Three new players crack the top 10.

The first edition of this list was put together last year, and it is something I am going to update at least once each season. I have a few general rules when it comes to building a team in a fantasy hockey keeper league. One of the more important ones is to not plan beyond a two or three year window. You are not building a real NHL club, and too often I see poolies place too much of an emphasis on youth and prospects instead of trying to add players who could help them win now. Using this rule, take a look at your team(s). Can you realistically say you will have a shot at winning the league at some point within the next two or three seasons? If not, time to scrap the rebuild and start adding proven NHL talent.

Keeping the two-to-three-year window in mind, I have compiled a list of the top 10 keeper league left wingers to own (assuming standard keeper league rules and scoring categories). Using the scope, the long-term upside of these players is balanced with their NHL readiness. I did my best to ensure only real left wingers were list, not those who have the position eligibility but play elsewhere the majority of the time (like Pavel Datsyuk or Rick Nash).

This list is in order, which means that I wouldn't trade the fourth player straight across for the fifth player, and so on. The one year upside is for 2011-12, and the three year upside is for any time between next season and 2013-14.

1. Alex Ovechkin – Washington Capitals

I finished the Ovechkin write up from last year off with the following statement: "The question of him breaking 70 goals in a single season is when, not if." With Washington's system shift from offense to defense in 2010-11, 70 goals in a season may be a stretch. Ovechkin had a very average offensive season compared to expectations in 2010-11, as well. 32 goals was his lowest output as an NHL player (and less than half of the 65 he scored two seasons ago). He had 367 shots on goal – one less than 2009-10, but nearly 200 less than he had two seasons ago. I'd expect his production to jump up next season (obviously), as this year was a huge adjustment for many of Washington's skaters. They'll head into the 2011-12 season with a better idea of how to play and produce while also sticking with their defensive responsibilities. Ovechkin recorded 41 PIM, the second lowest total of his career. He is way too valuable to be sitting in the box, so don't expect to see him above the 70 or 80 minute mark any more.

One year upside: 65 goals, 110 points

Three year upside: 65 goals, 125 points

2. Daniel Sedin – Vancouver Canucks

Sedin's one year upside was listed as 105 in last year's list – I was off by one with that prediction. He's in his prime, and should produce at an elite level for at least three more years. The Canucks have a lot of offensive weapons to play with, and Sedin benefitted from this (especially on the league's best power play unit). The Sedin twins used to be valued as fantasy assets due in large part to their consistency – 75 to 85 points each season, not many games missed and steady production from beginning to end. They still are consistent, but the production has increased to an elite level.

One year upside: 45 goals, 105 points

Three year upside: 45 goals, 105 points

3. Bobby Ryan – Anaheim Ducks

Only three players had more even strength points than Ryan this past season – Ovechkin, Sedin, and Corey Perry. Ryan is an incredibly gifted forward who possesses an incredibly rare combination of size, strength, and speed. The Ducks took their time with his development, much to the frustration of poolies who snatched him up in their fantasy drafts back in 2005. Ryan is proving to be well worth the wait. Ryan may be the most offensively gifted forward on his line – no small feat considering Perry's 50 goal season and Getzlaf's emergence as a superstar forward. With increased power play time, there is no reason Ryan won't be scoring 45 goals each season.

One year upside: 45 goals, 90 points

Three year upside: 50 goals, 100 points

4. Zach Parise – New Jersey Devils

There is a bit of uncertainty surrounding Parise right now – how well will he bounce back from knee surgery? Will he re-sign with the Devils long-term, or will he take a short deal and test the open market next summer? Parise first landed on my radar after dominating for the United States internationally. The first thing you notice about him is his effort level – he may not have the highest skill level in the world (although he is incredibly talented), but he'll outwork any one on the ice. He gobbles up loose pucks better than any forward in the league. He also loves the shoot the puck a ton – he'll never score less than 30 because of this. Look for a big bounce back season from Parise – he has something to prove, especially to Devils management, who have been reluctant to open up discussions with him regarding a long term deal. It remains to be seen if he and Kovalchuk can coexist, but I like the potential for the two together (at least on the power play).

One year upside: 45 goals, 95 points

Three year upside: 50 goals, 100 points

5. Ilya Kovalchuk – New Jersey Devils

2010-11 was a tale of two seasons for Kovalchuk. The first half saw him botch scoring chances, screw up shootout opportunities, and make hockey fans everywhere question the sanity of New Jersey for making him a $100 million man. Something changed in Kovalchuk after Jacques Lemaire was hired – his effort level increased, his production increased, and he took the Devils on his back as they made an improbable charge towards the playoffs. He scored only four goals in the first 23 games of the season, and 27 in the last 58. I doubt he will slide over to the right wing (even with Parise returning), as the Devils will try to balance their offense out among two or three lines. Another thing holding Kovalchuk back from producing at the level we have come to expect – New Jersey's lack of an offensive defenseman. He benefitted from playing with Tobias Enstrom in Atlanta (who doesn't?), and he needs a skilled defenseman to get him the puck on his stick. Kovalchuk was a minus-29 before the All-Star break, and a plus-3 in the games after. 22 of his 28 PIM came before the break as well. Kovalchuk's power play goals have decreased each season since he had 27 back in 2005-06 – he needs to get back to this level if he wants to live up to his contract.

