An in-depth look at Marek Zidlicky of the New Jersey Devils

If you had the opportunity to pick up Dan Boyle in your fantasy hockey league for next to nothing, I know that all of you would jump at the opportunity. What if I told you that there is another player who currently has equal-to or better-than output in all of the most commonly measured categories and that the player was only 52% owned? That player is Marek Zidlicky
.

I stumbled across Zidlicky while doing one of my regular Fantasy Hockey Geek analyses: I compare a player's prior year value to the value that they are providing in the current season, to see who is rising and who is falling. I was doing the analysis for a Yahoo! roto league (G, A, +/-, PPP, SOG, Hits). Last year, Zidlicky didn't even crack the top 300 players in this pool. Granted, he missed some time last season but even his prorated stats were pretty terrible in 2011-12. This season, FHG calculates Zidlicky as the 75th most valuable player and the 20th most valuable defenseman. Let's take a look inside the FHG numbers to see what's happening with Zidlicky:

Rank

Player

GP

G

A

+/-

SOG

PPP

HITS

75

Marek Zidlicky

24

3

7

-4

52

7

25

On the surface, Zidlicky's numbers are decent but not stellar. He is on a 34pt pace and is a minus player. In terms of scoring output, he has exactly 1 more goal and 1 more assist in 24 games this season than he did in his 22 games with the Devils last season. So why has his value increased so much this year?

- Zidlicky provides solid hit output of approximately one per game, which is in line with his career output
- Take a look at Zidlicky's shot totals though: he is playing at an 82 game pace that would see him amass 188 shots! This is a huge increase for him and a major driver of his increased value. Last season, Zidlicky was under one shot per game in his 22 games with the Devils (20 shots). This season, he is suddenly averaging 2.3 shots per game, which is good for 3rd amongst all NHL defensemen who have played at least 15 games.

- Zidlicky has been getting a good portion his output on the powerplay this season, to the tune of a 24PPP pace. Last season, only four defensemen in the entire league achieved this output.
- When Zidlicky last had a steady job on the PP1, he was an incredibly consistent contributor. From 2007 to 2010 he had three seasons of 43, 42 and 43 points. In the 2010-11 season he had 24 points in 46 games, which is a 42.7 point pace. Given this history and the fact that he only has a 5.5% shooting percentage this season I think that there is a reasonable chance that his current 34 point pace may actually increase slightly. The fact that he is getting more pucks to the net will also help in this regard.

Zidlicky stacks up very favorably to some much bigger names in the NHL. In the opening of this article I compared Zidlicky to Dan Boyle , which was more for effect than anything. I love Dan Boyle
as a player and I even
profiled him
as well earlier this year. Although this season has not been great for Boyle so far I do expect him to turn it around and provide more value than Zidlicky over the remainder of the season; but for the games that are in the bank – check out the comparison!

Player	G	A	+/-	SOG	PPP	HITS	PIM
Marek Zidlicky	3	7	-4				

52

7

25

22

Dan Boyle

3

7

-6

44

7

12

10

Boyle is better than Zidlicky in exactly zero of the above key categories. Again, I am not saying that Zidlicky will be better going forward, but this data does beg the question: How is Zidlicky only 52% owned?

If you are lucky enough to be in one of the 48% of Yahoo! leagues where Zidlicky is available, then I suggest snapping him up ASAP. If you are one of the 52% however, you could make a pitch for him and hope for a buy low and while I wouldn't even consider parting with a Dan Boyle for Zidlicky, there are plenty of other guys whose perceived value may be higher that I would gladly move in a deal to obtain Zidlicky. Here are a few options that FHG helped me to identify:

Christian Ehrhoff :

Rank

Player

G

A

+/-

SOG

PPP

HITS

75

Marek Zidlicky

3

7

-4

52

7

25

96

Christian Ehrhoff

2

8

4

52

3

18

Ehrhoff is a bigger name with identical point and shot totals and less hits. By moving Ehrhoff you lose a bit of +/-, but in acquiring Zidlicky you gain what is a more valuable stat in PPP. If I could parlay Ehrhoff into Zidlicky and maybe a little something more, I would not hesitate to do so.

Paul Martin :

I have been picking on Martin a lot lately, but I just don't buy into his value. He gets less than a shot per game and under half a hit a game. His 17 points and the "PIT" beside his name will probably give him some good perceived value, but FHG will tell you that even with this improved production Martin provides about 100 spots less value than Zidlicky.

John Carlson (One year league only):

Carlson is a great player, but fantasy wise he doesn't quite hit the mark yet. Much like Zidlicky, he has 10 points and provides hits and shots, so he does have some value. What Carlson doesn't do however is contribute to PPPs – he currently has 0. If you are in a keeper then you absolutely need to hold onto Carlson but if you are only interested in the next 24 games then Zidlicky may actually prove to be the better option.

Playing around with the results in Fantasy Hockey Geek and identifying situations where a player's actual value far exceeds his name value is a great way to make some shrewd moves in your fantasy hockey league. Sign up for
Fantasy Hockey Geek

today and find some shrewd moves of your own!

Recent GOTW:

Geek of the Week: Alex Semin

Geek of the Week: Cody Franson

Geek of the Week: Erik Karlsson