Most of the time it is a lot easier to perform as a player when expectations are low. When you are not expected to turn water into wine, or when fans have to quickly rifle through their program to figure out who you are, that usually means as long as you don't burn down the arena you can escape major scrutiny.

That is the type of solitude Ville Leino enjoyed early in his career.

Up until the 2009-10 Stanley Cup playoffs, Leino played in parts of two seasons with the Red

Wings and Flyers, and did nothing of fantasy relevance. In fact, he was still technically a rookie during the Flyers run to the final that year when he all of a sudden exploded for 21 points in 19 playoff games.

Despite the plethora of production on the biggest stage, I'm sure poolies as well as Flyers fans were cautiously optimistic. It's not all that unusual for a player to be a flash in the pan only to be remembered by the phrase, "Hey, who was that guy who had that great postseason and then fell off the face of the earth?"

Leino, however, followed that up with a respectable 53 points in 2010-11 and really started turning some heads. He became a UFA after that season and new Buffalo Sabres owner Terry Pegula, perhaps trying to overcompensate for years of penny pinching in Western New York, gave him a six-year $27M deal. So much for low expectations.

In 2011-12 the pressure was squarely on Leino to produce and he struggled mightily to say the least. His point totals dropped by more than 50% as he went from 53 to 25. As rock and roll legends Oasis once so eloquently put it, where did it all go wrong?

Well for starters, Leino really relied on the power play during his breakout season as he notched 11 points in that area with Philly in 2010-11. Last season he was only able to muster up one measly power point on the campaign. Probably because his power play time per game dropped by over a minute from 2:18 down to 1:03 this year with the Sabres.

His faceoff percentage dropped drastically as well when he arrived in Buffalo. He was second on the Flyers in percentage with 57.4, but that number dropped all the way down to 41.3% with the Sabres.

Rank	Player	Pos	Team	Won	Lost	Total	Win%
1	ROY, DEREK	C	BUF				
2	GAUSTAD, PAUL	C	BUF				
3	POMINVILLE, JASON	R	BUF				
4	ENNIS, TYLER	L	BUF				
5	HECHT, JOCHEN	C	BUF				

6	HODGSON, CODY	C	BUF
7	BOYES, BRAD	R	BUF
8	ADAM, LUKE	C	BUF
9	ELLIS, MATT	L	BUF
10	LEINO, VILLE	C	BUF

You may be thinking that a big reason for Leino's struggles was a drop off in talent around him in Buffalo. This is not necessarily the case. While Leino did benefit from playing with Scott Hartnell and Daniel Briere regularly in Philly, in Buffalo he played with Derek Roy and Jason Pominville most frequently. Not only that, but Pominville had his second best statistical season ever with 73 points.

Frequency	Strength	Line Combination
20.24%	EV	23 LEINO,VILLE - 29 POMINVILLE,JASON - 9 RO
12.99%	EV	23 LEINO,VILLE - 9 ROY,DEREK - 21 STAFFORD
8.25%	EV	22 BOYES,BRAD - 23 LEINO,VILLE - 21 STAFFO
7.43%	EV	42 GERBE,NATHAN - 36 KALETA,PATRICK - 23

Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate Leino's struggles is by using the caphit per point stat. In 2010-11 with Philly he ranked second on the squad next to Claude Giroux and 11th in the entire NHL, costing the team just over $15,000 per point.

Rank	Player	Pos	Team	GP	Pts	Caphit
1	GIROUX, CLAUDE	R	PHI			

2	KOSTITSYN, SERGEI	L	NSH
3	PARENTEAU, PIERRE	R	NYI
4	NIELSEN, FRANS	C	NYI
5	D'AGOSTINI, MATT	R	STL
6	SANTORELLI, MICHAEL	C	FLA
7	BICKELL, BRYAN	L	CHI

8	BENN, JAMIE	L	DAL
9	PURCELL, EDWARD	R	T.B
10	BOYLE, BRIAN	C	NYR
11	LEINO, VILLE	C	PHI

In 2011-12 after signing that new deal with the Sabres he was 19th on the team in that area and was costing them $180,000 per point.

Rank	Player	Pos	Team	GP	Pts	Caphit

16	KASSIAN, ZACK	R	BUF
17	LEOPOLD, JORDAN	D	BUF
17	EHRHOFF, CHRISTIAN	D	BUF
18	SZCZECHURA, PAUL	C	BUF
19	LEINO, VILLE	C	BUF
20	WEBER, MIKE	D	BUF

In hindsight, Philly management appears to have made the right move by letting Leino move on. A guy like Matt Read has filled the void that Leino left for a lot less money. Buffalo is now stuck with an overpaid player who is seriously under performing. Of course Leino could still turn things around in the future, but it would have to be something pretty special to justify that contract. This is just another cautionary tale of giving big money long-term deals to unproven players. The Flyers may have just executed a shrewd move of addition by subtraction.