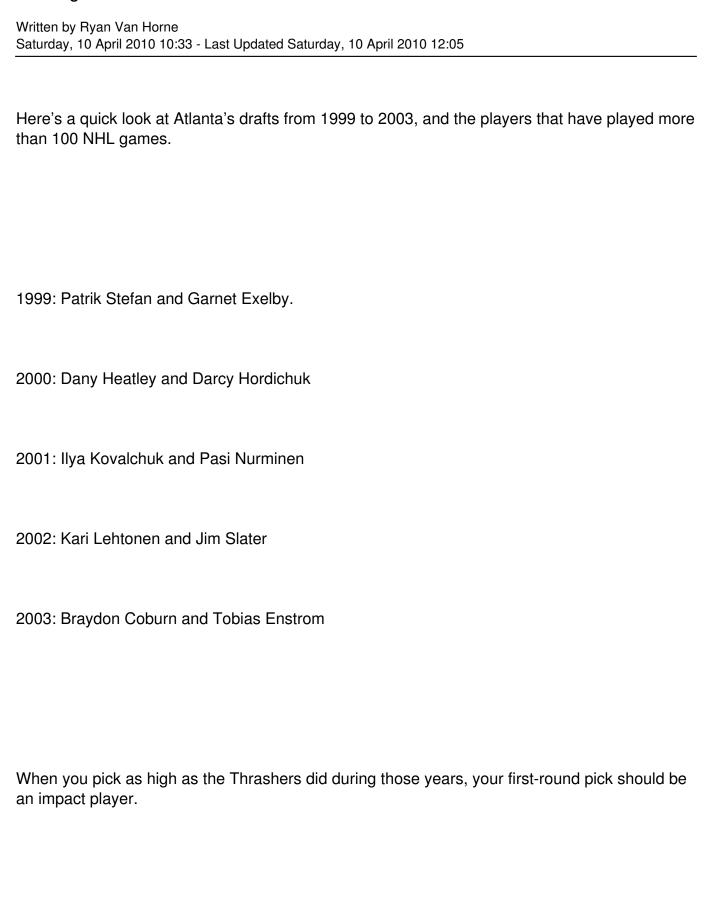


A good prospector knows which streams to avoid.

Panning for gold is hard enough work as it is – and time consuming – so when you have little or no chance of finding nuggets, you stay away.

When it comes to yielding hockey prospects, some teams are worth your effort and some are





Stefan was a bust, but 1999 was a weak draft year which could explain why Stefan was so highly touted. Atlanta didn't opt for the Sedin package and picking just one wasn't an option, or

Avoiding Sand and Gravel Written by Ryan Van Horne Saturday, 10 April 2010 10:33 - Last Updated Saturday, 10 April 2010 12:05 so the story goes. Heatley, Kovalchuk, Lehtonen and Coburn were good picks, and Atlanta is just guilty of poor asset management with them. Dany Heatley turned into Marian Hossa who was dealt for Angelo Esposito, Colby Armstrong and a first-rounder (Daultan Leveille). Kovalchuk turned into Niclas Bergfors, Patrice Cormier and Johnny Oduya and New Jersey's first-round pick this summer. Lehtonen let them down with a poor commitment to conditioning and was injury-prone. To a lesser degree, this is an example of poor asset management, but blueline prospect Ivan Vishnevskiy could still tip the scales back to even for the Thrashers. Coburn turned into Alexei Zhitnik, who went back to Russia.

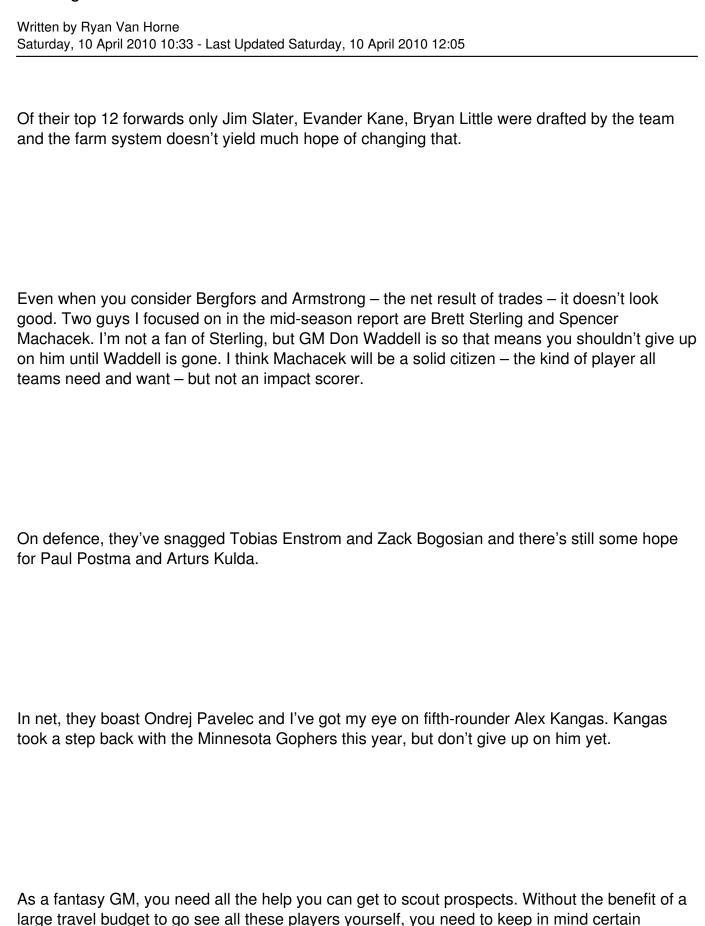
Getting impact players with top 10 picks is a bit like picking low-hanging fruit. Many people can do it. What separates successful teams from also-rans like the Thrashers is how well it can snag impact players and role players later in the draft. Trading for them and making smart

When it comes to developing players in-house, the Thrashers have done a poor job. The jury is

free-agent acquisitions are also keys to success, but let's focus on drafting.

still out on their performance since 2003, but it still looks weak.

factors.



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Given their drafting and development history, I do not have a lot of confidence in any Atlanta Thrashers prospects. I never completely close my eyes to them, but as a keeper league GM, I don't rate any of them very highly.

You're safe with any of their top 10 picks, some of them are gold, but the rest are mostly sand and gravel.