In a little over two weeks, I'll be heading off to Vegas for some fun. One reason I am heading down is to meet up with several members of the Ultimate Fantasy Pool – a keeper league that uses head-to-head scoring. I have been in the league for two years now, and it features some stiff competition (all of our league members read this site, and one is among the regular columnists).

Over the next few weeks, I am going to introduce the league and each of the 12 teams to the DobberHockey readers. The five teams today – The Crosby Show (myself), Hextall's Hackers (Tim), Legion (Jeff), the Great Whites (Cory), and Wookie Sandwich (Scott).

The questions asked:

1) What is your outlook for 2011-12?

2) Best trade made over the past year?

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

6) Favorite parts about the league…

The League
The Crosby Show (yours truly)
Hextall's Hackers (Tim Lucarelli)
Legion (Jeff)
Great Whites (Cory)
DraperNEuroTwinSauce (Rhys)
Wookie Sandwich (Scott)
Wu Crew (Jake)
Shannon (Bulldogs)
Biscuits and Gravy (Alex)
Fire on Ice (Bill)
Vegas Domination (Bret)

El Loco's Sharks (Jason)

The Crosby Show (Jeff)

Mike Fisher	**C**
Vincent Lecavalier	**C**
Vladimir Sobotka	**C**
Mikko Koivu	**C**
Steve Ott	**C**
Mark Giordano	**D**
Zdeno Chara	**D**
Dan Boyle	**D**
Johnny Boychuk	**D**
Alex Edler	**D**
Andrej Sekera	**D**
Doug Murray	**D**
Cory Schneider	**G**
Roberto Luongo	**G**
Dwayne Roloson	**G**
Patrick Sharp	**LW**
Andrew Ladd	**LW**
Mason Raymond	**LW**
Ville Leino	**LW**
Loui Eriksson	**RW**
Marian Gaborik	**RW**
Johan Franzen	**RW**

PA Parenteau	**RW**
Sidney Crosby	**C**
David Perron	**LW**
Erik Karlsson	**D**
Steve Kampfer	**D**
Brendan Smith	**D**
Oliver Ekman-Larsson	**D**
Matt Calvert	**LW**
Jeremy Morin	**RW**
Mats Zuccarello	**RW**

1) What is your outlook for 2011-12?

My team is entirely dependent on the health of Sidney Crosby. I clawed my way to a second place finish in the playoffs last season thanks to a strong finish from several of my players, but Crosby is far and away the most valuable player on my team and in this league. With him, I'd say my team is among the three or four best. Without him, my team is middle of the pack.

2) Best trade made over the past year?

I've had a busy summer, but it was my smallest trade that I like the best. I flipped Justin Williams for Steve Ott. With our scoring categories, Ott was the 14th most valuable forward in the league last year. I see his point totals increasing with a likely spot on the second line with Benn and Eriksson (who I also traded for) in Dallas.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

I've written lots on my regrettable Steven Stamkos trade (moved him and Shattenkirk/Lehtonen for Liles, Chara, and Brodeur). That still haunts me, especially with Crosby's injury. I may be regretting moving David Rundblad for Ville Leino and a very good draft pick in our dispersal draft, but that remains to be seen. Wingers who can win faceoffs are extremely valuable in our league, and I'm hoping Leino can join Sharp as my LW/C and give me a huge edge in that category each week. I have a wealth of young defensemen which made moving Rundblad a tad easier.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

I've changed things up a bit over the years. In general, I build from the defense out in this league, especially with six starting spots. I recently traded away Martin Brodeur. Our league relies a lot on goaltending categories, including those that reward just playing (saves, and games started). However, I'm going to focus less on those and more on the other categories (shutouts, goals against, and so on). With my forwards, I try to draft the skill categories (goals, assists, power play points) earlier than the peripheral categories (hits, PIM, plus-minus).

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

First league I've played in with it, and I am a huge, huge fan. The stat isn't recorded accurately across all 30 teams, but at least it is a positive measure, unlike PIM. I still hate the fact that you

are “rewarded” in pools if your player takes a lazy hooking penalty.

