With the end of the regular season in sight, it's time to take a look back at how your Western Conference fantasy players have fared this season and hand out some April flowers.

Western Conference Goaltending

Most Valuable Goaltender

Winner: Pekka Rinne

The Predators' version of their saviour recorded 33 victories, only five back of the eventual NHL leader Roberto Luongo. Rinne's save percentage (0.930) was good enough to sit him in second place amongst starters behind only Tim Thomas of the Bruins. His 2.12 goals-against-average is the third best and just a smidgeon below the Roberto Luongo (2.11) and the aforementioned Thomas (2.00). He recorded the seventh most saves in the NHL (1771) while finishing the season with six goose eggs. Considering he didn't have a dominant defensive or offensive corps in front of him, Rinne certainly saved a few hides this season, so there's probably isn't anyone more deserving of the award.

Runner Up: Roberto Luongo

Luongo essentially had the best season of his career year (at least from a numbers perspective). He finished top of the league with 38 victories and ranked amongst the top-three both in terms of goals-against-average and save percentage. Perhaps having a 75/25 start/rest ratio does make a big difference after all? The Nucks are poised to make a big run at the Cup this post-season, now only if he can get rid of that giant gorilla, aptly named the Blackhawks, off his back then all should be well.

The Charlie Sheen Commemorative Award (Duh, Winning!)

Awarded to the best goalie who wins at the expense of all else.

Winner: Mikka Kiprusoff

If wins were all you’re after, then Kipper was your man. He finished with 37 victories just one shy of league leader Luongo. Unfortunately from the peripheral perspective, he finished 23rd and 26th overall in terms of goals-against-average and save percentage respectively, which would have been pretty detrimental to many fantasy leagues out there.

Runner-up: Jimmy Howard

After a great rookie season last campaign, Howard succumbed to the dreaded sophomore slump. After displaying spectacular 2.26 and .924 numbers in 2009-10, he dropped the ball with 2.78 and .908 numbers 12 months later. But thanks to the offensive juggernaut of the Red Wings offense, the win totals didn't suffer too much as he finished with just oneless than he did a year ago.

The Brett Lemon (he finished last in this year's Dobber Expert Pool) Commemorative Award:

Awarded to the Western Conference goaltender determined to be the most detrimental to a fantasy team.

Winner: Craig Anderson

After a great campaign last season, many poolies headed into the season brimming in confidence with Anderson at the helm between their fantasy pipes. But from a Western Conference (pre-trade deadline) perspective, Anderson was absolutely detrimental to many fantasy leagues. He finished with a 13-15-3 record along with a dismal 3.28 goals-against-average and .897 save percentage in his short tenure in Colorado. What exasperated the problem was the fact that after he was traded to the Sens he posted a 11-5-1

record with a respectable 2.05 goals-against-average and dazzling .939 save percentage, which pretty much sent a clear “I didn’t give a flying ****” message to the Colorado management when he suited up for the Avs.

Runner up: Nikolai Khabibulin

Much like the situation with Anderson, many poolies headed into the season thinking that the Oilers would make a strong play to contend this season, which would have resulted in them snagging a great late round sleeper option in the Bulin wall. Unfortunately, once again they finished the season as cellar dwellers and Khabibulin finished with an awesome 10-32-3 record with a monstrous 3.39 goals-against average and glittering .891 save percentage.

Best Late Round Pick:

Winner: Antti Niemi

There were plenty of large debates between which goalie would win out the number one gig out in San Jose at the start of the pre-season with both Antero Niittymaki and Niemi both trying to vie for the title. Niittymaki had the early hand as he was on average picked 30 spots ahead of Niemi, but ended up losing the gig due to his mid-season injury. Niemi grabbed the bulls by the horn and rattled off a 22-5-3 record in the final three months of play in which he posted 2.10 goals-against average along with a .927 save percentage during that span. If you happened to roll the dice with Niemi during the pre-season, you surely would have been rewarded with it this season.

Runner-up: Kari Lehtonen

Lehtonen was widely considered a band-aid boy during the pre-season, which probably explained why he was drafted so late in many fantasy pools (111.5 overall). He shook off that moniker by appearing in a whopping 69 contests this campaign while finishing with a 34-24-11 record and nearly backstopped the Stars into the post-season. I don't think he made as big of an impact as Niemi did, but he's certainly deserving of a runner-up selection.

Most Likely Not to be on Your Fantasy Roster Next Season Award:

The only reason you would have either of these two guys on your fantasy roster next season is that you are in a very deep league or are very desperate.

