Keeper league junkies do not have a lot of things to look forward to in the summer and are often forced to content themselves with beefing up their teams via trades in order to get their fantasy hockey fix. However, there are a couple of summer dates that are the exception. On July 1, unrestricted free agency opens. The other date, of course, is Jun 22-23. The NHL entry draft. Here are the guys that are prominent on my radar and you should be quick to stick them on yours.

**10. James van Riemsdyk, Philadelphia.** Lots of skill and even more power. By the time the second overall pick is finished growing, he'll be 6'3, 235 at the very least. GM Paul Holmgren said that he reminds him of a young John Leclair. While I don't see that kind of offense out of him, I do see 80-point seasons in his future. He is also one of the more certain NHLers in the draft. The only drawback from a fantasy perspective is that it will likely be five years or more before he starting putting up fantasy-worthy points at the NHL level.

**9. Lars Eller, St. Louis.** Besides Patrick Kane and, at times, Alexei Cherepanov, Eller is possibly the most skilled, most intelligent player in the draft in terms of offense. The 13th overall pick is still a little raw, as he has yet to play against men. Had he proven himself against stiffer competition, he would have been drafted higher. He is much closer than van Riemsdyk from contributing fantasy-worthy points, but is less of a certainty to become an NHLer. In the end, he squeaks ahead and into ninth.

**8.  Maxim Mayorov, Columbus.** A steal at 94 – NHL teams were far too chicken to draft Russian players this year – Columbus has been through the headache before and are certainly capable of bringing this highly talented winger to the NHL in a couple of years. He should have gone top 20. More talented than most in the draft, Mayorov also boasts a projectable frame and a ton of speed. He has wrist shot worthy of 40 goals some day.

**7. Sam Gagner, Edmonton.** The sixth overall pick is a safe one. If there is one thing Gagner is great at, it is rising above expectations. He's highly intelligent, a dazzling playmaker and he can also shoot the puck. What's more – hockey is in his genes. He'll be more of a fantasy asset than father Dave, whose career high in the NHL was 82 points in 1991.

**6. Zach Hamill, Boston.** If he better understood the defensive side of the game, Hamill would have been a top five pick. As it was, he was chosen eighth – which was higher than he was pegged. He has all the tools to be a first or second-line center and the wait for him will not be all that long. He is the one player – other than the obvious ones – who could surprise in training camp as early as this year. I liken him to Patrice Bergeron, fantasy-wise.

**5. Jakub Voracek, Columbus.** It pains fantasy junkies to see the Blue Jackets land two guys in my top 10 in this year's draft, given how draft picks have performed for Columbus up until now (even Rick Nash has never had a 58-point season). However, Mayorov was a steal and Voracek was the right pick at seven. He is not that far from the NHL and his talent is his all-around game. His offense, defense and physicality are all high-end. He would have been the first overall pick hands down, if he played the game he can play every time he stepped onto the ice. Consistency is his drawback. He could produce in the mid- to late-80s one day.

**4. Kyle Turris, Phoenix.** The ultimate wildcard of this draft. He could be a 70-point player one day, or he could be a 100-point player one day. The jury is out, until we see him play some real competition. He makes a great high risk/high reward selection in your keeper league, but you won't know what you have for a few years.

**3. Angelo Esposito, Pittsburgh**. On any other team, the highly-talented pivot would have been hard-pressed to make this list, but hey – it's Pittsburgh we're talking about. He may need to learn the game on the wing. If he does, he could wind up as a mainstay with any of the Penguins' three big pivots as early as 2008-09. If that happens, you can add about 25 points to his upside.

**2. Alexei Cherepanov, NY Rangers.** If you watched the World Juniors, you would swear that he would be a 100-point player in the NHL. However, that was apparently a one-off. He's good, but not that good. He has the desire and the hunger, but not the consistency. He might be the

closest to playing in the NHL out of all the prospects, however he has promised Omsk of the RSL one more season. An upside of 90 points is possible, but producing in the 80s is more likely. I can see 60 or 65 in his rookie year. He broke Pavel Bure's goals-by-a-rookie record in the RSL last year.

**1. Patrick Kane, Chicago.** Of course. He is the greatest talent in the draft, but he may have slipped to third on this list given the teams that selected Cherepanov and Esposito. What kept him at No.1 is the fact that GM Dale Tallon is clearly hoping that he can make the team this fall. Small players generally take a few extra years to get into the show, but there have been exceptions. The Blackhawks will give Kane every opportunity to make the squad. Helping your fantasy team immediately is always a bonus.