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### New Jersey Devils Defensemen: Zone Exit and Passing Season Review



Bruce Bennett

This is a review of all the zone exits and passing statistics for the New Jersey Devils Defensemen for the entire 2013-2014 season. Read on for the details.

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This is a look at the zone exit and passing stats for the Devils Defensemen for the 2013-2014 season. The amount of data and words needed to write up the entire team in either category would be overwhelming at this point, so you'll get a Part 1 and Part 2. You'll see several new columns compared to the single-game recaps. All Corsi figures were pulled from ExtraSkater. Time On Ice figures were pulled from NHL.com. Let's get to it.

#### **Terms You May See:**

OS%: Overall Zone Exit Success Percentage

PE%: Percentage of Zone Exits that Maintain Possession

**NZ%:** Defensive Zone Completion Percentage **NZ%:** Neutral Zone Completion Percentage **OZ%:** Offensive Zone Completion Percentage

**D/NZ SAG:** Shot Attempts Generated from beyond the offensive zone **OZ SAG:** Shot Attempts Generated from within the offensive zone

SAG: Shot Attempts Generated

**D/NZ SG:** Shots Generated from beyond the offensive zone **OZ SG:** Shots Generated from within the offensive zone

SG: Shots Generated

SAG/P%: Percentage of pass attempts that result in shot attempts generated

SG/P%: Percentage of pass attempts that result in shots generated

SG/SAG%: Percentage of SAG that result in SG

CF: Total Corsi events for while that player is on the ice

iCF: Total Corsi events for that skater

SAG/CP%: Percentage of Corsi events that occur as a result of that player's SAG

iCF/CP%: Percentage of Corsi events that occur as a result of that player's iCF

CC%: Corsi Contribution Percentage; percentage of Corsi events that the player

directly contributes to (SAG and iCF)

Accuracy: Overall Completion Percentage (total completions/total attempts)

% DZ P: Percentage of that player's passes that occur in the defensive zone

% NZ P: Percentage of that player's passes that occur in the neutral zone

% OZ P: Percentage of that player's passes that occur in the offensive zone

ESM/P: Even Strength Minute per Pass Attempt

ESM/SAG: Even Strength Minute per Shot Attempt Generated

ESM/SG: Even Strength Minute per Shot Generated

Player	GP	Successes	Attempts	% Success Rate	Poss. Exits	% Poss. Exits	Success/GP	Attempts/GP	D-Zone T/GP
Marek Zidlicky	81	599	733	81.7%	335	45.7%	7.4	9.0	1.51
Adam Larsson	26	187	231	81.0%	104	45.0%	7.2	8.9	1.35
Andy Greene	82	684	853	80.2%	370	43.4%	8.3	10.4	1.52
Mark Fayne	72	387	488	79.3%	212	43.4%	5.4	6.8	1.18
Peter Harrold	33	230	308	74.7%	127	41.2%	7.0	9.3	1.73
Eric Gelinas	60	321	432	74.3%	187	43.3%	5.4	7.2	1.55
Bryce Salvador	40	204	294	69.4%	108	36.7%	5.1	7.4	1.78
Anton Volchenkov	56	304	372	81.7%	132	35.5%	5.4	6.6	0.80
Jon Merrill	52	346	430	80.5%	195	45.3%	6.7	8.3	1.23
Totals	502	3262	4141	78.8%	1770	42.7%	6.5	8.2	1.39

Player	GP	DZ C	DZA	NZ C	NZA	OZ C	OZ A	Total C	Total A	DZ%	NZ%	oz%	Accuracy
Marek Zidlicky	81	926	1188	192	242	371	490	1489	1920	77.9%	79.3%	75.7%	77.6%
Adam Larsson	26	325	400	37	42	43	53	405	495	81.3%	88.1%	81.1%	81.8%
Andy Greene	82	1029	1249	192	242	255	321	1476	1812	82.4%	79.3%	79.4%	81.5%
Mark Fayne	72	704	820	122	156	161	183	987	1159	85.9%	78.2%	88.0%	85.2%
Peter Harrold	33	330	423	54	70	101	127	485	620	78.0%	77.1%	79.5%	78.2%
Eric Gelinas	60	606	728	99	130	126	158	831	1016	83.2%	76.2%	79.7%	81.8%
Bryce Salvador	40	382	471	37	53	72	88	491	612	81.1%	69.8%	81.8%	80.2%
Anton Volchenkov	56	351	425	55	70	66	84	472	579	82.6%	78.6%	78.6%	81.5%
Jon Merrill	52	608	696	117	138	154	172	879	1006	87.4%	84.8%	89.5%	87.4%
Totals/Averages	502	5261	6400	905	1143	1349	1676	7515	9219	82.2%	79.2%	80.5%	81.5%

