



HART WORTHY: Henrik Sedin of the Vancouver Canucks averaged an assist per game and added 29 goals to lead all NHL point-getters. RICHARD WOLOWICZ/GETTY IMAGES

For your consideration: Henrik for Hart

The 2009-10 Art Ross Trophy winner should be NHL MVP as well

By KARL YU
Epoch Times Staff

VANCOUVER—While Sidney Crosby's five-point performance last Sunday made it close, the Vancouver Canucks' Henrik Sedin still finished the 2009-2010 NHL campaign with a league best 112 points.

With 29 goals and 83 assists, Sedin will take home the Art Ross Trophy as the regular season points leader at June's NHL Awards in Las Vegas but has he done enough to take the Hart Trophy as the player judged most valuable to his team?

Not as well-known as Crosby or as flashy as the Washington Capitals Alexander Ovechkin—Sid and Ovie finished in a two-way tie for second with 109 points—Sedin could be one of the most unheralded Art Ross Trophy winners ever.

An understated person, Henrik Sedin didn't want to brag about his career season.

"My season's been consistent I guess," Sedin told The Epoch Times.

"There haven't been many downs so that's maybe the thing I'm most happy with."

The list of previous trophy winners is filled with more recognizable NHLers such as Crosby, Ovechkin, Mario Lemieux, and Wayne Gretzky and while no one would compare the Canucks centre with those players, with all due respect, Sedin has done yeoman's work for Vancouver this season.

One-half of the Canucks Sedin twins, along with brother Daniel, Henrik has played playmaker to Dan being the goal scorer. The twins rank behind goalie Roberto Luongo in the Vancouver pecking order. Luongo is the team captain after all.

STEPPING UP

But 2009-2010 hasn't been an ordinary season for the Vancouver Canucks.

While Luongo had respectable numbers for the Canucks this season, his performance hasn't been as good as in years past.

Captain Lou did manage a 40-22-4 record but also had a goals against average of 2.57, the lowest GAA of his time in Vancouver.

Brother Daniel, who is often on the receiving end of Henrik's

passes, went down with a broken foot back in October and while it could've been a chance for Henrik to slump, he actually flourished with his twin bro in the infirmary.

In the 18 games that Daniel missed, Hank, as he is also known, scored 10 goals and 8 assists for 18 points. Included in that period of time was Henrik's first career hat trick.

Despite playing for an extended time without his favourite triggerman, Henrik says that he really didn't change things up during his identical twin's absence.

"I didn't do much different," Sedin said.

"I think it was more mental and it was confidence that helped me keep producing."

ROAD WARRIOR

Another testament to how well Sedin has played this year was his performance during a 14-game Winter Olympic-induced road trip between late-January and mid-March.

Many analysts saw this as a "make or break" part of the Canucks schedule. The team finished the long trek with a very respectable record of 8-5-1 and Henrik Sedin performed well during the voyage with 3 goals and 11 assists for 14 points.

Hank is a road warrior with 10 goals and 36 assists for 46 points in

41 road games this season.

While the Art Ross or Hart are nice for the trophy case, a hockey player really wants his name engraved in the Stanley Cup. Sedin is confident going into the playoffs and doesn't plan on doing anything differently.

"It's going to be the same," said Sedin when queried on preparation for the team's opening-round playoff series against the L.A. Kings.

"It's not a big difference if you compare playoffs to regular season. It's just the intensity's up and that's pretty much it."

During a regular season campaign where the team captain and star goalie wasn't having his best season and sniper Daniel Sedin missed 18 games due to injury, Henrik Sedin stepped up his play and emerged from beneath their shadows.

Henrik's durability is also worth noting. The Swedish center hasn't missed a regular season game in five years. In his nine-year career with the Canucks, he has only missed 10 games.

Subsequently, the Canucks captured another Northwest Division title and are third in the Western Conference with a record of 49-28-5.

That's Hart material if you ask me.

NHL playoff predictions: experience and goaltending counts

Three picks to progress to second round are New Jersey Devils, Pittsburgh Penguins, and Detroit Red Wings

By RAHUL VAIDYANATH
Epoch Times Staff

The National Hockey League playoffs have just begun after a grueling 82-game regular season was put in the history books last Sunday.

