

For the past couple of seasons, I've written a few columns breaking down each of the Western Conference team's top-six from the bottom-six. So for the next couple of weeks, I'll go back to the well once again and give you better insight of each of the Western Conference teams for the upcoming season.

At the end of the day, point production can easily be attributed to one thing; **opportunity**. A top-line player, who is the focal point of his team's offense, will generally receive every possible chance to succeed and put up big points. A top-six player will receive decent even strength/second unit power-play ice-time, but may not put up dazzling fantasy numbers. A cavalry candidate is a player who may find themselves in line for a top-six role if things fail to remain status quo (injury or poor inconsistent play, etc.) Finally, a bottom feeder will most likely receive checking line time and probably won't receive ample optimal scoring time to put up fantasy roster worthy numbers. Their big break will only come if there are injuries or sudden collapses of young players from their team's top-six. We all like to be optimistic with our projections, but there really isn't a point in projection 80 points for a player who won't even crack a team's top-line let alone top-six.

Cavalry

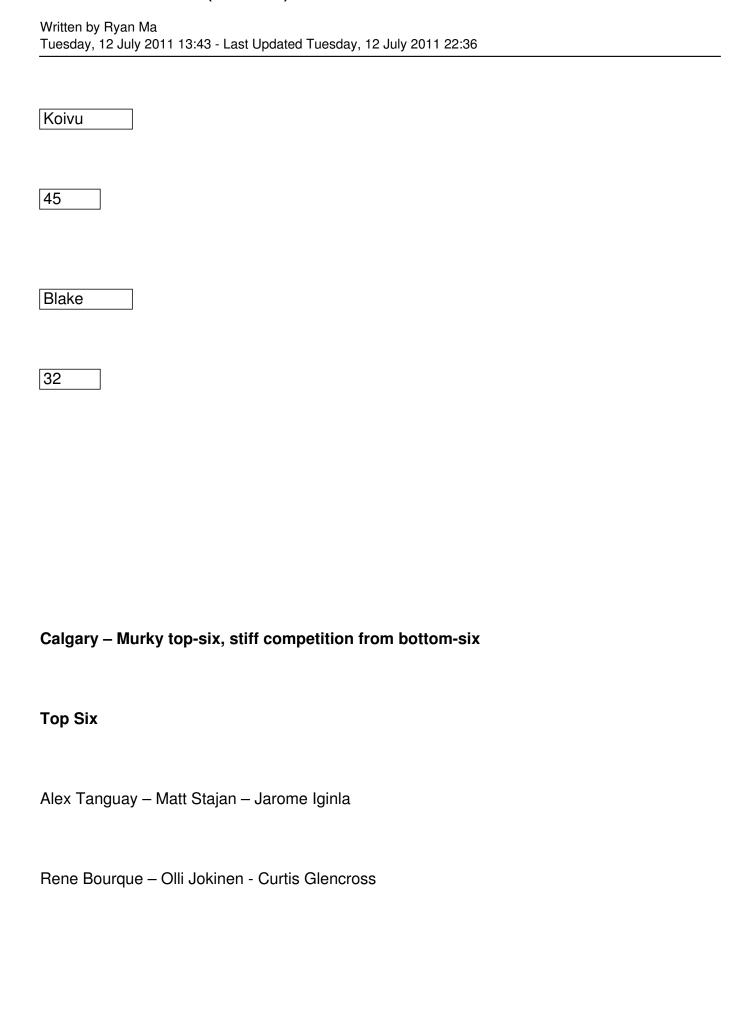
Earmarked for Success (West 2011): Part One Written by Ryan Ma Tuesday, 12 July 2011 13:43 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 July 2011 22:36 If you haven't read my **projections** article from earlier this summer, go back and take a gander. I know I had an eye-opening experience when digging up all the stats. Note: Take the line combos with a grain of salt. They are just arbitrary and are used primarily to separate a team's top-six from the bottom-six . I really don't want to get into arguments about player X had chemistry with player Y therefore they'll be on a line together during the season. Now onto the good stuff: Anaheim – Top five fairly locked, sixth role up for grabs Top Six Bobby Ryan – Ryan Getzlaf – Corey Perry Jason Blake – Saku Koivu – Matt Beleskey

