

Rounding the First Turn

Written by Ryan Ma

Tuesday, 27 October 2009 07:09 - Last Updated Tuesday, 27 October 2009 22:38



Similar to the last couple of weeks, I'll walk you through the Western Conference to see what's been happening and catch you up with the latest trends plus this week's hot pickups/must drops.

As always before the good stuff let's take a look at a few:

Maaasquito Buzzings...

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

Goals

Assists

+/-

PPP

SOG

Stoll (3)

Dumont (4)

R. O'Reilly (5)

Grabners (4)

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Grabner (18)

Voracek (2)

Gagner (4)

Simmonds (5)

Gagner (3)

Hornqvist (14)

Brouwer (2)

Vermette (4)

Regher (4)

Kesler (2)

Burns (12)

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Vermette (2)

O'Reilly (3)

Cumiskey (2)

Umberger (2)

Aucoin (12)

Grabner (2)

Umberger (3)

Stewart (2)

Dumont (2)

Voracek (11)

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Anaheim

Ryan Getzlaf finally woke up this week, with a line of five points, two PIMs and 10 SOG. It appears that he's turning his slow start around and getting back towards the Getzlaf that we all know. The recently demoted Bobby Ryan had his biggest offensive outburst in Monday night's loss to the Leafs. I know there are a lot of Ryan owners out there who are glad to see that production, but I just don't think that it's going to be a consistent practice by the youngster. The Ducks dynamic duo on the blue line have certainly done alright for themselves to start the season, Scott Niedermayer and Ryan Whitney have combined for 13 points in 10 contests. I'd still like to see Whitney improve upon his 1.1 SOG per contest average to make more of a fantasy impact. It looks like Jonas Hiller has caught his first break of the season with J.S. Giguere resting on the sidelines with a groin strain, but then again Giguere's ugly numbers so far hasn't exactly provided Hiller with any competition for the number one gig.

Calgary

The Flames are off to a blistering 7-1-2 start, while sitting pretty atop the league by averaging a gaudy four goals scored per contest. Rene Bourque is pacing the way with 14 points in 10 contests, now might be a good time to sell high on the band-aid boy Bourque as he's only averaged 57 games per season in the first four years of his career. The Flames are getting nice support numbers from Curtis Glencross, Nigel Dawes, Eric Nystrom, and David Moss, I wonder how long it's going to last though? Miikka Kiprusoff continues to win his fair share of games, but like I've said a million times, you need to get support for him to help lower those peripheral stats.

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Chicago

Cristobal Huet is beginning to right the ship with solid back-to-back outings against the Wild and Predators. He's improved his last week numbers of 3.25 and .840 to 2.49 and .888 following the two victories. The Hawks have a relatively weak schedule facing the Preds, Canadiens, Coyotes and Avs the next four contests, which means that Huet should have a fairly good shot at improving his stats even more in the next few contests. A big question mark is still surrounding the status of both Brent Seabrook and Jonathan Toews as they are still dealing with concussion-like symptoms. Brent Sopel and the recently acquired Andrew Ebbett have certainly filled in nicely for the Hawks, but their fantasy value will plummet when the two stars return. Marian Hossa recently told a Chicago radio station, that he plans on returning to the Hawks' lineup on November 25th's contest against the Sharks, so if you have a free IR slot open you might want to consider stashing Hossa for the next month or so.

