Cory Conacher had posted 5-7-12 through his first seven starts, but then was blanked for six consecutive games headed into Saturday's tilt against the Florida Panthers.

His situation perfectly reflects one facing poolies on a practically weekly basis. Any seasoned fantasy owner knows well enough to stick with the stars through thick and thin (although even the most veteran of veteran guys need to be talked off the ledge from time to time), but when is it necessary to pull the plug on those mid to lower-level performers?

There isn't (or shouldn't be) a 'one size fits all' philosophy for this sort of thing. Measure each one on a case by case basis. For Conacher in particular, the positive factors that were in place during his success (good line assignment, secondary power play time, and faith from the coach) basically remained there during the mini-drought too. He saw mostly assignments with Vincent Lecavalier earlier on, but that has shifted of late to be more focused on Steven Stamkos. Tough job, but someone has to do it.

Conacher, at least so far, has been someone I'd want to remain patient with in most situations. It's tough not to love what he did in the AHL last year and you can see the guy plays with heart at this level as well. Overall, he's still averaging right around the point-per-mark with his assist

Saturday and he’s doing enough on a nightly basis to warrant your patience.

Plus, as an added bonus for leagues which count them, his six-game slump also saw him credited with his first seven hits of the year.

*

For the past few Saturdays I’ve been meaning to write this blurb and have continually been sidetracked with the gong show these evenings tend to be. So let me fire this off quickly before I forget again.

Viktor Fasth is a perfect representation for fantasy owners of what can happen when you’re willing to put in the hard work to get ahead of your competition. All of the information you need is right at your fingertips, thanks to this wonderful thing called the internet.

One of my favourite parts of fantasy hockey over the years has been deep keeper leagues. I

find great enjoyment from scouting players outside the NHL and have spent countless hours just going through league stats and scouting profiles from around the world. I can't tell you how many gems I've found combing through Elitserien or SM-liiga or wherever. This is why my family wonders why I never contact them. I just get lost in stats for ridiculous amounts of time. Entire afternoons disappear.

Anyway, long story short is that when Fasth was a month or so into what would become the first of his back-to-back MVP seasons in the SEL, I had added him to my farm system. Didn't know he'd be THAT successful immediately, of course, but I liked what I was seeing and the early reviews were quite favourable. I bought a lottery ticket, wrote down his numbers and look at the road on which he's started down. It's been a fun journey to watch from both a poolie perspective and one of a fan.

Viktor Fasth is 3rd goaltender in NHL history to win his first eight or more career decisions (Ray Emery of OTT and and Bob Froese of PHI).

— Anaheim Ducks (@AnaheimDucks) February 17, 2013

My particular fantasy fetish (easy.. I'm still talking hockey here) has always been scouting goaltenders. My farm systems trend goalie-heavy and aside from the fact that I love the position (again, shut up) netminders are always a high-quality, constantly-sought trade chip.

With how far Twitter has come in the past year or so in particular, it's SO DAMN EASY to find quality information from overseas and if you're not making regular efforts to do so then you're only going to fall further and further behind your competition.

Keeper league or not, more information is always better. Soak it up. Learn it. Live it. Love it.

*

Henrik Zetterberg has been fantastic. Pavel Datsyuk is, well, Pavel Datsyuk. Niklas Kronwall has stepped up offensively with Nicklas Lidstrom retired. Damien Brunner has generally fared well since entering the NHL.

One Wing who hasn't done as well as expected has been Valtteri Filppula though. 3-5-8 in 14 GP isn't horrible, but Mike Babcock called him out Saturday after Friday's 5-2 loss to Anaheim.

"Fil wasn't good enough last night, wasn't competitive enough, and he's got to be way better than that," Babcock said. "We need him. He's a significant player for us and he's got to play better than this."

It'll always depend on the options in your league, but in this shortened season scenario we could see Filppula dropped more quickly than he otherwise might be at this stage. We should see his point pace trend upward before too long, so keep an eye out.

*

John Tavares was interviewed in the second intermission of the Devils outing and noted that while Lubomir Visnovsky has clearly helped the power play, the veteran defenceman has also given a boost to the Isles' transition game. It's not all on Mark Streit to lug the puck up the ice. Visnovsky is averaging a point-per-game and has made for a really effective addition for those who snagged him when he finally came back to North America.

How about Tavares, incidentally? He has managed to take his game to a level beyond what he showed us last year, when he recorded 31-50-81 in a full campaign. He finished with a 3.49 shot-per-game pace, and after Saturday's contest against the Devils he has taken that up a notch this season to just shy of 4.1. He has eight straight games of at least four shots per night. His current goal streak is at five straight games and after this hat trick he has 11 markers in his past 10 starts.

Linemate Brad Boyes has points in four straight and five of six and continues to see first power play time with Tavares and Matt Moulson.

