Mondays are days that give the feeling of “it is time to go back to work”. For fantasy owners, it is the day of the week that begins with some hope. Line combinations are the fabric of what can make or break your fantasy league experience. Week 5 is now upon us and with the first month gone, it is time to begin digging deeper into those combinations that can cause an uptick in your production. Making the wrong choice can bring one even more fantasy pain however. Choosing wisely is key heading into the beginning of a stretch that has teams playing more often.

Teams played around 10 games in October but that number ratchets up by a few. In some cases, teams have one more game a week or so. There has been a coaching change already as **Davis Payne** is relieved of his duties in St. Louis. **Ken Hitchcock** is back in the NHL after last coaching in Columbus. Any St. Louis line combination will take that into account.

Forward March…….

David Backes, RW, St. Louis Blues – It is apparent that St. Louis has to get production more consistently from Backes (seven points in 13 games) but with new coach Ken Hitchcock in town, are all bets off? Backes spent the most time (19.75% at even strength) with
Vladimir Sobotka
and
Chris Stewart
. When it comes to the second power play unit, the percentage is only 1.94% with
Jason Arnott, Alex Steen
and
Matt D'Agostini
. With the new coach coming in, Mr. Hitchcock may not touch anything for the first week or so just to see what he has with the new team. Keep in mind that Hitchcock is under contract for the rest of this year and next year. The other problem is Backes has also played with
T.J. Oshie
over 10 percent of the time at even strength. With
Andy McDonald
out of the picture (concussion issues), the Right Winger will see more and more time with Sobotka and Stewart.

Stephen Weiss, C, Florida Panthers –The Florida Forward has 11 points in 12 games and has clicked with linemates **Kris Versteeg** and **Tomas Fleischmann**
. Since his six shot, four point effort against Tampa, he has not hit four shots on goal once (averaging around two shots a game). By the way that four-point night was the first time Versteeg and Fleischmann were put together full time.

Derek Stepan, C, New York Rangers – Stepan is another curious case that has been talked about for a few weeks now because of his apparent meshing with
Marian Gaborik
. This duo has played more and more together over the last five games and apparently they are producing which keeps fantasy owners happy. The 21.15% EV (the percentage of the season during even strength in which Stepan was out there with these two) is no lie with Stepan, Gaborik, and
Brad Richards
. When looking at power play situations, the numbers become abundantly clear as far as the John Tortorella method of mind-blowing tinkering. That 31.68% in PP situations strictly assumes the four forward unit including
Ryan Callahan
. However, the past three games,
Artem Anisimov
has been moved onto that line in place of Richards. More tinkering.

Lead Us Defenders.....

Adam Larsson, D, New Jersey Devils – He started off with some very rough numbers, going pointless after nine games. Sure Larsson was getting good ice time and playing pretty well but the offense just kept drying up for him. In the last three games he has two points. This is oddly enough because Larsson is being shifted in different ways to give opposing teams different looks. Larsson has been almost evenly paired with **Henrik Tallinder** and **Andy Greene** in the last six games. With Greene out now, Larsson has clicked with Tallinder with the scoring chances actually leading to better and better opportunities. When a rookie can command 24 or 25 minutes of ice time a night and handle it, one knows it is a matter of time before the offense comes.

Marc-Andre Bergeron, D, Tampa Bay Lightning – This is one that still has many fantasy experts, fans, and GM's alike shaking their heads. There are combinations that should not work yet Coach Guy Boucher has found one that just is baffling. Pairing Bergeron with former Ranger **Matt Gilroy** seems suicidal on paper yet Bergeron, who is with his fifth team, has found chemistry there. Recently, they played nearly half the time together at EV alone and are being paired on the power play unit as well. The 15 points are a surprise but when you are on a PP1 in Tampa with guys like Steven Stamkos, Vincent Lecavalier and Marty St. Louis, it is not hard to dish the puck.

David Schlemko, D, Phoenix Coyotes – The defenseman has been paired nearly 82% of the time at EV with **Rostislav Klesla**. That is not a surprise as Klesla and Schlemko have been together since late in training camp. However, with Schlemko's increased point output he has seen a bit of time with **Keith Yandle** (although less than 1%) and even with **Adrian Aucoin** (7%, SH, 2.51% EV). While he only had 14 points in 43 games last year, Schlemko has 6 points in 12 games already and could be moved up a little more with Yandle even on the PP1 unit. Watch the percentages here because he is already a plus-9 and can play solid in his end.

He is only 24 and has deceptive upside.

As always, you can follow me on Twitter @TheProgramBTR and fire away those questions. Thanks again.