

Saturday's NHL Picks - with Notch

Written by Steve Johnson

Friday, 05 February 2010 18:55 - Last Updated Saturday, 06 February 2010 13:57



What a big week we just witnessed in the hockey world. Washington and Ottawa have twelve and eleven game win streaks respectively. On Thursday February 11th, the two teams will face off, and the NHL should be scrambling to get the game on Versus in the US, as currently it will only be shown on TSN for Canadian viewers. For the two teams to remain unbeaten until that team, Washington will have to defeat Atlanta, Pittsburgh and Montreal, and Ottawa will have to beat Toronto and Calgary.

These two streaks mark only the 2nd time in NHL history that two teams have concurrent winning streaks of more than 10 games. In other hockey news, the Devils trade for the biggest fish in the trade market – Ilya Kovalchuk. On top of that, Toronto and Calgary completely overhauled their rosters (which could be bad news for Ottawa's winning streak).

Vancouver at Boston 1:00 PM EST

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Vancouver will play the fourth game of their massive, NHL record, 14 game road trip. They lost their second game in a row following a seven-game winning streak. Some thought Vancouver would struggle on the road as their friendly home schedule afforded them the line matchups they wanted, and they don't get that luxury on the road. Henrik Sedin has been held pointless for consecutive games, something that has happened only two other times this season. His incredible consistency has been unmatched by any other player in the league this season. Three of the five games in which Henrik hasn't recorded a point have come on the road. Luongo will definitely be in between the pipes for Vancouver, but he struggles against Boston with a lifetime record of 10-9-3 and a 2.44 GAA. He does have four shutouts against Boston, so that leads me to believe is either really good or really bad against the Bruins (Luongo's record is also skewed against most Eastern Conference teams because of the poor Panther clubs he was a part of). Luongo is also only 8-8-1 on the road this year. The Bruins are in a world of hurt lately losing nine in a row and 12 of their last 13. They have also lost eight straight at home. This game will be Boston's last of a four game home stand before they head on the road for four. The Bruins are already 0-2 on the year in the last game of long homestands. Afternoon records are 1-2 for Vancouver and 2-6 for Boston.

Vancouver – Visitor win – V (ProLine)

Pittsburgh at Montreal 2:00PM EST

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Crosby plays the team he rooted for growing up once again. Montreal is a team he has no trouble playing his best hockey against, and 24 points in 17 career games speaks to that. The Pens are 2-0 against Montreal this season after splitting the four games last campaign. Pittsburgh is 9-3 in their first game on the road after a home game. The afternoon record for Pittsburgh is only 1-3, and Montreal is 1-2 before dinner. Pittsburgh is a good road team, and Montreal has been just over .500 at home. Pittsburgh is the hotter team going into this game.

Pittsburgh – Visitor win – V (ProLine)

Detroit at Los Angeles 4:00PM EST

The Wings have taken two of three this season. So far on their current five game road trip, they

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are 1-2. Their road record for the year is 12-12-6. Other than Nick Kronwall, who may return for this game from a short injury, the Wings are only missing Johan Franzen. Detroit is going to have to get things together sooner rather than later, or they will miss the playoffs for the first time since the 1989-90 season. The Kings, winners of eight straight, are on fire. They have a solid record of 16-9-2 at the Staples Center. Los Angeles is very good (3-0) at the end of homestands of three or more games. The Kings are able to win any type of game. They have lots of close wins, blowouts, and both low scoring and high scoring wins. Don't underestimate the fact that the Kings did not make a push for Kovalchuk; that may bring the players closer together as they know they are now in it for the long haul and management believes in the group they have. The players will respond to that type of confidence. GM Lombardi has been very patient and the results of that patience will be seen for years to come. Afternoon records are 0-2-2 for the Wings and 4-2-1 for the Kings.

Los Angeles – Home Win – H (ProLine)

Phoenix at Dallas 6:00PM EST

Phoenix has a short turn-around from their late game on Friday night against the fast-paced

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Blackhawks. As of Friday afternoon, Phoenix has won five in a row. The Coyotes have a mediocre road record of 13-10-3, even though they have won their last three. Phoenix has won all three games this season by a combined score of 12-6 against the Stars and will be looking for the season sweep here. Dallas has one of the top home records in the league going 17-6-5 this year. I don't really feel like digging up anymore info because I feel so strongly in the short rest Phoenix will have and the fact that I think the Coyotes will leave everything they have on the ice in Chicago. I see a let down by Phoenix for this game against the rested and desperate Stars.