*

Marek Zidlicky had an ugly six-game pointless streak rolling along, but now has points in three of four. He's not a high-end option on the back end, but as mid-level guys go he's in a pretty sweet spot. Almost always on PP1 alongside Ilya Kovalchuk and the gang.

*

Milan Lucic will not play in Sunday's tilt against the Jets because of personal reasons that saw him head back to Boston Saturday. Rich Peverley practiced with David Krejci and Nathan Horton.

*

Speaking of the Bruins, Tyler Seguin's slow start (2-5-7 in 12 GP) provides another great learning opportunity for poolies.

We talk all the time about selling high and buying low, which is all well and fine. The point which bears underlining, specifically for keeper league owners, is that when someone of Seguin's stature struggles it's not really about buying low.

It's about having the opportunity to buy where it may not have previously existed.

Virtually any and every Seguin owner realizes he's going to be a legitimately high-end star before too long. But the mind can play amazing tricks on poolies when it comes to the fickleness

of one's absolute, steadfast belief in any given player.

Are you going to get any sort of discount on Seguin, even when he's slumping? Hell no. You shouldn't be able to, anyway.

But it's a lot easier to be convinced of trading someone in the first place when he's struggling and is drawing plenty of criticism.

Try to land Seguin when he's in the midst of a 10-game goal streak. Good luck with that.

Just know that every single player's career is filled with peaks and valleys; target those down cycles and even if you have to pay an entirely reasonable, yet relatively high market value price to land someone like Seguin, it's absolutely worth it in the long run of a keeper league.

Investing in gold is always a smart play.

I tweeted the same thing after Erik Karlsson's unfortunate Achilles injury. If his owner in your keeper league is a contender this year, this may be your window to acquire one of the most electrifying players in the game today to save for next season. That one incident took Karlsson from a stud performer who would otherwise be untouchable to a sidelined stud performer who may be on the market for what'll still be a high-dollar price, but who is still worth every penny.

Another target that fits this bill, just because? Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. Land this kid in those deeper keeper leagues while people are still worried about his shoulder. I can't promise you there won't be further issues this year, but I am 100 percent convinced this guy is on track to become a dominant producer in the NHL and the early recurrence of shoulder problems in his career so far doesn't deter that thought in the least. Use the current concerns and the fact that he's been fairly dormant offensively in the early going to throw a little dirt in the eyes of his owner and get him while you can.

*

Tyler Bozak has added five points in his past five affairs and although he's generally a player about whom nobody tends to get too excited in pools, he's been a constant L1 presence who is still chipping in decent totals.

Don't look now, but Dion Phaneuf has quickly piled up five points in his past four outings. The PIM and hits continue to roll with regularity.

Ben Scrivens with a 34-save shutout against the Senators leaves him with February splits of 1.69/ .952 and a 2-1-0 mark.

*

Brayden Schenn added another assist in the loss to Montreal, giving him 3-6-9 in nine starts this month. Jakub Voracek has eight points in that same span.

Giroux: "It's not acceptable the way we played tonight,.It's not just two or three guys. It's the whole team...We didn't show up." #Flyers

— Sam Carchidi (@BroadStBull) February 17, 2013

*

Brendan Gallagher and Max Pacioretty each had two-pointers vs. Philadelphia, but also ended up with upper-body injuries before the night was out.

Rene Bourque had 5-3-8 in 38 games for Montreal last year following his trade from the Flames. So far this year, he’s already up to 5-5-10 in 14 games.

*

Jack Johnson was blanked in his first five starts of the year. Since then, he has points in seven of 10 from the back end. Ideal for leagues which don’t count plus-minus, naturally.

Brandon Dubinsky apparently has a left knee injury.

*

Keith Yandle has nine points, but six of them have come via separate three-pointers. He had nine shots to go with this three-point effort. The Coyotes lost Radim Vrbata to a lower-body injury.

Yandle said defense wasn't told to get more involved with offense. But he said he's felt better skating/puck-handling lately.

— Sarah McLellan (@azc_mclellan) February 17, 2013

*

Jamie McGinn, who has been seeing a fair bit of time with Matt Duchene and P.A. Parenteau of late, already had six points in six games before this multi-pointer (1-2-3) against the Oilers. 24 shots in that six-game span too, with the additional bonus of a decent hit total if your league counts them. Remember that he had 13 points in 17 games last year after being dealt from San Jose.

Duchene with another stellar fantasy showing. He's flying out there and all of the hard work he put in over the summer is paying off in spades. What more could you ask from the team's perspective? He owned last year's struggles, he took a relatively low-value contract in the off-season and worked his ass off to give himself every chance to succeed this time around. Which he is. And then some. So good to see.

John Mitchell has points in four of six, with a pair of multi-pointers in that span. Seven points in all in that period. He began with Cody McLeod and Milan Hejduk.

*

Sick dangles from Ales Hemsky. What. A. Comeback.

{youtube}YFrqVXjcaV4{/youtube}

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Twitter: @Nichols_NHLPool NHL news, analysis & fantasy takes with minimal inane babble.

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