Player	GP	D/NZ SAG	OZ SAG	SAG	D/NZ \$G	OZ \$G	SG	D/NZ \$/\$AG%	oz s/sag%	s/sAG%	SAG/Pass%	SG/Pass%
Marek Zidlicky	81	28	113	188	18	40	58	72.0%	40.8%	47.2%	9.8%	5.2%
Adam Larsson	26	5	7	31	1	2	3	20.0%	28.6%	25.0%	6.3%	0.7%
Andy Greene	82	20	62	108	9	21	30	56.3%	39.6%	43.5%	6.0%	2.9%
Mark Fayne	72	14	55	75	4	13	17	36.4%	29.5%	30.9%	6.5%	2.1%
Peter Harrold	33	7	14	41	5	7	12	71.4%	50.0%	57.1%	6.6%	2.2%
Eric Gelinas	60	10	28	50	4	4	8	50.0%	21.1%	29.6%	4.9%	1.5%
Bryce Salvador	40	5	23	36	4	12	16	80.0%	52.2%	57.1%	5.9%	3.5%
Anton Volchenkov	56	6	16	33	2	4	6	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	5.7%	2.2%
Jon Merrill	52	18	41	60	9	20	29	60.0%	57.1%	58.0%	6.0%	3.7%
Totals/Averages	502	113	359	622	56	123	179	57.7%	40.6%	44.8%	6.7%	3.3%

Player	GP	Team CF	iCF	iCF/Team CF%	SAG/Team CF%	cc%	CF%
Marek Zidlicky	81	1147	168	14.6%	16.4%	31.0%	53.3%
Adam Larsson	26	348	51	14.7%	8.9%	23.6%	55.5%
Andy Greene	82	1233	250	20.3%	8.8%	29.0%	56.3%
Mark Fayne	72	941	182	19.3%	8.0%	27.3%	55.3%
Peter Harrold	33	403	63	15.6%	10.2%	25.8%	54.7%
Eric Gelinas	60	663	170	25.6%	7.5%	33.2%	53.1%
Bryce Salvador	40	494	71	14.4%	7.3%	21.7%	50.4%
Anton Volchenkov	56	573	111	19.4%	5.8%	25.1%	55.0%
Jon Merrill	52	674	109	16.2%	8.9%	25.1%	53.6%
Totals/Averages	502	6476	1175	18.1%	9.6%	27.7%	54.1%

Player	GP	ES TOI/GP	ES TOI Total	ESM/P	ESM/SAG	ESM/SG
Marek Zidlicky	74	18:29	1497:11	0:46	7:57	16:05
Adam Larsson	21	16:24	426:35	0:51	13:45	32:53
Andy Greene	75	18:39	1530:36	0:50	14:10	31:19
Mark Fayne	65	16:16	1171:37	1:00	15:37	48:05
Peter Harrold	28	16:34	547:05	0:52	13:20	16:31
Eric Gelinas	56	14:23	863:52	0:51	17:16	63:07
Bryce Salvador	40	16:15	650:30	1:03	18:04	31:24
Anton Volchenkov	51	12:59	727:40	1:15	22:03	70:35
Jon Merrill	47	17:04	888:01	0:52	14:48	25:00
Totals/Averages	502			0:56	15:13	37:46

Player	GP	% DZ P	% NZ P	% OZ P	o/Dst%
Marek Zidlicky	81	61.9%	12.6%	25.5%	59.0%
Adam Larsson	26	80.8%	8.5%	10.7%	58.0%
Andy Greene	82	68.9%	13.4%	17.7%	47.2%
Mark Fayne	72	70.8%	13.5%	15.8%	47.2%
Peter Harrold	33	68.2%	11.3%	20.5%	50.8%
Eric Gelinas	60	71.7%	12.8%	15.6%	63.3%
Bryce Salvador	40	77.0%	8.7%	14.4%	51.3%
Anton Volchenkov	56	73.4%	12.1%	14.5%	49.7%
Jon Merrill	52	69.2%	13.7%	17.1%	55.5%
Totals/Averages	502	69.4%	12.4%	18.2%	53.6%

Marek Zidlicky: Zidlicky finished the season with a 45.7 PE% and committed 1.5 turnovers in his defensive zone per game. His PE% actually led the Devils defenseman, which is something I would not have seen coming a few months ago. He increased his PE% 1% over the final twenty-three games, so he had to be pretty solid over that split to impact nearly three times as many games by a full percentage point.

