

Lancione looks at three veteran waiver-wire grabs

Aside from a few late-to-the-race groups, the vast majority of fantasy leagues have been drafted by now. For the most part, poolies are optimistic about their title contention status, with a few exceptions whom will undoubtedly wheel n' deal their way to rosters built for a legitimate championship run. However, there are always areas which can and should be promptly addressed and improved upon. Especially in leagues with trade-averse GMs, free agent watch lists will be heavily reviewed.

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Fantasy GMs across North America (myself included) tend to be far more speculative with prospects in the first couple weeks than they will be all year. This is the time to put those sleeper picks to work. Now comes reliance on the first sample size of games to determine whether the kids will fit the bill for the long haul or whether they'll soon be dumped for more familiar names on waivers. However, the likelihood of most kids (particularly 18-21 years old) to succeed right off the bat are slim. Therefore, for single-season and shallow-roster keeper leagues, with few elite star exemptions, try to be conservative with the number of prospects with little to no NHL experience introduced to your lineup. Get a jump on your competition by plucking the top

ol' reliable veterans left floating in waiver-land.

Its vital to do so before your colleagues realize that their prized prospects:

1. A)...Will be sent back to junior before the expiration of their nine game trial  $\{ex.\ \underline{Ma}\ \underline{rk\ Scheifele}\$ 

in recent years}

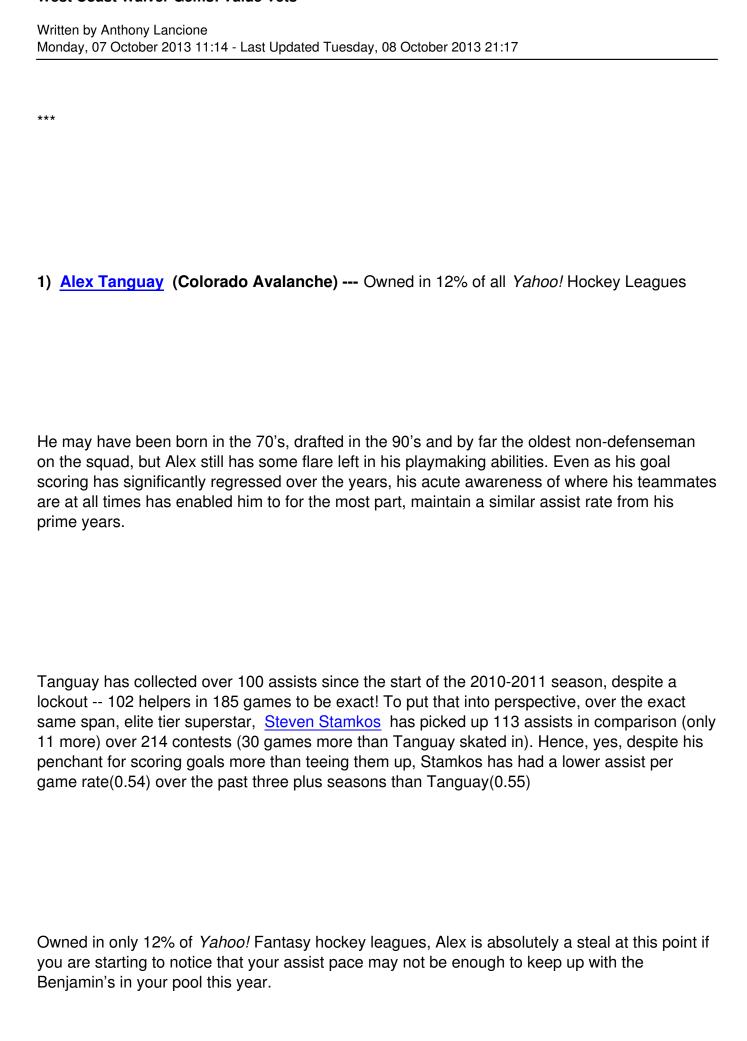
before burning a year off their entry level deals

