I'd like to introduce "FrozenPool Forensics", a weekly 'hard hitting' column dedicated to uncovering and analyzing data found by my tools. There are many powerful FrozenPool tools available to subscribers. Naturally, hardcore fantasy fans enjoy unearthing hidden gems via FrozenPool on their own. That's part of the fun right? Stay the course guys, you're doing great. This week's article wasn't intended for you. Before delving into deep stat geekdom, let's hit the basics.

Since this is my first column, let's start off fresh and devote a crucial checklist for all rookie managers to follow when assessing that "no-name" player who causes a flurry at the beginning of the season. This goes beyond just clicking sort on Yahoo Fantasy Points and adding a player. The entire point is avoiding flavours-of-the-week and digging up players who will be successful over the long haul. Granted, hockey crystal balls don't exist but if you make smart pickups with substantiated data to back it up, more often than not you will succeed. Like with all statistics, hockey stats are about trends. When you have the big picture and know what to look for, it is a crucial step on picking up a player well before your vulnerable and soon-to-be-crushed competition has even heard of them.

"Who the hell is this guy?"

1. Pedigree

Your potential free agent candidate now plays in the NHL. (Congrats! Things are warming up for you!) He didn't just waltz into the coach's office one day with incriminating photos of he and a local Denny's waitress demanding a roster position. No sir, he actually earned it! Therefore, there must be a history of his play, right? Correct. Well before he got there, and certainly well before your beady little eyes even saw his name, he was assessed by countless scouts and coaches. You are at the end of a very long line of people who had their hands all over him (reow). Why not leverage this? When a player comes onto your radar, it's a necessary to look at his draft position. It's an obvious but mandatory step. Was he a high first rounder? Check it. What was his prospect scouting report at the time? Check it. If there was high praise back then, you should start feeling a bit more excited. You're on the right path!

Yeah I know about the classic retorts. "Hey Jay what about Zetterberg eh? He got drafted in the seventh!" or "Martin St.Louis was never drafted! I'm going to fight you!". Well played…. but remember: "more often than not, you will succeed". It's not 100%. C'mon.. if Detroit knew what they had with Zetterberg & Datsyuk, I promise you they would have drafted them sooner.

"Is this guy for real?"

2. Pre NHL Scoring History

Junior stats pretty much roll into the Pedigree model. After all, if he went high, I can confidently say your player had a respectable point-per-game(PntPG). But it's not always the case.

You see, there is an aspect of the game that many players (Maxim Afinogenov I'm looking at you) never really understood. It's called "defence". In the fantasy realm, a defensive forward or stay-at-home defenceman is pretty much fantasy cyanide. You never, ever want to hear those words about your players. "Holy crap Jay, your team is stacked with short handed specialists and shot blockers!" represents trash talk from your friends that goes too far. In fact, consider them enemies and keep the power washer you borrowed from them. Your windows and patio chairs will thank me. If you want go with high draft pick, defensive-minded guys like Chris Phillips or Luke Schenn, by all means lose away! The bottom feeders await your timely arrival with a warm embrace. I, for one, spit on you... both figuratively and literally if you happen to live in Ottawa and share your address. You made foolish choices with your heart and not your head. Separate those two or be eaten alive.

What was your players PntPG like in junior? Because junior has so much offence, I'm **always** disappointed with sub 1.00 PntPG performance. If there's no sign of excellence there, especially in his draft year, it's quite often downhill from there for both you and him. The NHL is 1000x more difficult than junior so draw your own conclusions. Rarely are there late bloomers but never discount them. They are the most fun to research!

So he got drafted and later was sent to the Minor Pros (AHL/ECHL/FHL etc). This is *definitely* a faster game than junior so how did he fare? I like to see steady improvements, if not immediate performance in PntPG throughout his minor league career (barring injury). Look for above or a *shade*
under 1.00 for forwards and 0.50 for defencemen. If the sample base is too small, ignore it. Allow for an adjustment period. Take that minor PPG with a grain of salt too, it's not immediately translatable into the NHL. But it's closer to a positive outcome. You've just crossed off another successful item of contention!

"I have never heard of this guy!"

3. Line Combinations and Ice Time

We're in the big leagues! This is where FrozenPool starts bringing home God's own bookmark (aka bacon)! First off, check the Last Game Lines for your player's team. This is just the top four most frequent lines. There are so many line shuffles during a game you'd have to consult my Line Combinations tool to see every

single line your player's played on with many different date ranges available. For now, let's stick to the highlights. Is he playing with quality talent? You don't want him playing with fourth liners. If he's playing with Teemu or Brad Richards, raise an eyebrow. If you only have one, raise one side than shave it because you look ridiculous and will never get laid. Let the coaches line decision and trust give you a hint at his potential. After all, they're with them 24/7. Also, where does he fall on the power play - if at all? If he's nowhere to be seen: RED FLAG. The flavour meter just started beeping.

