

## Top 10 Keeper League Goaltenders

Written by Jeff Angus

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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 poolies place an emphasis on youth and prospects over proven veterans. So using my general 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.

I have compiled a list of the top 10 keeper league goalies to own (assuming standard keeper league rules and scoring categories). Using the two or three season scope, I had to balance proven production with young goaltenders on the verge of breaking out.

The goaltending position is far and away the toughest to predict in terms of development, which is why this list has more veterans than any of my other previous lists. It is too risky to rely on a young goalie compared to a young forward or defenseman. Additionally, many goalies can play at an elite level well into their late 30's and early 40's, unlike most forwards and defensemen.

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How the list works – since it is “in order,” my point is that I wouldn’t trade the second ranked goalie for the third ranked goalie in a standard, non-salary cap keeper league pool.

I also included where each of my picks ranks on [Dobber’s Top 50 Goaltenders](#) list. Don’t forget that his list accounts for playoff wins and trade carry-overs. Read his full criteria by clicking the link above. I’d consider the top four goalies below to be the top tier right now. The second tier of goalies (those from five to 10, the honorable mentions, and a handful of others) is quite large.

Standard keeper league goaltending categories:

- Wins
- Shutouts
- GAA
- SV %

My draft recommendation would be to grab one of the top four, and then target one or two you like in the second tier, but don’t draft them early. Even if there is a crazy run on goaltenders, they seem to be enough surprises and dark horses season to cover for leaving a draft with only one legitimate starting goaltender.

[My 2010 Top 10 Goaltenders List](#)

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### [My 2011 Top 10 Goaltenders List](#)

#### 1. [Henrik Lundqvist](#)

##### **Dobber Rank: 1**

The king still reigns supreme. The gap between Lundqvist and the rest of the goaltenders in the NHL (from a fantasy perspective, at least) continues to grow. The Rangers have a slew of talented young defensemen who excel at preventing goals, led by Dan Girardi, [Marc Staal](#), and future Norris Trophy winner Ryan McDonagh.

Lundqvist is consistently elite, and he plays a lot. Since 2008-09. Lundqvist's GAA has dropped each year, from 2.43, to 2.38, to 2.28, to 1.97. Not surprisingly, his SV % has correspondingly increased, from .916, to .921, to .923, to .930. He doesn't play 70+ games any more, as the

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Rangers have a capable backup in [Martin Biron](#) . However, a fresher Lundqvist means better numbers. Poolies will gladly take that trade off.

### 2. [Jonathan Quick](#)

#### Dobber Rank: 3

The Los Angeles Kings absolutely dominated the rest of the league during their 2012 postseason run. Quick was extended for another 10 years a few weeks ago, and the Kings will return the exact same Stanley Cup-winning team for 2012-13. Quick is extremely athletic and he has perfected his playing style. He is a lot of fun to watch, as he doesn't play like a prototypical butterfly goaltender. The Kings have a foundation in place to be among the NHL's elite for Quick's best years as a goalie. The statistics used in standard keeper leagues for goaltenders are a strong reflection of the team that the goaltender plays behind, and Quick will benefit from playing behind a very good team.

Like Lundqvist, Quick's numbers have improved significantly in recent years. He doesn't even turn 27 until next January.

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His fantasy value in recent years was hurt a bit by the presence of top prospect [Jonathan Bernier](#) behind him. Quick owners don't have to worry about Bernier stealing the starting gig any more.

### 3. [Carey Price](#)

**Dobber Rank: 7**

I'll cut to the chase – I am very high on Price. I think his combination of skill and mental toughness is very rare, and he is destined to become one of the elite goaltenders in the league. The crux – owners may have to wait a year or two to reap the fantasy benefits. The Habs have a solid group of players, but they aren't ready to contend with the top teams in the Eastern Conference yet. As we all know, a goaltender's fantasy value is very indicative of the quality of team playing in front of him.

Price is a special player and I would draft him over any goaltender not named Quick or Lundqvist and feel comfortable with my decision.

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### 4. [Pekka Rinne](#)

**Dobber Rank: 2**

If [Ryan Suter](#) had re-signed in Nashville, Rinne would likely be number two or three on this list. Factor in the uncertainty over [Shea Weber](#)'s future, and Rinne could slide down the list even further. It isn't totally fair to tie his fantasy value completely to two defensemen, but Weber and Suter were the backbone, the heart, and the engine that drove the Nashville Predators. All of their other defensemen struggled at pushing the play in a positive direction last season. Rinne will play a lot of games for the foreseeable future, but his stats may be in for a decline as he won't have the league's best defensive pairing in front of him for 30 minutes a night any longer.

### 5. [Ryan Miller](#)

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### Dobber Rank: 9

2011-12 was a forgettable one for Miller. His play was as uninspired as his teammates were after he was run by [Milan Lucic](#) back in November of 2011. Only two years ago, Miller was arguably the class of the NHL. He had led the underdog USA to a Silver Medal finish at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, and he was backstopping the Sabres with elite goaltending each and every night. Miller's slide is a great example of the year-to-year fluctuations in goaltending. He's still very good, but his reputation has taken a bit of a hit. There were even some rumors last season (likely unfounded) that the Sabres were shopping him.

