

A Draft Primer for Caps Fans
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I. Capitals 2008 Draft Picks

- (1) Round 1, Pick 23, *23rd overall*
- (2) Round 2, Pick 24, *54th overall*
- (3) Round 2, Pick 27, *57th overall*
- (4) Round 2, Pick 28, *58th overall*
- (5) Round 3, Pick 23, *84th overall*
- (6) Round 4, Pick 2, *93rd overall*
- (7) Round 5, Pick 23, *144th overall*
- (8) Round 6, Pick 23, *174th overall*
- (9) Round 7, Pick 23, *204th overall*

II. Draft Strategy

The Capitals are sittin' pretty heading into this draft, coming of a playoff berth, holding four of the draft's first 58 picks and one boasting of the league's best group of prospects to boot. While it might be tempting for the Caps to package some combination of the 23rd, 54th, 57th and 58th pick together for a high first rounder, it's more likely that the Capitals will hold on to their picks and take advantage of their scouting staff and one of the deeper drafts in recent memory. Given the club's past drafts, its overall prospect depth and the lack of any particular pressing need, it's likely the Capitals will be content to draft the best overall player. With apologies to anyone who was hoping for fireworks out of the Caps, they're unlikely to make any significant trades and any player chosen will probably have to wait until at least 2010 or 2011 to wear a Capitals uniform.

III. Capitals Top Prospects

These are the Capitals' top prospects, regardless of position. After their names you will find their position, age, and the team with which they spent most of last season.

- (1) Karl Alzner – Defense, 19, Calgary Hitmen, WHL
- (2) Semen Varlamov – Goalie, 20, Lokomotiv Yaroslavl, Russia
- (3) Chris Bourque – Left Wing/Right Wing, 22, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (4) Sami Lepisto – Defense, 23, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (5) Josh Godfrey – Defense, 20, Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds, OHL
- (6) Francois Bouchard – Right Wing, 20, Baie-Comeau Drakkar, QMJHL
- (7) Mathieu Perreault – Center, 20, Acadie-Bathurst Titan, QMJHL
- (8) Michal Neuvirth, Goalie, 20, Oshawa Generals, OHL
- (9) Joe Finley – Defense, 21, University of North Dakota, NCAA (WCHA)
- (10) Andrew Gordon – Right Wing, 23, Hershey Bears, AHL

IV. Top Prospects by Position

Left Wing

- (1) Chris Bourque, 22, Hershey Bears
- (2) Oskar Osala, 20, Espoo Blues, Finland
- (3) Luke Lynes, 20, Brampton Battalion, OHL
- (4) Andrew Glass, 18, Nobles (High School)

Center

- (1) Mathieu Perreault, 20, Acadie-Bathurst Titan, QMJHL
- (2) Kyle Wilson, 23, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (3) Andrew Joudrey, 23, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (4) Philip DeSimone, 21, University of New Hampshire, NCAA (Hockey East)
- (5) Travis Morin, 23, South Carolina Stingrays, ECHL

Right Wing

- (1) Francois Bouchard, 20, Baie-Comeau Drakkar, QMJHL
- (2) Andrew Gordon, 23, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (3) Stephen Werner, 23, Springfield Falcons, AHL
- (4) Brett Leffler, 19, Regina Pats, OHL

Defense

- (1) Karl Alzner, 19, Calgary Hitmen, WHL
- (2) Sami Lepisto, 23, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (3) Josh Godfrey, 20, Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds, OHL
- (4) Joe Finley, 21, University of North Dakota, NCAA (WCHA)
- (5) Sasha Pokulok, 22, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (6) Viktor Dovgan, 20, CSKA Moscow, Russia
- (7) Oscar Hedman, 22, MODO, Sweden
- (8) Andrew Thomas, 22, University of Denver, NCAA (WCHA)
- (9) Patrick McNeill, 21, Hershey Bears, AHL

Goalies

- (1) Semen Varlamov, 20, Lokomotiv Yaroslavl, Russia
- (2) Michal Neuvirth, 20, Oshawa Generals, OHL
- (3) Daren Machesney, 21, Hershey Bears, AHL
- (4) Dan Dunn, 20 on draft day, St. Cloud State, NCAA (WCHA)

V. Organization Strengths

- (1) Goaltending. Varlamov projects to be a good number one NHL goaltender at this point and both Neuvirth and Machesney look like they have the potential to be significant contributors at the NHL level. Not very many NHL teams can boast three legitimate NHL prospects at the goaltending position, let alone two who look like they are very likely to become starters.
- (2) Defense. Amazingly the Capitals top *six* defensive prospects could one day be NHL regulars. Not only that, but the origination boasts blueliner prospects to fill just about any role: Alzner and Pokulok project to be good two-way players, Godfrey and Lepisto are more offense oriented and Finely and Dovgan are physical, stay-at-home types.

