

Saturday's NHL Picks - April 21st

Written by Martin Kwiaton

Friday, 20 April 2012 20:12 - Last Updated Friday, 20 April 2012 20:14



Five games are on the schedule for this Saturday, which is the perfect recipe for a weekend in mid-April that is filled with rain, sleet, and snow. Unfortunately this is being written before all the Game 4's are completed on Thursday as I have some family obligations that are taking priority, I know, even over playoff hockey.

However, I can't complain as with all the brew-ha-ha, my wife has gotten into the playoffs almost as much as I have this year. As we all know, a single play can swing the momentum in a series. It will be impossible for this weekend to live up to the nuttiness of last weekend, but still look for things to heat up as teams near the brink of elimination, and pull out all the stops in desperation. It's been a blast writing for you guys, so let's get to it.

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Capitals @ Bruins

No matter what happens in Game 4, the Capitals will have Backstrom returning to their lineup, and he will be certain to provide an offensive spark for Game 5 on Saturday. The Caps managed an OT victory in Boston in Game 2 so there is no reason why they won't be able to extend this series by at least another game. The contests have been close in this series, and it appears as though the Caps have woken the sleeping bears with one too many questionable cross checks, and after the whistle taunting. You would think that they would have learned from Vancouver last season and the Aaron Rome incident. Do they have pro-line ties in the postseason?

My Pick: T (Capitals win, OT)

Thunder's Pick: H

Senators @ Rangers

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Any expert that was writing off the Senators in this series will be questioning that decision, as this now turns into a best of three series. The Sens hope to be riding a wave of momentum coming back from a 2-0 deficit in game 4 to win in overtime. That's two come from behind, and overtime wins in the series. Another statistic that gets overlooked, and has contributed to their success is that Ottawa leads all playoff teams in face-off percentage winning 54.5% of their draws. Nonetheless, it's nice to see a series where both goaltenders are playing well enough to give their team a chance to win. After the first time the Rangers lost in OT in the series Lundy came back and pitched a shutout in Ottawa, look for a similar dominant performance in the big apple.

My Pick: H (Rangers win)

Thunder's Pick: H

Blackhawks @ Coyotes

Without Marian Hossa and Andrew Shaw, the Hawks will be in tough to generate enough offense to secure a victory against Mike Smith. Crawford, like Smith, has to have a bounce back game in Game 4 after he allowed that stinker in OT. Who in this universe would have picked Rusty Klesla to be leading the Coyotes in scoring through the first three games with four points? Toews, Sharp, and Bolland need to elevate their games to the next level, perhaps with the Canucks making a run at the Kings and with the hope of still getting a chance to face Vancouver in the next round will push this battered Hawks team to victory.

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My Pick: V (Hawks win)

Thunder's Pick: V

Devils @ Panthers

What a bizarre series this one has been – the first two games had each team race out to an early 3-0 lead only to coast the rest of the way and barely hang onto winning their respective games 3-2. In Game 3, the Devils tried it again, however this time, with Theodore getting replaced with Clemmensen in provided the Panthers a spark early enough to begin the comeback early, and chase Hall of Fame goalie Marty Brodeur out of the net in a span of just over six minutes. The only reason the Panthers are in this series, let alone leading it, is thanks to their power play converting on six of 10 chances through the first three games, against a penalty kill that was ranked first in the NHL in the regular season. The Panthers have had their fun, but it's time for this mishmash of overpaid free agent signings to reach the cap floor to hit the beach.

My Pick: V (Devils win)

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Thunder's Pick: H

Sharks @ Blues

Andy McDonald is the only player in the top 13 in playoff scoring not playing on the Penguins or Flyers. Again highlighting the importance of special teams in the post season, five of his six points have come with the man advantage. He's factored in every power play goal by the Blues in their thirteen chances. The secret to success for the Sharks is to ensure that they stay out of the box. San Jose also shook up their lines for Game 4 at home, so it'll be interesting how long those lines stick for as the team tries to improve on their two goals for per game average in the playoffs. If the Sharks bow out in the first round, what kind of changes can we expect in San Jose this off-season?

My Pick: H (Blues win)

Thunder's Pick: H