

Saturday's NHL Picks - with Marty and Thunder

Written by Marty Kwiaton

Friday, 18 December 2009 19:00 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 December 2009 13:27



It's that wonderful time of the year, where we are all supposed to be in the spirit of giving. As much as I'd love to give you all guaranteed winners so you have some extra spending money on Boxing Day, I'm quite busy rushing around trying to find adequate Christmas gifts, as I have left my shopping till the last week... again. Enough of this fluff talk, let's get right to it. If you want to win money I'd bet on my dog before putting money on me... Happy Holidays!!!

NY Rangers @ Philadelphia Flyers

Philadelphia heads into this matinee with only two wins in their last 11 games. The 2nd most penalized team in the league has had some success in afternoon games, scoring 4.0 GF/game, however Lundqvist and the Rangers have been stingy allowing a single goal in two matinees this season. The Rangers picked up their 2

nd

win of December Thursday in Long Island. Marian Gaborik is rolling along with 45 pts this year, and has 20 in 15 road games. Lundy's 11-5-1 record vs. Philly is reassuring but be wary, as they tend to be high scoring affairs with his GAA being over 3.00 against the Flyers.

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Pick: T (PHI in the SO)

Thunder's Pick: V

Detroit Red Wings @ Dallas Stars

A great Western Conference rivalry in the lone star state sees the Wings coming in winners of four straight (first time they've managed this feat all year) and seven of their last 10. The Stars, winless in 3, haven't gone winless in 4 all year. They boast the 4th best home defence in the league. Jimmy Howard will be in tough, despite only allowing two goals or less in his last five starts, as the Stars fire the 5th most SOG in the league.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: V

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Nashville Predators @ Calgary Flames

The first of a triple header on CBC has the Flames coming in after snapping a three-game winless streak versus LA on Thursday night. The last time they were winless in three they rolled off three wins in a row. Nashville has been on a tear in December going 6-1-2, and finding themselves tied with Chicago (three games in hand) for the Division lead. That success hasn't come with the extra man as they're 4th worst in the league. After winning all their Saturday games in November the Preds search for their first Saturday victory in December. Kipper shutout the Preds in Nashville 5-0 in their only meeting this season.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: H

Phoenix Coyotes @ Anaheim Ducks

If you were told that one team is ahead of the other team by 11 pts and eight wins, you certainly wouldn't think the Coyotes were playing that well, or even more surprisingly that the Ducks were in the basement of the Western Conference. Anaheim takes the 4th most penalties in the league, but it shouldn't be cause for too much concern as the Coyotes failed to score on the PP in afternoon games last season. Phoenix's 4

th

best defence and 5

th

ranked PK unit will be up for a challenge against the 2

nd

best PP in the league. Phoenix won B2B road games versus Columbus and Toronto but have failed to win three in a row on the road. Hiller is 7-0-2 in his career versus Phoenix with a 2.20

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GAA and .927 SV%, meanwhile Bryzgalov is 7-5-2 versus his former team.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: H

Pittsburgh Penguins @ Buffalo Sabres

It's early in the season but the way both teams have been playing this could be a possible 3rd round matchup in the playoffs this year. The Pens, with all those weapons with the man advantage have been struggling, they currently sit 2nd

worst in the league, and with rumours that Goligoski has been pulled from the top unit, things will get worse before they get better. After winning 4 straight the Sabres were shutout against Ottawa, and depending on their game versus the Leafs on Friday should indicate what kind of team we'll see on Saturday. Pittsburgh is 10-2-1 in their last 13 games. They've had a fairly slow December and should be well rested with newly renowned sniper Crosby with 22 goals this season. Fleury's 3.06 GAA and .892 SV% versus the Sabres aren't pretty, neither are Miller's #'s as they are equally comparable.