6) Favourite parts about the league

The fact that they all read my innermost thoughts on DobberHockey each week!

Hextall’s Hackers (Tim)

Mike Richards	**C**
Patrik Berglund	**C**
Derick Brassard	**C**
Jonathan Blum	**D**
Chris Pronger	**D**
Lubomir Visnovsky	**D**
Zach Bogosian	**D**
Matt Carle	**D**
John-Michael Liles	**D**
Brian Elliott	**G**
Martin Brodeur	**G**
Jean-Sebastien Giguer	**G**
Jaroslav Halak	**G**
Ray Emery	**G**
Simon Gagne	**LW**
Nikolai Kulemin	**LW**

Ryane Clowe	**LW**
Thomas Vanek	**LW**
Jakub Voracek	**RW**
David Backes	**RW**
Kyle Okposo	**RW**
Joe Pavelski	**RW**
Devin Setoguchi	**RW**
Rick DiPietro	**G**
Alex Burmistrov	**C**
Michael Del Zotto	**D**
Joacim Eriksson	**G**
Martin Jones	**G**
Mark Dekanich	**G**
Viktor Stalberg	**LW**
Nino Niederreiter	**LW**
Jordan Caron	**RW**

1)□□□□What is your outlook for 2011-12?

I am looking to make the playoffs as one of the bottom seeds and hopefully get hot at the right time for a playoff run. Many of my players are entering or will be entering the prime over the next 1-2 years.

2)□ Best trade made over the past year?

My Joe Thornton and Brent Seabrook for Derick Brassard, Jakub Voracek, and Michael Del Zotto. I was looking to make a major shakeup and moving Thornton forced me to do just that. Jumbo Joe was my first ever pick in this league.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

My Joe Thornton and Brent Seabrook for Derick Brassard, Jakub Voracek, and Michael Del Zotto. A big reason for the trade was a re-alignment of my strategy. I was looking to acquire players who skated on the same line and with Brassard and Voracek still occupying the top line in Columbus AND still being very young, I viewed this trade as an investment. Now I'm left with Brassard, who isn't typically a player I would have sought after unless I also had his linemate for the next couple seasons. Thornton was eventually flipped for Carey Price, a guy I could desperately use. I guess the bright side is that I got Voracek before he was traded to Philly. The guy I traded with (my brother - also a Flyers fan) would have never let him go in this deal if Voracek was a Flyer.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

I had to rebuild in this league a bit, but I've still kept most of the same players I had when I started. In the past, I looked to dominate the faceoff win category and look for residual offense. I've changed that up a bit and am now considering player combinations to possibly double point production on certain nights. I've found that approach isn't as easy as I thought it might be. I've also (reluctantly) decided that it might be time to start valuing defense a little more. I've often been found with only four or five D and we start six daily.

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

The addition of hits has made me open my eyes to a couple extra players in the league, but I haven't gone out and picked up a guy whose value is basically only hits. Not yet at least. It's also made me value David Backes quite a bit higher. I might have traded him before the addition of hits, but I doubt I'll move him now.

6) Favorite parts about the league…

This is definitely my favorite league to be a member of. In other leagues, you get guys who give up at times or who don't ever communicate with you...I hoped to avoid all of that in this league, and that's why each GM was hand-picked. I genuinely think each GM loves being in this league, which is why we hardly ever have anyone leave. If there's ever an issue or problem, I always

bring it to the attention of all of the members and we just discuss pro's and con's. Every person's input is always valued.

