season. The most sought after position on the team will be the player that complements Tavares and Okposo.

Moulson spent the most time with the duo last season, and his recent pay rise should see him get first dibs in that role once again. Comeau spent the second most time, but doesn't have the offensive upside to keep up with the two stars. Same could be said for Nielsen. A highly-touted prospect Petrov, could also provide some much needed offensive support. Newly drafted duo, Kabonov and El Nino, could also impress if given an opportunity.

Either way with at least six players in the mix, it's pretty much impossible to speculate who's going to come out on top of this battle. We've all heard of Schremp's offensive prowess, but this season might be the one that he finally gets the opportunity and the ability to finally break through. He'd be my dark horse candidate for an offensive outburst in 2010-11. Joensuu has the size to be successful but still appears to be at least a few years away before making a fantasy impact.

Last year's pre-season top-six:

Comeau, Tavares, Okposo, Nielsen, Weight, and Hunter.

End of year finish:

Tavares

54

Okposo

52

Moulson

48

Nielsen

38

Bailey

35

Comeau

35

Next week: the Senators, Flyers, and Penguins.

Questions or comments? Like always I'll be ready and willing to discuss them in the comments section below.