Over the course of the next few weeks we'll take a look back at a few of the articles I churned out at the beginning of the pre-season and evaluate whether or not my prognostications were on the money or completely off base.

Corey Perry – RW- Anaheim

I mentioned Perry a few times the last couple of weeks, and I'm staying the course with my initial opinion of him. It's not that I don't want him on my fantasy team, it's just that it's a damn high investment of a fifth overall pick for someone who's only had one statistically great season. You've probably read all of the reasoning behind a possible decline for Perry, so I won't bombard you with that again, but you also have to keep in mind that in a 12, maybe even 14-team league, RWers are so plentiful that if you miss out on Perry you still have quite a few options in the next 4-5 rounds who would still produce similar numbers. I know it's bloody hard to see his name dangling there in front of you, but it'd be a wise move to go after a player that's from a shallower position.

Pretty much was right on the money on this one. Perry ended up with a line of 37 G, 23 A, a minus seven rating, 127 PIM, 23 PPP along with 277 SOG, which if you looked at it by itself, might not look too horrible but when you factor in draft position (4.8, first RW taken) that outcome becomes detrimental. There were plenty of warning signs heading into the season about being wary of him, but if you ignored them and still went with Perry, then there's nothing more I can say besides "I told you so". Maaaasquito Bite: HIT.

Anze Kopitar – C- Los Angeles

Quiz time: Which player would you rather have (based on the previous average three-year production)?

Player A: 71.3 GP, 21 G, 57.7 A, 78.7 P, plus 7.7, 78.3 PIMs, 28.7 PPP, and 164.3 SOG

Player B: 77.7 GP, 34 G, 39.7 A, 73.7 P, plus 3, 63.3 PIMs, 25.3 PPP and 315 SOG

Player C: 79.7 GP, 28.7 G, 44.7 A, 73.3 P, plus 4.7, 22.7 PIMs, 26.3 PPP and 242 SOG

Player D: 80.3 GP, 22 G, 59.7 A, 81.7 P, plus 12.3, 52.3 PIMs, 32.3 PPP and 143 SOG

Player A is Ryan Getzlaf , player B is Eric Staal , player C is Kopitar and player D is Joe Thornton .
Now consider their relative draft positions. Getzlaf (36.2), Staal (35.6), Kopitar (15.5) and Thornton (45.5): which one of the four doesn't fit in like the others? I wouldn't mind having Kopitar on my team, but the price of a second round pick is just too expensive for my liking. I can essentially wait two rounds and snag a Thornton, while having the exact same production and saving my second round pick. Think of this scenario, would you rather have a combo of Pavel Datsyuk and Thornton or the combo of Kopitar and Vanek? What about Getzlaf and Kovalchuk or Kopitar and Marleau?

If you look at the end of year stats from all four players, they are all relatively similar.

G

A

+/-

PIM

PPP

SOG

ADP

Kopitar

25

51

+12

20

26

230

16.6

Thornton

18

59

+17

31

23

156

48.8

Getzlaf

11

46

-11

75

23

185

35.7

Staal

24

46

-20

48

23

262

32.7

My initial prediction was spot on, as you essentially would have received the same stats from Thornton/Getzlaf/Staal than if you owned Kopitar. The big thing was you could have waited to land those three alternatives, but you would have had to pay a much dearer price if you wanted Kops. Maaaasquito Bite: HIT.

Antti Niemi – G– San Jose

Niemi had a fantastic season when he posted a 35-18-6 record, along with a very respectable 2.38 GAA and .920 save percentage last campaign. The only problem for me was that those numbers were posted with an injured Antero Niittymaki on the shelf for much of the season with a lower body injury, which kind of forced Niemi into the number one role by default. He definitely played well enough last campaign, to enter this season as the number one, but a hiccup/cold streak and the pendulum could easily swing back to the way of Niittymaki. The reward might be great, but the risk is definitely dangerous if you're depending on Niemi as your number one heading into the season. Just a word of advice if you are dead set on selecting him

make sure you snag a handcuff in Niitty as well.

Niemi essentially had full reigns on the number one gig this season with little resistance from Niittymaki. His end-of-season line of a 34-22-9 record, 2.42 GAA and a respectable .915 SP ranked him as the 13th goaltender in Yahoo! leagues. Missed on this one. Maaaasquito Bite: MISS.

Bobby Ryan – LW – Anaheim

Ryan is just a tad overrated in fantasy drafts. He certainly has the pedigree to put up huge numbers in the future, but for this season I don't think he'll get that opportunity. At the end of the day, the Ducks are going to be Ryan Getzlaf 's and Perry's team. Ryan will always play third fiddle to the dynamic duo, and probably won't really be a focal point of the Anaheim attack. I also understand that the LW position is a bit shallow, but I'd lean towards a Henrik Zetterberg or Ilya Kovalchuk (who play more of a bigger scoring role with their respective clubs), before Ryan.

