

Under 30, But Has Already Peaked

Written by Rick Roos

Tuesday, 19 March 2013 07:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 March 2013 18:15



Roos goes out on a limb - and gives you six young players who have already peaked

It's never easy to convince yourself to "get out on top", mostly because it's almost impossible to know things have peaked until it's too late. It happens in real life with dating, stocks, trips to the casino, and has even been used as a humorous plotline [on TV](#) . And of course it happens in fantasy hockey too, where one of the hardest things to do is realize when a player's point production has truly peaked, never to be exceeded again. After all, were any of you smart enough to trade

[Brian Gionta](#)

or

[Jonathan Cheechoo](#)

after the 2005-06 season? Probably not, since when one of your players achieves a career high in points while still young (Gionta was 27 at the time, Cheechoo was 25), the natural tendency is to believe it's only the beginning of even better things to come, when in truth it can often be the beginning.....of the end.

Under 30, But Has Already Peaked

Written by Rick Roos

Tuesday, 19 March 2013 07:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 March 2013 18:15

With this in mind, I've put together a list of six still young players (three forwards, three defensemen – all under 30 years old) who each had a career best in points within the last three years but who I'm pretty confident won't ever exceed that career high. Think of it as an "Already Peaked" all-star team.

I've focused only on players who are under age 30 (in fact, all are 28 or younger) and who had a career best in points either in 2011-12, 2010-11 or 2009-10, and I didn't include guys (sorry

[Mike Green](#)

) where it's already clear they're on their way down or guys (like

[Corey Perry](#)

or

[Duncan Keith](#)

) who had one "fluke" season that pretty much everyone can acknowledge at this point will most likely never be duplicated let alone exceeded. In the end, what's nice is all six of these guys are still big enough names that they have very good trade value, which is why I've also indicated players you might look to target as part of a deal if you can bring yourself to trade one of these guys.....before it's too late.

Forwards

[Jonathan Toews](#)

When Toews scored 133 points in 139 games over the past two seasons, more and more whispers began to compare him to the likes of a young [Joe Sakic](#) or Steve Yzerman – two natural born leaders (both were captains by age 23) who also happened to have offensive talent to put them among the NHL's best scorers. But Toews seems to be taking his leadership role so seriously that it's perhaps coming at the expense of his scoring potential. Plus,

[Patrick Kane](#)

's offensive explosion has taken pressure off Toews to be "the guy" when it comes to offense, so he can instead be "the guy" in the locker room and on the bench. I still think Toews could put up at least 90 points if he (and his team) wanted him to, but it seems like everyone in Chicago is fine with Toews settling at just under a point per game pace in favor of displaying leadership

Under 30, But Has Already Peaked

Written by Rick Roos

Tuesday, 19 March 2013 07:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 March 2013 18:15

and maturity that, in the real NHL, translates to more wins than 10-15 extra goals or assists. Looking at how well it's worked for the Hawks so far this season, I wouldn't expect a change in philosophy from the Hawks (or points increase for Toews) in the years to come.

[Phil Kessel](#)

It's true that Kessel is barely below his point per game career high of 82 points from last season. And in fact, some might argue that the return of a healthy [Joffrey Lupul](#) will push Kessel even above that scoring rate. But I'm not buying it. Kessel still often plays like he's deserving of his label as a talented but disinterested player. And I can't help but think a lot of his success last season was in hopes of buying himself a ticket out of Toronto. That didn't happen, and now the Leafs are doing much better well as a team and other players (like

[Nazem Kadri](#)

[James van Riemsdyk](#)

, and

[Matt Frattin](#)

) have elevated their games to rival – if not exceed - Kessel's. Some might say that his career high of 82 points from last season won't be hard for him to surpass since he's still only 25 years old, but he's just not showing signs of being someone who will threaten that mark again, especially since I think he's a candidate for a big drop off in production after he gets to cash in again when his current five year deal expires.

(Get the latest line combinations [right here](#))

[Loui Eriksson](#)

This one is tough, since Eriksson is such a likeable player. But what we've seen from him this

Under 30, But Has Already Peaked

Written by Rick Roos

Tuesday, 19 March 2013 07:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 March 2013 18:15

season suggests that his membership in the 70+ point club over the past three seasons might've had more to do with the presence of [Mike Ribeiro](#) (and, before him, [Brad Richards](#)) than it did with Eriksson's abilities to produce in his own right. If you look at players who score 70+ points in today's NHL, I'm just not convinced Eriksson will remain a fixture in this club given what we've seen this season. He's looking more like a

[Mikko Koivu](#)

type of player – well above average and great to have on an NHL or fantasy team, but someone who you don't see ending up as an offensive star. Hopefully there's someone in your league who can be tantalized by Eriksson's past numbers, which at this point look like they might be hard to duplicate, let alone exceed.

