

## Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---



Even after all these years, I still love Wayne Gretzky. While I certainly have no complaints about today's stars, Gretz occupies a special spot in my hockey heart. One of my favourite descriptions of Gretzky's hockey prowess was uttered by, of all people, a Russian. "He appears out of no where. He passes to no one. And a goal is scored." We can thank urbane Soviet coach, Igor Dmitriev for that haunting, and accurate piece of hockey poetry.

Gretzky certainly had a lot going for him as a player, but one element that is sometimes overlooked was his love of learning. Whether it was analyzing Russian hockey methods (instead of blustering about the "Canadian way"), or reflecting on the level of sacrifice required

## Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

to win the Stanley Cup (after catching a glimpse of the battered occupants of the New York Islanders' dressing room in the spring of 1983), Wayne was never one to live the "unexamined life". Wayne was a thinker. And if you want to be a Pro Star like Wayne, then you gotta be like Wayne. You have to think about your game.

As we enjoy these last couple of weeks of the regular season, you're entering a critical time for your fantasy success. No matter where you are in the standings of your pool, you've got work to do. So before your season fades into playoff pool triflings, summer-time Coronas, and pimping your lawn, you've got to capture your *lessons-learned*.

### Lessons-Learned

What is a "lesson-learned", you ask? Don't fret, it's not rocket science. It's a term used by business execs and military leaders to describe proposed improvements to the way of doing things that follow from experience in a particular venture.

For example, if Alan Eagleson and the boys were serious about things back in '72, they might have come up with a few lessons-learned. *Holy crap, these guys are in shape...next time we really shouldn't be drinking beer in the dressing room before the game.*

## Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

Simple enough, right? But there's a catch. A lesson-learned needs to be captured while events are still fresh – time has a way of erasing the pivotal details of important insights.

*Ah, those Commies weren't so bad, right? We beat 'em in the end. Hey Phil, pass me another Labatt 50.*

While the agonies and ecstasies of your season are still raw, you need to grab them and hang on.

In case your life is as busy as mine, I'll get you started. Here are some common errors that we poolies commit year in and year out:

### 1. 1. Over-committing to one team

Fantasy hockey allows us to indulge our desires of playing General Manager, but in our

## **Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie**

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

enthusiasm some of us over-select from our favourite team. Sometimes this happens unconsciously simply because we know that team's players best, and they can seem larger than life in local media. Rose coloured glasses are a great way to get our butts kicked in fantasy hockey (especially if you're a Leaf fan).

Conversely, some of us will do the opposite. We will select players from teams that we secretly fear; players from teams that knocked our beloved squads out of the playoffs the previous spring before may become inflated in our mind's eye.

### **1. 2. Over-committing to one position**

The economics of supply and demand can be unforgiving and some of us can panic when we feel that we're missing out on a crucial commodity. There is probably no resource perceived to be scarcer in a fantasy hockey than starting goaltenders. This can push some of us to obsessively collect them, at the expense of our over-all team performance.

### **1. 3. Getting too excited over pre-season stats**

## **Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie**

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

Sergei Shirokov. Enough said.

### **1. 4. Missing out on fair trades**

Maybe we thought it was a “strategic” first offer, or maybe we sincerely valued our current roster that much, but our fellow GMs may have been insulted when we offered Matt Carle and Craig Anderson for Ovie. We can cut ourselves out of the loop if we don’t act reasonably and responsibly on the trading circuit. And trading is an excellent avenue to help our squad, so why deny ourselves in the faint hopes of fleecing someone?

### **1. 5. Assembling an All Star team...circa 2015**

And speaking of getting too excited over shiny, new things...We all want to grab the next big thing. It proves that we are crafty GMs. But the rush to prove our abilities to our peers can encourage us to draft/pick-up/trade-for players who are destined for greatness, but, for one reason or another, aren’t quite there yet. We need to compare likely performances in the coming season, not theoretical apexes. Obviously this lesson-learned mostly applies to those of us who play in one-year leagues.

## Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

### 1. 6. Selling early

Every year fantasy experts caution against this, but without fail [slows starts by fantasy studs like Ryan Getzaf](#) can cause people to panic, unloading the very players that they so carefully drafted only weeks before. This is a mistake that we cannot afford to make. Learn who tends to have slow starts (yes, I'm talking about you Mr. Luongo), and then plan accordingly.

Conversely, buying late is another perennial problem, one that is often worse in the early part of the year when hot starts create an artificial market for a commodity (hello, Matt Carle). Like many aspects of fantasy hockey, making perfect use of a player's hot streak is almost impossible, but be warned that statistics usually even out in the long run.

### 1. 7. Not looking into an injury-prone player's history

There is nothing wrong with using Band-Aid Boys. Just handle with care. We need to go with our heads on this one, not our hearts. [Look into the history of mercurial players like Martin Havlat or Marion Gaborik](#). If the best is hoped for, the worst must be prepared against.

## **Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie**

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

### **1. 8. Stealing tactics from the successful enemy**

Don't forget to take a look at the top dogs in your league. Stealing their ideas is fantastic (just be sure to deny it afterward).

### **1. 9. Forgetting that luck still plays a significant factor**

Sadly, fantasy hockey doesn't really have hard and fast laws...it has trends. Like anything involving humans, fortune plays a role. Learn the trends, read the experts' opinions, but sometimes all you can do is laugh (or cry).

### **1. 10. Getting things right...remember your successes!**

No matter how many mistakes we commit, each of us enjoys successes during each fantasy crusade. Remember these and build on them. Maybe you haven't enjoyed luck in your recent drafts, but you're king (or queen) of the waiver-wire. Maybe you pulled off a timely trade this year. Maybe you engineered a late-season push in your pool. Whatever it was, take a look at

## Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

that success and think about why it worked for you.

The utility of recording a few lessons-learned isn't lurking in the originality or universal applicability of these generic examples. The magic lies in actually taking a few minutes and performing the exercise (we're talking point form notes here, folks). The above list isn't *your* list; only you can scribble down the list that will help you out the most. But if you do make the time, I guarantee that you will reap the rewards next autumn

Gretzky was a dedicated student of the game and that was part of his greatness. Take a lesson from Number 99 and look critically at your season and start a lessons-learned file.

Gretz would.

### Other Business...

If you're in the Toronto area, then check out [The Hockey Expo](#) , April 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> at the Toronto

## Lessons Learned: If Gretzky was a Hockey Poolie

Written by Brent Lemon

Tuesday, 30 March 2010 22:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 31 March 2010 15:46

---

International Centre. If you haven't heard yet, Dobber will be there performing his soon-to-be-famous unicycle stunt act while wearing a 1930s-era clown suit.

Okay, I might have made that last part up entirely, but I'm going anyway.