Sorry for the brief hiatus the last couple of weeks, I've been roughing it in Europe and enjoying some time off. Anyways, back this week with a ripper of an article. At the end of last season I wrote a similar column which was very well received by my fellow Dobberites, so I figured I'd go back to the well once again this off-season. It's a great add-on to give you a decent recap of what went on this past fantasy season and what to expect for the upcoming season especially if you are trying to get a head start on your competition next campaign.

First, let's clear up some general misconceptions about projections:

1. First of all we need to place a realistic value on overall point production.

- This past season saw only 21 players achieve the greater than point-per-game mark. Last season, 17 players operated at above the point-per-game mark and 23 players the year before that, so if you are looking at the grand scheme of things there might only be two maybe three players on a typical 12-team fantasy squad that is really capable of tallying above the point-per-game and not five or six as many of you are probably expecting.
- Of those players 21 players all of them were essentially playing on their team's top-line, so if you own someone that interchanges between second line/top-line duties (Alex Semin/Ryan Kesler), there is a high chance that they won't achieve the point-per-game mark that you may be expecting.
- Of those 21 players only Mike Green was the only defenseman to tally above the point-per-game mark.

2) Team depth is vitally important; a player playing on the third line isn't going to be a candidate for 80 points, or even 60 according to the numbers below. Pay attention to the potential line combos released as part of the pre-season Dobber guide.

3) Salary plays a large role in ice-time distribution, and generally speaking if a team is forking out six million or higher in salary for a player, they are going to receive optimal ice-time. In the salary cap era of the NHL, teams will be very hard-pressed to stick a player making bucket-loads of cash on a checking line.

o A perfect example of this is what the Oilers did with Shawn Horcoff. They didn't green light Sam Gagner or Gilbert Brule, but continued to give Horcoff 19:25 a contest desp ite him tallying a miserable minus 29 rating.

4) Ice-time plays a huge factor in point production.

- Everyone in the top 30 in scoring garnered no less than 19:07 in ice-time per contest.
- In the top 50 only three players (Alex Burrows, Jussi Jokinen and Chris Stewart) averaged less than 18 minutes per contest.
- In the top 100 only three players (Patric Hornqvist, Tomas Fleischmann, and Alex Ponikarovsky) averaged less than 16:30 per contest.
- There's definitely a direct correlation between ice-time received and point production, so definitely keep that in mind when drafting for the upcoming season.

5) The Western Conference teams are slightly more offensive than the Eastern Conference teams.

- Eight out of the top 15 most offensive teams in the league is from the Western Conference.
- The Western Conference teams averaged 228 goals on the season, while the Eastern Conference teams averaged 225.5 goals (219.1 if you take out the offensive juggernaut of the Caps offense). Last season it was a role reversal with the Eastern Conference teams with a marginal lead of 237.1 to 229.9.

6) Beware of expecting mind-blowing numbers from rookies.

- Only eight rookies managed to suit up for 80 or more contests.

- Only five rookies managed to eclipse the 40 point plateau. Seven in the year before and another seven in 2007-08.
- Last three number one picks plus their production in their rookie seasons (Patrick Kane 72, Steve Stamkos 46, John Tavares 54) Taylor Hall 55? or Tyler Seguin 55?
- Only three defenseman surpassed the 25 point plateau as a rookie (Tyler Myers, Mike Del Zotto, and Erik Karlsson), two the year before (Drew Doughty and Matt Hunwick) and three the year before that (Tobias Enstrom, Tom Gilbert, and Erik Johnson). So taper your expectations for Cam Fowler this fantasy season.
- Victor Hedman finished the season with 20 points, how many of you poolies reached for him at your drafts just to be annoyed all season long?

