

NHL Picks (Pro-line) for November 08, 2008

Written by Dale McCarthy

Friday, 07 November 2008 12:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 08 November 2008 03:12



This week marks the debut of the "monkey". Dale McCarthy gives you his picks for Saturday's games, as well as his reasoning and info that you need to know!

Buffalo Sabres @ Boston Bruins

-Key Injuries-

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BUF - Jochen Hecht, Tim Connolly

BOS - Chuck Kobasew, Shane Hnidy

-Probable Starters-

BUF - Ryan Miller

BOS - Tim Thomas

-Notes-

Both Miller and Thomas are on fire. This game will probably come down to special teams and I think Buffalo has the edge there. Boston's PP is 6th (at 22%) in the league and Buffalo's is 11th (at 20.3%) but Boston is only 29th in the league in PP chances. They average only 3.8 chances per game. The PK is not as close. Boston's PK is running at only 76.4% which puts them 22nd in the league. On the other hand, Buffalo is killing penalties at a 91.1% clip, good enough for 2nd in the league.

-Prediction-

I'm predicting a low scoring game with a Buffalo PP goal possibly being the difference.

-Bet-

1 banana on BUF to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

Montreal Canadiens @ Toronto Maple Leafs

-Key Injuries-

MTL - None

TOR - Nik Antropov, John Mitchell

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-Probable Starters-

EDM - Carey Price

CBJ - Vesa Toskala

-Notes-

This matchup is looking very similar to the game they played near the start of the season. Back in early October, Montreal was looking at back to back games on a Friday and Saturday after having a few days off. The Habs lost the Friday game to Anaheim before defeating the Leafs at the ACC on the Saturday. Now the Habs, who haven't played since last Saturday, are looking at a game against Columbus tonight and a return to the ACC tomorrow night.

Montreal is the highest scoring team in the NHL despite having the 3rd worst PP in the league. Toronto's PK (at 73.2%) is the 2nd worst in the league. Look for the Habs to pop a couple of PP goals by Toskala.

-Prediction-

I don't think we'll see another 6-1 blowout here. In fact, I'm expecting a close game with Montreal holding on for a 4-2 or 4-3 win.

-Bet-

1 banana on MTL to win

1 banana on the OVER (5.5)

Pittsburgh Penguins @ New York Islanders

-Key Injuries-

PIT - Sergei Gonchar, Ryan Whitney

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NYI - Rick DiPietro, Brendan Witt, Sean Bergenheim, Josh Bailey, Radek Martinek, Mike Sillinger, Freddy Meyer

-Probable Starters-

PIT - Marc-Andre Fleury

NYI - Yann Danis

-Notes-

The Penguins are coming off two wins in which they've scored a total of 11 goals. Prior to that they lost three in a row and scored a total of 4 goals in those three losses. The Islanders give up an average of 3.46 goals against per game so the recent goal-scoring trend for the Pens should continue. It may be safe to assume that the Pittsburgh offense everyone was expecting is starting to click.

-Prediction-

Given the recent trends I look for one of two scenarios to go down. Either the Islanders will jump out to an early 2 or 3 goal lead and the Penguins will storm back or the Penguins will jump out to a big lead and give up a few to New York just to make it close.

-Bet-

2 bananas on PIT

1 banana on the OVER (5.5)

Tampa Bay Lightning @ Philadelphia Flyers

-Key Injuries-

TAM - Jeff Halpern

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PHI - Daniel Briere, Derian Hatcher, Randy Jones, Andreas Nodl, Ryan Parent, Ossi Vaananen

-Probable Starters-

TAM - Mike Smith

PHI - Martin Biron

-Notes-

This is a battle of two teams who are underperforming in the eyes of many. The Lightning aren't scoring enough goals and the Flyers are giving up too many. The Flyers are averaging 3.7 goals per game making them the 2nd highest scoring team in the league. This is despite the fact they are the 3rd worst team in the league for shots on goal. They are averaging only 26.5 SOG per game. This tells me they are making the best of their chances and have a good shooting %. The Lightning may be just what Philly needs right now. Tampa only averages 2.3 goals per game, putting them 29th in the league, and they give up more shots (average of 36.3) than any other team in the league.

