Following along the same footsteps as my Eastern counterpart, here is the second part of the Western Conference postulations.

All NHL teams have between 19 and 22 games remaining in the regular season. But not all games are created equal. For the shrewd fantasy owner, there is opportunity here.

Thanks to the shootout, there are just two teams in the Western Conference that have a sub-.500 record. Alright, enough chit-chat, let’s get started:

Dallas Stars

Home (18-6-5)

Away (10-15-7)

Total (28-21-12)

Games Remaining

12

9

21

Against .500 or Worse

1

0

1

Against Better Than .500

11

9

20

Against 75 Points or Better

8

5

13

The Stars have a rough schedule ahead as they only have one contest against a sub-500 team. On the plus side, they do have a 62 percent home winning percentage and with 12 home contests remaining that should definitely help soften the blow. They do have a tough road-trip

against the Pens, Caps and Sabres in early March, followed by another tough four-game road-trip against the Preds, Sharks, Kings, and Ducks at the end of March which would surely determine their post-season fate.

3 Games – LA, SJ

2 Games – STL, ANA

1 Game – PIT, WSH, BUF, COL, PHI, OTT, PHX, NSH, EDM, CHI, MIN

Gold Prospects:

Brad Richards has very interesting home/away point split numbers. In 59 contests, he has 41 points at home compared to just 25 on the road. With 12 home games in the final 21 contests, look for Richards to finish near his career-high of 91 points at the conclusion of this campaign.

The trio of Richards, **Loui Eriksson,** and Jamie Benn have accounted for 27.4 percent of the entire Stars' offense. Eriksson has also spent close to 80 percent of his overall ice-time

alongside Richards and with that amount of ice-time along with the production that the trio has produced, Eriksson should have a very eventful final quarter for the Stars.

After returning from a throat injury earlier in February, **Mike Ribeiro** garnered five points in three contests prior to the Olympic break. Ribeiro has 31 points in 30 career contests against the Kings, and with three remaining contests with the Kings that should definitely provide an extra boost in his numbers moving forward.

Silver Liners:

Brendan Morrow also has very interesting splits this season. He has 20 points in 28 home contests, compared to just 13 points in the same amount of away contests. With a favourable 12/nine split of home/away games remaining, Morrow should see his point-per-game average near the 0.66 mark than the 0.5 mark the rest of the way.

After having a huge opening rookie month with 10 points in 14 contests, **Jamie Benn** hit a bit of a snag for the next three months as he only tallied 13 points in the next 41 contests. He did begin to turn it around prior to the Olympic break as he picked up six points in six contests in February. The youngster has spent 88 percent of his shifts, in the last three contests, alongside Brendan Morrow. If that trend continues Benn could definitely operate at the point-per-game pace moving forward.

With 15 PPP on the season, **Stephane Robidas** ranks 17th overall in terms of PP production amongst blue-liners in the league. He averages 3:11 per contest with the man advantage, so don't expect his production to dip for the remainder of this fantasy season.

Bronze Suspects:

James Neal has 14 points in 15 divisional contests. The Stars have nine remaining games against divisional rivals, so Neal might just be in for a very good final 21 contests.

Steve Ott just received a huge payday as he signed a $14 mil deal for the next four years. Perhaps he salvages the final 21 contests of the season to thank the organization that awarded him huge contract for a sub-par pro-rated 36 point season.

A 0.87 point-per-game average is certainly not something to scoff at. That's the average that **Mi ke Modano**
has against his division rivals. Granted those numbers are over a 20-year NHL career, and he is

a bit past his prime, but with nine divisional contests remaining he should still be fairly productive for the rest of this campaign.

Detroit Red Wings

Home (16-8-5)

Away (12-13-7)

Total (28-21-12)

Games Remaining

12

9

21

Against .500 or Worse

3

2

5

Against Better Than .500

9

7

16

Against 75 Points or Better

3

4

7

Similar to the Stars, the Red Wings will spend the majority of their remaining contests at the Joe. They have a fairly comfortable schedule as they have five contests against sub-500 teams. With nine divisional contests remaining, they could certainly make up some huge ground on the Hawks if they get on a hot-streak.

