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Olympic hockey sure was fun to watch, but I am craving some competition. If I can pick NHL winners correct about 70% of the time, how hard is it to pick Canada to beat Germany or Norway? I will be picking my winners for Saturday's games until the season is over now, as my partner in crime Marty Kwiaton is touring the world looking for the next Alexander Daigle.

These picks are sure to win you money. If you want to be positive you collect cash, just pick the teams I have winning and take out the extra goal in some of my plus picks this week. My winners are solid, but sometimes I gamble on the extra goal to increase my odds at bigger paydays.

Dallas at Pittsburgh 1:00 PM EST

Kari Lehtonen is getting his first start for Dallas after coming on in relief for Turco on Thursday. Lehtonen, the once highly touted prospect who has seen injuries derail his career, has some very surprisingly solid numbers against the Penguins. He is 6-2-2 with a .922 SV%. For the Stars to win, he will have to be on the top of his game. Dallas has allowed 11 goals since returning from the Olympic break with a combination of porous defensive play and sieve-like goaltending being at the root of Dallas' struggles. The Stars cannot afford any more poor outings as they are in the middle of a dogfight for the final playoff spot in the West with 6 other teams. The Stars own the 10th worst road record in the league. Pittsburgh is coming off a big win over the Rangers where Malkin and company peppered King Henrik with rubber and eventually won in OT. The Penguins have the 10th best home record in the NHL. As good as Lehtonen has been against the Penguins, MA Fleury has been better against Dallas in his career. He is 3-0, with 1.62 GAA and a .937 SV%. Dallas is 2-1-1 in afternoon games, Pittsburgh is only 2-4-2, but that is not enough for me to pick the Stars. The Pens take this one in a cakewalk.

Pittsburgh by 2 or more – Home plus win – H+ (ProLine)

Boston at NY Islanders 2:00 PM EST

Boston is hitting the road for seven games in a row. That is a good thing considering Thursday's win at home versus the lowly Leafs was their first home win since the Winter Classic on January 1st. This game will close out the season series with Boston sporting a 1-1-1 record, losing one in regulation and one in overtime. The Bruins only win came in a shootout. Boston has gained points in eight of their last 10 games, thanks in part to the 4th best road record in the Eastern Conference. Boston is 3-5-2 in afternoon games this season, the Isles are 3-6-0. Long Island is 3-10-0 in their last 13 games and have fallen out of the playoff race after showing some interest

in the post season back in December. Not only has the Islanders given up on the playoffs, Tavares has shown he doesn't care about the Calder trophy as well, basically handing it over to either Tyler Myers or Matt Duchene. The Bruins had won seven straight over the Islanders before losing the last two meetings. This game will go into extra time and I am going to gamble and say it makes it to a shootout and will pick a tie.

Boston in a shootout – Tie – T (ProLine)

Toronto at Ottawa 7:00 PM EST

Games like this are so hard for me to research objectively. My love for Ottawa combined with my disdain for Toronto always makes me pick with my heart. Good thing the Sens are head and shoulders above the Leafs in terms of on-ice productivity as well though. Toronto's roster brings their combined 90 goals for into this game against the Northeast division leading Sens. Most media outlets tend to use the 90 point mark as the threshold needed to make the playoffs in the East. With Toronto having an abysmal 50 points on the season so far and 19 games remaining, even if Toronto goes undefeated they will end of with 88 points. For the sake of argument, let's call them eliminated from the playoffs. Problem with that is, that is usually when the sad-sack Leafs turn it on to get the 14th overall pick in the upcoming draft. Do I think that will happen this year? No. Boston will gladly draft Tyler Seguin at 2nd overall. The Olympic break came at the worst time for the Sens. The hottest team in the league other than Washington before the break, the Sens have lost both games post Olympics and have looked disorganized in the process. As bad as the former co- winner of the Rocket Richard trophy Cheechoo was for Ottawa offensively, since he was placed on waivers, the Sens are 1-3 and needed three third period goals to beat the Islanders 4-3 in the win. Matt Cullen and Andy Sutton were brought in via trade and it is too early to tell the outcome of those moves. Pascal Leclaire was pulled very early in Thursday's game and a death stare followed. Leclaire is a good teammate, but he is a terrible goalie. A goalie of his calibre and bone structure should not be making waves, he should be glad he is even still in the NHL and not in a full-body cast for precautionary reasons. I didn't look up any stats for this game, because I know that Ottawa and their 3rd best home record will stomp on the brutal away record of the Toronto

Marlies.

UPDATE: The Sens dressing room has the flu, with three players missing practice and call-ups expected for Saturday's game.