Let's analyze a currently hot topic player: Roman Horak. He had a great final year in the WHL, scoring at a 1.21 PntPG clip. He's also a fifth round selection in the 2009 draft. Not that great. The good news is that he's doing very well so far this year with 5 points in 7 games. Let's delve deeper shall we?

Latest Game:

CALGARY FLAMES LINES FOR 2011-10-28		
EVEN STRENGTH		
FORWARDS		
#1	25%	GLENCROSS,CURTIS - JOKINEN,OLLI - MOSS,DAVID
#2	18%	IGINLA,JAROME - MORRISON,BRENDAN - TANGUAY,ALEX
#3	13%	BOURQUE,RENE - HORAK,ROMAN - STEMPNIAK,LEE
#4	7.5%	HORAK,ROMAN - JACKMAN,TIM - KOSTOPOULOS,TOM

POWER PLAY		
FORWARDS		
#1	27.3%	BOURQUE,RENE - GLENCROSS,CURTIS - JOKINEN,OLLI - TANGUAY,ALEX
#2	18.2%	HORAK,ROMAN - JACKMAN,TIM - KOSTOPOULOS,TOM
#3	18.2%	GLENCROSS,CURTIS - MOSS,DAVID
#4	9.1%	BOURQUE,RENE - GLENCROSS,CURTIS - JOKINEN,OLLI

He's played mostly with Jackman and Kostopoulos on October 28. Not only even strength but on the power play too. Horak isn't exactly surrounded by offensive dynamos. This isn't great news but it doesn't mean it's permanent. Is this a temporarily plug-in due to injury or a statistical blip? Time to extend the date range here and check out FrozenPool's Last 3 Game Lines . This will give you a better view of the player's usage from roughly a week. If it was just one period in one game that he had a lot of power play duty, this will expose and bring him back down to earth. If both tools report quality line talent
and
power play duties, we're laughing.

Latest 3 Game Lines:

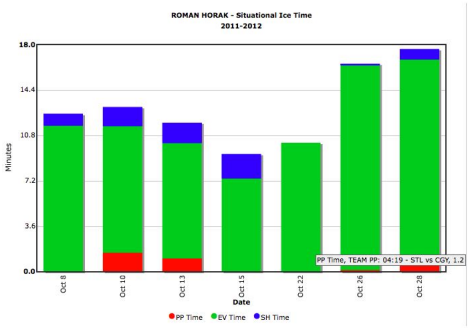
CALGARY FLAMES LINES FOR GAMES 2011-10-22 to 2011-10-28		
EVEN STRENGTH		
FORWARDS		
#1	40.4%	IGINLA,JAROME - MORRISON,BRENDAN - TANGUAY,ALEX
#2	22.5%	HORAK,ROMAN - JACKMAN,TIM - KOSTOPOULOS,TOM
#3	19.6%	BOURQUE,RENE - JOKINEN,OLLI - MOSS,DAVID
#4	17.5%	GLENCROSS,CURTIS - JOKINEN,OLLI - MOSS,DAVID

POWER PLAY		
FORWARDS		
#1	40%	GLENCROSS,CURTIS - IGINLA,JAROME - JOKINEN,OLLI - TANGUAY,ALEX
#2	30%	BOURQUE,RENE - JOKINEN,OLLI - MOSS,DAVID
#3	15%	BOURQUE,RENE - IGINLA,JAROME - JOKINEN,OLLI - TANGUAY,ALEX
#4	15%	BOURQUE,RENE - GLENCROSS,CURTIS - JOKINEN,OLLI - TANGUAY,ALEX

Hmm things aren't getting better. He's *still* playing with Frick and Frack, both even strength (EV) and on the power play (PP). But he does have 5 points in 7 games. Where is this production

coming from? Just relax I'll get to it...

Let's check out FrozenPool's Chart-A-Player to view his entire season's ice time breakdown. Albeit only seven games.



His success has obviously earned him more ice time in the past two games, as you can see buy the uptick. That PP Time tool tip is triggered when it's hovered over the red (PP Time) of the Oct 28th game. You can actually hover over any colour. It showed me the team had 4:19mins of total PP time and our new friend Horak had 1.2 minutes of it. That gets the big Meh..

"FrozenPool and shameless plugs are the best!"

4. Current Scoring

Onto the next tool… Line Production (see I told you.) This will break down a player's points by line and situation. Pretty cool eh? If you don't think so, close your browser now and smash your hard drive with a plumbers wrench. You are dead to me.

