Hear ye! Hear ye! All hail our new Malking!

In a shocking turn of events, December brings us a new leader of the DobberHockey fantasy realm. Evgeni Malkin is the new most valuable fantasy hockey player.

After the Crosby injury last season, conjecture like this began around hockey. Why was Malkin playing so much better? Coincidence or was Malkin coming into his own as the star of the show. Well, 59 games and 91 points since the injury, we know Malkin can do it with or without the spotlight. He is currently the NHL points leader this season on pace for 139 points this season. Crosby in his own right is still as elite as they get with 34 points of his own. So why the fall? What about AO?

When I saw the news that the rankings had changed at the top, I couldn't predict which of these three kings would be the next to take the throne. They are all very deserving. So when you break it down, did Evgeni Malkin really deserve this title? Did Crosby deserve the demotion? Is Alexander Ovechkin getting a shaft having fallen to third instead rising to the top?

Well lets take a look at some of the major fantasy factors...

Age: An extremely significant factor in keeper leagues, These players are all separated by about a year of age. AO 23, Malkin 22 and Crosby 21, they are all close. Ovechkin is just over 10 months older than Malkin and Malkin is just over 12 months older than Crosby. With youth comes upside for improvement.

Advantage: **Crosby** followed by Malkin then Ovechkin

NHL Experience: Experience breeds maturity in the NHL, and these players all have already garnered plenty of it at a young age. The more experience the player has, the more secure they are as investments. With his health and earlier arrival, Ovechkin has proven the most in this category with 267 games played while Crosby has only reached 236 with injuries. Malkin of course has played one fewer seasons

Advantage: **Ovechkin** followed by Crosby then Malkin

Position: This is a factor I may value more than some other players. Positional scarcity is extremely important. Ovechkin is the obvious choice here as he plays at the significantly shallower left wing. Crosby, being purely a center, fall short in this category. Malkin has the ability to gain duel-eligibility any given season. Given he is still only a center in most leagues this season, he is just a wild card at this point.

Advantage: **Ovechkin** followed by Malkin then Crosby

Durability: Malkin and Ovechkin have done little to fall short in this category. Crosby, with his 29 missed games last season, falls significantly short in this category. He is also prone to more nagging injuries apparently. This may just be bad early luck, but it is all we have to go on. Malkin has shown he is extremely durable but Ovechkin has the longer, ironman trackrecord. Only family issues have come between AO and the ice.

Advantage: **Ovechkin** followed closely by Malkin then Crosby

Points: Averaging 1.38 points per game thus far in his career, Crosby has the definite advantage if the injury category does not interfere. He has averaged 113 points every 82 games while Ovechkin has been a steady 104 points with Malkin quickly gaining based on this season. He now is averaging 103 points every 82 games.

Advantage: **Crosby** followed by Malkin and Ovechkin

Goals: Ovechkin has clearly taken this category. As a more scarce category than assists, this is a huge factor in comparing player values. AO has averaged 54 goals in a full season thus far while Malkin follows averaging 40 goals per 82 games after his big 47-goal season. Crosby is improving, but he has yet to show he can reach 40, much less approach 50 like Malkin.
Still, Crosby is averaging 38 with a strong start to this season.

Advantage: **Ovechkin** followed by Malkin then Crosby

PIM: Crosby is the only player on this list who has exceeded 100 penalty minutes in a season. Still, his totals have decreased steadily in his first three seasons. Overall, Crosby still leads the category on average with 78 minutes per season, but that is definitely a skewed number. Malkin has average 77 per season and has done so very evenly thus far. Ovechkin is doing well this season and is good for at least 50 this year.

Advantage: **Malkin** followed by Oveckin then Crosby

SOG: The category is one that makes a huge difference depending on your league setup. If you have shots on goal, I think this category seals the deal for Ovechkin as the undisputed number one player in fantasy hockey. He is good for over 400 shots every year and could reach 500 one of these years. He averages 423 each year and this season is no different. Crosby and Malkin are far behind averaging 273 and 266 respectively.

Advantage: **Ovechkin** followed distantly by Crosby and Malkin

Help: Alexander does have the other Alex and a growing Backstrom on his side, but they have to prove a lot (and stay healthy in Semin's case) to come close to the value of having Malkin on the same powerplay and sometimes same line. Having possibly the best player in the game as a teammate is untouchable.

Advantage: **Crosby and Malkin** followed by Ovechkin

The Unknown: This final category may be just as important has statistical history. There is an element of the unknown in Malkin that the other two players may lack a bit more purely because of that one year less of experience. This is the converse to experience in that even though experience brings security, the unknown allows for an increased upside. Perhaps, this is the biggest factor in Malkin's rise as he has in a short time proven a lot, shown major improvement in one season and not unveiled any weaknesses like the injuries that slightly concern some Crosby owners. It could be luck but there is always that question. With this being his third season, his stats cannot be easily charted with only two points. If he continues at his current pace, he would be right on track with his projection based on the first two seasons. 85 to 106 points in the simplest of forms is a gain of 21 points. Does that mean this season will be the same gain to 127? There is the increased value of his unknown. Crosby has the next best unknown value because of his injuries hampering him and because he is the youngest at 21.

Advantage: **Malkin** followed by Crosby and Ovechkin

So does this prove anything? Not really, but it does help us to understand where the players stand at this point in their careers. Place your bets. They are all so close in skill, proof and age, we can only make our best judgment. Based on this, the final scores are...

Ovechkin: 5-4-1

Crosby: 2-7-1

Malkin: 2-7-1

So, Ovechkin is the most well-rounded candidate. If you have both positions and shots on goal, he is you overwhelming top player at this moment. If not, it is very close. Ovechkin still has the valuable goals stat going for him. Crosby has the age and points upside going for him. Malkin has the unknown and current stats on his side.

What do you value the highest?

The December 2008 overthrow is not the beginning of a Malkin reign in my opinion. This should be short lived. I feel this is just the beginning of a volatile fantasy hockey triumvirate of power. This is the new era of a three-headed fantasy monster.