

BLOCK PARTY

Prospects Ranking

Qualifications for this list include being under the age of 26 on the final day of the 2014-15 regular season. This prohibits Scott Darling, Brandon Mashinter (each 26 now) and T. J. Brennan from consideration for these rankings.

The other qualifier is the player must have no more than 25 NHL games played in the current season or no more than a total of 40 NHL career games played. Rankings are formed by a weighted formula the leans heavily to skill, career potential and probably of impact at the NHL level.

1 – TEUVO TERAVALAINEN [age 20, C, Blackhawks/IceHogs]

The #86 sweaters have been stocked in the Blackhawks Store for ten months. Is it finally Teuvo Time already? His poise and calmness making plays in traffic and how he effectively uses technique, feet and smarts to win pucks from bigger players near the walls set Teravainen apart. His peripheral vision must be incredible. One defenseman told me, "he was looking me dead in the eyes the whole way down and hit his winger perfectly on the tape all the way over on the other side of the ice. How do you defend that?"

2 – NICK SCHMALTZ [18, C/W, North Dakota-NCHC]

If you go by merely skill and potential alone, Nick Schmaltz would be number one on this list. Over the puck, he can do everything. The knock on him going into the 2014 draft was consistency, and, put frankly, his 'Give a Fuck' meter without the puck. For me, his World Junior tournament was a huge disappointment. The Hawks traded up last June to prevent St. Louis from getting Schmaltz. They figure at ND he'll be taught the structure he needs. The potential is there for him to be the next Claude Giroux. On the lower end he's Radim Vrbata. Or, he may not make it with the Hawks at all. Suppose the Hawks felt it was worth the gamble in keeping him away from the Blues.

3 – STEPHEN JOHNS [22, RD, Rockford IceHogs]

Should return soon from a concussion that has sidelined him since Nov 26th, Johns' arrival on the west side could come in the fall. He's huge, plays heavy and is a strong skater. Best open ice hitter the organization has had in two decades.

4 – ADAM CLENDENING [22, RD, Rockford IceHogs]

No IceHogs' skater is facing a more crucial second half than this third-year pro. His offensive production is way down from last season. Last year the power play ran through him while this year he shares those duties with T.J. Brennan. While that's hurt him somewhat, Clending is strong enough of a competitor and needs to find a way to finish this season strong and stay in the picture for a Hawks' roster spot in the fall. He'll turn up in the NHL somewhere and contribute.

5 – JOHN HAYDEN [19, RW, Yale University-ECAC]

This Chicago born, but Greenwich, CT native just served as an alternate captain for Team USA at the World Juniors. Hayden's game is all power. He wins 50/50 battles and takes pucks all night long. He's a beast along the walls and around the net. His skating needs some refinement, though he gets up and down the ice adequately. Now in his sophomore season at Yale, Hayden was drafted with the pick the Hawks got in return for trading Michael Frolik.

6 – TREVOR VAN RIEMSDYK [23, RD, Chicago Blackhawks]

Back-to-back serious injuries raise concern that this year's surprise of training camp may not be durable enough to handle a serious NHL workload. First it was a broken ankle and now a shattered knee cap, which is not an easy thing to return from. He wasn't the best skater to begin with. Could be headed to Rockford once he is medically cleared come March.

7 – VILLE POKKA [20, RD, Rockford IceHogs]

To appreciate Ville Pokka, you really do have to watch him play night after night. He performs well in every situation he's put in, but also not particularly outstanding in any phase of the game either. Pokka's poise is easily detected. His passes are good and he doesn't do anything high-risk. He's not physical back there either. Could still be room to grow. A year from now he'll either be in the top three on this list or he'll drop out of the top ten.

8 – MARK MCNEILL [21, RW, Rockford IceHogs]

The Blackhawks went to McNeill's junior coach after they selected him 18th overall in 2011 and requested he strictly be played at RW. Sometimes I wonder if that's been a mistake. The Hawks want McNeill to go to the net harder, be more physical and engaged shift-to-shift. He has the frame and NHL body now, and his skating has never been an issue. He's either on the verge of a breakthrough or watching others pass him by. Turns 22 next month.

9 – RYAN HARTMAN [20, RW, Rockford IceHogs]

Hawks' 2013 first-rounder (30th overall) is having trouble finding his offense so far in his rookie season. Hartman is a gamer. There are nights when you know he's been one of the best players on the ice, but he doesn't show up on the scoresheet. Other nights you don't notice him at all until he pots the game-winner. Put simply, Hartman finds a way every night to

impact the game. Plays a tough, agitating game but goes overboard at times and must learn to control that. Eventual replacement for Andrew Shaw.