Total Points for Roman Horak : 5

Str	On Ice Line Combination	Points	%Total Points
EV	BOURQUE,RENE - HORAK,ROMAN - TANGUAY,ALEX	1	20%
EV	GLENCROSS,CURTIS - HORAK,ROMAN - JACKMAN,TIM	1	20%
EV	HORAK,ROMAN - JACKMAN,TIM - KOSTOPOULOS,TOM	1	20%
EV	HORAK,ROMAN - IGINLA,JAROME - TANGUAY,ALEX	1	20%
EV	HAGMAN,NIKLAS - HORAK,ROMAN - STEMPNIAK,LEE	1	20%

Ugh.. his scoring is spread right across the board and with no sign of trending chemistry. Seven games is a small sample but you gotta be quick and decisive when pouncing on early season talent. No power play points either - just mish mash of line combos. It **is** nice to see him getting production with Iginla and Tanguay though. I'd like to see that trend continue and that's the only way I'd remain interested. If he plays with Kostopoulus and Jackman all year, he's a waste of time. I don't like Hagman or Stempniak either. Hagman is probably the king of Windex Wonders. It's like he zones out for months at a time and then BAM - five games of awesomeness. Screw him. He belongs in the rubbish bin alongside crusty balls of kleenex. If I wasn't clear, I hate Hagman. My license plate even says IH8HAGMN.

I've seen his goals since I have NHL Centre Ice, but perhaps you haven't and want to get a taste of him yourself. Youtube is your friend or Google "roman horak goal site:youtube.com". First hit is his first goal. He shows some great hand eye coordination there. Not only was he falling on his tuchus, he batted the puck out of the air with a back hand. Pretty sweet and earns FrozenPool bonus points on that move. If it was a garbage sweeper goal I would have been disappointed and moved on. That is yet another item piled on this thorough case for a solitary pickup. Nobody can say you aren't doing your homework right?

Next up is the Report Generator. While we're picking on poor Horak, let's have a look at Calgary as a whole. This is Top 50, Calgary selected and the entire season 11-12 chosen.

Top 50 Big Board

Click on the table headers to sort your results! Try it out!

Rank	Name	Pos	Age	NHL Yrs	Team	GP	Avg GP	G	A	Pts	Avg P	PPG	Pace	GW	PPP	PPTOI	%PP	%TOI	Shots	+/-	PIM
1	TANGUAY,ALEX	L	31	11	CGY	9	70	1	7	8	49	0.89	73	1	3	03:47	69.8	30.5	8	-1	6
2	JOKINEN,OLLI	C	32	13	CGY	9	79	2	5	7	35	0.78	64	0	1	02:54	53.7	30.1	28	-1	10
3	HORAK,ROMAN	L	20	0	CGY	7		2	3	5		0.71	59	1	0	00:34	11.0	21.7	4	3	0
4	GLENCROSS,CURTIS	L	28	5	CGY	8	73	3	2	5	39	0.63	51	0	0	01:40	29.2	29.3	14	-1	6
5	BOURQUE,RENE	R	29	6	CGY	9	70	5	0	5	49	0.56	46	1	2	02:55	53.9	29.1	24	0	4
6	STEMPNIAK,LEE	R	28	6	CGY	9	79	1	3	4	29	0.44	36	0	0	01:50	34.0	27.5	21	1	4
7	IGINLA,JAROME	R	34	14	CGY	9	82	2	2	4	81	0.44	36	0	2	03:10	58.5	33.4	22	-3	8
8	HAGMAN,NIKLAS	L	31	9	CGY	7	73	1	3	4	24	0.57	47	1	1	01:21	25.4	23.2	13	3	2
9	MOSS,DAVID	R	29	5	CGY	9	68	1	3	4	29	0.44	36	0	0	01:30	27.7	25.2	24	1	4

Look! Horak's third in scoring! You win! Wait.. not so fast. He's used only 11% of the entire team's power play time. Did someone fart? 21.7% time of ice for the team is not ideal either. Four shots?? I just threw up a little. At least he has more points than Niklas Hateman. Iginla has been banged up and a notoriously slow starter. I promise you this is not how Calgary's rankings will look at the end of the year. The only sure thing is Tanguay will be up there.

Conclusion

In my opinion there are better guys out there. See Luke Adam, Alexander Burmistrov, Craig Smith, Matt Read, David Descharnais etc… The latter is currently getting a boat load of PP time *and* scoring too. If you're in any kind of respectable 12 team pools, those guys are already snatched up. Probably because I didn't post this article until today. You'll have to just get over it and we'll both move on with our lives, ok? In the future, follow these steps and hopefully you'll be proud owner of the Hidden Gem of the Year. For now, the NHL season is long and full of streaks and droughts. In the end, it's up to you to hit when the iron's hot and dump 'em like a used jimmy cap when they're not.

That is all.