In order to evaluate teams on their success at drafting, it is necessary to have expectations of what they should have gotten from their draftees. A case in point is Mark Stone, who was a very pleasant surprise for Ottawa, given he was drafted 178th in 2010. Truth be told, he would have been considered a disappointment had he been drafted 8th.

This article will show how the value of a draft pick was determined. A different method is being used than has been previously used.

All players are evaluated based on the six seasons immediately after the year they are drafted. When I say something like a player did not play in the NHL in this article, I mean he did not play in the NHL in his first six post-draft seasons.

A Minor Change

It is a minor but necessary change. In earlier articles, I used a Stapled To The Bench (STTB) statistic called Return From Play (RFP\$), which converted a player's PR-Score to salary dollars: the better the season, the higher the RFP\$.

RFP\$ was based on an \$82MM (MM = million) salary cap. With the salary cap set to explode these next few seasons, it was clear that RFP\$ would have to change as well. A season worth \$6MM in 2020 might be worth \$9MM in 2026, given the estimated salary cap increases.

What is constant from season to season is PR-Scores. A season that produced a PR-Score of 8.22 in 2007 would produce a PR-Score of 8.22 in 2026. Rather than convert PR-Scores to RFP\$, I will simply use PR-Scores.

How Drafted Players Are Evaluated

Drafted players will be evaluated by their total PR-Score in their first six post-draft seasons. The time span was chosen because a team should be able to control the drafted player for at least that long.

It's time for examples, so let's check Travis Hamonic, a defenseman drafted with the 53rd pick in 2008 by the New York Islanders. He played in Ottawa in 2024-25.

Travis Hamonic											
Season	PR-Score										
2010	NYI	62	6.118								
2011	NYI	73	6.865								
2012	NYI	82	6.843								
2013	NYI	69	6.862								
Total PF	R-Score	Ê.	26.688								

Hamonic did not play in his first two seasons, so they count for naught. He played very well in the next four seasons and accumulated a total PR-Score of 26.7. To get an idea as to whether that is a good total PR-Score, we need five more Travises.

Six Guys Named Travis													
Name	Draft	Draft	Draft	6Yr	Ssns	Ssns	Ssns	Ssns					
	Year	Slot	Team	PR	Plyd	Elite	Star	First5					
Travis Konecny	2015	24	PHI	27.8	5	0	0	1					
Travis Hamonic	2008	53	NYI	26.7	4	0	0	4					
Travis Sanheim	2014	17	PHI	16.5	3	0	0	2					
Travis Dermott	2015	34	TOR	13.9	4	0	0	0					
Travis Barron	2016	191	COL	0.0	0	0	0	0					
Travis Ewanyk	2011	74	EDM	0.0	0	0	0	0					

(In the column headers, Ssns means seasons.) Hamonic's total PR-Score is just under Konecny's, who played an extra season. Sanheim and Dermott are close to each other in total PR-Score: Sanheim took a little while to develop and is obviously the better player. Neither Barron nor Ewanyk played even a single NHL game.

Draft Groups

The first step in determining the value of a draft pick will be to group picks together: there is no difference in what you would expect from the 102nd pick and the 103rd pick. The groups are shown in the table below.

Draft Group	Picks Rounds
DG1	1-2
DG2	3-5
DG3	6-10
DG4	11-20
DG5	Late R1
DG6	R2
DG7	R3
DG8	R4-R5
DG9	R6-R7

A small change has been made to the draft groups I used in earlier articles, and I'm surprised it took me so long to extract my head from my [body part] to figure it out.

The change starts in group 5. In the earlier approach, I was focusing on groups of 30 draftees, as the 2007 draft involved 30 teams. Things started getting messy when the league expanded, and messier when it expanded again. The new approach will use draft picks to identify the first four groups, the fifth group will be the rest of the first round, and the last four groups will be defined by rounds.

While these groupings are somewhat arbitrary, you will see that they work. The better players are usually drafted with early first-round picks and the projects are usually drafted in the later rounds.

Draftees

The next step is to determine how many skaters were drafted in those groups from the 2007 to 2019 drafts. 2019 is the latest draft class that can be evaluated, as it is now six seasons since that draft was conducted.

Draft Group	Picks Rounds	Drafted Skaters
DG1	1-2	26
DG2	3-5	39
DG3	6-10	65
DG4	11-20	126
DG5	Late R1	129
DG6	R2	366
DG7	R3	344
DG8	R4-R5	707
DG9	R6-R7	680

Two important details about the counts of drafted skaters: goalies are excluded, and players who never made it to the NHL are included.

Goalies are excluded because they are evaluated using the STTB statistic Goalie Expected Points (GxPts), and there is a process that converts GxPts to PR-Scores.

Players who never made it to the NHL are included because they are a key portion of the drafted skater population. If calculations were based solely on the players who played in the NHL, the value of draft picks would be unrealistically high. Just as the value of lottery tickets would be too high if you based your calculations only

on winning tickets.

