

Over/Under

Which NHL players are getting more credit than they deserve and which ones could use a little bit more icetime

By Josh Lewis

It's time to expose the most over-rated and underrated players in the NHL.

I apologize for not giving you this vital information in time to submit your hockey pools, but if your pool has trades, there's still time to act.

Better late than never - just ask the Alexei Yashin-less New York Islanders.

Overrated

1) Zdeno Chara

The Hockey News recently listed Chara as the fifth best defenseman in the NHL. To which I say: well, I'm not saying anything because I'm still laughing. You know the kind. Your ribs hurt, you start choking, and milk comes out of your ears. Chara had one good season with Ottawa. That's it. If he wasn't 6'9", you'd never hear about him. Did I mention he makes \$7.5 million per year?

2) Milan Hejduk

This guy is not the same player without Peter Forsberg feeding him the puck. End of story. Had he been more consistent last season, the Avs likely would have made the playoffs.

3) Brad Richards

Richards is a very good playmaker, I'll give him that. He's probably a top 10 centre in the league. But he is nowhere near the elite player many make him out to be - and which his \$7.8 million contract suggests. Every time I hear someone compare him to Joe Sakic, a little part of me dies - and the rest of me wants to egg his house on North River Road.

4) Todd Bertuzzi

Let me clarify. There are two Bertuzzis. The pre-Steve Moore version was the best power forward in the NHL. The post-Moore Bertuzzi is a shadow of his former self, no thanks to his wonky back. Brian Burke took a huge risk in signing him to a \$4 million contract this summer. If you require further evidence, talk to Mike Keenan - but don't bring your kids.

5) Niklas Backstrom

Let me get this straight. Backstrom comes over from the Finnish league, plays 41 games last year and posts really good numbers playing behind one of the

best defensive teams in the league, and now he's a top 10 goalie?

That's what THN thinks, anyway.

Two words: Steve Penney.

Actually, I'll give you nine more: Josh Harding will be Minnesota's starter by year's end.

Honourable Mention: I'd put Bryan McCabe on this list, but a lot of people already think he's crap, so it's not really necessary. For details, find a video of Sidney Crosby's game-winning goal against the Leafs last Saturday. The one where McCabe is chasing butterflies.

Underrated

1) Andrew Brunette

Brunette has been a wingman for both Marian Gaborik and Joe Sakic in recent years. And while that contributes to his point totals (83 last season), not just anyone can play and produce with superstars (see Hoglund, Jonas). For a player who has put up seasons of 83, 69 and 63 points in the last five years, \$1.6 million per year is a steal. And he's very versatile.

3) Brian Rolston

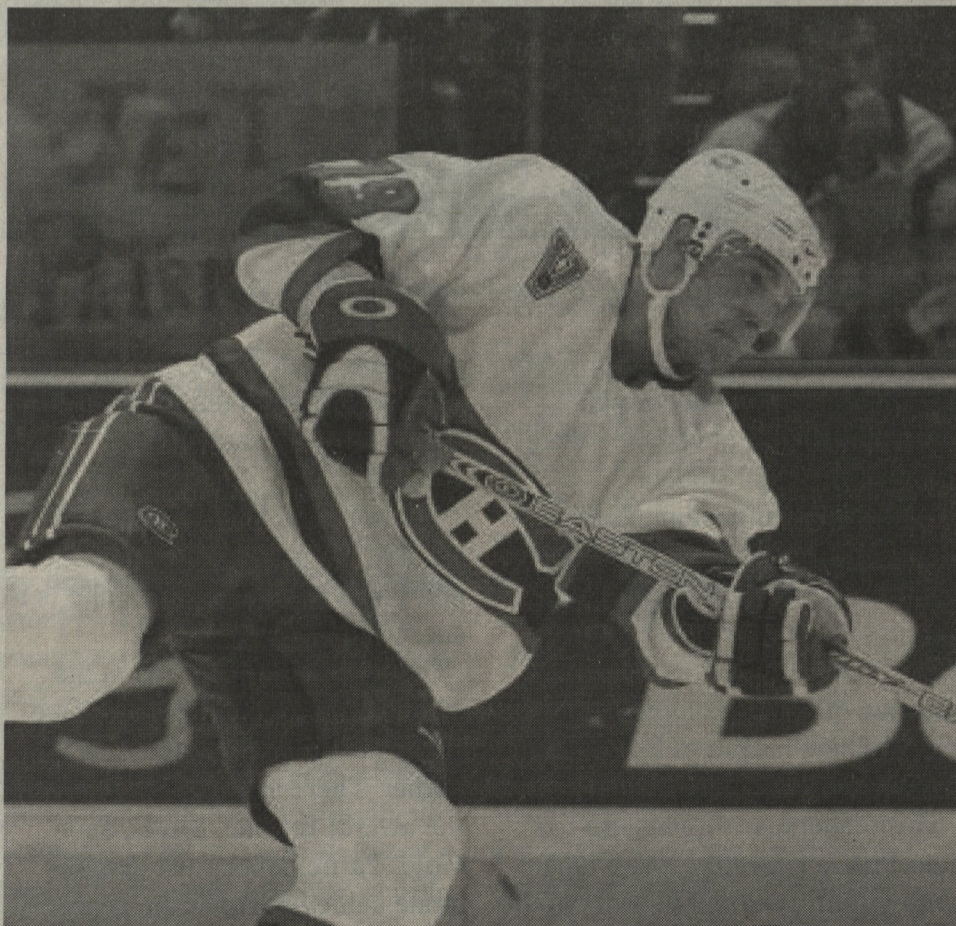
Ever since he was shipped to Boston as part of the Ray Bourque trade in 2000, Rolston has consistently put up 60-80 points per season. He is an outstanding penalty killer, is fast and has a great shot. He can also play all three forward positions with equal effectiveness. His signing was a major reason for Minnesota getting back into the playoffs last year.

