It took me a while to figure out how to tackle this list. The selection process for my previous four keeper lists – top ten centers, left wingers, right wingers, and defensemen – has been relatively straight forward. Using a one-to-three season window, the best talents at each position were ranked (according to standard fantasy hockey categories). Secondary statistics, like shots on goal, plus-minus, and penalty minutes, are much easier to fill with the later round picks (in my experience, at least). With your top guys, you generally want to get the players who will maximize your goals and assists categories.

Most leagues would place more value on a 120 point player who only gets 20 penalty minutes as opposed to a 70 point player who gets 100 penalty minutes, but for this list, the penalty minutes part of the combination has been weighed a bit more heavily in order to eliminate the obvious players like Sidney Crosby, Alex Ovechkin, and Evgeni Malkin (all three play with enough of an edge to be considered ‘combo’ players).

Penalty minutes tend to fluctuate from year to year for most players, and there are many reasons as to why this happens. Sometimes it is because a player has changed roles with his respective team. Brenden Morrow is the perfect example of this. Morrow started his career with Dallas in 1999. Between his rookie season and the 2005-06 campaign, he played in 451 regular

season games, and racked up 789 penalty minutes (1.75 penalty minutes per game). However, in the summer of 2006 he replaced Mike Modano as captain. Becoming captain meant Morrow had to change his game. Staying out of the box was something he diligently worked on, as he was too valuable a player to be sitting in the box for about two minutes each game. From the 2006-07 season up to the end of the most recent one, Morrow recorded 256 penalty minutes in 216 games (1.18 penalty minutes per game). Over the course of an 82 game season, the difference between Morrow's totals before and after being named captain is 48 penalty minutes.

Alex Burrows could follow a similar path as Morrow. He won't be named captain of the Canucks any time soon, but as a top line scorer, he is much more valuable on the ice than in the box. His time in the sin bin has declined from 179 in 2007-08, to 150 in 2008-09, to 121 this past season. There are countless other examples of the inverse relationship between production and penalty minutes.

I only started playing fantasy hockey seriously in 2001, so I missed out on a lot. I never got to experience the Wayne Gretzky rule (ineligible to be drafted because he was too dominant). One player who I really would have loved to own in a league that counted penalty minutes is Pat Verbeek. Verbeek's four most "productive" seasons (from a 'combo' standpoint): 1987-88 with 46 goals, 77 points, and 227 penalty minutes, 1989-90 with 44 goals, 89 points, and 228 penalty minutes, 1990-91 with 43 goals, 82 points, and 243 penalty minutes, and 1992-93 with 39 goals, 82 points, and 197 penalty minutes.

In 2009-10, Steve Downie was the first player to record over 20 goals and 200 penalty minutes in the same season since Theoren Fleury scored 24 goals and had 216 penalty minutes back with the Rangers in 2001-02. Verbeek had over 40 goals and 200 penalty minutes three times!

There is something about the combo player that makes them fun to own. You cheer when they get in a fight or are given misconduct for doing something stupid. You love looking at the stat line the next morning to see the goals, assists, and penalty minutes categories all filled up. Thanks to some help from a few DobberHockey readers and members, I have been having some fun with excel spreadsheets over the past week working on this list. Unlike past lists in which the placement on the list was directly related to trade value (I wouldn't trade a player ranked eighth for one ranked ninth in a one-for-one deal on my other lists), there is some flexibility with the rankings here. Your team may need more points, so a player may be a better fit. Or you may need a decent offensive player who is capable of putting up at least 150 penalty minutes in any given season. Essentially the list is a way to honour ten of the coolest players to own in fantasy hockey!

1. Ryan Getzlaf – Anaheim Ducks

Age: 25

Contract: $5.3 million/season, signed through 2012-13

Known for: Dominating opposing defensemen, a hairline receding faster than the arctic circle

Getzlaf is not the player Anaheim wants spending 100 or more minutes in the penalty box each season, but he often ends up there due to the style of game he plays. He is big, mean, scrappy, and physical. Chris Pronger's lasting legacy in Anaheim is seen in their top players – they play with swagger, malice, and they hit to hurt. Getzlaf had only 79 penalty minutes last season, but he missed a good chunk of it with a high ankle sprain. Look for him to return to the century mark in 2010-11. Like Perry, don't expect his production to peak until the Ducks are able to find some quality depth forwards to supply some secondary support.

