

One prediction, two prediction

by Randal Smathers

Norris Division
Toronto Maple Leafs — Lots of good young forwards — Courtnall, Clark, Dampousse, Fergus, Olczyk and Allison. The defence is weak, but improving. Ya gotta love Bester and Wreggett in goal. Too many Europeans. (1st, 80 points)

Chicago Black Hawks — They are the deepest team in the league at right wing — Larmer, Vaive, Thomas, Presley, Preston, Duane Sutter. The weird thing is that they traded for right wings this summer. After Curt Fraser, the left side is a loss, as is the defence. Goaltending should improve, and therefore the Hawks will too. (2nd, 78 points)

Detroit Red Wings — This team has lots of potential, but seems to lack any drive, cohesion or direction, even with Demers coaching. Taking 2209 minutes in penalties doesn't help, but great goaltending does. Look for them to stay even. (3rd, 73 points)

St. Louis Blues — The Good (Doug Gilmour — 42/63/105), the Bad (Mark Hunter — 69 points, 167 penalty minutes), and the Ugly (Brian Sutter) will keep the Blues competitive. The thin blue line and holes at forward won't help, but this is the Norris. (4th, 75 points)

Minnesota North Stars — Herb Brooks will lead the perennial under-achievers out of Minneapolis...and into the wilderness. Sweet Lou from the Soo will finally get fired, and Brooks will take over,

which both he and the Stars so richly deserve. (DEAD LAST, 65 points)

Smythe Division
Winnipeg Jets — Great goaltending, Dale Hawerchuk with a jumpstart, and deep if not stellar defense will ignite the Jets. Newcomer Peter Taglianetti may be the new NHL heavyweight champ. (1st, 100 points.)

Calgary Flames — Underrated Brad McCrimmon will solve the Flames depth problem on defense. New coach Crisp will get more out of his vets than Badger Bob without losing the kids. (2nd, 95 points.)

Edmonton Oilers — This team is a holdout. Mess and will Coff up 1st place, de-Moog-ed to 3rd. The lack of Andy and the Lowe & Slow defence will burn out Grant Fuhr. (3rd, 90 points)

Vancouver Canucks — Bob McCammon has shown that he can get a lot out of slow forwards and big, tough defencemen. After the summer's trades, the Canucks have lots of both for him to work with. Look for Greg Adams to score 90 points between Tanti and Skirni. (4th, 67 points)

L.A. Kings — Will Robitaille, Carson, and Craig Redmond play the way they did as rookies? No. Will Taylor, Carpenter, Williams, Bourne, Nicholls, and Melanson recapture past glories? No. (5th, 60 points)

by Gord Stech

Norris Division
Detroit Red Wings — Demers will still improve this team despite very few changes from the 1987 Campbell finalist club. Alarmingly similar to the Jets, but Detroit will challenge for league's best GAA. (84 pts.)

St. Louis Blues — Semi-pathetic that a team can be satisfied to float around .500 for so many years. However, Team Stagnation improves slightly in '88 for two reasons: 1) Underrated Jacques Martin has a year of coaching under his suspenders, 2) Blues (namely Ferderko, Ramage & Sutter) can't possibly miss as many games due to injury. (83 pts.)

Chicago Black Hawks — A goalie, a Sutter, a coach, and a robbery keep the Hawks respectable. (81 pts.)

Minnesota North Stars — Brooks barely brings back Bloomington's Broten-Bjogstad-Bellows-Beaupre bunch to .500. (Hey, ya gotta play games to remain a North Star fan) (80 pts.)

Toronto Maple Leafs — Local fumigators continue to do good business in the Gardens after Leaf games. Some good talent and depth at forward positions, but it stops there. Too many questions on defence, too much Wreggett, too much talent traded away and the stretch continues. (60 pts.)

Smythe Division

Edmonton Oilers — Unless you're just craving out of a cave, you're aware of the fresh cracks in the mini-dynasty, and the sacrifice of points it'll take to repair them. Team Oil misses the "C-note" for the first time in six seasons. (86 pts.)

Calgary Flames — Minor rebuilding process allows the Flames to stay in stride with the superior Alberta city. Bullard, quality rookies, size, and depth will help this solid club stay in the 90-point range. (90 pts.)

Winnipeg Jets — Classic example of how clutch and grab tactics can propel a largely talent-less team to respectability. Maloney, Hawerchuk and the "Pokey and the Bandit" show still can't make up for scoring troubles. Jets slip to .500. (79 pts.)

Los Angeles Kings — Kids will do line under Murphy but they're also a Dionne less this year. Improvement may be greater if they don't whine about travel and take advantage of their slipping Smythe sisters. (72 pts.)

Vancouver Canucks — It's flakjakker night for every game at the Pacific Coliseum this year to help Canucks fans prevent rib cracking from constant laughter. They'll need a sense of humour to endure futility this long. Still no major improvements. (61 pts.)

Adams Division
Hartford Whalers — 1986-87 and 1987-88 will be nearly twin seasons for The Whale. They won't try quite as hard during regular season but with Turgeon and Lawless healthy, they can't slip much. (92 pts.)

Montreal Canadiens — Like Hartford, the Habs will be similar to last year. Classic, well-developed Canadian rookies like Corson and Per-

ron's system will make up for defensive slippage. (89 pts.)

Boston Bruins — Can't possibly have as many injuries as last year. If any of Linsmean, Crowder, Thelven, Gradin and McCarthy play more, Boston will improve, but only slightly due to their style of play and a lack of stars. (87 pts.)

Buffalo Sabres — Sator rules. Literally. The Man squeaked a 500 record out of these bums since he took over Dec. 4, 1986. Turgeon won't hurt. (76 pts.)

Quebec Nordiques — An incredibly bright future including two MORE 1st round draft picks in '88 can't help the Nordis make the playoffs this season. A self-rape that includes losses of coach Bergeron and sparkplug Hunter invites a plummet. (66 pts.)

Patrick Division
Philadelphia Flyers — Hextall beheads Gretzky with goalstick. Keenan testifies against Hextall. Propp, Kerr, Tocchet, Poulin, Howe, Eklund, Simola revolt against Keenan by quitting. Flyers fold. Just kidding. (101 pts.)

Washington Capitals — New and improved with a playmaker (Gustafson), a character (Hunter), an excellent goalie (Kalarchuk), and the best starting defencemen in the NHL. Caps climb back up to battle with Flyers and Oilers for first overall. (97 pts.)

New York Rangers — Yeah RANGERS. Espo may be the most line-up disrupting GM ever, but he's starting the season with amazingly after all those trades, some impressive names. It's betting that Sandstrom, Podubny, Dionne, Ogrodnick, Kisio, Larouche and a revived Dugway score enough goals to compensate for the Broadway Blues

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