Dallas – Home Win – H (ProLine)

Ottawa at Toronto 7:00PM EST

With solid team play the Sens have only allowed 13 goals against during their current 11 game win streak. Wins against Boston, Montreal, Chicago, New Jersey, Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Vancouver have the Sens confidence in the system and themselves at an all-time high. A healthy squad doesn't hurt either. Injuries are starting to creep back though with Foligno out, but the real issue is standout rookie Erik Karlsson who was injured last game and will now be out

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until the Olympics are over. Karlsson is quickly becoming a game-breaker for the Sens as his play has directly led to the winning goal being scored by Fisher and Alfredsson, respectively. Karlsson is a big loss to the Sens as he has emerged as their best puck-mover over the past six weeks. This team is bigger than individuals right now for the first time in years, so a little more adversity should make them even stronger. During this winning streak the Sens have won six straight road games, and a victory here will break a Sens record for consecutive road wins. All 3 games against the Leafs this season have been decided by scores of 3-2 with the home team winning each game (Sens up 2-1). The Leafs top line of Kessel, Bozak and Dobber is scaring the hell out of the 2nd hottest team in the league. LOL!

***Note to Ottawa ***Please don't play down to your opponent after beating some of the best in the league recently. Also, please don't play Leclaire for the first time since a 6-1 loss to Atlanta on January 12th. Yes, this would be a good tune-up game for him after recovering from whole-body-bone-replacement surgery due to the first and only diagnosis of Glassboneitis ever recorded. Yes, this game is against the worst offense in the league, but don't do it. If I was Coach Clouston, I would play Leclaire here, but since I am a fan...Elliott please and thank you.

Ottawa by 12 or more – Visitor plus win – V+ (ProLine)

New Jersey at NY Rangers 7:00PM EST

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Welcome to the Swamp, Kovalchuk. The Devils have been dealing with a terrible case of the flu that has dragged on for awhile affecting almost every player on the team at some point. That might explain their play recently that saw them go 3-7-1 in their last 11. The Devils are winning the season series 2-1, with the road team winning each game so far. The Rangers are only one of four teams in NHL who have a losing record at home; Toronto, St. Louis and Edmonton are the others. The Rangers are playing their worst hockey of the season, going 3-9-1 in their last 13. They have fallen out of playoff contention as well. Being the all-world goalie that he is, Henrik Lundqvist does well bouncing back from poor outings. After having a game where he has a GAA of 4 or more (which he had last game against Washington), Lundqvist has a GAA of 2 in the next game. What I didn't expect is Lundqvist to have eight games with a GAA over 4 this year. Take the under, if it is available, and...

New Jersey – Visitor win – V (ProLine)

I am running out of time in the day, but I will be back in the comments section to post more winners and a bit of analysis on the remaining games of interest.

Buffalo at Columbus 7:00PM EST

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The Sabres are starting to cool off by going 3-5-2 in their last 10. Could Miller finally be getting tired? He let in a terrible game winning goal on Friday night. The magical world of Twitter has informed me that Miller will get the rest he needs tonight. Lalime has started seven games this season with a record of 3-2, but has also been pulled twice. Lalime's numbers are unspectacular and Columbus is catching a huge break here. The Blue Jackets with their new head coach are 1-0, but barely got by a poor road team in Dallas by a score of 2-1. I, as well as many fantasy hockey GM's and fans of the game, would love to see what Rick Nash could do if he didn't need to be the first forward back in the defensive zone. Let the reigns loose Claude Noel. I didn't bother looking at how Columbus has played recently because I don't think that matters anymore with a new coach in place. New coach = new results (for a little bit at least).

Columbus – Home win – H (ProLine)

Calgary at Tampa Bay 7:00PM EST

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These two teams haven't played since a wild 8-6 win for Tampa Bay on March 1, 2009. The Flames have won 2 of 3 since the Phaneuf trade and 2 of 2 since trading Jokinen. Calgary looked very good against Florida in their last game and maybe getting rid of two huge attitudes in Phaneuf and Jokinen can bring this team back into the playoff picture in the West. Tampa Bay has won 5 of their last 7 and are definitely the hotter team coming into this game. I'm not sold on that stat as the competition that Tampa beat in those 5 games (TOR, MTL, ATL x 2, ATL) doesn't strike too much fear in me. The two games they lost were to Anaheim and Washington who I consider a more proper comparison to Calgary right now. Calgary is 8-2-1 versus the East; Tampa is 4-5-5 versus the West.

Calgary – Visitor win – V (ProLine)

If you really want to pick a tie for some reason this week, this one MAY go to a shootout.