

## Playing the Peripheral Game

Written by Ryan Ma

Tuesday, 28 September 2010 16:51 - Last Updated Wednesday, 29 September 2010 13:32

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### A look at hits and blocked shots

I spent the weekend planning for my favourite league to play in, which is my very competitive friends' league. After finishing in second place in consecutive years, I thought I'd be pulling a Marian Hossa and be earmarked for a championship. Surely the fantasy hockey gods would be smiling down on me considering two very close and heartbreaking 8-6 and 8-4 losses for the last two campaigns. After coming out pretty happy in my last few drafts, I was pretty confident heading into this one.

Boy was I disappointed.

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One of the major differences that we added this year was the two new dimensions of HITS and blocked shots (BS), and man...did those two little stats throw me for a loop. I was constantly debating each pick whether to choose player A or player B while playing 50 scenarios in my head. With 15 stats in a H2H league, do I go after the "big name"? Or do I go with the across-the-board stat monger? As with every draft, I armed myself with a handful of sleeper picks, but then to see them go flying off the board in the mid-rounds absolutely shattered my confidence and then the panic sensation set in.

As I see more and more "rate my team" threads on the forum, I'm starting to notice how HITS and blocks are starting to become more prevalent in fantasy pools. Well Dobberites, my loss is your gain as this week we'll take a look at a few of the players who may help contribute in those two stats to help garner you a fantasy crown in April.

### **Stephane Robidas – D- Dallas Stars**

If we're mentioning the two stats of HITS and BS, it's not hard to find the king in that department. That moniker belongs to Robidas as he finished the 2009-10 season with 269 HITS and 177 BS. If you factor in the 41 points, 70 PIMs and 199 SOG that he tallied, he's a golden own for fantasy leagues. If you dig a little deeper and think about possible factors for regression, there probably isn't any. His biggest competition is the 23-year old, Matt Niskanen, who continually teases us with potential, but never seems to reward. Or if you really want to dig deeper for threats, you might have to factor in a tiny two-way threat in Trevor Daley. Either way there's no major roadblocks standing in the way for Robidas to repeat the 24:29 and 3:09 that he had on the PP from last campaign. If you are playing in a league with HITS and BS, you have to consider Robidas as a must-own, as much as Mike Green.

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### **Mike Richards – C – Philadelphia Flyers**

Richards probably won't factor very much in standard fantasy leagues, but if you add HITS and BS to the equation, his fantasy value shoots up ten-fold. In a somewhat down year last campaign, he still registered 145 HITS along with 64 BS. If you also add in the propensity for SHP (5.2 per season since 2005-06) and SOG (197 per season), he's another great across-the-board own for custom fantasy leagues.

### **Ryan Getzlaf – C – Anaheim Ducks**

Getzlaf is pretty much in an identical boat, (situational wise and stat wise), as Richards. If you consider his three-year averages of 146 HITS and 46 BS, those aren't bad numbers in a position that generally doesn't provide much of those stats. Factor in the PIMs and SOG and you have a solid candidate for a first round pick.

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### **Dustin Brown – RW – Los Angeles Kings**

With the addition of HITS as a category, Brown's fantasy value dramatically rises. You won't get very many BS with Brownie, but his number two league ranking in the HITS department, last season, more than makes up for it. Considering he also tacks on a guaranteed 50 points and 220+ SOG with the prospect of playing alongside superstar Anze Kopitar for at least a part of the season, that's pretty darn good value to pay for their average draft position in Yahoo! leagues at the moment.

### **Brendan Morrow – LW – Dallas Stars**

Identical to the situation as Brown, with the addition of HITS as a category, Morrow's fantasy value also dramatically rises. BS is pretty much non-existent with Morrow, but he'll most likely pick up 200+ HITS and a fair few SOG and PIMs in this fantasy campaign. Considering he'll probably garner a similar ice-time breakdown as last season (19:10 and 3:25), he could be in for a very across-the-board line of production in 2010-11.

### **David Backes – RW – St. Louis Blues**

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Backes is beginning to develop into a poor man's version of Morrow. His HITS, PIMs, and SOG potentially mirror fairly closely to what Morrow may produce, but his points outlook probably lags a few steps behind. Last season, he really took a big step forward in establishing himself as an "all situations" type of player, but I want to see a repeat performance before I dive head first into the Backes pool. If your pool incorporates HITS and BS as a category, it's probably very low risk to gamble on Backes, but just keep your expectations in check.

### **Zdeno Chara – D- Boston Bruins**

If Robidas is the king in these settings, then Chara is probably the queen. Since he has donned the Bruins jersey, he has averaged 186.5 HITS and 109.8 BS per season. Considering the addition of Nathan Horton, and the potential bounce back seasons from David Krecji, Milan Lucic, and Blake Wheeler, the Bruins won't finish last in goals scored for a second consecutive season, which should definitely help boost the offensive numbers for Chara in 2010-11.

### **Shea Weber – D- Nashville Predators**

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Generally speaking, if you are after high-end fantasy production, you need to keep an eye out for players in ideal “real-life” situations with their respective squads but also fit a certain mould. Weber fits that description perfectly, as he’s the number one PP QB in Nashville, takes a fair amount of SOG, and also garners plenty of ice-time. If you include HITS and BS into the equation, Weber then becomes a gold mine for fantasy poolies. Considering he’s being drafted, on average, in the seventh round, I wouldn’t hesitate to grab him a round or two earlier in leagues that take HITS and BS into account.

