

Looking Ahead: Week 4

Written by Bob Fisher

Thursday, 07 February 2013 17:17 - Last Updated Friday, 08 February 2013 15:26



The 'Looking Ahead' series helps you get the edge when setting your fantasy lineups.

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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.

Conference Bias

Like last week, Eastern Conference teams lead Western Conference teams in the "Best Bets" section. But this time, not quite as heavily. The East led 22 to 13 this week. Similar to last week, Western Conference teams ran away with the "Steer Clear" award, 26 to nine.

I will analyze these numbers each week to see if we ever get a swing going in favor of the West. But for now, the East is looking better (but not as much as last week) for this upcoming schedule.

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For the record, I don't see this trend reversing this season with only intra-conference play. West vs. West is going to yield fewer goals and fewer fantasy relevant performances (from non-goaltenders) compared to East vs. East matchups.

Kovy Time?

[Ilya Kovalchuk](#) loves playing Carolina and Pittsburgh, he feeds off of it. He points at Crosby in the penalty box after scoring power play goals and drinks [Cam Ward](#)'s tears for refreshment. In Kovalchuk's career, no team has allowed him to generate more points than Carolina (70 points in 56 games). Pittsburgh isn't bad for him either (48 points in 43 games). With a home and home with Pittsburgh on Saturday and Sunday and a matchup versus Carolina on Tuesday, it should be expected that Kovalchuk's defenseman-like ice time will start to payoff.

The Devils look primed to break out of their average goals per game of 2.56 and start putting some pucks in the net. Pittsburgh, Carolina, Philadelphia and the Islanders are all vulnerable, and in intra-division games, anything can happen. Patrick Elias and [David Clarkson](#) should continue their good starts and help their fantasy owners make up some ground over the weekend and generate a good start next week.

Philadelphia Desperation

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Starting Monday, the Flyers head out on a six-game road trip, but don't worry, the Flyers love the road (maybe a little too much, ask [Mike Richards](#) and [Jeff Carter](#)). Last season, only the Canucks could claim that they matched the amount of power play goals Philly scored on the road. Philly's PK was actually slightly better on the road last season as well. While that trend isn't exactly repeating itself this year, the Flyers do seem to have more success playing away from their home cooking, for whatever reason.

Not having Hartnell and losing Jagr has definitely affected Giroux – but he's too good of a player to allow that to continue. The thing that ails the Flyers isn't necessarily offense or defense necessarily, but everything that goes along with it. Like most players, Giroux doesn't play well in losses – he has two points in the Flyer's six losses and this road trip is basically the Flyers' season. Look for him to step up like he did in last year's playoff matchup against Pittsburgh.

With Philly sitting last in their division and fourth worst in the Eastern Conference, one would have to expect that the team that leaves on Monday won't be the same that comes back the following week. Be it through a trade by Holmgren or just sheer will from Laviolette – it's time for the Flyers to start winning for their NHL season and for their players to start putting up points for your fantasy season. [Matt Read](#) , [Jakub Voracek](#) and Danny Briere need to carry the torch. When you have players on a team with so many expectations and so much skill in a do-or-die scenario, it's more than likely to bring out their best. Play your Flyers with confidence this week, I know I will.

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Washington Crapitals

While the Caps are getting some help by playing Florida in their next two games, it does little to inspire confidence as a fantasy owner of any of their players (goalies included). The Caps have fewer goals for per game than the Panthers. Read this following sentence slowly to fully digest it: [Alex Ovechkin](#) and [Nicklas Backstrom](#) have the same amount of goals as [Jonathan Huberdeau](#) Combined. Just disappointing.

They'll cap off their craptacular week against Tampa Bay and the Rangers, both on the road, which should be fun to watch. But those are the only games Washington plays for a span of eight days. I apologize for recommending the Caps last week – what a bust that was. The Caps seem to have no hope to try and understand Adam Oates system (which seems to consist of putting Ovechkin with fourth liners). It'll take a missed playoff appearance, rampant trade rumors and a drama-filled summer to get them back to some semblance of normal.