On average, Ryan was drafted as the fourth overall LW in Yahoo! leagues during the season. He finished as the 37th ranked LW at the end of the season. As predicted, Ryan finished behind Teemu Selanne , Getzlaf and Perry in team scoring and wasn't a main focal point of the Ducks offense. You would have been much better off going with Zetterberg/Kovalchuk at that draft spot instead. Maaaasquito Bite: HIT.

Ryan Kesler – C – Vancouver

The latest news coming out of the Kesler camp is that "there's not a chance that he would be able to play right now." and that his status for the regular season is still unclear. There's just too much uncertainty to gamble on a player of "decent but not great calibre" at a second/third round slot, especially with players like Ryan Getzlaf , Eric Staal or Jeff Carter who are ready to be taken just around the corner. Be sure to drop Kesler down a few notches on your rankings on draft day.

There's been a bit of information in the past regarding shoulder injuries and about how players returning from off-season shoulder surgery generally tend to have their stats plummet the next season, which is exactly the case with Kesler. Hopefully Dobberities listened and avoided Kesler at the draft table. Maaaasquito Bite: HIT.

David Backes – RW- St. Louis Blue

Backes is great for leagues that have a strong focus on the peripheral stats (+/-, HITs, BS, and PIMs), but if you are in a points league or a standard settings leagues, then Backes might not be worth the initial draft investment. He had a great season when he posted a line of 62 points, a plus 32 rating, 93 PIMs, and 211 SOG, but this campaign might be a completely different story, as the competition for ice-time in St. Louis has become much stiffer with the additions of Jason Arnott
and

Jamie Langenbrunner
. Backes is currently drafted on par with
Marian Gaborik
and ahead of fellow RWers
Phil Kessel
and
Martin Havlat
. I'd easily select one of those options ahead of Backes in my fantasy drafts.

There's a couple of ways you could look at Backes. If you look at it from a stat-line perspective, 54 points, plus 15 rating, 101 PIM and 234 SOG, then you could argue that's probably what you expected from Backes to begin with. But if you're looking at the relative draft position argument, then you probably would have been hurt if you took Backes ahead of Gaborik/Kessel. If given a "re-do" I think I'd go with Gabby/Kess instead. Maaaasquito Bite: PUSH.

Johan Franzen – RW- Detroit

Frazen is another one of those players who carry "big name" status but always seems to under-perform when you're reflecting upon your fantasy season in April. I don't think it's from a lack of talent, but moreso to do with the depth charts. Much like Ryan, he'll always play third fiddle to Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg in Detroit add in the fact that there will always seem to be a plethora of 40-point players that will always slot in as competition to steal points away from Franzen. Poolies always seem to value him as a 65-70 pointer, but he's never once hit that expectation. I know the attractiveness of Franzen's name will always tempt you, but take the high road and pass.

Once again, pretty much on the ball with my pre-season statement. With 49 points in the first 64 contests (62 point pace), Franzen was on pace to finally surpass the 60-point plateau for the first time in his career, but a mini-slump (seven points in the final 13 contests) derailed that thought pretty quickly. Don't let his "name" tempt you again next season. Maaaasquito Bite: HIT.

Miikka Kiprusoff – G – Calgary

I can certainly understand why my Eastern Counterpart (Tim Lucarelli), would take a stab at Kipper for the Dobber Expert League based on our league settings. He has averaged 73.7 games played, 39.7 wins, a 2.50 goals against average and a .912 save percentage per season since the lockout. But if you are playing in a standard Yahoo! league, 2.50 and .912 numbers aren't going to lead you to a championship. I would much rather take a Martin Broduer or Cam Ward roughly 10 slots later and still get similar (if not better results), instead. Another interesting stat that I've dug up, is that Kipper has March numbers of 19-16-1, 3.17 GAA, and .889 save percentage for the last three seasons. Brent Sutter, if you are listening, play Henrik Karlsson for a few more games (15-20 games), throughout the season and keep Kipper fresh for the March run and your team will be much better off.

Kipper finished the season with 35 wins, a 2.35 GAA along with a decent .921 SP. He was also decent in his usually "down" month of March as well. Maaaasquito Bite: MISS.

Alex Burrows – LW – Vancouver

Burrows is another player that gets overvalued due to association. His 45 even strength points tied him with Tomas Vanek, Loui Eriksson , Nathan Horton and Jeff Skinner for 28th overall in the league in that department, but it's the one power-play point that puts a huge damper on things. With Mikael Samuelsson or Marco Sturm probably occupying top PP ice-time alongside the Sedins, Burrows will most likely be shafted once again. I know LWers are getting pretty thin at this point, but I'd probably take a pass on Burrows and take a stab at Taylor Hall or Mike Cammalleri a round or two later.