### **Ryan Malone – LW – Tampa Bay Lightning**

Malone probably isn’t someone that will dramatically help your fantasy squad, but he is someone that gains significant value when you factor in HITS and BS as part of your fantasy league settings. His situation is pretty ideal, as he essentially has a top-six spot cemented with the Lightning. Along with the prospect of lining up next to Vinny Lecavalier, Steven Stamkos, Martin St. Louis or Simon Gagne, that’s a pretty solid scoring situation to be in for 2010-11. His 50 point, 150 SOG potential certainly provides plenty of upside to invest in for this fantasy campaign.

### **Ryan Callahan – RW – New York Rangers**

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Following along the same lines as Malone, Callahan probably won't be making a huge impact on your fantasy squad. But in terms of HITS and BS, Callahan gains plenty of brownie points, when it comes to leagues with deep peripheral stats. He picked up the third most hits and was tops in blocked shots department amongst all right wingers last season, which is a pretty quiet feat considering he also tallied 200+ SOG and 20 PPP. With Alex Frolov and Derek Stepan now in town, Callahan probably won't get the same opportunity to repeat what he accomplished last season, but is probably still a worthy investment as a third/fourth RW.

### **Mike Fisher – C – Ottawa Senators**

If you're looking for a massive sleeper candidate in the HITS and BS department you don't have to look any further than Fisher. With the potential for 200+ hits along with 65+ blocked shots plus 60 PIM and 200 SOG, he is the definition of a "late round steal". If you consider that he'll get his fair share of SH and PP time, he comes as close as a must-own for a number three C as it comes.

### **James Neal – LW – Dallas Stars**

Neal has been a favourite late round pick for me in many of my fantasy leagues/mock drafts. With HITS and BS linked in, he becomes that much more valuable. If you factor in the 200 SOG and his spot on the Dallas depth charts as well as the lack of quality LW late in drafts, Neal is a great own at his current draft position. The Stars are a tough physical team with Jamie Benn,

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Steve Ott, Morrow, Robidas and Neal all registering over 170+ hits last season. They'll need to keep up that physical play especially against more talented teams like the Sharks, Ducks and the Kings in their division.

### **Pavel Kubina – D- Tampa Bay Lightning**

The final player that I am going to list is probably the biggest doozy of them all. If you look at the past historical numbers from recent years, Kubina is in line for a pretty respectable 40 points, 90+ PIMs, 150+ SOG, along with 100+ HITS and 100+ BS. Considering he's posted those numbers on fairly weak offensive teams, (Leafs and Thrashers), you would think on a pretty good team like TB, he should be able to blow those numbers out of the water. I personally think that fills the shoes that Kurtis Foster left behind and puts up mind-blowing numbers this fantasy campaign.

### **Other Notables:**

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**RW**

**LW**

**D**

Jarrett Stoll

Shane Doan

Ryane Clowe

Brent Seabrook

Martin Hanzal

Cal Clutterbuck

Alex Ponikarovsky

Keith Ballard

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Jordan Staal

Steve Downie

Milan Lucic

James Wisniewski

T.J. Oshie

Devin Setoguchi

Matt Moulson

Jay Bouwmeester

There's a couple of ways that you can go and approach drafting for a league that includes HITS

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and BS. One is that you can just draft how you normally draft and ignore the peripheral stats like you normally do with +/-, PIM or PPP. Or the second option is to look for players who will actively pick up those stats but at an expense of sacrificing “the best player available”. Either way you can't really go wrong with either option, as long as you're happy with the outcome.

### Tips for leagues that include HITS and BS

- Players who are generally considered “soft” players, are majorly devalued in leagues that include HITS and BS. If you really think about it, you're in the same boat if you owned a superstar combo of Niklas Lidstrom, Pavel Datsyuk, Henrik and Daniel Sedin on a team as someone who would own Robidas, Brown, Fisher and Richards with goals and assists being offset by HITS and BS.

- Generally speaking, the better across-the-board HITS and BS producers come from the blue-line, which means that you can save your early round picks for goalies or forwards and snag guys like Alex Edler, Joni Pitkanen, and Tom Gilbert in the late rounds.

- With that said, top of the class across-the-board producers like Zdeno Chara, Chris Pronger, Dion Phaneuf, Drew Doughty, and Sergei Gonchar could be worth over-reaching for in order to make sure that they're on your roster and not your opponents.

- With HITS and BS, it pretty much evens the playing field for many of the WW material and you'll probably find that you'll be utilizing the WW much more during the season than you would if it was a standard Yahoo! league.

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### My Team

I know you guys are all excited to see the team that I drafted, ok maybe not... but here it is anyways. Much like many of you have posted in the forums I'd love to have my team audited and have you guys pick up anything that you think I might need to improve upon.

Settings: 12 teams, H2H, G, A, +/-, PIM, PPP, SHP, SOG, FW, HIT, BS, W, GAA, SV, SV%, SO

C- Kopitar, Stastny, Lombardi

LW- Kovalchuk, Frolov, Versteeg

RW- Pavelski, Stewart, Havlat, Byfuglien

D- Keith, Edler, Zidlicky, Pitkanen

G – Bryzgalov, Rinne, Leighton

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Questions or comments? Like always I'll be ready and willing to discuss them with you in the comments section below.