The greatest player in the history of fantasy hockey turns 50 today. To celebrate the Great One's birthday, I have compiled a list of the 11 best fantasy skaters that Wayne Gretzky either made – or made better – just from his presence in the lineup.

Wayne Gretzky was so good in his day, that many pools had a special "no drafting Gretzky" rule. Others had a "Wayne Gretzky goals" player and a "Wayne Gretzky assists" player – you could draft one or the other. When a player reaches 196 points – and that's his fifth-best season – then you know he's in a class of his own.

The strategy of choosing teammates in fantasy leagues is still used to this day. Any forward playing for Pittsburgh or Washington is coveted in fantasy circles, particularly keeper leagues, because their point totals at the end of the season will be 10 percent higher than it otherwise would be playing with someone other than Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin or Alex Ovechkin. And when these three players reach their peak, they could potentially bump up the points of their linemates by 50 percent or more.

The Great One did that for a good 15 years of his career. Having been in a keeper league for 21 years, I am all too familiar with the ups and downs of the fantasy values of Gretzky's linemates/teammates. Here is my take on his greatest fantasy impacts:

11. Blair MacDonald – In Edmonton's first year in the NHL, MacDonald had 94 points. It was also MacDonald's and Gretzky's first year. The next season, MacDonald had 57 points in 63 games, and was traded to Vancouver towards the deadline. He never got to 34 points again, as injuries and lack of Gretzky combined to put an end to that.

10. Craig Simpson – A 50-point youngster for the Penguins, Simpson had his best season in 1987-88 when he was dealt to Edmonton and placed on a line with the Great One and Jari Kurri. He never again reached 90 points, as Gretzky was traded the following summer. But a young and impressionable Darryl Dobbs stupidly acquired him after he managed 76 points in 1988-89 without the Great One. His best season after that was 61 points. The prestige of acquiring a 90-point player still makes a player attractive in fantasy hockey three years later.

Simpson should never have held such value. Just ask Jonathan Cheechoo.

9. Glen Anderson – Although Anderson rarely played with Gretzky, he was possibly the best second-line player in NHL history. A first-line talent, Anderson faced weaker defences because the opposition focused on Gretzky/Kurri. That left Anderson and Mark Messier to pose an unprecedented secondary threat. Anderson had 99 points or more on four different occasions, but his best season after Gretzky left was just 72 points.

8. Charlie Huddy – Let's face it. Huddy would be a Roman Hamrlik at best without Gretzky. Instead, this 35-point-type of defenseman enjoyed seasons of 57, 51, 42 and 41 (twice). After Gretzky went to Los Angeles, Huddy had one more 44 point season and then never saw 30 again.

7. Jari Kurri – It seems wrong to put one of the greatest goal-scorers of NHL history here, and Gretzky didn't exactly "make" Kurri. But Kurri was a 35- or 40-goal scorer who stayed relatively healthy and as such would have probably reached 400 career goals. Gretzky made that total 601, and he also helped Kurri score 71 goals in 73 games (1984-85) and 68 goals a year later. Kurri had a 44-goal season after Gretzky left, but after that his best was 33. No other linemate clicked as well as Kurri did and Kurri is no doubt responsible for 10 or 20 of Gretzky's assists each season that he otherwise may not have had. But Gretzky's impact on Kurri was much stronger than Kurri's impact on Gretzky. Kurri was coveted in fantasy hockey the way Steven Stamkos is coveted today. But without the Great One, Kurri's appeal would have been limited to that of a Jeff Carter. In other words, Gretzky made his fantasy value jump from "Carter" to "Stamkos".

6. Tony Granato – See Kunitz, Chris. Granato was a 50-point player who could maybe pop up to 60 once in awhile. Playing with Gretzky he had seasons of 64 (in 68 games), 68 and 82 before injuries derailed his production. This is what we all hope to see from Kunitz, or from the next Kunitz, when Crosby really gets rolling in a couple of years.

5. Mike Krushelnyski – Similar to Granato, Krushelnyski was a 50-point player who popped to 88 points playing with Gretzky. He was later replaced by Simpson and/or Esa Tikkanen – and it showed when his numbers dropped back down to the 50-point range. He went with Gretzky to Los Angeles and enjoyed one more 62-point campaign, again seeing some time on a line with the Great One.

4. Bernie Nicholls – Let's see, his best season pre-Gretz was 100 points. Then he played with Gretzky for one-and-a-half seasons and tallied 225 points in 126 games before being traded to New York. The best he did after that was 73 points in a campaign. Gee, what influenced that?

3. Tomas Sandstrom – Acquired, along with Granato, in the Nicholls trade. Sandstrom was more talented than Granato and was probably a 70-point player without Gretzky. In fact, he had 88 points in a season once before the Great One. He was a huge Band-Aid Boy and only injuries prevented him from having three 100-point seasons. In 235 games with Gretzky, Sandstrom had 254 points.

2. Esa Tikkanen - Picture Sean Avery getting 75 points per season. That's what you have here. An agitator who misses a dozen games per season due to injury, with the talent to put up 40 points. Yet, on Gretzky's line, Tikkanen tallied seasons of 78 and 74. That was enough for him to keep his spot on the first line after Gretzky went to L.A., allowing him to post another 78-point season and later enjoy two more seasons of 60-plus.

1. Paul Coffey – Considered by many to be the second best offensive defenseman in NHL history to Bobby Orr and I don't dispute that. But without Gretzky, would Coffey have reached 120 points three times? Even if he managed 90 points in each of those seasons, he would still go down in history as the second best offensive defenseman in NHL history. It says here that Gretzky helped him with – at least – the other 30 to 40 points during those impressive campaigns (his career high was 138 points in 85-86, and an astonishing 48 goals). Later on, Mario Lemieux helped him get back over the 100-point mark on two occasions. Imagine Mike Green or Kris Letang getting to 100 points? Would that be based on their own talent, or would that be with a little help with some superstars?