Much like the Backes situation there's a couple of ways that you can look at this situation. If you look at it from a stat-line perspective, there's not a lot that you can fault with a stat-line of 52 points, a plus 24 rating, 90 PIM, seven PPP along with 198 SOG. But if you look at it from an average draft position perspective, you could have left Burrows and snagged Patrik Elias , Evander Kane , Joffrey Lupul or Matt Moulson much lower and would have been better off. Maaaasquito Bite: PUSH.

Jimmy Howard – G – Detroit

Pretty much the same as Kipper's comment. With Howard, you pretty much have the name factor, but other than that you don't exactly get a lot of substance with it. The 37 wins were nice, but the 2.79 GAA and .910 save percentage probably wouldn't have garnered you a championship. Howard honestly didn't play well enough to sustain a number one gig all season long, but luckily an injury to Chris Osgood (and a lack of a quality backup), saved the job for Howard. 2011-12 will be a different story as the Red Wings have brought back a familiar name

of Ty Conklin for the backup gig. If Howard struggles for a second consecutive season, he might not have as much luck as he did last campaign.

Well Howard certainly proved me wrong, as he posted 35 victories along with a dazzling peripheral stat-line of 2.12 GAA and .920 SP. Conks didn't factor into the mix at all and Howard did his thing. Maaaasquito Bite: MISS.

Loui Eriksson – RW – Dallas

There's been a lot of polarizing debate on the status of Eriksson heading into the new season. At this point you've probably read all of the arguments and have now well and truly drawn your own conclusions. The only thing that I'll add to the debate is draft position. At an average pick of 81st, he currently sits above a few proven guys like Marian Hossa and Dustin Brown . Those two have a tad higher potential upside than Eriksson, which is why I'd be more inclined to select those two over an uncertain Eriksson on draft day.

As with Backes and Burrows, if you look at it from a stat-line perspective, there's nothing wrong with a line of 71 points, a plus 18 rating, 12 PIM, 12 PPP and 187 SOG. But if you compare him to the RWers that were surrounding him (Joe Pavelski , Ryane Clowe or Marian Hossa) at the draft table, he didn't produce anything above and beyond any of those options. Maaaasquito Bite: PUSH.

Mark Giordano – D – Calgary

Gio certainly had himself a pretty decent season last campaign when he posted 43 points, 25 of which came on the PP, 67 PIMs along with 165 SOG. The only thing that I'd be wary about is whether or not he'd be able to repeat that performance for 2011-12. Considering he's on averaged selected ahead of number one PP QB options like Alex Edler, Erik Johnson and James Wisniewski, it'd be a tough pill to swallow if you selected Gio and have one of those three light up the scoresheets against you.

If you pro-rate Gio's numbers over the course of a full season, he would have finished with a line of 36 points, an even rating, 100 PIM along with 168 SOG, which isn't too shabby, but once again if you compare him to his relative counterparts, I don't know if he's done enough to prove that he was a better pick. Maaaasquito Bite: PUSH

Ryan Whitney – D – Edmonton

Ditto for Whitney! His elevated ranking is entirely based on an injury-shortened 35 contests. Whitney had a bit of a hiccup in the pre-season when he rolled over on his surgically repaired ankle two weeks ago, which should send some warning signs to all poolies who are wanting to take a leap of faith on Whitney. The fact that he's taken ahead of players like Chris Pronger, Alex Goligoski, Alex Pietrangelo or Jack Johnson reveals that he's being over-rated in fantasy pools.

Got this one! As the band-aid boy proved, once again, that he is just that; a band-aid boy. A lot of poolies who gambled on him to be healthy paid a hefty price indeed and surely were frustrated by his inconsistencies all season long. Maybe 2012-13 might be different… Maaaasquito Bite: HIT

Logan Couture – C – San Jose

Much like a few of the players mentioned above, Couture got a large boost in the pre-season rankings due to great 2010-11 numbers. The fact that he also plays for the highly offensive Sharks also helps to increase his stocks somewhat, but is it necessarily enough to select him over the likes of number one centers like Jason Spezza , Mike Ribeiro or Mikko Koivu ? At the end of the day, Couture is still going to be choked offensively behind Joe Thornton , Patrick Marleau , Joe Pavelski , and possibly Martin Havlat , so he'll certainly have quite a few roadblocks to overcome in order to put up favourable fantasy numbers. I'd rather go with a solidified number one center option instead.

Continuing along the theme of the article, Couture could also go either way depending on how you want to look at it. There's nothing that you can really fault with a stat-line of 65 points, plus two rating, 16 PIM, 26 PPP and 245 SOG, but you'd be spewing that you took Couture over Spezza, Riberio or Jamie Benn . Maaaasquito Bite: PUSH.

So overall it wasn't as good as my 9-0-1 record from last campaign, but a 6-3-5 record is still respectable in my books. There were a few pushes in there and if I really wanted to prop up my stats, I could have slid them into the win column. A hit ratio of 43% isn't too shabby.

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