

Not With a 10-Foot Pole!

Written by Ryan Ma

Tuesday, 18 August 2009 13:39 - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 August 2009 14:43



Following my Eastern Conference counterpart, every year there are players who just don't tickle my fancy. There are a variety of reasons ranging from changes to the team during the off-season, recovery from off-season surgery, and similar to Miller's list, overvalued rookies/prospects.

Here is my list of players from the Western Conference that you won't likely find on my fantasy rosters this campaign:

Bobby Ryan Ana

I know I'll get raked over the coals on this one, but hear me out first. Yes I realized he put up 57 points in 64 contests last season, I also realize that he plays a position which traditionally has been the shallowest talent pool from a fantasy hockey standpoint and yes I do realize he was the player drafted after Sidney Crosby. All of those factors are great but two factors just scare the bejebus out of me: 1) I'm dreadfully frightened of the sophomore slump, all I have to do is mention Sam Gagner and Peter Mueller. 2) The off-season changes of adding Joffrey Lupul and

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Saku Koivu to the Duck lineup. Ryan averaged 15:26 and 2.72 SOG/game during the regular season and 19:41 and 3.77 SOG/contest in the playoffs last year. He won't get the same opportunity with Koivu and Lupul joining the lineup.

Miikka Kiprusoff Cal

Kipper's numbers have been on the decline for the past four consecutive seasons. His goals against average has transitioned from 2.07, 2.46, 2.69 to 2.84 this past season, while his save percentage has also taken a steadily downturn from .923, .917, .906 to .903. If I were a betting man, I'd predict a GAA of above three, and a save percentage below .900 this season. If you are playing in a simple wins/shutouts league then I would strongly consider Kipper, because of the number of starts he'll get in Cowtown, but if you are playing in a standard W, GAA, SP%, SO league, it's not worth sacrificing two stats for just one.

Duncan Keith Chi

Keith had a great fantasy season last year while finishing the regular season with 44 points, a plus 33 rating, 60 PIMs and 173 SOG. The post-season however, was a completely different story. In 17 playoff contests, he finished with six points, a plus one rating, 10 PIMs and 23 SOG. A lot of the decrease in production could be due to the progressive development of Cam Barker. This season you'll probably see that Barker fully establishes himself as a full-time NHLer, which will cause Keith to revert back towards his regular shut down defender role alongside Brent Seabrook. Don't expect Keith to be close to the numbers he put up last season.

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Nikita Filatov Cib

I just don't think he'll get a fair shake of the sauce bottle this year. The Blue Jackets will ice a line up of: Rick Nash, Kristian Huselius, R.J. Umberger, Antoine Vermette, Derick Brassard, Jakub Voracek, Sammy Pahlsson, Freddy Modin, Jason Chimera, and Raffi Torres, I just don't see Filly being able to crack that top 10. If they're going to bring him up it's going to be in a top-six role, not for a checking role.

J.M. Liles Col

Last season Mr. Liles registered a very quiet 39 points in 75 contests, all while averaging over 21 minutes of ice-time last season. The Avs added Preissing and Quincey in the off-season, which will pretty much remove Liles from the top-dog position of the Colorado depth chart. You can essentially kiss his 4:02 of power-play ice-time goodbye.

Loui Eriksson Dal

Eriksson had a great season last year thanks in part to a serious knee injury to Brendan Morrow. In Morrow's absence, Eriksson connected at nearly double his previous NHL shooting percentage as he tickled the twine once every five shots. He was also garnering close to 20 minutes of ice-time, three of which were on the power-play, per contest for the Stars. With Morrow returning to the Dallas line up, you can essentially count of those top-end opportunities a goner for this season.

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Ville Leino Det

With the departure of Marian Hossa in the off-season, surely many would think that someone in the Detroit line up will step up to the plate. I just don't think that person is Leino. I'm projecting the top-six to be Dan Cleary, Pavel Datsyuk, Thomas Homstrom on one line and Henrik Zetterberg, Johan Franzen, and Valtteri Fillpula as the second line. The recent acquisition of Patrick Eaves also complicates things in Detroit. Either way some poolies are going to overpay for Leino's hype, I won't!

Denis Grebeshkov and Tom Gilbert Edm

Both blue-liners had a solid season last year as Grebeshkov and Gilbert both potted 39 and 45 points respectively for the Oilers. They gained extra offensive responsibilities when Lubomir Visnovsky fell to a season-ending shoulder injury midway through last season, which could explain why the duo had such high point totals at season's end. With Vizzy slated to return to the Oiler's line up this season, you will probably see both Grebby and Gilbert's ice-time and point production drop dramatically.

