

2022-23 Regular Season Awards

Welcome to the second Stapled to the Bench (STTB) regular season player awards article. The idea behind this article is that awards are too important to rely on the voting habits of a bunch of overfed sports writers. Why vote to determine award winners when the statistics show you who the award goes to?

Also, the number of awards is dreadfully limited. We need a few more!

Most Valuable Player Trophy

The STTB MVP is awarded to the player with the highest PR-Score, which is technically the most productive season, but whatever. If I used Value Rating rather than Productivity Rating, the winner would be the same player.

Obviously, this year's MVP is **Connor McDavid** (EDM). His 2022-23 season was the best season of any player since 2007-08, and the gap in PR-Score between him and second place is, by far, the biggest ever ("ever" means "since 2007-08").

Defenseman of the Year Trophy

The defenseman of the year trophy goes to the defenseman who has the highest PR-Score. If you are curious, if the league MVP had been a defenseman then STTB would have a Forward of the Year Trophy.

As should surprise no one, **Erik Karlsson** (S.J) is the winner. Karlsson had his best season ever, and had the second-highest PR-Score this season. Adam Fox (NYR) was in second, but it wasn't a really close race.

Rookie of the Year Silver Spoon

The Silver Spoon is award to the player who was: a) a rookie and 2) had the highest PR-Score. I used NaturalStatTrick.com to determine who was a rookie (some player reports allow you to select only rookies).

To my surprise, the talking heads at TSN 1200 (Ottawa's best radio station) are correct. The STTB Rookie of the Year Silver Spoon goes to **Jake Sanderson** (OTT), who's PR-Score was 7.60. Owen Power (BUF) is second with a PR-Score of 7.17, then it's Noah Cates (PHI) at 6.65 and Matty Berniers (SEA) at 6.50.

Looking at the data for these four rookies, Sanderson and Power shine out like a shaft of gold when all around is darkness. One can only assume that the NHL voters, in all their wisdom, will give the NHL Rookie prize to Matty Berniers (bEcAuSe ThE kRaKeN mAde tHe PLAyOfFs).

I decided to write a separate article on the 2022-23 Rookie of the Year race. You can find a link in the Reference Article section at the end of this article.

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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.

Johnny Gaudreau (CBJ) wins the Fabergé Egg by being involved in 1.35 hits per 60 minutes of ice time, a level of contact that is very slightly higher than you would see in the All-Star game. Patrick Kane came second while Josh Bailey was third. A surprise at fourth is Max Domi: cheap shots and sucker punches aren't counted in the official statistics.

Sixth Man Six-Pack

Sixth man is traditionally a basketball concept, but it works for hockey as well. This season's award determining process is different. First, I identified all players who were sixth best on their own team, then selected the player in that group who had the highest PR-Score. Players who were traded during the season were excluded from consideration.

Carter Verhaeghe (FLA) wins the Six-Pack, with a PR-Score of 7.97. That PR-Score is 0.03 PR-Points below the PR-Star category. In second place was Jacob Trouba (NYR, 7.95)

Three teams had no player with a PR-Score as high as Verhaeghe's: Philadelphia (Ivan Provorov, 7.56); Columbus (Johnny Gaudreau, 7.50); Washington (Alex Ovechkin, 7.39). None of those teams made the playoffs.

Least Defensive Forward Titanic Tureen

The least defensive forward is awarded a tureen from the Titanic: a memento from a big floater. It is awarded to the player who had the least total PR-Points from five categories that have a defensive flavour: penalty-kill time on ice, blocks, take-aways, hits and defensive zone starts.

For 2022-23 the winner is **Artemi Panerin** (NYR). In 82 games, he played 1.00 minutes on the penalty-kill. That is not a per-game average, that is his season total: 60 seconds, less than 1 second per game. He blocked (couldn't get out of the way of) 11 shots, had 36 takeaways but 102 giveaways, and only 24% of his zone-starts were in his defensive zone.

In a group behind him were Trevor Zegras (ANA), David Pastrnak (BOS), Nikita Kucherov (T.B) and Alex Ovechkin (WSH). It's not that these guys are bad players, it's just that they don't do defensive things.

Best Defensive Forward Shin Guard

A change has been made to the way the Shin Guard is awarded for the 2022-23 season. It will be awarded using the same formula that was used to identify the Least Defensive Forward (see previous category), but the prize goes to the player with the most total points.

Colton Sissons (NSH) wins the Shin Guard. In 82 games, he played 233 minutes on the penalty-kill, blocked 72 shots, had 32 takeaways and only 27 giveaways, and 53% of his zone-starts were in his defensive zone.

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Most Offensive Defenseman Jug

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 shot 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 non-trivial amount of time are eligible for this coveted prize.

Considering his competition, the surprise winner is **Noah Dobson** (NYI), who was on the ice for 126.0 combined shot attempts per 60 minutes. He edged out John Carlson (WSH, 125.9) and Kris Letang (PIT, 125.5).

