

## Saturday's Picks - with Marty and Thunder

Written by Marty Kwiaton

Friday, 04 December 2009 19:00 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 December 2009 15:54

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Wawa, ON was quite rough on me and my selections a couple of weeks ago. Lesson learned, just like with a woman, alcohol hinders judgement when it comes to hockey. I am now back in the Bay, and Thunder's been getting antsy without making any picks for almost a month. I wish I could say that I've won \$1300, but I guess I just don't have the balls to send out anything more than a \$5 ticket. 14 games on tap for the weekend, let's see if we can get back to our winning ways.

**Vancouver Canucks @ Carolina Hurricanes**

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The Canes have still won five games all year, and the Leafs with their 8<sup>th</sup> victory just the other night are slowly pulling away. The only good news I have for Carolina is that all of their wins have come at home. The bad news is the Canucks have won six of their last eight games, and have also held their opponents to 2 goals or less in 6 of 8. That's music to the ears of Canucks fans. Burrows seems to be back on track with 8 pts. in his last 8, and Henrik leads the team with 14 goals, only 8 away from last years career high.

Pick: V

Thunder's Pick: V

### Edmonton Oilers @ Dallas Stars

Everyone has been hoping that Patrick O'Sullivan would step up his game in Edmonton and perhaps Thursday night was his first step in the right direction. The Oilers have struggled on the road this year, winning only 4 of 14 games while Dallas is 6-3-4 at home. The Stars have had some struggles defensively. Omitting their shutout over the Canes, they haven't surrendered fewer than 3 goals since a Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> game versus Detroit. Dallas' PP at home is over 23% while the Oilers have had a 26% success rate on the road. The Stars have won 2 straight on Saturday's and going for a 3<sup>rd</sup> while the Oilers are 1-5 this year.

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Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: T

### **St. Louis Blues @ Los Angeles Kings**

Backes, Kariya and Oshie seem to be getting it going again for the Blues offensively. 4 in 5, 3 in 3, and 5 in 4 respectively for the trio as of late, but the results in the standings have been disappointing thus far. As the struggling Blues offense seems to be slowly coming together it's the Kings that appear to be headed in the other direction. If teams knew that Ryan Smyth was the key to keep Kopitar in check (3 pts. in his last 9 games), perhaps some goon, named Alex Ovechkin, would have taken a run at him sooner. The Blues have given up the 2<sup>nd</sup> fewest GA on the road this season.

Pick: V

Thunder's Pick: H

### **Toronto Maple Leafs @ Boston Bruins**

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The B's are 6-0-1 in their last 7 and 8-1-3 in their last 12, with all the bodies coming back off the IR they seem to be ready to make another run at the Eastern Conference crown. The Leafs are looking to win 3 straight for the first time this season (have failed twice already, losing by three goals on each occasion). It's not like Montreal's "physical" play is going to wear down the Bruins the night before this matchup.

Pick: H+

Thunder's Pick: H

### Atlanta Thrashers @ Florida Panthers

Atlanta's 8-2-1 road record is third in the NHL behind only NJ and CGY. Kovalchuk finished the month of November with 15 pts. (in only 10 games), and R. Peverly leads the team with 26 pts. thru 24 games. On the other side of the ice N. Horton seems to be on pace for all those multi-category numbers we've all been talking about 24 pts. 28 PIM, and 56 SOG in 27 games. Unfortunately only 5 pts. so far on the PP, but as that improves he should be able to maintain a 70 pt. pace. The Panthers are 1-4-2 in their last 7 and without their top goaltender thanks to Keith Ballard.

Pick: V

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Thunder's Pick: H

### **Colorado Avalanche @ Columbus Blue Jackets**

Tyler Weiman has been recalled thanks to Keith Ballard injuring another goalie. With Budaj's less than stellar credentials, the kid could see a start this Saturday night vs. Columbus. The Avs are 3-6-4 in their last 13 games since their hot start to the season. Chris Stewart and Matt Duchene were ranked 1 and 2 over the past week in yahoo sports' rankings prior to Thursday's nights action. Columbus has also struggled as of late going 1-4-3 in their last 8 games. Despite Mason's atrocious 3.35 GAA he's 2-0 in his career versus the Avs with a .920 SV% and a 2.00 GAA, a stat line poolies would love to see in this one.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: V

### **Washington Capitals @ Philadelphia Flyers**

With the Habs playing Friday night, RDS has picked up this game for Saturday night, must be in part to francophone's Briere, Gagne, and Giroux. After ending the month of November with a

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1-5 record the Flyers opened December by being shut out at home by Luongo and the Canucks. With only 12 GF in their last 7 games and being shut out in back to back games the Flyers should get on the board, but will have a hard time keeping up with the Caps, winners of 4 straight and scoring 9 goals in 2 games versus the Flyers this season (1-0-1).

