What a sublime kickoff to the 2012 edition of Lord Stanley's Playoffs! We've really been blessed with a treat of an opening week; with upsets, early goals, impressive comebacks, highlight reel saves, a litany of overtime contests right out of the gates and plenty of goals, goals and more goals galore!

As the regular season came to a close, I ended up splitting my picks in four of my final five weeks. I suppose it's not exactly a bad thing that I've managed to avoid hitting at a sub .500 clip since all but once since mid-February, but I will try yet again to hit the majority of this Saturday's card!

Stats as of Friday morning
Winning % on the season= 55%
Previous week record= 3-3

Washington @ Boston (3:00pm ET)

When you're outshot 26-7 through two periods, regardless if its game one, jitters are at play. Plenty of kudos go to Caps third string netminder Braden Holtby , as he authored a shutout through 60 minutes in his maiden playoff experience. However, an invisible Alexander Semin , et al, surely did no favors for a Washington team, used to hitting cruise control from March out but having to scrape and claw their way into the dance this season. On the other end of the rink, the old faithful Timmy T picked up exactly where he left off last epic spring in Massachusetts with a rather untested but still symbolic donut. Despite the nitty gritty edge of your seat affair in game one, expect an equally close contest, albeit a much more offensive-minded performance.

Pick
Washington - Visitor Win – V(ProLine)

Ottawa @ New York Rangers (7:00pm ET)

An expected convincing win from the regular season Eastern Conference champs occurred in the opener, the first if its kind in well over a decade to be hosted in Manhattan, since the Mark Messier era. King Henrik was well on his way toward a goose egg of his own, until it was spoiled with 10 to go in the final frame. Much more of this stellar goaltending can be expected for the rest of this series by the Broadway Blueshirt's main man. The Sens held their own in the closing minutes to keep the score line respectable, but respectable this game never was. It was a thorough, not quite dominant perhaps, but certainly satisfying victory. I definitely expect a scrappier affair with some fisticuffs to make their series debut between combatants Neil, Konopka, Rupp and Prust if this one gets out of hand in New York's favour once more. However it will not be a means to an end as the Rangers take this one at ease.

Pick

NYR- Home Win Plus– H+(ProLine)

San Jose @ St.Louis (7:30pm ET)

This may be the 2nd vs 7th seeds, but the favourite in my books has always been San Jose since the moment it was determined these two foes would be matched up. Sure, the young impressive Blues squad led by coach of the year Ken Hitchcock nearly won the President's Trophy after being written off by many pundits by November, but they are still inexperienced. Raw is what they are. Untouched by the grind of the second season are these unseasoned Blues. They are facing a Sharks squad, who probably doesn't get enough credit for finishing in a tie for third last season with Tampa Bay, and who now know exactly what it will take to make it beyond the final four. This series will be short for the veteran Sharks.

Pick
San Jose - Visiting Team Win - V(ProLine)

Chicago @ Phoenix (10:00pm ET)

The NHL-owned Phoenix Coyotes continue to surprise many, having not been division leaders all year until the eve of the final night of the regular season when they jumped ahead just in time to take the Pacific. Despite being the 3rd seed, they clearly were not being given the benefit of the doubt by most prognosticators prior to this series. But Mike Smith continues to shockingly cement his case for Team Canada 2014 conversation as third keeper. In the process, he's managed to do some pretty unbelievable things of late, including the most saves during a shutout record. However, I just believe Chicago's offense will ultimately be too much in game two.

Pick
Chicago – Visiting Team Win- V(ProLine)

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