

Eye on Sports

Too Easy: Flyers Cruise Past Devils in Round 1

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After making the NHL playoffs by the skin of their teeth, the Flyers sent the Devils back to where they belong. That's right, New Jersey. The Flyers, led by the once third string goaltender Brian Boucher, ousted the Devils in just five games and shocked the hockey world.

The playoffs prove to be a second season for the Philadelphia Flyers in two ways. First, they are playing their best hockey of the year and at the right time too. They are minimizing mistakes and making the most of opportunities. Most of all, the lines that were once changed daily are finally gelling together as one aggressive team.

Second, the style of play in which the playoffs embody undoubtedly benefit the Flyers. Although they have lacked intensity nearly all season long, the Flyers are playing as if it's for their lives. With that intensity, the playoffs bring about a much more defensive, belligerent game that suits Peter Laviolette's system extremely well. Essentially, Laviolette has been trying to get his club to play playoff style hockey since he took over in early December.

Heading into the series, the Flyers looked to be outmatched. The Devils had the definite edge on goaltending and a newly acquired weapon in Ilya Kovalchuk, the scary forward that was picked up by New Jersey near the NHL trading deadline. Since being traded from Atlanta, Kovalchuk was unable to find in groove in the Garden State. But aside from that, the Devils have had an extremely successful season in which they won the Atlantic Division once again.

Another factor that would normally lead to trouble for the Philadelphia Flyers is that the officials dictated the play of the game throughout the series. Eight, nine, and ten penalties for each club per game were not uncommon in this series (and throughout the rest of the NHL). But the Flyers were certainly more opportunistic with their power plays and Brian Boucher played consistently throughout.

Arguably the Flyers' best penalty killer in this series was Ilya Kovalchuk. The Russian sniper played the point on the power play and really threw the rest of the Devil's unit of sync. Kovalchuk consistently maneuvered around everyone on the ice, rarely looking to pass, until he seemed to finally find the lowest percentage shot on the ice. Then he usually fired a rocket towards the net that either hit a Flyers' player, post, boards, or none of the previously mentioned. Kovalchuk was in every way, a non factor for the Devils.

Now, that's not to discredit the men wearing the orange and black. They blocked 85 shots in the series, and they paid for it too. Simon Gagne blocked a Kovalchuk blast from the point that fractured a toe and will have him sitting for about three weeks. In the series finale, Ian Laperriere blocked a shot with his face that broke an orbital bone and required up to 70 stitches. "Lappy" will not miss any time because of the injury.

The biggest blow to the Flyers will be the loss of Jeff Carter. He was hit with a Chris Pronger slap shot that fractured his foot in a game where he finally found his scoring touch. Carter was able to put the puck in the net on the play, but it would be the last time of this year's playoffs as he is out indefinitely.

With the team most likely to play the Washington Capitals in the next round, the injuries to Gagne and Carter will surely be a handicap. However, if the defense and Brian Boucher can continue to play the way they did against the New Jersey Devils, the offense will be able to take advantage of the Capitals vulnerable defense and goalie. Defense overtakes offense when it comes to the playoffs and as proved in this past series, a hot goalie is much more effective than even the best of the best.

Bold Prediction: Flyers defeat Capitals in 7 Games

Brandywine Baseball Continues Winning Ways

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(Photo Courtesy by Evan Kobrath)

Don't look now Brandywine, but we have a winning baseball team on campus. The varsity baseball team is well on its way to a successful season, wrapping up another very successful team. At last check, the team was 13-7 with three games left on the schedule. They are 12-7 in the PSUAC and are looking strong heading down the home stretch. The team is still being led by excellent play from Ted Seiler and Bobby Harper. Seiler is batting .373 and slugging .588 with 19 RBI's. Harper leads the team in batting average (.397) and has 14 RBI's to go along with 8 stolen bases. Excellent contributions have also been made by Brad Holt (.388 batting average, 16 RBI's), D.J. Gallo (.355 avg). Overall the team has gelled and is one of the best teams in the PSUAC. So do yourself a favor Brandywine and come out to support the team in their final game of the regular season, May 8 vs. Delaware Valley. After that the team should be well prepared for a deep run in the playoffs.

