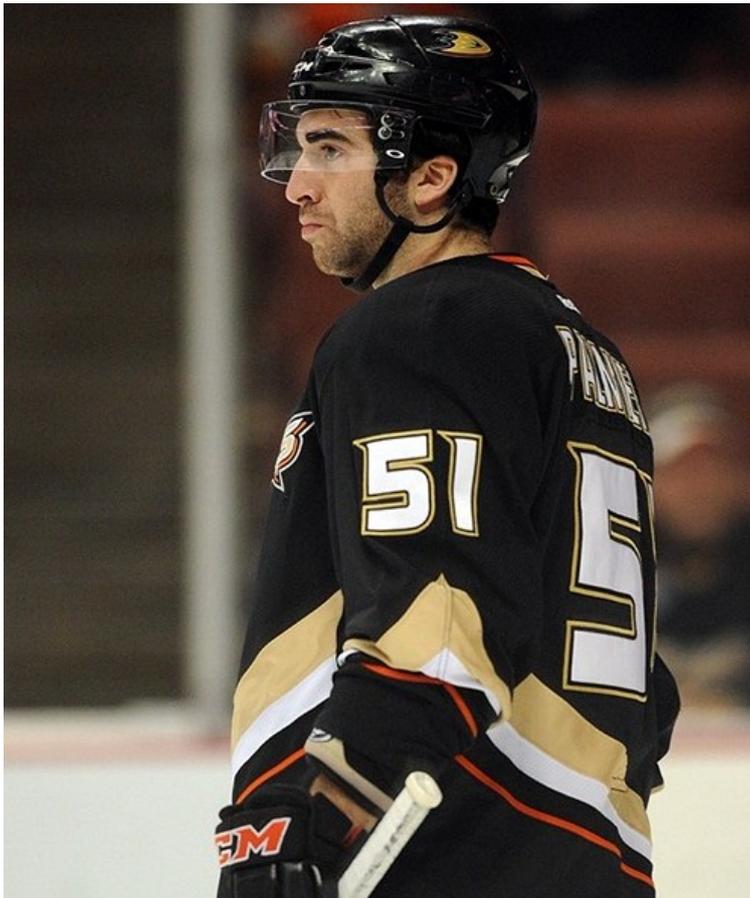


Finders Keepers

Written by Michael Amato

Monday, 07 January 2013 17:56 - Last Updated Tuesday, 27 August 2013 13:02



A look at some unsung prospects in the Western Conference

The National Hockey League has made many changes to the game over the years in an attempt to improve the product. Now some may argue that they have failed in their efforts. Many hockey purists can't stand the shootout, dislike the trapezoid, and I'm sure there is even someone out there that is hoping we again see the day where you can't make a two-line pass.

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Much like the NHL, hockey pools have experienced their fair share of evolution. One of the more prevalent forms of fantasy hockey these days are keeper leagues. Not only that, but these leagues will often have salary caps and farm systems as well. Part of the appeal of retaining players from year to year is the challenge it creates for managers of a given squad. People get to discover that it's not so easy to project what a player will do in the future.

Unless your name is Mike Milbury, once a player is an established NHL talent, you can usually decipher what value they are going to bring to the table for the foreseeable future. However, there are rare cases like that of [Jonathan Cheechoo](#), who went from 50-goal scorer to AHL mainstay faster than you can say Sergei Krivokrasov. In general though, forecasting what a veteran will do is far easier than figuring out how a rookie is going to perform on the big stage.

Scouting is never an exact science and even the most can't-miss prospect has a chance of not panning out. That's why in keeper leagues your farm unit is extremely important. Holding onto a few players that end up making an impact at the NHL level can be a shrewd move that could bring you success for years to come.

Here is a look at a few Western Conference youngsters that figure to play a prominent role on their respective squads in the future.

[Boone Jenner](#) – Columbus Blue Jackets

Jenner scored 27 goals in just 32 games with the Oshawa Generals before joining Canada at the World Junior Hockey Championship. He also has a bit of an edge to his game as well, as he has averaged nearly 70 PIM in his last three OHL seasons. More evidence of that was the three game suspension he suffered for a hit he delivered in a pre-tournament game against Sweden.

Since the Blue Jackets will surely be rebuilding after trading away [Rick Nash](#), Jenner figures to get an opportunity with the team sooner rather than later. He also has one of those last names where it's easy to emphasize the vowel whenever he does something good. Can't you just hear Blue Jacket fans yelling Boooooooooone in unison every time he delivers a solid check? Me either, but you can imagine what it would be like.

Brett Ritchie – Dallas Stars

Ritchie, like Jenner, has 27 goals so far in the OHL in 2012-13 with the Niagara IceDogs. He also proved how dominant he could be one week in early November. Ritchie was named OHL player of the week after picking up ten goals and three assists in just three games. In fact, he tallied nine goals in a single weekend by recording four against the Guelph Storm on Saturday, and then followed that up on Sunday with a five goal performance against the Peterborough Petes. With international experience now at the WJHC and Subway Super Series, Ritchie figures to inject some scoring in the Stars' lineup down the line.

[Brandon Saad](#) – Chicago Blackhawks

The Blackhawks figured to take a long look at Saad during training camp this season, but the NHL and NHLPA put any plans like that on hold. It's a good sign that Chicago sent him to their AHL affiliate the Rockford IceHogs, as that's an indication they probably think he is close to being ready to play at the next level.

Saad has struggled a little in his first AHL season, and battled a few injuries as well. He has just six goals and 14 points with the IceHogs this year. Saad is also a minus-2 which Chicago will no doubt want to see him improve as soon as possible if he has aspirations of cracking the Blackhawks roster. However, going through growing pains and a learning curve during the lockout will be vital for his development and Saad should be better prepared for the NHL because of it.

[Kyle Palmieri](#) – Anaheim Ducks

If you have Palmieri on the farm portion of your squad, chances are he won't be there much longer. There was a good possibility he would have started with the Ducks in 2012-13 had the campaign started on time. Palmieri actually has 28 games of NHL experience over the last two seasons already under his belt, and has been impressing so far this year with the Norfolk Admirals of the AHL. He has 21 points in 30 games with the Admirals to go along with an impressive 50 PIM. At 21 years of age, Palmieri is a little more experienced and versatile than

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many other prospects currently looking to make NHL squads.

[Joakim Andersson](#) – Detroit Red Wings

Andersson has now spent extensive time in the Swedish Elite League, as well as the AHL with the Grand Rapids Griffins. The Red Wings have a good track record of drafting quality talent later in drafts, and Detroit will be hoping Andersson continues that trend. Not only does Detroit develop talent well, but they usually turn into complete players by the time they reach the NHL. Currently Andersson is on pace to hit 130 PIM with the Griffins this season and finish with around 50 points. The Wings figure to use him as a depth player in the Motor City, but he could help you out in a few different categories once he gets there.

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