

The Anatomy of Change

Written by Ryan Ma

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Change is always constant in our everyday world. We change the way we talk, we change the way we walk, and we even change our daily rosters in our fantasy hockey squads. Some change is good, some is bad. For the next few weeks we'll discuss what changes may occur in the Western Conference at the trade deadline. We'll take a look at which teams are due for changes and which will be forced to make some. Buckle up and get ready for the ride.

Maasquito Buzzings...

- Mikko Koivu regains the Western Conference lead in faceoff wins with 364. Shawn Horcoff continues to mosey along with 355, and Paul Stastny rounds out the top-three with 353.
- Koivu has the most power-play faceoffs won in the Western Conference with 91.
- Paul Stastny, Milan Hejduk, and Andrew Ladd all picked up seven points this past week.
- Pavel Datsyuk, Patrick Kane and Brad Richards, were the only members of the Western Conference to be ranked in the top-25 in Yahoo rankings last week.
- Dustin Brown maintains the lead in the Western Conference with 119 hits.
- Kyle Wellwood took a bit of a hit this week as his shooting percentage fell to 32.4%. It'll be

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interesting to see what happens to that stat once Mats Sundin joins the Canucks lineup. Loui Eriksson is taking advantage Brendan Morrow's absence and is now firing at 27.7%, Tomas Holmstrom rounds out the top-three with a 25.5 shooting percentage. It's interesting to see seven of the top-ten are from the Western Conference, but only 12 of the top 25.

- Teemu Selanne continues to lead the league with 13 power-play goals, but will miss four-to-six weeks with the laceration on his thigh. Petr Sykora, Brad Boyes, Thomas Vanek and Ryan Clowe will try to chase him down while he's dealing with his injury.
- Stastny, Kane and Clowe all had two power-play markers last week.
- Dustin Brown is firing a ton of bombs on opposing goalies as he maintained his Western Conference lead with 152 shots on goal. He's second to only Alex Ovechkin who has a blistering 195. The Detroit pairing of Marian Hossa and Henrik Zetterberg is continuing to rack up the shots on goal. Hossa is fifth with 136 and Zetterberg is seventh with 121..
- Marian Hossa fired 18 shots on goal this past week, followed by Jarome Iginla at 17 and Milan Michalek at 15.
- Shane O'Brien continues to maintain his NHL lead in PIMs, he has 112 in 34 games played.
- Minnesota continues to be stellar on the PK with a 88.6%.
- Anaheim now gains the leading ratio in five-on-five situations with a ratio of 1.27. Anaheim has played well as of late and it shows with this stat as they were near the bottom at the beginning of the season. St. Louis is the worst in the Western Conference with a rating of 0.78, they desperately need to get Paul Kariya and T.J. Oshie back into the lineup.
- Detroit leads the Western Conference with an average of 10.5 minutes in penalties per contest, they just don't take any penalties. Anaheim is averaging the league high of 19.8 with Vancouver not too far behind at 19.7.
- Phoenix is 7-2-0 when they are out-shooting their opponents, while Columbus is 7-10-3. San Jose is 10-1-0 when being out shot by their opponents, while St. Louis is 6-11-2.

Anaheim

Salary Cap Status

\$58.153 room of 404k

Team Status

Anaheim is in a very interesting situation next season, they only have nine players under contract, which means that they can honestly blow up their entire team and rebuild from the second line downwards. They pretty much have the core of Ryan Getzlaf, Corey Perry and Chris Kunitz locked in for the long-term, while having a support cast of Selanne, Chris Pronger and J.S. Giguere to complement the youngsters.

Key Changes

My guess is that Scott Niedermayer will retire, which will clear up \$6.75 million in cap space. They can afford to pass on third liners like Todd Marchant and Rob Niedermayer, who are overpaid in the salary cap era of the NHL. With only 404k available in cap space, they won't be able to land a big fish during the trade deadline, so don't look for any changes later on this season.

