



YAHOO! SPORTS

# NHL DRAFT KIT 2011

## BREAKOUT ROOKIES

It can take a long time for even some of the most talented players to achieve NHL productivity. For every Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin, there are players like Henrik and Daniel Sedin - super-stars now, but neither cleared 40 points in his first three years in the league, and it wasn't until their fifth year until either broke into the 70s. And, of course, there are many more that don't make it at all. Every year, though, some rookies make an immediate impact, and the 2011-12 season is shaping up to be an interesting one with some big-time prospects ready to make the leap to NHL greatness. Here are some favorites to break out with big rookie years.

### FORWARDS

#### BRAYDEN SCHENN, C, PHILADELPHIA FLYERS

The best prospect in hockey came to Philadelphia in the Mike Richards deal, and he couldn't have found a better landing spot than this retooled Flyers squad. They're a contending team, but one with so much turnover on the top lines that Schenn could easily play his way into the top six. Schenn's credentials are unquestioned: fifth overall pick in '09, nearly two points per game in juniors last year, plus a point per game in his seven-game AHL stint. He's ready to rock.

#### RYAN JOHANSEN, C, COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

Jeff Carter comes in and presumably assumes the top center spot, but everything after that is up for grabs. Derick Brassard and Antoine Vermette will make their cases for the No. 2 center role as well, but Johansen is just as talented as those guys (and they're no slouches). He's only 19, but he rocked junior hockey for 40 goals and 92 points last year, and the 2010 No. 4 pick is capable of contributing on the NHL level right now - especially if he's filled out that 6-3 frame with a bit more muscle.

#### BRETT MACLEAN, LW, PHOENIX COYOTES

MacLean has nothing left to prove in the AHL after racking up 50 points in 51 games last year and 65 points (including 30 goals) in 76 the year before. Better yet, the Coyotes have little in the way of competition for him: Outside of the veterans Ray Whitney and Shane Doan, there are absolutely no sure things on the wing in Phoenix. Soon to be 23, MacLean's got a new contract and a great chance to apply his scoring ability to a lot of NHL minutes.

#### RYAN NUGENT-HOPKINS, C, EDMONTON OILERS

Yet another first overall pick comes to Edmonton, where Nugent-Hopkins could team up with Taylor Hall and Jordan Eberle to create the best young line in hockey. He's only 18 years old, but he racked up 106 points in juniors as a 17-year-old last year. Unlike most of the others on this list, he's assured of nothing as far as getting to the NHL right away, but the slender center has put on some weight over the offseason, getting up to 175 pounds, which should improve his chances of competing in what seems to have become a more rough-and-tumble league.

#### GABRIEL LANDESKOG, RW, COLORADO AVALANCHE

The man picked after Nugent-Hopkins, Landeskog is already penciled in as a second-line winger for a Colorado team that's sort of in transition right now. The soon-to-be-19-year-old Swede didn't

blow the competition away offensively last year in juniors (not that he did bad, tallying 36 goals and 66 points in 53 games), but he's got NHL size and strength, and is widely considered the most NHL-ready player in this draft. (To me, he's second to the guy below.) It's hard to project him coming in and racking up 60 points, but 40-some would play in deeper leagues.

#### JONATHAN HUBERDEAU, C, FLORIDA PANTHERS

In Huberdeau, we have a player who is arguably just as good or maybe even better than the players picked in front of him. He scored just one point less than Nugent-Hopkins last year for Saint John of the QMJHL, collecting 105 points in 67 games, and he comes to a Panthers team that has little of interest up the middle, leading many - including yours truly - to believe that he's in for a Jeff Skinner-like rookie breakout, particularly if he gets a shot to click with David Booth on the first line.

#### TOMAS KUBALIK, RW, COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

Last year's training camp sensation had a very fine season in the AHL despite failing to make the team, tallying 24 goals and 53 points (both easily team-leading totals) for Springfield to go with with a couple assists in four NHL games. Columbus is iffy on the wing, especially right wing, and so Kubalik could find his way onto the roster this fall and make an immediate impact. The 21-year-old Czech has the skill and the size at 6-3, 209 to stick in a top-six role.