Winner: Marty Turco

Barring a huge Corey Crawford playoff meltdown, and a phoenix-like rebirth of Turco's career during the playoffs, it's pretty safe to say that Turco's days playing in the NHL are numbered. He appeared in just 29 contests, and with "bigger named" or "more appealing" goalies like Ilya Bryzgalov, J.S. Giguere, Tomas Vokoun, and Dwayne Roloson available via unrestricted free agency, it'll be interesting to see if Turco will find himself with an NHL gig next season.

Runner-up: Peter Budaj

Adrian Dater is one of the most connected people to the NHL and one of his main predictions for next season is that Colorado will make a big push during the summer to acquire the services of Tomas Vokoun. Brian Elliott was also picked up as part of the Craig Anderson deal, so management will need to at least offer him a short term contract to justify the trade, which means that he'll be securing a backup role to Vokoun (if he signs). If all of this happens then it'll pretty much leave Budaj out in the cold, but then again you'd have to wonder if there is any room in the NHL for a goalie that displays 2.83 and .901 career numbers?

Western Conference Defensemen

Most Valuable Fantasy Defensemen

Winner: Lubomir Visnovsky

Debated about this one for a little while, but I've settled on Vizzy as my pick for the Western Confernce defenseman MVP. Heading into the season Jeff Angus and I were both very high on Vizzy, and it appears that we were bang on in our pre-season predictions. He finished on top of all NHL blue-liners with 68 points (31 of which came on the PP) while firing 152 SOG against opposing goalies and was probably one of the main reasons why the Ducks finished with home ice advantage for the playoffs in the Western Conference. There was very little to fault with Vizzy's superb play this season.

Runner-up: Keith Yandle

Yandle finished a close second in my books as he essentially came from nowhere to post fantastic fantasy numbers for plenty of owners this season. If it wasn't for his little late-season slip (five points in his last 18 contests), he would have walked away with the title by a landslide. Either way he won't remain under-the-radar much longer.

Best Late Round Pick:

Winner: Brent Seabrook

Seabrook is largely considered a defense-first blue-liner, which might have been the primary reason why his stocks plummeted at the draft table. He didn't make very many large offensive splashes during the regular season, but did manage to tally a very quiet 48 points which tied him with Shea Weber and Brian Rafalski for 10th overall in that department. He was primarily scooped up for the peripheral stats (HITs and blocked shots), so the extra offensive boost was definitely a nice added bonus.

Runner-up: Brent Burns

Another pretty solid quiet achiever this campaign was Minnesota's Brent Burns. In Yahoo! leagues he was on average drafted as the 84th blue-liner, which makes it that much more impressive that he finished tied amongst all defenseman for 14th overall with 46 points. If it wasn't for Burns' heroics, surely the Wild would have finished much lower in the standings and probably battling for a lottery position.

Runner-up: John Michael Liles

If you were following my columns during the season, you probably would have noticed Liles' name mentioned quite a few times. He started off the season blazing hot with 29 points in the first 38 contests, but cooled down dramatically during the second half of the season, which isn't bad considering Liles was picked up in Yahoo! league on average as the 72nd defenseman. If you read the trends correctly and managed to piece together Liles with a player like Joe Corvo, you would have ended up with a 56-point blue-liner over the course of the year, which wouldn't have been a bad outcome. A blue-liner that finished amongst the top-15 in production should definitely deserve some props.

Most Disappointing Defenseman

Winner: Drew Doughty

Now that everyone's pretty much caught onto Jay Bouwmeester, there wasn't really a clearly identifiable "bust" candidate from the Western blue-line this campaign. The only reason that DD could be considered a bust was because of his high initial draft value. Drafting him as the second blue liner overall, you'd generally have pretty lofty expectations for him to meet and considering his age and experience, it was a tall task to expect that he was going to reach Mike Green level. A 40-point season is definitely a great outing by anyone's standards, but as an 18th overall pick, I expected more.

Runner-up: Brian Campbell

Although Campbell was hampered by injuries throughout the season, the 27 points that he posted has got to be a huge disappointment for many poolies. He's generally always a tad over-rated, which was demonstrated by his average draft position as the 21st overall blue-liner to be selected in Yahoo! leagues during the pre-season. Just keep that in mind while heading into drafts for next campaign.

Runner-up: Stephane Robidas

After a brilliant 41-point season last campaign, Robidas followed it up with a stinker by posting just 30 points and a lowly 106 SOG this season. It appears that he reverted back towards his stay-at-home blue liner tendencies, and handcuffed all of his offensive abilities.

