Last summer I was invited to join a head-to-head keeper league involving many DobberHockey members. At the time I was trying to limit my hockey pool involvement a bit, as I was having trouble keeping up with my nine different teams. However, after checking the league out a bit and talking to the members, joining seemed like my only option. A year later, I am thrilled with my decision. The league is very active, very competitive, and quickly became my favourite pool to track.

I came up with the idea this summer after watching a television series entitled “The League.” It is a comedy based on effect of fantasy sports (in this case, a football pool) on five guys. If you haven’t seen the show, I recommend checking it out. What I want to do is combine fantasy sports (in this case, a hockey pool), and some entertainment. Each month a review of the Ultimate Fantasy Pool (creative name, I know) will be posted at DobberHockey. By seeing how our league operates, I hope to provide some perspective and ideas in terms of trading and valuing players. Most importantly, I hope to make it a fun read. Enjoy!

Ultimate Fantasy Pool information:

12 team head-to-head league

Start: 3 C, 3 LW, 3 RW, 6 D, 2 G

Bench: 6

IR: 3

Forwards/Defensemen Stat Categories:

Goals (G), Assists (A), Plus/Minus (+/-), Penalty Minutes (PIM), Powerplay Points (PPP), Shorthanded Points (SHP), Game-Winning Goals (GWG), Shots on Goal (SOG), Faceoffs Won (FW), Hits (HIT)

Goaltenders Stat Categories:

Games Started (GS), Wins (W), Losses (L), Goals Against Average (GAA), Shots Against (SA), Saves (SV), Save Percentage (SV%), Shutouts (SHO)

The Teams:

Prince of Wales Conference (the stronger conference)

The Crosby Show, Dusty’s Diggers, Hextalls Hackers, Bulldogs, Wookie Sandwich, Las Vegas Thunder

Campbell Conference

DraperNEurotwinSauce, Great Whites, Wu Crew, El Loco’s SHARKS, fire on ice, Biscuit’s & Gravy

The teams...

The Hextall Hackers aka duballstar014

Team name originates from...

just a Flyers fan paying tribute to the Broad Street Bullies and the only goaltender in history to get over 100 PIM

Member of the UPF since...

Member since the origin, 2007-08. I'm also the founder.

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

I'd give myself a 6.5, dark horse to win, but it's probably not my year just yet.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

I landed Loui Eriksson, Zach Bogosian, and Niclas Bergfors for my Antoine Vermette and Niklas Backstrom (G)

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

I picked up Clowe and Stalberg for my Niittymaki

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Jeff Woywitka, emergency addition in the finals back in '08...I lost...

What is your management/team-building philosophy?

I've tried my best not to get 2 players on the same team for any one position. When you only start 3 at one single position, owning Pavelski and Thornton has been a headache in the past when little Joe wasn't listed as a RW. Next, I try to get solid goaltending (an ongoing struggle in this league) and keep my centers deep for FOW. Adding any wingers that take draws is a huge bonus and each year I look to finish in the top 2 for FOWs.

Wu Crew aka Smack

Member of the UPF since...

2008

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

I'd say chances for me to win it this year is 30%. I don't think that's necessarily so bad as it's pretty balanced all around. I'd have to say the favourite going into this year is The Great Whites.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

Acquiring Stamkos from TheCrosbyShow this past summer

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

Worst trade I made was trading Plekanec for Tanguay a month into last season - UGH.

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Worst player on my roster last year - Andrew Raycroft. No question. Alex Tanguay was close though last year statistically.

What is your management/team-building philosophy?

My management philosophy is balance. I've noticed that the winner of H2H usually doesn't have the best offence, or the best defence, or best goalies, it's the one who has the best balance of all 3. I've seen teams who might have the 2 best goalies (me) get an early exit cause of the offensive categories or teams with a stacked offense do the same because their goalies let them down. Also, I have no problem stacking on LW'ers as they're scarce nowadays. I also stay away from players from my favourite team (makes it easier that the Leafs are my favourite, haha).

DraperNEuroTwinSauce aka Rhys

Member of the UPF since...

2007

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

I'm more likely than ever to slide into the playoffs, but that's the extent of my 10-11 expectations. As for favorite, I'd say TheCrosbyShow will be a formidable foe to overcome.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

My Briere, Kariya, Savard, 3rd in exchange for Zetts, Lucic, Edler, 2nd

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Robert Nilsson. I got him+ in a trade for my Berglund several seasons ago. He hit the waiver wire relatively quickly.

What is your management/team-building philosophy

I like to have some Red Wings to watch. Otherwise, I've started leaning towards goaltending and wingers then filling in with best available centers and dmen. As my roster shows, my philosophy has changed.

Dusty's Diggers

Team name originates from...

All my fantasy sport team names start with Dusty and are related to the sport, Dusty's Danglers, Dusty's Dugout

Member of the UPF since...

Since the inaugural draft, this is year 4 so since 2007.

