

## Atlantic Division Picks to Click

Written by Russell Miller

Tuesday, 05 June 2007 15:39 - Last Updated Saturday, 09 June 2007 05:16

---

Now that we've had some time to analyze the fallout from the regular season, here are some players from the Atlantic Division teams who could be primed for a jump in their numbers next season:

**NYI** – Defenseman Marc-Andre Bergeron appears to have found a home on the Island. Before the trade, he had 25 points in 55 games, which would equal 37 points if he played all 82 games. After the trade, Bergeron went 23-6-15-21, on pace for a 75-point season. It is unlikely that he can sustain that pace, but somehow 60 points doesn't seem like a stretch. Most poolies will look at the 78-14-32-46 season totals and mark him down for 50 points next year.

There are still lots of Yashin bashers out there – you know who you are. His numbers this past season were pretty good 58-18-32-50. He was on pace for 70 points had he not been injured. Ted Nolan had him playing his best hockey in the last five years, though the way his season ended, there is some risk involved. Depending on how his relationship with Nolan goes, 65-70 points is achievable. He's played in 78 games or more in 8 of 11 seasons, not counting the lockout season where he played in 47 of the 48 games. His durability isn't in question, it's his motivation. He'll have far more potential to score 70 points next season than many of the other players available when you pluck him in the middle rounds of your draft. Don't let your dislike for "Cashin" spoil the chance to win your pool.

**PIT** – It's not easy to find a sleeper pick on this young offensive team. The closest thing might be Jordan Staal. He was 81-29-13-42 and was a team leading plus-16 as an 18 year old. He only had six points on the power play. Next season he should be able to balance out his goals and assists and score somewhere between 55-60 points. After that who knows? Go get this kid now before everyone else realizes how good he is going to be.

**PHI** – Last season was a learning experience for Jeff Carter. He managed to put up 62-14-23-37 (49 over a full season). He should be in line for 55-60 points next season as long as Philly goes out and gets a No.1 centre. That would ease the pressure and allow Carter to develop at his own pace. He's close to a breakthrough year.

I'm thinking Scottie Upshall was pretty happy to be traded from a contending Nashville team to

## Atlantic Division Picks to Click

Written by Russell Miller

Tuesday, 05 June 2007 15:39 - Last Updated Saturday, 09 June 2007 05:16

---

the lowly Flyers. He was 14-2-1-3 with 27 shots before the trade and he went 18-6-7-13 with an amazing 60 shots on goal after the deal. If he kept that pace for an entire season, he would have scored 59 points and taken an incredible 273 shots, tying him for 15th overall in the NHL in shots on goal. While he won't maintain that pace, 40 points with potential for more would make a nice late selection in most drafts.

**NYR** – Sean Avery. Love him or hate him, there's usually no in between. What people are finding out is that Avery can also put up some decent numbers. He posted 29-8-12-20 (56 points over a full season) after his trade to the Rangers. I think the Rangers and the restricted free agent will come to an agreement fairly quickly as he seemed to fit in very well on this team. He's shown steady upward points totals in the NHL with seasons of 28, 39 and 48 points. Look for about 55 points and just under 200 penalty minutes next season, making him an absolute stud in pools that reward penalty minutes.

Last year was not a very good year for Paul Mara (78-5-18-23). After consecutive seasons of 47 and 42 points with Phoenix, a 23-point effort had to be considered disappointing. Provided he gets time on the Rangers power play, Mara has the potential to double his points from last season.

**NJ** – Brian Gionta was on pace to score about 60 points (62-25-20-45), almost 30 points less than the previous campaign. If all goes well next season, he could get 75 pts. There is at least one reason to be cautious. If the Devils lose Gomez to free agency, then the chemistry of the EGG line will be gone (scrambled?). New Jersey would need to find a centre with comparable set up skills.

Regardless of where Scott Gomez ends up signing, he has to do better than 60 points. He had 84 and 70 points the two previous years. Gomez is too talented. He'll rebound and score no less than 75 points and could go much higher if he ends up on a more offensive minded team.

*Russell Miller's insights can frequently be found in the DobberHockey forum under the handle &quot;The Commish&quot;*