The Value of a Draft Pick

First up, I calculated the total PR-Score of each drafted player. (Travis Hamonic's total PR-Score was 26.7). I then calculated the totals for each draft group (Hamonic was in DG6, the group of players drafted in the second round). The results for all nine groups are:

Draft Group	Picks Rounds	Drafted Skaters	Draftees Played	GP/ <u>Draftee</u> 6 Ssns	Tot PR-Pts	Average Pick Value	Expected Pick Value
DG1	1-2	26	26	416	1015	39.0	31.0
DG2	3-5	39	39	323	1024	26.3	21.0
DG3	6-10	65	65	288	1470	22.6	18.0
DG4	11-20	126	121	196	1830	14.5	11.5
DG5	Late R1	129	118	139	1205	9.3	7.5
DG6	R2	366	253	82	2091	5.7	4.5
DG7	R3	344	165	35	854	2.5	2.0
DG8	R4-R5	707	249	29	1357	1.9	1.5
DG9	R6-R7	680	154	16	724	1.1	1.0

Along with the Expected Pick Value, this table contains some interesting trivia. Draftees played shows the number of drafted skaters who played at least one NHL game. Draft Group 4 (DG4, picks 11 to 20 of the first round) is the first group that drafted skaters who did not play in the NHL. Column 5, GP/Draftee, shows the average number of games played by draft skaters. Skaters drafted after the fifth round (DG9) average playing a total of 16 NHL games.

Stapled To The Bench

Average Pick Value is the result of dividing Total PR-Points by Drafted Skaters, and Expected Pick Value is 80% of the Average Pick Value, rounded to the nearest 0.5. The 26 draftees in DG1 produced a total of 1015 PR-Points, which is an average of 39.0 PR-Points per draftee, and 80% of 39.0 PR-Points is 31.0 PR-Points.

The reason Expected Pick Value is lower than Average Pick Value is completely logical: the draft is a profitable undertaking for teams, and that should be reflected in these data. After all, if teams didn't improve through the draft, they wouldn't participate in the draft. Using 80% was an arbitrary decision.

This table lays the foundation for evaluating teams in how they draft. I'll finish the article with some trivia about the draftees. Only one table comes with commentary: you're welcome.

	Players Whose 6-Yr-PR-Points was the Highest in Their Draft Group											
Player Info Draft Info						Season	Info			PR-Point Into		
Name	POS	Year	Slot	Team	Group	Played	Elite	Star	First5	6YrTot	Ехр	Dif
Connor McDavid	F	2015	1	EDM	DG1	6	5	0	0	61.2	31.0	30.2
Leon Draisaitl	F	2014	3	EDM	DG2	6	2	1	1	47.4	21.0	26.4
Quinn Hughes	D	2018	7	VAN	DG3	6	1	2	2	45.1	18.0	27.1
Cam Fowler	D	2010	12	ANA	DG4	6	0	0	5	38.9	11.5	27.4
David Pastrnak	F	2014	25	BOS	DG5	6	1	0	3	39.2	7.5	31.7
Ryan O'Reilly	F	2009	33	COL	DG6	6	0	3	0	41.4	4.5	36.9
Brayden Point	F	2014	79	T.B	DG7	4	0	3	0	31.9	2.0	29.9
Viktor Arvidsson	F	2014	112	NSH	DG8	6	0	0	2	27.6	1.5	26.1
Ondrej Palat	F	2011	208	T.B	DG9	5	0	0	3	28.2	1.0	27.2

Best Player in Each Draft Group

Top Ten Draftees (Based on 6-Year PR-Score)

Draftees With the Biggest Net Return With Respect to Their Expectations												
Player Info		Draft	Info			Season	Info			PR-Point Into		
Name	POS	Year	Slot	Team	Group	Played	Elite	Star	First5	6YrTot	Ехр	Dif
Ryan O'Reilly	F	2009	33	COL	DG6	6	0	3	0	41.4	4.5	36.9
Sebastian Aho	F	2015	35	CAR	DG6	5	0	3	1	40.6	4.5	36.1
Alex DeBrincat	F	2016	39	CHI	DG6	5	0	2	1	37.3	4.5	32.8
David Pastrnak	F	2014	25	BOS	DG5	6	1	0	3	39.2	7.5	31.7
Justin Faulk	D	2010	37	CAR	DG6	5	0	1	3	35.7	4.5	31.2
Connor McDavid	F	2015	1	EDM	DG1	6	5	0	0	61.2	31.0	30.2
Brayden Point	F	2014	79	T.B	DG7	4	0	3	0	31.9	2.0	29.9
John Carlson	D	2008	27	WSH	DG5	5	0	3	1	35.6	7.5	28.1
Cam Fowler	D	2010	12	ANA	DG4	6	0	0	5	38.9	11.5	27.4

Highest Return (6YrTot – Exp)