VI. Organization Weaknesses

- (1) Left Wing. Only Chris Bourque, who actually played on the right side in his brief stint in Washington in 2007, projects to be a solid NHL player from this bunch. Fortunately for the Capitals, with Alexander Semin and Alex Ovechkin manning the left side, they can afford to be thin at the pipeline for this position.

(2) Two-way Forwards. Bourque, Gordon and Wilson all look like they could contribute as defense-first depth players while Perrault and Bouchard are both offense players who lack grit, size and defensive aptitude. Thus while the Capitals have a decent number of solid forward prospects, they don't have anyone who's likely to significantly help them at both ends of the ice.

VII. Names to Know

Steve Stamkos – The consensus number one overall represents a win-win situation for the Tampa Bay Lightning, who were able to unload Brad Richards' huge contract and will be able to keep a modified version of "The Big Three" intact once Stamkos is under contract.

Nikita Filatov – There are those who think Filatov is the second-best player in this draft in terms of overall skill. However, the crop of talented defensemen and questions about Filatov's size (he's generously listed at 5'11", 171) means he might just fall into the lap of a team picking sixth or lower.

Drew Doughty – Generally regarded as the best of the "Big Three" (or "Big Four") defensemen in this year's draft, Doughty is both offensively adept and defensively sound. He should go either number two to Los Angeles or number three to Atlanta.

Zach Bogosian – The second of the "Big Three/Four", Bogosian also projects as a two-way defenseman, though he's not supposed to have the same kind of skating or puckhandling skill that Doughty does. Bogosian's most likely destination is Atlanta, who hold the number three overall pick.

Luke Schenn – Schenn has less offensive upside than either Bogosian or Doughty and is more of a physical, stay-at-home type. Schenn is supposed to be a very good puck mover however, so although he might not have the offensive talents of a true number one defenseman, he should be able to more than hold his own.

Alex Pietrangelo – He doesn't have the offensive upside of Doughty or Bogosian or the shutdown ability of Schenn, but Pietrangelo is a big body who projects to do well at both end of the ice at the NHL level.

Kyle Beach – Beach is one of this draft's more intriguing stories. A center at the junior level, Beach projects more as a wing as a professional. Though he owns first-round talent, Beach has a reputation for being unable to control his temper on the ice and for being hard-headed and difficult to coach off it. With good cost-controlled players being such an asset under the salary cap, it wouldn't be surprising for a number of teams to pass over a player with as many question marks as Beach. It is also fairly likely that he'll be selected 12th overall, by Anaheim, who would love his combination of grit and skill.

David Toews – The younger brother of Calder finalist Jonathon is the 27th ranked skater in this draft. Like his brother Toews has been praised for his intelligence, maturity and two-way play. He's just the kind of player New Jersey likes, and the last time the Devils went off the board a bit to select a forward in the first round (Zach Parise), it worked out pretty well for them.

Michael Del Zotto – Praised by the Hockey News as the Best Offensive Defenseman available in this draft, Del Zotto is expected to go mid-late first round and some mock drafts have the Capitals selecting him with the 23rd overall pick.

Anton Gustafsson – The son of former Capital Bengt Gustafsson has a lot of potential but hasn't played many games against top competition and faces injury concerns. Projected to go late in the first round, he's another player the Caps could potentially take at number 23.

Adam Comrie – Comrie is Canadian born but spent most of his youth in Arlington, home of Kettler Capitals IcePlex, and played for teams in Ashburn and Reston. Ranked 44th overall for this draft, Comrie, a defenseman, says of his game, "I think my best attributes are my physical sense of the game, my grit, my shot, my work ethic, my determination, passion and heart. I've been captain of two teams."

Kirill Petrov – Petrov is ranked second among European skaters by the NHL Central Scouting Service, but he has three more years on his contract with Kazan of the Russian Super League. There's no doubt someone will take a chance on drafting Petrov, but with the lack of a transfer agreement between the NHL and the RSL and the exclusive rights window expiration date set a year before Petrov's RSL contract is up it will be interesting to see which team chooses to take a chance on Petrov, and when.

Tony Oaks – The Hockey News says Oaks is the best fighter in this year's draft, which is enough to make me curious as to who will draft him.

Coverage of the NHL Draft starts Friday, June 20th at 7:00 PM on Versus in the United States and on TSN in Canada.