4) Andrei Markov

Markov is probably the most underrated defenseman in the game. I wouldn't put him on the same level as Tomas Kaberle, but he plays a very similar game. He has terrific offensive instincts, is a smooth skater, and is strong positionally. Fortunately for Habs fans, Bob Gainey chose to keep Markov over Sheldon Souray this summer.

5) Chris Kelly

Chris who? Kelly will never be mistaken for an offensive juggernaut. But after two NHL seasons he has already become a strong checking player known for giving his all on every shift. He scored 15



Andrei Markov: One of the most underrated players in the NHL?

2) Mike Sillinger

Did you know Sillinger had 63 and 59 points, respectively, the past two years? Liar. Sillinger has always been known as a great checking centre, but he has very quietly established himself as a strong second line centre over the past two years. It's not too often that a 30-goal scorer plays with 12 different teams over his career, though.

goals last year and should become a strong third line centre who can anchor the penalty kill.

Honourable Mention: He played in his first All-Star Game last year, so maybe Philippe Boucher doesn't need to be on this list anymore. But he has been one of the league's top shutdown guys for years now, with little recognition. He also had a career-high 51 points last year.

Panther briefs

By Josh Lewis

The UPEI Panthers women's rugby squad got its second win of the season Saturday, defeating the Saint Mary's Huskies 34-10 on home turf in Atlantic University Sport action.

Second-year centre Kaitlin Richard led the way for the Panthers (2-4) with two tries, with Kayla Devine, Amanda Carmody, Cassie MacKenzie and Amanda Hood adding one apiece. Lindsay MacAulay had two converts and was named UPEI player of the game.

Megan Kinsman and Barbara MacDonald had the tries for the Huskies (3-3). Kinsman received player of the game honours.

It was the final game of the regular season for both teams. They will meet again in Saturday's semi-final in Halifax. The winner of that game moves on to play five-time defending AUS champion St. F.X., which also won the national championship last season and finished in first place with a 6-0 record.

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The Panthers men's basketball team kicked off exhibition play with its annual Mickey Place tournament last weekend. Competing along with the Panthers were the Brock Badgers, Laval Rouge et Or, and Cape Breton Capers.

UPEI dropped an 87-84 decision to Brock Friday night, despite scoring 32 points in the fourth quarter. Second-year guard Brent McLaren led the home side with 24 points.

Further results were unavailable at press time.

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Men's soccer captain Danny Craig hopes to return to the team for the rest of the season, despite learning two weeks ago he'd torn the ACL, MCL and meniscus in his right knee. "I'm back training and (last week) I put in a full practice so hopefully that's a promising sign," said the fourth-year midfielder. UPEI has four regular season games remaining, including a home-and-home this weekend with Mount Allison. Game time Friday is 8 p.m. at the UPEI turf field.

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The women's hockey club got its first win of the pre-season Friday with a 5-3 win over Mount A in Sackville, N.B. The team kicks off the regular season Saturday as they take on St. F.X. in Antigonish, N.S. before travelling to Halifax to meet the Dalhousie Tigers Sunday.