

Tortoise Versus Hare (West 2011)

Written by Ryan Ma

Tuesday, 04 October 2011 11:30 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 October 2011 16:36



This week's article stems from a [thread](#) created by Princeton on the Dobber forums. So I thought it'd be a good idea to take a look at the Western Conference players to see if they are a hot starter (hare) or if they tend to start out of the gates a bit slower than the norm (tortoise). You can use this article in a few ways, where, if you are an owner it might just give you peace of mind to know that your player is a traditional slow starter, but should return to normal pretty soon. Or you might use someone who's traditionally a hot starter and try to "sell high" and maximize trade value after the first month. Either way it should be beneficial for you fellow poolies.

Now, onto the good stuff!

Bobby Ryan – LW - Anaheim Ducks

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Ryan's a bit of a tortoise, as he owns a 0.67 point-per game average (16 points in 24 contests), during the last two Octobers, but a 0.86 point-per-game pace for all of the other months (119 points in 139 contests). Most of the Ducks, in general, are slow starts, so if you are a Ryan owner, make sure you don't hit the panic button too early if he's off to another slow start this campaign.

Jarome Iginla – RW – Calgary Flames

Iggy has a career October average of 0.89 points-per-game, but 0.91 points-per-game ratio for all of the other months. If you look at the overall stats they might appear pretty close, but those numbers are kind of buoyed because of a 19 point October back in 2007. If you take out that year, the average is closer towards 0.83, than the 0.89 number above. Iggy will still put up decent numbers, but just don't expect them to be right off the bat.

Jonathan Toews – C – Chicago Blackhawks

Toews is in a very similar boat, as he owns a 0.63 point-per-game October numbers (20 points in 32 contests), during the last three seasons compared to 0.94 (193 points in 206 games), during the rest of the months. Granted a few of the slow Octobers might be due to long post-season runs during the previous year, but it might just be that he's a slow starter.

Henrik Zetterberg – C, LW – Detroit Red Wings

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Zetterberg is a flighty hare as he maintains a 1.02 point-per-game average career October average compared to a 0.93 average during the rest of the season. His dual eligibility in Yahoo! leagues certainly will make him quite valuable in fantasy leagues, but if you don't really need that eligibility it might be to your advantage that if he does get off to a quick start to sell him for a higher quality player.

Patrick Marleau – C, LW – San Jose Sharks

Marleau is in an identical boat as Zetterberg, but with much more mind-boggling numbers. For the last three seasons, he maintains a 1.18 point-per-game October average compared to a 0.91 point-per-game average for the rest. The Sharks have a bit of a soft October schedule this season, so another hot start from Marleau wouldn't be all that surprising.

Joe Thornton – C – San Jose Sharks

Marleau and Thornton's point production seem to go hand-in-hand as they have very similar October vs the rest of the season splits. Thornton has enjoyed a 1.17 point-per-game October split during the last four seasons compared to his 1.03 rest of the month average. Last campaign was a bit of a forgettable one, so look for a strong bounce back season from a player that has averaged over 94 points-per-season since 2003.

Dan Boyle – D – San Jose Sharks

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A third Shark makes the list. For the last three years, Boyle has registered 29 points in 34 October contests (0.85 points-per-game), which is a noticeable improvement over the 0.70 points-per-game (136 points in 195 contests), that he maintains during the other months. Maybe all of the Sharks are just “hot” starters, or maybe something is in the water in San Jose during October. Either way if you own a Shark, enjoy the feast!

Dany Heatley – LW, RW- Minnesota Wild

Heatley's best month throughout his career has been always October. He preserves a whopping 1.23 point-per-game career October average, which is a strong improvement compare to his 1.00 point-per-game career average during rest of the season. The newly formed trio of Mikko Koivu, Devin Setoguchi and Heatley could certainly do some damage during the early part of this season and certainly could form an “elite tandem” or “elite trio” for poolies who are interested in utilizing that strategy.