San Jose Slumping

Every good team goes through slumps. San Jose goes through one every season in April or May. The Sharks just finished playing a wildly entertaining game against Chicago where All-World goaltender (sarcasm, in case anyone missed it) [Corey Crawford](#) outdueled the high-powered Sharks after a crazy first period giving the Sharks their third loss in a row.

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San Jose hits the road starting on Monday to play Columbus, Nashville, a rematch of Tuesday's barnburner in Chicago and a visit to St. Louis. While Columbus and Nashville aren't exactly scary teams, they have a high potential of being "fantasy duds" for the Sharks. We've all seen the Columbus or Nashville snooze-fests where [Scott Gomez](#) will score some weird goal and the Sharks win a shootout while

[Thomas Greiss](#)

gets the win and you check your lineup to see

[Joe Thornton](#)

finish with ten faceoff wins and three shots on goal.

This has the potential to be just one of those weeks for the Sharks. Six of San Jose's next seven games are against strong (or traditionally strong) defensive teams (PHX, NSH, CHI (x2), STL, DAL – sorry CLB). So the defensive battle this weekend against Phoenix should continue throughout the week against the Central division. I'm not expecting a ton of losses, just not a lot of offense based on the circumstances and matchups.

Possible Pickups

Here's a list of some players, owned in less than 30% of Yahoo leagues, to target during the upcoming Monday through Sunday week.

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Minnesota: [Tom Gilbert](#) (15%) – Six points in the last six games (although pointless in the last two).

Philadelphia: [Matt Read](#) (23%) – Three points in the last three games. [Tye McGinn](#) (1%) – Playing with Giroux and Briere at even strength and powerplay.

Dallas: [Derek Roy](#) (21%) – Has a point in both games since he returned from injury. Now that Benn is back, Roy can excel at the C2 spot he was brought in to do.

Calgary: Basically the entire Calgary top six, minus Iginla – [Alex Tanguay](#) (25%), [Mike Cammalleri](#) (27%), [Jiri Hudler](#) (19%), [Curtis Glencross](#) (17%), [Lee Stempniak](#) (9%). Don't forget that Calgary has only played seven games so far (Hudler only four).

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St. Louis: [Patrik Berglund](#) (29%) – Six points in the last six games.

Best Bets

Carolina (4.10) - 4 Games: @PHI, @NYI, @NJ, TOR

Minnesota (4.01) - 4 Games: NSH, @CGY, @VAN, COL

Nashville (3.89) - 4 Games: @MIN, CHI, SJ, PHX

Tampa Bay (3.86) - 4 Games: @BOS, @NYR, MTL, WSH

Philadelphia (3.19) - 3 Games: CAR, @TOR, @WPG

Steer Clear

Los Angeles (1.76) - 2 Games: @DET, @STL

Colorado (1.90) - 2 Games: PHX, @MIN

Chicago (1.96) - 2 Games: @NSH, ANH

Columbus (2.10) - 2 Games: EDM, SJ

Winnipeg (2.10) - 2 Games: @OTW, PHI

to Friday, February 15

Best Bets

New Jersey (4.11) - 4 Games: PIT, @PIT, CAR, PHI

Carolina (4.10) - 4 Games: @PHI, @NYI, @NJ, TOR

Philadelphia (4.09) - 4 Games: CAR, @TOR, @WPG, @NJ

Pittsburgh (4.05) - 4 Games: @NJ, NJ, OTW, @WPG

Minnesota (4.01) - 4 Games: NSH, @CGY, @VAN, COL

Steer Clear

Colorado (1.90) - 2 Games: PHX, @MIN

Anaheim (2.66) - 3 Games: @STL, @CHI, @DET

Dallas (2.85) - 3 Games: @EDM, @CGY, @VAN

Phoenix (2.85) - 3 Games: @SJ, @COL, @NSH

Columbus (2.91) - 3 Games: EDM, SJ, @LA

o Saturday, February 16

Best Bets

New Jersey (4.15) - 4 Games: @PIT, CAR, PHI, @NYI

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Nashville (4.04) - 4 Games: CHI, SJ, PHX, ANH