### DEFENSEMEN

#### MARC-ANDRE GRAGNANI, BUFFALO SABRES

Here's how you make a great impression as a young player: After four wildly successful AHL seasons (52, 51, 43 and 60 points), you come up at the end of the year, get in on your team's playoff run, and lead the team in points in the playoffs as a defenseman. Gragnani racked up seven points in Buffalo's seven playoff games last year, and he's established himself as one of the top up-and-coming offensive defensemen in the game. Unfortunately, Buffalo brought in Christian Ehrhoff to man the power play with Tyler Myers, pushing Gragnani off for the moment. Ehrhoff may not be as impressive as his Sedin-twins-inflated numbers, though, and of course this is the NHL - injuries happen. Gragnani will get his chances on the PP eventually, but even without that, he could easily achieve a fantasy-relevant point total this year.

#### DAVID RUNDBLAD, OTTAWA SENATORS

Not a lot of young players score 50 points in the Swedish Elitserien, and of those few, you almost never see a defenseman - until Rundblad ripped off 11 goals and 39 assists in 55 games last year. Now he brings his talents to the NHL, where he'll be expected to bring his scoring touch to a blue line that's seen Sergei Gonchar age very suddenly and, aside from Erik Karlsson, doesn't have much offensive upside. It's hard for young defensemen to make a scoring impact, but if anyone can do it, Rundblad can. He's one of the very best defense prospects of the last decade.

#### RYAN ELLIS, NASHVILLE PREDATORS

Ellis is another one who fits into "best defense prospects of the last decade" as the rare 100-point junior scorer from the blue line.



**BREAKOUT ROOKIES (cont ...)**

In just 58 games last year in the OHL, Ellis racked up 24 goals and 77 assists. If he doesn't make the Preds out of camp, it'll be a travesty. The only knock on Ellis is that he's a bit undersized, but he has so much offensive talent, there's just no way that Nashville needs to "let him develop." He's developed. Don't tell me the Predators are a better team with Kevin Klein or Jack Hillen.

**JONATHON BLUM, NASHVILLE PREDATORS**

If the powers that be in Nashville were smart, they'd join Ellis with Blum on their second defensive pairing, sit back, and watch the kids do work. A first-round pick (No. 23) in '07, Blum has shown the ability to put up points both in juniors (where he was a two-time 60-point scorer) and in the AHL, where he's got 75 points in 134 games over the past two seasons, including 34 in 54 last year. Blum's had his two seasons in the AHL, and he's had a little NHL exposure, too, with 23 regular-season games followed by 12 in the postseason. That experience should be enough to put him solidly in the rotation for Nashville this year. He's capable of big things, especially if he gets some PP time.

**JAKE GARDINER, TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS**

The Leafs wisely acquired Gardiner from the Ducks, who took him in the first round in '08 and watched him develop into a top defenseman at the University of Wisconsin, where he put up a point per game over 41 contests last season. The Leafs have made some great moves to strengthen their blue line, adding John-Michael Liles and Cody Franson, but there's still room for Gardiner to beat out Carl Gunnarsson for the sixth defense spot. Even if he doesn't do that in camp, it's only a matter of time before Gardiner makes his way up to the big team for good.

**GOALIES****KEVIN POULIN, NEW YORK ISLANDERS**

One of my favorite goaltending prospects, Poulin ridiculously outperformed his fifth-round (2008) draft pedigree last year, racking up a sick .932 save percentage for AHL Bridgeport over 15 games before getting the call to Long Island, where he went 4-2-1 over 10 games with a .924 save percentage and 2.44 GAA for a bad Islanders team before suffering a fluky knee injury that ended

his season. Rick DiPietro is always hurt and hasn't played well; Al Montoya, who played well for the Isles at the end of last season, is more likely to be a flash in the pan than a long-term solution; Swedish import Anders Nilsson will need some time in the AHL. That leaves Poulin plenty of opportunity to take a starring role and run with it.

**JHONAS ENROTH, BUFFALO SABRES**

With Patrick Lalime finally retired after a couple seasons of backing up Ryan Miller, Enroth is the inheritor of that role. Miller's one of the best in the game, and he tends to be a high-volume goalie, starting 68 and 65 games the last two seasons, but the talented young Enroth has been consistently good in the AHL for the last three years, and with Miller on the wrong side of 30 now, the Sabres could look to have his load reduced a little. You can pencil Enroth in for at least 20 games as a backup, and if Miller gets hurt, he's suddenly a full-time starter on a playoff-caliber team.

