

Return of The Big Bad Bruins?

By: Michael Cappola written 2/26/2021

Off to a red hot start, the Boston Bruins have jumped out to a division best 24 points with a record of 11-5-2. However, with some up and down games and inconsistency to beat up on bad teams, do the Bruins have what it takes to win the division and make a deep playoff run? As many Bostonians would like to believe yes, I'm a little more skeptical and realistic on this team. This is by no means overlooking what kind of start they had to the beginning of this year, but with the recent struggles that the Bruins have had there are just some holes that must be addressed by both the players and coaches, as well as the front office.

To start, the goaltending has been mediocre and inconsistent. Tuukka Rask and Jaroslav Halak are 15th and 36th in the league in save percentage respectively and neither ranking in the top 20 in goals against average. To put it simply, they're playing like swiss cheese in net. Some of this might come from young defenders that need more time and experience, but we'll talk about that next. Regardless of the defenders, it seems neither goalie has the superstar mentality and clutch gene needed in the playoffs to win games and be able to stand on their head when needed. Don Sweeney might need to re-evaluate his goaltenders before the deadline and see what else is out there that might improve the position.

As I brought up earlier, the defense is filled with young, still developing talent that needs to start stepping up. With the departures of fan favorites Chara to Washington and Krug to St. Louis, the Bruins have leaned on Charlie McAvoy to lead this group and take on the reigns of the blue line. While three year veteran McAvoy does lead all Bruin skaters with roughly 24 minutes on the ice, the Bruin's second highest time on ice skater is rookie defenseman Urho Vaakanainen with 23 and a half minutes. This might point to recent defensive mistakes and the increase in goals allowed. Although the Bruins probably won't make any changes to the defense at the trade deadline, adding a big body veteran might improve their chances against more physical teams.

Finally, the offense has been enough to win games when needed. In the seven games they've dropped this season, they scored 2+ goals in 5 of them. Most nights, that would win you games with better goaltending. The Bruins are getting their usual domination in the points column from their first line in Bergeron, Marchand, and Pastrnak, but the scoring tapers off from their other three lines. Krejci in 15 games has no goals scored and 10 assists. For a 14 year veteran that makes \$7.25 million, this is unacceptable. Although his presence in the locker room will help a postseason run, moving on from him and finding a cheaper winger and/or defenseman might benefit the production needed to get chippy must needed wins.

These big issues might come up and hurt the Bruins later in the season if not addressed at the deadline by Sweeney. The sense in the industry leads people to believe that they will not move before the deadline but the decrease in recent games might change some thinking. Will Don Sweeney make a move and bring in a big body veteran or another wing scorer? Only time will tell.

(Since the writing of this article, the Bruins added Jarred Tinordi, 6'6 lefty defenseman off waivers from the Nashville Predators. We look forward to seeing what this signing means for our Bruins!)