Oscar Moller LA

Sure Moller is a solid young offensive talent, but the recent addition of Ryan Smyth to the Kings' line up pretty much sealed the fate in terms of fantasy value for Moller. He might get some second unit power-play ice-time, but it isn't going to be enough to make him fantasy worthy.

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Martin Havlat Min

Havlat did manage to play in 81 games last season, but he also did only manage to play in 109 the previous three seasons. Last season he also had the protection of Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews to take the brunt of the opponent's checking lines. This season, he's going to have a huge bullseye on his back and no protection in Minny. Let some other clown gamble on Havlat's health, while you steer clear.

Entire Phoenix Forward Corps

The whole situation is as clear as mud, I'd just save yourself the headaches and avoid all Coyote forwards with the exception of Doan and Lombardi.

Christian Ehrhoff SJ

25 of his 42 points last season came from the Sharks power-play. The San Jose power-play was operating at 24.2 percent during the regular season, but was nearly non-existent at 16.7 percent in the playoffs. McClellan tried to implement a Detroit-like umbrella PP system, where Boyle and Blake controlled the play with shots from the point moreso than through the playmaking skills of Joe Thornton. I personally think that they revert back towards 2006-07 power-play style and run the PP through JT more than the dynamic duo in the backend, which will negatively affect Ehrhoff's point production.

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David Backes STL

For those of you who followed my column last season know that I was a big supporter of Backes. This season I'm just not that attracted to his hype. Yes he did have a huge across-the-board season with the Blues, but that was because of the injuries to Paul Kariya and Andy McDonald. Now that those two are back on a full-time basis, Backes will be relegated to third-line checking duties. You just won't see the 2:32 in PP ice-time, and the 208 SOG that he had last season. Some poolies are going to buy into the Backes hype and overpay to draft him, let him slip and you can probably find a better bargain with a few other alternatives.

Alex Burrows Van

I'm kind of sitting on the fence about this one, and here is my reasoning. Burrows did have a great regular season while tallying a career-high 51 points in 82 contests, but then he kind of disappeared in the playoffs. While both of the Sedins were firing at a point-per-game pace, Burrows tallied only four points in the 10 playoffs contests, which is a big warning sign in my books. Burrows did show plenty of chemistry playing with the Sedins, but you could say the same for Anson Carter in 2005-06, Matt Cooke in 2006-07, and Taylor Pyatt and Mason Raymond in 2007-08, and look what happened to each of them the season after playing with the Sedins. The addition of Mikael Samuelsson also complicates the picture even further. Either way, a few people are banking on Burrows to continue that chemistry with the Sedins and are willing to over reach in order to land Burrows. You just have to decide whether or not you are going to be one of those people.

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Avoid These Murky Goaltending Situations:

Pekka Rinne & Dan Ellis Nas

2006 was Tomas Vokoun, 2007 was Chris Mason, 2008 was Dan Ellis and 2009 was Pekka Rinne. The revolving door of Predator goalies just keep on turning. Rinne had Calder-like numbers last season, but just fell short to Steve Mason at the voting booth. I just don't fully trust Rinne this season especially with Ellis still lurking around in the shadows. The pipeline also seems full with Chet Pickard and Mark Dekanich waiting in the wings, which could also pose a few problems for Rinne's number one status this season.

J.S. Giguere & Jonas Hiller Ana

There is a similar goalie controversy in Anaheim as there is one out East in Washington involving Simeon Varlamov and Jose Theodore. Giggy had a terrible season, due to off-ice personal problems, as he finished with a 19-18-6 record along with a dismal 3.10 GAA and a .900 save percentage. He essentially gave his number one gig away to Jonas Hiller who dazzled in the playoffs with a 2.23 GAA and .943 save percentage in 13 post-season contests. That was last season, now is this season, so what's going to happen? Your guess would be as good as mine. Dobber is a strong believer in Hiller, and like the Washington situation we're butting heads with this one too. Two times in Giggy's history he's rebounded from poor seasons with two dazzling ones. In 2000-01, Giggy finished the season with a 2.57 GAA and .911 save percentage, while following it up with a 2.13 GAA and .920 save percentage for 2001-02. In 2005-06, Giggy finished with a 2.66 GAA and a .911 save percentage, and followed that up with a 2.26 GAA and .918 save percentage in 2006-07. Could he do the same for next year? If you are a dead set on drafting a Duck goalie, you'd be wise to pick up the other as a handcuff, if you don't you could be setting yourself up for a huge nightmare. Both goalies are ranked pretty high by poolies, and you might need to end up spending consecutive 4th and 5th round picks on both goalies, which is a steep price to pay in my opinion.

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Craig Anderson & Peter Budaj Col

Similar to the situation in Toronto, but do you really want to own any of these goalies on a team that was ranked 26th in goals against average per game last year?

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