3 Games – NSH, CLB

2 Games – CHI, VAN, MIN, EDM, CAL

1 Game – COL, BUF, PIT, STL, PHI

Gold Prospects:

Henrik Zetterberg has 146 points in 148 career divisional contests. The Red Wings will have nine divisional contests remaining for the rest of this campaign, so look for the Swedish

Olympian to produce at a point-per-game pace the rest of the way.

Pavel Datsyuk hasn't exactly lived up to standards as he only has 49 points in 59 contests so far this season. On the flip side, he did tally 12 points in the final 10 contests prior to the Olympic break and with the Red Wings infirmary clearing out, the high octane Red Wings' offense will be back on track following the break. Look for Datsyuk to be an integral part of the Detroit line up moving forward.

The offensive struggles for **Niklas Lidstrom** this season has been widely documented throughout the internet. He's currently on pace to finish the season with only 47 points, which would be his lowest total since the debacle in the 2003-04 season. If you delve a little further to analyze his stats in 10-game spans, you would see production numbers of: 3, 4, 4, 6, 8 and 8, which does indicate that he has gotten stronger as the season progressed. He has a career 0.80 point-per-game average in the months of March/April, so look for similar numbers from the Swede in the final 21 contests.

Silver Liners:

After blowing out his knee in the third contest of the season, **Johan Franzen** returned with a bang in February while registering three points in three contests for the Wings. In the last two seasons, Franzen has tallied 18 and 17 points respectively, so he definitely could be in for a huge spring this season.

Brian Rafalski had six points in six contests prior to the Olympic break. I generally favour players who had that extra two-week break to get rested up for the final stretch, but I think in Rafalski's case, the Olympic break might have just woken up the slumbering American blue liner. Since the lockout, he has a 0.63 point-per-game average in March/April, so similar to Lidstrom, Rafalski should have an awesome final stretch of the season.

Since the return of Franzen back into the Red Wing line up, **Valtteri Filppula** has spent just a tad over a third of his ice-time alongside, Todd Bertuzzi and Dan Cleary and just over 20 percent of his ice-time alongside, Cleary and Johan Franzen. Filppula was nursing a bit of a groin injury prior to the Olympics, but the Olympics showing has demonstrated that he's probably getting over the injury. Look for the Finn to continue on a similar 2:31 on the power-play each contest for Detroit.

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Bronze Suspects:

Despite missing 12 contests this season, **Dan Cleary** is still on his always under rated 40-point pace. With the return of the cavalry, Cleary should enjoy some playing time alongside a few of the Wings' star players the rest of the way. My prediction is that he tallies 14 points in the

remaining 21 contests.

Tomas Holmstrom's knee gave him plenty of problems this season, while forcing him to miss the Olympics. All the current reports have him back at practice and apparently fully healthy and ready for the stretch run. The Wings will need his pesky big body in front of opposing goalies to help them make the post-season this campaign, so definitely consider him a strong buy-low candidate.

I'm going to go out on a limb on this one, and there'll be plenty of haters on this one, but **Chris Osgood**
could be a very strong sleeper candidate in the final quarter of the season. Osgood was pretty much in a similar situation last season in duelling with Ty Conklin for the number one gig in Detroit before reeling off a 15-8 record, along with a 2.01 GAA and a dazzling .926 save percentage in the playoffs. Let's make a quick comparison, at this point last year, Osgood had a 3.25 GAA along with a .880 save percentage, this year he has a 2.94 GAA along with a slightly better .891 save percentage. Between March/April last season, when it really matters the most, he posted a 2.63 GAA along with a .904 save percentage. Could he do the same once again this year? No knock on Jimmy Howard, but Osgood has 129 career playoff games under his belt, while Howard has a giant goose egg. I know Howard has far superior numbers than Osgood this season, but so did Conklin exactly 12 months ago, and how did that situation end? For those of you who whole-heartedly believe that coach Mike Babcock will head into the post-season with Howard as his number one it could be a gigantic mistake. If you are a Howard-owner, I'd definitely do everything in your power to get your hands on Osgood for the final stretch run.