Colorado

Craig Anderson is certainly turning heads, as most experts had the Avalanche pegged to be the front runners for the Taylor Hall sweepstakes for this upcoming NHL entry draft, but they're off to a stunning 8-1-2 start, Wednesday night's contest will be the key matchup as they take on an equally hot Flames squad. The biggest improvement this season, compared to last year, has been their power-play, which sits nicely in fifth place in all of the NHL I've had the luxury of watching a few Avs games, and their crisp passing puck-possession power-play can honestly be compared to that of the Capitals and Penguins but without the "big-named" star power. If you are desperately looking for an upgrade in power-play points, look to see if you can get Paul Stastny, Milan Hejduk, Matt Duchene, Marek Svatos and Kyle Quincey for the cheap in your leagues. A youngster that is really starting to impress me is Ryan O'Reilly. He's second in the

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team in points scored with 10 points in 11 contests, and also possesses a plus 10 rating, along with 16 SOG. He's averaging 15:22 per contest for the Avs, but barely any PP time (0:39 per contest). If he can get himself onto the second PP unit, he could make a very strong case to be a fantasy own. With Darcy Tucker injured for an undisclosed amount of time look for O'Reilly to fill in until Tucks returns.

Columbus

There was major shuffling in Blue Jackets' territory this past week, as Ken Hitchcock pretty much played roulette with his lines. Derick Brassard got the raw end of the deal as he was dropped down to the fourth line with Nikita Filatov and Mike Blunden. While Jason Chimera and R.J. Umberger got a fantasy boost as both have been upgraded to Rick Nash's line. Jakub Voracek is beginning to heat up as he has six points in his last five contests. If you are still trying to recover from the early season injuries to Andrei Markov and Sergei Gonchar, you might want to lean towards the one percent owned Anton Stralman in Columbus. He's leading the Jackets in power-play ice-time with a 3:37 average since joining the Jackets eight contests ago. He's also picked up 14 SOG, while having three of his four points coming on the power-play. If you looked at Steve Mason's overall numbers you must be wondering didn't I draft this guy because he's supposed to be a stud? His 3.51 GAA and .880 save percentage certainly is scaring many owners, but if you look at the numbers a bit deeper you'll realize that he has home/away split numbers of 1.00 and .964 at home compared to 5.11 and .836 during away games. Mason owners rejoice as seven of their next nine contests will be at Nationwide, so if you are a savvy fantasy player make sure you scan the trading blocks in your leagues, as you might be able to pick up Mason on the cheap from a panicking owner.

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Dallas

The Stars might not be getting it done at home, but they are doing just fine on the road as they average four goals per contest on the road while just averaging 2.25 goals at home. The positives coming from the Stars' lineup is that it's a balanced team contribution rather than just a single line producing all the scoring, which makes it that much harder for teams to develop a defensive game plan to defend against the Stars. With that said, it's probably not as enjoyable for us fantasy pundits as we never know where the production is going to come from. After missing two contests for the sore groin, Brad Richards has rebounded with back-to-back two point efforts. He'll be just fine, if you were able to snag him late in your drafts this season. He's averaging a team-high 4:42 on the power-play each contest, which should lead to a plenty of PPP this season. Matt Niskanen has been out of the lineup due to a head injury. The latest reports have him probable for Wednesday night's contest against the Leafs, but if he doesn't look for Trevor Daley and Stephane Robidas to pick up the extra slack. Marty Turco's numbers have returned back to vintage Turco form (2.19 and .917), so it looks like last season's debacle is well and truly past him.

Detroit

With all the off-season departures along with the early season injuries, it looks like all the wheels in HockeyTown are falling off. The Wing's are only averaging 2.78 goals per contest, which is a far cry from their league-leading 3.52 that they potted last season. On top of that they're giving up 3.33 goals against, which ranks them fifth from the bottom in the league. If you look deeper at the numbers, they're not exactly giving up a ton more shots on goal each contest either, so really at the end of the day you really can only blame the goaltender. Chris Osgood will need to improve upon his 3.16 and .890 numbers or you can kiss their run for a third consecutive trip to the Stanley Cup finals goodbye. Pavel Datsyuk has four points and most importantly only 12 SOG in seven contests, which leads me to the conclusion that he's dealing with some sort of an injury. Niklas Lidstrom is also off to a somewhat slow start with only three points in nine contests, so if you have the opportunity to buy low on him you definitely should make a pitch to the Lidstrom-owner in your fantasy league.

