

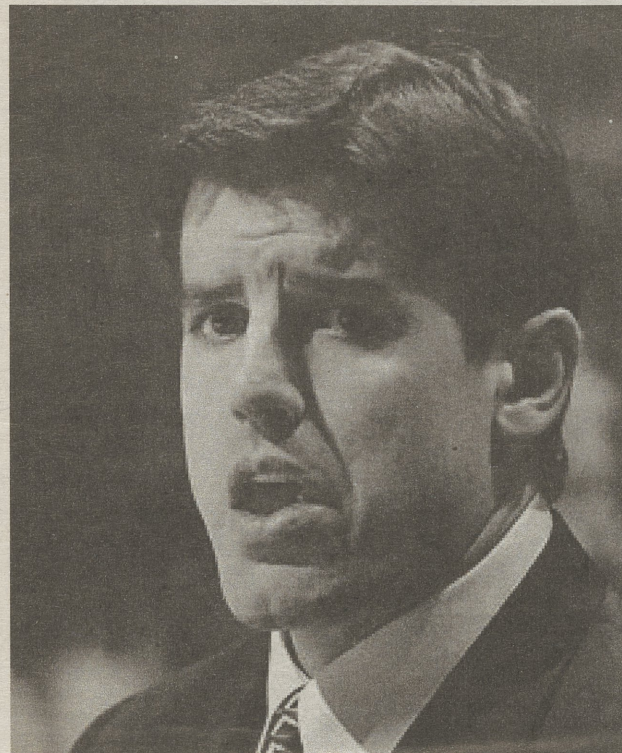
Eye on Sports

Flyers Cruising into Second half Grades are in for the class of '10-'11 first half

By Dave Hoffer - Lion's Eye Staff Writer - deh5081@psu.edu

Coach:

Peter Laviolette: A+. Coaching the deepest team in the NHL doesn't come without its challenges. Laviolette has done a masterful job rotating players in and out of the lineup to keep players mentally focused and disciplined. His continued use of his timeouts is still second to none. (Take note Andy Reid.)



Forwards:

Danny Briere: A+. Leading the Flyers in goals with 26, and on pace for a career year, Briere has shaken off last year's personal problems to be most consistent offensive producer on the team, as well as a deserving All-Star.

Scott Hartnell: A-. Playing alongside Briere and Leino, Hartnell has picked up right where he left off in the playoff last year, definitively leaving his poor regular season last year behind. He currently ranks 4th, 9th and 6th on team in goals, assists and points respectively.

Ville Leino: A. The man that really makes the top line go. Leino has also continued his playmaking prowess from last year's playoff run as well as solid defensive play. When playing with confidence his skills produce many goals for Briere and Hartnell.

Mike Richards: A+. The captain of the team has continued to lead by example. Richards currently leads the Flyers in assists, tied for first in points, and is tied for first in shorthanded goals with Giroux (second overall in the NHL).

Claude Giroux: A+. In just his third season in the NHL, many are comparing Giroux's skills in playmaking and seeing the ice to Peter Forsberg's. He has had a terrific season so far, leading the Flyers in points with Richards and ranks 3rd and 2nd in goals and assists respectively. He will also be making the trip to North Carolina for the All-Star game with his roommate and teammate Briere.

James vanRiemsdyk: C+. After a sloooow start which got him benched multiple times, the former 2nd overall pick in the 2007 draft has come on as of late recording 2 goals and 1 assist in his last five games before suffering an injury. He is on pace to top his numbers in nearly every category from last year's disappointing season.

Andreas Nodl: B-. One of the top surprises of the season is the play of Nodl who only saw 10 games in each of the regular and postseason last year (0 goals 1 assist). His hard work and hustle have earned him much ice time playing alongside Mike Richards and even a little time playing shorthanded.

Jeff Carter: B. Signed to a long term extension two months ago, Carter is continuing his usual solid play. He is second on the team in goals and fourth in points. Entering the break he has registered 4 goals and 2 assists in his last five games.



Nikolay Zherdev: B-. In his first season back from Russia, the enigmatic forward has seen both highs and lows. Despite injuries and being benched for discipline purposes, Zherdev is on pace for a 30 goal season and is near the top of the pack in goals and shooting percentage in limited games.

Darroll Powe: C+. While his goal scoring does not catch your eye, Powe's effort on the penalty kill has paid dividends. A penalty kill that is 14th in the NHL, in spite of the Flyers being one of the most penalized teams in the league. The speedy forwards hustle continues to impress the Flyers brass.

