The third week of the 2008-09 NHL season has come and gone. Let's take a look at what has occurred during the third week in the Western Conference and perhaps a little foresight into what could happen down the road.

Maasquito Buzzings…

- 29 of the league's top 52 point getters were from the Western Conference, so it's pretty even between the two Conferences.
- Four of the top ten players that garnered the most time on ice were defensemen from the Western Conference.
- Paul Stastny and Pavel Datsyuk are leading the Western Conference in faceoff wins with 90. Jonathan Toews isn't far behind at 89.
- Jarome Iginla and Marian Hossa led the Western Conference by tallying seven points this past week.
- Shane Doan is leading the Western Conference with 36 hits.
- Keith Tkachuk just can't be stopped on the power-play as he is now leading the league in

power-play goals with six.
- Patrick Marleau leads the Western Conference with 37 shots on goal.
- Peter Mueller, Johan Franzen, Brad Boyes, Patrick Sharp, Rick Nash and Antti Miettinen all have two game-winning goals each.
- Minnesota is the only team in the NHL to have a 100% penalty-killing percentage.
- Colorado is the best in the Western Conference in five-on-five scoring ratio with a rating of 1.29. Phoenix is the worst with a rating of 0.71, followed by Calgary at 0.72.
- Minnesota is averaging a league-low of 8.8 minutes in penalties per contest. Calgary is averaging a Western Conference high of 22.4 with Anaheim and Columbus not far behind with 21.6 and 21.4 respectively.

Around the West

The Blackhawks are 2-0-2 under coach Joel Quenneville after he replaced the fired Denis Savard. The main problem for them has been the shootout - they are 0-3 so far this season. Kris Versteeg seems to have hit the jackpot lining up between Jonathon Toews and Patrick Kane. He's only 10% owned in Yahoo leagues, that number will skyrocket fairly soon, so pick him up before your league mates do. Nikolai Khabibulin doesn't look like he's going to give up the number one gig easily and it looks like its going to be a 50/50 timeshare between him and Cristobal Huet for the time being.

In Columbus, Pascal Leclaire can't seem to shake the injury prone tag as he was pulled from Saturday night's contest with a sprained ankle. Fredrik Norrena will get the bulk of the starts until Leclaire returns. Consider him day-to-day but ankles for goalies are very iffy injuries and can linger for a while. Manny Malhotra was shifted to play with Rick Nash and Kristian Huselius while R.J. Umberger was downgraded to third line duties. Manny won't last long up there and not worth adding to your roster. Nikita Filatov continues to be scratched from matches, and will most likely be sent down to the minors.

After losing Henrik Zetterberg with a knee injury for most of last week, the Red Wings will be without Johan Franzen for the next three weeks because of a knee injury. That will probably free up some playing time for Daniel Cleary or Jiri Hudler. Detroit is second in the league for goals for at 3.67 goals, while averaging a league-high of 39.4 shots on goal per contest. Also as a team, Detroit is winning 55.2% of their faceoffs, which means there might be a few extra points based on the new faceoff on the power-play in the offensive zone rule. Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg should benefit largely from that.

In Predators territory, Jason Arnott returned from a finger injury and picked up three points in two contests. The Preds are a quick start team, but they won't be able to hang on to very many games if they don't play solid hockey for the full 60 minutes. They have scored 11 first period goals and 10 second period goals which ranks them amongst the leaders in that department. On the other hand, they have given up 10 third period goals which ranks them third lowest in that department. Nashville is also giving up the fourth least opposing shots on goal with 25.8 per game, which means once Ellis gets back into form, his atrocious 3.35 goals against average

and .867 save percentage will improve. I'd try to see if you can buy-low on his services from a frustrated owner.

Seems like a broken record, but St. Louis players continue to have many fantasy owners singing the Blues this week for bypassing them in their drafts. The big four of Keith Tkachuk, Paul Kariya, Andy McDonald and Brad Boyes continues to set the NHL on fire by tallying a combined 44 points, 29 of which have come from the power-play. The only downside to owning those four players is that they are in the unhappy side of the plus/minus column with a rating of -13. Tkachuk continues to be lethal on the power-play as all six of his eight goals have come from the power-play. Tkachuk is only owned in 75% of Yahoo leagues, up from 67% last week, so there might still be time to pick him up in your leagues. McDonald is tied with Evgeni Malkin for the league-lead in assists with 11. If he continues to average more than 20 minutes per contest he'll be at the top of the league in that department at the end of the season. The St. Louis power-play dropped a bit but is still operating at a blistering 34.2% which is second to Detroit at 34.4%. Both number one and two goalies on the depth chart are injured right now so Ben Bishop, officially the league's tallest goalie, started on Saturday night and picked up a shut out in his first official NHL start. Manny Legace seems to be fine and should return on Thursday night.

