As the regular season closed on Saturday, fantasy GM's focus shifts to the next season. Most fantasy pools are over and we revert back to being a fan of the game of hockey – watching for enjoyment rather than focusing on every single statistic and how that might relate to our fantasy rosters. But each year we can find fantasy relevance in the postseason games. Some players emerge for the first time while others re-kindle their fantasy relevance or break out into another level. Let's look at some players to watch in each of the four Eastern Conference playoff series.

NY Rangers (1) vs. Ottawa Senators (8)

Carl Hagelin – The Rangers are the top seed in the East and this rookie is still skating on Brad Richards and Marian Gaborik's line. So essentially, the 23 year old Swedish rookie is skating on the best line for the best team in the Eastern Conference. Forget about his 38 points in 64 games. Hagelin is in a prime position to really make a name for himself.

Derek Stepan – Stepan plays a similar game to SJ's Joe Pavelski . They also just so happened to spend two years at the University of Wisconsin before turning pro. Stepan has actually progressed a little quicker than Pavelski. In 2008, "Little Joe" was just coming off a 40-point campaign when he rattled off nine points in 13 playoff games, opening a few eyes. He followed that up with a 59-point season in 2008-09. Will Stepan take the next step forward in this year's postseason?

Tim Erixon – Erixon might not be part of the Rangers' Game One roster, but let's face it – injuries happen. He was expected to be pushing for a spot on the Rangers' squad right out of training camp, but he was unable to stick. He took advantage of his time in the AHL, leading the blue liners in scoring (33 points), despite playing 15 games less than the next defenseman (32 points).

Kyle Turris – Turris ended the season in a positive way, scoring nine points in seven games. The tricky thing is that eight of those came in three games, showing that the young forward still is showing signs of inconsistency. While it's unlikely he'll completely round out his game in one postseason, he will be making his second postseason appearance. His last appearance lasted only four games in Phoenix, but Turris scored three points and looked impressive in that stretch. Perhaps he can turn a few heads this time around in Ottawa.

Nick Foligno – This year, Foligno more than doubled any penalty minute output from any of his previous NHL seasons. Is that a good or a bad thing? Well he also added a career high point total with 47 and he's entering the postseason skating with Turris and Alfredsson. The opportunity is there to raise his personal stock even higher.

Other notables: Ryan McDonagh (NYR), Colin Greening (OTT), Jared Cowen (OTT).

Boston Bruins (2) vs. Washington Capitals (7)

Rich Peverley – While Peverley had only 42 points this year, he did it in only 57 games, which shows that he still has a scoring touch in his game (or playmaker's touch as most of his points

were assists). With Horton out and “unlikely” for postseason action, Peverley has found himself skating with David Krejci and Milan Lucic .

Jordan Caron – Angus and I have been talking up Caron for the last year or so. He is only 21 years old and wrapping up his second NHL season, but he could very well be positioned to be a key player for the Bruins this spring. Caron has mostly been skating on a checking line, but he has a scoring touch to his game. In his last season in the QMJHL, Caron scored 18 points in 11 playoff games and he has shown spurts of offense in his limited professional exposure. Depth scoring is always critical in the postseason and Caron might be the guy to bring it for Boston.

Marcus Johansson – With Backstrom out for half the season, Johansson’s ice time rose over two full minutes from the previous season. There are parts of his game that he is still figuring out though (for example his SOG was lower by 12 this season despite playing 11 more games). Regardless, Johansson has a bright future for the Caps and with Backstrom back in the lineup, there will be less pressure for Johansson, which might translate into a mini-breakout. He has been shuffled around many different positions and lines, but will do whatever it takes for his team to win. Think of a less aggressive, but more talented R.J. Umberger from the 2008 Flyers.

Joel Ward – Ward has never scored more than 35 points in an NHL season and he was only able to muster 18 points this season, but will that all change in the playoffs? Just last postseason he scored 13 points in 12 games after only scoring 29 points in 80 regular season games. Can he do it again?

