In a little under four weeks, I'll be heading off to Vegas for some fun. One reason I am heading down is to meet up with several members of the Ultimate Fantasy Pool – a keeper league that uses head-to-head scoring. I have been in the league for two years now, and it features some stiff competition (all of our league members read this site, and one is among the regular columnists).

Over the next few weeks, I am going to introduce the league and each of the 12 teams to the DobberHockey readers. The three teams today – Biscuits & Gravy (Alex), DraperNEuroTwinSauce (Rhys), and the Bulldogs (Shannon).

The questions asked:

1) What is your outlook for 2011-12?

2) Best trade made over the past year?

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

6) Favorite parts about the league…

The League
The Crosby Show (yours truly)
Hextall's Hackers (Tim Lucarelli)
Legion (Jeff)
Great Whites (Cory)
DraperNEuroTwinSauce (Rhys)
Wookie Sandwich (Scott)

Wu Crew (Jake)
Bulldogs (Shannon)
Biscuits and Gravy (Alex)
Fire on Ice (Bill)
Las Vegas Thunder (Bret)
El Loco's Sharks (Jason)

The Rules:

- Goals (G), Assists (A), Plus/Minus (+/-), Penalty Minutes (PIM), Powerplay Points (PPP), Shorthanded Points (SHP), Game-Winning Goals (GWG), Shots on Goal (SOG), Faceoffs Won (FW), Hits (HIT)
- Games Started (GS), Wins (W), Losses (L), Goals Against Average (GAA), Shots Against (SA), Saves (SV), Save Percentage (SV%), Shutouts (SHO)
- Roster size - Start 3 LW, 3 C, 3 RW, 6 D, 2 G
- Roster up to 23 (bench can have any position)
- Keep 17 each summer
- Farm size up to eight players (maximum of 200 NHL GP)
- Head to Head
- 40 maximum moves all season

Biscuits & Gravy (Alex)

Player	Positio	Status
Tyler Kennedy	C	Pro
Anze Kopitar	C	Pro
John Tavares	C	Pro
Brian Boyle	C	Pro
Alex Goligoski	D	Pro
Marc-Andre Bergeron	D	Pro
Marc Staal	D	Pro
Jack Johnson	D	Pro
Luke Schenn	D	Pro
Henrik Lundqvist	G	Pro
Tim Thomas	G	Pro
Ryan Miller	G	Pro
Jonathan Bernier	G	Pro
Josh Bailey	LW	Pro
James Neal	LW	Pro
Alex Burrows	LW	Pro
Tyler Ennis	LW	Pro
Matt D'Agostini	RW	Pro
Teddy Purcell	RW	Pro
Phil Kessel	RW	Pro
Ales Hemsky	RW	Pro
Chris Neil	RW	Pro
Derek Roy	C	IR
Andrei Markov	D	IR
Peter Mueler	LW	IR
John Carlson	D	Farm
Jeff Petry	D	Farm
Robin Lehner	G	Farm
Linus Omark	LW	Farm
Nikita Filatov	LW	Farm

Brett Connolly	**RW**	**Farm**
Beau Bennett	**RW**	**Farm**

1) What is your outlook for 2011-12?

I think I have a pretty good shot at winning next season. I came close last year and I think my team is a lot stronger now. I expect some of my younger players like Kopitar and Tavares to have breakout seasons so my offense should be stronger. With Miller, Lundqvist and Thomas as my goaltenders I should do well in the goalie cats so I will be a tough opponent each week.

2) Best trade made over the past year?

