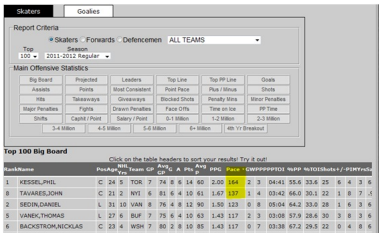
As most teams have played six or seven games and the rust has shaken off, we are starting to see who is performing up to standards and who is either exceeding or falling short of our expectations. Although most expected an improvement, New York Islanders captain John Tavares is one of those players exceeding our expectations early. In fact, the only person scoring at a higher pace in the NHL right now is Toronto sniper Phil Kessel (Kessel is on pace to score 164 points while Tavares is on pace to score 137
).

Tavares, who joined the lowly Islanders immediately after being drafted first overall in 2009,

scored a respectable 54 points in his rookie campaign, followed by a 67-point effort a year ago. Now entering his third NHL season, people are wondering just how good he will be. Tavares has yet to break the 30-goal barrier, but has averaged 26.5 goals per year in his limited career. Before entering the NHL, Tavares tallied 45, 72, 40, and 58 goals respectively in his four years in the OHL, while breaking Wayne Gretzky's record of 70 goals in one OHL season along the way. While his great vision led to a 29-goal, 38-assist campaign a year ago, Tavares is a gifted goal scorer, who should have little trouble reaching the 30-goal mark this season.



In his rookie campaign, Tavares had 186 shots with a 12.9% shooting percentage. John followed that up with 243 shots at an 11.9% success rate. This year, he's shooting even more and is on pace for 300 shots on goal. If Tavares does manage to crank out a 300-shot season with a 12.5% shooting percentage, the result would be a 38-goal season. It's early, but that is pretty encouraging for Tavares owners. Last year, 38 goals would have been the sixth-highest total in the league.

In terms of Tavares' linemates, we all know the P.A Parenteau story. Okposo was injured early last season, opening the door for Parenteau to skate with Tavares, and P.A. never looked back. Heading into 2011-12, Okposo owners were hoping for Parenteau to finally be taken off the Tavares and Moulson line, giving Okposo the top-line position that seemed to be all but guaranteed to Okposo just 13 months ago. So far, that does not appear to be a likely scenario.

The Moulson-Tavares-Parenteau line has been rock solid for the 3-3 Islanders. Moulson and Tavares are both gifted goal scorers, while Parenteau is proving himself to be a more-than-capable setup man. Through only six games, Parenteau has a goal and seven assists, while Tavares is boasting six goals and four assists. The line is averaging 17-18 minutes a game and is providing just about all of the offense in Long Island. Moulson has only four points, but the chemistry of the line is unmistakable. Don't fix what's not broken is the approach most coaches take when they see this type of success, and it is very unlikely this line is broken up any time soon.

GM Garth Snow has proven to be a savvy leader for this Islanders organization, and one great move was to ink Tavares to a six-year extension at a $5.5M cap hit before the season started. With $2.2 million on the books to Alexei Yashin for the next four years and $4.5 million committed to DiPietro through 2021, Snow has to be smart with his money. While it's unlikely that Tavares has a 91-point season like Stamkos (who had the privilege of skating with former Hart winner Martin St. Louis), Snow wanted to be absolutely certain to avoid what the Lightning went through with "Stammergeddon," which eventually led to a five-year contract at a cap hit of $2 million more than Tavares' contract.

Tavares is almost guaranteed to have a career year and is starting the season off with a bang. In the short term, if the Islanders continue to keep the Moulson-Tavares-Parenteau line intact, all three players are worth a spot on your fantasy roster. If Moulson or Parenteau are injured, Grabner and Okposo are very solid players who should not slow Tavares' production down at all. Long term, the Islanders are committing their money wisely and not overspending. Parenteau is a free agent after this season and if he is not brought back, the Islanders still have a very appealing crop of talent ready to emerge. Whether you're in a one-year league or a keeper league, Tavares is a great player to own and is just beginning to show what he is capable of doing at the NHL level.