**JACOB MARKSTROM, FLORIDA PANTHERS**

Jose Theodore has a two-year contract, which should send a message about what the Panthers think of Markstrom's development, but Theodore is no Tomas Vokoun and backup Scott Clemmensen is no NHL starter, so Markstrom could push his way up with a strong first half, particularly if one of those guys is bitten by the injury bug. After all, Theodore has had problems holding up for whole seasons before and now he's soon to be 35 - no spring chicken. Markstrom, a 2008 second-round pick, is one of the top goalie prospects in the game, so if he can elevate his game in the AHL this year, the Panthers will have to find a place for him.

**MARK DEKANICH, COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS**

Look out, Steve Mason. Dekanich is coming for your job. At some point, the Jackets are going to get sick of Mason, the '08 rookie sensation (10 shutouts!) turned picture of mediocrity the last two seasons. Enter Dekanich, signed away from the goalie-heavy Predators, with whom all he did was put up a .931 save percentage and 2.02 GAA in the AHL last year. Not only is Dekanich arguably better than Mason, he's older than him and he has a history of excellence in college and in the AHL. Don't be surprised if he usurps the job in Columbus (or at least turns it into a time-share) much quicker than most would expect.



# SLEEPERS & UNDERVALUED PLAYERS

## CENTER

### MIKAEL BACKLUND, CALGARY FLAMES

On the face of it, Backlund had a so-so 2010-11 campaign, posting 10 goals and 15 assists in 73 games, though he still watched a handful of games from the press box as a healthy scratch. However, numbers don't tell the full story as he showed signs of improvement as the season wore on. While he may not open the year centering Jarome Iginla, by year-end, he should be firmly in that prime spot.

### PATRIK BERGLUND, ST. LOUIS BLUES

You aren't likely to find a cheaper 60-point center on draft day. Berglund came on at the end of last season, playing at a .75 ppg clip once the calendar reached February. He's entering his fourth season and he'll be flanked by two of Alex Steen, Matt D'Agostini or the perpetually perplexing yet talented TJ Oshie. The 6-4 Swede is just starting to tap his immense potential and a jump from 51 points to 60 is not an outlandish projection.

### PATRICK ELIAS, JACOB JOSEFSON, NEW JERSEY DEVILS

These two went from being centers two and three in New Jersey to one and two with Travis Zajac's Achilles' tendon surgery in mid-August. That means each will skate with an elite left winger (Ilya Kovalchuk or Zach Parise). Do we need to say anything more?

### MIKKO KOIVU, MINNESOTA WILD

Koivu has been on the cusp of fantasy relevance for the past few seasons now but has yet to be flanked by a true goal scorer. The Wild took care of that problem by acquiring Dany Heatley from the Ducks, the best player Koivu has played with since the departure of Marian Gaborik.

## LEFT WING

### ANDREW BRUNETTE, CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS

Brew is expected to start the season with two guys named Toews and Kane. Tough gig for sure and the 37-year-old will be a low budget ass on draft day. The return could be 20 goals+, 50 points+, and double-digit power play point totals. Just look at his career numbers and you'll see a minimum of 18 goals (four times exceeding 20 goals) over the past six seasons. A good sign for Brunette is the fact that the Hawks are most weak at left wing amongst their forward groupings. Viktor Stalberg and Bryan Bickell have not yet reached Brunette's skill level yet as scorers.

### GABRIEL LANDESKOG, COLORADO AVALANCHE

Can a highly-touted rookie be a sleeper? Drafted second overall after scoring 60 goals and 112 points in 114 games the last two years for Kitchener of the OHL, Landeskog finds himself in an advantageous situation with Colorado. The Avs are thin at left wing, and Peter Mueller, sadly, is one concussion more from possible retirement. Kitchener gave up its rights to Landeskog (to sign another Euro, they have quotas), so Landeskog's not going back to juniors, and most 18-year-olds don't play in the AHL.

### JAMES NEAL, PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

Neal was a major disappointment after coming over last year from Dallas for Alex Goligoski. After scoring 21 goals in 59 games with the Stars, Neal netted just one score in 20 games with the Penguins. This year, Neal should get the chance to play with either Sidney Crosby or Evgeni Malkin, which should be a boost for his production.