Zidlicky finished the season as the least accurate passer on the defense, completing 77.6% of his passes. However, his contribution to the team's offensive output simply cannot be matched by any other defenseman. 9.8% of Zidlicky's passes result in a shot attempt, which is 3.2% percent higher than the next best defenseman (Peter Harrold). 9.8% may not seem like a lot, but when you factor in that Zidlicky attempted 1920 passes this season and almost 10% of them are generating shot attempts, that's a good number of attempts being taken—188 to be exact.

5.2% of Zidlicky's passes result in a shot being generated, which was 1.5% higher than the next best defenseman (<u>Jon Merrill</u>). Zidlicky generated fifty-eight shots. Remember that I wasn't tracking shots that were generated until around the 32nd game this season. Zidlicky does slightly better than generating one shot per game.

Zidlicky ended up contributing to 31% of the on-ice Corsi events: 14.6% of them via his own shot attempts, and 16.4% of them via his direct passes. Zidlicky more than doubled most of his fellow Devils defensemen in terms of his SAG/CF% rate. I think it would be a good idea to bring him back on another one-year deal as no one really distributes the puck the way Zidlicky does. Yes, he's prone to dumb mistakes at times, but this Devils defense is not exactly offensive-minded to begin with, so if you take away Zidlicky, yikes. Of course, the other side of that is that Zidlicky finished the year with "only" a 53.3 CF% in 5-on-5 situations. While that's a good number, it's below the positional average for the Devils. So, he brings a lot to the table, but maybe the Devils wouldn't be so bad off without him.

In terms of his statistics by the minute, Zidlicky attempted a pass every 0:46 of Even Strength Ice Time, generated a shot attempt every 7:57, and generated a shot every 16:05. Zidlicky average 18:29 of ice time at Even Strength, so you see that he was a consistent producer each game.

Zidlicky attempted just over a quarter (25.5%) of his passes in the offensive zone. Zidlicky did face the easiest zone starts apart from <u>Eric Gelinas</u>, but it's understandable that Pete Deboer would want to get Zidlicky as many opportunities in the offensive zone as possible. Even so, considering that 72% of the shot attempts Zidlicky generated from beyond the offensive zone resulted in a shot on goal, he's just as efficient elsewhere on the ice.

Andy Greene: Greene saw his PE% slide from 44.3% to 43.4% as he continued to regress. He actually turned the puck over slightly more than Zidlicky, which is disappointing to see. Of course, the two of them have the puck an awful lot, so turnovers are more likely to happen the more often they have the puck.

Greene finished the season right at the average mark for defensemen in terms of his passing accuracy. He completed 1476 passes and attempted 1812. He was just below average in terms of his SAG/Pass% and SG/Pass% among defensemen. Greene actually attempted more shots than I thought he would this season, with 250 attempts, accounting for 20.3% of the shot attempts while on the ice. Adding the 108 shot attempts Greene generated via his passing, he finished the year contributing to 29% of the team's on-ice Corsi events. Greene also finished the season with the highest CF% of the defensemen at 56.3%.

Regarding how active Greene is, he attempts a pass every 0:50 of Even Strength play, generates a shot attempt every 14:10, and generates a shot every 31:19. Greene contributes more to the team's Corsi totals by his own attempts, so it's overly concerning how rare his shot-generation is, but if he could generate more offense then I feel he'd become that much more dominant.

Territorially, Greene saw the most difficult zone starts at 47.2%, which was tied with his partner, <u>Mark Fayne</u>. He still managed to get forward enough to attempt 17.7% of his passes in the offensive zone and 13.4% of his passes in the neutral zone.

**Mark Fayne:** Fayne finished with an identical PE% of his defense partner, Greene. He did slightly better over the final twenty-three games than in the first three-quarters of the season, and lowered his turnovers by an even better margin.

Fayne finished as the 2nd most accurate passer of the defensemen, trailing on Jon Merrill. Fayne completed 987 passes out of 1159 attempts on the year, good for an 85.2% completion rate. He finished with nearly identical rates as Andy Greene regarding the percentage of passes that resulted in shot attempts (6.6%) and shots (2.1%). Fayne had very poor shot attempt version rate, as only 30.9% of his SAG totals resulted in a shot on net.

Fayne contributed to 27.3% of the team's Corsi totals while he was on the ice. Unimpressive shot-generation numbers aside, Fayne posted a solid 55.3

CF% in a case where limiting the opposition's chances influenced his Corsi rate rather than his own production in all likelihood. He's a solid defenseman alongside Greene and I'd hope he's brought back next year.