Ryan Miller/John Carlson for Tuukka Rask/Kris Letang

I was in desperate need of another starting goalie with only Lundqvist playing regularly. Rask was on the bench behind Thomas and Varlamov was stuck on the IR (surprise, surprise). The addition of Miller gave me two elite netminders which are highly coveted. Rask will be great down the road but I could afford the hit with Bernier in the farm system. I'm a big fan of Carlson so I was excited to add him to my squad. He's three years younger and I think has similar if not higher upside than Letang. Either way this deal worked out well for me and saved my season. With only one starting goalie I would have been screwed.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

I'm happy with all the trades I made this year. Some may not end up working out but I don't regret any moves I made.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

I put an emphasis on goalies since they count for almost half of the scoring stats and made it my mission from the beginning to get quality netminders. I knew it would be hard down the road to acquire goalies since there are only so many good ones so I drafted and acquired early on a lot of young offensive defensemen figuring eventually they would be at a premium and I could cash in. I have since used Letang to get Miller, Enstrom to get Lehner and Green to get Thomas. For my forwards I initially tried to load up on purely offensive players but soon realized that won't win you a championship. I then changed that strategy in order to try and balance my team out so that I would have a chance in every category each week. I've tried to build my team so that I have a good mix of players in their prime and those on the verge. The average age on my team is 27 so there is a decent balance that hopefully can be maintained.

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

I love the addition of hits since players who generally had little value suddenly became relevant.

6) Favourite parts about the league

Extremely competitive, knowledgeable GMs, very active, weekly reviews and games of the week to spotlight.

Bulldogs (Shannon)

Eric Staal	**C**	**Pro**
Ryan Getzlaf	**C**	**Pro**
Jordan Staal	**C**	**Pro**
Ryan Kesler	**C**	**Pro**
Jason Arnott	**C**	**Pro**
Kurtis Foster	**D**	**Pro**
Shea Weber	**D**	**Pro**
Erik Johnson	**D**	**Pro**
Cam Fowler	**D**	**Pro**
Tyler Myers	**D**	**Pro**
Miikka Kiprusoff	**G**	**Pro**
Cam Ward	**G**	**Pro**
Devan Dubnyk	**G**	**Pro**
Steve Mason	**G**	**Pro**
Patrick Marleau	**LW**	**Pro**
Rick Nash	**LW**	**Pro**
Rene Bourque	**LW**	**Pro**
Chris Kunitz	**LW**	**Pro**
Bobby Ryan	**LW**	**Pro**

Ray Whitney	**LW**	**Pro**
Antti Miettinen	**RW**	**Pro**
Nathan Horton	**RW**	**Pro**
Teemu Selanne	**RW**	**Pro**
Ryan Whitney	**D**	**IR**
Ed Jovanovski	**D**	**IR**
Zach Boychuk	**C**	**Farm**
Dmitri Orlov	**D**	**Farm**
Ty Wishart	**D**	**Farm**
Ryan Ellis	**D**	**Farm**
Evander Kane	**LW**	**Farm**

1)□□□□What is your outlook for 2011-12?

The hope is to defend the title if possible. With the changes made to some of the contenders and the improvements of the non-playoff teams, it won't be easy.

2) □□□Best trade made over the past year?

The Selanne trade was expensive as hell for us (we lost Kulikov among other pieces) but he was definitely the missing link for us.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

Dubnyk for Hamonic. It's to early to tell for sure on this one but if Dubnyk can't obtain the #1 job we may have just given up a multi-cat stud in Hamonic for a back-up in Dubnyk.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

The original plan was to try to cycle the roster with veterans to mid aged to youth but as the NHL has gotten younger we've had to adjust to a younger timeline. The goal now is to establish a core protection list that will be young enough to hold onto for an extended period of time.

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

Love it. Any time we can improve on our categories in the pool it's a good thing. Personally I think we had a couple of categories that were overlapping so for us to add something new to give us a wider range of valuable players was beneficial to the pool. Ideally we would continue

to tweak the rules so that a wider range of players have value in the league. In my opinion this will give each GM a better opportunity to create an individualized roster.

6) Favorite parts about the league…

The competition. I personally play in four other pools aside from this one and I'd be hard pressed to say that any of the other pools have a more dedicated or intelligent GM pool. The odds in my opinoin of any one team dominating this pool year after year is minimal which is just great. Of course at the same time that's scary as hell, knowing that any given week we could have our ass handed to us is what keeps us on our toes.