One Hit Wonders, One Track Mind

Winner: Brian Rafalski

With 44 assists this season, Rafalski ranked fourth amongst his peers in terms of tallying helpers for his team-mates. Sure playing with a high powered offense like the Wings certainly will help rack up the assist totals, but his play this season is really deserving of a mention and definitely helped to balance out a few goal-heavy fantasy teams.

Runner-up: Kurtis Foster

Foster didn't exactly have a monster fantasy campaign, but his 182 SOG ranked him tied with Erik Karlsson for 11th overall amongst all blue liners in that department. The baby Oilers should have the services of Ryan Whitney back full-time, which should then allow Foster to continue to launch bombs from the blue line. Definitely keep his name in the back of your mind for next season's drafts.

Western Conference Forwards

Most Valuable Fantasy Forward

Winner: Corey Perry

Daniel Sedin might have won the Art Ross trophy but in terms of fantasy MVP, the award certainly belongs to Perry. He finished the season with a line of 98 points, plus nine rating, 104

PIMs, 31 PPP and 290 SOG. It's just almost unheard of to see players post such great across-the-board numbers as Perry had, which certainly made plenty of poolies (including Dobber) quite happy this campaign. Now the big question that remains is whether or not he'll be able to carry it into the post-season?

Runner-up: Daniel Sedin

Daniel just missed out on award mostly because of the lack of PIMs. His 63 assists, 41 goals, 40 PPP ranked him third, tied for fourth and top of the league respectively in those categories. He also plays left wing, which is generally considered the one of the weakest positions to fill for fantasy hockey purposes. Either way Henrik had his day in the sun last campaign, so it's fitting to see the other twin get his share of the limelight this season.

Best Late Round Pick:

Winner: David Backes

On average Backes was taken as the 27th overall RW at Yahoo! draft tables during the pre-season. He finished the season as the seventh ranked RW with a beautiful across-the-board line of 62 points, plus 32 rating, 93 PIMs, 15 PPP along with 211 SOG. That's definitely a massive payoff for just a minimal investment eight or nine months ago. He certainly won't be available on the cheap for the upcoming drafts next campaign.

Runner-up: Teemu Selanne

There was still plenty of gas left in the tank for the Finnish flash as he bombarded the NHL scoresheets with an 80-point campaign in his 19th NHL season. Considering he was on average taken as the 107th pick, that's a pretty darn good yield for someone who was pretty much left for dead in many fantasy pools. Much of his NHL future will depend on the Ducks success in the post-season, but he's certainly shown us that there's plenty of offensive output level in those 40-year old legs and certainly deserving of a nomination for "best late round pick" award.

Most Disappointing Forward

Winner: Dany Heatley

Heatley mustered up a pretty disappointing season while tallying just 64 points in 80 contests. I'm a pretty big believer in that point scarcity is a bigger influencing factor for point production than a player's talent and this scenario has proven me correct once again. Heatley was on averaged selected with the 14th overall pick in Yahoo! leagues, just a smidge past the first round, and for those who invested that highly on him must have been frustrated all season long. It's no surprised to see that only 14.5 percent of winning public Yahoo! teams had Heatley on their roster. All I can add is that you win some and you lose some.

Runner-up: Paul Stastny

On average Stastny was snagged at the 65.6 position at Yahoo! draft tables, which isn't exactly high up there where you're expecting huge fantasy numbers. But then again, he did post 79 points last campaign, so expecting similar numbers probably wouldn't have been a big ask. Stastny was essentially on pace for that mark up until Christmas before the wheels fell off. I know I had him pegged as a dark horse candidate for the Art Ross trophy, so I'm certainly disappointed that he posted just 57 points this campaign.

Runner-up: Patrick Kane

Kane didn't necessarily have a bad season, but much like the situation with Doughty, he was a

victim of inflated draft expectations (taken on average 20th overall). He did manage to post a point-per-game effort, but I, like many poolies, were left expecting more. Kane tore up the Nucks last post-season with eight points and 18 SOG in six contests, can he play spoiler once again?

One Hit Wonders, One Track Mind

Winner: Cody McLeod

With 189 PIMs and very little of everything else, McLeod is certainly deserving of the one hit wonder award. The amazing thing is that he did that while missing 11 contests. There were plenty of poolies that utilized his services just to climb up the PIMs chart in many roto leagues, so definitely keep him in mind for drafts next campaign.

Did I miss anyone you thought should have been included in the Western Conference Fantasy Awards? Comment below!

Look out world, proof that the Australia does have a national ice hockey team! Below are a couple of pictures from the IIHF Division Two World Championships held right here in Melbourne. The Aussies took home gold against some pretty stiff competition against the Mexicans, Serbs, Kiwis, and Belgians (unfortunately the North Koreans pulled out).

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