Eight months of hockey have now come down to a best-of-seven series to crown a champion. Four wins are all that remain for either the Los Angeles Kings or the New Jersey Devils. In the back of every player's mind are plans for what they'll do during their day with the Stanley Cup or dreaming about what the downtown parade will look like. It all begins tonight.

This year's Stanley Cup Final features a lot of guys who have never been there and one guy who is looking to go out atop the mountain. Zach Parise and Dustin Brown get a shot at redemption after falling short for the 2010 US Men's Olympic Hockey Team. Martin Brodeur will try to hoist the Cup one more time before walking away from his illustrious career. Players like Willie Mitchell and Johan Hedberg, guys who have paid their dues, and beaten their bodies up for the love of the game have their chance at the ultimate prize. Jonathan Quick, perhaps the best young goaltender in the game, and probable US Olympic Team starting goaltender in Sochi for the 2014 Olympics, could become the first US-born starting goaltender to win the Cup since Mike Richter of the New York Rangers in 1994.

If you want to talk about unlikely teams to play for a championship, look no further than these two. This is the first time in Stanley Cup history that a #6 seed and a #8 seed will meet in the finals. The Kings mowed through the top three seeds, Vancouver, St. Louis, and Phoenix, in the Western Conference while the Devils beat the third-seeded Florida Panthers, the fifth-seeded Philadelphia Flyers, and the top-seeded Rangers.

How did the Kings get here? They peaked at the right time and really bought in to the Coach Darryl Sutter's gameplan. The Kings were hovering around the .500 mark at mid-season when they fired Coach Terry Murray and, four games later, replaced interim coach John Stevens with Sutter. The Kings, factoring in overtime losses, lost more games than they won during the regular season. Some savvy front office moves by GM Dean Lombardi, including the acquisition of Jeff Carter from Columbus, propelled the team into the playoffs and now all the way to the finals.

How did the Devils get here? Martin Brodeur shook off the signs of age and the Devils played a solid team game and strong defense. Brodeur, who turned 40 earlier in May, missed the playoffs last season for the first time since the 1995-96 season. There was talk of retirement after last year, a year where Brodeur really struggled and the signs of aging were clearly evident. Yet, now, here he is, attempting to win his fourth Stanley Cup and, presumably, go out on top.

The Kings have allowed just 22 goals in 14 games, an incredible number, especially keeping in mind the teams that they've played. The Devils have allowed 38 goals in 18 games, so these are two teams that have really bought in to defense and could make for a low-scoring series.

Here is the schedule for the Stanley Cup final series (2-2-1-1-1 format, New Jersey starts at home):

Game 1: 5/30, 8 pm, NBC

Game 2: 6/2, 8 pm, NBC

Game 3: 6/4, 8 pm, NBC Sports Network

Game 4: 6/6, 8 pm, NBC Sports Network

Game 5: 6/9, 8 pm, NBC*

Game 6: 6/11, 8 pm, NBC*

Game 7: 6/13, 8 pm, NBC*

* - if necessary

This series isn't exactly what the networks wanted to see. The Devils are hated rivals of the large New York TV market and the Kings aren't much of a draw, even in their hometown. The Brodeur storyline could attract some casual fans, but this is far from the series that the NHL envisioned.

It will be a rough series for the players as well. With the long cross-country travel, about as far as you can get traveling within the United States, there will be two days off between Games 1 and 2 and Games 4 and 5. Other than that, it will be an every other day series. One has to wonder if the fresher Kings will benefit from that format. The Kings have played just 14 games because they've rolled through their schedule while the Devils have played 18.

All in all, it will be an entertaining series to watch with a lot of players really looking to turn themselves from stars into superstars. Youth will be on display with the skaters while old v. new will be on display between the goaltenders.

Prediction: Kings in 6. They're playing too well and they're too powerful right now. They can't be stopped. The Devils are a solid team who are certainly trying to win the Cup and send Martin Brodeur out on top, but the Kings have more top-end skill and a goaltender playing out of this world.

As June approaches, we're just over three weeks away from the 2012 NHL Entry Draft. I've already profiled defenseman Ryan Murray and forward Mikhail Grigorenko , two of the options available to the Columbus Blue Jackets with the number two overall pick. This week, I'll head across the pond to look at Swedish forward, and top NHL Central Scouting Bureau European prospect, Filip Forsberg.

Name: Filip Forsberg

Position: Center

NHL Central Scouting Bureau Rank: #1 European; #1 European Center

Birthdate & Place: August 13, 1994; Ostervala, Sweden

Height, weight: 6'2", 181

Shoots: Right

Filip Forsberg, no relation to Swedish superstar Peter Forsberg, is a good centerman in all three zones and fits the Swedish mold as a hard-working player whose talent doesn't overpower his

work ethic. Forsberg has played against adults in his native Sweden, playing in the second-tier of the Swedish Elite League to go along with international competition and the ultra-competitive Swedish Junior Elite League.

Forsberg is not a high-risk, high-reward kind of prospect. He is a low risk pick with a mature body and a good skater. Even if he never reaches his full potential, unlike some of the other prospects available in the top part of the first round, he'll still be a contributor. It may not be enough to warrant his draft slot, but he will play in the NHL and be a solid player. That's not to say that Forsberg lacks talent, because he has a heavy right-handed shot and good passing skills, it just means that he won't be a bust.

One thing about Forsberg that is worth noting is that he was consistently atop the NHL Central Scouting Bureau's European skater ranks. There is usually a lot of movement in that list as there are limited scouting opportunities for some of the prospects and it's sometimes hard to gauge the caliber of opponent they are playing against. Forsberg has been at the top of the list during his entire first year of eligibility. Another thing is that he has intangibles that GMs love like leadership qualities, a strong work ethic, and a knack for scoring big goals.

Analysis: Forsberg probably doesn't have the home run potential that people expect out of a top two pick. He'll be a very safe pick and a reliable player for a long time. It remains to be seen if he can be a superstar at the NHL level, but NHL Director of European Scouting Goran Stubb compares Forsberg to Corey Perry of Anaheim, a guy who has scored over 40 goals in a season at the NHL level. So, Forsberg certainly has the gifts and the talent.

With so many of these prospects, you don't know what you're getting. With Forsberg, the Jackets would have a very good idea of the type of player they're getting. The Blue Jackets have had the opportunity to see what the Detroit Red Wings have done with Swedish players, including Henrik Zetterberg, a seventh round pick in 1999, so that could play into their thought process.

The NHL Entry Draft's first round will take place on June 22 in Pittsburgh, PA.