

## A Work In Progress: Luke Adam

Written by Tim Lucarelli

Sunday, 05 June 2011 13:10 - Last Updated Monday, 06 June 2011 14:42

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Just after the Anaheim Ducks selected Justin Schultz in the second round of the 2008 Entry Draft, the Buffalo Sabres selected Luke Adam. Their first-round selection from that draft, Tyler Ennis, would capture the Red Garrett Award (AHL Rookie of the Year) in 2009-10 and just this past season, Luke Adam would capture the award as well. With Gerbe taking the award in 2008-09, the Sabres have had a prospect win the honor in three consecutive years and four of the past 11 years (Mika Noronen in 99-00). While fantasy owners have been well educated on Ennis and Gerbe, they might not know as much about Luke Adam.

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At the time Adam was drafted, he had just completed a QMJHL season in which he scored at a 0.94 point-per-game pace, adding one minute in penalties for every game played as well (72 PIM in 70 games). That postseason, Adam would also score eight points in six games. The following year would show similar results for Adam, though he played fewer games overall and he was skating in a new town. So far, he was about a point-per-game player in the QMJHL, a rather high scoring league.

Adam would relocate once again and in 2009-10, he broke out. With Olivier Roy between the pipes, Adam scored at will, registering 90 points in only 56 games, by far a career best. That year he would even skate for his country and his eight points put him in a tie for fifth most on the team, trailing only Eberle, Hall, Pietrangelo, and Gabriel Bourque. When Adam's Cape Breton Screaming Eagles were eliminated in the first round, he joined the Portland Pirates' playoff push, but only dressed for three games before they were also eliminated. In those three games, Adam managed to get on the scoresheet with two assists.

Just after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, Adam would begin training for his first season of professional hockey. He would start it off with a bang, scoring two goals and two assists on the opening night against Manchester on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>. By Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>, Adam was already making his NHL debut. His first NHL goal came on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>

, a game in which I

[audited](#)

in the PG Advised section. This was the first time I saw Adam play and witnessing the increase in the level of intensity after his goal was wonderful to see. It was clear to me that he could be a dominant player, but he wasn't quite there yet.

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As mentioned in the audit, Adam had developed chemistry with 25 year-old Mark Mancari, who had performed well in the AHL, but failed to stick in the NHL (after joining the AHL in 2005). With Buffalo facing injury trouble early in the season, both Mancari and Adam were called up together and sure enough, they skated on the same line. If you thought Adam's 6'2" 215 lb. frame was a bit intimidating, try adding Mancari's 6'4" 227 lb. frame on the wing. With Pominville just returning from concussion symptoms, it's no wonder this was the line Lindy Ruff slotted him on.

As the season progressed, both Mancari and Adam found themselves back in Portland where they continued to dominate. By season's end, Adam had strung together 16 multi-point games and an 11-game scoring streak from late February to late March. He finished with 62 points in 57 games and his counterpart Mancari, finished with 64 in 56 games.

While looking at Adam's progression, there are plenty of positives to look at. From a fantasy perspective though, we have to remember that Adam was merely a point-per-game player in the QMJHL only three years ago. He had one phenomenal QMJHL campaign and a pretty good AHL campaign with a couple cups of coffee, but he'll need to improve a few aspects before he is a fantasy relevant NHL player.

One statistic that stands out in a big way is his minus-six rating in 19 games. Over the course of an 82 game season, that's close to a minus-26 rating, which can turn a promising prospect into a Patrick O'Sullivan. Adam will need to learn the defensive game better and the best place for that will be in the AHL. Ideally, Adam would split about 30-35 games in the NHL with the remainder in the AHL for the coming season. Adam clearly could use more help developing his game, but if he continues to get NHL call-ups, the work ethic will rise and each time he is demoted, he would work that much harder to stick in the NHL.

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In the short term, he looks to be penciled in for third line duties when skating in Buffalo, but depending on well he adapts, he may have the tools to produce as a second-line center in two to three years. He drives the net well and has pretty good hands down low, but will need to improve his shot, his skating, and his defensive coverage before he can hold down second-line duties. For a power forward, those are fairly difficult areas to improve, so the safest bet is that Adam will be a third line center that occasionally fills in at second line duties.

This year Buffalo has seven UFA's and one RFA (Gerbe) at forward alone and that's after they just extended Stafford. On the blue line, they have four RFA's and one UFA, and in goal they have only Miller signed with Lalime and Enroth looking for extensions. Needless to say, it's going to be a busy offseason in Buffalo.

If the Sabres decide to throw some big money around, they could be in need of entry-level contracts stepping up, which could see Adam in the show next year. If that is the case, be cautious as a fantasy owner as he is still extremely raw. In a keeper league, Adam should stay buried in a prospect system for at least one year. It will be interesting to see how management decides to develop Adam, but if they do it right, he could approach the 50-point-plateau in 2012-13. He's worked hard to get as far as he is now, but he's going to have to work even harder to reach 60-65 points and he won't hit that until 2013-14 at the earliest.