Fayne attempted a pass every 1:00 of Even Strength ice time, generated a shot attempt every 15:37, and generated a shot every 48:05. Territorially, Fayne posted similar numbers as Greene, but slightly more conservative with 70.8% of his passes originating in the defensive zone.

**Eric Gelinas:** Gelinas played in sixty games this season, but it seemed like less considering how much debate there was over him getting sent to Albany or getting scratched. Sixty games is a lot for a rookie. Gelinas improved enough in the zone exit phase of the game over his final sixteen games to raise his PE% to 43.3% and cut down his turnovers to one-and-a-half per game, which is still not great, but he was just about the same as Greene and Zidlicky. So, people can say Gelinas wasn't good in his own end with the puck (and he wasn't), but he's better than Salvador and Harrold.

Gelinas finished slightly above average for the position with regards to his passing accuracy, completing 831/1016 passes for a completion rate of 81.8%. He wasn't great on generating offense for others as he possesses a shot unlike any other defenseman in the Devils system. Gelinas attempts 25.6% of the shots taken while on the ice and contributes to 33.2% of his team's Corsi totals. He has the highest CC% of the Devils defensemen, but still posted a 53.1% CF%, just below average for the Devils defensemen.

Gelinas attempted a pass every 1:03 on the ice, generated a shot attempt every 18:04, and generated a shot every 63:07, which was just behind Anton Volchenkov for worst on the blue line. Again, his teammates are looking for him to shoot, so these numbers will always be a bit behind other defensemen, but you'd hope he could distribute a bit more efficiently next season.

Territorially, Gelinas received the most generous zone starts of any defensemen and only managed 15.6% of his pass attempts from the offensive zone. Put another way, Fayne started in the offensive zone 16% less often, and attempted 0.2% more of his passes in the offensive zone when compared to Gelinas. Yikes.

**Jon Merrill:** Merrill started very strong in the zone exit phase, but has come way back down to Earth. In the twenty games he played since the Olympic Break, his PE% fell by 0.9%, but his turnovers improved slightly. He's just behind Zidlicky and slightly ahead of Larsson on the blue line in PE%, but he turns the puck over less than both of them. Solid first year for Merrill.

Merrill finished the season as the most accurate passer among defensemen. He complete d 879/1006 passes. 6% of Merrill's passes resulted in shot attempts and 3.7% of his passes resulted in shots. That was the lowest difference between the two, suggesting that Merrill's passes have a better chance of resulting in a shot on goal. In fact, his S/SAG% was the highest on the blue line at 58%.

Merrill contributed to 25.1% of the team's on-ice Corsi Events, which is below average for the group, suggesting more of a conservative approach by Merrill. He was below the positional average for both iCF events and SAG events as part of his Corsi Contribution percentage.

Merrill attempted a pass every 0:52 of Even Strength, generated a shot attempt every 14:48, and generated a shot every 25:00. The time between generating a shot attempt and a shot was only 10:12, the third shortest duration between the two events and behind only Peter Harrold and Marek Zidlicky.

Territorially, Merrill saw favorable zone starts at 55.5% and fit in about average for the position with respect to his pass by zone percentages.

**Anton Volchenkov:** Volchenkov turns the puck over the least of any defenseman and by a fair margin as well. His PE% is never going to be high, or even average (35.5%, lowest on the blue line), but he's a PK specialist, 3rd pairing defenseman who can be good in some spots. If his contract was \$2 million rather than the \$4+ it is currently, I think we'd talk about this as being a decent signing. The PK has been tops in the league two of the last three years and Volchenkov has been a fixture on it, so he does some things right, but everything he does can be done by Merrill, Larsson, or Fayne even for cheaper.

Volchenkov is about average in terms of accuracy among the Devils backend. He doesn't get forward a whole lot, nor does he even attempt passes all that frequently. He attempts a pass every 1:15, which is twelve seconds more than the next defenseman, <u>Bryce Salvador</u>. Volchenkov generates a shot every 70:35, which is about five-and-a-third games for him when you look at the fact he spends 12:59 a game on the ice at Even Strength.

Volchenkov contributes to 25.1% of the team's Corsi events, identical to Jon Merrill. He did finish with a 55% Corsi rate, so he's on the plus side of things and perhaps he's doing things well positionally, away from the puck, which we don't track or can easily reference. This is something I hope to do some work with next season.

Territorially, Volchenkov receives the third-lowest zone starts on the team at 49.7%, and attempts 73.4% of his passes from his own end of the ice. He's not here for his passing or shot-generation abilities, but Volchenkov is a decent third-pairing defenseman. If only he wasn't paid like a second-pairing defenseman.