John Carlson – Carlson had 32 points in 82 games, a slight decrease from last season. However, his average ice time (21:52) is second overall on the team. It was likely difficult with Mike Green out of the lineup for so long and as a result, Carlson was called upon heavily. Unfortunately, he ended up -15 on the season, but has more recently been paired with Karl Alzner (who was a +12) to balance the shortcomings in his own zone. It will only be a matter of time before Carlson truly kicks into that next gear and this year's playoffs may be just that time.

Other notables: Chris Kelly (BOS), Joe Corvo (BOS), Anton Khudobin (BOS), Dmitri Orlov (WSH), Troy Brouwer (WSH).

Florida Panthers (3) vs. New Jersey Devils (6)

Kris Versteeg – Versteeg broke out early, but quickly fizzled in the minds of fantasy owners after a stretch of only one point in 13 games toward the end of the season. However, despite his team losing four of its last five games, Versteeg may have turned things back around, scoring five points in that stretch. Consistency has been one of the biggest criticisms in Versteeg's game and he'll have the opportunity to show that his team can (or cannot) rely on him when needed most.

Mikael Samuelsson – Samuelsson is a tested veteran with a Stanley Cup ring and an Olympic gold medal on his resume. After an early season injury and a trade to Florida, Samuelsson has lost just about all fantasy relevance, but will have the opportunity to show that he can still contribute.

Travis Zajac – It's tough coming back from an injury that's kept you out the majority of the season. Even tougher when you come back too early, like in Zajac's case. But let's not forget that Zajac was a huge part of why Zach Parise became Zach Parise a few years ago. Without the chemistry of another elite player, you're simply Rick Nash. As a Zajac owner, I am not expecting dividends until next season (after Zajac has an entire offseason to regroup), but it's hard not to get excited about the fact that he is skating with Kovalchuk and Parise.

Adam Larsson – Although Larsson had only 18 points in his rookie campaign, he was consistently improving. Actually, his 18 points led all Devils' blue liners and his average time on ice was above 20 minutes all season – fifth most on the team and third most among defensemen. Zidlicky has stepped in as the top D in Jersey, but Larsson will certainly have opportunities to elevate his game.

Other notables: Dmitry Kulikov (FLA), Wojtek Wolski (FLA), Shawn Matthias (FLA), David Clarkson (NJ), Petr Sykora

(NJ),
Mark Fayne
(NJ).

Pittsburgh Penguins (4) vs. Philadelphia Flyers (5)

Tyler Kennedy – Kennedy has turned into a decent depth player, but it's easy to skim past his name when seeing only 33 points on the season and knowing that he is not skating with Crosby or Malkin. The thing that gets missed though is that Kennedy had 33 points in 60 games (not 80+) and that despite playing only 14:19 per game, he was on pace for 267 shots on goal. That would have been third on the team behind Malkin and Neal if Kennedy were able to play a full 82 games. Lastly, Kennedy fired 21 shots on goal in the five games against the Flyers this year, by far the most amount of shots he had against any team.

Jordan Staal – Despite playing in only 62 games, Staal managed to score 50 points this season, a career high (barely). Staal had twice reached the 49-mark, though both times it took him a full 82 games to do so. If Dan Bylsma continues to keep the Crosby-Malkin-Kunitz line intact, the Pens will need some secondary scoring and Staal will be the most likely candidate to contribute.

Brayden Schenn – It took Schenn a little while to get going in his first full NHL season and although the stats might not reflect it, Schenn is definitely improving. For one thing, despite having only 12 goals on the season, three of them were game winners, showing signs that he can be a reliable player when the team needs him most. The other positive sign is that when Claude Giroux was held out of the final regular season game to nurse an upper body injury, Schenn was the one who got the call to fill in between Hartnell and Jagr. While Schenn isn't a player who can replace Giroux, he could be a big player for Philadelphia this postseason.

Jakub Voracek – While Voracek has not turned into a first line player, he has consistently provided offense (even if it's not on the scoresheet) in the second half of the season. His speed creates opportunities for everyone on his line and he has also shown a knack for finding the back of the net. If there is an injury to any of the top-six forwards, Voracek may just have the opportunity to show how far he can elevate his game.

Other notables: Steve Sullivan (PIT), Paul Martin (PIT), Sean Couturier (PHI), Eric Wellwood (PHI), Matt Carle (PHI).

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