

2021 Regular Season Awards

There can be a surprising amount of passion raised when it comes to player awards, specifically the awards that are based on subjectivity. One of the goals of my player rating systems was to look at issues objectively, so let's look at who should win the various awards based on data.

Will that reduce the amount of passion regarding who wins which award? Hell no. When has reason and logic ever reduced passion?

Most Valuable Player Trophy

The stated criteria for The Hart Memorial trophy is far from helpful. It says it should be awarded to the “player *judged most valuable to his team.*” If the best player in the league has a teammate who is nearly as good, does that mean he is not the most valuable player to his team? Does Rasmus Dahlin have a chance to win this? Can a player on a losing team be the MVP?

The Stapled To The Bench definition for MVP is that it is awarded to the best player in the league, as determined by highest PR-Score. It may seem like VR is the more logical rating system to use, but VR looks at three seasons worth of data while PR looks at just the most recent season. The winner is Connor McDavid (Edmonton), who edged out Auston Matthews (Toronto).

The question of which player is the most valuable *to his team* can also be answered. That would be the player who is the highest rated on his team that is the farthest away from the second-highest rated player on that team.

Roman Josi has a “PR category-and-a-half” lead over Matt Duchene in Nashville, winning the MVPHTH trophy. Jacob Slavin (Carolina) was edged out.

Defenseman Of The Year Trophy

Again, this is a simple process. The defenseman of the year trophy goes to the defenseman who has the highest PR-Score. Victor Hedman (Tampa Bay) wins this trophy, beating out Cale Makar (Colorado) and Roman Josi (Nashville). These three gentlemen also happened to finish 3rd, 4th and 5th in the race for MVP.

Had a defenseman been the highest rated player in the league, he would have won both the MVP and the Defenseman of the Year.

Team-Relative Corsi Loving Cup

The NHL has an award for the player with the highest plus/minus statistic in the regular season. PR doesn't use the plus/minus statistic, but it does use Team-Relative Corsi (TRC). Corsi is similar to plus/minus but focuses on shot attempts rather than goals scored.

“Team-Relative” means that the player's Corsi statistic is compared to his team's Corsi, thus treating good players on bad teams, and bad players on good teams, more equitably. For example, Radko Gudkas, a defenseman for Florida, has a personal Corsi of +210. That puts him 61st in the league. Thomas Chabot, a useful defenseman for Ottawa, has a personal Corsi

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of +2 (407th in the league). The key items in those two sentences are not “+210” and “+2”. they are “Florida” and “Ottawa.” Gudkas has a TRC of -84, while Chabot comes in at +101.

The TRC Loving Cup goes to Patrice Bergeron, and it wasn't close. He was +397, while second place through fourth place were +297, +289 and +284 (Brad Marchand, Auston Matthews and Jason Robertson of Dallas).

Best Defensive Forward Shin Guard

The forward with the highest total PR-Score for blocked shots, take-aways, give-aways, team-relative Corsi and defensive zone starts is awarded the Best Defensive Forward Plate. Since having lots of defensive zone starts has a negative impact on team-relative Corsi, only 20% of the team-relative Corsi score was used.

The winner of the Best Defensive Forward Shin Guard is Anthony Cirelli (Tampa Bay), beating out Sean Kuraly (Columbus Blue Jackets) and Nick Paul (Tampa Bay, Ottawa). I thought that Phillip Danault (Los Angeles) would do well in this competition, but he wasn't in the top 30: that was a bit of a surprise.

Had hits been included the winner would have been Sean Kuraly, who delivers a hit once for every five minutes of ice time. Unfortunately for Sean, I couldn't convince myself that hits had a good relation to defense. If you think that hits are a key defensive statistic, please send Sean Kuraly a shin guard (or an elbow pad).

Most Offensive Defenseman Jug

The opposite of a defensive forward is an offensive defenseman. Rather than awarding this prize to the highest scoring defenseman, I thought it would be more fun to give the award to the defenseman who was on the ice for the most offensive attempts for both teams, the defenseman who would be most at home on the 1982 Edmonton Oilers.

The statistic created for evaluating players was “total shot attempts for both teams per 60 minutes of five-on-five play (TC60).” A time played requirement (820 minutes) is used so that only players who played a good amount are eligible for this coveted prize.

If a player was on the ice for exactly 900 5-on-5 minutes and his team had 810 shot attempts while they gave up 930 shot attempts, his TC60 is $((810 + 930) * (60 / 900)) = 116.0$.

The winner of the Most Offensive Defenseman Jug is Dougie Hamilton (New Jersey), whose closest competitors were Zach Werenski (Columbus Blue Jackets) and Erik Karlsson (I can't believe Ottawa traded him to San Jose – it still hurts). When Dougie was on the ice, there were 122.4 shot attempts per 60 minutes. Mr. Hamilton had the 8th highest TC60 in the league, following seven forwards.