### VINNY PROSPAL, COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

Prospal has proven he can hold his own playing on a top line with elite talent who are in their prime. He's done it in Philadelphia (Briere, Richards), Tampa Bay (Lecavalier, St. Louis), and New York (Gaborik). The Blue Jackets signed him when Kristian Huselius suffered a training accident working out during the summer. This signing could work out well for those who invest a late round dart on him if he lines up at first line left wing playing with Rick Nash and Jeff Carter. Prospal's main competition will come from Antoine Brunette and Derick Brassard, as it seems foolish for Columbus to put all their top-six big bodies (Nash, Carter, RJ Umberger) on one line. It's almost an all-or-nothing here as Prospal would likely land on the first PP unit if he's already skating with Nash and Carter at even strength. Lots of risk here but a 20-goal/55-point season in the 65-70 games that he plays is certainly within reach.

### JAMES VAN RIEMSDYK, PHILADELPHIA FLYERS

Van Riemsdyk came into his own during the playoffs last season. His play along with Claude Giroux's may have made it easier for the team to deal Mike Richards and Jeff Carter. The departure of those two also assures van Riemsdyk of being a top six forward, which will bring with it more power play time.

## RIGHT WING

### PIERRE-MARC BOUCHARD, MINNESOTA WILD

Bouchard, currently listed as a left wing on Yahoo!, figures to play the RW1 spot this year in Minnesota. Logic dictates that you split up two high-volume shooters like Dany Heatley and Devin Setoguchi, neither of whom are known as set-up men. Bouchard missed all but one game of the 2009-10 season due to a concussion. The four seasons prior saw him average 56 points per season, including averaging 24 power-play points and 40 assists. That, friends, is a set-up man. Bouchard played 59 games last season and had a modest 12 goals and 38 points - that's a 52-point clip over 82 games. Now think what could happen if he plays 70 games with Mikko Koivu and Dany Heatley? PMB is symptom free and a worthy draftee.

### NICK PALMIERI, NEW JERSEY DEVILS

The Devils are loaded at left wing but thin at center with Travis Zajac out until mid-November at the earliest. They're also relatively thin at right wing after trading Brian Rolston and buying out the player they got back in the deal - Trent Hunter. This where the big youngster Palmieri, 6-3/220, comes in. Consider that he finished the season playing on the first line with Ilya Kovalchuk and Zajac while finishing with nine goals and 17 points in 43 games. Palmieri, who turned 22 last month, has scored 20 in the OHL (3 times) and 20 in the AHL. If he sticks on the first line with two of Kovalchuk, Zach Parise, Patrik Elias, and Zajac it's fairly certain



**SLEEPERS & UNDERVALUED PLAYERS (cont ...)**

he'll score 20 this year in the NHL. Competition at right wing is slim with David Clarkson (career high is 17 goals/32 points) and Vladimir Zharkov (14 points in 78 career games) next on the depth chart. The only caveat is power-play time, as the kid only averaged 0:33 on the PP while Clarkson got 1:40 of PP time per game last year. It's something to watch for in training camp.

**DEVIN SETOGUCHI, MINNESOTA WILD**

Gifted goal scorer, great hands, an extremely physical player who is not afraid of mixing it up in the front of the net, good hockey instincts, blazing speed, loves to shoot and has a hard and accurate shot. Plays hardnosed but smart. Setoguchi should thrive within the new offensive-first approach of new coach Mike Yeo. An expected 18 plus minutes of TOI as a top six forward and just as critical first team power play unit fixture should see Setoguchi's star rise once again.

**DAN SEXTON, ANAHEIM DUCKS**

This is a deep sleeper conditional on Teemu Selanne retiring. Selanne will make his announcement in September, as the 41-year-old continues to rehab offseason knee surgery. Sexton is a late bloomer. Never drafted, he was signed as a free agent after two years at Bowling Green where he scored 36 goals and 60 points in 76 games. Amazingly, in his first year as a pro (2009-10) he worked his way up from the humble beginnings of the ECHL (26 points in 18 games) to the AHL (12 points in 13 games) all the way to the NHL (19 points in 41 games). Sexton received some top-six minutes that year in Anaheim due to injuries whereas last year he struggled scoring in a third-line role, with just 13 points in 47 games and was eventually sent down to the AHL where he got his confidence back (17 points in 17 games). Should Selanne retire, Sexton would be first line to take the RW2 spot, though he'd be still a non-factor in keeper leagues with Kyle Palmieri a year away from a top-six role.

