In a little over one week, 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 final four teams today – Wu Crew (Jake), Fire on Ice (Bill), and Las Vegas Thunder (Bret).

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)

Scoring Categories

Goals
Assists
Plus-minus
PIM
Shots on goal
Game winning goals
Power play points
Short handed points
Hits
Wins
Shutouts
Save percentage
Games started
Goals against average
Saves

Wu Crew (Jake)

Marcus Johansson	C	Wu Crew	Pro
Steven Stamkos	C	Wu Crew	Pro
David Krejci	C	Wu Crew	Pro
Mike Ribeiro	C	Wu Crew	Pro
TJ Oshie	C	Wu Crew	Pro
Brian Rafalski	D	Wu Crew	Pro
Kevin Shattenkirk	D	Wu Crew	Pro
Bryan McCabe	D	Wu Crew	Pro
Marek Zidlicky	D	Wu Crew	Pro
Dmitry Kulikov	D	Wu Crew	Pro
Kris Russell	D	Wu Crew	Pro
Dion Phaneuf	D	Wu Crew	Pro
Marc-Andre Fleury	G	Wu Crew	Pro
Kari Lehtonen	G	Wu Crew	Pro
Patrik Elias	LW	Wu Crew	Pro
Jamie Benn	LW	Wu Crew	Pro
Andrei Kostitsyn	LW	Wu Crew	Pro

Ilya Kovalchuk	**LW**	**Wu Crew**	**Pro**
Tuomo Ruutu	**LW**	**Wu Crew**	**Pro**
Joffrey Lupul	**LW**	**Wu Crew**	**Pro**
Jordan Eberle	**RW**	**Wu Crew**	**Pro**
Jarome Iginla	**RW**	**Wu Crew**	**Pro**
Mikael Samuelsson	**RW**	**Wu Crew**	**Pro**
Kristian Huselius	**LW**	**Wu Crew**	**IR**
Evgeni Grachev	**C**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Tyler Bozak	**C**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Calvin de Haan	**D**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Vyacheslov Voynov	**D**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Cedrick Desjardins	**G**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Anton Khudobin	**G**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Dustin Tokarski	**G**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Mattias Tedenby	**LW**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Alexander Radulov	**RW**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**
Evgeni Dadonov	**RW**	**Wu Crew**	**Farm**

1) What is your outlook for 2011-12?

I'm in semi-rebuild mode. After trading Chara and Brodeur for Stamkos, Shattenkirk and Lehtonen, I decided to go young while still trying to be a bit competitive. Rafalski's retirement made me revamp by defence even faster. I have an outside shot on the playoffs and it's still my goal but I'm not expecting any miracles with this lineup, yet.

2) Best trade made over the past year?

I felt our Brodeur/Stamkos trade helped both myself and The Crosby Show last draft as it got you to the finals and helped me begin the rebuild process. If that's too far back, then I'll go with my Neuvirth/Boyes for Phaneuf/Tedenby/Tokarski/ pick upgrades trade with Legion. It hurts to give up Neuvirth, the constant goalie juggling in Washington drove me crazy last year and now with Vokoun in the picture and Holtby pushing Neuvirth's heels, I get some peace of mind and Tokarski should be in the NHL next year while I get some great young players in Tedenby and Phaneuf, as well as pick upgrades.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

Would have to be Selanne/Taormina for Kulikov/Clarkson/2nd round prospect pick. While I got the young D I wanted in Kulikov and the pick I wanted, I still wonder if I couldn't have got more for Selanne closer to the trade deadline and if he comes back for another year as expected, it'll hurt even more.

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

For the most part at the beginning, I cared more about getting the best player available no matter the position. In the end, I realized my defense suffered so starting last year I revamped it as I noticed the teams that went far in the playoffs had some stud d-men. So after trading Chara and then Rafalski's retirement I replaced them with Shattenkirk, Kulikov, Phaneuf which sets me up nicely there. Right now I have Lehtonen and Fleury in net and would love a strong 3rd goalie but those are nearly impossible to get in this league except giving up some huge offense or getting lucky with a waiver pickup which is what I hope to do. Goaltending will be the reason I most likely won't get into the playoffs which is why it's my mission to improve it. You should always be able to balance out the forwards.

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

I wouldn't have drafted Ruutu with the last pick of the pro draft last year if it wasn't for the hit category and I'm sure glad I did it. He gave me some strength in that category while producing in other cat's as well. I would have still done the Phaneuf deal if hits didn't count but it's a huge plus and sets me up nicely there as Kulikov was also a surprising asset in the category.

6) Favourite parts about the league

Easily the GM's. It's a great bunch of guys that like to have fun and never take anything too seriously. Any topic that is brought up is debated heavily and intelligently and that's all you could ask. Plus, the live draft is so much fun and by the end, everybody is intoxicated. As well, the variety of scoring categories makes it that much more challenging which is a huge positive.