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Key Needs:

- Second line winger

Unrestricted Free Agents:

- Scott Niedermayer (\$6.75)
- Francois Beauchemin (\$1.650)
- Brett Hedican (\$0.871)
- Steve Montador (\$0.800)
- Brendan Morrison (\$2.75)
- Todd Marchant (\$2.66)
- Rob Niedermayer (\$2.00)
- Sammy Pahlsson (\$1.4)
- Travis Moen (\$0.925)
- Brad May (\$0.600)
- George Parros (\$0.575)

Calgary

Salary Cap Status

\$57.691 room of \$1.236 million

Team Status

Calgary will essentially ice the same team next season as they have this season. They don't have much leeway in terms of cap room for next year, so I wouldn't picture them going out and splurging on a big named free agent in the off-season. They'll need both Mike Cammalleri and Todd Bertuzzi for the playoffs, so both will remain in a Flames uniform till the end of the season. They also don't possess any potential free agent bargaining chips to move at the deadline to help acquire any big pieces for the playoff run. Look for the Flames roster to remain the same for the duration of this season.

Key Changes

As stated before, the Flames will need both Cammalleri and Bertuzzi for their playoff run, but after the season anything goes. Cammalleri and Bertuzzi aren't under big contracts, so if they enjoy playing for Calgary, they could re-sign for a similar amount next season. Or if they decide to chase money, I'm sure there would be plenty of teams that would take a run at both since they are fairly cheap and serviceable in the salary cap era of the NHL.

Key Needs:

- Defensive depth

Unrestricted Free Agents:

- Mike Cammalleri (\$3.60)
- Todd Bertuzzi (\$1.95)
- David Moss (\$0.575)
- Andre Roy (\$0.550)

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- Jamie Lundmark (\$0.600)
- Rhett Warriner (\$2.5)

Restricted Free Agents:

- Dustin Boyd (\$0.675)
- Curtis McElhinney (\$0.500)

Chicago

Salary Cap Status

\$57.283 room of \$0.274 million

Team Status

Chicago is one of the teams in a great financial situation for next season. With youngsters, Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews, Andrew Ladd, Brent Seabrook, Duncan Keith and Patrick Sharp all signed for pennies, the Blackhawks have plenty of cap space to make big splash this off-season in the free agent market. The main kicker is that they also have quite a few younger RFAs that could command huge raises this off-season. They should have plenty of cap space available, so I don't see the Blackhawks dealing away any of them because they are afraid they will be unable to re-sign any of them.

Key Changes

With, Martin Havlat and Nikolai Khabibulin's \$12.75 million coming off the books next season, so they have the luxury of perhaps choosing to re-sign the both of them before the season finishes, or they can wait and test out the waters to see if they can lure a better free agent in Marian Hossa or Marian Gaborik. The balls basically in Chicago's court. With that said, will they move Havlat or Khabibulin just to get something out of them, I don't think they will. The Blackhawks are making a serious push for the playoffs and will need both in order to get them into the second season. Havlat's injury proneness and big salary will be hard for contending teams to accommodate. Same goes for Khabibulin, his \$6.75 million salary this year is just too much for teams to absorb even at the trade deadline. The only thing that may possibly happen is if a team is willing to unload an under-performing albatross contract, like Wade Redden or Michael Nylander in a straight swap for Khabibulin or Cristobal Huet, but it looks more and more likely that the Blackhawks will be stuck with Huet and Khabibulin for the rest of the year.

The Blackhawks have plenty of bargaining chips in terms of young restricted free agents. They could very easily deal Dave Bolland, Troy Brouwer, Colin Fraser or even Kris Versteeg for some veteran presence at the trade deadline.

Key Needs:

- Veteran presence in the locker room.