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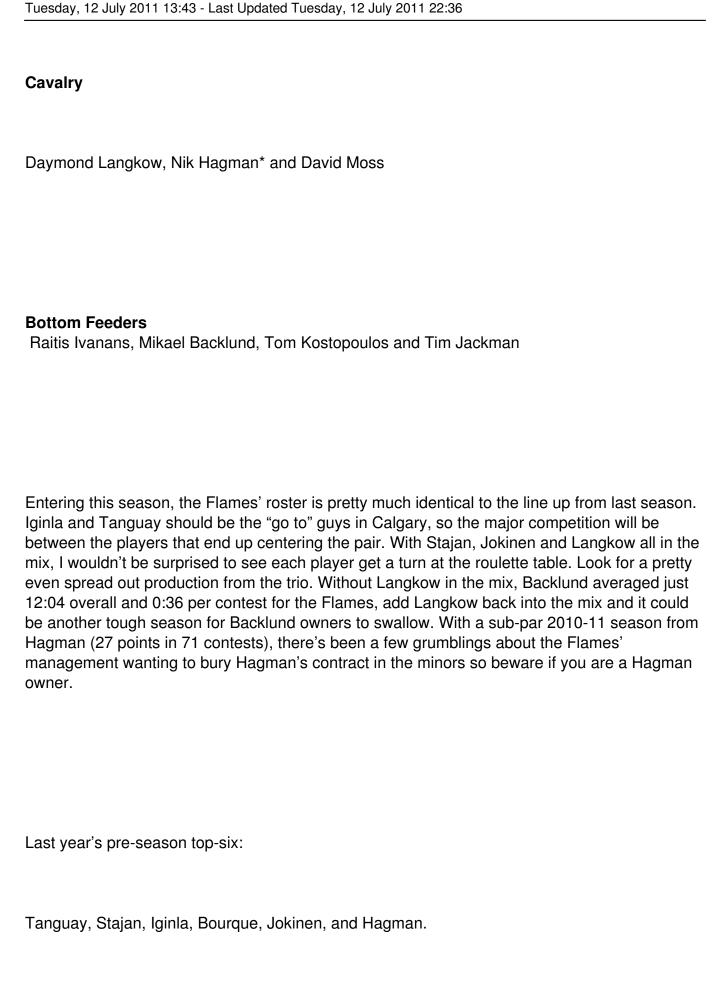
Last year's pre-season top-six:

Earmarked for Success (West 2011): Part One Written by Ryan Ma Tuesday, 12 July 2011 13:43 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 July 2011 22:36 Andrew Cogliano, Teemu Selanne*, Brandon McMillan, and Emerson Etem **Bottom Feeders** Brian McGrattan, Kyle Palmieri, J.F. Jacques, and George Parros, Much of Anaheim's future top-six will depend on the status of Teemu Selanne. If he decides to return for one more go, the Ducks top-six could boast a very similar roster as last campaign. The latest news on the Selanne front is that he just had arthroscopic surgery on his left knee in late June, which will probably delay his decision until training camp in August just to further keep us fantasy poolies waiting. Most of the battle for a top-six spot will be between Beleskey and McMillan, but both are probably waiver wire pickups during the season anyway. With 80 points in 65 games (and more importantly 21 in 15 during the WHL playoffs), with the Medicine Hat Tigers last season, Etem could be a serious dark horse candidate to challenge for a top-six spot during training camp, so keep an eye on that situation. With 146 points in 328 contests, we're still waiting for Cogliano to breakout in the NHL. He didn't get a lot of opportunity in Edmonton and he probably won't get a lot in Anaheim, either. Look for another third line gig for him this season.

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Ryan, Getzlaf, Perry, Blake, Koivu, and Lupul.
End of year finish:
Perry
98
Selanne
80
Getzlaf
76
Ryan
71



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End of year finish:		
Iginla		
86		
Tanguay		
69		
Jokinen		
54		
Bourque		
50		

Earmarked for Success (West 2011): Part One Written by Ryan Ma Tuesday, 12 July 2011 13:43 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 July 2011 22:36 Glencross 43 Morrison 43 Chicago- Fairly set top-six, slight competition from bottom-six

Top Six

Patrick Sharp - Jonathan Toews - Patrick Kane

Andrew Brunette - Dave Bolland - Marian Hossa

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Viktor	Stalberg, c	Jeremv	Morin*	and	Rotislav	Olesz
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Bottom Feeders

Dan Carcillo, Bryan Bickell, Jamal Mayers, Ben Smith, and Marcus Kruger

After another summer of off-season culling, the Blackhawks lost a lot of its offensive glimmer since their Stanley Cup win two campaigns ago. The top-six is chock full of veteran talent with the incoming of the fairly consistent Brunette to the line up. He's a great addition that won't take away prime scoring opportunities from Toews and Kane, but should complement Hossa well on the second line. He's posted seasons of 59, 50, 61, 46, so a yo-yo back to 60 points wouldn't completely surprise me to the least. Stalberg and Olesz are great complementary players and could see their fantasy value rise if an injury to the top-six occurs. A dark horse candidate to keep your eye on might be Morin. He picked up three points in nine contests during his brief tenure in the NHL last campaign, but his fantasy upside is certainly much higher.

Last year's pre-season top-six:

Sharp, Toews, Kane, Versteeg, Bolland and Hossa.

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End of year finish:
Toews
76
Kane
73
Sharp
71
Hossa
57
Kopecky