**Bryce Salvador:** The Captain. Mercifully, Salvador played in only forty games for the Devils this season. He finished 1.2% above Volchenkov in PE%, which means he's among the worst players exiting the zone with possession. He turns the puck over the most out of any defenseman. Your Captain.

Salvador does do some things well. He had the highest shot attempt conversion rate when generating shots from beyond the offensive zone (80%). Overall his S/SAG% was just behind Merrill's at 57.1%. Overall, Salvador contributed to 21.7% of his team's Corsi events while on the ice. He finished with the lowest CF% among Devils defensemen at 50.4%, which is still a positive number, but he just barely kept pace with the opposition while on the ice.

Salvador attempts a pass every 1:03, generates a shot attempt every 18:04, and generates a shot every 31:24. Territorially, he's faced easiest zone starts as the season progressed, but attempts the second highest percentage of passes in the defensive zone (77%), behind only <u>Adam Larsson</u>. Salvador may do a few things well, but overall he's a third-pairing defenseman at best with limited ability to successfully exit with possession and contribute to one of the league's best possession teams.

**Adam Larsson:** Larsson returned to the lineup for six games since he last had any change in this charts, but it wasn't for the better. He had some good games and some bad games, but overall his PE% dropped 1% to 45%, and his turnovers increased slightly. He still finished as the third best defenseman by possession exit percentage, behind Zidlicky and Merrill.

Larsson completed 405/495 passes to finish just above average at 81.5% accuracy. He only played in six games after I started tracking shots generated off of passes, and averaged half-a-shot generated each game. 6.3% of Larsson's passes resulted in a shot attempt, which was right in line with Greene

and Fayne's production. Larsson contributed to 23.6% of his team's Corsi events while on the ice, 4% lower than the positional average on the Devils. Next season, I'm sure many Devils fans would like to see Larsson contribute more offensively, not even in points, but just by being involved more often. He seemed to do quite well when paired with Eric Gelinas, so perhaps that's a pairing we'll see in training camp.

Larsson attempted a pass every 0:51 of Even Strength ice time, generated a shot attempt every 13:45, and generated a shot every 32:53. So, you can see he had the puck as frequently as Andy Greene, generated shot attempts at a faster clip than anyone except for Zidlicky and Harrold, but didn't do as well when generating shots. Territorially, Larsson has very generous zone starts at 58%, but 80.8% of his pass attempts were within the defensive zone, suggesting he wasn't as active offensively once he made the initial breakout pass. He did finish with a 55.5% Corsi rate, beyond only Andy Greene.

**Peter Harrold:** Harrold finished just behind Salvador for the most defensive zone turnovers per game on the team. He did much better in his last nine games over his first twenty-four, lowering his total by almost half a turnover per game. He also raised his PE% to 41.2%, but that is still quite low on even a below-average Devils blue line. He's a fine 7th Defenseman, but that's all he is.

Harrold completed 485/620 passes this season, a 78.2% completion rate. He tied with Merrill with one of the higher S/SAG% rates at 57.1%, suggesting the attempts he generates for other players are of a high quality. 6.6% of his passes result in shot attempts, while only 2.2% result in shots. He's taking more passes than others to generate those shot attempts, but more often than not, they are resulting in a shot on goal.

Harrold contributed to 25.8% of the team's Corsi events while on the ice, 1.9% below the positional average. He was the only defensemen besides Zidlicky to have more than 10% of his CC% made up of his SAG figures. Harrold can be injected into a lineup if it were missing Zidlicky, but with Zid here, there's no reason to have Harrold in the lineup.

Harrold attempted a pass every 0:52, generated a shot attempt every 13:20, and generated a shot every 16:31. He was very efficient and frequently on the puck and created opportunities for his teammates to shoot. Territorially, he had a similar breakdown to Andy Greene, with a slight increase in his zone starts and, as a result, percentage of pass attempts in the offensive zone. Again, he's a serviceable 6th/7th defensemen if you're looking for a little more offense from the back end, but at the expense of defensive responsibilities or consistency exiting the zone. He's the opposite of Volchenkov, really.

#### Musings

Some things were made abundantly clear this season: Marek Zidlicky's prowess with puck and penchant for turning it over or making a boneheaded play on defense, Anton Volchenkov and Peter Harrold's offensive and defensive limitations respectively, Bryce Salvador's rapid decline as an NHL Defenseman, and the overall reliability and consistency in the top pairing of Andy Greene and Mark Fayne.

What we did not expect was the emergence of Eric Gelinas and Jon Merrill, both of which bring significant skill and upside to the Devils' backend. Adam Larsson featured early on in the season until sidelined by injury, but certainly should have a place going into next season. He just needs someone like Gelinas alongside him to get him going.

