

Bust a Move - Eastern Style

Written by Russ Miller

Thursday, 09 December 2010 12:28 - Last Updated Thursday, 09 December 2010 18:57



Following my Western counterparts lead this week, we'll take a look at the Eastern Conference in the search for big busts. I will also give you my take on what the balance of the season might hold for them.

Atlanta

Fantasy-wise, many Thrashers are doing better than expected. On the bust front, **Zach Bogosian** has five points in 22 games, which has him on a 16 point pace. Most of us thought he would at

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least double that this season. As disappointing as Bogosian has been,

Ron Hainsey

has been absolutely horrid. Only two points in 28 games?

View from the Edge: Okay, with the arrival of Dustin Byfuglien, the writing may have been on the wall for Hainsey, but he averaged 33 points in the previous four seasons and is on pace for only five points. He'll finish with no more than 15 points. Most poolies will consider Bogosian a bust this season due to greater expectations. The 20-year-old will need an injury to either Tobias Enstrom or the aforementioned Byfuglien to produce more than 25 points this season.

Boston

Not much negativity on the Bruins this season. You knew on draft day that Marc Savard would likely be out for an extended period. Sure Patrice Bergeron could be doing better than his projected 43 points and maybe rookie Tyler Seguin could be closer to Taylor Hall's 15 points than his own not so perfect 10. The real disappointment for fantasy owners is the re-emergence of Tim Thomas. That is only if you own the young **Tuukka Rask** who has started only seven out of a possible 26 games. Rask has a 1-6-1 record with a 2.59 goals-against-average and 0.926 save percentage, but that pales in comparison to his veteran crease-mate's 14-2-0 record, 1.49 goals-against-average and unreal 0.955 save percentage.

View from the Edge: Thomas will turn 37-years-old in April. He should fall off the pace as the

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season progresses, opening the door for Rask to potentially fulfill what many thought was his at the end of last season - the number one designation.

Buffalo

There are many candidates in this herd of Buffalo droppings. Literally the biggest might be not so super sophomore **Tyler Myers**. He has exactly one point in his last nine games and is on pace for 25 points this season, nearly half of what he had in his rookie campaign. For some,

Ryan Miller

has not done enough with only nine wins in the team's first 28 games. Miller's average draft position according to Yahoo was 6.7.

Jason Pominville

is on pace for a measly 26 points, but he may be showing signs of shaking his slump with three points in his last four games.

View from the Edge: Myers is still receiving a decent amount of power play time as well as the second most overall ice time on the team. Last season, he had ten points in 14 January games and 14 points in 16 contests in the month of March. Last year's Vezina Trophy winner has a very similar goals-against-average and save percentage to last season, so his 25 win pace is all about the team he plays for. Unless the team can turn it around dramatically, look for Miller to finish just north of 30 wins. Pominville has averaged 82 games and 69 points over his last four seasons. Last year, he scored a combined 22 points in 23 games in February and March.

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Carolina

Since coming over in a trade from Calgary, **Ian White** has three points in eight games with the Hurricanes. He is stuck behind Joni Pitkanen and Joe Corvo for top power play minutes. The writing was on the wall for **Jamie McBain** heading into this season. The Hurricanes brought back Corvo and Anton Babchuk, two offensive-minded defensemen. That muddies up the (ice-)water for the promising McBain. He is on pace for only 18 points after recording 10 points in 14 games at the end of last year.

View from the Edge: White will continue receiving top four ice time, but fall short with the man advantage. He'll start to feel more comfortable as the year progresses and finish with close to 35 points. Short of an injury to Pitkanen or Corvo, and maybe even White, McBain will struggle to put up fantasy-worthy numbers this season.

Florida

After putting up back-to-back 60 and 61 point seasons, **Stephen Weiss** owners have to be unhappy about his 41point pace. In the soon to be 37-year-old

Cory Stillman

's two previous seasons, he scored at 0.64 and 0.78 points-per-game rate. This year's 0.4 pace is simply bad.

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View from the Edge: You didn't expect much offense from the Panthers this year, especially after dealing one of their top guns (Nathan Horton) to the Bruins for a defenseman. Weiss could score at a better pace, but this is an offensively-challenged team, so don't expect a turnaround and you won't be disappointed. If you are still holding Stillman, you must be in a very deep league as well as a glass half full kind of guy.

Montreal

Three players stand out as letting down their fantasy owners. I was surprised to learn that not counting last season's 45 games, **Andrei Markov** has averaged 79 games over the three preceding years. Rookie defender **P.K.**

Subban

has nine points in 25 games and has been a healthy scratch of late. Inconsistency is the trademark of rookies, so we really shouldn't be too surprised. After 27 games,

Scott Gomez

is on pace for an under-whelming 25 points. Fans need to get past the fact that he is grossly overpaid regardless of how many points he puts up. He'll never live up to his salary.

