

## The Puck Stops Here: Goaltending in the Western Conference

Written by Jeff Angus

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Here is the second of three articles on the goaltending of the 15 Western Conference clubs. Covered in this article are Dallas, Minnesota, Calgary, Colorado, and St. Louis.

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### Dallas

Current Starter: Marty Turco

Current Backup: Mike Smith

Summer Outlook: There have been rumours swirling that the Bruins and a number of teams are after Turco's services. After his stellar first round against the Canucks, his playoff questions have all been answered. His contract is reasonable for a top level goalie, which makes it doubtful that Dallas looks into moving him, even though they believe Smith is almost ready to be a starter in this league.

Prediction: Dallas goes into next season with the same two goalies, and Smith continues his progression into a starter.

### Minnesota

Current Starter: Niklas Backstrom

Current Backup: Josh Harding

Summer Outlook: Manny Fernandez is done in Minnesota; it is just a question of when he is moved. Backstrom was phenomenal last season and Harding is one of the best young prospects in the world. The Wild are set in nets for a long time.

Prediction: Fernandez is moved for another roster player and Harding pushes Backstrom right out of camp.

### Calgary

Current Starter: Miikka Kiprusoff

Current Backup: Jamie McLennan

Summer Outlook: Calgary will probably opt for a different backup, and they have a few options within their own system. Kiprusoff is in a contract year and Calgary has got to lock him up before he hits the open market.

Prediction: Calgary promotes Curtis McElhinney to play 5-10 games backing up Kiprusoff.

### Colorado

Current Starter: Peter Budaj

Current Backup: Jose Theodore

Summer Outlook: Colorado has been trying to move Theodore for the past season, but with his contract that makes it basically impossible. They won't make any moves between the pipes this off-season.

Prediction: Budaj firmly cements himself as a legitimate goalie, while Theodore provides inconsistent play behind him. If the Avalanche had gone with Budaj out of the gate last season, they would have made the playoffs.

### St. Louis

Current Starter: Manny Legace

Current Backup: Jason Bacashihua

Summer Outlook: The Blues may go for a more veteran back up and try and move Bacashihua. Legace posted terrific numbers after Christmas and looks primed for a big season.

Prediction: Legace starts the majority of the games, regardless of who the Blues bring in.