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Edmonton

The Oilers dropped two big games this weekend, with consecutive losses to the Flames and the Canucks. The Oilers' offense seems to have dried up as they only managed to register one goal against both of their division rivals. Dustin Penner is continuing to do his best Alex Ovechkin impression with 15 points in 11 contests while leading the team with 32 SOG. The Oilers have been hit pretty hard by the flu bug, as Gilbert Brule and Mike Comrie missed a few game due to the flu, they should be past the worst of it and getting back to 100 percent this week. Edmonton also tested Patrick O'Sullivan at the point on their top power-play unit and looked pretty decent. He should be a decent fill in by getting pucks to the net which was missing after Sheldon Souray has left the Oilers lineup dealing with post-concussion symptoms. Nikoali Khabibulin better start watching his heels as Jeff Deslauriers is certainly nipping at them with a decent 1.51 GAA and .960 save percentage. If Khabibulin's numbers don't improve from his current 3.18 and .900 figures, he might find himself in a time share situation fairly quickly. If you are in a deep league you might want to consider stashing JDD for the long run.

Los Angeles

The Kings top-line of Anze Kopitar, Ryan Smyth and Dustin Brown has been phenomenal this past week as the trio has combined for a whopping 48 points in just 12 contests, which would pro-rate to a 328 point pace over a course of an entire season. Drew Doughty in continuing to build upon his impressive sophomore season with 11 points in 12 contests while garnering just over five and a half minutes of power-play ice-time per contest for the Kings. Alex Frolov owners must be as frustrated as I am, playing him when he picks up one point in three contests last week, and benching him when he picks up six points in three contests this week. Why oh why did I draft Frolov to play with my feelings? I have two under-the-radar picks who are both under

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10 percent owned in Yahoo leagues, Jarrett Stoll and Jack Johnson. Stoll's quietly strung together a very productive 10 points, four of which have come on the power-play, along with 32 SOG. Center is generally a very deep position, but if you are struggling after the Jason Arnott or Marc Savard injuries, you might want to turn towards Stoll. Johnson doesn't have as much to show on the scoreboard as Stoll does, but I think the potential is there. The fact that he's still averaging 3:40 on the Kings' second power-play unit, along with his fifth ranked rating amongst the team in SOG, it's just a matter of time before the puck starts to bounce his way and begins to tickle the twine.

Minnesota

The Wild are certainly struggling to score goals as they are tied for second last in terms of offensive production in the NHL. Only five players have scored above the 0.5 point-per-game pace which is certainly not going to be enough to get it done. On a positive note, Mikko Koivu does have 41 SOG, which ranks him tied with Sidney Crosby for eighth overall in the league. Brent Burns is finally picking up his game with three points and 12 SOG during this past week. He's only 27 percent owned in Yahoo leagues at the moment, so if you are looking for a decent waiver wire pick up you probably don't have to look much further than Burns. Nicklas Backstrom's numbers are returning back to Earth, as he posted a 2.21 GAA along with a .924 save percentage this past week. I don't think he'll pick up too many wins this season, but if you own Kiprusoff and are looking for a support type goalie you might want to consider dealing for Backstrom.

Nashville

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Nashville finally broke out of their offensive slump with a six goal outing on Wednesday night. The problem is five of the six goals came from defenseman rather than their offense, which means that the offense is still in the slumping funk, especially following another shutout loss on Saturday night. With Jason Arnott out of the lineup, it just appears that the Predators offense has dried up completely. He'll be sidelined for at least another week due to a left arm injury, which means that if you own any Preds now might be a good time to sell! It appears as though Dan Ellis and Pekka Rinne are trying to outduel each other to see who can do worst, as a tandem they have averaged 3.16 and .897 numbers on the year.

