

## Future Maple Leafs

Written by Stu McDonald

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When writing about hockey prospects in Toronto, it's tough to avoid the inevitable questions about how the young Leafs stack up against other organizations. Generally, there is a pretty decent group of prospects in Toronto but to avoid further questions, here are a half dozen of Toronto's top prospects, their vital statistics, and their ultimate fantasy potential.

**Matt Frattin** was the second leading scorer in the NCAA last season and was in the running for the Hobey Baker Trophy given to the best US College player. Frattin, a fourth rounder in 2007, has some potential as a top-six forward but at 23 will have to prove himself this year in the AHL. At most, he has two years to produce in the minors or he'll leave the organization or become a checker. He has moderate to low fantasy potential although this season should give you a rough idea which way he's headed.

Yes, **James Reimer** is still a prospect. He hadn't played an NHL game until January of this year and although he played very well, 37 games does not make him a lock as an NHL starter. He will start the season with the Leafs and should be their go-to goalie, but remember the NHL is

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littered with one or two season wonders (Dan Ellis, Cristobal Huet, Ray Emery, Marc Denis) between the pipes. Don't start building your fantasy team around him just yet. Reimer, 23, is definitely a solid prospect because of his size, quickness and mental toughness, but should still be treated as a prospect until he shows he can perform well for a full season. There are too many people in Toronto that have anointed him the goalie of the future already. He's got some work to do before he can lay claim to that.

**Nazem Kadri** plays a very robust style for his size. In his last season of junior Kadri had 105 PIMs in 56 games. He is slightly undersized but that doesn't stop him throwing his weight around. There is some injury potential unless he changes his style. Nonetheless, Kadri has all the tools necessary to be a star in the NHL. He was sent back to AHL twice last season and he improved his game each time which bodes well for him. It shows he's willing to work to get better and because of his huge upside he's definitely a prospect to own in a fantasy league.

At 6'5, 215 pounds and a decent skater, **Joe Colborne**, 21, is the player to watch in a Marlie uniform this season. Acquired from Boston in the Tomas Kaberle deal, Colborne is constantly compared to Joe Thornton because of his size, vision and passing skills. Like Thornton, he doesn't throw his weight around and prefers to play a skill game. The knock on him so far is his inconsistency, a word that was constantly used to describe him last season. Despite that, Colborne is a big forward and bigger forwards always take more time to develop. The Leafs will be very patient with him. Expect two years before you see decent NHL numbers from him, but like Kadri, his potential is extremely high.

**Jake Gardiner** is another reason to visit the Ricoh Centre this season. Gardiner, 21, was acquired in the Francios Beauchemin deal. He'll likely play a full season with the Marlies before the Leafs give the big offensive defenseman a long look. Gardiner has a 50-point upside but is likely two years away from any meaningful fantasy numbers.

**Greg McKegg** is considered a steal by many in the 2010 draft. McKegg, 19, was drafted in the early third round, went back to the OHL Erie Otters, was named captain and led the Otters in scoring by 11 points. His performance last season proved to many that he was taken a little too

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low in the draft. McKegg will play another year in junior this season, but he's one to watch three to four years from now. At the moment his upside is high but he's only played two pro games so unless you've got a big farm team, wait another year or two before drafting him.