



YAHOO! SPORTS

# NHL DRAFT KIT 2011

## OFFSEASON MOVES & ANALYSIS

The free agent free-for-all and the ensuing weeks produced the usual results. A few clubs managed their funds wisely. A number of teams had to spend a lot of money just to reach the cap floor. And some didn't have the necessary room or didn't know where to start looking. But this team review isn't all about the quick money grabs. Grades will be assigned based on the sum of all signings, trades, draft picks and other relevant transactions from late May on.

A+

### WASHINGTON CAPITALS

The Capitals may have paid a bit much for Joel Ward (4 years, \$12 million) and Roman Hamrlik (2, \$7M), but grabbed Tomas Vokoun (1, \$1.5M) and Troy Brouwer (2, \$4.7M) on the cheap (although they dealt a first-rounder for the latter). The real coup had to be convincing Colorado to send them a first-rounder and a conditional second-rounder for a goalie (Semyon Varlamov) who was clearly not in their plans for 2012 or beyond. Good on them for securing Brooks Laich (6, \$27M) and Karl Alzner (2, \$2.57M) before others came calling. Now if only they could dump Alexander Semin (one year left at \$6.7M) on some unsuspecting soul by rebranding him as a team player.

A

### ST. LOUIS BLUES

St. Louis were in no rush to fill any gaping holes, although they needed some added veteran leadership to complement the burgeoning youth up front. Both Jason Arnett (1, \$2.875M) and Jamie Langenbrunner (1, \$2.8M) have earned Stanley Cups and know how to win. Scott Nichol (1, \$0.7M) is a grinder who can center your third or fourth line. Kent Huskins (1, \$1M) can lend his experience to the younger defensemen. Brian Elliott (1, \$0.6M) is a thrifty expense and a decent backup to Jaroslav Halak. And unless the Blues can somehow convince Joe Thornton to come to the Midwest, the signing of Jonathan Cheechoo (1, \$0.6M) will prove to be negligible.

B+

### CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS

Chicago can now afford to add a few pieces to fill out the roster, unlike the previous offseason where the club was forced to divest a number of key personnel. It added nothing too extravagant, including the acquisitions of a relative scoring bargain in Andrew Brunette (1, \$2M), a serviceable mucker in Jamal Mayers (1, \$0.55M), and a general pest in Daniel Carcillo (1, \$0.775M). It brought in two new blueliners, with the prize being Steve Montador (4, \$11M) and the insurance in the form of Sean O'Donnell (1, \$0.85M). It showed confidence in Corey Crawford (3, \$8M) by inking him long-term. Same for Patrick Sharp (5, \$29.5M) and Michael Frolik (3, \$7M). And it managed to ship the albatross otherwise known as Brian Campbell (four more years at \$7.1M each) to Florida for a cheaper forward option in Rostislav Olesz.

### TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

Tim Connolly (2, \$9.5M) may be a little expensive and is by no means the prototypical first-line center, but he'll do fine alongside Phil Kessel. Clarke MacArthur (2, \$6.5M) deserved a raise after his stellar campaign. Goalie revelation James Reimer (3, \$5.4M) was rewarded for his surprise season. John-Michael Liles was added via trade right before the draft and will provide the Leafs with that point presence they've been lacking since Tomas Kaberle's departure. If Matthew Lombardi can return from his prolonged concussion and produce even a little, then we can truly say Toronto stole him (and Cody Franson) from Nashville.

### EDMONTON OILERS

Another year, another first overall pick in Edmonton. But there was so much more going on in Oil City beyond the Ryan Nugent-Hopkins selection and signing (3, \$2.78M). Hometown boy Ryan Smyth was re-acquired after he rebuffed a move to the rival Flames. Veterans Eric Belanger (3, \$5.25M), Ben Eager (3, \$3.3M), and Darcy Hordichuk (1, \$0.825M) will add some wisdom and toughness to the forward corps. Cam Barker (1, \$2.25) was expendable in Minnesota but will enhance the D's offensive punch. And any time you can rid yourself of malcontent Sheldon Souray (contract bought out) and disappointment Kurtis Foster (traded to Anaheim), you know you've done the right thing.

