

My Industry Experts League Draft Experience

Written by Russ Miller

Thursday, 26 September 2013 22:18 - Last Updated Friday, 27 September 2013 00:56



This week, Eastern Edge writer, Russ Miller reports on how the Industry Experts League draft went and comments on the experience.

At the beginning of last season, Dobber presented me with a very interesting offer; would I be interested in taking over the DobberHockey team in the Industry Experts League and represent the website? Of course, I was interested in proving myself in battle against some very knowledgeable fellow fantasy hockey writers.

First, a little background information on the league itself, which was started for the 2005-06

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season. Former DobberHockey writer, Eric Maltais took the title in its second year. It is a 12-team rotisserie league with daily rosters comprised of four Centers, four Left Wingers, four Right Wingers, six Defensemen, two Goalies and five Bench positions along with two Injured Reserve slots. There are 10 scoring categories consisting of: **Goals, Assists, Plus/Minus, Power Play Points**

,
Shots on Goal

,
Hits

,
Blocked Shots

,
Wins

,
Goals Against Average

and

Save Percentage

. Every year, each team protects four players, only one of which can be a goaltender.

For the record, I finished second last year, a good showing for sure, but all the glory is reserved for the top spot. Heading into last year, the four players I chose to keep were Marian Hossa, Anze Kopitar, Dion Phaneuf and Mike Smith.

Below is the draft order (randomly generated) for this year and each team's protections:

1-Rotoworld - P.Kane, Hall, Letang, M.Green

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2-NHL Trade Tracker - Stamkos, Malkin, Kunitz, Kronwall

3-Y! Romig - Toews, Seguin, Yandle, Lundqvist

4-TSN.ca-Cullen - H.Sedin, Datsyuk, Benn, Quick

5-Fantasy Hockey Scouts - Tavares, Subban, E.Karlsson, Rinne

6-SiriusXM-Flowers - Perry, Zetterberg, Nash, Niemi

7-NHL.Com-Jensen - Neal, Duchene, Getzlaf, S.Weber

8-Goods Fantasy Hockey (formerly KuklasKorner) - Kessel, E.Staal, Parise, Rask

9-Dobberhockey-Miller - Kopitar, Byfuglien, Phaneuf, M.Smith

10-RW-Levine - Crosby, Voracek, Suter, Price

11-Rotowire-Topper - D.Sedin, Couture, D.Brown, Crawford

12-The Sports Forecaster - Ovechkin, Giroux, P.Bergeron, Howard

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As you can see by the above list, some teams have a decided advantage heading into the draft over other teams. I think I had a very good draft last year, plucking Dustin Byfuglien (round 1), Drew Doughty (round 3), Patrick Marleau (round 4) and Derek Stepan (round 7) among others. If Stepan had been signed, I would have kept him over either Byfuglien or Phaneuf on my protected list. In a very close call, I chose to let the 34-year-old Hossa walk and keep two defensemen who provide nice overall numbers, including a decent amount of hits and shots on goal in comparison to their peers.

On to this year's draft. After crossing off all the protections, there are still some very good fantasy picks left on the table. As this is essentially a one year league, a large part of my draft strategy includes NOT taking unproven, overhyped players. Drafting from the ninth slot, I was trying to be realistic in who would be available at number nine. I was thinking a goaltender, specifically Bobrovsky, Anderson or Holtby.

After everyone's four protections came off the board, Round Five opened with Anderson, Evander Kane, Eberle, St. Louis, Ryan, Luongo and then sadly, Bobrovsky and Backstrom (the Center, not the Goalie). That left Braden Holtby for my first pick. Yakupov, Spezza and Hiller closed the first post-protection round.

Once I had my goaltending situation settled, I wanted to focus on players who would give me multi-category balance. Round two started with Moulson, Eriksson and Chara. I considered taking Lucic, Marchand and Wheeler with this pick but settled on Max Pacioretty, who finished seventh in the NHL in shots on goal and scored at a 73 point pace last season.

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Then the long wait. Vanek, Lucic come off the board and I was unrealistically hoping that Alex Pietrangelo would fall into my lap, but alas, it wasn't meant to be. Fleury is taken early in the third round and will be a nice pick for the regular season. My third pick came down to Wheeler, Doughty or Marchand. Since my second round pick of Pacioretty, eight Right Wing eligible players were taken and I had exactly zero on my roster. Blake Wheeler was my highest ranked right-sider and he scored at a 70-point pace last season, while racking up nice totals in shots on goal and hits.

My next selection was possibly the easiest of the draft for me. I had Drew Doughty one slot below Pietrangelo and while he only recorded 22 points in 48 games last year, there were only seven players with as many hits who had more points than Doughty. He should rebound nicely this year.

