

Revenge of the Fallen

Written by Ryan Ma

Tuesday, 22 December 2009 09:26 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 December 2009 09:34



What a crazy week it has been - we had an equipment truck on fire, another Wing is clipped, the Preds, Blues, Ducks and Wild are red-hot and we have a new “win and you’re in” strategy employed in Columbus. Let’s take a look at the latest news of what’s been happening on the Western front.

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

Maaasquito Buzzings...

Players in the last seven days with the highest production in each category who are less than

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50% owned in Yahoo leagues.

Goals

Assists

+/-

PPP

SOG

A. McDonald (3)

Kariya (5)

Goc (5)

Steen (4)

Steen (17)

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Hornqvist (3)

J. Ward (5)

Lombardi (5)

Kariya (3)

Modano (15)

Upshall (3)

Steen (4)

Hamhuis (4)

Nilsson (2)

Bertuzzi (14)

Goc (2)

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Goc (4)

Hornqvist (4)

Winchester (2)

Stewart (13)

R. Jones (2)

Lombardi (4)

Dumont (4)

1. McDonald(2)

Tkachuk (13)

Maaaasquito Bite of the week: Todd Bertuzzi

Bertuzzi is red-hot with nine points, 22 PIMs and 35 SOG in 10 December contests. The Red

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Wings have been decimated by injuries this season, which has opened up a door for Bertuzzi to gain a quality scoring role for Detroit. He's also averaging 17:47 overall and 2:38 in PP ice-time during that 10-game span. With Henrik Zetterberg scheduled to be out for a few weeks, look for Big Bert to get every opportunity to keep up this scoring pace.

Now onto the quick hits...

Anaheim Ducks

Last year January was the month that Bobby Ryan really took off with 16 points in 16 contests. Look for him to continue that trend this year. Saku Koivu has a career 15.5 shooting percentage for the month of December, which sort of explains why his current 28.6 shooting percentage is where it's at. Dan "bringing sexy-back" Sexton went pointless the last two games, but still lined up alongside Koivu and Ryan on the Anaheim second line. He's probably worth a keeper until the New Year. Scott Niedermayer has been awful defensively this month, as he has six minus contests (minus seven overall) in the final month of the year, but luckily the Ducks are 4-3-3 during that span. Ryan Whitney now has 11 points and 17 SOG in December. Hopefully you bought him when I mentioned him as a buy-low candidate a few weeks ago. Statistically speaking, January is J.S. Giguere's Achilles heel. He has a career 2.64 GAA along with a .904 save percentage in 66 January contests. Is it the opening that Hiller needs to claim the number one gig? There were earlier reports that Selanne could return early from his hand injury. The latest news is that it'll be early-mid January before he returns, but it should still be early enough to make an impact at the Olympics.

Calgary Flames

As mentioned last week, Jarome Iginla is back after snapping an eight-game goal-scoring drought. Dion Phaneuf is now riding a three-game point scoring streak after going pointless in

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the previous five. He's drilled back-to-back power-play bombs in the last two contests. Ian "Expert Audit" Fergusson, has been trying to pry Rene Bourque from me in the Dobber's Expert League for a few months now but to no avail. Bourque is averaging over two minutes of PP ice-time and close to 18 and a half minute of overall ice-time per contest. He's currently just slightly below the point-per-game pace, and with his injury woes behind him, should be close to that mark from here on out. If you are looking for some positional flexibility in your Yahoo pools see if you can acquire the underrated, Bourque. Despite owning dazzling 2.00 and .934 numbers for December, Miikka Kiprusoff is just 3-4-1 in eight starts. He's still on pace to start in 72 contests, so much for keeping him rested during the season.

Chicago Blackhawks

The Hawks offense is dangerous as there are now five players who have notched 10 goals with Dustin Byfuglien being the latest member to join that club. Troy Brouwer is the next potential candidate as he has eight goals. Duncan Keith is continuing to chug along as he now has 28 points, which is only 16 points short of the career-high that he set last season. The Team Canada brass has sure to take notice. Cam Barker continues to play himself off the Hawks squad as he's now pointless in the last 10 contests, while only tallying one point in the last 13 contests. He also has a grand total of three points since the end of October. Ouch! If you are a Barker owner, you probably should have cut bait a long time ago. Last week I mentioned the words goalie controversy between Cristobal Huet and Antti Niemi, and now you can safely put that to rest as Huet posted back-to-back shut outs to throw that thought out the door.

