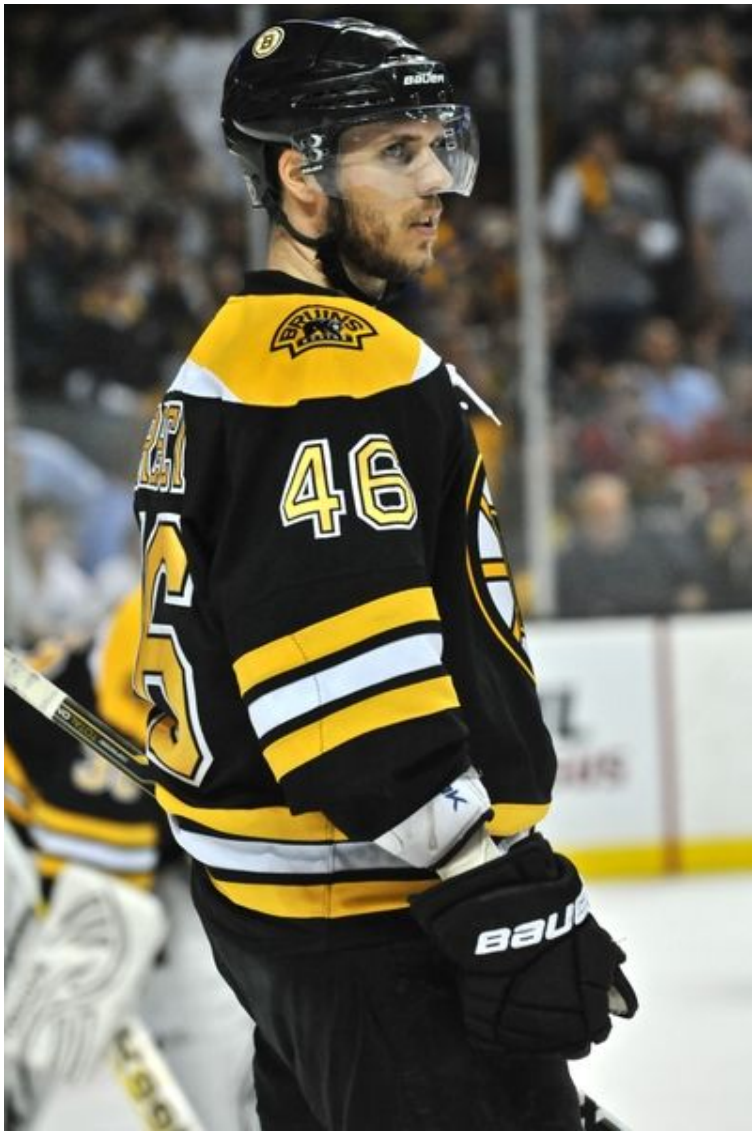

According to Yahoo's Player Ranker , most fantasy GM's have Krejci ranked 26th among centers. Although he will likely be facing a mild Stanley Cup-hangover, Krejci is entering his fifth full season in the NHL and is slated to line up as Boston's top-line pivot with all the developmental room in the world to blossom.

Krejci really started turning fantasy owners' heads in 2008-09 with a 73-point season at only 22 years of age. How impressive is that? A 73-point season last year would have tied him for 15th overall in NHL scoring with players like Kesler, Kane, Marleau, Vanek, Kopitar, and Eriksson. Not a bad list of company. Over the next two seasons however, Krejci would average only 57 points. Although that could be somewhat discouraging, there are certainly some positives to look at as we enter the coming season.

Although Krejci scored significantly fewer points in the last two years, both seasons featured a locker room distraction in Marc Savard. Now I love Savard and it's a travesty that his career is being cut short, but his attempts to return from injuries, then get knocked back out, then resume workouts, and fall back out had fed rumblings and debates about who should truly be Boston's top center. If healthy, I have no doubt in my mind this spot would belong to Savard. But that's not the world we live in. The world we live in has Savard sitting out the entire season and likely hanging up his skates for good.

This means that Krejci's only real competition for the top center role in Boston is Patrice Bergeron, a player with a bit of a concussion history of his own. While Bergeron did have a strong season and postseason, Krejci was the man who led the team in scoring in *both* the regular and post-season.

Krejci's postseason performance was likely the most impressive, where he totaled 23 points in 25 games, which is a 75-point pace over 82 games. In 2009-10, Daniel Briere was wrapping up a 53-point season when he caught lightning in a bottle scoring 30 points in 23 playoff games. Granted a lot of that can be attributed to the chemistry with his linemates, but it was clear Briere was re-energized. The result was a 15-point increase in the following season, despite an overcrowded offense in Philadelphia. Although Krejci hasn't shown that he has as high of a

ceiling as a player like Briere, he should still be very likely to continue his momentum into the coming season, but with much more ice time to go around.

Another thing to consider is that Krejci, who is actually the fourth-highest paid Bruins forward (fifth if you include Savard), is entering a contract year. This should be encouraging news to most fantasy owners because it tells you that opportunity *and* motivation should both be high.

The only Bruins forwards signed further than next season are Savard and Bergeron. While Krejci has the edge over Bergeron, it is important to note that Patrice is no slouch himself, scoring only five and three fewer points than Krejci in the regular and post-seasons, respectively. Not to worry though as Claude Julien is unlikely to break up the trio who formed last year's top line in Lucic, Krejci, and Horton. Krejci actually skated with these two wingers in 59% of his even-strength shifts last season, which is remarkable consistency.

This particular season will be rather interesting for Boston as they have 10 players with expiring contracts, including Rask, Boychuk, Corvo, Peverley, and Krejci. The good news is that they already have over $5 million in cap space with their current roster though (even including the bonuses from last year's Cup win), and there is likely some money that could be trimmed in the bottom six forwards. However the team decides to move forward, they shouldn't be handcuffed with their cap the way some other teams (Chicago, Philadelphia, etc.) have been.

As we look to the future, it is possible that one of Krejci or Bergeron would need to be moved to

accommodate for the emergence of Tyler Seguin. Since Bergeron carries a NTC for the next three years, we might see Krejci moved next summer or possibly signed to an offer sheet. For the coming year, Krejci certainly has the settings to improve upon last year's output and could be a top-10 center. If your counterparts are letting him slide, you might want to roll the dice.