Fire on Ice (Bill)

Henrik Sedin	C	fire on ice	Pro
Mikael Backlund	C	fire on ice	Pro
Saku Koivu	C	fire on ice	Pro
Olli Jokinen	C	fire on ice	Pro
Tyler Seguin	C	fire on ice	Pro
Stephane de Costa	C	fire on ice	Pro
Derek Stepan	C	fire on ice	Pro
Drew Doughty	D	fire on ice	Pro

Kevin Bieksa	**D**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Ondrej Pavelec	**G**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Mathie Garon	**G**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Evgeni Nabokov	**G**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Chet Pickard	**G**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Sergei Kostitsyn	**LW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Ryan Malone	**LW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Daniel Sedin	**LW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Sean Avery	**LW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
James vanRiemsdyk	**LW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Nathan Gerbe	**LW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Bobby Butler	**RW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Marian Hossa	**RW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Claude Giroux	**RW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Daniel Alfredsson	**RW**	**fire on ice**	**Pro**
Matt Lombardi	**C**	**fire on ice**	**IR**
Dustin Jeffrey	**C**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**
Mathieu Perreault	**C**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**
Henrik Karlsson	**G**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**
Kevin Poulin	**G**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**

Jack Campbell	**G**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**
Kirill Petrov	**LW**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**
Jordan Schroeder	**RW**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**
Sergei Shirokov	**RW**	**fire on ice**	**Farm**

1) What is your outlook for 2011-12?

Depends on goalie performance. If Nabby can get in position to get some games I think the playoffs would be doable. Once in, anything can happen.

2) Best trade made over the past year?

Only 1 trade I can remember. Brought in Garon and Kevin Poulin (right before his injury when he was on fire).

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

Hated giving up Dubnyk after waiting so long for him to get his chance (and after losing another farm prospect I really liked after holding on to both Dubnyk and JDD forcing me to drop the other prospect because Edmonton couldn't decide on one of them at the start of the year)

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

Currently rebuilding after championship season and a bunch of my veterans retired or no longer perform. Hard to trade in this league as so many value players vastly different.

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

I preferred Blocked Shots but league didn't vote that way.

6) Favourite parts about the league

Competitive league with my brothers (Jeff, Tim, Bret) and the draft. Have always wanted a

fantasy league where the guys get together to draft (only half the league will be there though).

Las Vegas Thunder (Bret)

Nicklas Backstrom	C	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Jeff Carter	C	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Stephane Robidas	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Grant Clitsome	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Brent Seabrook	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Paul Martin	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Duncan Keith	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Brent Burns	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
John Moore	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
David Rundblad	D	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro
Michael Leighton	G	Las Vegas Thunder	Pro

Carey Price	**G**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Antero Niittymaki	**G**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Alex Tanguay	**LW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Magnus Paajarvi	**LW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Andy McDonald	**LW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Taylor Hall	**LW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Brett MacLean	**LW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Clarke MacArthur	**LW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Cal Clutterbuck	**RW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Jiri Hudler	**RW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Daniel Briere	**RW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Martin St. Louis	**RW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Pro**
Marc Savard	**C**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**IR**
Jonas Hiller	**G**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**IR**
Joe Colborne	**C**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**
Vladimir Tarasenko	**C**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**
Tyler Toffoli	**C**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**
Richard Bachman	**G**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**
Jhnoas Enroth	**G**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**

Jake Allen	**G**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**
Eddie Lack	**G**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**
Mikael Granlund	**RW**	**Las Vegas Thunder**	**Farm**

1) What is your outlook for 2011-12?

I don't see myself as a playoff team this upcoming year. I have a lot of youth that can be inconsistent, and am in the first year of a rebuild. I have to make sure I stay patient and let my team develop.

2) Best trade made over the past year?

I like most of my trades I made. I am rebuilding so I wanted to trade some of my veterans for youth. I think the following trades all helped out with my rebuild.

- Voracek, Brassard, and Del Zotto for Thornton and Seabrook – this allowed me to get a star C who I would later flip, and a 45 pt dman who was a leader in hits
- Thornton and Niemi for Hall and Price – I was able to solidify LW with a potential star which has been a challenge for me. I was also able to upgrade long term in goal.
- Leino and picks for Rundblad and pick – I needed to strengthen my defense, and wanted a young dman to match my team core. I had a strength in LW, and was very deep and was able to use that to fill an area of weakness.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

I was desperate for goalie depth and looking for that 3rd possible tender. If I could acquire a tender who could get a few games a week, I had a shot at the playoffs. I thought Leighton had a shot at stealing the job in the Philly goalie carousel so I took a risk and traded Johansen for Leighton. Johansen at the time wasn't considered a top prospect and I was willing to release him because I wasn't sold on CLB's development of prospects and felt he would have a hard time reaching his potential. I preferred to keep Colborne and Tarasenko over Johansen. We will see if I made the right choice in a few years.

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

I have learned the value in certain positions that I took for granted the first couple years. With the inclusion of hits it requires a more balanced team. Defense has also become more valuable with all the stats. My philosophy is to build a strong goalie and defensive core and have at least one but hopefully two star player(s) at each forward position.

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

It has made one field a more balanced team. Certain players who had minimal value previously now are keeper worthy. I would never have thought to keep Clutterbuck before, but now he is an easy keeper, and unavailable.

6) Favourite parts about the league

Everything about it. The interaction between managers is always active as it's a 12 month league. I also enjoy strategizing about my team and making deals, and figuring out how to build a successful team. With so many categories and capable GM's in this league you have to have a well thought out strategy to complete.

Stay tuned to find out about how the draft went!