Phoenix

Shane Doan is continuing his hot streak with eight points in his last five contests. It's just too bad that the rest of the team hasn't been following Doan's trend. Ed Jovanovski has certainly been playing solid hockey with nine points and 28 SOG in 10 contests, which is certainly making a few owners who gambled on the 33-year old very happy. Peter Mueller only has two points and more alarmingly 16 SOG which is making a very strong case as a serious drop candidate at the moment. The problem is he doesn't have the numbers to support any reasoning to keep him. He's only averaging 15:27 and 2:52 on the power-play each contest for the Yotes, which you can probably get from many waiver wire candidates at the moment. Ilya Bryzgalov's numbers are still looking pretty good, but unfortunately this past week he posted 4.02 and .828 numbers which are probably a better representation of his end of year numbers than his 1.14 and .950 he had in last week's article.

San Jose

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Manny Malhotra and Benn Ferriero replaced Ryan Vesce and Devin Setoguchi in Sunday night's victory over the Flyers. The quartet of Joe Thornton, Patrick Marleau, Dany Heatley and Dan Boyle have certainly proved to be a handful this season as they have combined for a whopping 60 points so far this season. My lone question mark regarding the Sharks is the status of Rob Blake. He only has three points to show for 12 contests, which is certainly not anywhere near what we expected of him heading into this season. A positive note is that he does have 10 PIMs along with 23 SOG, which is a good sign if you are looking for peripheral stats and not points. The main blemish is his measly 2:14 power-play ice-time compared to Jason Demers 3:20. My advice is to hold for now, but if Blake is still not producing by next week then look for other alternatives. Joe Pavelski has begun skating on his own, which means that he's nearing a return to the Sharks' lineup fairly soon. I'm beginning to classify Evgeni Nabokov as a Kiprusoff-lite. Although Nabby will get his fair share of wins, his peripherals stats of 2.84 and .903 probably isn't going to provide you with an advantage over your opponents in the goalie stats. If you are a Nabby owner, you really only have two options. 1) keep Nabby, but find yourself a good number two support goalie like Ryan Miller, Backstrom or Anderson or 2) See if you can deal Nabby, while using his high win totals as your main selling point.

St. Louis

Nothing really big coming out of St. Louis as they're happily chugging along with a 500 record while sitting in the middle of the league in terms of offense and defense. The big injury blow goes to T.J. Oshie as he'll be sidelined for the next two weeks following an appendectomy. With Oshie out of the lineup, David Backes will now get his shot on the Blues' top six, hopefully that'll jump start his slow start to the season. Eric Brewer is "knocking on the door" to returning to the Blues' lineup following all his back problems, which probably isn't good news for Alex Pietrangelo owners out there. Carlo Colaiacovo replaced Erik Johnson on the Blues' top power-play unit on Friday night, and also spent some time with the same unit on Saturday evening before succumbing to an injury, so Johnson owners definitely keep an eye on that situation. Entering the season, I would have thought that Chris Mason had the number one job secured and locked, but with Ty Conklin's fine play, it might look more like the dreaded 50/50 split duty tandem quickly approaching.

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Vancouver

With unfortunate injuries always come welcomed returns. The Canucks got one back with Mathieu Schneider making his 2009-2010 debut against the Oilers on Sunday night, while picking up 14:51 of ice-time along with 2:18 on the power-play. The Canucks are probably okay for now, but I don't know what they're going to do when Sami Salo returns from his knee injury around late November/early December. Mikael Samuelsson is tops for SOG and second on the team for overall points and power-play points. He's also averaging 17:12 along with 3:12 on the power-play, which makes his 64 percent Yahoo-ownage rating a bit undervalued. Roberto Luongo is beginning to right the ship as he picked up his first shutout of the season by blanking the Oilers 2-0, and is really rewarding the owners who stuck by him during the rough times.

Questions or comments? Like always I'll be ready and willing to discuss them with you in the comments section below. We'll see you next week, as we bring back the 2009-10 version of the highly popular Fantasy Indicators of Success series.