

Stastny Makes Vegas Dangerous Down Middle

By Dave Lukow

The Vegas Golden Knights have lost key players, but Paul Stastny may ease the sting.

A 32-year-old center, Stastny signed with Vegas as an unrestricted free agent July 1. Under the terms of the deal, Stastny will get \$19.5 million over three years. The addition of the veteran pivot helps offset the scoring and leadership lost when winger James Neal signed with Calgary and David Perron left for St. Louis.

Stastny spent the 2017-18 season with Winnipeg and the Blues. He finished with 16 goals and 53 points in 82 games. In 17 playoff appearances with the Jets, he had six goals and nine assists.

Drafted in the second round by Colorado in 2005, Stastny played for the Avalanche from 2006-14. In 824 games, he has 220 goals and 646 points. For the postseason, he's totaled 20 goals and 30 assists in 72 games.

The addition of Stastny makes the Golden Knights deep - and lethal - at center.

Last season, William Karlsson, who's just 25, totaled 43 goals and 35 assists. Erik Haula had 29 goals and 26 assists in 76 games. Cody Eakin, likely the team's fourth center, played in 80 games for Vegas. He had 11 goals and 16 assists. His faceoff percentage was 52.12.

Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, who also plays left wing, had a faceoff percentage of 51.15 in 72 games. He netted six goals and had 10 assists. The 33-year-old Frenchman added three assists in 20 playoff games.

Cody Glass, 19, was taken in the first round (sixth overall) by Vegas in 2017. In 64 games with Portland of the WHL, Glass had 37 goals and 102 points. The 6-foot-2 Winnipeg native finished the WHL playoffs with 13 points in 12 games.

Along with Stastny, another important signing for Vegas was 6-foot-4 defenseman Nick Holden. In 73 games with the Rangers and Bruins last season, Holden had four goals and 17 points. He's accumulated 36 goals, 112 points and 123 penalty minutes in 374 NHL games. In 20 playoff contests, he has five goals and nine points.