Forget the Olympics, NHL Playoffs Have Never Been Better

By David Hoffer - Lion's Eye Staff Writer - deh5801@psu.edu

As a lifelong hockey fan, I have forever preached that once hockey enters its postseason, no sport can compare to it. The intensity, ferociousness and tenacity displayed on the ice can jump through a TV screen and strike a chord with any sports fan. Not mention if you happen to catch a game in person. If you are still on the fence, I highly recommend tuning in over the next couple of weeks. After just two weeks into the 2010 NHL playoffs, I am convinced that we are in the midst of the most exciting NHL playoffs ever.

Let's take a look at the playoffs so far. Keeping it home, we'll start with our Flyers. After just barely making it into the playoffs, the #7 seeded Flyers shocked the #2 seeded Devils in 5 games. Three of the five games were back and forth contests with one being a memorable overtime game making a hero out of Dan Carcillo. Staying in the east, the matchup between the #3 seed Buffalo Sabres and #6 seed Boston Bruins has produced very exciting games featuring plenty of fights and tight games, one of which a thrilling double overtime game. Speaking as someone who has seen extra sessions in every other sports postseason, nothing compares to sudden death overtime hockey. That

includes that anticlimactic Vikings-Saints OT game last year.

Looking at the western conference, things only get better. The #1 seeded San Jose Sharks and #8 seeded Colorado Avalanche have had a super competitive series in which all but one game has been decided by one goal. Over half their games have gone into overtime, one of which ended when Shark defenseman Dan Boyle accidentally put the puck into his own net. The #3 Vancouver Canucks - #6 Los Angeles Kings series has also been very good. After splitting the first two games that went into OT, the next three all were high scoring affairs with the teams trading victories. The Flyers aren't the only #7 seed shocking the experts either. The Nashville Predators are remarkably making their series versus the Stanley Cup favorite Chicago Blackhawks very competitive.

Overall, out of the eight playoff series, seven will see a game six or game seven. Nine or more games will go into overtime. And the best part: With all the tight games and lack of dominance by the higher seeded teams, for the first time in a long time, this year's Stanley Cup is truly up for grabs.

Philadelphia Phillies Update

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The fighting Phils are back to their winning ways this season and have positioned themselves in 1st place at the start of this long season. Right now the Phils are only a game and a half in the lead in the NL east and the Marlins, who are in 2nd place, are playing well this season. Hopefully, the Phils will find a way to keep this lead in the division and bring themselves to another playoff berth.

The whole team is playing well, even without their shortstop Jimmy Rollins, who has been on the disabled list for the past couple of games. In his place is Juan Castro and he is playing very well in Jimmy's place. He is hitting well with a .333 average and has 7 RBIs. His defense has also been impressive and he has showed that he is a valuable asset to this 2010 Phillies team. The pitching has also been a bright spot this season for the Phils, with both Roy Halladay and Cole Hamels pitching well, and even 47 year old Jamie Moyer has made quality starts. Halladay became the first pitcher this season to win 4 games and he also has no losses. "Doc" has an ERA of .82 with 28 strikeouts. More notable stats for Halladay are that he has 1 shutout and he has 2 complete games. Hamels in 2-2 this season so far and he has 26 strikeouts. If the pitching stays sharp throughout the whole season then the Phillies will have another shot at the World Series. Kyle Kendrick has been the only one in the starting rotation that hasn't been playing well this season; hopefully Joe Blanton will be ready soon to take his spot back from Kendrick.

This team has shown a lot this season

so far and is playing like they have something to prove. That something is most likely proving that they can beat the Yankees, which is why the team must get back to the World Series.



The Phillies and First Baseman Ryan Howard agreed on a five year, \$125 million extension through 2016

(Photo Courtesy of sports.yahoo.com)