

## DobberHockey Top 10 prospects - pre-season update

Written by Stuart McDonald

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Taking nine players from the DobberHockey Top 10 [Prospects list](#) , and tossing in goalie Simeon Varlamov...let's take a look at how camp is progressing.

### 1) John Tavares - New York Islanders

He has only played two pre-season games but Tavares has a long way to go. He appears lost on the ice at times and although he clearly belongs in the NHL, he is not close to his upside as a first-line center. He has scored one routine assist in two games. It's very early but it looks like it's going to take some time for him to adapt. Expect a season similar to Steve Stamkos' rookie campaign. Tavares' Calder chances will depend on how quickly he adapts to the NHL game and how often he scores once he does. Tavares is handicapped terribly with an incredible lack of offensive support. Tavares should score at least 45 points.

### **2) Nikita Filatov - Columbus Blue Jackets**

The young Russian added 17 much needed pounds of muscle over the summer. Filatov's frail build last season was reminiscent of teammate Derick Brassard whose light frame cost him the Calder. Filatov is going to need all the help he can get with veteran-loving coach Ken Hitchcock behind Columbus' bench. Hitchcock uncharacteristically referred to the "new NHL" as a young man's league when Filatov said he would consider playing in the KHL if he was demoted. The rhetoric died down considerably after Freddie Modin went down with an injury on September 20th. With Modin out 4-6 weeks, Filatov will definitely start the season with Columbus and likely with Brassard who he has played with consistently. Filatov has three points in four games with about 16 minutes of ice time. Expect his minutes to decline once the season begins but expect 45 points anyway.

### **3) James van Riemsdyk - Philadelphia Flyers**

van Riemsdyk has played well in the pre-season. From all accounts he worked hard during the summer and although the Flyers have considerable depth, there is a spot available on the left side, albeit not in the top six. van Riemsdyk has three goals and four points in four games averaging 15 minutes of ice-time. On almost any other team he would have a good chance to make the top-six, but this Flyer team is a Cup contender and doesn't need him at the moment. After playing only 11 AHL games last season, expect the New Jersey native to be up and down between Adirondack and Philadelphia, especially if there are any top-six injuries.

### **4) Simeon Varlamov - Washington Capitals**

Washington's brass have taken the obvious (Jose Theodore's \$5 million contract) step of anointing Theodore their No. 1 goalie. Dobber has stated publicly that this will only be a temporary situation and that Theodore will eventually give way to Varlamov. How long that takes and how many games Varlamov plays will largely determine his Calder chances. Varlamov has two wins in three games and has enjoyed a solid pre-season

### **5) Claude Giroux - Philadelphia Flyers**

Giroux is pretty much ensconced in Philadelphia's lineup after posting 32 points in 48 games (including playoffs) last season. Only 21, Giroux still needs to gain about 20 pounds to take the constant pounding he's going to receive over a full NHL season. Aside from his frame, however, Giroux has nothing left to prove in the minors and should score at least 50 points this season. Giroux has three points in four pre-season games despite playing only 15 minutes and averaging four minutes a game killing penalties.

### **6) Matt Duchene - Colorado Avalanche**

The Avalanche wants to know as much as possible about Duchene before they decide to keep him for his 10th NHL game or send him back to junior. Duchene has played 16 minutes per game for five games and has seen an average of three minutes on the power play. He has three points so far and has played well defensively, but the Avs don't want to rush their most prized asset. The problem is that Colorado has only Paul Stastny, Milan Hejduk, Wojtek Wolski and Marek Svatos in their top six. There will be a lot of pressure to keep Duchene in Colorado. Expect him to stick. He's looking more and more like a top Calder candidate every day. Expect 50+ points.

### **7) Cody Hodgson - Vancouver Canucks**

The sneaky good Hodgson has averaged only 12 minutes of ice time over five pre-season games. Vancouver's depth at forward is the only thing holding Hodgson back from the Calder Trophy. For example, Hodgson is very responsible defensively and yet has seen almost no time on the penalty kill. Hodgson is more than ready for the NHL but the Canucks are going to have to find a way to keep getting him at least 12 minutes a night in order to keep his development on track. Hodgson has scored twice in the pre-season. Look for slow, steady development and about 40 points.

### 8) Jamie Benn - Dallas Stars

A goal-scoring power winger, the 6'2, 205-pound Benn continues to defy expectations. After scoring almost a goal per game in the WHL last season, Benn has scored four times in four pre-season games despite playing on the third line 30 percent of the time. Benn has averaged 15 minutes of ice-time per game but has received more than his fair share of power play time which bodes well for his regular season. His average of four minutes of power play ice-time is a direct result of Dallas' dearth of top-six talent. Mike Ribeiro, Brendan Morrow, Brad Richards and Loui Eriksson are the only true top-six forwards, Sergei Zubov is gone and if Morrow gets injured, Ribeiro's points will disappear. This team needs Benn as much as Colorado needs Duchene. If Morrow goes down and Benn clicks with Ribeiro, look for Benn to score 55 points and win the Calder.

### 9) Ville Leino - Detroit Red Wings

Talk about a sweet situation. Leino, 25, can play centre or right wing and has the talent to play in Detroit's top-six. He'll likely start the season on the second line with Valteri Filppula and Jason Williams. He has scored three points in three games although his four minutes of power play ice-time per game bodes well for his regular season. An injury is the only thing stopping him from getting 50 points although his age and his great support will take away some Calder votes.

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### **10) Jiri Tlustý - Toronto Maple Leafs**

If anyone has been a major disappointment on this list it has been Tlustý. After a solid AHL season, it looked like Tlustý was ready to break through. Instead, the "Frat Pack" of Viktor Stalberg, Christian Hanson and Tyler Bozak has grossly overshadowed Tlustý's pre-season performance. Even 18 year old first rounder Nazem Kadri has made Tlustý look ordinary. Tlustý is destined to spend most of the season with the Marlies. He will see some time with the Leafs because the young guns are not going to be able to play a full NHL season after playing in college.