

Saturday's Picks - October 23rd

Written by Marty Kwiaton

Saturday, 23 October 2010 18:06 - Last Updated Sunday, 24 October 2010 13:31



It's great to have hockey back on again this year, and I apologize to the delay of our Saturday picks column as work has been crazy, and I'm finally in town to throw some numbers together. Last year had its share of ups and downs... let's face it, more downs than ups, but this is a clean slate so hopefully things can start off hot. There are plenty of surprising teams to start the season, so I won't be holding my breath this week. Thunder returns for a 3rd season and it's come to the point that I have to lock my other dog out in order to even get these picks done in time. Hope everyone's got a cold beer on hand for the 13 games scheduled this Saturday.

New York Rangers @ Boston Bruins

Tim Thomas is HOT. Not Megan Fox HOT, but pretty damn close with his play as of late. Sure he's only played 4 games, however a 0.75 GAA and a .978 SV% are disgusting any way you put it. Hopefully he can improve his 3-6 mark vs. the Rangers all-time. Both teams have

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combined for a total of 3 PP goals in their last 10 meetings H2H, with 8 of those contests being decided by a single goal. Look for another tight game, but the blue shirts just don't have the offense with their recent injuries to pull this one out.

Pick: H

Thunder: V

Atlanta Thrashers @ Washington Capitals

Last week on Saturday the Thrashers were massive underdogs against the Sharks in San Jose and pulled off a remarkable upset. Unfortunately don't look for lightening to strike twice. 15 days ago the Thrashers beat the Caps at home to snap an 8 game losing streak versus Washington, unfortunately the Caps will look to start a new streak. The Thrashers are giving up the 2nd most SOG in the league at over 37 per game. The Thrashers 3rd ranked road PP may keep this game close in the early going.

Pick: H

Thunder: V

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Toronto Maple Leafs @ Philadelphia Flyers

Anything in the past from these two teams facing off against each other can get thrown out the window as we haven't seen a Leafs team play like this in over 10 years. The Leafs lead the league in only giving up 24.5 SOG/game, while their PK is running at 90% (much improved from last season) and it certainly helps when you're giving up the 3rd fewest PP chances in the league (3.3, while the Flyers are 2

nd

worst at 5.8). Both teams are looking to snap respective losing streaks.

Pick: V

Thunder: H

Montreal Canadiens @ Ottawa Senators

It's a battle between the 2nd worst PP in the league visiting the 3rd worst offense in the league. The Sens have taken the last two matchups at the Scotiabank Place. Last Saturday the Habs outshot the Sens 40-19, but still only managed to come away with a 1 goal victory. Carey Price has allowed 6 goals on the last 39 shots he's faced but has won 5 games and posted 2 shutouts versus the Sens in 10 career starts. Spezza and Alffy love playing against the Habs, as they've posted 51 pts. in 41 GP and 101 pts. in 76 GP respectively.

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Thunder: H

Buffalo Sabres @ New Jersey Devils

The Devils are having a hard time scoring as they have the league's 2nd worst offense. It appears aside from a couple of shutouts that Martin Brodeur has lost a step and can't continue to bail his team out in hoping that they get on the board. Perhaps if they drew some more penalties (last in the league) they could get their woeful PP (9.5%) going. All their H2H games in the calendar year of 2010 have been decided by a single goal and with the way both teams have been struggling (2 wins each in 7 games), we could be looking at extra time.

Pick: T

Thunder: H

Anaheim Ducks @ Detroit Red Wings

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The Ducks come into this one with only 1 win on the road in their first 5 tries. They give up 3.6 GA on the road while the Wings are averaging 4.0 GF per game at home. The Ducks surrender 39.9 shots a game on defence, worst in the league, and that's not something you're going to get away with against the Wings.

Pick: H

Thunder:V

NY Islanders @ Florida Panthers

I really like the way the Isles look this year, and who would have thought their PP would be clicking at over 24% with Mark Streit on the IR. Unfortunately they're going to need a lot of PP goals if they hope to pick up their first win in Florida since November of 2006. Vokoun is 12-4-1 with a 1.84 GAA and .939 SV% against the Islanders in his career and will be looking to bounce back after getting pulled Thursday versus Dallas. Florida has yet to give up a PP goal this year (10 for 10 on the PK, as they have given up the fewest PP chances as well). Everything points to a FLA victory, but I can't help to pick the Isles.

Pick: V

Thunder: H

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Nashville Predators @ Dallas Stars

The Stars have won 5 of their first 6 games, and they sure as hell haven't done it with special teams this year. They own the worst PK in the league (64.3%) and have an atrocious PP (9.1%). Yet they seem to get the job done 5 on 5 as they've scored 24 times so far (tops in the league despite only a league worst 23 SOG/game). Jamie Benn returned to the line up Thursday to centre the 3rd line and pick up 3 helpers. If the Stars can roll 3 lines they will be hard to stop especially with the absence of Ryan Suter on the Preds blue line. The Stars will be lead by Richards (21 pts in 17 GP), Neal (8 in 8), and Ribeiro (16 in 18).

Pick: H

Thunder: H

Pittsburgh Penguins @ St. Louis Blues

A battle of undefeated teams, the Pens are 3-0 on the road while the Blues haven't lost in their 2 games at the Scottrade Center. The series has been split 2 games apiece since the lockout, with the Pens winning the last 2 games. Despite Hlak's playoff dominance versus the Pens he's only 1-1 in the regular season with a 4.20 GAA. The Blues have been averaging the most SOG in the league (38 SOG/game) while drawing the most penalties (6 PP chances per game). The Pens draw 5.6 PP's per game so whoever is watching this game will get to see plenty of 5

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on 4 action. I'll take Malkin, Crosby, and a broomstick upfront on the PP over Steen, and well, you get the point.

Pick: V

Thunder: V

Columbus Blue Jackets @ Chicago Blackhawks

The first meeting between these two teams is one that the Jackets will likely hope to forget. However, Columbus is 2-1 this year as they head into a matchup as the underdog. Mason unfortunately got rocked for 6 goals on only 23 shots Friday night versus Calgary at home. Mason has managed to follow up each loss with a win so far this season. These two teams have combined for 44 goals in their last 5 H2H matchups, I'd recommend sitting both goalies for this one unless your league only counts Wins.

Pick: V

Thunder: H

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Los Angeles Kings @ Colorado Avalanche

The Kings come into this contest with the league's worst PP at 4.8%, the good news they're 11 for 33 vs. the Avs on the PP in their last 10 meetings. Not to mention their PK this year at home is only 66.7%. Anderson has only beaten the Kings once in his career. At least the Avs average 3.3 GF/game against the Kings in their last 10 meetings so I wouldn't be surprised to see this one go over on the O/U.

Pick: V

Thunder: H

Carolina Hurricanes @ Phoenix Coyotes

Usually teams are intimidated going into a hostile environment playing in front of another team's home crowd. I don't think that applies here versus Phoenix. I'm sure 500 people will show up by the time the puck drops. The Coyotes snapped their 3 game losing streak and look to pick up their 3rd win of the season. Bryzgalov has a 3.46 GAA versus the Canes in his career, while Cam Ward 3.45 (2-2) hasn't fared much better.

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San Jose Sharks @ Edmonton Oilers

The 2nd best PP in the league visits the 2nd worst PK in the league. The Oilers hope to do exactly the Sharks accomplished Thursday night by snapping their 3 game losing streak. The Oilers lost each of those games by 2 goals. The Sharks have won 6 of their last 7 H2H matchups versus the Oilers. Edmonton is 0-2 as the underdog this season.

Pick: V+

Thunder: