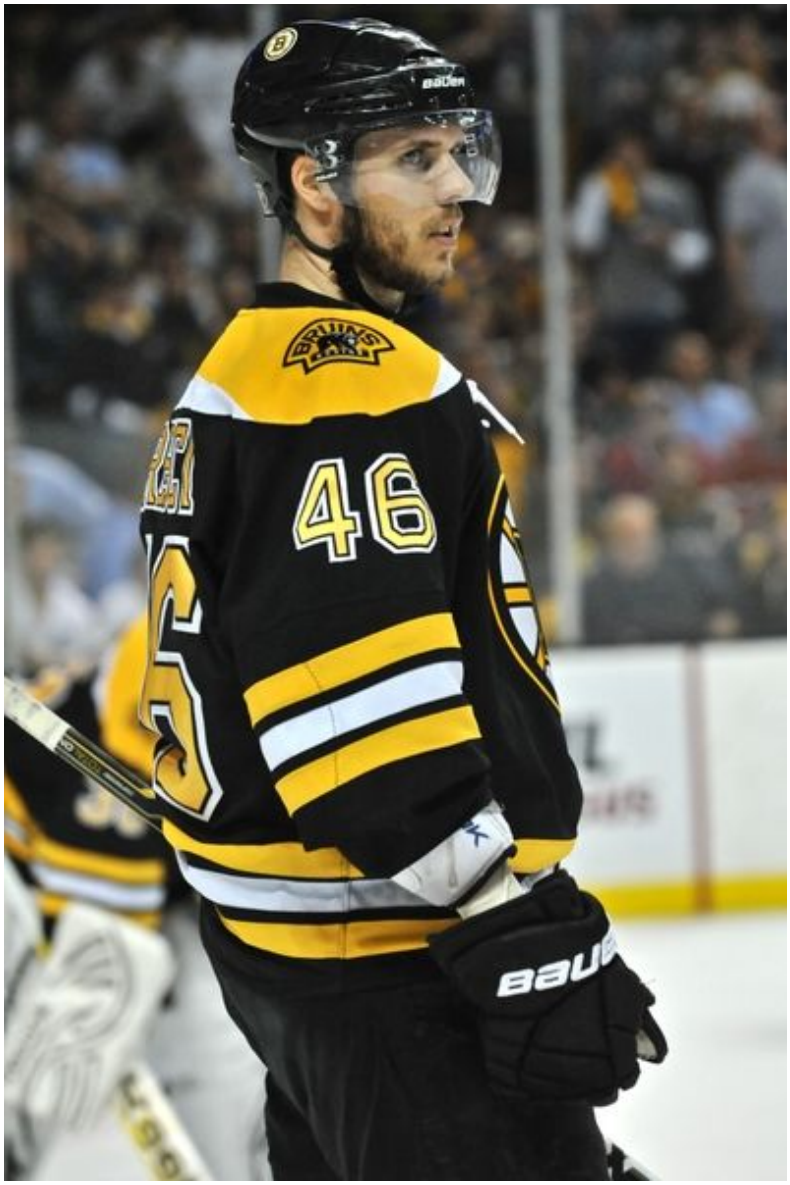

Welcome to another season! Every Friday I will be giving you all of the trends, tendencies and tidbits that you can handle with regards to the NHL schedule as well as providing a weekly chart showing the best five and worst five team schedules for the upcoming weeks (found below). I will be taking a similar approach to what I did last season , but am also going to be trying out a few different things.

The League has ended its one year stretch of having six teams start the campaign overseas and went back to just sending four teams; which was the case in 2008-09 and 2009-10. This year, the Rangers, Buffalo, Los Angeles and Anaheim will play two games in either Helsinki, Stockholm or Berlin followed up by almost a week-long break in their early schedule. LA has the shortest break of just five days, while the Rangers get an entire week off.

The extended travel, time zone change and time off will have some obvious effects on the team's ability to score in the days and even weeks following. Last season, four of the six teams that made the trip had a significantly lower average goals-for in the month of October than they did for the rest of the season. Obviously comparing a sample size of roughly 10 games to the remainder of the season is difficult to do, especially with many teams trying out new combinations and players, but this is just something to keep an eye on in the early going.

Looking at the beloved Leafs' schedule, one would think that they were making the trip to Europe as well. After games on opening night and this coming Saturday, Toronto doesn't play until the following Saturday. The Buds make up for it though, with a whopping nine games over the last 16 days of the month (Oct 15 – 30). (On a Leafs' side note, I'll be the one in the Wings jersey at Real Sports on Thursday. Can't wait!!).

I will again be analyzing team's goal scoring prowess at home versus on the road this season . While there obviously isn't any data to work with yet, some notable teams will be getting a lot more home cooking than others in October. Boston and Edmonton each play seven of their first

nine at home, while the Flames have seven of 10 in Calgary. Likely bottom feeders Colorado and Florida start the year with seven of nine on the road, while two teams who struggled mightily away from home early on last season, St.Louis and Tampa, play 8 of 11 and 7 of 10 on the road respectively. Including their two game trip to Europe (in which they're the road team in both games), the Rangers have to wait until Game 8 on October 27 for their first game at MSG.

The Jets start the season with 11 of their first 15 on the road. Winnipeg is going to be prone to stretches like this over the course of their season because of their placement in the Southeast Division. Adding to the one above, they also play 14 of their 16 December games at home, eight of nine on the road in mid January, eight straight home games in February and March and close out the season with seven of their last 10 on the road.

Monthly Look Ahead

If you are looking at taking advantage of some games played differences when scouring your league for trades, here is a look at team totals for the month of October.

13 Games: Pittsburgh

12 Games: Columbus and Ottawa

11 Games: Anaheim, Carolina, Chicago, Colorado, Dallas, Edmonton, Florida, LA, Montreal, Nashville, Philadelphia, St.Louis, Tampa Bay, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg

10 Games: Boston, Buffalo, Minnesota, NYR, Phoenix, San Jose

9 Games: Calgary, Detroit, New Jersey, NYI, Washington

Keep an eye out if you have some of those streaky wingers on the Pens as they could get you as much as a four game boost if you deal them for someone on the teams that play nine games.

Now, for the goods.....

A tough decision can be made easier with these charts showing you the best five and worst five schedules for upcoming seven-day periods. Some of you used them last year but for the benefit

of new readers here is a refresher. The number next to the team indicates the 'multiplier' to use on a player's point-per-game pace to give you an idea how many points to expect for that week.

Thursday Oct 6 to Wednesday Oct 12, 2010

Best Bets

Boston 4.20 - Phi, TB, Col, @Car
Pittsburgh 4.21 - @Van, @Cgy, @Edm, Fla
Columbus 3.84 - Nas, @Min, Van, Col
Carolina 3.67 - TB, @Was, @NJ, Bos
Minnesota 3.43 - CBJ, @NYI, @Ott

Steer Clear

Edmonton 0.83 - Pit
Winnipeg 0.87 - Mon
San Jose 0.94 - Phx
Los Angeles 1.77 - NYR, Buf
St. Louis 1.79 - Nas, Cgy

Friday Oct 7 to Thursday Oct 13, 2010

Best Bets

Minnesota 4.54 - CBJ, @NYI, @Ott, Edm
Ottawa 4.42 - @Det, @Tor, Min, Col
Colorado 4.42 - Det, @Bos, @CBJ, @Ott
Tampa Bay 4.10 - @Car, @Bos, @Wash, @NYI
Pittsburgh 4.09 - @Cgy, @Edm, Fla, Was

Steer Clear

San Jose 0.94 - Phx
Toronto 1.04 - Ott
Philadelphia 1.73 - @NJ, Van
Anaheim 1.87 - @Buf, NYR
Buffalo 1.88 - Ana, @LA

Saturday Oct 8 to Friday Oct 14, 2010

Best Bets

Minnesota 4.54 - CBJ, @NYI, @Ott, Edm
Colorado 4.18 - Det, @Bos, @CBJ, @Ott
Pittsburgh 4.09 - @Cgy, @Edm, Fla, Was
Carolina 3.74 - @Was, @NJ, Bos, @Buf
Ottawa 3.31 - @Tor, Min, Col

Steer Clear

Toronto 1.04 - Ott
NY Rangers 1.08 - @Ana
Anaheim 1.71 - NYR, SJ
Philadelphia 1.73 - @NJ, Van
Edmonton 1.89 - Pit, @Min

Sunday Oct 9 to Saturday Oct 15, 2010

Best Bets

Vancouver 4.54 - @CBJ, @Phi, @Det, @Edm
Minnesota 4.47 - @NYI, @Ott, Edm, Det