

Changing of the Guard

Written by Ryan Ma

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If you have ever been to London, England, I'm pretty sure you would have attended the changing of the guard ceremony at Buckingham Palace. It's actually quite a neat tradition to observe and seems fitting for the many changes that have come down this week in the Western Conference.

First, let's take a look at a few:

Maaasquito Buzzings...

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Players in the last week with the highest production in each category who are less than 50% owned in Yahoo leagues.

Goals

Assists

+/-

PPP

SOG

Bergeron (3)

Bouchard (5)

Bouchard (5)

Ehrhoff (3)

Moreau (15)

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Ott (3)

Modano (4)

Bergeron (5)

Nilsson (2)

Jones (12)

Erat (2)

Nilsson (3)

Conner (4)

Kesler (2)

Legwand (11)

Bouchard (2)

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Calder (3)

Johnsson (4)

Hamhuis (2)

Tyutin (11)

Ehrhoff (2)

Hensick (2)

Kunitz (4)

Bergeron (2)

Hensick (10)

Anaheim

The big four of the Ducks had a big week, as Ryan Getzlaf, Corey Perry, Chris Kunitz and Teemu Selanne combined for 11 points. Getzlaf continues to prove that he's a fantasy stud as he finished January with 19 points, 11 PIMs, eight PPP, 37 SOG along with a plus five rating. He finished fifth in Yahoo rankings for the month, and is proving that he's comparable to Evgeni Malkin and Alex Ovechkin in terms of fantasy production. Bobby Ryan also had a big month as

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he finished sixth in the Yahoo rankings with 15 points, 10 of which came from the power-play along with 41 shots on goal. Selanne's return to the lineup has dramatically influenced Ryan's ice-time. Ryan only garnered 13:54 and 11:39 in both contests since Selanne's return to the Ducks' lineup, but did manage to pick up two points. Will the decrease in ice-time affect his overall scoring? We'll just have to take a wait and see approach.

Scott Niedermayer was also red-hot in January as he finished with 17 points in 14 contests and is averaging 2.57 SOG per game. Despite all of the offensive fire-power the Ducks still finished 6-7-1 in the month of January. A lot of that could be attributed to J.S. Giguere as he finished January with a 1-3-1 record along with a 3.90 GAA and a .858 SP. If you own Giggy in your fantasy pools now might be a good time to handcuff yourself with Jonas Hiller as he seems poised to steal the number one gig away from Giguere. He finished January, with a 5-4 record with a much more respectable GAA of 2.05 and a dazzling .920 SP. There might just be a changing of the guard ceremony in Anaheim fairly soon.

Calgary

Calgary is starting to run away with the Northwest crown, thanks to their superb play at home. They are 19-5-3 at home, but just 11-9-1 on the road. 20 of the remaining 35 games will be away from Pengrowth Saddledome, so you might see the Northwest Division race just get a bit tighter as the season progresses. Mike Cammalleri could be one of the main contributors of the hot-streak as he is riding an eight-game point-scoring streak in which he has tallied 14 points. Adrian Aucoin also has a modest six-game point-scoring streak in which he has tallied seven points. After scoring eight points in eight games at the start of January, Bourque is now point-less in three games, with only four SOG to show for it.

Chicago

Chicago had a big week as they took down the Western Conference leading Sharks 4-2 on Saturday night. Kris Versteeg returned to the lineup and picked up two points, while centering Patrick Kane and Dustin Byfuglien. Jonathan Toews ended January on a high-note as he picked up two goals, including the game-winner against the Sharks. He finished January with 11 points in 14 games, while picking up three game-winners on the way. Nikolai Khabibulin is 15-4-5 on the season, which is the best season he's had since leaving the Lightning for the Blackhawks in the 2005-06 season. Cristobal Huet is still chugging along, as he's 12-9-3 on the season.

Columbus

Big news was released about Steve Mason this week as he's been playing with Mono for the past month. Karma points for the person who can name the last rookie goalie to post seven shut

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outs in his rookie season. It'll be interesting to see if this case of Mono sidelines Mason for any period of significant time for the rest of the season. If that were to happen, Wade Dubielewicz would gain huge fantasy value for the duration of the season. Jason Williams has five points in seven games since joining the Blue Jackets. He's centering R.J. Umberger and Jakub Voracek. Manny Malhotra has been red-hot centering Rick Nash and Kristian Huselius. He's finished with 11 points in 13 games since being promoted to the Blue Jackets top-line. Malhotra was once a seventh overall pick in the 1998 NHL Entry draft, so he does have some offensive upside. At 2% Yahoo-owned, he could be a bargain find for the rest of this season. Rostislav Klesla has been out for the past month but hopes to return Tuesday against the Blues. He will be a welcomed boost for the lackluster Jacket's power-play.

