

Will Calgary Trade Jarome Iginla?

Written by Rick Roos

Thursday, 24 January 2013 13:11 - Last Updated Friday, 25 January 2013 11:34



Welcome to Holding Court, a column where both sides of a fantasy hockey debate are argued just like in a courtroom, complete with a final verdict. Then you, the DobberHockey readers, can comment on whether justice was properly served!

Like most, I eagerly await the always entertaining yearly fearless forecasts column from Angus. What's interesting is that [right there at the top of his most recent list](#) is his prediction that [Jaro me Iginla](#) will be traded during this season. As it turns out, I was already going to tackle that very question as the topic of debate for this week's column, and seeing as how it generated some comments in his article I thought all the better to move ahead with my plans. So without further ado, let's focus on that as our debate for this week.

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No, he won't be traded

In [Jarome Iginla](#) , you have a player who's just outside the top ten *of all time* for regular season games played with a single franchise. And aside from

[Daniel Alfredsson](#)

, he's also currently the longest tenured captain in the NHL. But beyond that, Iginla is the only player among the many all-time Flames greats who's played only for the Flames in his career. As synonymous with Calgary as guys like Al MacInnis, Theo Fleury, Joe Nieuwendyk, and Lanny McDonald might be, the reality is that all of them played large portions of their careers with one or more other teams besides the Flames. Trading Iginla would immediately undo a significant part of Flames history that might never be equaled, and cause public relations damage that might never be repaired.

It's also important to remember that although Iginla has played well over 1000 regular season games, by all indications he still has plenty more left in the tank. For one, he doesn't even turn 36 years old until after the end of this season. But even more significantly, he's scored greater than 85 points in four of the past six seasons, averaged 38.5 goals per season during those six years, and played in all 82 regular season games in five of those seasons. And since the previous lockout in 2004-05, Iginla is in the overall NHL top ten for both games played and

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points, and stands 4th in goals.

While it's true that Iginla might be a bit past his former Art Ross and Rocket Richard trophy days at this point, he's still very much an elite player and not the kind of asset a team would be looking to move even without all his past glory in Calgary. In the end, if Calgary was to trade Iginla, not only would they destroy a large part of their very identity as a franchise, but they would be hurting their team by getting rid of a player who remains one of the very best in the NHL.

Let's also not forget the fact that while trading Iginla would certainly cause public relations problems in any year, doing so on the heels of the lockout would be an unmitigated disaster. Does anyone think for a moment that Calgary would entertain the idea of telling its loyal fans that the face of the franchise was traded so soon after having subjected those same fans to all the pain and uncertainty of the lockout? The fans of Alberta are fiercely loyal, but their team adding insult to injury like that might very well be the last straw for many of them. The Flames organization knows this, which is why it came as no surprise that GM Jay Feaster was so quick to confirm earlier in January that Iginla would be "going nowhere" this season.

Then there's the little matter of Iginla's contract having a no movement clause. Of course those types of clauses can be (and have been) waived, but the fact that the clause is there leaves all decision making power to Iginla. And not only was Iginla born in nearby Edmonton, but unlike most NHL players he actually resides in the city where he plays. Notwithstanding those local ties, he's also a part owner of the Kamloops Blazers of the WHL and he has owned and operated the [Jarome Iginla](#) Hockey School right in Calgary.

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Plus, rather than cash in on unrestricted free agency in 2008, where he could've signed with another team or at least driven his price up, Iginla chose to re-sign with the Flames for five years before even hitting the open market. So even placing aside the vast history and sentimentality of Iginla in Calgary, does he sound like someone who would consider for a nanosecond waiving a no movement clause to allow himself to be traded to another team?! No way.....

There's also the fact that despite their lackluster first week, Calgary arguably is now in a better spot to make a run for the Stanley Cup than at any point since they last made the finals in 2003-04. In this shortened season, their veteran core of Iginla, [Alex Tanguay](#), Michael Cammalleri, [Jay Bouwmeester](#)

, [Dennis Wideman](#)

, [Mark Giordano](#)

, and Mikka Kiprusoff should have an easier time remaining fresh, and as we saw with the #8 seed Kings hoisting the Cup just last year, any team that makes the playoffs has a chance to win in today's NHL. Plus, with 13 of the Flames' 48 games to occur after the trading deadline this season, there is little chance that the Flames (who only missed the playoffs by five points in last year's full 82 game schedule) would be out of the playoff picture by that time. The truth is they need Iginla now more than ever before.

In the end, the plain and simple reality is that each and every important factor points away from the Flames trading [Jarome Iginla](#).

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Yes, he will be traded

Iginla has clearly put up stats that rightfully entitle him to be considered the best who has ever played for the Flames franchise in its 40 years of existence. But despite this, and the fact that he's indeed the leader in games played for the franchise by a wide margin, in the eyes of many he isn't "Mr. Flame" for the simple reason that he hasn't won them a Stanley Cup, while guys like Fleury, MacInnis, Nieuwendyk and McDonald have.