One year upside: 45 goals, 90 points

Three year upside: 50 goals, 100 points

6. Taylor Hall – Edmonton Oilers

I have mentioned the fact that developing in a losing environment is never a good thing for young players, and can stall (or in some cases completely stop) development. However, I saw too many glimpses of Hall's elite potential to believe he'll be brought down even a little bit by Edmonton's struggles in 2010-11. After the All-Star break, Hall scored six times in 16 games. He also averaged over 3.5 shots per game (a 280 full-season pace). A nasty ankle injury ended his season in March, but he was still able to have a very impactful rookie season. If the Oilers do the smart thing and draft Ryan Nugent Hopkins this summer, he and Hall could form the next great dynamic duo in the league. Edmonton has some decent centers (Sam Gagner still has more potential than people give him credit for), but Hall needs someone who can match both his speed and skill. He may not take a monster step forward this season, but a 40 or 50 goal season isn't as far off as you'd think.

One year upside: 35 goals, 80 points

Three year upside: 50 goals, 95 points

7. Patrick Marleau – San Jose Sharks

Marleau's days as a center are definitely over, at least as long as he remains a Shark. The emergence of Joe Pavelski in 2009-10 and Logan Couture in 2010-11 has given San Jose an incredible 1-2-3 punch down the middle. Marleau is the quintessential hockey player – he is big, fast, gritty when need be, and he can absolutely wire the puck. He's averaged close to 40 goals over the past three seasons. His 279 shots on goal this season was a career high. Aside from a brutal 2007-08 season, Marleau has recorded at least 30 goals and 70 points every year since the lockout. He doesn't have the top end upside of other players below him on the list, but he's pretty much a guarantee for 30-40 goals, 70-80 points, and 250+ shots on goal. If Marleau played all 82 of his games in San Jose, his home stats prorate to 52 goals, 98 points, and 314 shots on goal.

One year upside: 40 goals, 80 points

Three year upside: 45 goals, 85 points

8. Jamie Benn – Dallas Stars

I get hunches with certain players. They sometime work out (Jeff Skinner from last summer being one), and they sometimes flop (Peter Regin, also from last summer). The first time I saw Jamie Benn live, I knew he'd be a good one. To be honest, I knew little of the 2007 5th round draft pick before the game (Vancouver Giants against Benn's Kelowna Rockets). Benn had teammates on his Kelowna team who were garnering lots of attention, including Luke Schenn and Tyler Myers. However, his strong game made me take note of him above anyone else on the ice. Like many late draft picks, he was a late bloomer physically. The one thing that stuck out was his ability to always be around the puck. All greats have this skill – they know where the puck is, and they either have it on their stick or they are very close to getting it. His real step forward came the next year in Kelowna, when he scored 59 goals in the regular season and playoffs combined. This season in Dallas was huge for him, and the turning point was a midseason Brad Richards injury. He moved to center, saw a huge increase in ice time and responsibility, and never looked back. Even when Richards returned, Benn was the best Dallas forward on many nights. He had 23 points in 23 games after the All-Star break. With Richards likely headed for greener pastures, Benn's days as a left winger may be numbered.

One year upside: 35 goals, 80 points

Three year upside: 40 goals, 90 points

9. Patrick Sharp – Chicago Blackhawks

Sharp's versatility has helped him develop into one of the elite goal scorers in the entire league. He still takes faceoffs for the Blackhawks, but he is a much more effective player when playing on his off-wing. Sharp has one of the heaviest shots among NHL forwards, and the Blackhawks love to use him at the point on the power play. He's entering his prime on a team with elite playmakers. Expect Sharp to hover around the 35 goal mark for the next three or four seasons. Just when you think he has reached his peak production level, he raises his game another level.

One year upside: 40 goals, 70 points

Three year upside: 45 goals, 75 points

10. Evander Kane – Atlanta Thrashers

Kane is the next great power forward in hockey. He's big, strong, tough, gritty, and very skilled. The Jarome Iginla comparisons have been made ever since Kane burst onto the WHL scene as a rookie five years ago, and he has done nothing to disprove them since that point. His production increased from 26 points to 43 points over the past two seasons. Look for a bigger jump forward in 2011-12. There are many players who didn't crack the top 10 who will out produce Kane next season, but none of them have his long-term upside. He'll move up this list very quickly. He loves to mix it up from a physical standpoint and should settle in as a 120-150 PIM player.

One year upside: 30 goals, 60 points

Three year upside: 35 goals, 75 points

Honorable Mentions:

Milan Lucic – offensive game better than most had expected.

Thomas Vanek – few are as gifted at scoring goals, needs more consistency.

James van Riemsdyk – a year or two (and a trade or two) away from making this list. Needs more ice time, which will come.

Ryane Clowe – one of the most physically dominating skilled players in the league.

Pavel Datsyuk – center

Henrik Zetterberg - center

Alex Semin – primarily right wing

Rick Nash – primarily right wing

James Neal – lots of potential, especially if he lines up alongside #87