Edmonton Oilers

Home (11-17-4)

Away (8-19-2)

Total (19-36-6)

Games Remaining

9

12

21

Against .500 or Worse

0

2

2

Against Better Than .500

9

10

19

Against 75 Points or Better

5

3

8

There's probably nothing exciting left for Oil fans this season as the team will essentially make the best push they can to get into the number one draft position heading into the entry draft in June. They do face MIN, DET, and ANA for seven contests, so they definitely could play spoiler

as teams push for the post-season.

3 Games – MIN

2 Games – DET, ANA

1 Game – NSH, CHI, NJ, OTT, MON, TO, CLB, SJ, VAN, STL, DAL, PHX, COL, LA

Gold Prospects:

I don't know if there are any serious gold prospects on a team that owns the 29th ranked offense in the entire league, but if you are looking for a few bright spots you might want to consider **Sam Gagner.**
He posted 21 points in the final 20 contests for the Oilers last season, and 15 in the final 17 the year before. There isn't a lot of statistical data to draw from, but with 36 points in 37 career March/April contests, Gagner might be developing into a strong must-own second-half player. He might be playing on the hapless Oilers, but there's always a slivering lining on the darkest of clouds.

Dustin Penner has completely lit up the Central division as he's tallied 23 points in 14 contests. Lucky for Penner he still has six games remaining against teams from the Central, so it should help provide a much-needed boost to his seasonal point totals.

17 of **Lubomir Visnovsky's** 32 points this season has come with the man advantage, which ranks him 12th in the league in that department amongst all blue-liners. That coupled with the fact that he also averages 3:22 per contest on the PP should provide him with enough fantasy value to be a great asset for the stretch run.

Silver Liners:

Patrick O'Sullivan's 162 SOG rank him second amongst the Oilers in that department. The Oilers appear to be sellers at the deadline and his name could be bandied about in a few potential deadline deals, which could skyrocket his fantasy value if he does land on a contending team like the Pens. Now might be a great time to stash him on your roster. If he doesn't get dealt you could easily just return him back to the waiver wire.

Mike Comrie could also be in a similar boat, as he's scheduled to become a UFA at the end of the season. He does have 550 career NHL contests under his belt, and that experience could definitely be an asset to contending teams who are in need of a third line center.

Bronze Suspects:

I'm really clutching at straws here... but I think **Jeff Deslauriers** could also make an impact on a few fantasy teams during the final stretch. The way I see it, is that in fantasy leagues, goalies are at an absolute premium. I've seen a few leagues where owners are clambering at guys like Peter Budaj, Andrew Raycroft, or Curtis McElhinney just to pick up a few starts, so owning a 50/50 goalie is definitely a luxury. If you want to look at it from a statistical point of view, let's say you are in a roto league with 164 max goalie starts and you've used up 123 of the starts already. If your current save percentage is .910, adding a .900 save percentage goalie the rest of the way would only drop your overall save percentage to .908, not really that big of a drop is it? But in JDD you would pick up a heap of saves, which might boost you up a few slots, as he faces close to 31 opposing SOG per contest. Same could be said for GAA, if you currently have a 2.50 GAA, adding a 3.19 GAA goalie like JDD would only jump it to 2.67 at season's end, which might be a small price to pay if you can gain some solid ground in saves. Either way now is a good time to take a look at the standings to see where you stand on the roto ladder, and what areas you can boost to maximize your end of year points.

If you look deeper into **Shawn Horcoff's** stats you could actually pick out a few positives, he actually has 17 points in 30 home contests compared to just six on the road. If you look at the Oilers home/road splits, they also provide a very telling tale. The Oilers are actually ranked 15th overall in terms of goals scored at home, but are dead last on the road. So if you are smart about your plays/sits, it might not be a bad idea to pick up Horcoff for the Oil home matchups, but bench him on the aways.