Colorado

Colorado is in big trouble as they have dropped seven of their last eight games and finished January with a 4-9 record. Most of their woes can be blamed on a lack of offense. Paul Stastny is third in team scoring, while playing 15 games less than their full-time starters. They recently juggled the lines as Ryan Smyth played with Wojtek Wolski and Marek Svatos. Milan Hejduk played with T.J. Hensick and Chris Stewart. Wolski was hot when he tallied six points in his first three games since being shifted from left wing to center, but only has four points in the past seven games. He desperately needs to pick up the offensive slack when given such a prime opportunity. Paul Stastny is still rehabbing his forearm, and will still be around two-to-three weeks away from returning to the Avs lineup.

Dallas

Dallas was in the same boat as Colorado but managed to rattle off four consecutive victories to finish January with a 7-3-2 record and in playoff contention. One of the main reasons could be attributed to the improved play of Marty Turco. He played in all 12 of the Stars' January games and finished with a 2.42 GAA and a .910 SP. I still think he's in store for a huge second-half as he has career post-All-Star numbers of 2.00 and .918. He's going to be the key in helping me make a push to winning the Dobber Expert's pool this year. Another factor is that the secondary scoring is beginning to pick up the offensive slack for the Stars. The Stars have scored 17 goals from 10 different scorers during this four-game winning streak.

Detroit

Detroit is dealing with the injury bug as both Henrik Zetterberg and Tomas Holmstrom both succumb to injuries this past week. When one door closes it always opens up another as the Red Wings got a taste of last season's Finnish Elite League MVP, Ville Leino. He scored a beautiful goal against the Caps on Saturday night:

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[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYtLu-dfLsM>]

With his gifted offensive ability, it looks like they won't be desperate to bring back Hossa in the offseason. They probably would be better off re-signing the trio of Leino, Jiri Hudler and Johan Franzen rather than fork out the money just to keep Hossa. Leino will still be an excess piece to the Red Wings offense once Zetterberg and Holmstrom return to the lineup, but if he can score another pretty goal, it would certainly make the Red Wings management team think twice about sending him back down to Grand Rapids.

Edmonton

Edmonton's season has pretty much been a yo-yo. They won five of six heading into the All-Star break then get drubbed by the Sabres 10-2 in their first game back. They rebounded well in a 3-1 win over the Wild, but then come out flat against the Predators on Sunday night. Although they currently hold a playoff berth if the season were to end today, they won't have as much luck 33 games from now if they play such inconsistent hockey. Dustin Penner is continuing to be in Craig MacTavish's doghouse as he was detached from the Oilers' top-line on Sunday night. He only has four points in the 12 past contests and continues to build more evidence that the Oilers majorly overpaid for his services when poaching him from the Ducks in the 2007 offseason. Robert Nilsson picked up an assist while replacing Penner on the top-line in Sunday afternoon's contest and looks to be a viable candidate to fill that role until they can find a permanent fixture on the left wing of Shawn Horcoff and Ales Hemsky.

Los Angeles

The Kings are continuing to experiment with their lineup. Kyle Calder has recently been moved into a top-six role and has been rewarded with decent offensive output as he has tallied seven points in the past five games playing with Dustin Brown and Jarret Stoll. The Kings have a tall task ahead of them as they play 12 of their next 16 games away from Staples center. They also only have 11 home games remaining for the rest of the season, which makes the hill even that much more difficult to climb. Alex Frolov has four goals in the past five games, and is on pace to finish the season with a 35 goals. Brown continues to be red-hot as he has a five-game goal-scoring streak in which he has tallied six goals. He has an outside shot of reaching 45 goals this season. Since Jack Johnson's return to the Kings lineup, Kyle Quincey has seen his ice-time take a big hit. In five contests, he has only breached the 20 minute mark once as opposed to being under the 20 minute mark only twice in the previous 14 contests. He still has

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four points in the five games, so I'm not too worried about his offensive production. Jon Quick made both starts this week and went 1-1 while allowing six goals. It'll be interesting to see if Murray continues to go with Quick, or will they bounce the ball back into Erik Ersberg's court this week.

Minnesota

The Wild finished January with a 7-5-1 record. M.A. Bergeron had a huge game notching three points including the game-winner in overtime on Saturday. He was a plus five with four points and seven shots on goal this week. At only 14% Yahoo-owned he might be another bargain bin find heading into the final stretch of the fantasy season. Mikko Koivu's fantasy value is beginning to decline. The points are still currently there, but the SOG is starting to drop which worries me. He had 49 in November, 47 in December but just 29 for January. Drop in SOG usually means drop in points. P.M. Bouchard finished January on a high as he tallied seven points in the last three contests. At 32% Yahoo-owned along with dual winger eligibility, he's a solid fantasy option to own in fantasy pools moving forward. Still no news on the Niklas Backstrom front, I still think the Wild is left with little or no options but to deal him at the trade deadline. I'd snatch up Josh Harding if you have a free roster spot.