I feel these are good stats to use for comparison over the summer (more on that below) and we won't know for sure who truly excels, is average at, or is poor at, these various statistics until more data is collected. However, there is now more detailed data available to know just how ineffective Bryce Salvador was this season and tangible proof of why he's not even one of the best six defensemen in New Jersey, let alone should be the Captain. I could

make an argument that Peter Harrold deserves a spot over Salvador.

Also, I have to make the case for re-signing Marek Zidlicky as no one's passes generate the offense that his do. Perhaps he becomes expendable during the season if Merrill, Gelinas, and Larsson continue to develop, but right now he's needed.

#### Over the Summer and Beyond

I've mentioned that over the summer I'll be tracking opponent's stats and comparing them to the Devils. I'll post my findings every ten games and see what trends develop. I'm keeping a tentative plan of trying to get ten games done each month, so my last post should be in September right before the season starts as a nice way to kick it off. Keep an eye out for those.

The added benefit of doing this is that with more opposition data, we can start to see what standards are set by other teams and compare them to the Devils players. How well do they stack up versus their opposition over twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty games? We'll find out over time.

Also, for next season I've thought about different ways to add to these stats. One of these new stats I'm going to track will be passes in the Scoring Chance area of the ice—the "home plate" area from the faceoff circles down to the goal. These would simply be a way of isolating passes made into this area of the ice and see who is best at setting up scoring chances.

Some other things I've thought about were pressure or forechecking stats. Basically, when one player presses another in each zone, what is the result? Do they force a turnover? Break up a pass? Force the opposition to skate or pass backwards? Lateral? There's a tremendous amount of off-the-puck stats that aren't being tracked and I feel this might be a good introduction to that. Challenging players that carry the puck into the zone and so forth.

Now, all of this is would be great to have, but I can't do it alone. I have a newborn on the way and that will impact my time to track everything. If anyone is interested in working with me in terms of tracking and making sense of all of this data, don't be shy. Let me know and we'll discuss.

#### **Your Thoughts**

Lastly, you've had to put up with my excel spreadsheets and stats all season, what did you think of them? How can we use this information going forward to better analyze and evaluate players? What are some changes you'd like to see for next season? In content or presentation? Sound off below and I'll do my best to respond to each one.



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- 2013-2014 devils season

#### **Teams**

• New Jersey Devils

#### **Players**

Marek Zidlicky

- Adam Larsson
- Andy Greene
- Mark Fayne
- Peter Harrold
- Eric Gelinas
- Bryce Salvador
- Anton Volchenkov
- Jon Merrill

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# Nothing further to add because you hit the nail right on the head here. :)

by BrockRocks on Apr 21, 2014 | 12:25 PM reply



# **comment collapsed**

I'm late to the party, so please excuse the basic question. What is the difference between a pass that results in a shot attempt and a pass that leads to a shot being generated? [9.8% of Zidlicky's passes result in a shot attempt, 5.2% of Zidlicky's passes result in a shot being generated.] Is the first for shots directed at net (the corsi or fenwick definition) and the second for actual shots on goal?

Interesting stuff. Hopefully in the near future the community will come up with some neat ways to display this info, but until then I'm cool with spreadsheets.

As for how to use this info moving forward, I think as we get more data (more teams, more seasons), we will be better able to pull out what is important and what is noise. Turnovers is one of those stats that is probably not worth a ton. The more you have the puck, the more chances you have to turn it over. The more you push the play, the more chances to turn it over. But those two traits (having the puck and pushing the play) are good traits. Similar to zone entries, carrying the puck in is riskier, but worth it as long as you have some minimum success rate. Now we just need to know the minimum success rates for defensemen.

by NJHockey8 on Apr 21, 2014 | 2:32 PM reply

### **comment collapsed**

Yes, shot attempts generated is essential Corsi generated. Shots generated is just that: a shot on goal. It's a way to measure efficiency in the attempts each player generates.

Correct, more data is always good. As I track more of the opposition data from this past season, trends will emerge as to what matters more than others. Turnovers as a whole might not be worth a ton, but in isolating one phase of the game—in this case, zone exits—it helps peel back another layer as to who is effective and to who is not. Salvador led the defensemen in defensive zone turnovers per game, but was only middle of the road in exit attempts per game. I think it matters more in the defensive zone then say, in your example, entering the zone, because of the inherent risk of gifting possession to the opposition so close to your own goal.

