

Saturday's Picks - with Notch

Written by Steve "Notch" Johnson

Friday, 22 January 2010 11:52 - Last Updated Sunday, 24 January 2010 14:24



My winning percentage stayed at the 70% mark last week. I correctly predicted a blowout victory and a shootout win. I got 7 out of 10 winning teams right. Not only am I getting the winners right, my analysis on what I think is going to happen and why I see it happening has been so spot-on it has been sort of freaking me out. I am in a hockey tournament this weekend in Niagara Falls so I am doing these picks late on Thursday night. I will look at some different angles for these games as I can't read and research the same articles I usually do. EDIT: After writing this I just have to say, these are some very tough games this week, tread with caution.

Ottawa at Boston 1:00 PM EST

After losing 11 straight games to Tim Thomas and the Bruins, Ottawa finally figured him out with a 5-1 win just 5 days ago. That win was right in the middle of the Sens current 5 game win streak. Ottawa has the most home wins in the entire NHL. On the road is a different story. Even though Ottawa has three straight road wins their record away from home is still a paltry 9-13-1. In the first game on the road after a home game, Ottawa is 3-8-1. Tim Thomas has given the Sens nightmares for a long time, I am not sure one win against him is enough for the Sens to have sweet dreams. The Bruins are struggling of late losing their last 3 games and 6 of their last 7. Boston is still banged up, but recently got some key bodies in Krejci and Bergeron back. Bergeron is not yet 100% as he is playing with a splint on his wrist/hand/finger and only

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took 2 faceoffs last game winning both draws. Not a lot of NHL teams can win 6 in a row, can Ottawa? This is a very tough game to call and it really is a flip of a coin in my mind. Stay away from this game or take the underdog for the best odds. Ottawa is 2-1-1 in afternoon games this season, Boston is 2-4.

Ottawa – Visitor Win – V (ProLine)

Carolina at Philadelphia 1:00 PM EST

Carolina is 1-11-2 in the game before they travel home. In saying that, they have won their last 3 afternoon games though. The Canes have lost all three previous meetings this season against Philly and were blown out 6-1 when they were in the City of Brotherly Love last time. This will be the Flyers 3rd game of their season long 6 game home stand; they have won the first 2 games. Interesting stat: In the 3rd game of home stands, the Flyers are 0-4 this season. I can't think of a better opponent to break that little trend.

Philadelphia by 2 or more – Home plus Win – H+ (ProLine)

NY Rangers at Montreal 7:00 PM EST

After scoring 14 goals in their last 2 games, the Rangers were shutout by Emery and the Flyers on Thursday night. This will be the 3rd meeting of the season with the home team winning each time. Montreal needed OT late in October to get their win, while the Rangers won big by a score of 6-2 just six days ago. The Rangers are 2-2 in their 2nd game on the road after losing the first game. This will be Montreal's 3rd game in 4 nights and also a back-to-back game with travel the night before. Teams that have to face the same scenario are 4-27-3 this season.

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NY Rangers – Visitor win – V (ProLine)

New Jersey at NY Islanders 7:00 PM EST

The Devils have won 2 of the 3 meetings this season, but have a fresh memory of Dipietro shutting them out only 5 days ago in a 4-0 loss. Brodeur rebounded with a shutout of his own in his next game against Florida and I can see him getting a chance to avenge the loss to the Isles. The Devils are in the same scenario as Montreal (see above) and will have to face the same daunting task of winning a game after playing and travelling a lot in the last four days. The Isles have won 5 of their last 6 games and 7 of their last 9. They have done so beating some good teams in Colorado, Phoenix, Detroit, Buffalo and these Devils. This is another tough game, but I just can't go against that 4-27-3 stat.

NY Islanders – Home win – H (ProLine)

Phoenix at Washington 7:00 PM EST

Inter-conference game. The Coyotes are 6-5-1 against the East this season, while the Caps are 6-4-1 versus the West. Key stat in my mind even though these teams are relatively close in the standings; Phoenix is a barely .500 team on the road, where Washington has only 3 regulation losses at home.

Washington – Home Win – H (ProLine)

Toronto at Florida 7:00 PM EST

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I really don't even like researching anything to do with Toronto, but Dobber makes me. Toronto swept their last Florida road trip this season beating Tampa 4-3 and then the Panthers 6-4. This second time around they just lost to the Lightning on Thursday 3-2 in OT. What will happen when the play Florida this time? The Leafs are 4-5 in the next game after losing the previous game after 60 minutes. Only 4 teams have fewer road wins than Toronto. The Leafs abysmal 69.7% PK may get a bit of a break this game as Florida has a PP that only converts 16.7% of the time. Florida is 6-3-3 in their first game back at home after a road game.

Florida – Home Win – H (ProLine)

Los Angeles at Detroit 7:00 PM EST

LA is 7-3-1 in the first game on the road after home game. That's a pretty decent stat, but then I see they don't like playing Central Division opponents as their record is 3-6-1. Detroit is slowly getting healthy and slowly climbing their way back into the Western Conference playoff picture. Detroit has a great Pacific Division record going 9-3-2 against them this season. For some reason I see a blowout Detroit victory; let's go with 6-1.

Detroit by 2 or more – Home plus Win – H+ (ProLine)

Atlanta at Tampa Bay 7:30 PM EST

Atlanta is 1-1-1 against the Bolts this season. Both teams are well rested and could use the two points to create some distance between their division rival and jump back into the race for the 8th and final playoff spot. Tampa is good at home, Atlanta not so much on the road. Nothing interesting about this game from an analysis perspective, everywhere I look it seems to be pretty equal other than that home and away record I mentioned.

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Tampa Bay – Home Win – H (Proline)

Anaheim at St. Louis 8:00 PM EST

Anaheim in a shootout – Tie – T (Proline)

Columbus at Minnesota 9:00 PM EST

Minnesota – Home Win – H (Proline)

Chicago at Vancouver 10:00 PM EST

This is one of the best rivalries the NHL has right now. The season series is split at one game apiece. The road team has won each time, with each victory being by one goal. Both teams are 7-2-1 in their last 10 and both teams will be well rested. Chicago is a good road team; Vancouver is a good home team. Let's face it; this game should be a good one. The Hawks have the better skaters; the Canucks have the superior goalie.

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Chicago – Visitor Win – V (ProLine)

Buffalo at San Jose 10:30 PM EST

Everyone has heard by now that Buffalo is 8-1-2 against the West. What about San Jose being 9-2-1 versus the East? This should be another great battle and it will be the goaltenders that settle this one. Take the under if you can. San Jose is more rested.

San Jose – Home Win – H (ProLine)