

## Firing On All Cylinders

Written by Tim Lucarelli

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This past week I reached on twitter out to ask who you wanted to read about. The winner was 5'9" Brad Marchand of the Boston Bruins. The 23-year-old rookie has impressed the hockey world most recently with his strong play in the postseason and will fight for his first Stanley Cup in a few short days.

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Drafted 71<sup>st</sup> overall in the 2006 Entry Draft, Marchand was merely a point-per-game player in the QMJHL. After his draft year, Brad would do what many others would – take the added confidence and elevate his game. In the 2006-07 season, Marchand scored 80 points in 57 games and even added 108 penalty minutes. Of his 33 goals, three were shorthanded and six were game-winners. He would follow that season up with 73 points in 59 games, while splitting between Val-d'Or and Halifax. Of his 31 goals, four were shorthanded and seven were game-winners.

In the first two years after being drafted, not only did Marchand increase his point production in the QMJHL, he also had the privilege of representing his country in the under-20 World Juniors. He would score only two goals in his first year followed by four goals and two assists the next, a year in which he was also named alternate captain on a team that featured Turris, Tavares, Giroux, and Stamkos. Brad and his teammates would strike gold both tournaments.

Although Marchand had signed his entry-level contract in 2007, he didn't make the Bruins out of camp and was forced to skate another year in the Q. Entering the 2008-09 season, the 20 year-old was ready to start his professional career and hope to build on his success. Many players have thrived at the QMJHL level only to flop in the professional leagues so this would be no easy task. Marchand would play admirably for Providence however, scoring 59 points in 79 games and adding 15 more in 16 playoff games.

Now 21 years old, Marchand had the Bruins full attention. He would start the year in Providence, but by October 21<sup>st</sup>, he was already called back up and skating in his first NHL game. Brad would register a primary assist that night on a goal by Michael Ryder, but he was unable to score a point in the following 11 matchups. In mid-November, Marchand was sent back to Providence, where he'd remain until March. Brad would not score another point the entire season and wouldn't see any time in the playoffs. While in the American league, he scored 32 points in 34 games, but in the National league, frustration had kicked in.

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From this point forward, most already know the story. Marchand sticks full time in 2010-11 and scores 41 points in 77 games, good enough for ninth overall in rookie scoring. His sound defensive play earned him a +25 rating, while he added 2 game-winning goals and five shorthanded. The season ends and Marchand makes sure each one of his postseason opponents know who he is by the time the series is over, scoring 12 points in 18 games and helping lead Boston to its first Stanley Cup Final appearance since 1990.

Marchand's impressive play has cemented him on the Bruins' second line with Bergeron and Recchi. Although Marchand is an RFA this year, Ryder (\$4m), Recchi (\$2m), and Kaberle (\$4.25m) are all UFA's and although Marc Savard has six years remaining on his contract, there's a strong chance his career is over. With the rest of the team fairly secure contractually, the Bruins should have enough money to re-sign Marchand and keep giving him plenty of ice time.

While Marchand does have ability, he isn't as offensively gifted as a Stamkos or Tavares. What Marchand does bring to the table though, is speed and vision. He reads the play extremely well and is always looking to pounce on a loose puck and bury his chances. Marchand tends to surprise his opponents and before they can figure out what happened, the puck is in the back of their own net. He is phenomenal at forcing turnovers, which is a perfect example of why he has so many shorthanded goals, a trait that is shared by Mike Richards.

In the right situation, Marchand could surprise fantasy owners and score 60-65 points, but that

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is not anywhere near standard for him. Instead, Marchand is going to float around the 45-55 point range, with a few shorthanded goals and game winners to add. Despite having a small frame, Marchand is known to be physical when his team needs him to be. He had 89 hits and 30 blocked shots last season if your league counts either of those stats. He is rather streaky at times and has the potential to be a Windex Wonder, but as long as Marchand continues to get second line minutes in Beantown, his production in multiple categories make him a player worth considering.