**ANTHONY STEWART, CAROLINA PANTHERS**

Stewart is a late-bloomer and far less known than his younger brother, St. Louis Blue Chris Stewart. While his career high is just 14 goals and 39 points, it occurred last season playing with centers like Bryan Little, Rich Peverely and Nik Antropov. This year, his center is expected to be Eric Staal. With apologies to the aforementioned trio, that is huge upgrade in skill for Stewart. This is a fluid situation that bears watching, though even a second line assignment could mean playing with the likes of Tuomo Ruutu and/or Jussi Jokinen. Working in Stewart's favor is the fact that the Canes have less talent at right wing than anywhere else in their lineup. Stewart is better than Chad Larose, and he's far more proven than Zac Dalpe. Bottom line: Stewart is a big body (6-2, 239) and former first-round pick who's a deep sleeper candidate entering this season with 20-goal/50-point potential should he stick with Staal on the first line.

**DEFENSE****MICHAEL DEL ZOTTO, NEW YORK RANGERS**

Del Zotto, drafted 20th overall in '08, scored 37 points as a 19-year-old rookie two seasons ago but his defensive zone coverage needed work so he spent part of last season in the AHL. MDZ has a good chance at landing a first PP unit gig on the point

opposite Brad Richards. The Rangers let Bryan McCabe leave as a free-agent and MDZ has better offensive skills than either of the top defensive pair of Marc Staal (29 points last season) and Dan Girardi (31 points). MDZ's main competition may well be 20-year-old rookie Tim Erixon, who scored 24 points in 48 games for Skelleftea of the Swedish Elite league.

**CAM FOWLER, ANAHEIM DUCKS**

The rookie d-man had 10 goals and 30 assists, quite impressive. Okay he was also a -25, he has to improve in his defensive zone to truly be a defensive power, but one should expect him to improve in that department this season.

**ERIK GUDBRANSON, FLORIDA PANTHERS**

Gudbranson (taken 3rd overall in '10) should've made the roster last season but he was unable to agree on a contract. He returned to junior, played for Canada at the World Junior championships and filled out physically. The first power play unit point spot across from Brian Campbell is up for grabs and Gudbranson will compete with aging vet Ed Jovanovski and fellow youngster Dmitry Kulikov (taken 14th overall in '09) for the gig. It would seem prudent that the Panthers spread out their experience and play either Gudbranson or Kulikov on the first unit alongside Campbell. Follow the camp news.

**TRAVIS HAMONIC, NEW YORK ISLANDERS**

It's not going to be long before this just-turned 21-year-old is going to be the top defender on the Island of Misfit Toys. He logged heavy minutes in all situations last season and finishes second-best in plus-minus (plus-4) among Isles' blueliners. He's big, he can skate, he can hit and he can score. Mid-30s in points and more than 100 PIMs is just the beginning.

**ALEX PIETRANGELO, ST. LOUIS BLUES**

When you talk about up-and-coming young defensemen, Pietrangelo's name many times gets left out of the mix. Maybe because he isn't flashy or plays in the Arch City, but Pietrangelo is a name to remember on draft day. Last year, St. Louis traded Erik Johnson due to Pietrangelo's growth, and he rewarded them with 43 points. This year, mid-50s are clearly possible. Don't leave him out of the the mix this time.

**GOALIE****RAY EMERY, CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS**

He doesn't have a contract and he has a long list of injuries and off-ice "challenges." But he proved last season that he could still play. Corey Crawford is certainly on the rise. But Emery may just be lurking in the weeds if CC falters. A good camp gets him on our radar even further.

**JONAS HILLER, ANAHEIM DUCKS**

Hiller was having a solid season in 2010-11 before vertigo derailed the end of it. He posted a 26-16-3 stat line in 49 games played (46 starts) for the Ducks last season while carrying a 2.56 GAA and a career-best .924 save percentage. If Hiller stays healthy, he should be a nice value. Ray Emery wasn't retained, so Hiller should once again have a stranglehold on the starting job.



## SLEEPERS &amp; UNDERVALUED PLAYERS (cont ...)

**ONDREJ PAVELEC, WINNIPEG JETS**

One small step for Winnipeg, one giant step for one of the better young goalies in the league. Pavelec's game took a leap last season but it's about to get even better in hockey-mad Manitoba. He has talent and speed, and now understands that he needs to add stamina to his tool belt (remember that swoon mid season? There won't be one like that this year). He'll be underrated on draft day; you won't regret nabbing him.



