As another summer approaches with the Toronto Maple Leafs needing divine intervention to make the playoffs, Leaf fans are once again left wondering how their young team is progressing. There is probably not a more frustrated fan base in sports unless you root for the Chicago Cubs.

In his brief history in Toronto, perhaps no one has been more scrutinized then Luke Schenn. Now in fairness Schenn's play has been erratic and streaky much of the time, but contrary to popular belief the young defenseman seems to be developing well in some areas.

The one thing Schenn has done consistently is play physically. In fact this year he leads all defensemen in the NHL with 231 hits.

Rank

Name

Pos

Age

Yrs

Team

GR

GP

Hits

1

SCHENN,LUKE

D

22

3

TOR

9

70

231

2

ORPIK,BROOKS

D

31

8

PIT

11

62

228

3

GREENE,MATT

D

28

6

L.A

10

72

219

4

EMELIN,ALEXEI

D

25

0

MTL

9

60

218

4

FISTRIC,MARK

D

25

4

DAL

10

56

218

5

COWEN,JARED

D

21

0

OTT

9

73

191

6

PHANEUF,DION

D

26

6

TOR

9

73

188

7

GIRARDI,DANIEL

D

27

5

NYR

10

72

186

8

SEABROOK,BRENT

D

26

6

CHI

9

69

178

So Schenn can throw his weight around, but what does that mean for his overall development? Well a good way to measure how a player is progressing is to compare them with their peers. With Schenn being in his fourth season, Frozen Pool offers a tool to see how all the fourth year players stack up. In our case we are just going to look at the defensemen.

Rank

Name

Pos

Age

NHL Yrs

Team

GR

GP

Avg
GP

G

A

Pts

1

PIETRANGELO,ALEX

D

22

3

STL

10

71

32

11

33

44

2

DOUGHTY,DREW

D

22

3

L.A

11

66

80

8

25

33

3

GARRISON,JASON

D

27

3

FLA

12

65

38

15

14

29

4

JOHNSON,ERIK

D

23

3

COL

9

67

75

4

20

24

5

BOGOSIAN,ZACH

D

21

3

WPG

11

54

66

3

19

22

6

SBISA,LUCA

D

22

3

ANA

10

70

38

5

17

22

7

SCHENN,LUKE

D

22

3

TOR

11

68

77

2

18

20

8

POTTER,COREY

D

28

3

EDM

11

54

3

5

15

20

9

WEBER,YANNICK

D

23

3

MTL

10

57

16

4

14

18

10

MACDONALD,ANDREW

D

25

3

NYI

11

64

36

5

13

18

Schenn actually sits in the top ten when it comes scoring for fourth year blue liners. Now granted he is never going to put up points like Drew Doughty or Alex Pietrangelo, but there is no shame in being second tier compared to that company.

Also when you look at average points in the first four seasons, Schenn now jumps into the top five.

Name

Pos

Age

NHL Yrs

Team

GR

GP

Avg GP

G

A

Pts

Avg
P

DOUGHTY,DREW

D

22

3

L.A

11

66

80

8

25

32

43

JOHNSON,ERIK

D

23

3

COL

9

67

75

4

20

24

23

BOGOSIAN,ZACH

D

21

3

WPG

11

54

66

3

19

22

20

SCHENN,LUKE

D

22

3

TOR

11

68

77

2

18

20

18

One thing that is a little concerning with Schenn is his blocked shots. Last year he posted 168 blocks and this year he has just 101 so far. In fact last season he led the team in the category and the next closest Leaf was Dion Phaneuf at nearly 50 blocks behind Schenn.

So why have Schenn's blocks decreased? Well the main reason for that seems to be ice-time. Last season Schenn ranked second on the team in average ice-time per game at 22:22, while this season he has dropped all the way to just 16:01 per game, which ranks 12th on the Leafs.

Less ice-time usually means two things. The first is you are not being used against the other team's top line, and second you aren't being used in crucial situations. Both of these scenarios usually equate to great opportunities to block shots so it's only natural Schenn's totals would go down.

The problem for Schenn is not so much his own development, but rather the emergence of other players on the back end for Toronto. With John-Michael Liles, Carl Gunnarsson, and Jake Gardiner playing more of a role, Schenn has slid down the depth chart considerably. So the moral of the story is, while he may be developing on par with his peers, Schenn is losing ground where it counts most, on his own team.

Feel free to follow me on twitter at @amato_mike