	Ten Draftees With the Highest 6-Yr-PR-Points											
Player Info		Draft	Info			Season	Info			PR-Point Into		
Name	POS	Year	Slot	Team	Group	Played	Elite	Star	First5	6YrTot	Exp	Dif
Connor McDavid	F	2015	1	EDM	DG1	6	5	0	0	61.2	31.0	30.2
Auston Matthews	F	2016	1	TOR	DG1	6	3	1	2	55.7	31.0	24.7
Steven Stamkos	F	2008	1	T.B	DG1	6	4	0	0	52.9	31.0	21.9
Drew Doughty	D	2008	2	L.A	DG1	6	0	4	2	49.6	31.0	18.6
John Tavares	F	2009	1	NYI	DG1	6	0	3	3	48.2	31.0	17.2
Leon Draisaitl	F	2014	3	EDM	DG2	6	2	1	1	47.4	21.0	26.4
Rasmus Dahlin	D	2018	1	BUF	DG1	6	0	3	2	47.2	31.0	16.2
Patrick Kane	F	2007	1	CHI	DG1	6	0	2	4	46.9	31.0	15.9
Seth Jones	D	2013	4	NSH	DG2	6	0	2	4	45.5	21.0	24.5
Nathan MacKinnon	F	2013	1	COL	DG1	6	1	1	3	45.5	31.0	14.5

The Value of a Late Round Draft Pick

	Draft Group 9 (DG9) Players With the Highest 6-Yr-PR-Points												
Player Info		Draft	Info			Season	Info		PR-Point Into				
Name	POS	Year	Slot	Team	Group	Played	Elite	Star	First5	6YrTot	Exp	Dif	
Ondrej Palat	F	2011	208	T.B	DG9	5	0	0	3	28.2	1.0	27.2	
Jesper Bratt	F	2016	162	N.J	DG9	5	0	0	1	24.4	1.0	23.4	
Jared Spurgeon	D	2008	156	NYI	DG9	4	0	0	1	21.5	1.0	20.5	
Carl Gunnarsson	D	2007	194	TOR	DG9	4	0	0	1	21.4	1.0	20.4	
Jason Demers	D	2008	186	S.J	DG9	5	0	0	1	21.4	1.0	20.4	
Mark Stone	F	2010	178	OTT	DG9	4	0	0	2	17.9	1.0	16.9	
Kevin Labanc	F	2014	171	S.J	DG9	4	0	0	0	17.7	1.0	16.7	
Markus Nutivaara	D	2015	189	CBJ	DG9	5	0	0	0	17.1	1.0	16.1	
Dalton Prout	D	2010	154	CBJ	DG9	5	0	0	0	15.6	1.0	14.6	

You know how people will sometimes say things that drive you insane because, you know they are wrong, and you know they won't believe you if you argue about it? One of the many things that triggers this reaction in me is when somebody says that a player like Mark Stone is an example of the value a team can get late in the draft. When Ottawa drafted Eerik Wallenius with the 136th overall pick in the 2024 draft, I bet some hometown commentator brought up Mark Stone as a comparison, implying that Stone's result was a reasonable expectation for Wallenius.

No, Mark Stone isn't an example of the value you can get late in the draft. He and the other players in the table above are unicorns. They produced far more than could reasonably have been expected from players drafted in the sixth or seventh round. The people who bring up Mark Stone suffer from selection bias: Mark Stone does not truly represent the target population of players drafted in the 6th and 7th rounds.

Honestly, it is exactly like saying that Connor McDavid is an example of the value a forward can bring to his team. Drives me crazy, it does.

Summary

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Stapled

Because a bunch of lawyers in Vegas couldn't figure out the contract status of Evgenii Dadonov, Ottawa was penalized a first-round draft pick. That penalty will be enforced this draft, costing Ottawa the 21st overall pick. What sort of player are they missing out on?

The 21st pick is the first pick in Draft Group 5. I guess that the estimated Draft Value for the 21st pick is 9.5 PR-Points, as DG5's Draft Value of 7.5 is the average of picks 21 through 32.

There are several players who were selected with a pick in the 20th to 25th overall draft slot who had a PR-Score is around 9.5 in their six post-draft years. I'll use Kevin Hayes as the example of the contribution such a player makes. Hayes was drafted in 2010 with the 24th overall pick and took four years to mature before playing in the NHL. His Career PR Chart (to 2015-16) is below.



Based on this example, Ottawa is missing out on a player who would be a fourth-line forward in 2029-30 and 2031-32. In fairness, Hayes was a good player from 2016-17 to 2022-23.

The Senator player whose productivity over the last two seasons comes closest to 9.5 PR-Points is Shane Pinto (9.8 PR-Points). Another way of looking at the player is that, five years from now, Ottawa will be missing out on the services of a forward who is not quite as good as Shane Pinto. Actually, he wouldn't be anywhere near as good as Pinto, as Pinto's PR-Point total is low due to his being suspended for half a season in 2023-24. It is not a huge penalty.

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