Unrestricted Free Agents:

- Martin Havlat (\$6.00)
- Matt Walker (\$0.600)

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- Aaron Johnson (\$0.525)
- Nikolai Khabibulin (\$6.750)

Restricted Free Agents:

- Dave Bolland (\$0.887)
- Troy Brouwer (\$0.700)
- Ben Eager (\$0.650)
- Colin Fraser (\$0.500)
- Kris Versteeg (\$0.490)
- Cam Barker (\$0.984)
- James Wisniewski (\$0.900)

Columbus

Salary Cap Status

\$49.343 room of \$7.357 million

Team Status

Columbus is also one of the teams in a great financial situation for next season. With youngsters, Derick Brassard, Jakub Voracek Rick Nash, Steve Mason and Kris Russel signed for pennies, the Blue Jackets also have plenty of cap space to make big splash this off-season in the free agent market. They are different than the Blackhawks because they don't have a lot of younger RFAs they need to re-sign in the off-season.

Key Changes

The Blue Jackets don't have to worry about aging free agents on their roster. Mike Peca and Manny Malhotra aren't impact players, so they have the option of keeping or passing on them at their disposal. Fredrik Norrena will be gone. Their only main worry is Christian Backman, the Jackets will need his services for the future so they probably won't deal him at the trade deadline. The Jackets are not contenders this season, so they won't make a big splash at the trade deadline this season.

With Nikita Filatov ready to crack the NHL, the Jackets might consider moving Freddie Modin or Jason Chimera to free up a top-six roster spot next season for Filatov next season. Modin could be a serviceable winger for a contending team this season.

Key Needs:

- Puck moving defensemen
- Power-play QB
- Veteran presence in the locker room

Unrestricted Free Agents:

- Mike Peca (\$1.315)
- Manny Malhotra (\$1.500)
- Christian Backman (\$3.400)

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- Fredrik Norrena (\$0.900)

Restricted Free Agents:

- Jiri Novotny (\$0.800)
- Ole-Kristian Tollefsen (\$0.750)
- Marc Methor (\$0.522)
- Clay Wilson (\$0.650)

Colorado

Salary Cap Status

\$53.198 room of \$3.502 million

Team Status

Colorado is in a similar situation as Calgary, a lot of their core players will be returning next season, so we won't see a huge change in their lineup in the off-season. They have \$37.175 million tied up in salaries for next season, which gives them a little bit of wiggle room to acquire a few mid-ranged free agents during the off-season, but it won't be enough to go after a big star like Hossa or Gaborik.

Key Changes

A lot of their moves in the off-season will probably depend on the status of Joe Sakic. My guess is that it's going to be 50/50 as whether he decides to come back or not. I don't think he wants to end his career with a year like this year, but he probably doesn't want to come back to deal with another injury-prone year like this one. The only place I see him potentially signing with is his hometown Canucks, but that will only happen if he takes a massive pay cut to accommodate for their financial situation. Tyler Arnason and Ian LaPerriere are both expendable. Jordan Leopold could be a great add for a few teams that need a puck moving defenseman, so I really do see him being moved at the deadline. His \$1.5 million salary isn't a big deal for teams to contend with. Andrew Raycroft's 800k salary also isn't a big hit to the salary cap strapped teams, so for teams who are looking to salary dump like the Bruins with Manny Fernandez, the Oilers with Dwayne Roloson, or Florida with Tomas Vokoun, could be interested in Raycroft.

Key Needs:

- Number one goalie.
- Second line center if Sakic goes.

Unrestricted Free Agents:

- Joe Sakic (\$6.00)
- Tyler Arnason (\$1.750)
- Ian LaPerriere (\$1.150)
- Ben Guite (\$0.475)
- Brian Willsie (\$0.600)
- Jordan Leopold (\$1.500)
- Daniel Tjarnqvist (\$0.750)

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- Aaron MacKenzie (\$0.475)
- Andrew Raycroft (\$0.800)

Restricted Free Agents:

- David Jones (\$0.550)
- Cody McCormick (\$0.522)
- Cody MacLeod (\$0.522)

Check in next week, as we take a look at Dallas, Detroit, Edmonton, Los Angeles and Minnesota.