## BUSTS & OVERVALUED PLAYERS

As with sleepers, most "Busts" fall into three types: players overrated because of their situation, players overrated coming off career years and big names overrated based on merit. **Situational Busts** are such because of where they play, the line they are on or because of their team's personnel changes. **Career-Year Busts** are self-explanatory - you don't want to get caught up chasing last year's stats. **Big-Name Busts** usually consist of players returning from career seasons, never to return to such heights again, or in some cases overhyped rookies not ready for prime time just yet.

### SITUATIONAL BUSTS

#### AL MONTOYA, G, NEW YORK ISLANDERS

In the wake of the Islanders' multiple goalie dramas last season, the silver lining was certainly Al Montoya. In place of the once-again injured Rick DiPietro, Montoya posted a 2.39 GAA behind an inconsistent Isles defense. Montoya played well, but it was injuries that gave him all those starts. The reality is New York has Evgeni Nabokov to keep or showcase (so he plays), and DiPietro is still under contract as well. Montoya's draft stock will be overvalued as a result. He'll struggle to reach 40 starts and could see as little as 25-30.

#### BRIAN CAMPBELL, D, FLORIDA PANTHERS

Campbell, who was traded by Chicago to Florida in June, goes from a team that had Marian Hossa, Patrick Sharp and Jonathan Toews to a team that is happy if it can boast one All-Star representative. He may be paid like a superstar, but he is certainly not one anymore now that he's a Panther.

#### CHRISTIAN EHRHOFF, D, BUFFALO SABRES

The only thing better in Buffalo is the the chicken wings. Vancouver made Ehrhoff better - he didn't "make" Vancouver better. The slick German defender loses his insulation on the back end and one of the best supporting casts in the NHL and gains ... well, nothing. Sometimes guys can thrive as the big fish in a little pond, but we're not convinced. Forget about 50 points - 40 will be the best he can do. Maybe his blocked shots (108) will go up ...

#### TOMAS KABERLE, D, CAROLINA PANTHERS

Kaberle was one of the big movers at the trade deadline last season, going for Toronto to Boston. He did little during the regular season, but came up big in the Hub during the playoffs, notching 11 assists. He signed a three-year deal with Carolina this offseason and will be looked to spark the 'Canes 24th-rated power play. Kaberle might do that, but with Joni Pitkanen and a rising Jamie McBain, Kaberle could find himself on the second pairing.

#### KEITH YANDLE, D, PHOENIX COYOTES

Yandle ranked third among NHL defencemen in scoring last season, recording 11 goals and 48 assists in 82 games. Yandle likely will be treated as one of the top defensemen in fantasy drafts, but he'll find it hard to repeat last year's numbers. Ilya Bryzgalov is gone, so Yandle will have to focus a lot more in his own zone this season. His offense almost certainly will suffer. Baaaad situation.

### CAREER-YEAR BUSTS

#### RYAN KESLER, C, VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Kesler, who won the Selke Award, notched 41 goals and 32 assists last season, two points off his career-high set in 2009-10. In addition, he helped carry Vancouver to the Stanley Cup Finals, but his play against Boston left a lot to be desired. It soon became apparent as to why that was the case. Despite hopes that he would not need to undergo the knife, Kesler had successful surgery in early-August to repair a torn labrum in his hip that is expected to sideline him 10-12 weeks. Given how valuable Kesler is to the Canucks, look for the team to be cautious with his return, giving him as much time to recover. Limited by an injury and coming off a near-career year isn't a good combination.

#### SERGEI KOSTITSYN, C, NASHVILLE PREDATORS

Kostitsyn hit a career-high 50 points last season, but it was pure fluke as he led the league in shooting percentage at nearly 25 percent (minimum 90 SOG). Kostitsyn never scored more than 27 points in a season with the Habs, who traded him last offseason to Nashville where he revived his sputtering career. Kostitsyn had karma last year. He'll have craps this one.

#### ANDREW LADD, LW, WINNIPEG JETS

Ladd had the best season of his career last year (29 goals, 30 assists for 59 points), earning him the honor of being named team captain and, more important, a long-term contract extension. He was an overachiever on shooting percentage, though, ranking among the league leaders last season as he converted a career-high 14.9 percent of his shots. Expect a reversion to the mean (or serious shrinkage) in his shooting percentage this season, and, thus, a decline in fantasy value from last year's high-water mark.