Los Angeles Kings

Home (18-9-3)

Away (19-11-1)

Total (37-20-4)

Games Remaining

10

11

21

Against .500 or Worse

2

1

3

Against Better Than .500

8

10

18

Against 75 Points or Better

4

3

7

The Kings will most likely not catch the Sharks for the division crown, so the final 21 contests will probably be spent to cement themselves into the post-season. The big test will be their back-to-back contests against the Avs near the end of March.

3 Games – NSH, COL

2 Games – CHI, DAL, ANA

1 Game – DAL, MON, CLB, NYI, STL, MIN, VAN, PHX, EDM

Gold Prospects:

If you are looking for the fantasy force of the Kings, you don't have to look any further than **Anze Kopitar**. The Yugoslavian has certainly had a big break out "magical fourth year" as he's tallied 64 points so far this campaign. The interesting thing is that when Ryan Smyth is in the Kings' line up, Kops has tallied 58 points in 46 contests, but just six in 15 when Smyth is absent. With Smyth fully rested after a two-week layoff, Kops should definitely enjoy his 1.26 point-per-game average with Smyth as his line mate.

In just his sophomore season in the NHL, **Drew Doughty** has firmly entrenched himself as a potential force to be reckoned with as he's on pace to finish the season above the 60-point plateau. His stint with Team Canada will certainly provide him with a great learning experience that may help translate into the NHL level for the former second overall pick. He should be in for a great final 21 contests.

Despite missing 15 contests earlier this season with an upper body injury, **Ryan Smyth,** has had a relatively quiet 38-point season. I've discussed earlier the impact that Smyth has had on Kopitar's fantasy production, so look for that chemistry to once again translate into a ton of points for the duo.

Silver Liners:

Jonathan Quick has really surprising home/away split numbers. He has 2.35 GAA along with a .920 save percentage away from the Staples center compared to 2.69 and .894 in Los Angeles. Goalies tend to play much better at home than away, but the opposite seems to be true for the American. Quick pitched a shutout the last time he faced the Avs, and with three contests remaining against Colorado he might just pick up a few more.

Jarret Stoll has 16 PPP on the season, which sits him behind only Kopitar and Doughty on the team in that department. He averages 2:56 with the man advantage per contest, so look for him to pick up a few more PPP along the way.

Bronze Suspects:

The enigma of **Alex Frolov** continues to plague all fantasy poolies, as we just don't know what to expect from the talented Russian. The only information that I could dig up is that he does have favourable home splits, as he has 21 points at the Staple Center compared to just 16 on the road. I also dug up that in his seven multi-point efforts five of them have been on home soil, compared to two on the road. From a historical perspective, Frolov does have his worst statistical months in March/April, so that might be something you might want to file in the back of your head for the future.

With only eight points in his last eight contests, **Michal Handzus** was definitely heading into the Olympic break on a high. In the last 10 contests, he's essentially been sutured to the hip of Frolov as he's spent 74.4 percent of his overall ice-time alongside the Russian. Handzus had a very eventful Olympic break and almost broke all of our Canadian hearts in the semi-final, so it'll be interesting to see if he can carry that into his play in the NHL.

Despite garnering over 108 minutes on the PP, **Jack Johnson** has only tallied 10 PPP on the season. The young American garnered plenty of experience while suiting up for Team USA during the Olympics, so let's see if that will translated to anything of importance for Johnson in the NHL.

If you ignore his 2006/07 March and April numbers, **Dustin Brown** has consistently been a huge spring flop. In the 06/07 season he did manage to tally 18 points in 19 contests, but if you look at all of his other seasons, he has managed to only tally 20 points in 67 contests. So if you are a Brown-owner, you might want to see if you can move him on the down-low at the trade deadline.

Minnesota Wild

Home (21-8-2)

Away (9-19-2)

Total (30-27-4)

Games Remaining

10

11

21

Against .500 or Worse

2

3

5

Against Better Than .500

8

8

16

Against 75 Points or Better

4

2

6

The Wild are definitely in control of their own post-season fate as they have eight contests against their division rivals the rest of the way. If the Wild can manage to sweep the four remaining contests against the Flames, they'll definitely put themselves into a strong post-season position. If you are looking for a big gamble for your fantasy squads stocking up on Wild players might not be a bad idea.