Now let's head up to the Northwest Division, Miikka Kiprusoff's rebounded well this week with three victories and a 1.67 goals against average and a .946 save percentage. I was highly critical of him to start the season, but now it seems that he's back to vintage form and safe to start in fantasy leagues again. Flames' superstar Jarome Iginla was on fire this week with a pair of three point performances. He picked up seven points in three contests this past week. Iggy and Todd Bertuzzi both have six goals so far this season. Phaneuf is working his way towards the 30 minutes of ice-time per game mark, he's now averaging 28:49. Rene Bourque is working his way up the depth charts and is lining up with Iggy and Craig Conroy on the top-line for the Flames. He is averaging 16 minutes per game. He's only 5% owned in Yahoo leagues, so if you are in a deep league keep an eye on the youngster.

In Avalanche country, The Avs' power-play have been clicking nicely as they are scoring on 20% of their power-play chances. The Avs' offense is still holding strong while averaging 3.62 goals per contest. The big four of Paul Stastny, Joe Sakic, Milan Hejduk and Ryan Smyth have a combined 36 points between them, 19 of which have come from the power-play. Stastny is also leading the Western Conference with 29 power-play faceoff wins compared to just 18 losses, what that might translate to is puck possession in the offensive zone whilst on the power-play. Puck possession usually equates to goals, which means Stastny should get an extra boost in point production from the power-play. If you can make a play to acquire Stastny, I'd strongly suggest you do so, when he is still relatively attainable. Peter Budaj seems to have firmly placed his grasp on the number one gig as he posted a 1.62 goals against average and a .941 save percentage in three contests this week. Andrew Raycroft's value is pretty much zilch right now. Darcy Tucker has joined Sakic and Wojtek Wolski on the top-line for the Avs and probably worth a flier as he's only owned in 9% of Yahoo leagues.

What a difference a week makes, after a blazing 4-0 start, the Oilers dropped three in a row this week due largely to some shaky goaltending by Mathieu Garon as he allowed 10 goals in his

two starts this week. The Oilers' season will pretty much live and die by their goaltending. I was pretty confident in Garon last week, but it has taken a sharp nose-dive after this week. The Oilers power-play unit is still clicking fairly well at a respectable 20%. Sam Gagner is experiencing the terrible sophomore slump as he only has one assist in six contests for the Oilers so far this season. His linemate Andrew Cogliano has four points in six contests. The Oilers will need the two sophomores to step up their game to help out the top-line on the scoring department. Robert Nilsson was promoted to the top-line to play beside Ales Hemsky and Shawn Horcoff. Dustin Penner will join Gagner and Cogliano on the second line. Nilsson had a decent season last year posting 41 points in 71 contests, but will need to be more consistent in scoring if he is to keep that spot for the duration of the year. I'd wait to see more consistent production from him rather than jumping and adding him immediately.

Minnesota is still undefeated in regulation after six contests, as they are 5-0-1 to start the 2008-09 season. Marian Gaborik was placed on the IR with a lower-body injury. The Wild have been secretive about his injury and have not released any additional information about him. However, there has been news about his contract status. GM Doug Risebrough has been talking to fellow GMs about his services. The Wild have offered Gabby a multi-year $10 million per season contract, but Gabby and his agent has declined the offer. Gabby honestly can be a league-leading superstar on another team that has a more offensive focus. It would probably do better in terms of publicity and his pride if he joined another franchise. Stay tuned for the Gabby sweepstakes coming up. Marek Zidlicky returned to action after missing the early part of this season with an ankle injury. He should be on the opposite side of Brent Burns on the Wild's power-play unit. He's averaging 19:29 in ice-time per contest for the Wild.

Vancouver had some bad news this week regarding off-season free agent signee, Pavol Demitra. Demitra is scheduled to miss the next three to four weeks with a rib injury. Look for Kyle Wellwood to fill that gap for the Canucks for the time being. He's only owned in 1% of Yahoo leagues, so he should be widely available. Taylor Pyatt who has one assist in six contests pretty much has no value now that he's lost his power-play spot to Jason Krog. Ryan Kesler might be a good sleeper option this year has he now has nine points in eight contests for the Canucks this season. He's only owned in 16% of Yahoo league's so he could easily be attainable. Roberto Luongo still is giving up three goals a game and with less than .900 save percentage, but at least he's getting some wins. If you own him don't get too panicky, he'll come around sooner or later.