Colorado Avalanche

Paul Stastny now has 11 points in 10 December contests, a span in which he is also averaging 2.2 SOG per contest. Wojtek Wolski and Chris Stewart continue to ride the coattails of Stastny as they have now combined for 24 points in the 10 December contests for the Avs. Behind the Florida trio of Nathan Horton, Stephen Weiss and Michael Frolik, they could very much be the most underrated top-line in the NHL. Kyle Quincey has hit the mid-season wall as he only has

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three points in December, but a positive is that he's still getting pucks to the net with 21 SOG. Milan Hejduk's knee is just fine as he returned with four points in two contests since missing two games with the injury. He's a great complement to Matt Duchene on the Avs second line, but more importantly he's still averaging 4:45 on the Avs top PP unit, alongside Stastny, which should give him plenty of opportunities to pick up plenty of points on the PP. If you are shopping for right winger, you might want to move Hejduk near the top of your list. He is very under-the-radar at the moment, where you can get him fairly cheap. Craig Anderson's numbers are slipping as he has a 3.11 GAA along with a .893 save percentage in the month of December. Peter Budaj has 1.39 and .951 numbers in that same span, it's only a matter of time before coach Joe Sacco gives Budaj a few starts.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Things are going south in Columbus very quickly as they have lost 10 of their last 11 contests. Rick Nash continues to be the lone bright spot fantasy-wise for the Jackets. He's tied for 11th overall in terms of roto-rankings based on the criteria on FrozenPool. Anton Stralman was scratched for the last two contests due to stomach illness. I had high hopes for him this season, but I recently let him go in a few of my fantasy leagues because of his lack of overall fantasy production. He's still garnering plenty of PP ice-time (3:31 per contest), but it's the lack of SOG (one SOG per contest in the month of December) that caused me to send him to the waiver wire. If you are looking for a replacement my current personal favorite is Montreal's M.A. Bergeron. The biggest news coming out of the Columbus camp is the "win and you're in" approach that coach Ken Hitchcock has recently employed with Steve Mason and Mathieu Garon. I don't think it does either goalie any favors, but he desperately needs to jump start the tandem somehow. Mason gets the call on Thursday against the Stars, but if you are an owner of either Columbus goalie, I'd probably bench em until things settle down.

Dallas Stars

Loui Eriksson now has a seven-game point scoring streak in which he has tallied 10 points.

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He's also averaging 20:09 in ice-time along with 2.66 SOG in the past nine contests. Brad Richards has 18 points and a whooping 59 SOG in the past 15 contests. He's in serious contention to get back towards the 90 point plateau. Mike Ribeiro righted the ship this past week as he picked up five points along with six SOG. The emergence of Richards really negatively impacted upon Ribeiro's fantasy production this campaign. Brendan Morrow continues to under produce as he just has five points in nine December contests. After going quite cold for the past six weeks, Jamie Benn is on a three-game point-scoring streak. There's just too much depth up front for the Stars for him dazzle the fantasy world this season. Stephane Robidas is on pace to shatter his career-high by Christmas. He has 22 points in 35 contests and is just four shy of his career-high of 26. Robidas has almost three times the point production despite averaging 40 seconds less of PP ice-time per contest compared to Matt Niskanen. Hopefully a few you guys listened to my call of picking him up earlier this season. After praising him last week, Marty Turco did a complete 360 this past week as he managed to put up a 3.79 GAA along with a 0.872 save percentage in four starts. OUCH!

Detroit Red Wings

The biggest news coming out of Detroit is the loss of Zetterberg for the next few weeks with a shoulder injury. It'll certainly be a tough road for the already depleted Red Wing lineup. Todd Bertuzzi might just be the beneficiary of all of the injuries as mentioned above. He picked up four points, 14 PIMs and 14 SOG this past week. Pavel Datsyuk is doing his part to keep Detroit afloat with seven points in the last six contests. Tomas Holmstrom now has two points in the past three games, what's alarming is that he only has a grand total of one SOG. Another key name that has emerged from the rash of injuries is Drew Miller. He has five points in the last five games. The journeyman isn't a huge offensive threat, but he should enjoy an increase in fantasy production until the "regulars" return to the lineup. Brian Rafalski finally snapped his 10-game pointless drought, by picking up two assists last Thursday. He's far from being in the clear. If you are a Nicklas Lidstrom or Rafalski owner, I'd start shopping them. H2H stats of Chris Osgood versus Jimmy Howard for December: 2.59 GAA and .917 compared to 2.00 and .930 respectively. Edge: Howard, but who has number one status? Osgood... Jonathan Ericsson will be out longer than the originally estimated two weeks. It'll be closer to four weeks. Valtteri Filppula recently re-joined the Red Wings in practice, he could return shortly after the Christmas break.