Legion (Jeff)

Marty Reasoner	**C**
Jason Spezza	**C**
Brad Richards	**C**
Sam Gagner	**C**
Paul Stastny	**C**
Samuel Pahlsson	**C**
Dan Girardi	**D**
Tomas Kaberle	**D**
Dustin Byfuglien	**D**
Ryan Suter	**D**
PK Subban	**D**
Jakub Kindl	**D**
Michal Neuvirth	**G**
Marty Turco	**G**
Semyon Varlamov	**G**
Corey Crawford	**G**
Alexander Ovechkin	**LW**
Dustin Penner	**LW**
Ryan Smyth	**LW**
Shawn Thornton	**LW**
Patrick Kane	**RW**
Milan Hejduk	**RW**
Shane Doan	**RW**

Brian Gionta	**RW**
Brad Boyes	**RW**
Mike Green	**D**
Anders Lindback	**G**
Mikko Koskinen	**G**
Braden Holtby	**G**
Josh Harding	**G**
Lars Eller	**LW**
Nazem Kadri	**LW**

1)□□□ What is your outlook for 2011-12?

I'm generally good at playing fantasy hockey, and I've never missed the playoffs in any of my leagues (knocks on wood). Once I inherited my team, I noticed a few holes that needed to be taken care of. I made a few trades to shore them up, and I'm excited to see where my team ends up.

2) □□□Best trade made over the past year?

My: Thomas + Roy + 3rd for his Green + Gagner + Varlamov. This was my first trade when I entered the league, and boy was it a blockbuster. I'm taking a gamble with Varlamov, but he is confident his injuries are behind him. Based off of what Colorado paid to get him, I would say

they are pretty high on him being their future and with only Thomas/Crawford at this point my goaltending was looking shaky for the future. I've always heard Bret and Tim complaining about goalies, and this helps me out immediately as well as in the future. Not to mention I got this other guy named Mike Green.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

Well I've only made a few trades so far, being the new member, and I think both of them helped my team. We'll see what happens in the next season.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

Well without giving away too much of my strategy I basically build my team with my favorite players, and try to have at least one 'elite' option in every position to balance out my team. I've gotten to watch a lot of hockey over the past few years and so there is certain players that I always draft/go for. I usually end up winning the league, so I would say I have a pretty good idea of who's valuable.

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

I personally like HITS, I have them in my league. I was not around before the HIT category was included so to me it's no big deal.

6) Favorite parts about the league…

I have a lot of people I know personally in this league: Bill, Bret, Tim, and Rhys. So that was one of the biggest selling points for me joining. Bret called me up right away and told me I had to join; there was no way around it.

Great Whites (Cory)

Jonathan Toews	**C**
Travis Zajac	**C**
Antoine Vermette	**C**
Brad Marchand	**C**
Cody Franson	**D**
Sergei Gonchar	**D**
Andrej Meszaros	**D**
Travis Hamonic	**D**
Kris Letang	**D**
Jason Garrison	**D**
Tomas Vokoun	**G**
James Reimer	**G**
Tuukka Rask	**G**
Niklas Backstrom	**G**
Zach Parise	**LW**
Eric Cole	**LW**
Brooks Laich	**LW**
David Booth	**LW**
Kris Versteeg	**LW**
Michael Grabner	**RW**
Dustin Brown	**RW**
Drew Stafford	**RW**
Chris Stewart	**RW**
Evgeni Malkin	**C**
Mark Streit	**D**
Stefan Elliott	**D**
Alex Stalock	**G**
Chris Kreider	**LW**
Tomas Tatar	**RW**
Kyle Beach	**RW**
Patric Hornqvist	**RW**

1)□□□ What is your outlook for 2011-12?

I am looking for a top five finish in the regular season. Anything goes in the playoffs, I'm just looking for a healthy squad at the end of the season. The last two years have been injury plagued, especially with Malkin, Parise, Streit down for the count last year.

2) □□□Best trade made over the past year?

Dubnyk for Hamonic -> Hamonic is looking like a stud d-man for our multi-cat league.

3) □□□Worst trade made over the past year?

John Carlson/Ryan Miller for Kris Letang/Tuukka Rask. I was hoping for Rask to take over from Thomas, so this deal hurt quite a bit last season in our goalie heavy league. In our keeper the goal was to get a little younger in net, so this deal should pan out fine in a few years.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

I look for a balanced roster with at least one elite player at each position. I tend to look for players that can contribute across the board rather than focusing on scoring.