What's more, because the Flames franchise has already won a Cup, that would make it easier for everyone (ownership, players, fans, even Iginla himself) to warm to the idea of trading Iginla without at the same time tarnishing the team or Iginla in the process. There's no reason why this couldn't end up like what happened with Ray Bourque in Boston, where no one could really argue that the best thing for everyone was to trade Ray while he still had value, giving him the chance to win a Cup for himself and helping the Bruins' quest to put their franchise in the best position to hoist another Cup down the road.

And although this might seem like a minor technicality, let's not also forget that unlike players like Alfredsson, Steve Yzerman, [Joe Sakic](#) , [Nicklas Lidstrom](#) , and others, Iginla actually hasn't been on one team for his entire career.

The fateful day in 1995 when Iginla donned a Dallas Stars jersey after being selected by the

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Stars with the 11th pick in the first round:

{youtube}bw2FiaxxSaU{/youtube}

So although he never actually played a professional game for the Stars at any level - let alone the NHL - he'll never be able to say that he was a Calgary Flame from day one or that he never wore another team's jersey. This too might make it easier for everyone involved to justify and tolerate a trade.

Also keep in mind also that even if he's traded, he'll still always be remembered as a Calgary Flame. Look at Mike Modano - his one year stint with the Red Wings already seems like a distant memory even though it occurred just two seasons ago. Modano played for the Wings, and then was able to officially retire as a Dallas Star and now is an executive advisor with the Stars. It's already as if his time with the Red Wings never even happened.

Need another example? Quick - guess what team Hall of Famer, six time Stanley Cup champ, and two time Norris Trophy winner Larry Robinson ended his career with? I'd bet that even the most devoted longtime hockey fans probably forget that he played his last three seasons with the LA Kings, since he was and will forever be known as a Montreal Canadien, just like Iginla would be forever a Flame even if he's traded.

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Another thing to remember is that Iginla has pretty much already hit every major playing milestone during his time with Calgary, including 1000 games played, 1000 points, and 500 goals. It would be one thing for Iginla (as well as the Flames organization and its fans) to rightfully want him to be in a Calgary uniform when these momentous events occurred, but now that they've passed it's all the easier to detach from sentimentality and focus on the actual merits of trading Iginla.



And in terms of those merits, there are a lot. For one, while the arguments above say you cannot trade Iginla because he's still so productive, that's actually one of the key reasons why he'd need to be traded now instead of later. If he was broken down shell of his former self, then what value would he bring? But if the Flames deal Iginla now, they could get real value for him in return. Iginla knows this and realizes that if he truly cares about the franchise then he should allow them to move him for key pieces to make the team better.

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What's more, Iginla could always do what [Keith Tkachuk](#) did back in 2006-07. That season, the 34 year old Tkachuk paved the way for his trade to Atlanta knowing that he could re-sign with his beloved St. Louis Blues in the offseason as a free agent. So in the end he helped Atlanta, giving them 15 points in 18 games and doing his part to ensure they qualified for their first and only (now that they're no longer in Atlanta) playoff appearance. And at the same time he helped the Blues, since his trade netted them several draft picks (including a first rounder) and he was back on their opening night roster the next season.

Yes, Iginla loves his team and city, but he also realizes that he could help them more in the short and long term by allowing himself to get traded.

Finally, with all the “buzz” already circulating about Iginla being traded, that would take away a lot of the shock if it was to actually occur. In this age of blogs, twitter, and the 24/7 news cycle, the NHL rumor mill has already prepared pretty much everyone for the possibility of this trade, so much so that by the time the trade deadline rolls around it almost will be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Final Verdict

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The historical information and arguments are indeed interesting, but what this will likely boil down to is whether the Flames end up in this year's playoff hunt. If so, then it's all but assured that Iginla will stay put. But if the Flames are well out of the playoff mix come the end of March, the temptation to trade Iginla will be very high, since it stands to reason that with the shortened schedule more teams than usual will be fighting for their playoff lives and will be drooling over the prospect of landing a difference maker like Iginla.

Plus, I agree that the abundance of Iginla trade chatter now and down the road will make it an easier pill to swallow for everyone.

I happen to think that the Flames will be on the outside looking in once the trading deadline arrives, and the lure of trading Iginla for a stockpile of youth and picks plus the ability for Iginla to return to the Flames once the season is over will prove too much for the Flames and Iginla to resist.

With that, the Final Verdict is that folks in Calgary and around the NHL should start preparing themselves now for the sight of Iginla, before this season is over, in a non-Flames uniform for the first time since 1995. And remember Flames fans – if I'm right, don't blame me; Angus started all this.....

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You can also leave ideas in the comments section for other debates to be settled right here in future editions of the column, or send me suggestions via a private message to my forum name – rizzeedizze.

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