If you own Tim Connolly, Alexander Semin, Sami Salo and Pascal Leclaire all on the same roster, you should think of trying something else. One can potentially weasel their way out of such sticky situations with deft late-round drafting or perspicacious waiver wire picking. Yea, I may use thesaurus.com, so what? What's bad is running with a roster of the aforementioned players without the appropriate bandages, er… depth to fill in when they are down and out. Acquiring this depth is most easily done through your draft and a strategical focus and plan can help.

I think we can all agree that depth is important in any league that allows injury replacements.

Losing a player of Zach Parise's status, like so many teams did last year, is cause enough to shut your roster down for the season, unless you have a suitable replacement. More often than not, you aren't going to have a Marion Hossa or a David Backes sitting on your bench. They're bound to already be on your active roster, leaving you scrambling for a suitable replacement. Citing my own salary-cap keeper league, having the right player can be enough of a bandage to not only stop the bleeding, but induce healing; in our terms, winning your pool. I refuse to mention his name as he frequents these forums, but last year's winner had Mike Ribeiro to fill on for Sidney Crosby when he went down with his concussion, and it helped lead him to, as Johnny Drama would say it, VICTORY!

The ultimate fill-in for an injured player would be with another who plays a similar game. Assuming you are happy with the balance of your team and there is not one glaring categorical need, a Ribero type is a perfect replacement for Crosby. Assist heavy with a penchant for powerplay production (say that with vigour - it's fun), Ribeiro will fall short of Crosby's elite production but his consistency and accountability can mend the tear in your team's fibre. Additionally, his $5 million cap hit easily fits with Crosby out and would generally be cheaper than another starting roster superstar who may get hurt. Drafting a guy like Ribeiro over a top young prospect like Vladimir Tarasenko is a tough decision, but is actually a likely situation in a keeper league draft and one that can define the path you're taking. Tarasenko is sexy, but his NHL chastity belt remains tight while Ribeiro's been popped like a security guard at a bank robbery. Picking the one who puts out, leads to bragging rights and sometimes cash - depth is necessary, and also comes in different forms.

It isn't easy making that "now" pick over a potential all-star like Tarasenko, and doing so isn't necessarily wrong. It does, however, affect how you need to approach the type of depth your team needs. Passing on the do-it-all Ribeiro's of the league leaves you with more of the one-dimensional players who aren't going to contribute across the board, unless very minimally. Focus now turns to the "won't hurt you too much" players, ones who aren't going to be a minus-20 with four points and 60 shots at seasons end, and can be extremely productive in one or two categories. Theo Peckham is a good example, as he can post huge PIM combined with a respectable 10-20 points. As an added bonus, these players make up the bottom echelon of players in the salary department, and are a seamless fit into any roster.

Losing the production from your “superstar” hurts, but gaining 40-50 penalty minutes in a two week period that you weren’t going to get from your original player, can be a blessing in disguise. If the PIM category was close in your pool, with four or five teams within 40-50 PIM of each other, your team can make a four to five point jump from that one category alone. This may not have happened with your points superstar, such as a Datsyuk or St. Louis, if .you were only getting mostly points out of them and that category wasn't close enough to earn that bump in rotisserie points. The one-dimensional players do carry more value in a salary-cap league when you consider the ease of fitting them into your lineup, as well as the production to cost rate ratio.

Obviously, cost plays the biggest role in roster flexibility, in terms of needed depth. If you can't fit a player into your roster, he holds no value to your team. Managing your depth to the point where you have a specific player(s) available to replace any number of a certain type of player (Ribeiro for a Crosby/Getzlaf/Backstrom or Nick Leddy for a Whitney/Visnovksy/Green), goes a long way towards a championship. As well, value is found in the cheapest, one-dimensional players. It's extremely important to recognize how valuable they can be considering how fast they can help your team take a jump in the standings. Managing your depth properly, not just having it but knowing when to use it, is a big part of a winning recipe. Your depth isn't simply there for injury replacement, but needs to be utilized when there is an opportunity to make major gains in a specific category.

Below are just a few players that could be drafted in the mid to later rounds, are strong in one category or solid across the board, produce now and are cost effective.

Forwards:

Defense:

Jussive Jokinen - $3 million

Sami Salo - $2 million

Matt Moulson - $3.1 million

Marc-Andre Bergeron - $1 million

Chris Higgins - $1.9 million

Theo Peckham - $1 million

Mike Knuble - $2 million

Dan Giriardi - $2.3 million

Troy Brouwer - $2.35 million

Grant Clitsome - $1.25 million

Rich Peverley - $1.3 million

Nick Leddy - $1.5 million

Tyler Kennedy - $2 million

Grant Clitsome - $1.25 million

Nathan Gerbe - $1.4 million

Carlo Colaiacovo - $2.1 million

Max Pacioretty - $1.6 million

Kyle Quincy - $3.1 million

Mikail Grabovski - $2.9 million

Ryan Suter - $3.5 million

Nikolai Kulemin - $2.3 million

Travis Hamonic - $875 thousand

Vaclav Prospal - $2.5 million

Andrew MacDonald - $550 thousand

Olli Jokinen - $3 million

Jason Garrison - $675 thousand

Val Filppula - $3 million

Aaron Johnson - $550 thousand

Ted Purcell - $2.3 million

Dave Bolland $3.3 million

Kyle Clifford - $870 thousand

Colton Orr - $900 thousand

Dan Carcillo - $775 thousand

Colton Orr - $900 thousand

Cal Clutterbuck - $1.4 million

Michael Ryder - $3.5 million

Ray Whitney - $3 million

Radim Vrbata - $3 million

Chris Neil - $2 million

Zack Smith - $700 thousand

Zenon Konopka - $700 thousand

David Jones - $2.5 million

Milan Hejduk - $3 million

Craig Smith - $700 thousand

Frans Nielsen - $525 thousand

Matt Martin - $852 thousand

Brandon Sutter - $2 million