Forwards to target in trade – [Max Pacioretty](#) , [Logan Couture](#) , [Jamie Benn](#) , [Jeff Skinner](#) , [Jordan Eberle](#)

,
[Matt Duchene](#)

Defensemen

[Dustin Byfuglien](#)

It might surprise many to see Big Buff here after he not only put up six points in the span of three games just last week, but also considering he scored at the second highest point per game rate last season among defensemen (one which projected to 65 points over 82 games). But that's just the point – he didn't play all 82 games, and this year he's already missed almost 20% of his team's contests. Plus, all joking aside, every year he gets older his extra pounds will leave him even more at risk for injury and decreased production. The talent to exceed his career high of 53 points is clearly there, but we simply cannot ignore the enormous risks posed by his inconsistent health, his weight, and, like Kessel, an attitude that might not be in line with his raw talent. All things considered, I just can't see him exceeding 53 points again, which is a shame.

[Alexander Edler](#)

Under 30, But Has Already Peaked

Written by Rick Roos

Tuesday, 19 March 2013 07:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 March 2013 18:15

Finally we were able to see what Edler was capable of last season when he actually played all 82 games for the first time in his career and the Canucks netted the fourth highest goal total in the entire league. The end result for Edler was an excellent 49 points, good enough to tie for 6th among defensemen scoring. What surprises me is that reaction among fantasy players has been to project Edler for 50+ points in years to come. But I for one just don't see it, since I have to think that last year pretty much was as good as it could get for Edler. Already this season the Canucks are down to the middle of the pack in league goal scoring, and every year the Sedins get older the team figures to lose more and more of its offensive prowess. And with whispers about Edler's back and his tendency to miss games with injuries every year, we need to deal with the fact that 50 points just isn't going to happen.

[Keith Yandle](#)

This was probably the easiest pick, as Yandle looks to be well on his way to being [Duncan Keith](#) version 2.0 in that even though he's only 26 years old, his 59 points in 2010-11 seems more and more like as much of an outlying season as Keith's 69 points in 2009-10. And while it's clear to me that Yandle won't come close to his 59 points again, it's much less apparent why he's taken a big step back from his breakout year, since after all he hasn't been plagued by the same issues (injuries, weight, attitude, team leadership pressure) as the other guys on this list. For Yandle, I think his career year was mostly a case of him sneaking up on people, who hadn't factored on the former 4th round pick exploding like he did. But once he got on other teams' radars, they quickly made adjustments that have held him more in check. Plus, Phoenix has more talented forwards now than they did two years ago, which has helped lessen the need for defenseman scoring. And of course, the emergence of [Oliver Ekman-Larsson](#) (who recently inked a long term extension) also hasn't helped Yandle's point totals either, and won't in years to come.

Defensemen to target in trade = [Kevin Shattenkirk](#) , [Justin Schultz](#) , [Michael Del Zotto](#) , [Niklas Kronwall](#)

,
[Dion Phaneuf](#)

,
[John Carlson](#)

Under 30, But Has Already Peaked

Written by Rick Roos

Tuesday, 19 March 2013 07:20 - Last Updated Tuesday, 19 March 2013 18:15

The Final Verdict

One important thing to remember is these six guys still should produce at very good levels for years to come, and should be owned in most every league. But if you believe what I'm saying about them having peaked, now might be the time to trade them since their name recognition and recent career best seasons should be able to convince another GM in your league to make a trade where you receive, at part of a return package, one of the players listed above as trade targets.

You'll see that in most cases the players I've identified as trade targets are actually ones who have not even reached the point totals of these six players. But in each case these targets not only appear to be on the upswing, but they also have point ceiling that could well exceed what these "already peaked" guys stand to offer in even the somewhat near future. That being said, if you're in a one year league or primed to make a run at the championship next season, then you might be better advised sticking with any of these six guys, since as I noted none of them look likely to see a major reduction in their point tallies in the immediate future.

Recent 'Holding Court'

[Does Size Really Matter?](#)

[15 Signs That Your Team is not Going to Win This Year](#)