### SAN JOSE SHARKS

Dany Heatley never truly fit in San Jose. Devin Setoguchi may have been a Shark from the start, but didn't quite impress in all areas. So when the opportunity to trade them in separate deals with Minnesota came, Sharks management jumped at the chance. While Martin Havlat isn't necessarily an upgrade, he'll be glad to join a potent offense. Ditto for Brent Burns (5, \$28.8M), who can elevate his game in Nor Cal. Michal Handzus (2, \$5M) may be 34, but there's nothing wrong with his skills. Colin White is all right for the price (1, \$1M). If James Sheppard can recover from his horrific accident last summer, he can at least fill a forward role.

B

### MONTREAL CANADIENS

The Habs' main offseason goal was to keep key personnel in the fold. They succeeded in re-signing Andrei Markov (3, \$17.25M), Max Pacioretty (2, \$3.25M), Andrei Kostitsyn (1, \$3.25M), Josh Gorges (1, \$2.5M), and Hal Gill (1, \$2.25M). Erik Cole (4, \$18M) seems to only produce when paired with Eric Staal, though Montreal can match the American forward with similar centers. Peter Budaj (2, \$2.3M) should be an upgrade as a backup, especially since he carried most of the load with Colorado last season.

### LOS ANGELES KINGS

The arrival of Mike Richards provides LA with a spectacular 1-2 center punch, albeit at the expense of steady youngster Wayne Simmonds and hot prospect Brayden Schenn. Ryan Smyth left California but in comes a younger and faster version in Simon Gagne (2, \$7M). A long-term deal is bound to be completed for RFA Drew Doughty, since he should be duly rewarded for his services. Alec Martinez (2, \$1.48M) showed enough flashes of brilliance to earn a new contract.



## OFFSEASON MOVES &amp; ANALYSIS (cont ...)

## NEW JERSEY DEVILS

One could've based this grade solely on Swedish stud D Adam Larsson falling to them at No. 4 in the draft. Although they may have dropped a notch based on their inability to secure Zach Parise (1, \$6M) long-term. Andy Greene (4, \$12M) is now locked in, while Johan Hedberg (1, \$1.25) will return to his usual spot on the bench waiting for Martin Brodeur to pop a muscle.

## DETROIT RED WINGS

If Detroit didn't convince Nicklas Lidstrom (1, \$6.2M) to stay, then an analysis of their offseason transactions would be moot. But the captain will be entering his 20th season without regular linemate Brian Rafalski, who retired after an abbreviated NHL career. The Wings may not have landed their first option on defense, but they still obtained a fine pair in Ian White (2, \$5.75M) and Mike Commodore (1, \$1M) while re-upping Jonathan Ericsson (3, \$9.75M). Kris Draper and Mike Modano walked off into the sunset, but role players Patrick Eaves (3, \$3.6M) and Drew Miller (2, \$1.65M) will be back.

C+

## COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

The Blue Jackets were the winners of the unadvertised Jeff Carter sweepstakes, although they did lose Jakub Voracek and their latest first-round selection in the deal. After buying out Mike Commodore and losing Jan Hejda to free agency, Columbus spent the rest of the summer securing defensemen. James Wisniewski (6, \$33M) would be pegged as the main attraction while Marc Methot (4, \$12M), Grant Clitsome (2, \$2.5M), and newbie Radek Martinek (1, \$2.2M) serve as the supporting cast. Vinny Prospal (1, \$1.75M) slides in, but more depth forwards are required or else the Jackets won't be able to field a complete lineup.

## BOSTON BRUINS

It's tough to improve upon a Cup title, especially when many of the pieces remain. They were never going to match outside dollars for Tomas Kaberle, so they found a cheaper option via trade in Joe Corvo. The Bruins also realized Michael Ryder wasn't in their price range, so they went with former rival Benoit Pouliot (1, \$1.1M). Another bonus high-first rounder (#9, thanks to the Leafs again) landed solid two-way defender Dougie Hamilton.