The TC60 figures were quite compressed, ranging from 126.4 to 94.5, with an average of 111.9. 411 players played at least 820 minutes last season, and only nine of them had a TC60 lower than 100.

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Sixth Man Shield

Sixth man is a basketball award, but both sports have five starters who are normally the players who play the most. I'm defining the sixth man in hockey as the best player in the PR-Regular category who played at least 80 games. The PR-Regular category is for players with PR-Scores between 4.0000 and 5.9999.

Players in the PR-Elite, PR-Star and PR-First5 categories are ineligible because they are top five players (even though some of them will be a "sixth" man on highly talented teams). Those who played fewer than 80 games are ineligible because their placement near the top of the PR-Regular category was caused by them having missed games. I wanted the winner of the Shield to be an everyday regular player, not a PR-First5 player who missed 10 games.

Tyler Seguin (Dallas Stars) played 81 games and had a PR-Score of 5.9926. Also considered was Pius Suter of the Detroit Red Wings, whose PR-Score was 5.9346.

Rookie Of The Year Silver Spoon

The Silver Spoon will be award to the player who was: a) a rookie and 2) had the highest PR. I used NaturalStatTrick's definition of rookie.

Moritz Seider (Detroit) is the clear winner over Michael Bunting (Toronto) and Lucas Raymond (Detroit).

When I discussed these awards with my son, he said the NHL award would probably go to Michael Bunting, because he had a good season and he played in Toronto.

PR doesn't care what team you play for, or how many hockey reporters work in that market. While Bunting was a PR-First5 last season, Seider was a PR-Star and he was a true rookie (never having played before).

My son was impressed that the rating system "found" Seider.

Jolly Green Giant Biggest Step Forward Cup

To the player whose PR increased the most from 2020, provided he played at least 50 games of the pandemic-cursed 2021 season's 56-game schedule.

Sixteen players improved by at least a full PR-Category in 2021, which is an increase of at least 2.0000 in their PR-Score. Six players improved by "a category and a half", or at least 3.0000 higher in PR-Score.

The top three were incredibly close: Ryan Hartman (Minnesota) improved his PR-Score by 3.341; Chris Kreider (New York Rangers) improved by 3.342; Nazem Kadri (Colorado) won the JGG prize, improving by 3.344.

If I'm being totally honest, I was very surprised the winner wasn't Chris Kreider. The PR-Score formula looks at more than just goals scored. While PR recognizes that Kreider scored 52 goals, it isn't enthralled by him having hit the magical 50-goal plateau.

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The Rockem Sockem Participation Ribbon

Considering how much the NHL likes to tout how combative play can be, it is a bit of a surprise that they don't give an award to the player who delivers the most hits. I'm stepping in to fill that void. The Ribbon will go to the player who delivered the most hits per 60 minutes, provided he played a minimum of 820 minutes. The time criterion eliminates players who played a couple of games and were ultra-aggressive when allowed on the ice.

The winner of the Rockem Sockem Participation Ribbon was Nicolas Deslauriers, who played 921 minutes for two teams (Anaheim then Minnesota) while delivering 263 hits. That's 19.7 hits per 60 minutes. Cal Clutterbuck (NY Islanders) just qualified by playing 828 minutes and came in second at 19.1 hits per 60 minutes. A Royal Commission might be called to investigate why neither of these players were under consideration for MVP.

Black And Blue Patch

Some players deliver hits, some receive hits, and some do both. The Patch is award to the player who was involved in the most hits per 60 minutes (TotH60), whether he was delivering them or receiving them.

And the Patch goes to Keegan Kolesar (Vegas), who was involved in 24.9 TotH60. A close second went to Nathan Bastian (New Jersey, Seattle) with 24.5 TotH60.

Most Gentlemanly Player Fabergé Egg

There is an old hockey saying about a certain type of player who could have six eggs in his uniform and play a game without breaking any of them. They neither give nor receive hits.

In a walk, the winner is Phil Kessel (Arizona), who's TotH60 was 1.1. Johnny Gaudreau (Calgary) and Keith Yandle (Philadelphia) came a distant second and third. Both Kessel and Yandle have (or had) extremely long consecutive-games-played streaks, and it seems logical that their collision-avoidance approach has helped them accomplish that.

The Milton Waddams Red Swingline

Milton Waddams is a character from the movie Office Space. He liked his stapler, a red Swingline.

The Swingline is given to the player who spent the most time stapled to the bench, as determined by games played times 60 minutes minus his time on ice. While the "stapled to the bench minutes" figure includes time spent in the penalty box, it does not include time spent in the press box.

This year's Milton winner is Brandon Duhaine of Minnesota, who played in 80 games and was on the ice for 817 minutes. That means he spent $(4,800 - 817 =)$ 3,983 minutes on the bench: more than 66 games. He edged out Dominic Tominato of Winnipeg, who had one of the best seats in the house for 3,974 minutes.