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

NY Rangers at Washington 7:00 PM EST

Gaborik will be back in the lineup for the Rangers, who put up a good fight against the Pens on Thursday thanks in large part to goaltender Henrik Lundqvist. Lundqvist has decent numbers against the Capitals sporting a record of 9-5-2, a 3.01 GAA and an .897 SV%. Those aren't typical numbers for the King, but respectable against the Caps. What isn't something to brag about is the last meeting between the two clubs. Henrik was torched for six goals on 32 shots in a 6-5 loss in early February. In my opinion, Washington, the best team in the league, also were the winners of the trade deadline. The Capitals 5th line would rival some teams 2nd and most teams 3rd line. Their offensive depth is scary. With the deadline acquisitions, the Caps have picked up right where they left off pre-Olympics and are well on their way to having home ice advantage throughout the playoffs. The season series in 2-1 for the Capitals and the away team has won all three of the games. The three games have been decided by a total of four goals. Washington has only lost three games at home in regulation all season, which is a crazy stat! One of those losses was to the Rangers though.

Washington – Home win – H (ProLine)

Carolina at Florida 7:00 PM EST

Has nobody told Carolina they should be eliminated from playoff contention already? They only got eight points out of a possible 36 to start the 2009-10 campaign; virtually eliminating them from the playoffs only 18 games into the season. But, since that point, the Canes have gone 24-18-3 and more recently have won 11 of their last 13 and currently ride a seven game win streak. Cam Ward has been hurt; they have traded away half their team, but it doesn't matter, they just continue to climb the Eastern standings and only sit seven points out of the final spot. This matchup will close out the six game series for the season. The home team has won all five games so far and four of the five games have been decided by three goals or more. As good as the Hurricanes have been lately, the Panthers have been just as…BAD! Florida is 2-7-1 in their last 10 games and didn't do anything to improve their team at the deadline. This game really is a matchup of teams going in opposite directions. I have to ride the trend with my money. Carolina is playing with swagger.

Carolina – Visitor win – V (ProLine)

Atlanta at Tampa Bay 7:30 PM EST

This is a big game for both teams. Playoff implications all over the place; Atlanta can distance themselves from the pack a little bit and Tampa Bay can create more chaos in the race for the final spot by winning in regulation time. Hedberg is getting the start for Atlanta and he has burned me many times as a backup by having a 40 or 50 save performance and stealing a win for the Thrashers. There is no in between with Johan, he either steals the show or makes a mockery of it. His save percentages are either in the high .900's or the low .800's or worse. I can never figure him out. What I do know is Atlanta has lost four of five meetings this season against Tampa. Both of these teams like to go to extra time; the Thrashers have been there 10 times, the Bolts 11. I can see this game going past 60 minutes as neither team will want to give

an inch. Atlanta has a good road record; Tampa has an equally decent home record. Based on this year's dominance, Marty St. Louis and Stamkos get the slight edge in this game further confusing the Eastern playoff race.

Tampa Bay – Home win – H (ProLine)

St. Louis at Colorado 9:00 PM EST

The Blues have won five straight and are trying to do what they did last year when they went on a huge 9-1-1 tear to end the season, passing five teams in the process and earning the 6th playoff seed. The Blues haven't lost since Feb. 8th after falling by a score of 5-2 to their current Saturday night opponent; the Avalanche. The Blues have the 3rd best road record in the Western Conference and will hope to continue that success in their push to the playoffs. The Avs are faltering a bit of late losing three of their last four, only scoring three goals total in the three losses. If goaltender Craig Anderson was playing the way he was at the start of the season, maybe it wouldn't matter, but he has been struggling of late as well. Colorado will be playing their fourth game in the last six nights. I usually put a bit of stock in a stat like that, but coming off the Olympic break and knowing the Avs are full of young energetic legs, I will dismiss it. In the game after a home loss, Colorado is 3-4 which is a pretty good record, and shows some consistency in their home record. This is the toughest game to call on the Saturday schedule.

Colorado – Home win – H (ProLine)

Montreal at Los Angeles 10:00 PM EST

Montreal has a four game win streak spanning almost seven years over the Los Angeles Kings. Looking at the Habs record versus the Western Conference this year (4-9-2), it seems like the Kings are the only team out West that the Canadians can beat. Flip the coin and you see the Kings can handle Eastern teams no problem this year as they sport a 13-3-0 record against them. Carey Price has started both games for Montreal post Olympics and the break seems to have helped him. In his last two starts Price has a 1-1 record, but has stopped 60 of 64 shots and kept Montreal in the game against the Sharks with several big saves despite the loss. Montreal has a habit of riding hot goalies, so he may get the start again over Halak. Los Angeles is 11-2-1 in their last 14 games, and has a firm grip on a playoff spot. The East vs. West numbers are good enough for me to predict a Los Angeles win.

Los Angeles – Home win – H (ProLine)

Columbus at San Jose 10:30 PM EST

This will close out the four game season series, one in which San Jose leads two games to one. As close as the series looks right now; when the games take place in sunny California it is another story. Columbus has not won in San Jose in their last 10 tries. Not only that, but they have lost 16 of 17 lifetime in San Jose getting outscored 69-28 in the process. The only thing going for Columbus is the fact that they threw in the towel at the deadline and the players are now playing for jobs next season. Sometimes that can make a team dangerous and a couple wins can get reeled together against teams that are better on paper. Not on my watch though.

San Jose by 2 or more – Home plus win – H+ (ProLine)

GOOD LUCK!