Steve Laidlaw takes a look at the NHL's best rookies.

During the lockout I'd hatched this fantastic scheme – if the season were to be cancelled I would put together the first ever *Cage Match Prospects Tournament*. There were a ton of fantastic prospects tearing apart their respective leagues. Following a strong 2012 draft class as well as several of the best international prospects having waited a few years before coming to North America there was an absolute glut of talent waiting to break into the league. That tournament would have been bananas but instead we have to
suffer
through this shortened NHL season and one of the best rookie classes in memory. Thanks a lot, Bettman.

So in lieu of the first ever *Cage Match Prospects Tournament* and in celebration of this fantastic rookie class we shall instead have the first ever
Cage Match Rookie Tournament
. For simplicity's sake and because of my bias towards defensemen (I really hate those fickle bastards) the field has been limited to just forwards. Now before you go and cry yourself to sleep in your
Justin Schultz
jersey I have to acknowledge that Schultz is my personal favourite to win the Calder this year, which is all the more reason to lock him out of the cage – that's right, another lockout, suck it defensemen.

For those of you unfamiliar with the Cage Match Tournament process, it is really quite simple. There's a bracket (see below) made up of players that have been ranked to determine the matchups. It's up to you, DobberHockey reader, to cast your vote for a winner in each individual matchup based on certain criteria to determine who moves on to the next round with one player eventually being declared champion.

So what are these criteria beyond; *don't be a defenseman*?

You also can't be a goalie. Sorry, but you already had yours and frankly you spend far too much time ruining our lives anyhow. Be gone goaltenders!

The only other criterion is to vote based on a points-only keeper league with a couple of caveats. The first caveat is for all you perpetual rebuilders – production now matters so please

do not write it off and base your vote purely on potential. Potential is nice but it's won exactly zero championships ever. The second caveat is that positions don't matter. If one guy is a centerman in your league and you think that makes him less valuable please ignore that impulse. This is about straight forwards so take your wings and shove 'em back in the oven.

Now for the bracket!

Admittedly this bracket is smaller than what you might be used to seeing from previous Cage Match Tournaments but this is hardly the place to debate the relative merits of Tye McGinn vs. Leo Komarov so the field is small but hopefully that will allow us to get at the matchups you really want to see. If you have any gripes about a certain someone being left out of the tournament, take it to the comments section, I'd love to hear about it!

This week we are offering up the first round matchups from the Selanne Bracket:

Selanne Bracket
1. Yakupov
8. Saad
4. Grigorenko
5. Schroeder
3. Galchenyuk
6. Schwartz
2. Granlund
7. Zibanejad
Ovechkin Bracket
1. Huberdeau
8. Foligno
4. Conacher
5. Gallagher
3. Brunner
6. Silfverberg
2. Tarasenko
7. Kreider
Best Rookie