After selecting Doughty, there was a string of picks that depleted my queue; Ekman-Larsson, Hartnell, Parenteau, Landeskog, Halak, Ward, Backes, Kesler, Jeff Carter and Mark Streit were all on my short list. I had initially hoped that one of Halak or Streit would make it to my next pick, but once all those picks started coming off, I noticed a gaping hole at Center. I whittled my choices down to one of either Nazem Kadri, Mike Ribeiro or Mikko Koivu. I went with Ribeiro as he is more of a sure thing than Kadri at this point in their respective careers. I love Kadri's upside, but he doesn't have undisputed power play minutes or even first line ice time locked up. Ribeiro tied for the most power play points in the NHL last season with Ovechkin. Of course, the Coyotes don't have the same power play as the Caps do, but he'll still get plenty of opportunities with the man advantage.

Round Six was a choice between Kadri and Elias, but I ultimately went with someone I was considering back in the third round, Brad Marchand. I hate to admit this, but his projected

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plus/minus was the determining factor. Kadri went four picks later.

My Seventh Round selection is going to provide many hits and will hopefully improve his offensive numbers. Brayden Schenn scored at only a 45 point pace last season, but recorded 109 hits in 47 games. For Schenn to improve his point total, he will have to get more power play time. Last year, he received the seventh most average power play time on ice on the Flyers.

I couldn't pass on Mikko Koivu any longer and took him in round eight. He, along with most of the Wild, had a poor showing last season and point totals should improve across the board this year in Minnesota.

For my next pick, I was determined to grab my fourth defenseman and had a short list of Enstrom, Del Zotto, Goligoski, Jack Johnson and Timonen. There was a drop off after those guys and by the time it was my pick, only Johnson and Timonen remained. Johnson will contribute nicely in most of our scoring categories and he received the fifth most average time on ice (25:58) in the entire NHL last year.

I wanted at least one more goaltender to help solidify that position and rolled the dice with Ondrej Pavelec as one of two undisputed number one's still undrafted, Semyon Varlamov being the other. I went back and forth between the two and went with the Jets big tender on gut feel alone. The Avs backstop was taken three picks later.

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By now, we are well into the draft and I see that Blake Wheeler is looking pretty lonely over there on my Right Wing. It was between Little or Vrbata and the latter's power play points won the day. Of course, Little went three picks after.

Round 12 saw Matt Carle join my defense corps. He'll contribute with 40 points and blocked shots while receiving second unit power play time.

With my next selection, I was tempted to take one of Stephen Weiss or Mikhail Grabovski, both of whom had a change of scenery in the off-season. I ended up going a different direction, grabbing a 40 point hit monster in Steve Ott. Yahoo has given the shift disturber Center/Left Wing eligibility, which will come in handy.

I was still playing catch up on the right side, so with my next pick I went with what will be a nice comeback player in Martin Erat. Last year was a write-off for the 32-year-old who will bounce back to the 50 point mark with the Caps this season. I also considered Beau Bennett and Kyle Okposo.

Round 15 and I couldn't pass on Center/Right Wing Sam Gagner, although at the time I drafted him, we didn't know how long he might be out for. The plan was to stash him on the Injured

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Reserve list. He will definitely help out when he returns.

My next pick rounded out my six defense spots. Dan Hamhuis will flirt with 40 points and provide decent all around numbers. He has added motivation as a candidate to play for Team Canada in Sochi.

Picks that came off that I had hoped would be available with my next pick included Ray Whitney, Steve Mason, Pierre-Marc Bouchard and Jason Garrison. I ended up rolling the dice with 21-year-old Cam Fowler. He had 40 points as an eighteen year old, but will be a hit or miss guy and won't likely provide any peripheral numbers. On a positive note, he has seen his plus/minus go from minus-25, to minus-28, to last year's minus-4 over his three NHL seasons.

I needed one more Right Wing to give me the full complement of four. I saw Jannik Hansen sitting there and I wondered if there was something wrong with him that I missed. He could hit for 50 points and will contribute with some hits and blocked shots and if all goes well, maybe in the plus/minus department as well.

The final three picks are all just depth picks, but that doesn't mean you can slack off and not take those picks seriously. I wanted a reserve Center for the injured Sam Gagner and selected Kyle Turris, who is only a Jason Spezza hangnail away from being a number one fill-in.

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For my penultimate selection, I chose a goaltender who will battle for the number one job in Tampa. Anders Lindback will battle Ben Bishop, who was taken 15 rounds earlier. Sure, most believe Bishop has the advantage, but Lindback still has a shot.

I debated selecting Chris Kreider with my second last pick and of course that meant that he would be taken only two picks in front of my final pick. Luckily, I had a back up plan in the form of Matt Frattin, who looks like he's cemented a spot on the Kings second line.

Participating in this draft was a lot of fun, yet something I took seriously. After all was said and done, I am confident that the draft went well and with a little luck, this team will be in contention for the title.

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