-Prediction-

Philly should get more shots than they are accustomed to which should help them maintain their high-scoring ways.

-Bet-

1 banana on PHI to win

1 banana on the OVER (5.5)

New York Rangers @ Washington Capitals

-Key Injuries-

NYR - NONE

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WAS - Shaone Morrisonn, Brian Pothier

-Probable Starters-

NYR - Henrik Lundqvist

WAS - Jose Theodore

-Notes-

He's baaack! No, not Slim Shady (although I hear he's returning from his binge/retreat); I'm talking about Alex Ovechkin. OV picked up 3 assists in the Caps win against Carolina Thursday night and will be looking to do what he does best. With only 2 goals so far this season Ovechkin should go on a run soon. He'll be hard-pressed to begin that run Saturday as he'll be facing one of the stingiest defensive teams in the league. NY gives up only 2.1 goals per game (2nd best in NHL), allows only 3.8 PP opportunities (3rd in the league) and is 2nd in both PK (at 90.2%) and PP goals allowed (at 0.4 per game). Washington has the second worst PP in the league so the Caps will need to get the PP going or generate some 5 on 5 offense. Luckily for them, they have a player who is capable of turning things around on his own.

-Prediction-

Ovechkin will score and the Caps will win.

-Bet-

1 banana on WAS to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

New Jersey Devils @ Detroit Red Wings

-Key Injuries-

NJ - Martin Brodeur, Andy Greene, Bobby Holik, Paul Martin, Brian Rolston

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DET - Chris Chelios, Johan Franzen

-Probable Starters-

NJ - Kevin Weekes

DET - Chris Osgood

-Notes-

The second most shots for, the second most goals for, the most PP goals scored and the best PP...the BIG RED MACHINE may leave Kevin Weekes asking for a rest after this game. After losing Martin Brodeur for a few months, New Jersey was able to win their first game, but that was to be expected. Teams usually step it up the first game after losing a main player. The second game is usually a different story, especially when you have to play the defending Stanley Cup champions.

-Prediction-

Detroit is just too strong and should be hungry after losing 2 of their last 3 games.

-Bet-

1 banana on DET to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

Calgary Flames @ Columbus Blue Jackets

-Key Injuries-

CGY - Matthew Lombardi, Rhett Warrener

CLB - Rostislav Klesla, Pascal LeClaire, Fredrik Norrena

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-Probable Starters-

CGY - Miikka Kiprusoff

CLB - Steve Mason

-Notes-

Not only is Pascal Leclaire still out but now Fredrik Norrena is nursing a sore groin. Steve Mason will have to face a Calgary team who put up 7 goals against the Nashville Predators on Thursday. The good news for the Blue Jackets is that Calgary gave up 6 goals to those Predators. On average, Calgary scores more than Columbus, gives up fewer goals than Columbus, has a much better PP than Columbus and has a better PK than Columbus. Mike Keenan can't be happy with giving up 6 goals despite the win so I look for the Flames to tighten things up a little.

-Prediction-

Calgary is just too strong for Columbus and the Blue Jackets will be coming off a game against the Habs the night before.

-Bet-

1 banana on CGY to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

Nashville Predators @ Colorado Avalanche

-Key Injuries-

NAS - Jed Ortmeyer, Steve Sullivan

COL - Joe Sakic, Scott Hannan, Daniel Tjarnqvist

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-Probable Starters-

NAS - Dan Ellis

COL - Andrew Raycroft

-Notes-

Nashville is scoring plenty of goals but they're giving up far too many. They have the third most powerplays in the league which has enabled them to score the most PP goals in the league. They are averaging 1.2 PP goals a game. Colorado, on the other hand, gives up the fewest PP chances in the league which is good because they have the worst PK in the league at 73.1%. If Colorado can stay out of the penalty box then they will give themselves a good chance of winning. After winning five in a row the Avs have now lost five in a row.

