Pittsburgh Penguins General Manager Ray Shero chose to use much of his available cap space this summer on defencemen.

Looking at the Penguins roster, they have three spaces to fill and, according to CapGeek.com, have only $724,785 to spend on each opening. That's not much higher than the NHL's minimum salary.

With only six defencemen signed, it's likely that one of the three remaining spots will be a blueliner. Eric Tangradi is already included in the mix, so the Penguins are going to have to add two cheap forwards. I'm betting one of them will be versatile Dustin Jeffrey (featured in Panning for Gold on Jan. 30, 2010) and the other is a bit of a toss-up. It could be Mark Letestu, but I'd put a little money on longshot Nick Johnson if the odds were good enough. That means if the price is cheap, really, really cheap, he could be short-term player to watch for in all pool formats.

Johnson is much older than some of the other Penguins prospects who have higher upside. The Penguins still have not re-signed Bill Guerin and, barring a trade, it's not looking like they'll be able to afford him. On a team with a dearth of right-handed shots, Johnson will fit in nicely. He's also got two years of pro experience which puts him ahead of players such as Nick Petersen, Kevin Veilleux, and Casey Pierro-Zabotel.

Other factors working in Johnson's favor are that the Penguins are thin on the right side and he also plays a defensively responsible game. He has some offensive skill – enough to fit in for a little bit and has earned power play time in college with Dartmouth of the ECAC, with Wheeling of the ECHL and with Wilkes Barre-Scranton of the AHL.

From Shero's point of view, Johnson's salary of $555,000 makes him more attractive. A player like Chris Conner will compete with Johnson for a roster spot. A guy like Conner will make it on a scoring line or won't make it all. A guy like Johnson might make it even in a third or fourth-line role.

Don't expect too much from Johnson and consider that his career scoring stats are modest. Still, if he lands in the right situation, he could put up worthwhile numbers. Don't pay too much for him, but if you get a chance to scoop him up from the bargain bin, he's worth a buck or two.

Upside: 15-30-45