#### COREY PERRY, RW, ANAHEIM DUCKS

Perry is awesome but c'mon - he'll probably never hit 50 goals again. Anything is possible, but he's more 35-45 with 85 PIMs than 50-48 and 104. And Lubomir Visnovsky, his favorite slick-passing defender, is never going to repeat last year's career numbers. He'll be overdrafted all over the place.

#### TIM THOMAS, G, BOSTON BRUINS

The world will conspire against this lovable lout this year. He won it all last year -- Vezina, Conn Smythe and Lord Stanley. But he's 37 and has Tuukka Rask, goalie of the future in the Hub of Hockey, breathing down his neck. Tiny Tim will get fewer starts and fewer wins to go with increased ratios, too. He's still very good but he can really only go down from here.

#### JORDAN LEOPOLD, D, BUFFALO SABRES

Leopold is coming off a career year in goals (13) and points (35) in his eighth year in the league. However, 2010 Rookie of the Year Tyler Myers (10g/37p) outproduced him over the final third of last season. Leopold had a career season while Myers went through a sophomore slump before rallying with an impressive 29 points in his last 54 games. The Sabres signed 50-point D-man Christian Ehrhoff, who should the draw a first PP assignment. Leopold, 31,



**BUSTS & OVERVALUED PLAYERS (cont ...)**

likely won't be on the first power play unit, as it's more important for Buffalo to keep developing their young asset Myers, 21. Moreover, both Ehrhoff and Leopold are left shots while Myers shoots right. The Sabres didn't spend \$40 million on Ehrhoff to play him on the second power play unit. Leopold can be avoided.

**LUBOMIR VISNOVSKY, D, ANAHEIM DUCKS**

Defenders typically age like fine wine, but Luby is 35 and coming off a kick-butt, 68-point effort. There's no way he can repeat that feat – he's way too prone to injuries. And his game, while still good, likely will start tasting a little like vinegar this season. Draft for 45-50 points, not 60-65.

**BIG-NAME BUSTS****SIDNEY CROSBY, C, PITTSBURGH PENGUINS**

Crosby was on pace to obliterate his career high in points last season, notching 66 in 41 games before being shut down with a pair of concussions. There has been a ton of misinformation about Crosby's status, with the only quasi-definitive news from Pittsburgh GM Ray Shero: "Crosby is training to be ready for the season opener Oct. 6, but it's unclear if that will actually happen." At this point, no one knows if/when Crosby will be back. Hockey is a contact sport and it's hard to see him playing enough games this season to justify where he will probably be drafted.

**MIKE RICHARDS, C, LOS ANGELES KINGS**

Opportunity has knocked, but don't think this guy's offense is going to take a jump while wearing purple and black. Richards

will go from lining up against the best lines in the Eastern Conference to the best in the West, and that's an infinitely harder task. He's still young but he's not the offensive stud that so many believe. Sixty points is the cap; don't draft him for anything more.

**ZACH PARISE, LW, NEW JERSEY DEVILS**

Parise missed 69 games last season after blowing out his knee. The previous two years he had 82 points and 94 points, respectively. Expecting scoring totals in the 80s for the coming campaign is not realistic, as the Devils are hurting at center and they're thin at right wing. The two best forwards in Jersey are left wings, which is one of the problems. Another problem is that Parise's old center – Travis Zajac – is out until at least mid-November after tearing his Achilles' tendon. Either Parise or Ilya Kovalchuk will get stuck with Dainius Zubrus until Zajac returns while the other left wing should draw converted left wing Patrik Elias at center. Further worsening the cause is the Devils' system, which is not exactly up tempo. Then consider the lack of decent puck moving D-men on the roster. Drafting Parise expecting 65-70 points is far more realistic. Let someone else draft him in the top two rounds.

**JAROMIR JAGR, RW, PHILADELPHIA FLYERS**

The mullet will be way overrated on draft day. His best-before date mirrors that of the salad dressings on the door of your grandparent's fridge. He's a liability at even strength because he can no longer mask his defensive indifference with reasonable speed. And how much value can a power-play specialist have even if he's on a strong team? It's awfully hard to maintain intensity over an 82-game schedule.