Pick: V

Thunder's Pick: V

## Detroit Red Wings @ New Jersey Devils

If the playoffs started today the Wings would be on the outside looking in. The Wings have been up and down this season after their offensive outburst with 19 goals in 3 games they followed that up scoring 5 goals in 6 games. Their PK on the road is last in the league at 67.6% (OUCH). Marty Brodeur is 3-0 with a 0.67 GAA, and has stopped 73 of 75 shots in the 2<sup>nd</sup> game of B2B situations. Could be a record setting night, and he couldn't do it against a more fitting team.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick:V

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### **NY Rangers @ Buffalo Sabres**

I'd like to start the Tyler Myers for the Calder bandwagon. No other team in the league has changed as little as placing a 19 year old on the blueline and letting him log close to 22 mins a game, and catapulted to the top of the Northeast Division and the 2<sup>nd</sup> best defence in the league (1 GA behind NJ). On the other side Marian Gaborik has been nothing short of amazing, 21 G, 37 Pts. I'm sure we all figured those to be his season totals. I guess it helps that Tortorella plays the hell out of this guy. NY has had 4 days to think about their recent spanking of 13-5 vs. the Pens in back to back meetings, and are reeling with a 3-7 mark in their last 10 games that has found them in the basement of the Atlantic Division.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: H

### **NY Islanders @ Tampa Bay Lightning**

It shouldn't take a scientist to figure out who the Isles should be playing in goal. Roloson has put up a mark of 8-2-5 this season, Biron is 2-8-2, although their GAA and SV% aren't that far off 2.80 to 3.04 and .920 to .910 in favour of Roloson. It just illustrates that Roloson can come up with the clutch save and swing the momentum in his teams' favour. Here's hoping this ridiculous goalie rotation comes to an end. Rolly is 4-2-1, 2.10, .926 in his career versus the

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Bolts. The Bolts have given up the 3<sup>rd</sup> fewest GA and boast the league's highest SV% of .931 at home this season. Tampa is 2-3-4 in Saturday games this year, I like those odds.

Pick: T (NYI in the SO since Tampa is 0-5)

Thunder's Pick: V

### Chicago Blackhawks @ Pittsburgh Penguins

How can the Hawks look so dominant in beating the Sharks in San Jose 7-2 than lose the following two games to ANA and LA and score only 1 goal? Malkin has 14 pts. in 10 games since returning to the lineup and Crosby has managed to put up 25 pts. in 14 home games. Sidney also has 20 pts. in his last 11 overall, where was that production when Malkin was out of the lineup?

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: V

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### Minnesota Wild @ Nashville Predators

Nashville has the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst shooting percentage at home in the NHL (6.6%, Leafs are worst at 4.9%), yet have managed to post a 9-5 record at home this year. The Wild have won 3 straight, and 4 straight Saturday outings, after losing the first 3. They're 3-2 on the tail end of B2B situations. Martin Havlat is -16 thru 20 games... ouch.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: H

### Calgary Flames @ San Jose Sharks

A matchup of powerhouses in the West takes place in California. The best road record in the West takes on the best home record in the West. The Sharks average 3.3GF/game and have the top PK at over 93% at home. Both teams are coming in having lost one goal games, and they split the season series last year with 2 wins apiece. 12 of Iggy's 17 goals have come on the road this season. Nabokov and Kipper have sub 2.00 GAA, .940+ SV%, and lost only once in regulation at home and on the road respectively.

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Pick: T (San Jose in the SO)

Thunder's Pick: T

### Ottawa Senators @ Phoenix Coyotes

The Sens have been outscored 23-37 on the road this year, which helps explain why they've only won 3 out of 10 games. The Coyotes look to win 4 straight for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time this year. Coming off a come from behind win versus Calgary. The Coyotes have been able to win with defence this year, as their leading scorer Shane Doan has 18 pts. thru 27 games. Hmm... no 60 pt. scorers in the desert this year. Despite posting a 1.88 GAA and a .925 SV% Bryzgalov is 0-2 in his career versus the Sens with a 5.00 GAA and .828 SV%. The Sens haven't won on the road since late October, a span of 9 games in which they've lost by 2 or more 5 times. Ottawa haunted me in my dreams last night.

Pick: V+

Thunder's Pick: H