DraperNEuroTwinSauce (Rhys)

Pavel Datsyuk	**C**	**Pro**
Patrice Bergeron	**C**	**Pro**
Matt Duchene	**C**	**Pro**
Henrik Zetterberg	**C**	**Pro**
Brandon Dubinsky	**C**	**Pro**
Nicklas Lidstrom	**D**	**Pro**
Brian Campbell	**D**	**Pro**

Niklas Kronwall	**D**	**Pro**
Kimmo Timonen	**D**	**Pro**
Christian Ehrhoff	**D**	**Pro**
Tobias Enstrom	**D**	**Pro**
Jordan Leopold	**D**	**Pro**
Jimmy Howard	**G**	**Pro**
Jon Quick	**G**	**Pro**
Sergei Bobrovsky	**G**	**Pro**
RJ Umberger	**LW**	**Pro**
Milan Lucic	**LW**	**Pro**
Dany Heatley	**LW**	**Pro**
Jeff Skinner	**RW**	**Pro**
Justin Williams	**RW**	**Pro**
Bryan Little	**RW**	**Pro**
Jason Pominville	**RW**	**Pro**
Steve Downie	**RW**	**Pro**
Blake Wheeler	**RW**	**Pro**
Tomas Fleischmann	**RW**	**IR**
Gustav Nyquist	**C**	**Farm**
Jamie McBain	**D**	**Farm**
Jacob Markstrom	**G**	**Farm**
Alex Salak	**G**	**Farm**
Louis Leblanc	**LW**	**Farm**
Mikkel Boedker	**LW**	**Farm**
Matt Kassian	**RW**	**Farm**

1)□□□ What is your outlook for 2011-12?

My team exceeded my expectations last year. I expected to make the playoffs for the first time since the league's inception, but I did not expect to win the regular season, albeit by the skin of my teeth. A 3rd place finish in the playoffs after a tie-breaker loss to the always formidable Jeff Angus and his TCS team was icing on the cake. As much as I wanted to take the title, my worst

trade last season helped to turn Bulldogs into a wrecking ball when it counted the most.

2) Best trade made over the past year?

I was an active trader last season. I liked most of my deals, but dealing Lehner and a 5th round pro pick for Enstrom and a 3rd round pro pick really solidified my team as a contender for the here and now. I may regret dealing Lehner in a few seasons, but I was in the position to make moves that pushed my team over the edge in the present. Enstrom really helped make my defensive corp the favourite part of my team.

3) Worst trade made over the past year?

I alluded to this trade above: my Kiprusoff and a 4th round pro pick for the eventual Champions' Bobrovsky and a 3rd round pro pick. If and when Philly trades Bob, this deal could turn out okay. However, this deal took some of the steam out of my team's sails for the playoff stretch. And now, I'm stuck with an AHL starter/ NHL backup.

4) Overall team philosophy – how do you build your team?

I've always concentrated more on my forwards. Last season, I shifted my thinking and began the process of solidifying my goaltending and defense. With Bobrovsky being dethroned, my goaltending needs a bit of help again. That said, I love my defense, which now includes Enstrom, Lidstrom, Ehrhoff, Kronwall, Campbell, McBain, and Timonen.

5) How has the inclusion of the hit statistic changed things ?

Besides my improvement in goal and on D, adding hits as a category may be the single biggest reason my team went from 10th to 1st in the regular season and 10th to 3rd in the playoffs. Lucic and Downie were huge for my team. Recently, I added Dubinsky and, to a lesser extent, Justin Williams to add even more grit. I also added Kassian to my farm in the hopes that he brings the hammer in the future.

6) Favorite parts about the league…

The GMs in Ultimate are some of the most knowledgeable I encounter in any of the leagues I participate in. I love that Ultimate includes GMs from all over North America who just love hockey. I also love the challenge of trying to beat such great hockey minds and always enjoy

negotiating deals with this group. With half of the league's GMs heading to Vegas for the draft this season, that may quickly become my favourite aspect of this league.

I asked each of my fellow poolies a few questions as the draft approaches. I didn’t ask them to reveal their keeper lists, unfortunately. Check back later on in August to find our more about the rest of the league...