## CAROLINA HURRICANES

Content to secure existing players, Carolina found a way to hold on to Joni Pitkanen (3, \$13.5M), Jussi Jokinen (3, \$9M), Brandon Sutter (3, \$6.2M), and Chad LaRose (2, \$3.4M) with multiyear extensions. In what was essentially a swap of D-men, the Canes purchased Tomas Kaberle (3, \$12.75M) and then dealt Joe Corvo to the Bruins for a draft pick. Brian Boucher (2, \$1.9M) should be a bargain who can handle the backup position, but neither Alexei Ponikarovsky (1, \$1.5M) nor Anthony Stewart (2, \$1.8M) will add a whole lot to the offense.

## TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING

Bolts supporters breathed a huge sigh of relief when Steven Stamkos (5, \$37.5M) dotted the "i"s and crossed the dollar signs. Ditto for Teddy Purcell (2, \$4.725M), although obviously not as significant. Simon Gagne and Sean Bergenheim are manageable

minuses on a side that has invested a fair sum of cash on forwards. Perhaps 2010 first-round pick Brett Connolly (3, \$2.7M) will make that next step. No need to worry about goalkeeping, as graybeard Dwayne Roloson (1, \$3M) will pair with Mathieu Garon (2, \$2.6M). The back line is intact, with Eric Brewer (4, \$15.4M) and Marc-Andre Bergeron (2, \$2M) re-signing for another deep playoff run.

## PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

Everyone knows Pittsburgh's season depends on the health of Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. As a sizable chunk of funds are tied to these two stars, there's not a lot of cash lying around. Tyler Kennedy (2, \$4M) and Pascal Dupuis (2, \$3M) were musts to retain, while Steve Sullivan (1, \$1.5M) will fit in well. Beyond a few well wishes, there's not much else the Penguins really need.

## NEW YORK RANGERS

When Brad Richards (9, \$58.5M) wants to join your team for less money than competing offers, you're going in the right direction - though not many would have committed this long or this much for Mike Rupp (3, \$4.5M). Brandon Dubinsky (4, \$16.8M), Ryan Callahan (3, \$12.825M) and Brian Boyle (3, \$5.1M) cashed in before arbitration. Artem Anisimov (2, \$3.75M) and Ruslan Fedotenko (1, \$1.4M) will rejoin the Blueshirts with stay-at-home defender Michael Sauer (2, \$2.5M). Tim Erixon (3, \$2.7M) could have a bright future given the right opportunities. Does anyone want to take on a \$6.5 million salary (Wade Redden) going to waste in the AHL?

## DALLAS STARS

Michael Ryder (2, \$7M) joins Dallas after an impressive postseason. Vernon Fiddler (3, \$5.4M) cashed in due to his faceoff and defensive skills, while Radek Dvorak (1, \$1.5M) receives another chance to contribute. The Stars like how tough Adam Pardy (2, \$4M) can be in his own end, but they'd be more excited if former 64-point scorer Sheldon Souray (1, \$1.65M) could regain a fraction of his old form.

C

## COLORADO AVALANCHE

Things didn't turn out like they were supposed to in Colorado last season, so a summer shakeup became necessary. The first task was to find a No. 1 goalie and they may have done so with the acquisition of Semyon Varlamov (3, \$8.5M) from Washington. Unfortunately, this came at the expense of what could be a high first-round pick and a second rounder. And just in case the young Russian doesn't pan out, Jean-Sebastien Giguere (2, \$2.5M) comes to fill in. John-Michael Liles is history, but minute machine Jan Hejda (4, \$13M) counts as a defensive upgrade. Chuck Kobasew (2, \$2.5M) is aboard to provide some depth. Another season for Milan Hejduk (1, \$2.6M) is in the cards, while David Jones (1, \$2.5M) will have to overcome injury and TJ Galiardi (1, \$0.7M) will have to show consistency to prove themselves as decent performers. With his size and smarts, Gabriel Landeskog (at #2) grades as the most NHL-ready draftee and should step into the lineup immediately.

## VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Following the Game 7 debacle and subsequent city cleanup, Vancouver decided to stay quiet. No big splashes on the free-agent market, but that's more a factor of not having the available



## OFFSEASON MOVES &amp; ANALYSIS (cont ...)

resources. The only real significant external pickup was Marco Sturm (1, \$2.25M), who can still contribute at 32. Instead, the Canucks spent in-house to retain trick shot expert Kevin Bieksa (5, \$23M), point cannon Sami Salo (1, \$2M), steady blueliner Andrew Alberts (2, \$2.45M), mild revelation Chris Higgins (2, \$3.8M), and supreme agitator Maxim Lapierre (2, \$2M).

## WINNIPEG JETS

Welcome back, Winnipeg! The team you bought may not be the best, but you'll be happy to know your building will be the loudest. Oops, and sorry about the extensive Southeast Division travel itineraries. At least Atlanta didn't leave behind a lot of pending contracts, although RFA Zach Bogosian is awaiting his day to sign. Captain Andrew Ladd (5, \$22M) will lead the way after pledging his allegiance to the fans. Blake Wheeler (2, \$5.1M) was also a no-doubter from a team perspective. No other notable signings, unless you count ex-Canuck enforcer Tanner Glass (1, \$0.75M).

## FLORIDA PANTHERS

For a club that hasn't reached the postseason since 2000, Florida sure did a lot to project a winning image. But alas, quantity does not equal quality. They welcomed back original Panther Ed Jovanovski (4, \$16.5M) and upgraded their front line with several new recruits. Some would argue Florida overpaid for Tomas Fleischmann (4, \$18M) and Tomas Kopecky (4, \$12M), but Scottie Upshall (4, \$14M), Sean Bergenheim (4, \$11M), Kris Versteeg (from Philly for draft picks) and Marcel Goc (3, \$5.1M) could be categorized as more reasonable transactions. Perhaps the expectation is that Jacob Markstrom is ready to go, since neither Jose Theodore (2, \$3M) nor incumbent Scott Clemmensen would seem to be the answer between the pipes.

## BUFFALO SABRES

Like Florida, Buffalo went on a spending spree and bought whatever they could. First was Christian Ehrhoff (10, \$40M), whose rights were traded twice before hitting the jackpot. Then it was Ville Leino's (6, \$27M) turn to strike it rich. Reuniting with Ales Kotalik and boosting their character with Robyn Regehr should be tabbed as smart moves. Goalie Jhonas Enroth (2, \$1.35M) is familiar the system, while Marc-Andre Gragnani (1, \$0.55M) already put on a display during his brief stint. Unfortunately, the big-ticket items left the Sabres with zero cap space and the headache of finding a couple more forwards.

D

## MINNESOTA WILD

For a club that ranked near the bottom of the NHL in goals-per-game in 2010-11, adding snipers like Dany Heatley and Devin Setoguchi can only bolster Minnesota's offense. Unfortunately, the Wild lost a lot of talent, with Brent Burns, Martin Havlat, Andrew Brunette, Antti Miettinen, and Chuck Kobasew among the skaters who jumped ship. The deals for Darroll Powe (3, \$3.2M) and Mike Lundin (1, \$1M) make for passable print, but they'll only be asked to play secondary roles.

## PHOENIX COYOTES

The Desert Dogs may have been granted another stay of execution, but their on-ice product is becoming an embarrassment. Ilya Bryzgalov, Ed Jovanovski, and Eric Belanger have already booked

their tickets out and others may be close behind. Keith Yandle (5, \$26.25M) isn't wary of the franchise's long-term future. Neither is Radim Vrbata (3, \$9M) nor Lauri Korpikoski (2, \$3.6M). Either of their two major purchases - Raffi Torres (2, \$3.5M) and Boyd Gordon (2, \$2.65M) - would be classified as financial reaches. Anyone else excited about goalies Mike Smith (2, \$4M) and Jason LaBarbera (2, \$2.5M)?

