

Team's Best Players –Pacific Division

Being a fan of Ottawa, I was wondering the other day about who were the best players to ever play for the Senators. Being a sports data wonk, I wanted to use numbers, rather than opinions, to answer the question (PR-Score, GxPts: see the first two related articles).

There are four Best Player articles, one for each NHL division. The first part of each article, from here to the divisional Best Players tables, will be identical in each article. The Best Players tables will be presented without extra commentary, but the Summary section may have a little something extra.

Methodology

What did I mean by the best player? I was interested in individual seasons rather than a span of seasons. At the start, I wanted to know which player had the best single season for Ottawa. I could do this very easily using PR-Score: the answer for the Senators is Erik Karlsson in his 2015 season, and it isn't close.

I immediately wanted to complicate my life. What about the best forward? Wait, how about the three best forwards, two best defensemen and a goalie?

For Edmonton, the top three seasons for forwards come from the legal team of McDavid, McDavid and McDavid. I wanted to see three different forwards. This made the data structure a little more complicated, but it was nothing I couldn't handle.

By the way, any player who was traded mid-season had absolutely no chance of qualifying as one of the best three players for either of the teams he played for.

As I'm using PR-Score for skaters, and GxPts for Goalies, I can only go as far back as the 2007-08 season (with apologies to Wayne Gretzky and Guy Lafleur).

In the next section, I will explain the "Best Players table".

Description of the Best Players Table

The example Best Players table shown below is Pittsburgh's "second team": their fourth to sixth-best forwards, their third and four-best defensemen and their second-best goalie.

PIT Season	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2018	Jake Guentzel	F	19.4	40	36	76	248	26.4	45
2012	Pascal Dupuis	F	17.5	34	31	65	270		
2008	Jordan Staal	F	19.8	22	27	49	369		
2023	Erik Karlsson	D	24.1	11	45	56	170	17.4	50
2023	Marcus Pettersson	D	22.5	4	26	30	323		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2021	Tristan Jarry	G	3415	138	144	0.10	146	59.3	51

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The top five data lines are show forwards (yellow shading) and defensemen (green shading). The sixth data line is for a goalie (blue shading). While goalies have the same number of data columns as forwards, the data in those columns are different.

For the skaters I show four NHL statistics: time on ice (minutes) per game played, goals, assists and points. For seasons that played fewer than 82 games (2012, 2019 and 2020) I show extrapolated data, as that puts all player data on the same scale.

“Lg Rank” is league rank: if the players were sorted by Productivity Rating from best to worst, Jake Guentzel’s 2018 season would be the 248th best season amongst the forwards.

Unit Score is the total Productivity Score of the three forwards or two defensemen, while Unit Rank is the rank (1 would be best) of those productivity scores. Pittsburgh’s second-best set of forwards had a total PR-Score of 26.4, which would place them 45th, while the defensemen have a total PR-Score of 17.4 placing them 50th. In the actual tables the Unit Ranks will range from 1 to 32. I’m showing the second-best group from Pittsburgh, and there are 64 best and second-best groups in the league.

Goalie data shows games played, total time on ice, goals against (GA) and expected goals against (xGA). SvAA60 is the amount of saves a goalie made above average per 60 minutes of play. Jarry gave up 6 goals fewer than an average goalie would have (138 GA, 144 xGA), and that worked out to 0.10 saves above average per 60 minutes.

GxPts is the rating system for goalies, representing the number of standing points a team should expect with a goalie in nets, playing the amount of time a goalie played. Unit Rank shows how a goalie ranks among the other best goalies. It will range from 1 to 32 when considering the best goalies for each team – Jarry ranks 51st among the top 64 goalies.

Teams will be presented from least impressive to most impressive, based on a formula I cannot describe well as I barely understand it myself.

One thing I noticed while compiling the data for this article is the lopsided seasonal distribution of the best players. An unexpectedly large number of them come from either the first four seasons (2007 through 2010) or the last four seasons (2020 to 2023).

	2007 to 2010 2020 to 2023	2011 to 2019
Seasons	8	9
Forwards	65	31
Defensemen	60	36
Skaters	125	67

The 2011 to 2019 group should have had 100 skaters instead of 67 skaters. I can think of no statistical or methodological reason for this to have happened.

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Pacific Division – Best Players Tables

SEA	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2022	Jared McCann	F	16.3	40	30	70	603	22.3	32
2022	Yanni Gourde	F	17.1	14	34	48	899		
2022	Alexander Wennberg	F	18.7	13	25	38	1013		
2022	Vince Dunn	D	23.7	14	50	64	132	18.5	31
2022	Adam Larsson	D	23.6	8	25	33	153		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2023	Joey Daccord	G	2833	116	127	0.23	267	51.1	32

VGK	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2017	William Karlsson	F	18.7	43	35	78	148	27.2	29
2019	Mark Stone	F	19.4	25	49	74	248		
2019	Max Pacioretty	F	18.2	37	40	77	344		
2021	Alex Pietrangelo	D	24.6	13	31	44	87	18.6	28
2020	Alec Martinez	D	22.6	13	34	47	207		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2020	Marc-Andre Fleury	G	3143	104	130	0.49	100	63	9