Team-Relative Corsi Loving Cup

STTB gives an award to the player who improved his team’s Corsi the most.

Matthew Tkachuk (FLA) was the runaway winner. His personal Corsi was +559, while his team would be +195 in the amount of time Tkachuk played. That’s a Team-Relative Corsi of +364, or just over four shot-attempts per game over 82 games.

Tkachuk won this award by both increasing Florida’s shot attempts and decreasing the shot attempts of their opponents. Converting Florida’s season average Corsi data to Tkachuk’s ice time, Florida would have 1,223 shot attempts for and 1,028 shot attempts against. Tkachuk’s numbers are 1,502 shot attempts for and 943 shot attempts against.

Jolly Green Giant Biggest Step Forward Cup

The Step Forward Cup goes to the player whose PR increased the most from 2021-22, provided he played at least 72 games in 2021-22. We are looking for a player who greatly improved his play rather than a player who recovered from a significant injury or a player having a great first full season.

The Cup goes to **Elias Pettersson** (VAN), whose PR-Score increased by 3.48. Vince Dunn (SEA) was second with an increase of 3.43, while Tim Stutzle (OTT) was third with an increase of 3.42.

My resident hockey expert (who also happens to be my son) tells me that Pettersson’s play this season is much more what was expected of him, and that his 2021-22 season was a disappointment. Dunn had a breakout year that not many people expected of him.

Being in the Ottawa market, I see a lot of Ottawa games. Stutzle was incredible this season, and he’s not an offense-only player. He averaged more than 1 minute per game on the penalty-kill, he had 61 takeaways and 114 blocked shots. As a fan of the Senators, one can only dream about his future.

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The Rockem Sockem Participation Ribbon

The Ribbon will go to the player who delivered the most hits per 60 minutes (H60), 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.

In a very close race, **Keegan Kolesar** (VGK, H60=19.71) elbowed out Matt Martin (NYI, H60=19.60).

The next four players were all traded during the season: Sammy Blais (NYR, STL), Luke Schenn (TOR, VAN), Garnet Hathaway (BOS, WSH) and Tanner Jeannot (NSH, T.B). Playoff-bound teams will sometimes pick up a player that will make things tough for their opponents.

It's hard enough to face a guy like Kolesar four times in a season, but it is really tough to face him four times in a week.

The Lone Ranger Silver Bullet

At the end of almost every Lone Ranger show, as he rode off into the sunset, somebody would ask "Who was that masked man?" The Silver Bullet award goes to the player who is most likely to ask that about his own goalie, because he rarely starts a shift in the defensive zone. Technically, it goes to the player who has the lowest PR-Score in the DZF (defensive zone faceoff) category of the PR calculations.

The winner is **Alex Ovechkin** (WSH), who was on the ice for 1,412 faceoffs of which only 190 were in the defensive zone. It is unlikely he was forced to stay on the ice 190 times due to icing calls. I'd guess that the number of icing calls is closer to 150 than it is to 40.

Matt Barzal (NYI) had a lower percentage of defensive zone faceoffs than did Ovechkin, but I'm using counts rather than percentages. Ovechkin's offensive, neutral and defensive zone start counts were 800-422-190. Barzal's counts were 554-216-102. As a comparison, David Kampf had the highest PR-Score in the DZF category, with counts of 156-343-716.

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.

On a technicality, this season's Swingline goes to **Garnet Hathaway** (BOS, WSH), who sat on the bench for 4,049 minutes. The technicality is caused by his having been traded: he played 84 games this season, giving him extra time to soak up the wonderful aromas emanating from the bench of a professional hockey team.

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Amongst players who played 82 or fewer games, the leaders are Ryan Lomberg (FLA) at 3,993 minutes and Nicolas Deslauriers (PHI) at 3,992 minutes. Also among the leaders are Pat Maroon (T.B), Matt Martin (NYI), Trevor Lewis (CGY), Ross Colton (T.B) and Dakota Joshua (VAN): all players who throw their weight around.

A surprising fellow to find in the top ten in this category is Phil Kessel (VGK). The top ten players delivered a total of 1,584 hits, of which Kessel contributed 10.

Summary

One award from last season was removed: the Black and Blue Patch. The lead players in that award were largely the same as the lead group of the Rockem Sockem Participation Ribbon, and players of that sort don't need two awards.

Changes were made to the processes which identified the winner of the Sixth Man Six-Pack and the Defensive Forward Shin Guard. Another small change was made to the order the awards are presented in.

Finally, a word about grammar. I ended the Rookie of the Year section with the phrase "bEcAuSe ThE kRaKeN mAde tHe PLAyOfFs". That phrase is presented in "studly case", which is also known as "camel case". It is used to convey a mocking tone. You should read the phrase to yourself in a mocking tone to fully appreciate its message.

Reference Articles

Introduction to Productivity Rating

2022-23 Rookie of the Year