View from the Edge: The only question left this year for Markov is, do you keep him for next year? I would, primarily because in those three healthy seasons prior to last season, he averaged 57 points. Subban set the expectation bar high with his eight points in 14 playoff games (47 point pace) performance last year. He definitely has the talent to see that pace

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through an entire season, but he is still only a 21-year-old rookie. His stint in the press box should motivate him and hopefully help him rediscover his playoff pace.

Not including his big 84 point year, Gomez recorded seasons of 59, 58, 70 and 60 points. From February last year until the end of the regular season, he scored 24 points in 26 games. It's not like the Habs have many other options.

New Jersey

Without question, the biggest bust this season is **Ilya Kovalchuk** and the entire New Jersey organization. The team is dead last in goal scoring, averaging a miniscule 1.78 goals per game, which might get you a few wins, but as many of you have pointed out in the forums,

Martin Brodeur

hasn't exactly been in Vezina form over the last couple of seasons. The numbers are staggering for Kovalchuk. In his eight NHL seasons, he's recorded 40 goals four times, 50 goals twice, 38 goals once and 29 goals in a 65 game rookie year (a 37 goal pace). If you take away his New Jersey games, for every 82 games, he has averaged 45 goals and 85 points. He is on pace for 15 goals and 33 points this year. Martin Brodeur has lost a little lustre over the last couple of seasons or could it just be that this is the worst Devils team he has played behind? Brodeur has four wins in 16 starts, yet his 2.74 goals-against-average and 0.901 are not horrendous. A little support is needed.

Travis Zajac

is on pace for the same 33 points that Kovalchuk is on. After back-to-back seasons of 67 and 62 points, more was expected.

View from the Edge: I've got to believe that Kovalchuk's career numbers mean something and

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that by the end of the year, he'll be at or very close to 40 goals. In non-salary cap keeper leagues, I would go hard after this guy. Brodeur hasn't recorded worse than a 0.916 save percentage or 2.41 goals-against average in any of the last four seasons. His numbers will pick up when (not if) the team does. Zajac obviously misses Zach Parise. It doesn't look like he'll be of much fantasy value until his linemate returns.

NY Islanders

Expectations weren't all that high for this year's edition of the fishsticks. The one guy who stands out as disappointing would be **Josh Bailey**. Currently in the minors, Bailey had only six points in 18 games before his demotion.

View from the Edge: Bailey, who turned 21 in October, has six points in six AHL games. If he can get rediscover his offensive mojo in the minors, he can score at a 35-40 point pace the rest of the way.

NY Rangers

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Last season, **Michael Del Zotto** was a revelation, finishing with 37 points in his rookie season. This year, he is on pace for only 21 points. On a positive (sort of) note, he is only a minus-2. Last season, he ended the year minus-20, eighth worst in the entire league.

Alexander Frolov

averaged 62 points a season over the last four years with Los Angeles. He's on pace for less than half that.

View from the Edge: Del Zotto receives the most power play ice time on the team and top four minutes. The offense is there, but because he is trying to play more responsibly in his own end, he'll have to get a good portion of his points with the man advantage. Frolov is pointless in his last eight matches and has one point in his last 12 games. He sits tenth in average power play time and only receives 14:28 of ice time per game. On the positive side, over the last 10 games, he has spent the majority of his shifts with Marian Gaborik and Derek Stepan. Oh wait, read the previous sentence, that may not be making his case any stronger. Obviously he has talent, but the Big Apple may not be the best fit for the 28-year-old Frolov.

Ottawa

I had Erik Karlsson down as maybe a bust so far this year, but he's on pace for 37 points. How much more do we expect from a 20-year-old undersized defenseman? Alexei Kovalev could be permanently on this list, but really we should have expected this from him. More was expected out of Daniel Alfredsson, but he is about to turn 38-years-old, so it wasn't unreasonable for his numbers to take a down turn from the expected 70 points. The real bad guy to own on the Senators has been **Jason Spezza**. His 47 point pace isn't a very good return for an average Yahoo draft pick of 30.5.

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View from the Edge: Spezza had 57 points in 60 games last year and averaged 85.5 points over the previous four seasons. There is something wrong with this version of the Sens, but there is hope; he finished last season off with 38 points in his last 30 games.

Philadelphia

I was baffled when the Flyers signed **Nikolay Zherdev**, weren't they already one of the deeper teams at forward already? His 27 point pace is even lower than what I thought he would record, especially considering that Philadelphia leads the entire league in goals. He's bounced around many different line combinations, but has yet to find one that fits.

Dan Carcillo

was supposed to be a 20 point, 200 penalty minute guy. His current pace of eight points and 179 minutes is not what his owners expected.

View from the Edge: In Zherdev's last two NHL seasons, he registered 58 and 61 points. He's talented, but not fitting in. He is getting the tenth most average time on ice amongst Flyer forwards and only averages one minute with the man advantage. Zherdev might end up being showcased for a trade, which will ultimately help his value. Carcillo averaged 11:14 in ice time last season, this year he is only receiving 7:35 per game. Not exactly encouraging.