One year upside: 100 points, 120 PIM

Three year upside: 110 points, 140 PIM

2. Corey Perry – Anaheim Ducks

Age: 25

Contract: $5.3 million/season, signed through 2012-13

Known for: Slashing, hooking, tripping, diving, scoring

Perry is the kind of player who will make you look silly and then remind you about it for the rest of the game (see the video below). He operates his stick like a surgeon, both with the puck and on his opponents. Look for him to hit the 40 or 45-goal mark once Anaheim adds some adequate insulation for the big three (Perry, Getzlaf, and Bobby Ryan, for those keeping track at home). He has been remarkably consistent with his penalty-taking as well. His PIM totals over the past three seasons are 108, 109, and 111 respectively.

{youtube}MUr_qek_W2I{/youtube}

One year upside: 85 points, 120 PIM

Three year upside: 95 points, 140 PIM

3. Steve Downie – Tampa Bay Lightning

Age: 23

Contract: 2010 RFA

Known for: Scaring opponents, teammates, coaches, fans

Downie showed flashes of offensive brilliance during his OHL career, and most notably at the 2006 World Juniors in Vancouver, where he starred on the top line with Blake Comeau and Dustin Boyd. He has had quite a tumultuous life growing up (being involved in a car accident as a child, which killed his father and left him deaf in his left ear).

He was surprisingly traded away from Philadelphia last season, and at that point many soured on his upside as an NHL player. If Downie wasn't wanted by the Flyers, a team that over the years has loved the bad boys, what team would be willing to develop him? His career-long struggle to keep his emotions in check has affected him at every level. The OHL incident with Akim Aliu, slashing a linesman in the AHL, and the Dean McAmmond hit in the preseason with the Flyers.

However, after being traded to Tampa Bay, Downie began to tone his aggressive/psychotic behaviour down (just a bit). He owes a lot of his offensive success to former Lighting coach Rick Tocchet, who probably saw a bit of himself in Downie and gave him a long leash and a spot alongside Steve Stamkos and Martin St. Louis on the top line. He finished the 2009-10 season with 22 goals, 46 points, and 208 penalty minutes. His offensive production has been elite at lower levels – 92 points in his final OHL season (he only played 45 games), and 50 points in his 49 career AHL games. Does the firing of Tocchet affect Downie? It could, but I think he used last season to prove that he can keep up with elite offensive linemates, and whoever Steve Yzerman hires as head coach will now know that Downie is capable of being an offensive contributor. His “ability” to absolutely snap at any moment opens up some ice for Stamkos and St. Louis that they otherwise probably wouldn’t get.

To steal a line from my 2009-10 Prime Cuts series – Stamkos puts it best with regards to Downie’s on-ice presence. “He creates spaces for me... everyone’s a little scared of him when he’s on the ice. He has that edge.” Well put, Steven.

One year upside: 60 points, 225 PIM

Three year upside: 70 points, 250 PIM

4. Sean Avery – New York Rangers

Age: 30

Contract: $3.8 million/season, signed through 2011-12

Known for: metrosexual fashion sense, big mouth, bigger ego

Avery's 31 points and 160 penalty minutes (or 0.19 points-per-PIM) make him a very valuable player to own in standard fantasy leagues. 31 points is a low number for Avery – he can be a solid offensive producer when he keeps focused. His yapping will always earn him a few misconducts every year, so don't expect the penalty minute number to drop any time soon. The Rangers struggled mightily offensively in 2009-10, and they need to find an adequate center to pair with Marian Gaborik. Avery would be a great fit as the final piece of that top line, and his production would obviously skyrocket.