4 Games - CAL

3 Games – EDM

2 Games – DET, SJ

1 Game- FLA, BUF, STL, NSH, CLB, PHI, LA, CHI, VAN, DAL

Gold Prospects:

The future of Finnish hockey will rest on **Mikko Koivu's** hands, mark my words. The Finn has completely mind-boggling home/away splits, as he has 39 points at home (31 contests) compared to just 17 on the road (30 contests). The Wild have a pretty even home/away schedule the rest of the way, and with eight contests remaining against Canadian teams, Koivu should have a very eventful final quarter.

Speaking of being attached at the hips, that's exactly the situation that is happening between Koivu and **Andrew Brunette.** Brunette has spent a whopping 90.8 percent of his overall ice-time alongside the budding Finnish superstar. His 22 PPP currently ranks him tied for 19th in the entire league in that department. I don't foresee the situation changing much for the final quarter of the season, so Brunette should be fantasy gold moving forward.

With 34 points in the last 36 contests, the **Martin Havlat** of old has returned. He has 32 points in 34 career contests against the Flames and the Oilers, so he should have a field day with seven remaining contests against their division rivals during the final stretch of the season.

Silver Liners:

There's a big question mark surrounding **Marek Zidlicky's** status post-deadline, but there has

been plenty of news about the Wild trying their best to re-sign him for the future, so for the sake of this column I'll assume that he stays in Minny. The former sixth round pick has certainly made his mark in the NHL, as he has 253 career points. His 19 PPP ranks him tied for 10th overall in that department amongst all blue-liners in the league. The 3:46 that Zidlicky averages per contest on the PP is also ranked 19th amongst his same peer group. Whether he's dealt or not, he's definitely silver material for the rest of the way.

Joining the Wild earlier this season has certainly woken up **Guillaume Latendresse's** offense as he's tallied 26 points in 36 contests with the Wild. He has very interesting home/away splits of 19/7, so the 10 home contests should be beneficial for the Quebec-native for the rest of this campaign.

Bronze Suspects:

Brent Burns was dealing with concussion problems at the beginning of the season, but the symptoms seemed to have subsided as he appeared just fine heading into the Olympic break. He's ranked second amongst the Wild blue-liners by averaging 3:24 per contest on the man advantage. The recent addition of Cam Barker, might take some wind out of the sails of Burns, but he still should pick up plenty of quality ice-time in Minny.

As discussed above, the addition of **Cam Barker** should provide some jump into the Wild offense. He's spent 84.2 percent of his shifts with Burns, and that isn't exactly a crap defensive partner, which should provide plenty of evidence for a pickup moving forward.

Antti Miettinen has been a home warrior this season, as he has a 0.72 point-per-game average at home compared to just 0.34 away from the Excel Energy center. In the last 10 contests, Miettinen has spent 82.8 percent of his overall shifts alongside both Koivu and Brunette, and if you spend that much time alongside two players who are consistent scorers, you'll definitely pick up a ton of points.

Summary of First Five Teams

DAL

DET

EDM

LA

MIN

Total Games Remaining

21

21

21

21

21

Home Games Remaining

12

12

9

10

10

Away Games Remaining

9

9

12

11

11

Games Remaining Against Teams Same or Better in Standings

14

12

21

4

16

Games Remaining Against Teams Worse in Standings

7

9

0

17

5

Total Against .500 or Worse

1

5

2

3

5

Home Against .500 or Worse

1

3

0

2

2

Away Against .500 or Worse

0

2

2

1

3

Total Against Better Than .500

20

16

19

18

16

Home Against Better Than .500

11

9

9

8

8

Away Against Better Than .500

9

7

10

10

8

Total Against 75 Points or Better

13

7

8

7

6

Home Against 75 Points or Better

8

3

5

4

4

Away Against 75 Points or Better

5

4

3

3

2