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

7 out of 10. History lesson: year 1 playoff winner, year 2 regular season winner, year 3 regular season and playoff winner. My skaters have been in the top of the league since day one and haven't changed going onto this season. The ass fell out on my goaltending when Nabokov left though. My forwards getting a bit older but still in their prime. It is clear my goaltending problems could/will hinder my previous season dominance. I've always seen Bulldogs as a strong team, that could easily beat my guys any week of the year.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

I liked our trade: Received Brad Richards + Crawford + 5th, sent M.Koivu + Ehrhoff + 3rd. I had to drop Ehroff or Suter anyway, I see B.Richards on par with M.Koivu and I know Brad, and the down grade of the 3rd didn't bother me at all. Giving me Crawford to back my only goalie asset was big for me.

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

I still have nightmares about this and I'm not sure if I even want to type this. Before Rask took over Thomas and Nabokov was a punk, I trades Price + Neimi + D.Ellis + B.Schenn + Wolski for Nabokov + Thomas + Stempniak. Hahaha wow. I did it to win the league, which I did, but looking back at the trade makes me want to throw up.

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Jodi Shelley, my boy haha. I grab him the finals in year one with a few days left in the match-up. All the stats were close so I was looking to jump him in PIMs.

What is your management/team-building philosophy

My management philosophy is now to load up on goalies to try to improve my goaltending into the future as my goaltending is in shambles.

The Great Whites aka Rad64

Team name originates from...

Great Whites from Great White North....my NFL tag from playing with a bunch of Yanks.

Member of the UPF since...

2008-09 season

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

7/10 ...I think Bulldogs has to be the favorite with the addition of hits.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

Moved Huselius for Zajac in the offseason.

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

I moved Halak and a pick for Franson and a pick prior to the start of last season!!!

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Pascal Leclaire

What is your management/team-building philosophy

In general I like strong Defense and Goaltending. I find you can still get along on the wings and at center with depth vs a premier player.

Basic supply and demand.

El Loco's SHARKS

Team name originates from...

A combination of my favorite hockey team and college nickname

Member of the UPF since...

2007

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

2. The Crosby show, as much as it pains me to type those words.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

Stempniak, Thomas, and Nabokov for Wolski, Ellis, Price, B.Schenn, and Niemi

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

Trading RRW Blake Wheeler for Herri Sateri and a 4th rounder

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Take your pick

What is your management/team-building philosophy

Being a goalie and the high emphasis on goalies in a league like ours I tend to lean towards getting the best pro goalie and goalie prospects out there.

Wookie Sandwich aka mister_mcgoo

Team name originates from...

I love Star Wars and I was drunk at the time

Member of the UPF since...

2008

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

probably an 8...Dusty has a powerhouse team so he's always a favorite, The Crosby Show has made some smart moves and will compete again. Also lots of teams have built well thru the draft and have some young impact players that will make them very competitive this year, I think this will be the tightest year yet.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

I dealt Laich for Frolik which I'm really hoping pays off for me in a few years

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

I never make bad trades

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Jochen Hecht

What is your management/team-building philosophy

I inherited this team a couple years ago and it came with no farm team (the GM never drafted one!) so a big part of what I've had to do is draft/trade smart for the future. As a result my forwards are weaker than I would like as I wait for the prospects to develop. I have fantastic goalies though so I know I can compete every year with them so I just try to pick categories that I know I can compete in now while I wait for the youngsters to develop . I know I can't hang with the big boys for pts for example so I've focused on building a grinder type roster that can win the PIMs, Hits, FOW categories.

Fire on Ice

Team name originates from...

I run my own keeper league with the name of Fire on Ice and just used that for my team name here as an homage to my league

Member of the UPF since...

Inception

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

Hmmm...I think I'd give a 4 right now as my goalie situation is just dismal. Had a good draft this year but don't quite think I'm a contender unless I get some outstanding performances

Dusty has always been a powerhouse but his goalie situation got hit big this offseason. Just off

goalie situation it seems to come down to 2 teams, either The Crosby Show or Wookie Sandwich.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

Traded Selanne, Niedermayer, for Brouwer, Lombardi, 1st round farm pick

Looked like both Selanne and Niedermayer were gonna retire and turned it in to a couple of young players and a 1st round farm pick that ended up being 8th overall farm pick. Nieds did retire, Selanne is back.

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

Can't think of one....not to say I don't make bad trades, but I don't trade much and the ones I made the last yr I either really liked or didn't care about the players anyway. haha

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

As bad as some of my players have been (sometimes just the one season they were bad), I'd say the award would have to go to Marc Staal and his whopping 10 pts and 78 shots on the year. Ouch!

What is your management/team-building philosophy

I tend to go towards players I like, which is why I have such a hard time trading. haha. I also don't hold a high stock for dmen, and am usually running with only 5 when we can start 6.

Biscuits & Gravy

Member of the UPF since...