-Prediction-

With Sakic nursing a sore back, I look for guys like Stastny, Wolski and Hensick to pick up some slack.

-Bet-

1 banana on COL to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

Florida Panthers @ Phoenix Coyotes

-Key Injuries-

FLA - Bryan Allen, Cory Murphy, Rostislav Olesz, Cory Stillman

PHO - None

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-Probable Starters-

FLA - Tomas Vokoun

PHO - Ilya Bryzgalov

-Notes-

Florida is spiraling with five losses in a row. Early season injuries seem to be taking their toll and just as some guys get healthy, others go out. The Coyotes are anything but streaky. Their last six games have been win, loss, win, loss, win, loss. Keeping with the pattern they should pick up a win against the Panthers.

These are two of the lowest scoring teams in the league. Florida averages 2.25 goals per game and Phoenix isn't much better with an average of 2.27 goals per game.

-Prediction-

I think Phoenix will pull out the win in a low-scoring affair.

-Bet-

1 banana on PHO to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

Minnesota Wild @ Vancouver Canucks

-Key Injuries-

MIN - Brent Burns, Kurtis Foster, Marian Gaborik, Owen Nolan

VAN - Pavol Demitra, Jannik Hansen, Rick Rypien

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-Probable Starters-

MIN - Niklas Backstrom

VAN - Roberto Luongo

-Notes-

Minnesota doesn't score many goals to begin with but now they'll have to face Roberto Luongo who is coming off back to back shutouts. The Canucks are averaging 3.29 goals for per game which is a lot more than many thought they would score. Wellwood seems well fed and happy and continues to score goals. I thought this guy was a set-up man. Vancouver needs to keep this from becoming a battle of special teams as both Minnesota's PP and PK are much better than Vancouver's.

-Prediction-

Luongo is just too hot to bet against right now and Wellwood has to be feeling good about his production and the fact that McDonald's will be releasing their annual hockey cards soon.

-Bet-

1 banana on VAN to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

Dallas Stars @ San Jose Sharks

-Key Injuries-

DAL - Sergei Zubov, Jere Lehtinen, Doug Janik, Joel Lundqvist

SJ - Marcel Goc, Torrey Mitchell, Evgeni Nabokov

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-Probable Starters-

DAL - Marty Turco

SJ - Brian Boucher

-Notes-

The Sharks needed a shootout against the Blues to keep their home streak alive. However, the victory may prove costly as Nabokov looked to suffer a knee or groin injury on the very last shot of the shootout.

Dallas has the worst defense in the league. I bet you never would have thought you'd be hearing that. The Stars are giving up an average of 4.17 goals per game. That's almost two more goals per game than the Sharks are allowing. In fact, the Sharks are better than the Stars in every category: goals for, goals against, PP%, PK%, shots for, shots against, goal differential. Nabokov's injury is definitely a concern but Boucher is a very capable NHL goalie.

-Prediction-

The Sharks will actually give Boucher better defensive support than they gave Nabokov against the Blues.

-Bet-

1 banana on SJ to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)

St. Louis Blues @ Los Angeles Kings

-Key Injuries-

STL - Erik Johnson, Paul Kariya, D.J. King, Manny Legace, T.J. Oshie

LOS - Jack Johnson

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-Probable Starters-

STL - Ben Bishop

LOS - Jason Lababera

-Notes-

If there was a Johnson & Johnson promotion planned for tonight it will most definitely be put on hold as both young and promising Johnson defensemen will be out of the lineup with injuries.

St. Louis has the 2nd best PP in the league but Los Angeles has the 3rd best PK in the league. The telltale stat for this matchup may be the shots for and against. St. Louis averages only 24.8 shots for per game which puts them dead last in the league. And to make matters worse for the Blues, Los Angeles is first in the league for shots against, allowing only 24.0 shots against per game. All signs point to the Blues getting about 24 shots on net.

-Prediction-

The Kings are getting good goaltending from both Labarbera and Ersberg. The Blues will miss Kariya. Look for the Kings to take this one.

-Bet-

1 banana on LOS to win

1 banana on the UNDER (5.5)