First off this week, let me apologize to all who listened to my advice and got rid of Nik Antropov. I was way wrong on him. He's been scorching hot lately and it now looks like his fast start was for real. He may just have a shot at 80 points if he stays healthy. You should still expect ups and downs throughout the season though. What can I say? Sometimes you hit it on the head, like I did with Martin Gerber and Mike Comrie and sometimes you're off the mark.

Defensemen are often viewed as a necessary evil in fantasy hockey. Fantasy players are always on the lookout for production from a position where points are hard to come by. So here is a look at some blueliners who might have been overlooked in your league, but who have performed very well of late.

Dennis Wideman is riding a seven game point streak and now has 11 points on the season. He plays on the first power play unit with the likes of Marc Savard, Glenn Murray and Zdeno

Chara so his outlook for continued success is quite bright. He has a very solid rookie season in St-Louis in 2005-06 scoring 24 points and has 22 points in 55 games last season before finishing the season in Boston where he struggled. He definitely has 40-point potential.

The Dallas Stars are grooming Sergei Zubov's successor and his name is **Matt Niskanen**. A first round pick in 2005, Niskanen is enjoying a very fine rookie season with 11 points to date, including a three point performance in the Stars' last game. He's a future 40-point producer who be just steal Philippe Boucher's spot while the latter is injured.

Niklas Kronwall was a huge disappointment last season when he put up a mere 22 points. The former first round pick has been expected to become a solid offensive producer since coming into the league, but injuries have stalled his development. He looks healthy this year and recently ended a six game point streak. He still sits behind Niklas Lidstrom and Brian Rafalski in Detroit, but Kronwall finally looks like the player we expected him to be last season.

Hal Gill has never scored more than 22 points in a season, but he's on fire lately having scored 10 points in his last eight games. You can't expect this streak to last for long, but he's well on his way to a career best.

Scott Hannan has scored between 21 and 24 points in each of the last four seasons, but like Gill he's been lights out lately with 8 points in his last 8 games.

I wrote about **Filip Kuba** at the beginning of the season when Dan Boyle went down. I advised you to take notice of Kuba who would benefit from Boyle's absence. Early on, Paul Ranger was the only one to benefit, but Kuba has been quite valuable lately with 11 points in the last 15 games.

Niclas Havelid has a sub-par season in 2006-07 when he scored only 21 points after three season of 26 to 33 point production so it's not surprising to see him with 10 points thus far this season. However, 8 of those points have come in the last 10 games so you might not have taken notice.

Bryce Salvador isn't know for his offensive abilities having a career high 12 points achieved in 2001-02. However, he's been playing very solidly lately and averaging 22 minutes of ice time per game during the past month. Still, his 6 points in the last 7 games should not be taken as a sign of things to come.

The Ottawa Senators don't know if **Christoph Schubert** is a blueliner or a winger, but he keeps getting playing time regularly up front so his fantasy value gets quite a boost in the process. He's not as talented as Dustin Byfuglien, but with 7 points in his last 12 games, he's certainly worth a look.

Marek Zidlicky was a huge flop last season after scoring 53 and 49 points in his first two seasons. He didn't start off very well this year either with only 5 points in the first 12 games, but he's been his old self since then. Zidlicky's 10 points in the last 14 games are an encouraging sign that he's rebounding to 50-point form.

Questions for the Frog

What do I do with Vermette? He's playing third line with Kelly and Neil, and has 2 points in his last 13 games. He's great for faceoff wins as he is eligible at W and C, but will his scoring come around or is this what I can expect for the rest of the campaign? I'm cleaning up each week in faceoffs so I could probably live without him, but it's a pretty deep pool and the best wingers available are 13-15 point guys with no faceoffs like Dumont, Vrbata, Samuelsson, Satan, etc... Are they better options? There have been a few trade rumours floating around re: Vermette, any meat to them? – Jeff

FROG: Until he gets decent linemates Vermette will always be very streaky. Unfortunately, the other players you list are also very prone to hot and cold stretches. Unless he's too valuable to you for the faceoffs, you should drop him and just go with whoever is the hottest at the moment, which would be Vrbata in this case. I'd be surprised if the Sens traded Vermette since he's very valuable in the role he plays in Ottawa.

Currently I am 1st in a 12 team weekly match-up league. Considering that we have several goalie stats, I am not too crazy about my goalie situation.
My pool scores:
Goals, Assists,+/-,PIM,PPP,SHP,GWG,Faceoffs Won for forwards/defencemen
Games Started (stupid stat), Wins, SV%, GAA and SO for goalies.
My Roster is:
C - V. Lecavalier
C - M. Sundin
LW - R. Whitney
LW - T. Holmstrom
RW - D. Heatley
RW - P. Kane
D - B. Rafalski
D - J. Spacek
D - E. Jovanovski
Util - D. Roy
Bench - N. Horton
Bench - P. Sharpe
IR - S. Gagne
G - R. Miller
G - C. Price
Bench - C. Huet
I know I have a good team that will win most weeks in the forwards/defence stats, but my keepers have killed me a few times - do you think that the Price/Huet thing could work - we change line-ups every week (only skate 2 goalies).

Most of the guys that I have tried to trade with are asking for my big 3 (Vinny, Heatley or Mats) I cannot justify trading any of them - even for Henry, they carry my team most weeks. Who do you think I should offer in a package and for whom? Sorry for such a broad question.

The last two trade offers that I made, which were rejected, were:
Whitney/Jovo/Huet <----> M. Biron/ T. Kaberle
Whitney, Huet <----> C. Ward (I canceled this - thought it was too expensive)
What would you do?

BTW - The top available goalies in my league are: Ellis, Garon, Sabourin, Toivenen, Hedberg, and so on ~ garbage.
– Gilmour's Teeth

FROG: Well, you are right about the free-agent goalies, there isn't much there at all.With Simon Gagne on the verge of returning, you should use your depth on the wings to improve your goaltending. You could offer a package of Ray Whitney and Nathan Horton to get a top goaltender. You might even be able to include a defenseman and pickup a free-agent. Since your league isn't deep on D with only 3 starting blueliners there are probably some very good ones available.

Wondering who to pick-up? Who to trade? Who to keep? Write to the Fantasy Frog at fantasyfrog@dobberhockey.com and you could see your fantasy hockey question answered in Croaks from the Fantasy Frog.

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