Not all turnovers are created equally, but overall, yes, the more possession you have, the more you will turn the puck over.

by Ryan Stimson on Apr 21, 2014 | 3:53 PM up reply



## comment collapsed

We agree. I should have clarified, the turnovers I was referencing was the generic, all zone turnover in the box score. Rate stats can often be the best (such as in your Salvador example) as long as you have a large enough sample.

It's great that the community is getting at ways to better evaluate defensemen. Maybe we'll even get to a point where the Norris doesn't go to a scoring D.

by NJHockey8 on Apr 21, 2014 | 9:03 PM up reply



## comment collapsed

Interesting stuff, thanks for all your work. During the Olympic Break you took a look at the defensemen and offered your thoughts as far as pairings were concerned. What pairings would you like to see for next year? Your article seems to advocate for resigning Zids and Fayne (I can't say I disagree).

How about compliance buyout? Salvador or Volchenkov?

by NJmetal15 on Apr 21, 2014 | 8:32 PM reply

### **comment collapsed**

Ideally, I'd like to just bring back Fayne-Greene, Larsson-Gelinas, and Merrill-Zidlicky, but I don't think that will happen. I think we might see one of Salvador/Volchenkov either bought out or traded, but to have both exit New Jersey would be too good to be true. Zidlicky brings something to the position that no other defenseman does, so he'd be re-signed before Fayne, I think. Fayne might end up being the odd man out if Lou can't/won't move/buy out Salvador or Volchenkov.

by Ryan Stimson on Apr 22, 2014 | 9:28 AM up reply



### **comment** collapsed

Ignoring costs, if you could have your starting 6, who is the 7th D, Harrold, Volchenkov, or other? The main 6 has some offense potential, relative to the past few seasons of Devils hockey, so maybe Volchenkov is the better bet.

by NJHockey8 on Apr 22, 2014 | 3:22 PM up reply



### **Nevermind**

I typed this before reading what you wrote below and then didn't get to the edit button in time.

by NJHockey8 on Apr 22, 2014 | 3:25 PM up reply

## comment collapsed

The conclusion that these numbers keep pushing me towards is something I believe most of us already suspect: Bryce Salvador is a really, really lousy defenseman. It's a shame that we're not likely to see Salvador expunged this summer, either by trade or (more likely) by buyout, because he's simply worse than anything else on offer in the organization.

Any chance you could drop these analyses on Lou Lamoriello's desk.... say in boldface, 96-point font to get his attention?

by acasser on Apr 21, 2014 | 8:37 PM reply



### **Well**

They're gonna buy *someone* out. You think that could be Volchenkov? It seems PDB like him a lot less than Sal.

I have respect for most sports fans with 2 exceptions: NY Ranger fans who grew up in New Jersey, and Dallas Cowboy fans who can't name the capital of Texas. <a href="mailto:ansiersey">ansiersey</a>

by Cherno77 on Apr 21, 2014 | 9:21 PM up reply

# **s** comment collapsed

One HOPES they're going to buy one of the two brontosaurs out, but there's no guarantee of it happening. And there are plenty of good points on either side of the ledger to make *Salvador v. Volchenkov* a very healthy debate to be had.

My hope would be that Lou Lamoriello could find a sucker trading partner to take the last year of Bryce Salvador's contract off our hands and then to use the remaining compliance buyout on Anton Volchenkov. Or that Lamoriello would simply waive/release Salvador and buyout Volchenkov. Or even to eat some salary to trade Volchenkov and then deep-six Captain Sal. But if none of those are possible, I believe it would be preferable to keep Volchenkov around because he's simply the better player — and by enough that the difference in their paychecks doesn't deter me — and then try to trade A-Train next summer when he's entering the final year of his deal.

by acasser on Apr 21, 2014 | 9:36 PM up reply



# **comment collapsed**

I wonder if you could move Volchenkov retaining 2 mil? Lot of GMs like a dman that can hit, and he had an up year. Then you compliance Sal. Problem solved.

"My shot is like US missile... it always find the target." "Sometimes he [Marty] pass it better than our defense." ""I love Lou. He's honest. If you play bad, he'll tell you." - J Jagr

by Bar Man on Apr 22, 2014 | 12:36 AM up reply

## **comment collapsed**

Another option would be to keep the two F.As, dispose of sal, and rotate Gelinas and Volchenkov in the top 6 with Harrold as no.8. This isn't my first choice, but it is easier than what I want to do. Some may not like paying a 6/7 defenseman over 4 mill though.

How it would look:

Greene – Fayne

Merrill – Zid

Gelinas / Volch - Larsson

Harrold

by yaydevils on Apr 22, 2014 | 8:02 AM up reply

### comment collapsed

Some may not like paying a 6/7 defenseman over 4 mill though.

