As mentioned in my main page weekly NHL update , the Eastern Conference playoff pairings had not yet been determined at the time it was published, so here's a quick synopsis of the Eastern Conference matchups.

#1 New York Rangers v. #7 Washington Capitals

The Rangers snuck past the Ottawa Senators while the Capitals disposed of the reigning Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins in overtime of Game Seven on the road. Braden Holtby stole the show for the Caps, stopping 233 of 248 shots on goal in the seven games. The Rangers certainly struggled with the Senators as both teams experienced injuries to key players in the series. Now, the Rangers get to start fresh and play another low-seeded opponent where they are decidedly favored.

How the Rangers can win: Control the tempo. The Rangers got into bad habits in the Ottawa series trying to match Ottawa's speed and by getting sucked down into the offensive zone because of Ottawa's defensemen and their aggressive play. The Capitals also present a speed mismatch for the Rangers. If the Rangers are able to play a more physical game and clog up

the neutral zone, they should have success neutralizing the Capitals' speed advantage. Easier said than done and Alex Ovechkin was very quiet in the Boston series.

How the Capitals can win: Play with heart. My biggest concern about the Capitals all along has been their leadership and unwillingness to do the little things. Normally one-dimensional Russian forward Alexander Semin was the best player in the first round for the Capitals because he blocked shots, won board battles, and played unusually physical. The rest of the Capitals fed off his demeanor and played with a lot of heart. They'll need to keep doing the same against a more physical team like the Rangers.

Deciding factor: Goaltending. Henrik Lundqvist has been saddled with the label of a "playoff choker". Braden Holtby was the unknown guy who played out of his mind in the first few games of the first round. Both goaltenders must continue to be good. If one sags just a little bit, it could decide the series.

Prediction: Rangers in 5. The Capitals are a talented team, but the Rangers had their scare and have gotten a few days off to get healthy and get re-focused. The Capitals played out of character in the first round and I'm skeptical that it will continue.

#5 Philadelphia Flyers v. #6 New Jersey Devils

The Flyers have spent a lot of time practicing and relaxing as they won their series against the Pittsburgh Penguins in six games while the other three Eastern Conference series went seven. The Flyers took advantage of an undisciplined Penguins team while the Devils battled with the Florida Panthers in a series where neither team put together 60 (or more) consistent minutes in a game. Both teams blew big leads and the Devils eventually won the series in Game Seven's double overtime.

How the Flyers can win: Be the better team. The Flyers are the better team on paper. The only question mark is goaltender Ilya Bryzgalov. He was good in Game Six and will have to

build on that success. The Flyers have more skill, toughness, and tenacity than the Devils. The only way they can lose this series is if they allow themselves to abandon their gameplan and let the Devils dictate everything.

How the Devils can win: Have 2003 Martin Brodeur show up. Martin Brodeur looked very iffy during his first round series. He'll have to be the best New Jersey Devil for an upset to happen in this series. The aging Brodeur is nearing the end of the road and he'll need one more triumphant postseason run in order to propel his team to the Eastern Conference Finals.

Deciding factor: The New Jersey Devils defensemen. If they drastically overachieve and contain the Flyers' forwards, this could be a shocker. If they become pylons, the Flyers will end this in a hurry.

Prediction: Flyers in 5. This'll be a quick one too. The Flyers have too much talent and Martin Brodeur isn't the guy he used to be. It's a very difficult matchup for the Devils, who would be on the golf course already if they had to play anybody other than the Panthers in the first round. And they still barely got past them. It'll be a near-miracle if the Devils win this series.