L.A	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2017	Anze Kopitar	F	22.1	35	57	92	18	27.6	26
2017	Dustin Brown	F	19.8	28	33	61	475		
2023	Adrian Kempe	F	18.9	28	47	75	475		
2017	Drew Doughty	D	26.8	10	50	60	23	19.2	24
2015	Jake Muzzin	D	23.1	8	32	40	265		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2011	Jonathan Quick	G	4099	133	162	0.43	7	79.3	7

ANA	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2010	Corey Perry	F	22.3	50	48	98	38	30.5	14
2013	Ryan Getzlaf	F	21.3	31	56	87	86		
2016	Ryan Kesler	F	21.3	22	36	58	148		
2008	Scott Niedermayer	D	26.9	14	45	59	23	20.8	8
2010	Lubomir Visnovsky	D	24.3	18	50	68	46		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2011	Jonas Hiller	G	4256	182	186	0.05	25	72.5	21

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CGY Season	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2007	Jarome Iginla	F	21.4	50	48	98	51	30.6	13
2021	Elias Lindholm	F	20.0	42	40	82	68		
2021	Johnny Gaudreau	F	18.6	40	75	115	124		
2018	Mark Giordano	D	24.2	17	57	74	8	21.9	3
2007	Dion Phaneuf	D	26.4	17	43	60	23		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2009	Miikka Kiprusoff	G	4235	163	166	0.05	29	72.1	1

VAN Season	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2010	Ryan Kesler	F	20.5	41	32	73	18	33.4	3
2022	Elias Pettersson	F	20.6	39	63	102	18		
2021	J.T. Miller	F	21.1	32	67	99	26		
2023	Quinn Hughes	D	24.7	17	75	92	4	20.6	10
2010	Christian Ehrhoff	D	24.0	14	36	50	185		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2007	Roberto Luongo	G	4172	168	175	0.10	27	72.4	8

S.J Season	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2009	Patrick Marleau	F	21.2	44	39	83	74	30.4	15
2013	Joe Pavelski	F	19.9	41	38	79	74		
2007	Joe Thornton	F	21.4	29	67	96	100		
2022	Erik Karlsson	D	25.6	25	76	101	2	23.6	1
2015	Brent Burns	D	25.9	27	48	75	8		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2009	Evgeni Nabokov	G	4194	170	192	0.31	10	78.4	17

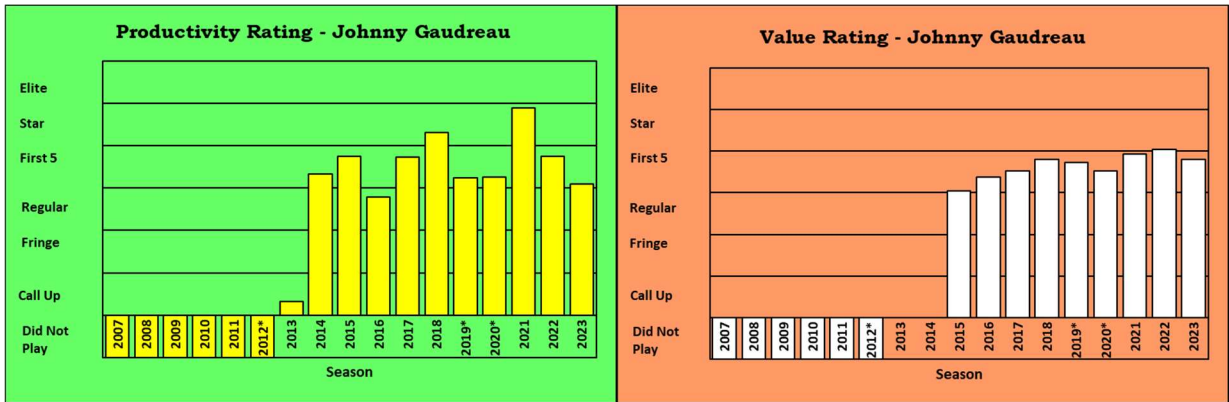
EDM Season	Name	POS	TOI/ GP	G	A	Pts	Lg Rank	Unit Score	Unit Rank
2022	Connor McDavid	F	22.4	64	89	153	1	36.9	1
2019	Leon Draisaitl	F	22.9	50	78	128	7		
2022	Ryan Nugent-Hopkins	F	19.8	37	67	104	59		
2023	Evan Bouchard	D	23.0	18	64	82	17	21.3	6
2020	Darnell Nurse	D	25.6	23	29	52	29		
Season	Name	POS	TOI	GA	xGA	SvAA 60	Lg Rank	GxPts	Unit Rank
2016	Cam Talbot	G	4294	171	194	0.32	6	80.2	4

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Summary

Seattle and Vegas rank as lowest in this division because they haven't played that many seasons.

I was happy to see that one of Johnny Gaudreau's seasons was included for Calgary.



While it felt like his last two seasons were substandard, they actually weren't. It's just that they followed his 2021 season and preceded his move to Columbus. His 2022 season rates are very similar to his 2015 and 2017 seasons, while his 2023 season rates similar to his 2019 and 2020 seasons. He wasn't quite a VR-Star player, but he was a solid VR-First5.

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