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

Luckily, I have Brown. Hits changed the league quite a bit and I factored this into the trade mentioned above. Letang should prove more valuable than Carlson even if Carlson hits his upside. Eric Cole suddenly became a star.

It also changed the balance of power a bit. Bulldogs already had a perennial favorite, adding hits put his team over the top this season. Some teams focusing on scoring took a bit of a hit as guys like Pat Kane dropped another category.

In a keeper, I'd recommend lowering the amount of players kept in a season where categories

like Hits are added. This would allow all the managers to have a better chance to rebuild accordingly. Adding specialists is a good idea to make up a category in principle. In reality, the results are not going to be great. Specialists are bench players. They do not get into a lot of games. Their value lies in getting them into a game on a Sunday in a close matchup.

6) Favorite parts about the league…

The sheer number of categories make the league very interesting. You can employ a number of different strategies, team building ideas to win. You don't have to have the top goal scorers to come out on top.
Great group of managers, very knowledgeable about fantasy hockey. Lots of action since Angus came on board. Prior to that, there wasn't a ton of player movement outside of Smack, myself and the manager Jeff replaced. It's been a lot tougher snagging waiver wire gems.

Wookie Sandwich (Scott)

Stephen Weiss	**C**
Tomas Plekanec	**C**
Jarret Stoll	**C**
Valtteri Filppula	**C**

Dennis Wideman	**D**
Alex Pietrangelo	**D**
Victor Hedman	**D**
Keith Yandle	**D**
Dennis Seidenberg	**D**
James Wisniewski	**D**
Pekka Rinne	**G**
Ilya Bryzgalov	**G**
Craig Anderson	**G**
Brenden Morrow	**LW**
Michael Cammalleri	**LW**
Scott Hartnell	**LW**
Vinny Prospal	**LW**
Dan Carcillo	**LW**
Michael Frolik	**RW**
Martin Erat	**RW**
Corey Perry	**RW**
Ryan Callahan	**RW**
Jamie Langenbrunner	**RW**
Kyle Turris	**C**
Cody Hodgson	**C**
Evgeny Kuznetzov	**C**
Jiri Tlusty	**C**
Colin Wilson	**C**
Marc Letestu	**C**
Luca Sbisa	**D**
Max Pacorietty	**LW**

1)□□□ What is your outlook for 2011-12?

I feel my team is sort of mired in that in-between state, where it’s not quite good enough to compete for the title but not poor enough to give me top draft picks.

2) Best trade made over the past year?

First year I've ever been in a league where I made no trades. And I was willing to deal away some of my top-tier talent like Rinne, Perry and Yandle but the offers I got for these guys were pretty weak. If you want to go after a top 5 goalie, winger or d-man then you need to offer at very least equal value that is going to help me build my team for the future, otherwise there's no point in dealing them in the first place. I did talk a lot of trades over the course of the season though and even came close a couple times but it always came down to a situation where one side would be skewed and screwed positionally so it never got done

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

See above.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

Looking at my roster last year, I saw that I was going to have trouble going up against the big boys in the scoring cats, so I sought to add grit so I could dominate the PIMs and Hits categories. Unfortunately it didn't work out very well...Carcillo was a healthy scratch and got little ice time, Callahan got injured and with my other injuries I finished middle of the pack.

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

I was in decent shape going into the season with guys like Callahan, Morrow, Hartnell, Seidenberg and Wisneiwski on my team but Carcillo was a disappointment this season. I expected to be stronger in Hits than I was, perhaps I underestimated some of my competition or perhaps my injuries got the better of me.

I definitely prefer the Hits category to the previous redundant points category we had before, it adds a new dimension to the league, especially with the mid-level scorers, many times a 50 pt forward who hits everything that moves will be a better option than a 60-65pt forward who plays a soft game.

6) Favorite parts about the league…

Great group of GMs, very competitive league, great commissioner.

Stay tuned to find out about the rest of the UFP next week.