The Right-Shot Centerman: The Cost of Tactical Overvaluation

November 11, 2026

Prepared by:

Dan Pedersen
nhldraftpicks.com

Teams may prefer a mix of left-shot and right-shot centermen for tactical reasons, particularly in end-zone faceoffs. However, since most centermen shoot left, teams often have only one right-shot centerman in the lineup.

Ensuring there is at least one right-shot centerman is often a priority, and in principle, that makes sense. However, a problem arises when the existence of a tactical advantage is treated as sufficient reason to prioritize it over a player's overall contribution.

A tactical benefit must be weighed against its trade-offs. The advantage of having the preferred stick side for certain faceoffs must be considered alongside what the team gains or sacrifices by selecting one player over another.

If every centerman has the same handedness, this may create a disadvantage in certain faceoff situations, but not necessarily an overall disadvantage.

Although the team may lose some key faceoffs, what goes unaccounted for in those moments is everything an alternative player might have contributed had he been in the lineup instead. Depending on that player's other attributes, his contributions could change the outcome of individual games and, cumulatively, the course of a season.

Consider a player who occasionally takes undisciplined penalties. These penalties carry genuine risks, and an infraction at the wrong moment can cost a team a game or contribute to its elimination from a playoff series. However, if that player is also a 50-goal scorer, his value may outweigh the cost of those penalties when compared with a more disciplined 30-goal scorer.

The relevant question is whether the cost of the additional penalties outweighs the difference in the players' overall contributions. Even though you would prefer that he not take those penalties, you would probably be worse off without him over the course of a season. Nor would you want to scratch him in a crucial game simply because he might take a bad penalty.

The same principle applies to a centerman's handedness. The possibility that handedness could determine the outcome of a key faceoff does not, on its own, justify preferring one player over another. Teams must weigh that tactical advantage against the full range of contributions each player brings to the lineup.

Handedness should generally serve as a secondary consideration between players of comparable overall value, unless its tactical benefits are sufficient to outweigh the difference in their overall contributions.

The objective is not to maximize a single situational advantage but to select the player who provides the greatest overall value to the team.