After dissecting Alex Ovechkin and pushing the surgical instrument budget to near breaking point, we now turn to Ovechkin's biggest adversary, Sidney Crosby. Also a physical specimen in terms of talent and ability, Crosby persistently challenges Ovie for the title of most valuable fantasy player in the universe. At almost a million bucks less than Ovechkin, Crosby has an instant advantage in a salary cap league. With the debate bound to rage on for years, both Crosby and Ovechkin have their perks; Ovechkin has his health while Crosby saves you cap space. But, by continuing the trend of following trends, much unlike Ovechkin's downward spiral, Crosby's production takes a likeness to a space launch and keeps on climbing.

When considering Crosby's value in a salary cap league it's important to note that we will ignore his health issues. As mentioned in a past article examining strategies in a cap league, the importance of owning a solid replacement for such a player is discussed. In last week's focus on

Ovechkin we took a look at his cost-per-point average, amongst other categories, which was simple to do considering his lack of missed games. We will do the same with Crosby but it's important to note that his breakdown will have to consider his pace rather than actual production in the years that he was well short of an 82 game schedule.

Year	Cost/goal	Cost/point	Cost/sog	Cost/pim	Cost/ppp
2007/08					
on pace – 53gp					
$235,135					

$78,378

$32,584

$145,000

$212,195

2008/09

$263,636

$84,446

$36,544

$114,473

$217,500

2009/10

$170,588

$79,816

$29,194

$122,535

$255,882

2010/11

on pace – 41gp

$135,937

$65,909

$27,018

$140,322

$228,947

2011/12

on pace

$414,285

$84,446

$27,444

$106,097

$280,645

Unlike Ovechkin, Crosby has managed to improve on his cost/production ratio in virtually every category - specifically goals, points and shots on goal. Without some sort of wonder drug to insure continued improvement in future years he's got to hit a ceiling at some point, but what stands out is a lack of major fluctuation. Comparing Crosby's numbers to Ovechkin's helps put things into perspective and features two key differences: consistency and a positive trend. The five-year average of these two superstars proves Crosby to be the more cost-effective player in three out of the five categories. One could argue that Crosby also has Ovechkin beat in the goals category as well (please note the asterisk).

Average cost over five seasons

Statistical category
Crosby
Ovechkin
Cost per goal
$243,916*
$237,491
Cost per point
$78,599

$106,654

Cost per sog

$30,556

$25,085

Cost per pim

$125,685

$185,508

Cost per ppp

$239,033

$290,874

** Crosby has never scored or been on pace for less than 33 goals in a season - his 21-goal pace this season is an anomaly and this total reflects this career low. Correcting that pace to one of 30 goals drops his average to* ***$219,059*** *which is better than Ovechkin's.*

It was tougher to label Crosby as a cost-effective player when he was averaging .45 goals-per-game. When Crosby decided he needed to score more often that became a lot easier. In the summer of 2009, just before his breakout 51-goal performance, Dan Bylsma sums up his chameleon-like ability to adapt:

"I think that's something Sid decided on this summer," he said. "In our short summer it was a focus he had on his game, something he wanted to improve upon." Full article here.

For a player to "just decide" to score more goals and work so hard on a skillset that he beats his career-best, up to that point, by a total of 12 is incredible. His average since that change in mindset has increased to .65 goals-per-game.

This ability to adapt is a far-cry from what we are getting out of a once electric Alex Ovechkin, who has taken the opposite turn and can't seem to find an effective way to score goals now that defenders know how to play against him. Between that and his decline in average time-on-ice, the outlook for Ovechkin's future is much different than Crosby's. Take a look at how Crosby's other averages have been maintained, a major contrast to that of Ovechkin's.

Year	**Average TOI**	**Average powerplay TOI**	**Points per game**
2007/08	20:50	5:12	1.36

2008/09

21:56

5:22

1.34

2009/10

21:57

5:00

1.35

2010/11

21:55

5:25

1.61

2011/12

19:15

4:16

1.38

Again, consistency stands out. Crosby has never seen the ridiculous ice-time totals that Ovechkin has in the past, but he has maintained what he does get and all the while produced at an increased rate that Ovie has been unable to match. Crosby's average has dropped slightly this year but not anywhere close to the five minutes of ice-time that Ovechkin has lost over the last five seasons. The reason for Crosby's recent reduction is an obvious one, and one that should right itself when Crosby is 100% healthy. It's Crosby's health that is the only issue in his valuable game and is a surmountable issue if the proper precautions are taken with team depth.

If Crosby is anything, he's accountable. Regaining his health will play a major role in how valuable he can be, but solace can be found in owning the player who has the ability be the best fantasy player in the entire league. With his averages, Crosby can miss ten games and still be the top-ranked player. Health aside, he is well worth the amount of space he demands in your

cap league and if there's anything we should know about Crosby, it's his dedication to the game and his ability to produce. Don't miss out on it.