**2013 (Shock) Victim**= Jonathan Drouin (Tampa Bay)

**2013 Risks**= Morgan Reilly (Toronto), Olli Maata(Pittsburgh) and Matt Dumba (Minnesota)

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B)Will be sent to the American Hockey League for more pro seasoning. {ex. Ryan Ellis & Jacob Markstrom in recent years }
2013 Victims= Chris Kreider (New York (R)) and Brett Connolly (Tampa Bay)
2013 Risks= Matt Nieto (San Jose) and Carl Soderberg (Boston)
1. C)Will be confined to the minors for Salary Cap restrictive reasons, regardless if the player is otherwise NHL-ready.
2013 Victim= Gustav Nyquist (Detroit)
*Consequently applies to high paid vets as well (i.e. John-Michael Liles)
Here are a few Western Conference veterans that may still be floating around in your pool's free agent list (especially in keeper leagues heavy on speculative prospect adds and single-season leagues with 10 GMs or less). These vets can certainly help you plug holes even if their "name value" has regressed in the past few years.



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He just might be re-invigorated upon his return to Colorado, putting up a very impressive three-assist night in his season debut. With the team parting ways with long time teammate and franchise lifer, Milan Hejduk, Alex is primed for an important leadership role this year as well. It won't hurt his potential for full season endurance that his teams have not made the playoffs since 2008-2009. Therefore he might just be a young 33-year-old, with less mileage than you probably thought. Grab him now!

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2) Saku Koivu (Anaheim Ducks) --- Owned in 5% of all Yahoo! Hockey Leagues

A little known fact is that the Koivu brothers are one of the most dominant brotherly faceoff artist duos the game has ever seen. Despite their advancing ages; with Mikko at 30 years and (especially) Saku at 38, the 2012-2013 shortened campaign saw them finish first and eighth in the West, respectively! If your league counts faceoff wins, Saku has been an absolute gem for myself in recent seasons, so I'd highly recommend him as your specialist. However, not to be confused, he has not been reduced to a one-trick pony role either.

In 2013, Saku actually improved on his prior season's production rate, scoring at a clip of 0.57 points per game, usurping his 2011-2012 rate of .51 PPG. Moreover, his near two decades of

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NHL experience has lent him to the Ducks' second power play unit last year, where he produced eight power play points in a half season. He is still employed in the secondary group, therefore that value added is still there for you to take advantage of. In fact, with Bruce Boudreau revealing that Saku's legendary compatriot, <a href="Teemu Selanne">Teemu Selanne</a>, will be rested on one of each back to back instance(12) this season, Saku may even see the odd shift on the primary unit.

Aside from an outlier 2006-2007 season, Saku has predominantly always been a 'plus' player (+/-). He's worth considering in any and all deep leagues.

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3) Stephane Robidas (Dallas Stars) --- Owned in 8% of all Yahoo! Hockey Leagues

Although Stephane has never truly been a remarkable threat from the blueline, he has more than held his own offensively. However, he remains of decent value as he has consistently been "The Jack of all trades, Master of none". In other words, he doesn't do anything extremely well, but he does "everything" fairly well!

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Specifically, traditional stats have never been his forte, with only one season in a decade-and-a-half long career where he scored over 30 points. However it's the peripherals where he racks the numbers up right across the board. Robidas is certainly multifaceted, in that he has an aggressive streak, picking up PIM at a nice pace. Last season he finished third among Western conference defenders with 56 minutes spent in the sin bin. It may have been one of his career best PIM per game rates, but he typically comes close to that level, having compiled nearly 500 PIMs over the past seven seasons(despite 35 games missed to injury over that span)

For leagues that count Hits, Robidas finished runner-up among blueliners in the Western conference in 2013 and fourth overall in the NHL (for defensemen)! He also finished 11<sup>th</sup> in the West in blocked shots among rearguard leaders. The success in these categories tend to not be focused on as much as the traditional production categories, in most leagues. Robidas can help you in all of them, while still chipping in goals, assist and points as well.

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