This is one of those fallacies that rears its ugly head all the time in sports, that a player's paycheck gets to dictate things such as playing time. Barring a trade, Anton Volchenkov's salary is a "sunk cost" to me at this stage — he gets to collect his \$4.25 million whether he's healthy or injured, playing in Newark or Albany or sitting in a press box somewhere. Therefore, there's no particular reason why he should be playing if there are superior alternatives at hand because it's not like there's a bonus in his contract where he gets paid extra to be a healthy scratch.

In defense of sports franchises that repeatedly forget this basic tenet, it's not like they're the only ones. Businesses of all sorts make these shortsighted decisions all the time in all sorts of other areas.

by acasser on Apr 22, 2014 | 6:21 PM up reply

# comment collapsed

By no means does it frustrate me that he is scratched and paid the big bucks, yet around the sports world, frequently overpriced players are played so

that it feels like they are getting something out of it. Personally, my view is that if you've already wasted your money, then don't waste other things like time and a roster spot

by yaydevils on Apr 22, 2014 | 7:16 PM up reply

## comment collapsed

Any chance you could drop these analyses on Lou Lamoriello's desk.... say in boldface, 96-point font to get his attention?

We could only hope.

I agree with your take on Salvador vs. A-Train and the last compliance buyout. If I could only keep one, it would be A-Train since he's better right now.

I wonder if the organization trusts Larsson, Gelinas, and Merrill enough to all be on the big club next year. Barring trade, we know Greene will be back. We know Harrold will serve at the 7th D-man. Salbatross and Volchenkov are both signed for at least next year, and as Ryan points out, you can make a case for Fayne and Zid coming back. Not a lot of spots to work with if they bring back all of the vets, and I guess we won't really know until the Devils either make a trade or use their buyout.

by TheJRod2006 on Apr 22, 2014 | 12:16 AM up reply

## **a** comment collapsed

I think the issue is the number of spots. Larsson, Merrill, and, to a lesser extent, Gelinas, all seem ready for regular roles in New Jersey. Greene is here already, so there's four. You have two spots for Salvador, Volchenkov, Harrold, who are all here at least one more season. If Fayne/Zidlicky come back, you'd think maybe one of the younger defensemen is traded to a forward-heavy team like Edmonton/Winnipeg that could really use some help on the back end.

If Volchenkov is dealt/bought out, I can deal with one more year of Salvador before his contract runs out. I think if we were to be informed both would be gone by next summer, we'd all sign up for that.

The other thing here is that the Devils should have extra cap space with Brodeur's contract expiring. Provided he's not brought back, maybe there's some extra \$\$\$ the Devils can use on their defense. I haven't look too closely at the Free Agent market for defensemen, but it gives them more flexibility if they trade for someone with a higher cap number, or go after a UFA forward like Paul Statsny, who will likely command a good chunk of change.

It'll be an interesting summer.

by Ryan Stimson on Apr 22, 2014 | 9:35 AM up reply

## comment collapsed

I think the issue is the number of spots.

Not that I'm particularly fond of the idea, but the Devils have demonstrated a willingness to construct an active roster with 13 forwards and 8 defensemen for long stretches in each of the last two years. If they're willing to do this again next year, there's no reason why Management wouldn't simply expunge one of Salvador/Volchenkov and simply carry the other plus Greene-Fayne-Larsson-Gelinas-Merrill-Zidlicky-Harrold.... and use Peter Harrold as the "14th forward" if that truly becomes necessary.

More than that, it's not like Salvador and Volchenkov (among others) have demonstrated a capability to remain healthy on a consistent basis. Even if both of them are on the roster (and one or both of Fayne and Zidlicky are gone), you're probably going to need an additional body or two at some point to fill in for them.

by acasser on Apr 22, 2014 | 6:14 PM up reply

## comment collapsed

I don't know if I'd make it out of the building alive.

Until I get deeper into the opposition data, a lot of these stats will do just that: confirm what we already know/suspect. There's little to compare to at this point, but in time that will be another bonus.

by Ryan Stimson on Apr 22, 2014 | 9:30 AM up reply



### comment collapsed

I would be surprised if the Director of Statistical Analysis – whoever they hired for that – didn't consider this site and your posts in particular a must read. Your PE%, CC%, and OZ%, NZ% and DZ% are data points he or she can't get anywhere else.

"My shot is like US missile... it always find the target." "Sometimes he [Marty] pass it better than our defense." ""I love Lou. He's honest. If you play bad, he'll tell you." - J Jagr

by Bar Man on Apr 22, 2014 | 11:05 AM up reply