Inception

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

Maybe a 4 or 5. This team was built for the future so I'm not really banking on a win this year. I just want to make it to the playoffs 'cause anything can happen then.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

Favourite trade in the last year is probably my Ryan Whitney and Jordan Staal for Markov and Mueller (although his concussion issues are killing me now). I got the best player in the deal in Markov who is a superstar and runs one of the top PP's in the league. I drafted Whitney when he was with PIT so when he got traded I was looking to replace him with someone who would log a lot of PP time so Markov was a huge upgrade for me. At the time I was frustrated with Staal because he seemed destined to be stuck behind Sid and Gino and I've always loved Mueller's upside. Seemed like a no brainer to me. I was ecstatic to get my hands on Markov. If Mueller's concussion issues continue I may lose in the long run but I love having Markov on my squad

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

Worst trade in the last year...I don't really have one. The only other trades I made were for draft picks.

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Worst player who was ever on my roster...probably Matt Carkner.

What is your management/team-building philosophy

Management philosophy...destroy the competition!! On a side note I have to mention the inaugural draft. I was able to steal Green with my 17th round (197th overall) and Rask with my last pick (268th overall).

Las Vegas Thunder

Team name originates from...

Las Vegas Thunder was a minor league hockey team that used to exist in Las Vegas. The year i moved to Las Vegas (2000) was their last year in existence. I was very excited to be able to have a hockey team, albeit a minor league team in the city i moved to to allow me to see some games in person since no NHL caliber team exists within 250 miles of Vegas. I was very dissapointed to have them fold the first year i moved here.

Member of the UPF since...

The year it started in 2007. I guess you can say i am an inagural member.

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

I would say my team ranks on a scale of 1 - 10 as a 8. I feel I have a nice mix of veterans and youth. I think i have a shot at the title if things fall into place but i am building my team to challenge next year or the year after.

I think the league is very balanced right now. There are a lot of very smart GM's that have done well to build their teams. I dont know if there is one clear cut favorite. I would say the Bulldogs, Dusty's Diggers, The Crosby Show, and Great Whites all have a legitate shot at winning the cup this year.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

The trade i made with Great Whites where i received Chris Mason and Mike Smith and gave up Michael Frolik, Ondrej Pavelec, Alex Auld.

Prior to this trade i was in desparate need of goaltenders. This league values goaltenders very highly. I only had Jonas Hiller as a regular starter. My other goaltenders where Alex Auld, Andrej Pavelec, and Brian Boucher. All current backups at the time. I was happy with the trade because i was able to get two starting goaltenders (thought Smith was going to come back and have a decent year after the injury plagued season.

With only one starting goalie i knew i did not have a remote chance at competing for a playoff position. This aquisition helped me improve from a 7th place finish to a 4th place regular season finish in one year.

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

The trade i made with DraperNEurotwinSauce where i gave up Zetterberg, Lucic, Edler, 2nd round pick and received Briere, Kariya, Savard, Leino, 3rd Rd Pick.

This trade hurt the most for a couple reasons. I gave up Lucic who will play a huge role in the league this year with the addition of Hits, but i did not know we weould be adding hits at the time of the trade. I didnt mind giving up Zetterberg because his value was higher when he had LW eligibility but since he moved to C i felt i was getting equal value in Savard back for him. ALmost right after the trade was made Savard was out with a concussion and is still suffering symptoms. Kariya is also out this year with post concussion symptoms. I made the trade to because i was making a run for the cup this year and felt i could add some veteran pieces to help out. I felt Lucic and Edler were part of my core but were still a couple years away from truly contributing.

This trade would not have been so bad if i didnt lose some of the peices coming back to me to injury.

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

Ollie Jokinen. I drafted him at the time because he was the BPA but i hated him. I didnt like his attitude and felt his production was going to decline. I was glad to have gotten rid of him.

What is your management/team-building philosophy

I strive to have at least two veterans who can be key contributors at each position. And then a few young players who are developing into their role. This allows the younger players to fill the veteran role once those players start to decline in production but can still contribute. Goalies are a huge contributor to your success in this league. I unfortunately learned this the hard way and have changed my philosopy to make sure I have a solid pipeline for goalies. They are the hardest position to fill and identify. I feel i am heading in the right direction with the goalies that i have currently.

TheCrosbyShow aka myself

Team name originates from...

Sidney Crosby + Bill Cosby early 1990's hilarity

Member of the UPF since...

2009

How likely are you to win in 2010-11? Who is the league favourite?

I'd give myself an 8 out of 10. I made some major moves this summer in order to compete.

Favourite trade made over the past year is...

So many to choose from… The beauty of this league is that I am still able to trade. My other leagues are basically impossible because of my role with DobberHockey. I'll say Luongo and Ekman-Larsson coming my way for the overrated Fleury and Neuvirth (who I really like).

Least favourite trade made over the past year is...

Haven't regretted any yet. Moving Stamkos for Brodeur/Chara could come back to haunt me…

Worst player that has been on your roster over the past few years is...

EASY choice – Steve Eminger. This league requires six defensemen to start… needless to say I was hurting on the back end last season, which is why I went out and acquired Edler, Chara, Ehrhoff, and Ballard this summer.

What is your management/team-building philosophy

Win now. Draft prospects who are close (Morin and Caron this year, Del Zotto and Benn last summer). It is easy to retool each summer.