Jody Shelley: C-. With two multiple game suspensions, 165 penalty minutes (ranked 11th in the NHL), and two goals on the year, it's business as usual for Shelly. While some may groan at his 1.1 million dollar salary and his sometimes undisciplined play, there is no denying his presence on the ice has kept the Flyers skilled players protected. In that regard, he has done his job perfectly.

Blair Betts: C+. The penalty killing extraordinaire has put forth another solid year on the ice so far. Paired with Powe, they are arguably one of the top 2nd unit penalty killers in the NHL. Betts has also contributed offensively from time to time, racking up 3 goals and 6 assists so far this season.

Dan Carcillo: C-. Battling injuries and struggling to crack a very deep lineup, Carcillo has spent most of the season on the sidelines. However, when inserted into the lineup he can play on any line and be productive. This showed in the final game before the break when he scored his 3rd goal of the year on the top line with Nodl and Richards.

Defensemen:

Chris Pronger: B+. For a second straight season, the veteran Pronger has dominated play on the blueline. The future Hall of Famer continues to lead the Flyers defense and team both on and off the ice. Statistically, his numbers are down due to him missing the start of the season as well as suffering a broken foot last month.

Matt Carle: B+. Although he has struggled at times, especially with his partner Pronger out of the lineup, Carle has been reliable playing on even strength. He currently ranks 4th on the team in assists with 23 and second in plus/minus with a +22.

Braydon Coburn: B. Coburn is another Flyer who has returned to his playoff form. Paired with Timonen, Coburn has been solid at 5 on 5 play as well as on the power play. While only registering 1 goal and 9 assists for 10 points, Coburn is among the leaders in hits on the team.

Kimmo Timonen: B+. Another year, another solid production from Kimmo Timonen. The veteran Finn, despite

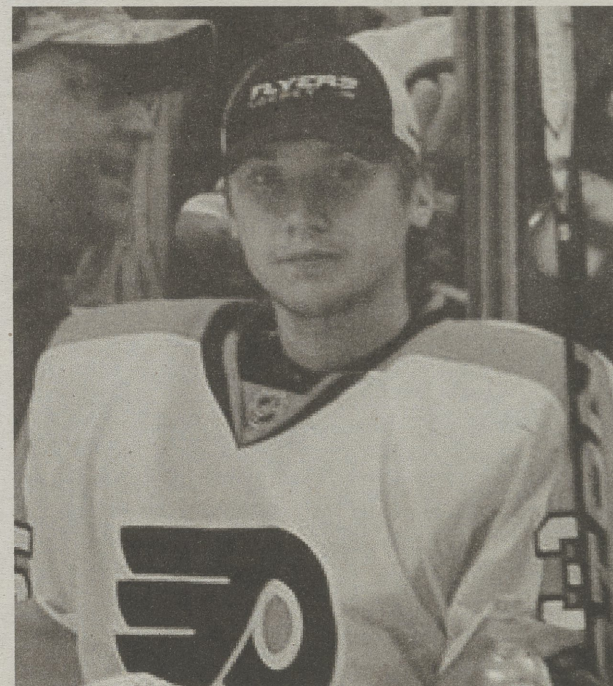
struggling with some hip problems, has done a fine job both offensively and defensively. He currently ranks 5th on the Flyers in assists with 22.

Sean O'Donnell: B+. O'Donnell is a shining example of the Flyers unbelievable depth at defense. The Flyers 6th and final defenseman has registered 10 assists on the year and has been amongst the leaders in the NHL in plus/minus all season.

Andrej Meszaros: A-. Acquired from the Lightning in the offseason, Meszaros was a question mark. He showed great skill and production early in his career when he was paired with Zdeno Chara in Ottawa but had 2 disappointing seasons with Tampa Bay. The change to the orange and black has done wonders for Meszaros who currently leads the NHL in plus/minus with a +28.

Goalies:

Sergei Bobrovsky: B+. The surprise of the year for the Flyers, and possibly the NHL, Bobrovsky has had a stellar first half after arriving from Russia during training camp. In his last six games, he is 6-0 with a GAA of 1.80. The 22 year old Bobrovsky is a strong candidate for the Calder Memorial Trophy (rookie of the year.)



Brian Boucher: B+. Brian Boucher's career has seen its ups and downs. From the highs of two deep playoff runs and a 5 game shutout streak to the lows of the waiver wire and the AHL. Thanks to "Boosh's" hard work and solid play, including a 9-1-1 stretch at the start of January, his biggest moment might be just half a season away.