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Pittsburgh

Evgeni Malkin is on pace for 66 points! This is a guy who two seasons ago won the Art Ross with 113 points and followed that up with a Conn Smythe winning playoff, recording 36 points in 24 games. Many people, including myself, thought that **Mike Comrie** signing with the Pens was a brilliant career move. Surely he would hit at least the 40 point mark playing with either Malkin or Sidney Crosby, right? Not so fast though, Comrie is on pace for 21 points.

View from the Edge: If Malkin's current owner is willing to discuss a deal, you should really try and accommodate him. I realize it doesn't look good at the moment, but this guy can really bring it when he's on. Comrie has most recently been playing with Craig Adams and Michael Rupp, not exactly conducive to putting up big point totals. He'll likely get more chances to play with the big guns, either due to someone else slumping or injuries. He has the talent to run with it if he can figure out how to mesh with either of the two big guns.

Tampa Bay

How Tampa has 15 wins with the terrible tandem of **Dan Ellis** and **Mike Smith** is beyond me. Ellis has started 14 games, sports a 7-4-3 record, 3.15 goals-against-average and nifty 0.880 save percentage. Mike Smith has a better record at 8-5-0, but is worse with a

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goals-against-average of 3.57 and 0.870 save percentage in 13 starts. In

Pavel Kubina

's last three seasons, he has recorded 38, 40 and 40 points. He is currently on pace for half those points. Before

Vincent Lecavalier

got injured, he had nine points in 14 games, a 53 point pace. That's well off the 70 points he should have as a minimum.

View from the Edge: Both of Tampa's goaltenders have been playing like a backup. I could envision General Manager Steve Yzerman making a deal to bring in a legitimate number one or at least a guy with top potential. Neither of these clowns are getting the job done. Kubina only gets mop up power play minutes, don't look for a marked improvement over the rest of the season. Lecavalier could be back in one to two weeks, but is it just more of the same from him? Right now, it's difficult to see the former 108 point player scoring at more than a 70 point pace.

Toronto

Injury or not, **Dion Phaneuf** has rapidly been losing his value as a fantasy asset. With four points in 11 games this year, he'll need to step it up offensively to warrant his former fantasy stud label. After recording 27 points in 37 games last season, the bar was set fairly high for

Tyler Bozak

, so his projected 27 points in 82 games is more than a little underwhelming.

Phil Kessel

was expected to lead the Maple Leafs offensively, so for him to be sitting fourth in team scoring is not encouraging. He is on pace for 48 points.

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View from the Edge: Phaneuf could return as early as tonight. This is a guy who stepped right into the NHL and scored 49, 50, 60 and 47 points prior to last year's debacle. Don't count on more than a 50 point pace from here on out this season. Bozak has three points in his last five games and continues to receive plenty of top opportunities on the power play and first line. In his last two seasons, Kessel has recorded 55 and 60 points. He is the go to guy in Toronto, but he could use some help, especially down the middle. If Toronto can address this deficiency, Kessel has the skills to explode offensively.

Washington

Most observers would not classify **Alexander Ovechkin** as a bust so far this season, but he was very likely the first or at worst second overall selection in everyone's drafts. OV is on pace for a career low 33 goals as well as 98 points.

Mike Green

has one point in his last nine games and is on pace for a lowly 44 points.

Mike Knuble

is on pace for 33 points. For a guy who is supposed to be a top six player on this offensive juggernaut, that's disappointing. I know some of you out there drafted

Jeff Schultz

for his league leading plus/minus total last season (plus-50). He was on pace for a meager 14 points after recording 23 points last year, but the kicker is his plus-5 is nowhere near what some expected.

View from the Edge: Ovechkin has averaged 57 goals and 110 points over the last three seasons. Look for the GR8 to pick it up in the goal scoring department very soon. The Green Machine is ripe for the plucking if his current owner is down on him. His point totals will soon

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explode as his last two seasons will attest (76 and 73 points). Get him now. Knuble logs nearly 17 minutes of ice time and second unit power play time. He's averaged 55 points over each of the last five seasons. Look for him to pick up the pace a little. Prior to last season's plus-50, Schultz was a plus-13 and plus-12. Never rely on those finicky statistics like plus/minus, they are very difficult to predict from season to season.

A Fleury of W's

Remember back as late as mid-November, all the griping and moaning about how poorly Marc-Andre Fleury was playing? Yeah, he's won 10 consecutive starts (thanks Sidney!) and allowed more than two goals against in only one contest during this run. He's now 12-6-1 with a 2.33 goals-against-average and a 0.912 save percentage. It pays to be on a good team.

Thursday Trivia Time

What two NHL General Managers were fired before their teams even played a single game with them in charge? Again, please refrain from simply using Google to find the answer and posting right away, try and let those who want to guess do so.