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Edmonton Oilers

Consistently inconsistent is probably the two words that would best describe the Oilers. They start the season with a 6-2-1 record then followed that up by losing six of their next seven. They recently had a five game winning-streak just to follow that up by losing four consecutive. What gives? What has been consistent is the fantasy production of Dustin Penner. He's averaging close to a point-per-game pace along with three SOG per contest. Those are the types of numbers that lead you to the glory land come April. Sam Gagner also snapped a three-game pointless drought by notching his eighth goal of the season in Monday night's blowout loss to the Blues. Andrew Cogliano broke a 17-game goalless drought Saturday night against the Caps. Robert Nilsson notched two-goals on Thursday night against the Preds, but quickly found himself in coach Pat Quinn's fourth line doghouse on Saturday. With the subpar play of both Cogliano and Nilsson both could be trade bait material come trade deadline time. Sheldon Souray had his three-game point-scoring streak snapped with a goose egg Monday night. Jeff Deslaurier played in his 14th consecutive game on Saturday night, which is the longest in his career. His current 2.60 GAA and .916 save percentage isn't dazzling, but should be good enough to hold the fort for many fantasy squads. Devan Dubnyk gave JDD a breather as he started against the Blues on Monday. Nikolai Khabibulin is still experiencing problems with his back, and doesn't appear to be returning to the Edmonton lineup anytime soon. Surgery is an option, but the Bulin-wall is trying to forego that option as it will cause him to miss the remainder of the season.

Los Angeles Kings

The Kings don't play until Saturday, so there's not a lot of news coming out of LA. The time off probably gave a chance for Randy Jones, Jack Johnson, Jarett Stoll and Ryan Smyth to get rest up their injuries. Anze Kopitar is starting to hit the wall as he only has five points in 10 contests this month. Now might be a good time to buy-low on Kopitar as I still think he finishes around the 80-85 point mark, which would equate to around 47 points in the next 45 contests. Take advantage of this slow stretch to see if you can acquire Kops on the cheap. Jon Quick continues to be a workhorse as he has started in 34 of the 37 contests for the Kings so far this campaign. Look for that trend to continue as coach Terry Murray doesn't seem to have much confidence in backup Erik Ersberg.

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Minnesota Wild

Martin Havlat extended his point-scoring streak to six contests. During that span he has amassed, nine points and 20 SOG all while averaging 19:07 per contest for the Wild. Andrew Ebbett returned to the Minnesota lineup last week after missing five games dealing with a concussion. Mikko Koivu continues to chug along with 33 points in 36 contests. He's garnering all the quality ice-time in Minny, so don't expect those numbers to drop too much moving forward. Andrew Brunette has alternated goose eggs with one assist in his last eight contests. Marek Zidlicky is showing signs of slowing down as he only has two points and eight SOG in the last nine contests. Niklas Backstrom has now allowed four goals in back-to-back performances which drops his dazzling December numbers to 2.31 and .909. They aren't exactly top-five numbers, but they should be good enough to hold the fort for contending teams.

Nashville Predators

I've learned a couple of things in the past few seasons since becoming a hardcore fan of hockey. One is to never doubt the Sabres' coach Lindy Ruff and the second is to never doubt the Pred's coach Barry Trotz. Those two seem to possess the Midas touch as it seems no matter what they are given they always seem to make the most out of it. The Preds are now 6-0-1 in the last seven contests while tallying a whooping 33 goals against their opposition. If Martin Erat is still sitting on your waiver wire, you better scoop him up ASAP. He has 20 points in 16 contests since November 21, which sits second to only Sidney Crosby in production during that span. I mentioned Joel Ward as a sleeper candidate in the pre-season Dobber guide, and with his recent three-game multi-point scoring streak, he's making me look like a genius. He has 18 points in 34 contests. I think he gets up to the 40-45 point mark by season's end, which would equate to 22-27 points in the remaining 46 contests. Marcel Goc is on pace to set new career-highs for goals and points, but too bad he won't play much of a role fantasy-wise this season. Jason Arnott is on the shelf once again dealing with an upper-body injury, Trotz said that he might not be ready for Tuesday night's contest against the Canucks, but should definitely be ready for Saturday night's contest against Chicago. So at least we know that it's not a serious injury. Could there be a fourth consecutive year of goalie controversy in Nashville? Dan Ellis is now 5-1-0 along with a 2.33 GAA and a .924 save percentage in his last six games,

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while Pekka Rinne is 3-0-2 along with a 3.62 GAA and a .884 save percentage in his last seven contests.