The Ducks finally broke out of their offensive slump as they tallied 14 goals in four contests this week. The Ducks "big guns" of Teemu Selanne, Ryan Getzlaf and Corey Perry have a combined thirteen points compared to just three a week ago. The Ducks will certainly need that type of production from the "big guns" if they are to continue their winning streak this week. Francois Beauchemin is averaging a surprising 25:33 with both Scott Niedermayer and Chris Pronger on the blue-line for the Ducks. Too bad he only has three points to show for it, but if ice-time equates to points, Beauchemin could be out for the big pay day fairly soon. Sammy Pahlsson is averaging a Western Conference high of 5:46 short-handed minutes each contest, if your league is counting short-handed points. Pahlsson should be given some consideration. He also has 89 faceoff wins in nine starts, so if you league counts faceoff wins as a stat you might want to consider him for your roster as well. J.S. Giguere is finally under the 3.00 goals

against average mark and above .910 for save percentage, he finally approaching the numbers that he had last season. He's like Kipper and safe to start again.

Surprisingly the Stars have yet to win back-to-back games this season mainly because they are ranked dead last in goals against per contest (4.22). They have allowed three or more goals in seven of their eight contests and that simply won't help them win very many games. Loui Eriksson joins Mike Ribeiro and Brendan Morrow on the top-line. His career-high has only been 31 points in which he tallied last year with the Stars, if he can keep that spot he'll have a chance to double it this season. He's only owned in 3% of Yahoo leagues, so it'd certainly be worth it to take a flier on him for your fantasy squad. Stephane Robidas seems to be filling in nicely for the injured Sergei Zubov, he's averaging well over 25 minutes of ice-time per contest for the Stars and has seven points to show for it. Keep him active as long as Zubov is sitting on the IR.

Jason LaBarbera's picked up his first shut out of the season as the Kings blanked the Blues on Friday night, but was shelled for three goals in 13 minutes the following night. Patrick O'Sullivan continued where he left off last season by scoring six points in six contests for the Kings. He's only 46% owned in Yahoo leagues, and should be owned now that he has dual C-LW status on Yahoo. Sully is on the left wing with Jarret Stoll and youngster Oscar Moller. The trio picked up a combined 10 points in three contests this week. Moller's ice-time will improve from the 14:31 that he's receiving right now, so he could be in for a 50 point season if he maintains that roster spot. Stoll is another player to keep an eye on as he is only owned in 8% of Yahoo leagues.

The Coyotes' woes continues after starting the season 2-0, they have only won one of their past five contests and will need to do much better if they have any hopes of making the post-season. The rookie trio of Mikkel Boedker, Kevin Porter and Kyle Turris are ice cold after registering only one goal between them in the two contests this week. Boedker picked up his third goal of the year, while Turris and Porter both put up goose eggs. The Coyotes are amongst the league-worst in power-play percentage as they are only operating at 14.3%. Carcillo picked up his first fighting major of the season and now has 13 penalty minutes. In the 2008-09 Dobber fantasy guide, I predicted that there was going to be a big drop in PIMs for Carcillo, so far it's on the right track. He'll most likely get a few more PIMs along the way just don't expect the 324 that he picked up last season.

Last but not least we have the Sharks. Everything is going well for the Sharks. They own the league's ninth ranked offense, as well as the eighth ranked defense. They also fire the second most shots on goal on their opponents (37.7) and give up the least (24.4). That usually means a recipe for success in the NHL. Brian Boucher also picked up his second shut out in as many starts. Evgeni Nabokov is the undisputed number one goalie in SJ, but if Boucher can make it three in a row, you would have to think they'd give him an extended look at a few more starts this season. Ryan Clowe deserves to be own in more than 9% of Yahoo leagues, as he picked up three goals and an assist last week, while firing 17 shots on goal. The top-line spot still belongs to Devin Setoguchi, but if Clowe can keep up this pace, he'll be lining up with Patrick Marleau and Joe Thornton fairly soon. If you currently have a free roster spot, it's better to take a pre-emptive strike and pick him up now than to pass and have one of your league mates take him and bite you in the bum.