One year upside: 45 points, 200 PIM

Three year upside: 50 points, 200 PIM

5. Alex Burrows – Vancouver Canucks

Age: 29

Contract: $2 million

Known for: the jam to the Sedin twins bread and peanut butter

Burrows has seen his production increase dramatically over the past three seasons, and subsequently his time in the penalty box has decreased. Back in 2002-03, Burrows split his time in the ECHL between the Greenville Grrrowl (yes, there were three r's in the team name) and the Baton Rouge Kingfish. He scored 13 goals that season (and recorded 265 penalty minutes). Seven years later, he is alongside two of the best hockey players in the world on the top line for an NHL club. He finished 2009-10 with 35 goals, led the league in short-handed points with seven, and pissed off players, referees, and television hosts. I have his three year penalty minute upside being higher as I see him potentially reverting back to more of a checker in that span. Lots can happen in three years, perhaps Vancouver finds another winger for the Sedin twins?

Burrows, like a true gentleman, asks David Backes how his wife is doing.

{youtube}o1angy_kjuk{/youtube}

One year upside: 65 points, 140 PIM

Three year upside: 70 points, 175 PIM

6. David Backes – St. Louis Blues

Age: 26

Contract: $2.5 million/season, signed through 2010-11

Known for: hitting people very, very hard

After scoring 31 goals and racking up 165 penalty minutes in 2008-09, Backes seemed primed to become one of the best power forwards in the game. However, he struggled offensively in 2009-10, scoring only 17 times. His PIM total also dropped to 106. Last year was one to forget for every member of the Blues forward group, save for Alex Steen. Expect Backes to bounce back in the goals department, but now that he plays center, he probably won't be above the 150 PIM mark again (more defensive responsibilities, less time in on the forecheck).

His patriotic mission last year (fighting Jonathan Toews, Corey Perry, and Rick Nash on separate occasions before the Olympics started) was extremely fun to watch. I hope he returns

to his 2008-09 form, as I'll get to write about him more. His name is one of the best for lame title puns, and finding a good one to use brings me an infinite amount of joy.

One year upside: 65 points, 170 PIM

Three year upside: 70 points, 170 PIM

7. Scott Hartnell – Philadelphia Flyers

Age: 28

Contract: $4.2 million/season, signed through 2012-13

Known for: annoying opposing players, and Flyers fans, to no end

Was Hartnell's 30-goal, 60-point season in 2008-09 a fluke? It was the only time in his nine year NHL career that he has broken the 50-point barrier. He is overpaid for what he brings to the Flyers from an offensive standpoint, for sure.

He is one of the better agitating forwards in the league, and three straight seasons of 140+ penalty minutes attest to that. Don't be surprised to see him traded this summer, as the Flyers need to find some space under the cap to fit in Braydon Coburn. Hartnell's 2010-11 production will depend on if/where he is traded to. Philadelphia's offensive depth is both good and bad for him. He gets high quality linemates (at times), but he also is bumped further down the depth chart (most importantly the power play depth chart) than he would be on most other teams. He was sixth among Flyer forwards in both power play time on ice (2:40 per game) and overall time on ice (15:43 per game).

How can you not love a player who looks like this ?

One year upside: 50 points, 150 PIM

Three year upside: 60 points, 175 PIM

8. David Clarkson – New Jersey Devils

Age: 26

Contract: 2010 RFA

Known for: chasing Sean Avery around the ice

Clarkson only managed to suit up for 46 games this past season with the Devils, but he still was able to put up some decent offensive numbers – 11 goals, 24 points, and 85 penalty minutes. Over a full 82 game season (Clarkson is far from injury prone, as he had missed just one game in his previous two seasons combined), his numbers in 2009-10 prorate to 20 goals, 42 points, and 152 penalty minutes. He is a great complementary player, much like Steve Downie. Sticking a tough, agitating presence with two skilled players is something that has been one before (Dave Semenko in Edmonton, although he played more of a bodyguard role), and teams continue to do it today (Downie in Tampa Bay is a great example). Clarkson has played with Zach Parise and Travis Zajac before, and he has been very effective (especially on the power play).

