

Free Picks – June 16th Weekend

Our NHL picks are currently on a **5-0 tear**, and our **World Cup** pick – the Netherlands to beat Serbia and Montenegro – came through, as predicted. This week we're back with more winners from the TopSportsTips team – enjoy!

Our first World Cup pick hit last week, and we're back for more. Tough call here for the patriotic among you, but for those of you interested in making money, we're going to suggest a play on Italy in the USA-Italy game. Italy posted a solid 2-0 win over a resilient Ghana team, and they now have their sights on the next round. However, to guarantee a spot in the elimination round, they'll need to beat the United States. In addition, a win against the Stars and Stripes would knock the Americans out of the tournament. The Italians will expect and receive another rock solid performance from Gianluigi Buffon, one of the best keepers in the world, if not THE best. We predict a low-scoring affair, and would not be surprised to see a 1-0 or 2-1 win for the Italians. Their offense looked to be functioning well in their last match, as primary striker Luca Toni had many near-misses, and superstar Francesco Totti appeared to be in good health. The United States will try to force the issue and come up short, as Italy keeps the flame burning in their quest for World Cup glory. **Play Italy to win.**

If championships are won through momentum, the Edmonton Oilers are in good shape heading home for Game 6 of the Stanley Cup playoffs. After Fernando Pisani's short-handed OT winner in a thrilling Game 5, it appears that this series had more life than some people may have thought a few days ago. The linesmakers have certainly started to give Edmonton a little more credit: after listing them at +209 dogs for Game 4 (congratulations, Oilers backers!) and -101 dogs *at home* for Game 3, the Oilers are now a slight favorite at -109. However, what is shocking is the total, currently posted at 6.5. Let's recap: in Games 3 and 4 (in Edmonton), the teams *combined* for six goals – that's right – the *combined* scores for Games 3 and 4 was just SIX GOALS! Granted, Game 5 was a solid Over, but one game is not enough to change the nature of this series. These are still two very conservative, defensive-minded teams. In the Hurricanes' last three games as a road dog, the Under is 3-0. In their last four road games overall, the Under remains a perfect 4-0. Finally, extra rest has tended to give the Oilers the strength to buckle down on defense: the Under is 4-0 in the Oilers' last four games on two days rest. All this combines to suggest that the correct pick here is to **Play the Under.**

Another total play here, as our free playoff picks roll onwards. Our complimentary selection, made just hours after the Miami Heat's Game 4 victory, is to suggest that it is time to make a play on the Over in this series. The starting total – 188 – is the lowest it's been between these two teams since November 3, 2003. Since February 9 of this year, the total between these two teams has been dropping, from 199 on that day, a full eleven points to 188 today. Is this line move justified? Consider that for the first two games in Miami, Dirk Nowitzki has been essentially a non-factor (16 and 9 in 41 minutes). Shaquille O'Neal was limited to just 17 points in under half an hour due to foul trouble. Udonis Haslem scored just one basket in less than 18 minutes of work because of foul trouble as well. Consider as well that no Mavericks player cracked 20 points in

Game 4. Josh Howard, a major Dallas contributor (averaging 17.1 ppg during the playoffs) had just three points on a horrific 1-8 shooting. Consider all this, then consider how likely it is that any of these will persist. Avery Johnson is too good a coach to let his team get shut down on offense twice in a row. Dwyane Wade has been playing the best basketball of his life, and will have to again if Miami is to avoid going back to Dallas on the verge of elimination. Simply put, we feel that the line has moved too far South, and that these teams will have no problems averaging 94 points in Game 7. The Over is 4-1 in these teams' last five meetings in Miami, and this will be 5-1 after Game 5. **Play the Over.**

Two solid starters go head to head tonight as C.C. Sabathia and Chris Capuano take the hill, pitching for the Cleveland Indians and the Milwaukee Brewers, respectively. Sabathia has had one rough outing (against the Angels), but apart from that has been in a solid groove for most of the season. Capuano brings a solid 6-3 win record, along with a 3.35 ERA, but has put up a 5.21 ERA in his last three outings, allowing 33 men on base in 19 IP. Those games were against the Pirates, Padres, and the Cardinals, minus Albert Pujols. His last outing – against St. Louis – saw Capuano throw 118 pitches, a stat that may come back to haunt him should he stay in for more than about six innings in this one. That start was his third straight game of over 100 pitches, which suggests to us that he'll either get pulled earlier than usual (if he's doing poorly), or stay in but be liable to give up big hits as he fatigues in the later innings. He's come off three straight 100-pitch outings four times before in his career, and in those situations before, his ERA is an ugly 7.33. The Indians, on the other hand, broke out of their offensive funk at New York yesterday, with Peralta getting three hits, scoring a couple times, and picking up two RBI. This lineup is #3 in the majors in runs scored – NOT what Capuano wants to see right now. Chris Capuano has solid overall numbers, but when we dig beneath the surface it is clear that he is primed to give up a big game to his opposition. **Play the Cleveland Indians.**

This week, Marcus Booth from the ParlayPick.com is recommending a two-team parlay that takes advantage of the particular advantages given to two teams by interleague play. Keep in mind that home field advantage becomes even more important in interleague play, particularly when American League teams visit National League parks, and their pitchers have to hit. The first pick involves the Seattle Mariners and the San Francisco Giants. The Mariners have been slumping lately, and are coming off a sweep at the hands of the Oakland A's. This is part of the reason they are such slim favorites here. However, they clearly have the edge in the pitching matchup, with young stud Felix Hernandez taking the hill against the very mediocre Noah Lowry (2-4 on the year). The Mariners won in Hernandez's last start, beating a solid Angels team 6-2. In his last three, the kid is 3-0 with a solid 3.27 ERA, whereas Lowry is just 1-2. We're going with the home team, and a solid young pitcher whom the Giants will not have faced before.

The New York Mets have been the hottest team in baseball recently, winning nine of their past ten, including eight in a row. They have been scoring early and often, and will relish the opportunity to face an American League team with a pitcher unused to

batting. With Orioles Jay Gibbons and David Newhan sidelined by injury, the lineup will be no problem for New York starter Soler, who has won his past two games, holding potent Diamondbacks and Angels lineups in check. Orioles starter Bedard, on the other hand, comes into this one having lost his past two starts, with a 5.79 ERA in his last three, pitching a meagre 14 innings combined in those starts.

→ Parlay the Seattle Mariners and the New York Mets.

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