My opinion on Eric Fehr has been shared a few times here at DobberHockey. Fehr has been mentioned briefly in past articles as well as in a few of the daily ramblings. However, it is time to expand on why he is such an undervalued fantasy player, with a particular focus on his value in keeper leagues.

Fehr was a prolific scorer in junior with the Brandon Wheat Kings. In his final two seasons there, he tallied 109 goals in 142 regular season games. He finished off his WHL career in 2004-05 with a stellar 16 goal run in 24 playoff games. Finally, Fehr was awarded the Four Broncos Memorial Trophy as league MVP to cap off the amazing season. He seamlessly transitioned to the professional game, scoring 25 goals with the Hershey Bears the very next season. Fehr continued his trend of clutch scoring, tallying eight goals in 19 playoff games for the Bears in 2005-06.

The injury bug struck Fehr the next season, as he only managed to suit up for 40 games with Hershey and 14 with the Capitals. However, he managed to improve on his per-game production from the previous season. His goals-per-game jumped from .36 to .55 (22 in 40 games). Fehr also put up 63 penalty minutes in those 40 games, although with less than 50 penalty minutes in close to 130 career games with the Capitals, that number looks to be more of an anomaly than a trend.

In 2007-08, Fehr continued to battle back and shoulder issues, and many were wondering whether his injuries were going to either force him in to retirement, or completely erase his shot at being a productive NHL player. Another tall, gifted offensive sniper battled serious back injuries. His name was Eric Daze. Although Daze managed to record 20+ goals in the NHL eight times (his only eight full seasons, not-so-coincidentally), many wondered if he could have been a 40-50-goal scorer. Like Fehr, Daze had consecutive 50-goal seasons to finish off junior. Daze, however, was able to make the jump straight to the NHL. He isn't a perfect comparison for Fehr, as he was both bigger and more talented (eight 20+ goal seasons in a row is pretty damn impressive, especially in the dead puck era'). However, unlike Daze, it appears as if Fehr has recovered fully from his back issues. Fehr owners would gladly take eight-straight 20+ goal seasons I am sure, so Daze may not be the best "negative" comparison.

Another player that Fehr reminds me of is former King, Penguin, and most notably Bruin, Glen Murray. Murray was drafted 18th overall in 1991. Fehr was drafted 18th overall in 2003 (note: I discovered this after doing the research, but I do love useless coincidences). Like Fehr, Murray was often mistakenly identified as a power forward because of his size. Murray used his large frame very well to get scoring chances and to become a dominant offensive player (a big body presence according to Pierre McGuire), and Fehr looks to be well on his way to developing into the same type of player. Murray scored 24 goals in his first 113 NHL games, and didn't break the 25-goal mark until he was 28, scoring 29 goals in 1997-98 with Los Angeles. Fehr has scored 23 goals through 129 games – very comparable to Murray's slow start as a professional. Murray owed a lot of his success later on in his career to Joe Thornton, but the comparison still stands - he didn't become a consistent scoring threat until he was on a team that gave him a shot.

At the very worst, I see Fehr developing into a steady 20-25 goal winger. The big issue with him is/was the injuries, and it looks like they are a thing of the past. Fehr is currently on pace for 27 goals, although it may be unrealistic to expect him to hit that number, as he is playing limited minutes, and he boasts an abnormally high shooting percentage (19.51, to be exact). Fehr possesses an elite shot, and sound fundamentals in the offensive zone. His weakness has always been foot speed, and it is probably the most improved part of his game so far this season. Another secret to his early season success is that he appears willing to go to the dirty areas on a consistent basis. If you pay the price in the NHL, you get rewarded, especially if you are Fehr's size. His short-term value will take a hit once Mike Knuble returns to the Washington lineup, but it won't affect his keeper league value all that much. Why, you ask? Fehr is either going to force his way on to one of Washington's scoring lines, or he is going to play well enough and produce point totals high enough to justify a salary too rich for Washington's blood.

The Murray comparison is very intriguing, and his career path is one I can see Fehr following very closely. Looking at Fehr's recent NHL play, he is showing signs of rapid improvement. His 25 points in 61 games last season are not all that impressive on the surface, but he averaged only 11 minutes of ice time per game – essentially fourth line minutes. 25 points is pretty impressive production from any fourth line player. Of Fehr's 12 goals in 2008-09, nine of them came in the final 33 games, a 22-goal pace over the course of a full season. This season, Fehr's ice time has shot up nearly five minutes per game, and not surprisingly he is on pace to double his 2008-09 production. He is seeing close to two minutes per game on the power play (a number that will decrease when Knuble returns), and he saw only 45 seconds of power play time per game in 2008-09.

I am advocating an immediate acquisition of Fehr in keeper leagues. In one-year leagues, I'd probably passon him (unless you can simply add him as a free agent, of course). With Knuble returning, Fehr will lose his spot on the right side of the second line in Washington, and his power play time will be diminished. However, for all of you in keeper leagues, this role reduction

for Fehr may end up helping if you want to acquire him, as his production will probably decrease as well. Buy low, sell high, simple stuff really.

Glen Murray scored 337 career goals in the NHL. 283 of them came after he left Pittsburgh (via Boston) for Los Angeles as a 26 year old. All Eric needs is a fehr shake.