David Backes – C, RW – St. Louis Blues

Backes is an extremely slow starter, as he owns a 0.33 point-per-game career October average. Ouch! But the good thing is that once November rolls around, that average shoots up to 0.60 to help make up some of the lost ground. St. Louis is chock full of offensive depth this season, which could very well end up being an “offense by committee” team where it's going to hurt a lot of fantasy poolies who have invested heavily on the Blues' players, so keep that in mind if you are a Backes owner.

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Paul Stastny – C – Colorado Avalanche

Stastny possesses a career 1.11 point-per-game average during the month of October, which is a far cry from the 0.89 average that he maintains during the other months. He and the Avs had a bit of a dismal year last campaign when he posted just 57 points in 74 contests, so a “hot” opening month might just be enough to start a bounce back season for Stats and co.

Mikko Koivu – C – Minnesota Wild

Koivu is another hare, as he maintains a 0.91 point-per-game average for his career during the month of October (51 points in 56 contests), but just a 0.71 average during the other months (266 points in 377 contests). The newly formed top-line of Heatley, Koivu and Setoguchi has been on fire during the pre-season, and if they can continue some of that during the regular season, October might just be the hot start that the Wild need turn themselves into contenders.

R.J. Umberger – C, LW – Columbus Blue Jackets

Umberger is another tortoise candidate as he owns a career 0.40 point-per-game average during the opening month of the season, but things generally turn for the better once the initial adjustment period ends as he boosts that average to 0.60 for the rest of the season. With so many changes happening in Columbus during the off-season, another slow start while all of the new players acclimatize might occur once again.

Brendan Morrow – LW – Dallas Stars

If you've been following my columns for the last couple of years, then you probably would have read me mentioning Morrow's yearly production quite a few times in the past. Morrow has very surprising splits in months where he returns from rest (October [summer], January [Christmas/New Year's], March [All-Star Break/Olympics]) compared to months in the heart of the season. Since the lockout, Morrow actually owns a 0.90 point-per-game average compared to his 0.73 average otherwise. If you are a smart poolie/owner, I'd take advantage of that and try to pawn him off after the opening month and take advantage of his usual hot starts.

Milan Hejduk – RW – Colorado Avalanche

Since the lockout, Hejduk has been a player that starts out of the gates with a bang as demonstrated by his 0.96 October point-per-game average (55 points in 57 contests), which is a solid improvement over the 0.75 numbers during the rest of the months. Keep in mind that the trio of Matt Duchene, Peter Mueller, and Hedjuk combined for a whopping 55 points in the final 15 contests of the 2009-10 season in Colorado. If some of that residual chemistry returns, look out in October, (and the rest of the season)!

Ryan Smyth – LW – Edmonton Oilers

Smyth has also been a player that has a running start out of the gates. He has a very respectable 0.87 point-per-game average in October. He then slows down quite a bit as the average drops to 0.66 as the season progresses. Another thing to keep in mind is that since the turn of the century, Smyth has averaged 0.86 points and 2.94 SOG per contest while suiting up in an Oiler uniform, so there's certainly some familiarity if he lines up alongside Ales Hemsky

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and Shawn Horcoff once again. It'd probably be a bit crazy to expect him to put up those numbers a decade later, but he still should be productive enough to be at least owned sometime during this season.

Other Notables:

Hares

C

RW

LW

G

Jarett Stoll

Mikael Samuelsson

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Andrew Brunette

Jaroslav Halak

Tomas Holmstrom

P.M. Bouchard

Nicklas Backstrom

Ales Hemsky

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Tortoises

C

RW

LW

D

G

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Radim Vrbata

Antoine Vermette

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Jay Bouwmeester

Miika Kiprusoff

Mike Fisher

Peter Mueller

Fedor Tyutin

Kari Lehtonen

Martin Hanzal

Keith Ballard

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Steve Mason

Questions or comments? Or any make or break candidates of your own? Like always I'll be ready and willing to discuss them with you in the comments section below.