It's no surprise that the Tampa Bay Lightning are strong second half performers, as a team. More specifically, Martin St. Louis and Steven Stamkos, who are usually paired together, really pave the way for significant fantasy outputs. This year there's something a little different going on in Tampa though. Sure, the team is poised for another strong late season push, but this time St. Louis and Stamkos are split apart. Let's take a look at the net result.

First, we'll look at Steven Stamkos. Heading into the first week of January, Stamkos was sixth in the league in points, scoring 45 points in 40 games (1.13 points/game). He was also shooting 3.5 shots per game (285-shot pace). From January 8th and on, Stamkos has 17 points in 15 games (1.13 points/game). His shots are up slightly, shooting 3.7 per game or a 306-shot pace, but the points are near identical.

Stamkos has recently been spotted skating without Martin St. Louis, and instead lining up with Steve Downie and Teddy Purcell. What has the effect been? Steve Downie has nine points in his last 11 games and Purcell has 11 in his last 12 games. Clearly, the offense is spreading in Tampa Bay. Stamkos is still primed for that second half surge, but there are others who are benefitting from it as well.

On the other side of the coin, Martin St. Louis must not have liked the fact that his name was left off the All Star roster this year. Leading up to the first week of January, St. Louis was scoring at a respectable 73-point pace (0.89 points per game), which was 57th most in the league. Since then, St. Louis has been on fire, scoring 19 points in his next 15 games (tied for 2nd-most in the league) and more importantly, on pace for 104 points during that stretch. St. Louis' shots per game have actually decreased, but he is already starting his second half run.

What has been the net result of St. Louis' production increase? Just as with Stamkos, St. Louis' linemates are seeing a surge. This time, St. Louis is skating with a familiar old friend in Vinny Lecavalier, and the third wheel has been rotating between Tom Pyatt, Ryan Shannon, and Brett Connolly, among others. Lecavalier is certainly seeing the biggest boost though, as prior to being reunited with MSL, Vinny had only 28 points in 40 games (0.7 points/game and a 57-point average). Since the change, Lecavalier is back among the league leaders, scoring 17 points over his next 15 games and being tied with Stamkos (and Erat) for the sixth-most in the league.

At the end of the day, Steven Stamkos has maintained his dominant play, despite being paired with new linemates. Eventually, when he catches his second half fire, not only will he reap the benefits, but so will his linemates – which currently appear to be Steve Downie and Teddy Purcell. Martin St. Louis has already begun his surge and Vincent Lecavalier is cashing in.

Whoever ends up being the third wheel on this line will certainly be worth a flier down the stretch, so keep an eye on the situation to see who eventually “clicks.”

Why am I telling you all of this? Some of you may be in keeper leagues. Some of you may be in one year leagues. Roto. Head to head. Whatever it may be, your trade deadline is likely rapidly approaching. If you’re in a one-year league, the Tampa players above should be on your radar to push for a title. If you’re in a keeper league, you should know that players like Martin St. Louis and Vincent Lecavalier will likely make excellent playoff “rentals,” but their reliability for the entire 2012-13 season might not line up with their current value. Similarly, Steve Downie and Teddy Purcell might be available cheap when we know the odds are strong they’ll be valuable fantasy assets over the next two months.

My goal is that whatever league you’re in, this article has helped you better understand the value of the top Tampa Bay forwards as you consider tweaking your fantasy roster in the upcoming weeks. Feel free to post your questions or comments below.