



Nicklas Lidstrom
of the NHL
champion Detroit
Red Wings

THE PLUSSES AND MINUSES OF HOCKEY

NHL defensemen are judged by the plus/minus stat.

We're two months into the 2008-09 National Hockey League season and, as usual, the Detroit Red Wings are playing to win. Last spring, Detroit won the 2008 Stanley Cup championship, making it 4 titles in the past 11 seasons. No other team has won more than *one* Stanley Cup during that span!

To excel in the NHL, teams rely on stellar play from their defensemen. Sure, the goal

scorers receive most of the glory, but without talented defensemen, NHL teams struggle to win on a consistent basis.

One statistic used to compare NHL defensemen is *plus/minus* (sometimes written *+/-*), which measures a team's goal differential while a particular player is on the ice. A player's plus/minus increases by 1 every time his team scores (while that player is on the ice) but decreases by 1 when the opposing team scores.

The greater the plus/minus number, the better. If the other team scores more than the player's team while that player is in the game, the player's plus/minus will be a negative number.

Last season, the Red Wings' Nicklas Lidstrom led all NHL defensemen with a plus/minus of 40. And in last year's playoffs, his teammate Niklas Kronwall had a plus/minus of 16, tops for all defensemen in postseason action. No wonder the Red Wings won it all!

Take a shot at our plus/minus questions. Your *goal* is to answer them all correctly!

—by Bill Wise

WHAT TO DO

Read "Calculating Plus/Minus" below. Use the information to answer the questions. You should be able to do the math in your head!

CALCULATING PLUS/MINUS

A player's total plus/minus is the sum of his plus/minus results from each game. After each game, that game's plus/minus is added to the player's previous total.

- ✓ Adding a negative number is the same as subtracting the number. ($6 + -2 = 6 - 2 = 4$)
- ✓ If you're starting with a negative number, think of its location on the number line before adding (right on the number line) or subtracting (left on the number line).

Example: Niklas Kronwall's plus/minus results from Detroit's 6 first-round playoff games last year were 1, 0, -1, -1, 2, 0. What was his total plus/minus for the series?

$$1 + 0 = 1$$

$$1 - 1 = 0$$

$$0 - 1 = -1$$

$$-1 + 2 = 1$$

$$1 + 0 = 1$$

Kronwall's total plus/minus was 1.

1 Here are Martin Skoula's plus/minus results for the Minnesota Wild's 6 playoff games in 2008: 0, -1, 1, -1, 0, 0. What was his total plus/minus?

2 In the Red Wings' first-round series last year, Niklas Lidstrom's plus/minus results were: 2, 1, -2, 0, -1, 2. What was his total plus/minus?

3 Here are Christian Ehrhoff's plus/minus results for the San Jose Sharks' 10 playoff games in 2008: 1, 2, -2, 3, -2, -2, -1, 1, 2, -1. What was his total plus/minus?

4 Montreal Canadiens star Andrei Markov posted the following plus/minus numbers in last year's playoffs: 0, 0, 0, 0, -2, 1, 1, 1, -1, -1, -1, 2. What was his total plus/minus?

5 Pittsburgh Penguins superstar Sidney Crosby is not a defenseman, but we included him anyway! Here are his plus/minus numbers from the 2008 playoffs: 0, 0, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0, -1, 1, 1, 0, 2, -1, 2, -1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0. What was his total plus/minus?

6 In last year's playoffs, Braydon Coburn of the Philadelphia Flyers had a total plus/minus of 4. Here are his plus/minus results for 13 of the 14 games: 2, 1, 0, 2, -1, -1, 0, -1, 2, 1, 2, -1, 0. What was his plus/minus for the missing game?

WEB WISE

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Andrei Markov (right) of the Montreal Canadiens on defense!

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