One year upside: 50 points, 200 PIM

Three year upside: 55 points, 220 PIM

9. Dion Phaneuf – Toronto Maple Leafs

Age: 25

Contract: $6.5 million/season, signed through 2013-14

Known for: big forehead, bigger slap shot

How the mighty have fallen. Phaneuf exploded onto the NHL scene with a 20-goal rookie season in 2005-06. During his first four seasons with Calgary, he averaged 16 goals, 52 points, and 118 penalty minutes. He was traded last season after a sluggish start (Darryl Sutter obviously isn't a DobberHockey reader), and the Maple Leafs have extremely high hopes for him in the future.

Expect him to be named team captain at some point this summer, and when (not if) Tomas Kaberle is traded; he'll be the go-to guy on the power play as well. Phaneuf's ego got the better of him in Calgary near the end, and being traded for Ian White and Matt Stajan (no offense to either of them) must have been a bit humbling for the player many considered to be the best young defenseman in the world only a few short years ago.

One year upside: 50 points, 160 PIM

Three year upside: 60 points, 180 PIM

10. Evander Kane – Atlanta Thrashers

Age: 19

Contract: $3.1 million/season (including bonuses), signed through 2011-12

Known for: The Punch

With one devastating punch, Evander Kane told the hockey world he was ready to step into the limelight. His knockout of the hated Matt Cooke back on April 10th made Kane a Youtube sensation (and Marc Savard's new favourite player). His offensive upside is enormous – his lanky frame can probably hold another 15 or 20 pounds of muscle, and he likes to hit, fight, and engage physically. Kane has the upside to be one of the best combo players to own – 40-45 goals, 80-90 points, 100-130 penalty minutes. He is a few years away from that kind of production, though.

{youtube}xW9Sp-WndwA{/youtube}

One year upside: 55 points, 100 PIM

Three year upside: 70 points, 160 PIM

Honourable mentions:

Forwards:

Steve Ott – Ott has averaged 153 penalty minutes in his five full NHL seasons. He has broken the 20-goal mark only once (this past season), and the 30-point mark only twice (this past season and in 2008-09). He isn't prolific enough of a scorer to crack the top 10, but he should continue to be a steady 30-45-point, 140-170 penalty minute player for the foreseeable future.

Ryan Kesler – Perhaps the most annoying shutdown center in the league, Kesler's development in all areas of the game since 2007-08 has been extraordinary. He finished last season with 75 points and 104 penalty minutes (Evgeni Malkin and Perry were the only other two players to have at least 75 points and 100 penalty minutes). Kesler is too valuable to Vancouver on the penalty kill to spend north of 100 minutes a season in the box – expect him to cut the number down to 70 or 80 in future seasons.

Dan Carcillo – Carcillo burst on to the fantasy scene in 2007-08. He lead the NHL with 324 penalty minutes in only 57 games (which prorates to a ridiculous 463 minutes in the sin bin over a full season, the highest since Dave Schultz's 472 with the Flyers back in 1974-75). He has toned his game down (just a bit) since then, but Carcillo still possesses the ability to get tagged with misconducts like they're going out of style. He has found a home in Philadelphia, and has more offense than given credit for. He skates hard, and his hands serve more than one purpose. Expect 10-15 goals, 20-30 points, and 200+ PIM from 'Car Bomb' Carcillo each and every season.

Rick Nash – Nash flirted with the penalty minute century mark back in 2007-08 (he finished the season with 95), but he has spent less than 60 minutes in the box in each of the past two seasons. He is too important a part of the Blue Jackets offense to spend time off of the ice, so don't expect any large PIM totals from him going forward.

Nathan Horton – Like Nash, Horton's PIM totals have declined after peaking in 2007-08 (he

finished that season with 85 in 82 games). The fact that he has played less than 70 games in both 2008-09 and 2009-10 probably accounts for some of the decline, but his value to Florida is measured in goals and assists, not in the number of fights won or penalties taken.

