

## Top 10 Keeper League Right Wingers

Written by Jeff Angus

Saturday, 09 June 2012 17:18 - Last Updated Monday, 11 June 2012 20:50

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The first few Top 10 lists I have put out in 2012 were much easier to compile than either [the left winger list](#) or this one. Defensemen and centers are (for the most part) correctly identified on hockey pool sites like ESPN, Yahoo!, and CBS. However, these sites use differing measures for figuring out whether a player is a left winger or a right winger. In pools that discern between the two positions, it is important to make sure you know which position a player plays before picking him (unintentional alliteration, I promise).

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I was asked to clarify by what “standard categories” means, so here is the league format that I am basing my selections on:

- 12 to 15 teams
- Start 4 C, 4 LW, 4 RW, 6 D, 2 G (5 Bench)
- G, A, +/-, PIM, PPP, GWG, HITS, SOG

I put an emphasis on offensive categories. They are harder to find in the draft – it is much easier to scoop up a PIM/HITS type of player on the waiver wire (Matt Martin, Derek Dorsett) than it is to get a player who fills the G/A/PPP categories nicely.

[Here is my 2011 list.](#)

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[Here is my 2010 list.](#)

### 1. Corey Perry

Even with a 38-point production decrease, Perry reigns supreme for the second consecutive year. His goal output fell from 50 to 37, and his assist output plummeted from 48 to 23. He set a career high in PIM with 127 – Perry has had at least 108 PIM in each of the last five seasons. You can debate the merits of PIM in fantasy hockey ( [and I wrote a column on the debate a few weeks ago](#) ), but Perry's dominance as a multi-category stud is unmatched. He is a creative offensive talent with an equally impressive ability to talk the ear off of any NHL official.

Perry's 50-goal season saw him score on over 17 percent of his shots – an unsustainable total. His shooting percentage dropped to 13.4 in 2011-12 (still the third highest total of his career). Perry shoots the puck a lot, usually isn't a plus-minus liability (2011-12 was the first time he finished a season in the negative at minus-7).

Another reason for Perry's offensive struggles was the awful play of Ryan Getzlaf. You likely won't be able to buy low on Perry, but if you own him I wouldn't be too concerned. Expect a strong bounce back in 2012-13 from the 27-year-old.

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### 2. Ilya Kovalchuk

Kovalchuk has played a lot of right wing this season in New Jersey. If Zach Parise signs elsewhere this summer, the Devils may move Kovalchuk back to the left side. He is a goal-scoring dynamo, and his playmaking has come a long way in recent years, too. Kovalchuk doesn't turn 30 until next April, and he is only 94 goals away from 500 in his career. He has a shot at 700 if he can stay healthy over the next four or five seasons in New Jersey.

He improved his plus-minus rating from minus-26 to minus-9 (still not great, but headed in the right direction), and he increased his assist total from 29 to 46. He had 65 more shots on goal compared to last season, in four less games, too. His lack of PIM hurts his fantasy value a bit, but not enough to slide him down this list at all.

### 3. James Neal

Hockey's next great power forward has arrived. After searching high and low for a goal scorer to

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plug alongside Evgeni Malkin and Sidney Crosby, the Penguins finally found one when they acquired Neal from Dallas for Alex Goligoski. Neal is big, strong, tough, and a natural goal scorer. Neal and Malkin were the first line mate/teammate combination to lead the league in shots on goal since Brendan Shanahan and Brett Hull with the Blues in 1993-94.

In 27 games (regular season and playoffs) with the Penguins after the trade in 2010-11, Neal scored two goals. In 85 games in 2011-12 (regular season and playoffs), Neal scored 42. He has a mean streak to his game, and his 87 PIM reflect that. Neal is guaranteed an elite center to play with every time he hops over the boards. Not many NHL wingers can say that.

#### 4. [Patrick Kane](#)

At this point, the only thing that can stop [Patrick Kane](#) is camera phones. The slick Chicago winger has experienced great on ice success over the past three seasons, and this has led to many celebrations off the ice. Some say Kane has a serious problem with drinking and partying, while others say it is just a case of a 23-year-old behaving like one. Regardless of where you fall on the spectrum of thoughts, Kane needs to learn to pick his spots better (and maybe find some new friends who don't seem intent on documenting his every move).

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His offensive game was inconsistent in 2011-12. He was tried at center to some success, as he possessed the hockey sense and defensive acumen to make the move. However, centers have more defensively responsibility, and this took away from a lot of Kane's offensive creativity. The Blackhawks moved him there out of necessity with the early-season injury to David Bolland, and he lack of depth up the middle in the organization.

