I have opened up my fantasy hockey mailbag this weekend. Here are a few questions (and of course, answers).

With standard stats, who would be your top 12 in a inaugural draft with 12 teams?

I love making lists, and I know people love reading lists, as they generally rank among the most viewed columns on DobberHockey. I have never been in an inaugural keeper league before. The keeper leagues that I am in or have been in I have joined them after they have already been up and running for a few years.

I would refer back to my golden rules for this situation. Don't draft based on potential alone, and evaluate your decisions with a three year window. With that being said... let's get to the list.

I will give my top 12 and make reference to where I would take a goalie. You don't want to miss out on one of the elite 'tenders if a goalie run occurs before or after your draft pick.

1-3 – Malkin, Crosby, Stamkos. Doesn't matter the order. This isn't up for debate.

Ovechkin at 4. He hasn't shown anything in recent years that makes him worthy of this spot, but he contributes in so many ways. And I am excited to see what Adam Oates can do with him. On a personal note – I have never owned Ovechkin in any league. Rare considering I have been in so many pools over the past five or six years. He has a lot to prove this year.

If i am picking 5th, I think hard about Henrik Lundqvist. I don't see any goalies coming close to him for the next few years, making his value relative to other goalies very high. Rinne has to survive without Suter, Price is great but Montreal isn't, and every other elite goalie has question marks: Luongo – where does he play? Miller – what has gone wrong in the last two years? Bryzgalov - ? And so on.

At 6 – John Tavares. He's going to be a consistent 50-goal scorer very, very soon. Small question mark surrounding the replacement of PA Parenteau, but something tells me Tavares will be just fine. His improvement from year to year has been ridiculous.

Assuming those six are picked, I'd go with Giroux at 7. He's a winner and is going to carry the Flyers to many regular season and postseason victories. He'll have some great young wingers to play with, too.

I don't think about picking a defenseman in the first 12 spots. I love Karlsson's upside, but defensemen fluctuate so much from year to year. It is much easier to draft some sleepers or steals in later rounds. The early picks should be when you focus on solidifying your roster with proven and consistent forwards.

For 8 and 9, I'd go with Kovalchuk and Perry, in that order. I think Kovalchuk takes control of the Devils with Parise gone. Perry will be much better in 2012-13 because there is no chance Getzlaf can be any worse than he was this past season. Both are multi-category studs, which helps out, even though the early rounds should be when you focus on filling the offensive categories.

Three spots left. I'd think about a goalie here as you won't be picking again for a while. The best bet is probably Rinne or Price i also really like Rask or Schneider, but both are too unproven to justify an early round pick.

So for picks 10, 11, or 12, I'd think about a goaltender. I wouldn't take a defenseman. The three best forwards at this point – Nick Backstrom, Zach Parise, and Daniel Sedin. Sedin turns 32 this fall, and there are a number of younger players with upside to outpoint him in the next few years – Toews, Staal, Kopitar, and so on. However, the Sedins are incredibly consistent and that is an attribute I'd value.

Marginal player...but would love to hear whether I can expect improvement from Dave Bolland? Projections for this year and beyond would be great. Another one I would like to know about is Jeff Petry.

Dave Bolland is far from a marginal player. In fact, I'd argue he is one of the best defensive centers in the league. Chicago essentially had two centers last year – they didn't trust Kruger

much, and they had to play Kane and Sharp out of position. Bolland made Toews look good – he started well below 50 percent of his shifts in the offensive zone, while Toews got great zone starts (well above 60).

This is far from music to the ears of Bolland owners though, as it means his ability to produce offense is very diminished. I don't see his role changing in Chicago either, as they haven't fixed their lack of a true second line center. In a situation where he played more of a two-way role, I could see Bolland hitting 60-70 points. In Chicago, he won't get there thanks to his defensive prowess.

Petry – great season last year. By the end of it he was Edmonton's best defenseman. I know, I know, that doesn't mean much, but he took huge strides forward with his game. Petry doesn't have elite offensive instincts, but he's a great skater and he passes the puck really well. Justin Schultz will be the top dog on Edmonton's PP, but there is plenty of offensive talent to go around.

Ryan Whitney may never be the same player after a brutal ankle injury. Corey Potter has a big point shot but he's far from an offensive defenseman. I like Petry to be in and around the 30-40 point mark for a while. Solid depth defenseman for most pool formats.

Just traded Semin for Jaden Schwartz, Stefan Elliott, Gustav Nyquist and a top-15 pick in next years prospect draft. Kinda hurts for next year, but what projections you have for

those 3 over the next couple years? Basically how long do you think I gotta wait until one or a combo of those players, equals Semin's fantasy value? Right now all those players can sit on my prospect roster until they are 25 (unless I take them off to play them) without wasting bench space.

At first glance, I don't like this trade a whole lot. I feel moving Semin now represents selling low, and he is going to a great situation in Carolina. What would his value be next summer if he scores 35+ with Staal as his center? Quite a bit higher, I'd presume. That being said, there is also the risk that he fizzles out with Carolina and ends up back in Russia.

Beyond that aspect of the trade, I like the players you acquired a lot. Schwartz is one of my top fantasy prospects – he plays a lot like Parise. The Blues are deep up front but I see Schwartz and Tarasenko forming a great top pairing. I see him scoring 20 next year.

Elliott is a great defenseman too. Lots of offensive upside. The Avs don't have a powerplay QB, but they don't want to rush him, either. He wasn't ready for the speed or pace of the NHL game last year. He'll be very good and I see at least 25-30 points this year.

Nyqvist is another prospect I really like. He's a smart player and sounds like the Wings will give him a top six spot (or at least the chance to play a top six role with them this season). I could see 45-50 points this year.

I'd say you lose the deal for a year with upside to win. And as you said, you can keep these guys without wasting a bench spot. Usually a 1-for-3 trade has a hidden cost of having to drop two players, and their values factor in to the equation too.