I'm in three keeper leagues and one of things I love most about the concept of a keeper league is that they keep you thinking fantasy hockey in August. For lack of a better topic, let's do a quick overview of my three leagues and what I have done – and what I would like to do. Attention competitors: please don't read.

Yeah, fat chance of that. Regardless, most moves are already completed so I have little to

worry about from those chumps.

League No.1

For 21-odd years, the league that got my feet wet in this field has had minimal rule changes. Very straightforward – 14 teams, 20-man rosters, you keep your full roster and the top 12 point-getters count in the regular season and again in the postseason (so two key trophies to be won). There are three rounds of drafting in early October and one round in early January.

Assets:

Evgeni Malkin, Vincent Lecavalier, Tyler Ennis, Jordan Staal, Dustin Brown, Sergei Gonchar, Tobias Enstrom, Kristian Huselius, Shawn Horcoff, Chris Kunitz, Patrick O'Sullivan, Luca Caputi, Viktor Stalberg, Evgeni Grachev, Matt Moulson, Alex Goligoski, Kris Letang, Nate Gerbe, Radim Vrbata, Ryan Whitney. Also four draft picks in October (two in the third round) and my January pick...plus four picks in 2011 and TWO January 2012 selections.

Needs:

I have too many assets. Too much depth. And what I've done this summer has only made things worse. While Whitney would be a dropsy in this format, Vrbata (my 19th best asset) is not and I need to somehow clear four spots for my picks. I also need more stars. I finished out of the money last year and the top team in our league is loaded with 10 high-calibre stars. I only have two.

Done:

1. I traded Dion Phaneuf for a January (2012) draft pick. Those picks are very valuable, especially if you can get one in the top six or seven. Imagine being able to get one of the best point getters in January not already drafted. Defensemen don't hold value when the league doesn't specify positions.

2. I threw everything but the kitchen sink in to try to land Jordan Eberle and/or Tyler Ennis. Eventually I had to pay a dear price for Ennis, but I got it done. It was a huge risk and the move was panned by everyone in my league. But I have a feeling that being "Dobber" means that I get charged more in trades as other owners become very wary. I traded away Loui Eriksson for Ennis and a 2011 second rounder. Why? This was a huge gamble. Eriksson is a proven 70-point player with upside that could see 80 or even more. But how much of that is Brad Richards? With Richards probably on the way out, I have to hope that I am selling high on Eriksson. I have to hope that he is a 70-point player, give or take five, year in and year out. Then I have to hope that Ennis becomes that star player that is impossible to get after he becomes a star. I look at the worst-case scenario and at how small he is and I realize I could be in a lot of trouble. But if I see him falter, I'm confident that I can trade him for reasonable value

later (though, not Eriksson value). The second-round pick offers a bit of a buffer in case I'm very wrong. This is the risk that needs to be taken if you are to hope to land a star – get him before he becomes one.

3. I was offered a group of players and I showed mild interest in a couple of them. Eventually, the deal came down to his Horcoff and Kunitz for my Mason Raymond. I didn't want to move Raymond, but what I see is a likelihood of three players getting around 55 points. So I gain a player. I'm not seeing Raymond as a future 75-point guy at all, but he is on the rise. However, I see Kunitz as a guy who had 18 points in 20 games playing with Sidney Crosby to end 2008-09 and then play hurt last year. So he could surprise. And Horcoff will play with Hemsky and a much bolstered Edmonton lineup. He has the salary and the ice time to hold his spot on the first line. I bought low on both of these players, though it was hard to give up Raymond.

To Do:

So now I'm in a jam. I have 19 keepers and four draft picks. Caputi, Gonchar and Vrbata may have to be moved for the best future draft picks that I can get. Or I could try and turn two third-rounders into a second and thus move up 10 or 15 spots. But unless that's done on the fly at the draft to get your guy, I think that's a waste of an asset.

League No.2

This league has 24 players, with an additional four spots for either the farm or the IR. The competition works for the Forecaster magazine, so some of the guys are actually pros. Eight wingers, four pivots, six defensemen, and two goalies. Points and half of plus/minus counts. You can only keep 12 players and the draft is by lottery. I took over the team two summers ago and finished second last this past season.