Martin Hanzal – In Hanzal's first 146 NHL contests, he amassed 68 total penalty minutes. This past season, he earned 104 in only 81 games. Is Hanzal's newfound pugilism going a sign of things to come? 34 of his penalty minutes came in two games, so the betting man in me says probably not. He is one of the best kept secrets in the NHL with his strong two-way play, and there is some untapped offensive upside in that giant 6'6" frame of his.

Dustin Byfuglien – Big Buff has yet to score 20 goals in a season (he has 19, 15, and 17 over the past three), but he will. He has yet to record over 100 penalty minutes in a season (94 this past season is the closest he has gotten), but he will. Will his golden ticket alongside Kane and Toews carry over to next season? Even if it doesn't, expect him to fall somewhere in between 20-25 goals and 100-120 penalty minutes.

Cody McLeod – McLeod won't ever be more than a 20 or 30 point player, but he has been between 120 and 160 penalty minutes in each of his first three NHL seasons. If you are more desperate for penalty minutes than you are for points, he makes for a decent option.

Chris Stewart – Stewart is big, skilled, and tough. He likes to mix it up, and his consecutive 100+ PIM seasons with Kingston in 2005-06 and 2006-07 attest to that. He was one of the biggest surprises from an offensive standpoint in 2009-10, lighting the lamp 28 times. Colorado has a wealth of talent up the middle, and Stewart will benefit greatly. He'll always be lining up with one of Paul Stastny or Matt Duchene, and both are phenomenal playmakers. Look for Stewart to have more than a few 25-30-goal, 100-120 penalty minute seasons.

Wayne Simmonds – Not a bad rookie season – 16 goals, 40 points, and 116 penalty minutes. Simmonds has more offense to give, but the Kings will be looking to fill the position of scoring winger this summer through free agency. He is already one of the best energy players in the game, and he loves to drop the gloves to give his team a spark.

Ryan Malone – Malone has averaged only 71 games per season since 2005-06. He had 103 penalty minutes in 2007-08 with Pittsburgh, but finished last season with only 68 for Tampa Bay. He's scored over 20 goals in five of his six seasons in the NHL, and his overall production has been consistently between 40 and 50 points.

Brandon Dubinsky – Dubinsky's PIM's dropped from 112 in 2008-09 to only 58 last season. He has had 100+ PIM seasons in both the WHL (with Portland) and the AHL (with Hartford). I believe last season's low total is more of an anomaly – he fights, plays aggressive, and has a nasty edge to his game. His offensive game is trending upwards as well – don't be surprised to see him in the 55-65 point range with 90-120 penalty minutes as early as 2010-11.

Milan Lucic – With Marc Savard, David Krejci, and Patrice Bergeron all locked up long-term, Lucic will always have a good center to play with in Boston. He had a frustrating 2009-10 campaign, missing 32 games with various injuries. He recorded 136 penalty minutes in 2008-09 – expect a number like that from the hulking winger each and every season. He hits to hurt, and opposing defensemen know it. Lucic's offensive game is more than adequate as well – he has a heavy shot and often times shows surprising creativity with his passes.

Kyle Beach – The 6'3", 210 lb Beach plays nasty. He is part sniper and part Claude Lemieux clone. He scored 52 goals in 68 games with Spokane this past season to lead the entire WHL. He had three goals in four playoff games for the Rockford Ice Hogs, Chicago's AHL affiliate. Chicago will probably have to move a forward or two this summer to open up some cap space, and many are expecting Beach to step in to one of the vacant positions. Keith Tkachuk scored 50 or more goals twice, 40 or more goals nine times, and had 10 100+ penalty minute seasons. If everything falls into place for Beach, he could hit those kinds of numbers over his career. How about if he plays on a line with Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews? Like Downie, Beach has been considered a bit of a loose cannon throughout his career. It is up to him to tighten the screws, but only a little bit.

Zach Kassian – Kassian just recently won the Memorial Cup with his hometown Windsor Spitfires. He had seven goals and 38 penalty minutes in 19 playoff games. The Sabres own his NHL rights, and they want to sign him to a contract this summer. With his rough-and-tumble style of play, he fills a major need on Buffalo, a team that was overwhelmed physically in the first round by the Boston Bruins. Expect him to be wearing the gold and blue, and making the

opposition black and blue, this fall in Buffalo.