Chicago continued to give Kane the opportunities to produce offensively, though. In 2010-11, he led all Blackhawk forwards (with at least 40 games played) by starting 68.4 percent of his shifts in the offensive zone. This past season, he led the team with a 66.3 offensive zone start percentage.

### 5. [Jordan Eberle](#)

Last year I wrote "give it a year or two, and Eberle will be in the top five." Well, it has been a year, and here Eberle is in the top five. The slick Edmonton winger had a season to remember on a miserable hockey club in 2011-12. Sophomore slump be damned – Eberle increased his production from 18 goals to 34, and 43 points to 76.

He has a great shot, deceptive speed, and arguably the best hands in the league of any non-Russian player. He is guaranteed to have elite linemates for the next 10 years or more, and

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his production may really take off if and when the Oilers can bring in a capable power play quarterback to complement their young forwards. Only three players in the league managed to record more than three points per 60 minutes of even strength ice time in 2011-12. Eberle was one of them. The other two – [Evgeni Malkin](#) and [Sidney Crosby](#) .

22 of his 34 goals came on home ice, and his 18.9 shooting percentage is unsustainable. Don't expect to see 34 goals out of him again unless he starts shooting the puck a lot more. Eberle is deadly from in close and his shooting percentage was so high because he has such an accurate shot, but scoring on almost every fifth shot fired at net would be a [ridiculously hard pace to maintain for more than a season.](#)

□ *“Is a shooting percentage that high sustainable?” No. □ Among players with more than 500 shots since the lockout, the highest shooting percentage belongs to [Alex Tanguay](#) at 18.0% – and he’s both highly accurate and highly selective in the shots he takes. □ The latter feature is why he’s never been a marquee goal-scorer – he just doesn’t shoot enough. Of the other three players over 16.0%, two – [Tomas Holmstrom](#) and [Andrew Brunette](#) – are poor comparables because they’re net front, crease-crashing forwards. □ That’s not Eberle’s game. The final player is [Steven Stamkos](#) , with a career rate of 17.0%.”*

All that being said, Eberle is one of the best young forwards in the league. Count your lucky stars if you have him on your fantasy roster.

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### 6. [Phil Kessel](#)

Kessel is arguably the most lethal scorer off of the rush in the league. His release is lightning-fast, and he is one of the best in hockey at changing the angle of his shots to fool opposing goaltenders.

From two years ago:

*“Kessel’s speed and shot are elite – the rest of his game isn’t. Fantasy hockey is all about production, so many of Kessel’s deficiencies don’t matter. However, he still is a bit too one-dimensional for me to include in the top 10.”*

Kessel is a one dimensional player, but his one dimension is impossible to ignore in pools.

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From last year:

*“What he has done with essentially zero help up front has been impressive. Could crack the list with better linemates.”*

Kessel did exactly that. [Joffrey Lupul](#) was stellar on the left side with Kessel, and the two were the toast of the NHL through the first half of the season. It is hard to argue with consistency, and in his last four seasons Kessel has scored at least 30 goals in every one. He set a career high with 45 assists in 2011-12 – a reflection of the improvement in line mate quality.

Kessel’s career high in PIM is 28, but it is much easier to pick up a player off the wire to fill PIM than to score goals. Kessel is one of the best goal scorers in the league, period.

### 7. [Tyler Seguin](#)

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Ah, the great debate – Kessel or Seguin (and [Jared Knight](#) and [Dougie Hamilton](#) )? If I was starting a franchise from scratch, the answer would definitely be Seguin. However, if I was in a standard category keeper league with my eyes on winning at some point in the next three years, Kessel would be my guy.

Seguin smartly made the move over to the right wing – with [David Krejci](#) and [Patrice Bergeron](#) as the top two centers in Boston, he saw that the best chance he had to see top line minutes was to change positions. Seguin more than tripled his rookie season production (22 points to 67), and he played a big role on the wing with [Brad Marchand](#) and Bergeron. He saw some time on the top unit with Krejci and [Milan Lucic](#) towards the end of the season after [Nathan Horton](#) suffered a concussion.

Seguin skates like [Steven Stamkos](#) , and the rest of his game isn't far behind, either.