Needs:

I have cut most of my players, but final cuts are due Friday. I'm down to these 17:

Keepers: Eric Staal, Anze Kopitar, Ilya Kovalchuk, Ales Hemsky, Claude Giroux, Jakub Voracek, Michal Frolik, Tom Gilbert, Paul Martin, John Carlson, Carey Price, Semyon Varlamov

To cut: Kyle Turris, David Backes, Alex Steen, O'Sullivan, Goligoski

I needed to reduce to 12 keepers and I had Nikita Filatov. I also need goaltending, which is the sole reason that I was second last instead of fourth or higher. I haven't officially cut the other five yet because they hold value that I may be able to parlay into assets.

Done:

I traded Filatov and a 10th rounder for a fourth rounder. I moved up 50 spots. Now I can keep Frolik and I have five picks in the top 54.

To Do:

If I can't acquire a reliable goaltender, I will make one my top pick (which will be fifth overall thanks to the lottery). Perhaps I'll wait until Pick 16, but I need a goalie. Price and Varlamov will be much better this year and in theory they 'could' be a fantastic 1-2 punch. But I would rather have some insurance. Last year, they failed me – along with last year's "insurance" Chris Osgood. I won't lose the pool over goaltending again. My keepers are finally solid from one to 12 for the first time since I took over this former cellar-dweller. It's go time.

League No.3

This one is the league I run. Full keeper, 25-player rosters – top goaltender, top defenseman and 12 of any skater count. We are transitioning to two goalies, four defensemen and 12 forwards by 2016 or so. Playoffs count (though only top eight regular season teams get to compete). Rosters become elastic after the draft (meaning they can expand via two-for-ones) but need to revert back to the cap of 25 on August 31. We are expanding to 14 teams this summer and we can only protect 10 players each – new owner will take one player per team. You can also, after the draft until the trade deadline, "sign" one player 24 years of age or older as a free agent. Last year I signed Matt Moulson.

I finished fourth in the season, but was built for the playoffs – though that went badly thanks to some weird NHL playoff results. I was up to 31 players (to maximize my playoff options), which was most in the pool.

My team:

F - Sidney Crosby, Jeff Carter, Marc Savard, Peter Mueller, Jordan Staal, Shane Doan, Brooks Laich, Patric Hornqvist, Brad Boyes, Andrei Kostitsyn, Rene Bourque, Matt Stajan, JP Dumont, Benoit Pouliot, Martin Hanzal, Alexei Ponikarovsky, Steve Sullivan, Casey Pierro-Zabotel, Ruslan Fedotenko, Sergei Samsonov

D – Nicklas Lidstrom, Alex Goligoski, Kris Letang, Zach Bogosian

G – Carey Price, Ilya Bryzgalov

Needs:

Whittle my team down to a level where I can use my four draft picks (there are five rounds this year – an extra round to cover both expansion, as well as the new addition/rule of one pro defenseman). Also need to minimize the damage from an expansion team taking a player. Ideally I would take a few players and bundle them to get an even better player back – and repeat that over and over. But who doesn't want to do that? That should be standard strategy for most people. But in my case the need was quite glaring.

Done:

1. Traded away Caputi, Cam Barker, Sergei Shirokov and Dustin Boyd for Kostitsyn and a third rounder for this year (I didn't like "only" having three draft picks, even though I don't need them I love the draft too much and will find a way to use them).

2. Traded away David Legwand and Chris Bourque for Bogosian. He wanted the extra player to fulfill the expansion draft rules (to explain Bourque). I think I got a future top defenseman for Legwand, who I would have dropped.

3. Traded away Milan Lucic and a fourth rounder in 2013 for a second rounder in 2013. Just whittling down players and getting the assets that I can.

To Do:

I'm sure I will lose either Bourque, Hornqvist, or a defenseman to expansion. I protected: Crosby, Carter, Bryzgalov, Savard, Mueller, Price, Staal, Laich, Boyes and Doan. That means I would drop Fedotenko at the August 31 deadline to get me down to 24 (that is the roster limit

this year, it goes to 25 after the draft). In 2011-12 we go up to two defensemen on the pro and in 2012-13 we go up to two goaltenders. So lots to plan for as we slowly transition to a near-realistic NHL franchise. I'll be dropping Samsonov and CPZ (barring an eye-opening camp), which means I have one more spot to clear up in order to use all my picks.

This is the action that got done – imagine all the action that happened without reaching any kind of completion. And this is the offseason! Remember, you can always find rules to use to start your own keeper league by visiting here .