## ANAHEIM DUCKS

A first-round disappointment following a hot regular season finish should necessitate change, but so far the Ducks have been reluctant to make any notable moves. Many holes still remain, especially at the forward position. They have started to build by dealing a second-round selection to Edmonton for RFA Andrew Cogliano (3, \$7.17M). With a strong nucleus, Anaheim should be able to convince 41-year old Teemu Selanne to return for at least another season. And they'll hope Kurtis Foster (also acquired from Edmonton) can hit the net like he did back in his Tampa days.

## CALGARY FLAMES

The Flames are another side that haven't produced recently and seem to be content with the status quo, though they were apparently next-in-line for Brad Richards. Funny thing about the chase was that the Flames couldn't have realistically been involved without then dumping a whole whack of salary. This explains why almost all of Calgary's cash transactions have involved existing roster members, whether it be Alex Tanguay (5, \$17.5M), Curtis Glencross (4, \$10.2M), Brendan Morrison (1, \$1.25M), Anton Babchuk (2, \$5M), or Henrik Karlsson (2, \$1.725M). Only Scott Hannan (1, \$1M) bucked the trend. Props for nabbing Sven Baertschi with the 13th pick, since he may be the purest offensive talent from the first round.

## PHILADELPHIA FLYERS

Many were shocked when Philly dealt Mike Richards and Jeff Carter to free up cap space. Further people were astounded when this money was then allotted to Ilya Bryzgalov (9, \$51M). Nothing against either Jakub Voracek, Wayne Simmonds, or Brayden Schenn, but trading long-term signees doesn't give a franchise a positive reputation when it comes to loyalty. Maxime Talbot (5, \$9M) was pried away from their interstate enemies, but the hockey world shook their collective heads when the Flyers took on 39-year old Jaromir Jagr (1, \$3.3M) for more than expected. Andreas Lilja (1, \$0.75M) has proven himself to be a solid body and a fine addition to a mainly offensive blueline. And Sean Couturier at No. 8 in the draft could be the one to step into Richards' role down the line.

D-

## NEW YORK ISLANDERS

Holding a ton of cap cash could be a signal to spend, but not when a proposed stadium deal gets flushed down the toilet. The trade with NJ for Brian Rolston and his \$5M tag doesn't count. Neither is aging role player Marty Reasoner (2, \$2.7M). They were briefly in possession of Christian Ehrhoff before wisely tossing him to Buffalo. The big plan is to stay with the youth revolution, which was carried out in the extensions for rookie sensation Michael Grabner (5, \$15M), talented scorer Kyle Okposo (5, \$14M), and steady performer Blake Comeau (1, \$2.5M). RFA Josh Bailey



## OFFSEASON MOVES &amp; ANALYSIS (cont ...)

should be next in line, as long as the Isles believe he can continue on his progression. If holdout Evgeni Nabokov can somehow make the club and earn a few starts, then New York's other franchise may be on the upswing.

## F

## OTTAWA SENATORS

A lost season turned into a forgettable offseason, as the Sens couldn't claim much on the market. Their sixth-overall reach for Swedish center Mika Zibanejad raised a few eyebrows, considering most had the 18-year old going somewhere in the later half of the first round. Welcome to Alex Auld (1, \$1M) and Zenon Konopka (1, \$0.7M); your services will only be required every third outing or so. Guess it's true what they say in the rest of Ontario: No one really wants to come to Ottawa unless they have to.

## NASHVILLE PREDATORS

The current Nashville hockey situation is reminiscent of the Chicago Blackhawks in 2009, where the soon-to-be champs embarrassingly forgot to submit their qualifying offers before the deadline and subsequently paid more than expected for many of their restricted free agents. But let's not compare the two teams based on skill; yes, the Predators are playoff-ready, but they are nowhere near being touted as Stanley Cup contenders. A lot of money can be doled out, but the Nashville franchise can't afford any major expenditure. It's not about adding salary, but dumping it. Nashville was successful in shedding center Matthew Lombardi and defenseman Cody Franson, both to the Toronto Maple Leafs, but the Predators might end up losing their biggest deal - team captain Shea Weber (1, \$7.5M) - in a year's time. With the sad state of hockey in Tennessee and the ongoing exodus of quality players, how long would you stay if you were Weber?