7) Be wary of the “sophomore slump”

- Of the top 30 rookies in scoring from 2008-09, roughly half (16) saw their point totals increase in their sophomore year while 14 saw a decrease.
- Biggest increase: Stamkos saw an increase of 49 points, Chris Stewart improved 45 points, Hornqvist bettered the previous season by 44 points, and Olympian sensation Drew Doughty saw respectable increase of 32 points.
- Biggest drops: Patrik Berglund diminished a whopping 21 points, Andrew Ebbett fell 17 points, Fabian Brunnstrom dipped 18 points, and both Mikhail Grabovski and Matt Hunwick shrunk their production by 13 points.
- Just because a player showed promise in their rookie season almost half take a dip in production in their second season, just ask any Steve Mason owner.

8) Be wary of the “Magical Fourth Year”.

- Anze Kopitar: 61, 77, 66, 81
- Paul Stastny: 78, 71, 36 (65), 79
- Joe Pavelski: 28, 40, 59, 51
- Loui Eriksson: 19, 31, 63, 71
- David Moss: 18, 11, 39, 17
- Dave Bolland: 0, 17, 47, 16 (33)

- Patrick O'Sullivan: 19, 53, 43, 34
- David Backes: 23, 31, 54, 48
- Robbie Schremp: 0, 0, 3, 25
- Troy Brouwer: 0, 1, 26, 40
- Nigel Dawes: 1, 29, 21. 32

In the summer of last season Russ and I wrote our pieces on potential "magical fourth year" candidates and were fairly spot on, so stay tuned for that in the upcoming weeks. If you want a recap read it here .

9) Take a note of a player's past history.

- Brian Gionta has one 89 point season but has never surpassed the 61 point plateau ever. So to expect around a 55-60 point production for next season.
- Shane Doan (68, 66, 55, 78, 73, 55) fairly consistent so expect roughly similar numbers for this upcoming season.

10) Beware of band-aid boys

- It doesn't matter how much potential a player may have, if he spends half of his season on the shelf, you're only going to get half a season worth of production.
- Be wary of players who take their usual "vacations" during the season (Jason Arnott) you need to budget that into the equation as well.
- Alex Semin has a career 0.92 point-per-game average, but has also missed an average of 17 contests per season, which means that on a whole you're missing out on close to 15 points of production per season.

11) Be realistic with your projections, everyone in the league has 100 point potential. It's whether there's a one percent chance or an 85 percent chance.

- Everyone can go out on a limb and say that Rick Nash could bust out for 85 points this season (I'm thinking in my head that there's probably a 10 percent chance of that happening) or I could be more realistic and say that he's a 75 point player with upside (75 percent chance of happening). That way if he bombs and pots 65, I'm really only out 10 points instead of 20, which is a manageable cushion to make up for the rest of my team.

Now onto the real mathematical stuff. Keep in mind these are general average numbers, there may be certain exceptions to each scenario.

Centers

- A top 10 point-producing center averaged 79.8 games played, along with 31.5 goals, 59.4 assists, 234.8 SOG and 20:42 in ice-time during the season.
- A 60 point-producing center averaged 77.8 games played, along with 24.8 goals, 35.0 assists, 219.7 SOG and 19:40 in ice-time during the season.
- A 50 point-producing center averaged 75.6 games played, along with 19.2 goals, 31.1 assists, 177.4 SOG and 18:24 in ice-time during the season.
- A 35 point producing center averaged 67.1 games played, along 12 goals, 23.1 assists, 130.4 SOG and 16:55 in ice-time during the season.

Left Wings

- A top 10 point producing left wing averaged 76.7 games played, along with 35.4 goals, 44.8 assists, 278 SOG and 19:53 in ice-time during the season.
- A 60 point producing left wing averaged 79.3 games played, along with 25.3 goals, 39.5 assists, 195.8 SOG and 18:00 in ice-time during the season.
- A 50 point producing left wing averaged 74.2 games played, along with 22 goals, 27.7 assists, 181.5 SOG and 17:15 in ice-time during the season.
- A 35 point producing left wing averaged 73.6 games played, along with 17.8 goals, 17.4 assists, 146.1 SOG and 15:10 in ice-time during the season.