Let's take a closer look at three of the eight first round series and my predictions.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS (2) vs. PHILADELPHIA FLYERS (7)

It's hard to ignore the fact that the regular season series between these two Atlantic Division rivals was dominated by the Flyers 5-1.

But the regular season is ancient history, as they say. Four of those five wins came before the Olympic break and the Devils are a different team now having fully integrated Ilya Kovalchuk into their system.

The most important factor differentiating these two rivals is experience between the posts.

You can't argue with Martin Brodeur's season and career. Brodeur led the league in wins with 45, shut-outs with 9, and games played in

with 77. There is no reason to believe he won't be hard to beat in the playoffs.

By contrast, the Flyers used five goalies this year due to injuries to Ray Emery and Michael Leighton. The two goalies they used last year, Martin Biron and Antero Niittymaki, are no longer with the team.

Current goalie Brian Boucher, who beat the Rangers in a shoot-out last Sunday to help the Flyers reach the postseason, has a 9-18-3 record this year.

The Devils have more offensive punch this year with the addition of Ilya Kovalchuk. The Russian sniper has scored 27 points in 27 games with the Devils.

The Flyers offensive punch isn't as lethal as it was last year as Mike Richards, Jeff Carter, Scott Hartnell, and Simon Gagne all had worse seasons.

The Flyers barely made it into the playoffs while the Devils proved they belonged all season long.

Prediction: New Jersey in six games.

PITTSBURGH PENGUINS (4) vs. OTTAWA SENATORS (5)

These two teams are familiar playoff rivals.

The Penguins, defending Stanley Cup champions, became Sidney Crosby's team this year as the Canadian hero scored 51 goals and ended up with 109 points.

Crosby's leadership also brought fruit in the Olympics when Canada won gold after his overtime goal in the final against the United States.

Ottawa missed the playoffs last season, after being swept by the Pens two years ago. This year, they are less flashy offensively but they are a strangely streaky team.

Behind Brian Elliott in nets, the Sens managed to win 11 in a row. They also lost eight of nine before winning another six in a row.

But Elliott is not their big money goalie. That would be injury-prone Pascal Leclaire who had a below .500 season this year. It's hard to imagine Elliott or Leclaire taking the Sens very far.

Meanwhile, Pittsburgh has Marc-Andre Fleury in net whose regular

season was similar to last year's. One more year under his belt and an Olympic rest break mean the young goalie is ready to steal the show again.

Former Penguin, Alex Kovalev will miss the playoffs for the Senators due to a knee injury and while his play is inconsistent, he is a credible threat on the power play that the Senators need.

The Penguins under Dan Bylsma, didn't finish the season as convincingly this year as they did last year, but they have more experience now. Their superior goaltending will pull them through a tough series against the hardworking Senators.

Prediction: Pittsburgh in seven games.

PHOENIX COYOTES (4) vs. DETROIT RED WINGS (5)

The Phoenix Coyotes were the surprise team of the NHL this season, finishing with 107 points. But perennial contender Detroit ended the season on a red-hot streak of 8-1-1 in their last 10 games.

A hot, experienced team the Red Wings are. With the goaltending of Jimmy Howard (.924 save percentage, 2.26 goals-against average), the Red Wings are also a complete team with the same recipe for success as



SID THE KID: Leading the charge for the Pittsburgh Penguins, Sidney Crosby faces a familiar foe in the Ottawa Senators. BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

two years ago.

Phoenix has solid goaltending, a very well balanced albeit unspectacular attack, and an experienced coach in Dave Tippett. However, the team lacks playoff experience, which the Red Wings have in spades.

The Red Wings have the crafty veteran partnership of Henrik Zetterberg and Pavel Datsyuk, the ongoing

defensive presence of Nick Lidstrom, and another goalie that can do what Chris Osgood and Dominik Hasek have done in seasons past.

Phoenix has had a remarkable season but now playoff hockey is upon them. It is a new challenge to them as they haven't been in the playoffs in eight years.

Prediction: Detroit in six games.

Family man Mickelson wins third green jacket

By JAMES FISH
Epoch Times Staff

Phil Mickelson played his best golf of the season to finish 16-under, winning the 2010 Masters golf tournament at the Augusta National Golf Club, in Augusta, Georgia, last Sunday.

