

A Look Back, Part II

Written by Ryan Van Horne

Saturday, 18 December 2010 01:00 - Last Updated Monday, 20 December 2010 16:39



It's been humbling looking back at some of the advice I've given. While some of it has been good – especially in Part I last week – this week I'm noticing more misses.

Looking back and re-assessing your judgment of players is a great exercise because it helps you adjust your evaluation skills. You see signs that you missed that would have told you a player was better than you thought, and you see which traits attracted you to a player like a moth to the light.

Here's a look back (chronologically) at some more players I've written about in the last year, and how good my assessment was.

A Look Back, Part II

Written by Ryan Van Horne

Saturday, 18 December 2010 01:00 - Last Updated Monday, 20 December 2010 16:39

Tyler Ennis – Ennis had nine points in his first 10 games with the Sabres last year and was named AHL rookie of the year. So far this season, he's on pace for 39 points which is a respectable total for a rookie on a struggling team. I told you not to let his size scare you away and many people have realized that Ennis has too much skill to let something like that stop him from producing in the NHL.

P.K. Subban – Mike Cammalleri nicknamed Subban 'Prime Time' during training camp and the nickname fits him; he has the personality and skills to be a star. Subban has struggled with defensive side of the game and has made his share of rookie blunders on the ice, but he will be fine. I'm not concerned with his lack of deference to veterans on opposing teams; they are wearing a different colour sweater than he is. As long as he respects the hard-working veterans on his team and is coachable, he will be fine. He can chirp the likes of Mike Richards, Sidney Crosby and Chris Pronger all he wants.

Gustav Nyquist and Landon Ferraro – Nyquist returned to the University of Maine for his junior year and is off to another good start although he is not putting up points at the same pace he did last year. I wouldn't worry too much about that, but prepare to be patient with Nyquist as the Red Wings let their prospects season a long time. Ferraro was dealt to the Everett Silvertips in the offseason and became their captain. After a good start, he missed some time with an upper-body injury and is not producing. He's been a disappointment so far this season and I'm beginning to question his long-term offensive upside and his ability to stay healthy.

Nazem Kadri and Peter Holland – This column drew the ire of a lot of Leafs fans because I criticized Kadri and said that Peter Holland was going to be a better NHL player. I was relaying the opinion of my super scout, whose opinion I value. Kadri struggled in training camp and I don't think the Leafs handled him properly. They should have just let him play in the AHL, or if

A Look Back, Part II

Written by Ryan Van Horne

Saturday, 18 December 2010 01:00 - Last Updated Monday, 20 December 2010 16:39

they absolutely insisted on playing him in the NHL, put him in a low pressure situation – not put him on the top line. Peter Holland didn't get an invite to the Canadian junior team but is on pace to set to beat his OHL career high in goals. He has 20 goals and 20 assists in 32 games so far for Guelph. Jury is still out on this one.

Kyle Clifford – the kid is in the NHL at the age of 19, but is a long way from being a fantasy factor. Plays a physical style and has limited offensive upside that will take some time to reach. No questioning his heart or his coachability, tough. Terry Murray is not an easy man to impress, but Clifford did it.

Justin Schultz – Has taken full advantage of the graduation of three Wisconsin d-men and is thriving in his sophomore season. Schultz not only leads the blueline in scoring, but leads the team with 11 goals and 14 assists for 25 points in just 20 games. Great offensive skills and instincts make him a kid to target in your keeper league; wishing I had picked him up in my recent draft.

Adam Henrique – Henrique struggled to start the season – his rookie pro campaign – with the Albany Devils. He's picked up the pace a bit, but don't expect him to light up the scoreboard. He adds a lot of the intangibles and is more suited to a second-line centre, so expect that kind of upside from him.

Roman Josi – He suffered a wrist injury in training camp, but has been producing well for the

A Look Back, Part II

Written by Ryan Van Horne

Saturday, 18 December 2010 01:00 - Last Updated Monday, 20 December 2010 16:39

Milwaukee Admirals since returning. It's tough to judge defencemen this early, but still optimistic about this call – even with Nashville's depth.

Travis Hamonic – Another kid who surprised me by making the jump to the NHL so quickly. I liked him, but didn't think he's make the Islanders. The injury to Mark Streit and others helped open the door, but Hamonic is playing well for a 20-year-old d-man on a bad team. I'm still optimistic about his long-term upside, though it will take a few years.

Ian Cole – Has just three points in 20 AHL games this season and none in nine NHL games. Cole will be a solid NHL defenceman, he just won't be a good fantasy contributor because he won't score much.

Blake Geoffrion – The kid with the famous name is struggling to score in his pro debut with Milwaukee. With just one goal and nine assists in 18 games, The Hobey Baker award winner is showing that he'll likely face a similar uphill climb in the NHL. Expect little production at first and a slow acclimatization.

Tyler Eckford – Boy, did I whiff on this one. I was convinced that Eckford's puck-moving skills and New Jersey's lack of depth on the blueline would open up a spot for him. I neglected to mention Matt Taormina, who had a solid year in the AHL last year under new Devil's coach John MacLean. Taormina made the Devils this year instead of Eckford. I thought Taormina's lack of size would hamper him, but his point production and ability to get shots on net gave him

A Look Back, Part II

Written by Ryan Van Horne

Saturday, 18 December 2010 01:00 - Last Updated Monday, 20 December 2010 16:39

a well-deserved spot. Taormina has since cooled off and got hurt, but he is the better New Jersey D prospect, not Eckford. Eckford is the top-scoring d-man for the Albany Devils and is still worth a look in deep leagues, especially those that value players who don't take too many penalties.

Louis Leblanc – Still a favourite of mine and looking forward to watching him play for Team Canada at the world junior tournament. He missed some time while at pro camp in September and is away from the Montreal junior lineup now, so don't be deceived by his spot in the team's scoring rankings. With a 1.21 points-per-game average, Leblanc leads the team.

Kyle Beach – With just five goals and seven assists in 27 games, Kyle Beach is far off the 50-goal pace he set in his last year of junior. That's not surprising though and one should expect a slow climb to his upside. His minus 12 rating and some earlier comments from Chicago brass, indicate that they want him to work on his defensive game before giving him a chance in the show.

Brian Connelly – He didn't make the Blackhawks, but the smallish defenceman is leading the Rockford Ice Hogs in scoring with 20 points in 28 games. He's in his second year in the AHL and could face a call-up if Chicago suffers an injury on its blueline. Another under-the-radar pick that I touted who was sent back to the AHL.

Nick Johnson – Did not make the cut out of training camp and went back to the AHL where

A Look Back, Part II

Written by Ryan Van Horne

Saturday, 18 December 2010 01:00 - Last Updated Monday, 20 December 2010 16:39

he's putting up middling numbers. Johnson is not an outstanding talent, but the real attraction with him is that his potential increases because of his potential linemates. Pittsburgh desperately needs more right-handed shooting forwards. A miss so far, but I haven't given up hope.

I'll stop there and wait for a little more time to elapse before evaluating my take on the rest of the players I profiled.