Right Wings

- A top 10 point producing right wing averaged 79 games played, along with 31.5 goals, 44.6 assists, 248.3 SOG and 19:59 in ice-time during the season.
- A 60* point producing right wing averaged 81.5 games played, along with 24.8 goals, 37 assists, 216 SOG and 18:30 in ice-time during the season.
- A 50 point producing right wing averaged 73.8 games played, along with 21.8 goals, 28.2 assists, 192.2 SOG and 17:14 in ice-time during the season.
- A 35 point producing right wing averaged 74.9 games played, along with 16.5 goals, 18.1 assists, 177.4 SOG and 16:29 in ice-time during the season.

*Small sample size of only four players.

Defenseman

- A top 10 point producing defenseman averaged 78.7 games played, along with 11.8 goals, 44.6 assists, 170.1 SOG and 24:55 in ice-time during the season.
- A 40 point producing defenseman averaged 81.2 games played, along with 9 goals, 30.8 assists, 160.4 SOG and 22:45 in ice-time during the season.
- A 30 point producing defenseman averaged 75 games played, along with 6.2 goals, 23.8 assists, 142.8 SOG and 22:39 in ice-time during the season.
- A 25 point producing defenseman averaged 76.3 games played, along with 5.7 goals, 19.4 assists, 103.3 SOG and 21:57 in ice-time during the season.

Goalies

I didn't know how to tier the goalies without getting 50 billion complaints about how I did it, so I guess I'll just state some quick points.

- Five goalies finished the season with 40 or more wins, compared to just two last season. 11 had 35 wins or more (seven last season).
- Six goalies started in 70 or more contests. (Martin Brodeur, Jon Quick, Mikka Kiprusoff, Henrik Lundqvist, Evgeni Nabokov, and Craig Anderson) None of which made it past the first round of the playoffs, cept Nabby. Maybe there is a correlation between performance and games started after all???
- The average top 40 goalie picked up 25.9 wins while starting 50.4 games this season.
- Of those 40 only two were considered quality own goalies (60 starts with at least a 60 percent winning percentage) Nabokov and Ilya Bryzgalov. There is however quite a few reliable owns (60 starts and a 55 win percentage). Martin Brodeur, Ryan Miller, Roberto Luongo, Jimmy Howard, and M.A. Fleury.
- When averaging the top five goalies in wins, you get stats of roughly, 42.4 wins, 70.2 starts, 60.4 percent win percentage, 2.35 GAA, and a .920 save percentage.
- A goalie that finished the season with 35 wins had stats of roughly, 65 starts, 54.2 percent win percentage, 2.43 GAA, and a .916 save percentage.
- A goalie that finished the season with 30 wins had stats of roughly, 55.5 starts, 42.4

percent win percentage, 2.66 GAA, and a .913 save percentage.

- A goalie that finished the season with 20 wins had stats of roughly, 47.7 starts, 43.3 percent win percentage, 2.85 GAA, and a .908 save percentage.
- A goalie that finished the season with 15 wins had stats of roughly, 34.5 starts, 44.4 percent win percentage, 2.88 GAA, and a .905 save percentage.

