



This is part two of my Columbus Blue Jackets' All-Decade Team. I will be writing about my selections for top goaltender, top two defensemen, top three forwards, and best overall player. The second installment will cover the top two defensemen of the decade.

What do Scott Lachance, Mattias Timander, Radim Bicanek and Darrel Scoville have in common? They all played for the Blue Jackets and 99.9% of you reading this have no idea who the hell they are. These four gentlemen, and a handful of other no-namers, have proudly (probably) worn the CBJ crest on their chests.

However, we are not here to discuss these footnotes of Blue Jackets history. Nor will we be discussing any Foote notes. Through ten years of Blue Jackets hockey, draft pick busts and minor league fodder have manned the blue lines. Certainly, there has been a smattering of solid hockey players among the Duvie Westcotts and Derrick Walsers of the franchise. Many of them have been acquired during the Scott Howson regime, so I have largely left them off.

As a defenseman myself, I evaluate the position largely with the eye test. I do not believe that defensemen, for the most part, should have gaudy offensive stat lines. My favorite defensemen

are the guys you do not notice, because, if you do, they have done something wrong. The unsung hero types, if you will.

Over the ten years of the Blue Jackets, the game of hockey has changed dramatically. It is more offensive-minded now and the rules have been morphed to benefit the highly-skilled and speedy forwards. It can be difficult to compare and contrast the pre-lockout NHL and the post-lockout NHL when looking at defensemen. So, with that in mind, my first selection is a guy who has played through both eras.

Rostislav Klesla was the first-ever draft pick of the Columbus Blue Jackets, being chosen fourth overall in the 2000 Entry Draft. His route to the NHL was a bit different from most Czech-born players. At the age of 16, Klesla came stateside to play for the Sioux City Musketeers of the United States Hockey League. Having played two years in North America, where the rinks are smaller than in Europe and the style of play is different from country to country, teams were able to scout Klesla easily and know how he would adapt to the North American game.

It is easy to look at the stats and say that Klesla was a bust as a top five draft pick. He has played in just 483 games over the decade. Injuries have derailed him. Everything from ankle sprains to a horrific torn groin suffered last season, yet Klesla has sauntered on and been one of the most consistent Blue Jackets of the decade. There is no doubt that the team is better with him in the lineup, and that should remain true for the duration of his time as a Jacket.

Jaroslav Spacek played just 153 of the Columbus Blue Jackets 900 or so games of the first decade in franchise history, but his talent and contribution is enough to put him in as the second-best defenseman of the decade. Before Jaroslav Spacek was even drafted in the 1998 NHL Entry Draft, he was already a winner. His draft day was just four months after being a part of the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic Gold Medal Czech Republic Men's Ice Hockey Team. How's that for a prelude?

Spacek was drafted in the fifth round by the Florida Panthers. He was shipped to Chicago in 2000 before becoming a Columbus Blue Jacket in 2002, along with a second round pick (Dan Fritsche) in exchange for Lyle Odelein. Spacek would go on to record 72 points in his 153 games.

The NHL lockout ended his Blue Jackets tenure. Spacek returned to the Czech Republic during the lockout and then signed a couple of one-year contracts before being a crucial part of the Buffalo Sabres. His career is still going strong at the age of 36 and his paycheck is bigger than ever.

Honorable mention: Fedor Tyutin, Ron Hainsey, Adam Foote, Jan Hejda

In current Blue Jackets news, Mathieu Garon recorded his second straight shutout on November 4 against Atlanta. He suffered his first defeat over the weekend in Minnesota, a place where the Jackets have historically struggled. He has forced rookie coach Scott Arniel's hand and it will be interesting to see how the games will be split amongst Garon and Steve Mason.

Steve Mason was aided by three first period goals in an 8-1 rout of the St. Louis Blues on Wednesday night. He still held up his end making 29 of 30 saves in the game.

After a slow start, team catalyst Rick Nash is on a five-game point scoring streak. The team's offense goes as he goes, so getting the captain going is critically important.

Much maligned youngsters Derick Brassard and Jake Voracek seem to be thriving under Scott Arniel's new uptempo system. Brassard entered Wednesday's game leading the team in points and Voracek was tied for second in assists. Voracek had two goals on Wednesday night propelling the Jackets to the win while Brassard added three assists.

Aforementioned Rostislav Klesla is sixth in the league in blocked shots. My kind of stat. He is also leads the league in plus/minus with a +14.

Other news from around the NHL:

Through six home games, both the St. Louis Blues and Los Angeles Kings have allowed just seven goals at home. You may be shocked to find out that both teams are undefeated at home.

In the weekly “beat up on the Devils” note, New Jersey’s powerplay is a pathetic 3-for-46 on the season. They have allowed two shorthanded goals. Without checking, I am sure that more shorthanded goals allowed than powerplay goals scored would be a record. With Parise out for a while, they may still be challenging this record deep in to December. The Devils are the worst team in goals scored per game with 1.66 per.

Perennial worst player in the NHL Derek Boogaard broke a 232-game slump this past week scoring his first goal since January 7, 2005. Boogaard is an enforcer with 565 penalty minutes in 268 games, but it is nearly unfathomable to think that he has to go five years without accidentally scoring a goal.

A minor league update on the Lake Erie Monsters shows that they may enjoy 10:45 a.m. games. The Monsters handed the Hamilton Bulldogs just their second regulation loss on Wednesday morning with a 5-1 win. The win broke a two-game losing streak for the Monsters, but both losses were in overtime.

With a five-game point streak, the Monsters have the second best streak in the AHL right now. The Houston Aeros have points in six straight.

Upcoming schedules:

Columbus: 11/12 v. COL; 11/17 @ LA

Lake Erie: 11/12 v. Milwaukee; 11/13 v. Milwaukee; 11/17 V. Grand Rapids