This week we'll take a break from the team-by-team off-season look . It only makes sense, since the NHL Entry Draft is upon us. We'll also take a break in early July to discuss the impact of the July 1 free agent frenzy.

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Goaltenders and defensemen generally take a long time to develop. Occasionally defensemen are brought into the NHL at the age of 18, but by the time they start producing fantasy-worthy numbers they are well into their 20s. Chris Pronger was 27 before busting out, and Jay

Bouwmeester and M-A Vlasic still haven't come into their own. Dion Phaneuf – he's the exception to the rule. There are no Phaneufs in this draft.

For the record, however, I will give you the order of defensemen I would pick in my keeper league: Drew Doughty, Alex Pietrangelo, Michael Del Zotto, Zach Bogosian, Colby Robak, Erik Karlsson and Aaron Ness.

Because forwards tend to make an impact quicker, we will look at them more in-depth. Here are the top '08 eligible forwards to consider in your keeper league (in order of my preference):

Steven Stamkos: Of course! In Tampa Bay he will step right onto the second line in October and you can look for him to post Patrick Kane-like numbers as a rookie. His long-term upside is in the 90s, just like Kane.

Nikita Filatov: Another obvious one. Don't be fooled by his nationality, he will play in the NHL whether there is a transfer agreement or not. He will debut as early as 2008-09 and probably no later than 2009-10. His upside may be higher than Stamkos's, but his downside is lower – so his range is less established. If his range were more of a certainty, he would be picked ahead of Stamkos. There is talk of him going second overall, but the smart money is on the Islanders nabbing him at No. 5. He can slide right into that lineup and become a star.

Mikkel Boedker: If you think Lars Eller (St. Louis) is a good prospect to own – this one is better. He's fast, works hard, and has good hands. He should wind up being a 70-point player and could be a 50-point rookie in 2009-10. The Leafs are a good fit here, with the seventh overall pick.

Cody Hodgson: A hardworking leader with high-end hockey sense, you're probably not going to get closer to a Mike Richards in this draft than Hodgson. Richards came into his own far earlier than I (or anyone, for that matter) expected and if Hodgson were to do the same you probably should not expect it for four or five years.

Colin Wilson: A two-way leader with good vision, Wilson should be ready for the show a lot sooner than the other draftees. His upside is mid-60s, but the fact you don't have to wait as long for him makes him attractive in keeper leagues.

Mattias Tedenby: The fastest player in the draft hands down, Tedenby also has the hands and reflexes to keep up with his wheels. Players like that create a lot of offensive chances and that's good enough for me.

Zac Dalpe: Yes, he spent some time playing in Stratford – my hometown – for the Cullitons, so there may be a bias here, but Dalpe has a lot of potential. With some added bulk to go with his hands and hockey sense and he could be a 30-goal scorer in the NHL in a few years.

Jordan Eberle: Only Stamkos and Filatov have better shots in this draft. If you need goals in your league, Eberle should be your man.

Zach Boychuk: He has well-rounded offensive skills and I always have a soft spot for the little guy. You'll be waiting a few years on this one, though.

Jared Staal: Can a last name be a reason to pick a guy? Apparently so. Name one Staal who has failed in the NHL. Give up? Then Jared doesn't seem like such a big risk now, does he?

Kirill Petrov: He's big and skilled and has high-end offensive potential (think 75 points or more). The lack of a transfer agreement could push him to the fourth round, but if he turns into a star in Russia next season, the NHL team that picks him won't care about that. They'll get him over here any way they can.