His numbers in the past two seasons have been almost identical - .916 SV % each year, a GAA of 2.59 and 2.54, respectively, and 34 and 31 wins. His backup, [Jhonas Enroth](#), has visions of being an NHL starter. It won't be in Buffalo (unless Miller is injured or traded), but he will make sure that Miller doesn't play close to 70 games again.

### 6. [Tuukka Rask](#)

### Dobber Rank: 11

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The only thing that was holding Rask back from being regarded as one of the best in the league was opportunity. Thanks to some interesting decisions from [Tim Thomas](#), that is no longer a problem. Rask is now “the guy” for the Boston Bruins, who will once again ice a formidable roster in 2012-13. The 25-year-old is ready for full time duties after earning his chops for the past three seasons behind Thomas. Rask post sparkling numbers in 23 games last year, finishing with a 2.05 GAA and a .929 SV%. Some may consider it a risk to rank an unproven goaltender so high, but I have no doubts that Rask is ready for the challenge.

### 7. Ilya Bryzgalov

**Dobber Rank: 12**

Bryzgalov may have felt that the net behind him was as big as the universe at times last season. The Flyers, hell-bent on finally fixing their ever-present goaltending issues, made Bryzgalov a very rich man last summer. In 59 starts, Bryzgalov won 33 games. 59 starts was his lowest total since the 2007-08 season in Phoenix. His inconsistent play was frustrating to poolies and Flyers fans, but he has proven in recent years that he is one of the most durable and consistent goaltenders in the league.

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His quirky off-ice personality was put under the national spotlight thanks to HBO's 24/7 production. The Flyers could care less how odd he is, as long as he can rebound from an up-and-down 2011-12 campaign. Bryzgalov spoke to Puck Daddy's Dmitry Chesnokov, and [shared his thoughts](#) on year one in Philadelphia.

*"We have an excellent team. All the guys are good, the management is great. But there is a lot of negativity surrounding the team. You did everything you could on the ice. You go to the locker room and someone yells some nonsense at your back. They're ready to eat you alive. It's unpleasant, because we are all people. You should understand that I am not speaking out against the fans. Philadelphia has great fans, they are the majority. They are always with the team in difficult times. Even after a mistake they say words of support. But who didn't make mistakes in this world?"*

### 8. Marc-Andre Fleury

**Dobber Rank: 4**

Fleury's meltdown in the first round against the Flyers was one of the worst in recent memory.

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Like Bryzgalov, Fleury has proven in recent years to be very durable and one of the best starting goaltenders in the league. It will take more than one awful stretch of hockey for me to change my opinion on him. Fleury won a career high 42 games in 2011-12, and the Penguins have their top players all locked up for a long time.

He probably won't start close to 70 games again, as Pittsburgh brought in [Tomas Vokoun](#) to both provide Fleury some relief as well as push him to bring his best every night. There is a small chance that Vokoun gets on a hot streak and steals the starting gig, but rebounding from struggles is nothing new for Fleury. I'd expect him back in top form for 2012-13.

### 9. [Cory Schneider](#)

**Dobber Rank: 16**

It is only a matter of time until the Canucks trade [Roberto Luongo](#). Florida is the most likely destination, with Toronto and Chicago also potentially in the mix. People may think that Canucks fans ran Luongo out of town, but that couldn't be further from the truth. What happened was a younger goalie came in and simply stole his starting gig. Like Rask in Boston, the only thing holding Schneider back from being one of the best goaltenders in the game was opportunity. That won't be a problem anymore.

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Schneider was given some tough starts last year, and he responded with stellar play. In 33 appearances, he had a GAA of 1.96 and a SV% of .936. He has earned this opportunity – Schneider's patience and professionalism should be admired. Instead of asking for a trade or for more ice time, he honed his craft behind one of the game's best goalies. The chance to start in the NHL has been a long time coming – it has been over eight years since the Canucks drafted Schneider.

### 10. [Roberto Luongo](#)

#### Dobber Rank: 10

It may seem foolish to rank Luongo on this list without even knowing where he will be playing next season. However, as mentioned numerous times above, consistency and durability are two very important qualities in fantasy goaltenders. If Luongo ends up in Toronto, he instantly makes the Leafs a playoff club. He takes Florida up a few levels, too. His time in Vancouver was filled with ups and downs, but he leaves as arguably the greatest athlete to ever play in the city. An Olympic Gold, a Hart and Vezina finalist, franchise records in nearly every single goaltending statistic, and taking the team to within a game of the Stanley Cup (although his effect on the Boston series could be debated). Luongo played in only 55 games last season, due in large part to the emergence of Schneider.

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Whoever acquires him will be getting an elite NHL goaltender with at least three high-level seasons left in him.

### Honourable Mentions:

[Jaroslav Halak](#) – his value could rise if [Brian Elliott](#) can't repeat his performance of 2011-12.

[Cam Ward](#) – a very durable goaltender who struggled with consistency last year. He will benefit from an improved Carolina roster.

[Kari Lehtonen](#) – talent-wise, Lehtonen is a top 10 goalie. The Stars aren't going to win enough for him to be ranked among the game's best, though.

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**Jimmy Howard** – it must be said – how will the Red Wings handle life after Lidstrom?

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