Phoenix Coyotes

The Coyotes stingy fourth ranked defensive scheme continues to stymie their opponents as they're allowing only 2.27 goals against per game. The downside is that their defensive scheme also stymies their offense as they're tied for 23rd overall by scoring just 2.53 goals per contest, which explains why they don't have any players above the 23 point mark on the season. Scottie Upshall is returning to last year's form as he now has eight points in the last eight contests. It seems the Coyotes' top-line trio of Shane Doan, Matthew Lombardi and Upshall are starting to find some of their groove from last season as they combined for 10 points in Monday night's huge 5-2 win over the Blue Jackets. If you are looking for a player to take a gamble on definitely look no further than Upshall. Upshall and Lombardi is both eight and seven percent Yahoo owned respectively. Doan has 114 SOG which ties him with Kyle Okposo for 22

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overall in that department. Radim Vrbata has 131, which sits him tied for sixth overall in the league. Ed Jovanovski is continuing his solid season with 18 points in 25 contests. A player that I've kept my eye on is Zbynek Michalek. In the past 10 contests, he's averaged 25:46 and 2:46 on the PP while registering 19 SOG for the Coyotes. The points haven't really been there, but with that amount of quality ice-time, he might just be due for a breakout fairly soon. Ilya Bryzgalov is 6-2-1 while possessing an impressive 1.99 GAA and .934 save percentage in the month of December. Those are pretty solid numbers if you ask me.

San Jose Sharks

Devin Setoguchi snapped his 10-game pointless drought with a two-point effort in Thursday night's 4-1 victory over the Ducks. Joe Thornton is on pace to tally 111 points and has 12 points in December. His partners in crime, Patrick Marleau and Dany Heatley, have also combined for 17 points during that span as well. Joe Pavelski has only picked up four points in December,

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which isn't all that great, but a positive sign is his SOG totals. He has 34 in eight contests so it should just be a matter of time before they start creeping into the net. Dan Boyle now has a six-game point scoring streak in which he has tallied one goal along with five assists. He also has 25 SOG in eight December contests while ranking fifth overall in terms of PP ice-time per contest by a defenseman (4:45). Evgeni Nabokov continues to make his case as a top-tiered fantasy goalie as he proudly owns a 10-2-6 record along with a stunning 2.20 GAA and .929 save percentage since the end of October.

St. Louis Blues

After starting with four points in his first 21 contests, David Backes now has 14 in the last 14 games. For those of you who were patient with Backes you're now reaping the rewards. Brad Boyes extended his point-scoring streak to three games with a two point effort in Monday night's blowout win against the Oilers. He now has nine points in 10 December contests. Andy McDonald also potted a pair in the 7-2 victory and has alternated points and goose eggs in the last seven contests. Statistically speaking Keith Tkachuk has operated at a better than point-per-game pace during his career in the month of December. He currently has six points in 10 contests, but could be in store for a few huge games in the five remaining December contests. Alex Steen busted out for four points and six SOG versus Edmonton. The Blues forward lineup is just too deep for Steen to score consistently in five-on-five situations. He was manning the point on the Blues top PP unit alongside Boyes, McDonald, Tkachuk and Colaiacovo so he might be able to pick up a few PPP along the way. Erik Johnson was leading the Blues in scoring just a few weeks ago, but has gone pointless in his last five outings, which is a shock considering the Blues put up 17 goals during that span. His SOG has also dramatically dropped as he registered only eight SOG during his goose egg drought. His ice-time is still there as he averaged 20:47 during that span, but his PP ice-time is diminishing as he's giving way to Carlo Colaiacovo on the top PP unit for St. Louis. Chris Mason versus Ty Conklin: 2.55 and .910 compared to 2.27 and .930. Does Conks deserve to have a fair shot at the number one gig? Hell Yeah!

Vancouver Canucks

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Ryan Kesler is certainly backing the numbers that he put up last season as he's continuing to flirt with the point-per-game pace with 31 points in 36 games. He actually has 65 points in 68 contests dating back to last season. If you are looking for a very quiet improvement to your fantasy squad, I would certainly suggest adding Kesler to your roster. Henrik Sedin finally had his point-scoring streak snapped at nine games, a streak where he tallied 16 points during the span. Mason Raymond is stepping up his play with eight points in the last eight contests. He's already set career-highs in goals and points with 14 and 25 respectively. He's also on pace for over 200 SOG as well. I don't think he keeps it up for the entire season just because once Pavol Demitra returns to the Vancouver lineup, that quality ice-time will dry up for Raymond, but until that happens he's probably a great pickup for the next month or so. Kevin Bieksa's play has certainly slipped in the last few games as he currently rides a four-game pointless drought. He also only has four points in the last 15 contests. If there are better options on the waiver wire I suggest you make the swap if you are a Bieksa owner.

Questions or comments? Like always I'll be ready and willing to discuss them with you in the comments section below. I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and I hope to see you guys back here again next week to discuss more from the Western Conference.