Tampa Bay (4.01) - 4 Games: @NYR, MTL, WSH, @FLA

Philadelphia (3.99) - 4 Games: @TOR, @WPG, @NJ, @MTL

Columbus (3.76) - 4 Games: EDM, SJ, @LA, @PHX

Steer Clear

Washington (1.99) - 2 Games: @FLA, @TB

Vancouver (2.10) - 2 Games: MIN, DAL

Winnipeg (2.10) - 2 Games: PHI, PIT

Anaheim (2.71) - 3 Games: @CHI, @DET, @NSH

St. Louis (2.84) - 3 Games: LA, @DET, @CGY

to Sunday, February 17

Best Bets

Minnesota (4.11) - 4 Games: @CGY, @VAN, COL, DET

Philadelphia (3.99) - 4 Games: @TOR, @WPG, @NJ, @MTL

Dallas (3.95) - 4 Games: @EDM, @CGY, @VAN, CGY

Calgary (3.94) - 4 Games: MIN, DAL, STL, @DAL

St. Louis (3.70) - 4 Games: LA, @DET, @CGY, @VAN

Steer Clear

Anaheim (2.71) - 3 Games: @CHI, @DET, @NSH

Edmonton (2.26) - 2 Games: DAL, COL

Washington (2.85) - 3 Games: @FLA, @TB, @NYR

Columbus (2.66) - 3 Games: SJ, @LA, @PHX

Colorado (2.89) - 3 Games: PHX, @MIN, @EDM

to Monday, February 18

Best Bets

Florida (4.40) - 4 Games: WSH, MTL, TB, TOR

Montreal (4.20) - 4 Games: @TB, @FLA, PHI, CAR

Nashville (4.14) - 4 Games: SJ, PHX, ANH, @COL

New Jersey (4.35) - 4 Games: CAR, PHI, @NYI, OTW

Philadelphia (3.99) - 4 Games: @WPG, @NJ, @MTL, @NYI

Steer Clear

San Jose (1.76) - 2 Games: @NSH, @CHI

Los Angeles (2.16) - 2 Games: CLB, @CHI

Edmonton (2.26) - 2 Games: DAL, COL

Columbus (2.66) - 3 Games: @LA, @PHX, @ANH

St. Louis (2.80) - 3 Games: @DET, @CGY, @VAN

13 to Tuesday, February 19

Best Bets

Nashville (4.19) - 4 Games: PHX, ANH, @COL, DET

Toronto (4.09) - 4 Games: @CAR, OTW, @FLA, @TB

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Montreal (4.06) - 4 Games: @FLA, PHI, CAR, @NYR

Ottawa (4.00) - 4 Games: @PIT, @TOR, @NJ, NYI

NY Islanders (3.95) - 4 Games: @NYR, NJ, PHI, @OTW

Steer Clear

San Jose (1.71) - 2 Games: @CHI, @STL

Washington (1.85) - 2 Games: @TB, @NYR

Boston (2.00) - 2 Games: @BUF, @WPG

Edmonton (2.10) - 2 Games: COL, LA

Carolina (2.15) - 2 Games: TOR, @MTL

4 to Wednesday, February 20

Best Bets

Nashville (4.19) - 4 Games: PHX, ANH, @COL, DET

Los Angeles (4.16) - 4 Games: CLB, @CHI, @EDM, @CGY

Toronto (4.09) - 4 Games: @CAR, OTW, @FLA, @TB

Montreal (4.06) - 4 Games: @FLA, PHI, CAR, @NYR

NY Islanders (3.95) - 4 Games: @NYR, NJ, PHI, @OTW

Steer Clear

San Jose (1.71) - 2 Games: @CHI, @STL

Washington (1.85) - 2 Games: @TB, @NYR

Dallas (1.96) - 2 Games: @VAN, CGY

Boston (2.00) - 2 Games: @BUF, @WPG

Edmonton (2.10) - 2 Games: COL, LA