Ryane Clowe – Clowe has shown glimpses of dominance during his time with the Sharks, but he struggles to bring a high level of intensity to the table each and every game. His PIM number nearly tripled from 2008-09 (51) to 2009-10 (131). Clowe needs another season of 100+ penalty minutes before I consider him an elite combo player. Even though he is turning 28 in September, he has lots of room to grow offensively. Don't be surprised to see him to hit the 70-point mark if he gets a steady dose of power play time in 2010-11.

Defensemen:

Mark Giordano – Perhaps Calgary's best defenseman last season, Giordano combines offensive flair with solid defensive zone play. He had 81 penalty minutes in 82 games last season (nothing special, I know). He had 141 penalty minutes in 2005-06 with Calgary's AHL affiliate in Nebraska, and he also had 109 penalty minutes with the OHL's Owen Sound attack in 2002-03. He has the upside to be a 40-45-point, 100+ PIM defenseman.

Keith Ballard – Ballard made headlines in 2009-10 for all the wrong reasons – first, he nearly decapitated his own goaltender (Tomas Vokoun) while slamming his stick against the post in disgust. Only a few weeks after that unfortunate incident, he gloved the puck out of the air into his own net. He has broken the 80 penalty minute mark three times in his NHL career, which is a very high total for a non-goon defenseman. Ballard plays a strong two-way game. Expect him

to put up 30-35 points and 60-90 penalty minutes each season.

Zdeno Chara – Chara's PIM total peaked at 147 in 2003-04, when he was still a member of the Ottawa Senators. In his first five NHL seasons, he averaged 142 penalty minutes and 31 points per season. Since joining the Bruins, he has averaged 99 penalty minutes and 47 points per season. The inverse relationship of the two numbers is not surprising, as Chara is an important part of the Bruins first power play unit. He is also team captain, and that has forced him to pick his spots when it comes to fighting.

Chris Pronger – Pronger is probably dirtier than he was a decade ago, but he takes about half as many penalties. The decline in penalty minutes points to Pronger's ability to play 'smarter' dirty hockey. He is still the king of the two-handed chop, but he makes sure the referee has already turned away before he does it.

Victor Hedman – Hedman was near the top of the penalty minutes list for defensemen this past season. However, don't expect him to stay up there. He took 32 minor penalties, and as he adjusts to the speed of the NHL game, that number should drop to 15 or 20. He fights on occasion, but his value as a defenseman comes in his ability to move and shoot the puck.

Matt Corrente – Corrente played only 12 games in 2009-10 with New Jersey, but he was able to rack up 24 minutes in penalties. He had 161 in only 67 games in 2008-09 with the Lowell Devils, and had 74 in 43 games before being called up in 2009-10. He has enough offensive upside to be considered a combo player as well. He should find a spot in New Jersey's top six for 2010-11. Expecting 15-20 points and 150+ penalty minutes from Corrente would be reasonable.. He played wing in the playoffs for the Devils, replacing Jay Pandolfo on the fourth line. Long-term, he has the upside to develop into a 25-30 point, 200+ penalty minute defenseman. He isn't big (6'0", 200 lbs), but he uses every inch and pound to intimidate the opposition.

Kevin Bieksa – Bieksa has struggled to find consistency in his game after suffering two serious leg injuries during the past three seasons. His first full NHL season in 2006-07 saw him record 42 points and 134 penalty minutes. He loves to fight, but hasn't done as much of it recently. He scored only twice in 55 games this past season, but still managed to receive 85 penalty minutes. He is a candidate to be traded this summer, as his role in Vancouver as a two-way threat has been replaced by the acquisition of Christian Ehrhoff and the development of Alex Edler. He may never be a 40-point defenseman again in Vancouver, but he still has plenty of value in leagues that reward penalty minutes.

**** if I missed anyone, let me know. There were a great number of players who could be considered honourable mentions ****