Pick: V

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Thunder's Pick: V

Boston Bruins @ Toronto Maple Leafs

Yes the Leafs have been playing some amazing hockey lately. Going 6-4 in their last 10, however look for a repeat of two weeks ago to happen when these two teams met on Saturday night. The Leafs have only 1 win in the 2nd game of a B2B situation, and they haven't beaten Boston all year. Sorry Leafs fans this isn't an early X-mas present.

Pick: V+

Thunder's Pick: H

Minnesota Wild @ Ottawa Senators

The Wild are probably the hottest team in the league at the moment winning 9 of their last 11 games. They've only allowed 7 goals in their last 5 outings. The last time the Sens played NJ the night before a home game in Jersey they were defeated, but followed that effort up with a win. Elliott is 6-1-2 2.00 GAA and .927 SV% at home this year. He'll be going up against Backstrom who has only surrendered 5 goals in his last 5 starts. Something has to give here.

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Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: H

Montreal Canadiens @ NY Islanders

The Habs have are winless in 5, and have the 3rd worst offense in the league. They lost 5 in a row earlier in October only to reel off 4 straight victories. They started that winning streak at home, whereas this time they'll be in Long Island against the Islanders. Both Martin Biron and Dwayne Roloson have shown success against the Habs in their careers, with Biron holding the better GAA (2.37) and SV% (.919) numbers. The Isles have alternated wins and losses in their last 5 games, so it's time for them to put up a W, and for the Habs struggles to continue.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: H

Florida Panthers @ Carolina Hurricanes

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Despite having the worst record in the league the Canes are actually playing .500 hockey at home. They have the worst defence in the league. Florida has only won the tail end of a B2B situation twice in nine tries this season. Carolina is winless in 6 tries at the tail end of a B2B set. With the way Weiss and Horton have been playing over the last month, I don't think the Canes can count on another Ruutu hat trick to save them this time around.

Pick: V

Thunder's Pick: H

New Jersey Devils @ Atlanta Thrashers

The Thrashers have the league's 4th ranked PP and 3rd highest scoring offense. Luckily for the Devils they take the fewest penalties in the league and should maintain that discipline while visiting Atlanta. Not to mention they have the league's 2

nd

best defence (behind Chicago) lead by Martin Brodeur. The Devils seem to continue winning at will with 9 wins in their last 11 games. Brodeur seems to be having another Vezina worthy season as he's given up 2 goals or less in 20 of 29 starts this season. He's won 3 games straight or more on 5 separate occasions already. He may get the night off as the team plays Ottawa the night before which may be good news for Thrashers fans as his 2.09 career GAA would be on the bench. Atlanta is tied for 6

th

in terms of the teams Marty has shutout the most in his career. The Thrashers have won 3 in a row at home only once this year. 4 of Atlanta's 5 losses in December have been by 2 goals or more, while 8 of the Devils' last 12 victories have come by 2 goals or more.

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Pick: V+

Thunder's Pick: H

Columbus Blue Jackets @ Colordao Avalanche

The Blue Jackets have only won 2 of their last 15 games, how is Hitchcock still behind the bench of this team??? The last time I wrote an article Stevens got fired in Philly and replaced by Laviolette. Maybe if I'm lucky Hitch gets fired tonight after my article gets posted?? J The Avs have won the only meeting between these two so far this season. If the Jackets are to have any success they need their 2nd ranked road PP to get a couple early versus the Avs.

Pick: H

Thunder's Pick: V

Washington Capitals @ Edmonton Oilers

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The league's hottest show on ice visits Rexall Place in the finale of CBC's triple header. Well, maybe not the hottest, but certainly the highest scoring, and best PP in the league. Winners of 8 of their last 10 games the Caps only blemishes came on the road versus the Sabres and the Leafs. The Oilers seemed to be headed in the right direction, winning their last 5 road games to start the month of December, but seem to have fallen a little flat coming home, blowing an early 2-0 lead versus Nashville only to be thumped 6-3. Jeff Deslauriers has been atrocious at home, with a 3.41 GAA and .881 SV%.

Pick: V+

Thunder's Pick: H