Nashville

The Predators are heating up at the right time as J.P. Dumont has a goal in all three games since the All-Star break. He was recently reunited with Jason Arnott and Steve Sullivan on the top-line for the Predators. Martin Erat is heating up as he's picked up 11 points in 13 games since the calendar rolled over to 2009. Shea Weber's point-less streak has now reached four consecutive games. He still averaged 3.5 SOG per contest during that span, so that's a positive, but I'll offer the same advice that I did last week. In one-year leagues, use his hot start to see if you can pawn him off for a more consistent producer with higher upside like Jay Bouwmeester, Chris Pronger or Dennis Wideman. Pekka Rinne started all three contests between the pipes for the Preds since the All-Star break. He's 2-1 with a 2.37 GAA and a brilliant .924 SP. If he keeps those numbers up, it'd be near impossible for Dan Ellis to regain his number one status over Rinne.

Phoenix ☐ ☐

The Coyotes' power-play has just been woeful this season, in the last three games they are a combined one for 18, which has dropped them to second-last in the league for that statistic operating at a dismal 13.2%. Daniel Carcillo has regained his PIMs crown as he now has 146 PIMs on the season. His measly six points this season is still a huge disappointment though. Peter Mueller is still suffering from a concussion he sustained on Jan. 27th against the Ducks. He's still considered day-to-day but could be returning to the Coyotes' lineup very shortly. I own him in a couple of fantasy pools, but am ready to cut him loose any day now, I'm just not sure that he's going to have the breakout season that we were all expecting him to have this year. Olli Jokinen's struggles are still continuing as he's only on pace to finish the season with 244 SOG, which would be a season low that he hasn't hit since the 2002-03 season. Shane Doan continues to score in twos or nothing as in the past 10 contests, he has five two-point games

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and five goose eggs. Ed Jovanovski's pointless streak has now hit four games. Ilya Bryzgalov remains winless since the All-Star game despite playing well in two of the three losses.

San Jose

Evgeni Nabokov played a club-record 170:58 minutes of shut out hockey before having it snapped 48 seconds into Saturday night's contest against the Blackhawks. In Dan Boyle's absence, Christian Ehrhoff extended his point-scoring streak to three-games. He has five points in the past four games, and as averaged 24 minutes of ice-time per contest. Rob Blake has also averaged over 23 minutes of ice-time during Boyle's absence. His plus 15 rating could be on pace to finish as a career-high. Milan Michalek has also been red-hot with nine points in the past seven games playing on the Sharks' second line alongside Joe Pavelski and Ryan Clowe. Jonathan Cheechoo continues to be ice-cold as his pointless streak reached four games.

St. Louis

Chris Mason is red-hot with a 3-1 record in the past 4 starts, in which he has recorded two shutouts. He might be making his push to establishing himself as the number one goalie in St. Louis. Patrik Berglund is making his push for the Calder trophy as he potted his 15th goal of the season. David Backes' previous career-high was 31 points, and he should smash that feat as he's currently only four points off that mark with 34 games remaining. Carlo Colaiacovo is starting to heat up as he has five points in the past six games, four of which have come on the power-play. 11 of his 14 overall points have come from the power play, which sits him inside the top-35 for defensemen in the league for power-play points.

Vancouver

Heads may be rolling soon as the Canucks continue to try to find their identity. Mats Sundin has been a bit of a disappointment as he has just only three points with a minus six rating in nine contests since joining the Canucks. It's definitely a far-cry from the career point-per-game player that we are used to donning the Leafs uniform. I think sooner or later we're going to see the IKEA line as Sundin should join both the Sedin's to help jumpstart the offense. Mason Raymond as gone from high (playing in the NHL Young stars game in the All-Star break) to getting benched and then scratched in two contests following the break. He's riding a 10-game pointless drought. Pavol Demitra continues to be out of the lineup with a groin injury. He was slated to return on Saturday but was deemed to be unfit to play in the contest. He'll probably take one or two more games off before re-attempting a comeback. Roberto Luongo was winless in the month of January as he had a 0-2-3 record with a 3.70 GAA and a .910 SP. He'll need to return to his career 2.59 and .919 numbers if the Canucks have any prayer at the post-season this year.

NHL teams are always tinkering in order to get the best chemistry for their team. Sometimes they find it right away, while other times they don't find it till the last month of the season. Some teams are so used to consistency that they never envisioned themselves ever having to make changes. Some teams are forced to make changes as the players are unresponsive to the coaches' demands, while some other changes occur to the players stepping up their play. With

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roughly 10 weeks left to play in fantasy hockey, it'll be interesting to see what changes happen from now to the end of the season.