Mickelson, who came into the day tied with Lee Westwood at 11-under, hit some poor shots but then made some amazing saves, hitting out of the woods and onto the green.

On 9, 10, and most notably on 13, Mickelson missed badly with his drive but saved par, and on 13, scored a birdie with a difficult shot out of deep pine straw under the trees.

Mickelson took risks and made good on them, scoring five birdies without a bogey.

"I could go on and on as to the many reasons why, but to win this tournament it's the most amazing feeling. This has been a special day. I'll look back on this day. I'll always cherish it," said Mickelson.

Mickelson said the game turned in his favour on the 12th hole. "Just like in '04 I hit the ball in the same spot. I knew that putt. I ended up making that, and that gave me a little advantage heading into 13 and 15. And fortunately I was able to reach those in two and make birdies."

Mickelson has had a difficult year. His

wife and his mother are battling breast cancer, and the stress had hurt his concentration. Mickelson's wife, who had spent the entire tournament in bed, came out to watch his triumph at the 18th hole, a very emotional moment for both of them.

"I am very proud of my wife, and the fight and struggle that she has been through," Mickelson said. "It's been a difficult year, and to come out on top in this tournament, it feels terrific and it's very emotional."

This was Mickelson's third Masters win, putting him in rare golfing company: Jack Nicklaus has won the Masters Tournament six times, Arnold Palmer and Tiger Woods four, and Jimmie Demaret, Sam Snead, Gary Player, and Nick Faldo have won three each. Now Phil Mickelson adds his name to that list.

TIGER MIFFED

Tiger Woods, coming back after a five-month layoff to try to repair the damage he did to his family with his infidelity, turned in a performance which would have satisfied any other golfer, but left Woods disappointed.

After the tournament Woods told CBS that he was not pleased with his play. "I wanted to win this tournament," Woods said. "As the week went on I kept hitting the ball worse."

Woods said that he judged his play by the same standard, despite his layoff. He



EMOTIONAL WIN: Phil Mickelson celebrates with his wife Amy and children. HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

wasn't going to pass off his poor play with the excuse that he was rusty.

"I entered this event," he said. "I only enter events to win, and I didn't get it done. I didn't hit the ball good enough, and I made too many mistakes around the greens."

Woods said he wasn't sure when he would play again.

"I am going to take a little time off and reevaluate things."

He has since confirmed that he will play in the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach in June.

Woods scored two eagles and three birdies but also five bogies. He mishit his first drive and hooked several other drives into the woods along the fairway. He three-putted 14, ending his chance to catch the leaders.

Lee Westwood played par golf through the first nine holes and scored a pair of birdies on the final nine, but didn't make the big shots he needed to catch Mickelson.

Westwood had hoped to be the first Englishman to win the Masters since Nick Faldo's last win in 1996.

Bulls clinch final playoff spot

By TONY KAWARSKI
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In the Eastern Conference, the Chicago Bulls clinched the eighth seed Wednesday night after defeating the Charlotte Bobcats 98-89. They set up a first round match up with LeBron James and the top-seeded Cleveland Cavaliers.

Derrick Rose finished with 27 points and Joakim Noah put up 21 points and 13 boards.

The Toronto Raptors beat the New York Knicks 131-113 and finished a game back of Chicago.

LEBRON AND SHAQ SIT OUT FINALE

LeBron James and Shaquille O'Neil sat out the last regular season game on Wednesday, and while the decision among many others is practical and sound considering the Cleveland Cavaliers are in championship contention this year, the issue will be part of several discussions to be had during the off season.

During an annual pre-playoffs conference call, Commissioner David Stern highlighted the pros and cons of healthy players sitting out final regular season games and the effect it has on the fan base and the sport.

"We're troubled by it, because it would be our preference that healthy players play," said Stern during the call.

While expressing his concern, Stern however, didn't give a sense that there would be anything of significance to come from the discussions on the topic.

"I think it's a fair item for discussion. I'm not sure that the policing function is something that the league and the owners will want to get deeply involved in, but it's a point and I'll be expressing my views to the governors in the executive session," said Stern.