Summation Tables

TOP 10 C

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

81

29.5

61.7

225.2

20:30

2009-10

79.8

31.5

59.4

234.8

20:42

Average

80.4

30.5

60.6

230

20:36

60-point C

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

76

25.8

33.6

217

18:31

2009-10

77.8

24.8

35.0

219.7

19:40

Average

76.9

25.3

34.3

218.4

19:05

50-point C

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

76

22

28

157

17:49

2009-10

75.6

19.2

31.1

177.4

18:24

Average

75.8

20.6

29.6

167.2

18:06

35-point C

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

65

11.5

23.1

124.5

16:45

2009-10

67.1

12

23.1

130.4

16:55

Average

66.1

11.8

23.1

127.5

16:50

Top 10 LW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

78

36.9

47.9

265.9

19:27

2009-10

76.7

35.4

44.8

278

19:53

Average

77.4

36.2

46.4

272

19:40

60-point LW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

78

28.4

31.4

214.8

18:10

2009-10

79.3

25.3

39.5

195.8

18:00

Average

78.7

26.9

35.5

205.3

18:05

50-point LW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

75

20.8

29.6

146

16:32

2009-10

74.2

22

27.7

181.5

17:15

Average

74.6

21.4

28.7

163.8

16:53

35-point LW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

63

16.5

18

118.5

15:49

2009-10

73.6

17.8

17.4

146.1

15:10

Average

68.3

17.2

17.7

132.3

15:30

Top 10 RW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

80

30.8

43.9

252.7

19:22

2009-10

79

31.5

44.6

248.3

19:59

Average

79.5

31.2

44.3

250.5

19:41

60-point RW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

78

24.8

34.2

196.2

17:11

2009-10

81.5

24.8

37

216

18:30

Average

79.8

24.8

35.6

206.1

17:50

50-point RW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

77

22.5

26.3

185.5

17:16

2009-10

73.8

21.8

28.2

192.2

17:14

Average

75.4

22.2

27.3

188.9

17:15

35-point RW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

73

15.6

19.4

144.2

15:10

2009-10

74.9

16.5

18.1

177.4

16:29

Average

74

16.1

18.8

160.8

15:50

Top 10 D

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

77

16.8

41.7

189.7

24:40

2009-10

78.7

11.8

44.6

170.1

24:55

Average

77.9

14.3

43.2

179.9

24:47

40-point D

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

73

10

29.6

139

21:40

2009-10

81.2

9

30.8

160.4

22:45

Average

77.1

9.5

30.2

149.7

22:12

30-point RW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

72

6.2

23.8

109

19:51

2009-10

75

6.2

23.8

142.8

22:39

Average

73.5

6.2

23.8

125.9

21:15

25-point RW

GP

G

A

SOG

IT

2008-09

71

4.6

19.1

102.1

21:15

2009-10

76.3

5.7

19.4

103.3

21:57

Average

73.7

5.2

19.3

102.7

21:36

So you're probably sitting there wondering, there's a whole bunch of numbers, what does it all mean? Here's how I would use the numbers...

Let's take a look at Stephen Weiss' stats. He appeared in 80 games, while averaging 19:59 in ice-time and accumulating 180 SOG. He's garnering top-line ice-time in FLA and he's a centerman. According to the stats, he's slightly off of top-10 ice-time and only in the range of a 55-point C in terms of SOG. On the plus side, he's ranks behind only Nathan Horton and David Booth in terms of PP ice-time, which should add a few more points to his projection. It'd be a safe bet that he finishes around a 60-65 point mark next season.

Let's try a second example to make sure that we're all on the same page. Kyle Okposo finished the season with an ice-time average of 20:32 per contest while tallying 249 SOG. Those numbers for a RW should have translated into 76-point producer not the 56 point that he actually tallied. Another positive is that he also averaged a team-high 4:17 in PP ice-time, which should provide more evidence for a positive increase this upcoming season if he maintains similar numbers. I'd definitely head into the season thinking 65 but with plenty of upside for more.

For a third example we can take a backwards approach. Andrew Brunette finished the season with 129 SOG, 61 points and an ice-time average of 17:01 per contest for the Wild. He is fluctuating between the top-line and the second line in Minnesota which does give him a small boost in production, but the small amount of SOG and lack of ice-time is a big warning bell for me heading into next season. I certainly wouldn't head into next season thinking equivalent production, but a five to 10 point drop probably would be reasonable. Think 50-55 in 2010-11.

So hopefully you can use the guidelines above, along with the numbers to help you gain a better grasp of what to expect for player X heading into next season. Of course if you are desperately seeking different opinions, hop onto the DobberHockey Forums and there will be plenty of fantasy fanatics who are ready and willing to give you're their opinions. Questions or comments? Like always I'll be ready and willing to discuss them with you in the comments section below. See ya guys next week as we have some more post-season discussion about the Western Conference.