Every season there are players who bounce back from an off year. Among the reasons - injuries, weaker linemates, being in a coach's doghouse, or just not a fit with a new team. Whatever the explanation, some players bounce back, some don't. Here are my top five candidates to mount a comeback in 2011-2012.

5. Sheldon Souray, Dallas Stars

After being first banished from the NHL and then bought out by the Edmonton Oilers, Souray is making a comeback in Dallas and says he his healthy and motivated to show he can still play. Now 35 years old, Souray is probably not going to be able to return to his glorious 50 points and 100-plus penalty minute days. However, if he can stay healthy he has the ability to be very successful and have considerable fantasy value. Souray has a lethal point shot and playing with

a set up partner on the power play like Alex Goligoski has a lot of potential. That duo could be formidable. Just signing an NHL contract has earned Souray comeback recognition, but he will only really have made a significant comeback if he can produce at least 35 points.

4. Vincent Lecavalier, Tampa Bay Lightning

Do I think Lecavalier will be able to get back to the 100-point level...no. But Lecavalier has been plagued by injuries for a few years now and if healthy a nice comeback is probable. Nineteen points in 18 playoff games after being reunited with Martin St. Louis, as well as 13 points in the final 10 regular season games seems to indicate he is both healthy and more than capable! Only 31 years old and surrounded by elite level offense (Steven Stamkos, St. Louis) look for Lecavalier to get back to the 75-80 point range.

3. Drew Doughty, Los Angeles Kings

After enjoying a phenomenal breakout sophomore season in 2009-10 in which Doughty scored 59 points and won Olympic gold playing for team Canada, Doughty struggled last year posting only 40 points in 76 games. Part of the problem was the concussion Doughty suffered that had him miss six games. However, a slow start and finish were real downers as well. He scored just seven points in his first 21 games and only three in his final 13. Currently Doughty is unsigned but no doubt will receive a big time contract from his childhood favorite team in Los Angeles and will be determined to prove he is worth it. The Kings added some significant help this off season as well bringing in Mike Richards in a deal with Philadelphia and signing free agent winger Simon Gagne. Entering his fourth season now, (often a season where players break out) Doughty is poised to return to an elite level and produce close to 60 points again. A Norris trophy nomination is a distinct possibility.

2. Niklas Backstrom, Washington Capitals

Backstrom suffered a disastrous point drop of 36 last seasons from his previous 101 in 09/10. While 65 points is very nice, playing on a line with Alex Ovechkin demands more. Already having shown that he could do more, the youngster should bounce back in a huge way. Backstrom may have been playing much of the season with a finger injury that caused him to miss five games. With offensive weapons like Alexander Semin, Mike Green, John Carlson, and Ovechkin, Backstrom should be able to produce another 90-100 point season in 2011/2012

1. Ilya Kovalchuk, New Jersey Devils

Last season was a disaster for New Jersey and Kovalchuk. The team's fortunes changed too little too late after switching coaches, but the change had a significant impact on Kovalchuk. He scored at a 71-point pace afterwards. In the first 12 games, Kovalchuk managed just six points and was a healthy scratch for a game. In the final 10 he scored nine points. Now with a fresh season and a healthy Zach Parise to provide offensive support, look for Kovalchuk to regain his prolific scoring ways and flirt with 80-90 points again, which is obviously a significant improvement from last season's 60-point nightmare for fantasy owners.

If you owned these players in a keeper league, last year was tough. Hopefully you were wise enough to hold onto these stars as you will be rewarded for your patience this year when they make their comeback. No sense in selling high. In fact, if you don't own them you should be "buying low"!

Honorable mentions to: Jason Spezza, Ottawa. Dany Heatley, Minnesota. Josh Harding, Minnesota.

Mike Green, Washington. Nik Antropov, Winnipeg.

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