10 – PHILLIP DANAULT [21, C/LW, Rockford IceHogs]

This Quebec native's two year mission to "Be a Kruger" is now going according to plan. And Phillip Danault very well may wind up getting an opportunity to fill Marcus Kruger's fourth line skates next fall. Danault hunts the puck like no other forward on the IceHogs, he's Toews-like in that capacity. But Danault doesn't have the touch offensively to warrant anything above third line minutes.

11 – CARL DAHLSTROM [19, LD, Linköping-SHL]

Perhaps being looked at as a replacement for Niklas Hjalmarsson down the line, this six-four, smooth skating blue liner is acquitting himself quite well in his first full season in Sweden's top league by all accounts. Offensive upside is thought to be limited.

12 – ANTTI RAANTA [25, G, Chicago Blackhawks]

Raanta is not likely to ever be a number one, but he could make a decent living for a handful of years as an NHL backup and eventually into coaching.

13 – FREDRIK OLOFSSON [18, LW, Chicago Steel-USHL]

This Swedish born, Colorado raised slick-skating winger the Hawks picked up in the 4th round in Philly last June could wind up becoming the best pro of all those Hawks picks that weekend. Fredrik de-committed from Colorado College after his older brother Gustav signed with the Minnesota Wild after one year at CC and will now join Nebraska-Omaha in the fall. There, Olofsson will be under the guidance of two-time NCAA National Champion coach Dean Blais (a one-time Hawks' draft pick himself) and play alongside fellow Hawks' 2014 pick, Luc Snuggerud. Dave Bolland fans should know the picks received in his trade to Toronto netted Dahlstrom and Olofsson.

14 – GARRET ROSS [22, LW, Rockford IceHogs]

Taken by the Hawks at the 2012 draft with the same exact pick the team used the year prior to select Andrew Shaw. Ross is one of the harder guys to rank because now he's 22, he's still six-foot-nothing and little about his game is exceptional. He is all around solid and a very good AHLer and one of many potential fourth liners the Hawks have coming up in the system.

15 – LUC SNUGGERUD [19, LD, Nebraska-Omaha-NCHC]

Went to the same high school as Nick Leddy and the comparisons between the two won't end there. Snuggerud was a finalist for the same Minnesota state "Mr. Hockey" award Leddy won in 2009. Snuggerud is an excellent skater with great acceleration bursts. He's responsible in his own zone but his greatest asset is his puck-moving ability. Needs to get stronger but bypassing a buffer year in the USHL and making the immediate jump to the NCAA is a good sign. Has 2 goals and 11 points in 22 games thus far as a freshman.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

BEAU STARRETT [19, C/W, South Shore Kings-USPHL]

Tough-luck year for the Hawks' 2014 3rd round pick. Starrett took this year off from school to focus on hockey before heading to Cornell in the fall. He missed the first 12 weeks of this season after dislocating his shoulder in the Kings' final preseason game. He returned after Thanksgiving and had 5 points in 7 games before reinjuring himself on December 17. He's since had season-ending shoulder surgery. Starrett has a unique blend of size (6'5") and skating skill and is worth keeping two eyes on when he gets to Big Red in the fall.

KLAS DAHLBECK [23, LD, Rockford IceHogs-AHL]

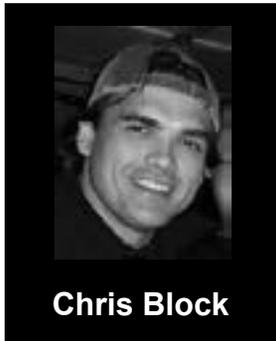
The Hawks' depth at the defense position cause Dahlbeck to slide out of the top 15. Still a solid NHL prospect given the opportunity.

CHRIS CALNAN [20, RW, Boston College-HE]

A Jimmy Hayes for when there is no Jimmy Hayes no more. The nephew of Jeremy Roenick, this sophomore has stepped up this year under an increased role for coach Jerry York at Boston College. Calnan is an extremely intelligent player. He's not the best skater but he moves well enough under his 6'3 frame. Has a good stick. Calnan uses his size economically. Sees himself growing into a Troy Brouwer type player.

Look for the full Top 25 rankings and extended bios on each prospect this coming Monday at TheThirdManIn.com.

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