The 2011-12 season:

**Frequency** **Strength** **Line Combination**

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47.35%

EV

37 BERGERON,PATRICE - 63 MARCHAND,BRA

12.77%

EV

46 KREJCI,DAVID - 17 LUCIC,MILAN - 19 SEGU

The final 10 regular season games:

Frequency	Strength	Line Combination
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45.88%

EV

37 BERGERON,PATRICE - 63 MARCHAND,BRA

30.49%

EV

46 KREJCI,DAVID - 17 LUCIC,MILAN - 19 SEGU

### 8. [Loui Eriksson](#)

'Mr. Underrated' won't stay that way for long if the Dallas Stars can find a center for him and [Jamie Benn](#)

to play with next season (and beyond). The experts predicted that Eriksson's production would plummet with the departure of

[Brad Richards](#)

. Loui had 71 points in 2011-12, only two points less than his previous season total. He has scored at least 26 goals and 63 points in each of the last four seasons, and he has missed only three games total over that time. He is one of the best two-way wingers in the game.

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With new ownership, the Stars are looking to make significant on ice improvements. Eriksson stands to benefit from playing with better linemates at both even strength and on the power play. Too often last year he and Benn were split up in order to balance the offensive attack.

His lack of PIM production slides him down a few spots on this list, but the rest of his production is top notch.

### 9. Martin St. Louis

The ageless St. Louis looks to have another few years of elite production left in him. He does everything at a high level – score, pass, skate, create, and he has been a major factor in the emergence of [Steven Stamkos](#) as the game's best goal scorer. St. Louis ranked fourth on my list last year, but his slide isn't indicative of his declining level of play – just an improvement in the play and value of a few other players.

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His 74 points in 2011-12 was his lowest total since the 2005-06 season. It was a disappointing season for most Lightning players asides from Stamkos. Tampa Bay needs to get a goaltender, and if they are able to shore that problem up this summer, expect the rest of the team to perform better.

### 10. [Jeff Skinner](#)

Taking Skinner over a few of the players left off of the top 10 list was a difficult decision. He struggled at times in his sophomore campaign, scoring only 20 goals (11 less than his rookie season). He has 50-goal upside, and now would be a great time to buy low on the future Rocket Richard contender. His offensive game is well rounded, and he plays the game with an intensity reminiscent of [Sidney Crosby](#) and [Zach Parise](#) .

Skinner has developed a bit of a reputation as a diver, but as we have seen from Los Angeles's [Dustin Brown](#) during this postseason run, all is fair in hockey.

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I am one to make sure to avoid overrating potential, especially in the case of proven producers like [Jeff Carter](#) , [Marian Hossa](#) , [Marian Gaborik](#) , and [Jarome Iginla](#) . However, the Hurricanes are going to spend some money over the next few years to build a strong team. Skinner has an elite center to play with (Staal), a crop of exciting young defensemen to play in front of (led by [Justin Faulk](#) ), and a very good goaltender in [Cam Ward](#)

### Not Eligible:

[Claude Giroux](#) – considered a center

[Patrick Sharp](#) – considered a left winger

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[David Backes](#) – considered a center

### Honorable Mentions:

[Marian Hossa](#) - When Hossa is on top of his game, he is one of the most dominant forwards in the league. He is as strong as [Jaromir Jagr](#) , and as quick as [Marian Gaborik](#) . Concussion issue is a concern.

[Jeff Carter](#) – shot-producing machine needs to get his game on track in Los Angeles after a disastrous stint in Columbus.

[Dustin Brown](#) – great player and contributes in a lot of ways to a fantasy team, but was trade bait only a few months ago. Don't buy high on him.

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[Rick Nash](#) – depending on where he ends up (his days as a Blue Jacket are numbered), he could place on the list. Until then, he's not good enough production-wise to unseat any of the 10 names ahead of him.

[Alex Semin](#) – when healthy and engaged in the game, he is one of the best pure talents. KHL risk at the moment.

[Dany Heatley](#) – a 6-3, 220 pound player with his skill set should be much more impactful. Shoulder injuries and off-ice distractions have diminished a once-promising career.

[Marian Gaborik](#) – an elite talent, but has an extensive recovery ahead after surgery to repair a torn rotator cuff.

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[Jarome Iginla](#) – for so long the best right winger in hockey. Father time and a lack of help on Calgary are contributing factors in his fall.

[Jakub Voracek](#) – it won't be long until he is moving quickly up this list.

[Ales Hemsky](#) – potential with a capital P. Hemsky has the talent and drive to be one of the best in the game, he hasn't put it together. Is it too late?