

Was This Offseason Enough for the Postseason?

By Jesse Almeida 10/21/23

3 games out of 82 down for the Boston Bruins and just like last year, they have started off on the right foot. The Bruins are 3-0-0 with 6 points in the NHL. Last year was a historical season that went to waste. The most points and wins ever in a single season by an NHL team. Bruins fans thought, who could stop us? Well, the Florida Panthers made a remarkable comeback from being down 3-1 against the B's to knock them out 4-3 in the first round. Every Bruins fan wanted the cup desperately. This was their best opportunity since 2019 and they blew it yet again. This time however was different.

Normally as a Bruins fan, you can say that "they'll be back next year" because the core would still be there next season. This time, that was not a guarantee. With Bergeron's future, and Krejci's future in the air, this was the Bruins "last dance" to get a cup. They did not reach the ultimate goal and now Bergeron and Krejci have both retired from the NHL for good. Not only that, there were many key players that were becoming free agents after the season. One name was Dmitry Orlov who came via trade from the Capitals. In his 23 regular season games with Boston, he scored 4 goals, 13 assists, which equals to 17 points, and was a plus 10 on the ice. In the playoffs he had 8 assists and was a -3 on the ice. Orlov was one of the bigger pick ups at the trade deadline and he ended up signing with the Hurricanes who is one of the top teams in the East. The biggest name on the free agency market was Tyler Bertuzzi. Last year, Bertuzzi played in 21 games with the B's in the regular season. He had 4 goals, 12 assists, and a plus minus of 4. In the playoffs, Bertuzzi had 5 goals, 5 assists, and was a -4 on the ice. Tyler Bertuzzi was the Bruins best player in the postseason, and was a player they could not lose. The only problem with this was that the Bruins were facing a salary cap issue. They had about 5 million dollars to play around with and they needed to fill in players who were leaving. So in order to pay Bertuzzi, the Bruins needed to shed off salary. The Bruins made a trade that made fans believe that they were ready to lock up Tyler. They sent Nick Foligno, and Taylor Hall to the Chicago Blackhawks for Ian Mitchell, and Alec Regula. The fact that the Bruins were willing to give up Hall, gave fans the impression that Bertuzzi was coming back. But in reality, the Bruins offered him a multi year deal worth about 5 million dollars per year, and Bertuzzi wanted a longer contract. Tyler could not find the deal that he was looking for and Boston ended up being out of the race for his services. Now Tyler Bertuzzi is on the Toronto Maple Leafs, and the Bruins also do not have Taylor Hall as well.

So what did the Bruins do with their money in free agency? Well, the B's went out and used that money on players who are either in their mid 30s, or on players who could break out when given a shot. One of their offseason moves was getting James Van Riemsdyk. Last year, Van Riemsdyk played in 61 games. He had 12 goals, 17 assists, and was a -3 on the ice. James brings veteran presence in which the Bruins lost. He is 34 years old, and seems like he lost a step compared to his prime years. The biggest question with Van Riemsdyk is can he stay on the ice, and can he be somewhat of a player like he used to. Another move that the Bruins made was bringing back Milan Lucic. The Bruins were Lucic's first NHL team in his career. He was on the Bruins for 8 seasons, and helped propel them to a Stanley Cup in 2011. Lucic at the back end of his career only had 7 goals, 12 assists, and was a -13 on the ice last year. He definitely is not what he was, but he brings something to the Bruins that they lacked. Physicality. We all know that Lucic was a fighter with the "Lucic Fight Club" shirts back in the day, and even to this day he is still a very physical player with a high amount of hits. This is something that the Bruins have lacked in recent years, letting teams push them around and getting out bodied. The final key signing was Morgan Geekie. This was one of those moves where a player could break out with time on the ice. Geekie is 25 years old. Last year with Seattle, Geekie played 69 games with 9 goals, 19 assists, and a plus 14 on the ice. With Bergeron gone, you have Coyle and Zacha as your top 2 centers. There is a chance for Geekie to show that he can be a 3rd line center in the league, but with Matt Poitras looking solid early, Geekie may have to be on the 4th line.

The Bruins are definitely not as talented as before. The Bruins lost many talented players, and leadership that were key to the Bruins success. Will they be as good compared to years past? No. But there are opportunities for young players to show that they can fill those shoes. Are the B's a top 3 team in the NHL? No, but will they miss the playoffs? No. They still have two of the best goalies in the league, their defensive lines are still elite, and the top two lines are still good. The expectations should be the playoffs as seed 5-7, and depending on the match up, possibly winning a series.