Several DobberHockey writers/personalities contributed some thoughts/critiques on the fantasy magazines that are available on newsstands. I have organized their points and figured that these thoughts, tips and pointers on which magazines to buy would be helpful to the fantasy hockey buff.

*McKeen's and Hockey: The Magazine reviews have been added at the end of the piece.

(First off, to order Dobber's Fantasy Guide, CLICK HERE)

To begin, we will start with an introduction by Jim Gunther. Jim pens "Sticks and Stones" every Thursday. This is taken directly from his email response to my request.

"Dobber,
I have not purchased any other pool guide because of lack of credibility. This site (DobberHockey.com) is updated everyday and your knowledge is evident. Your personal interaction is also key. Right now, there are not many hockey preview/pool guides available in the United States. The NFL and fantasy football is huge and hockey takes a backseat.

The hockey pool guides are really out of date. For example The Hockey News came out and they still have Matt Cullen listed as a Ranger. That happened so long ago you would think they would have more updated news. That's the problem with all of these magazines - they need info early to get it all published.

The Dobber guide is 1) out early and is accurate 2) an updated pdf of your guide is emailed free as the season nears so you miss nothing 3) you offer midseason guides, playoff info, etc and other great info that the big publications tend not to offer 4) you offer credibility (you write for many well known sources and have proven success against other well known fantasy personalities)"

Now, onto the guides. J Status (aka "Project Returns" in the forum) and Russ Miller, who pens "Eastern Edge" every Friday, take a look at:

The Hockey News Ultimate Fantasy Guide 2007-08

Layout Design
J Status:

THN offers a well-organized, quick-reference guide. Player projections are alphabetized and separated into skaters and goalies. These projections provide strong visuals with the player name, headshot, point projection and team logo all displayed prominently. Lots of white space and photos make the guide an enjoyable read.

If in a live draft, the Ultimate Fantasy Guide would be a great asset for someone who came unprepared, but still wanted to make smart choices. The arrangement and clean design makes it very easy to decide between two or three similar players quickly. Many know that rushed feeling when the clock is ticking. The THN guide can be a tool to get you through those moments with ease.

The team section also is alphabetized, providing a quick visual point projection chart for the top scorers on each team, as well as depth charts and top five prospect lists. There also are separate, concise, pages on pending UFAs, sleepers and rookies for fast access. All of these aspects make for an easy-to-navigate fantasy source. This is definitely a strong area for the magazine.
Stars: *****

Russ Miller adds:

First impressions of this hockey pool magazine are good. The layout works well. Visually, there are colour pictures throughout the magazine. Head shots for all players in the alphabetical listings don't really help you decide which player to take, but I have to admit that it was kind of fun to see a goofy mug shot when looking up a player. There is minimal advertising and once you know where the important bits are, you can access them reasonably fast.

The articles were generally informative and interesting to read. The Fab Freshmen, 2008 Free Agents, Buyer Beware and the Risers and Decliners articles all provided decent fantasy information.

I found it hilarious that the dobber hockey ad follows an article about how interesting it would be if an NHL team hired a fantasy league GM to run their team. Dobber for GM!

General Content

J Status:

Because THN is so visually appealing and concise, the content suffers. If a magazine uses a lot of white space and pictures, it is more legible, but becomes difficult to pack with additional information. Hardcore fantasy junkies in very deep leagues would probably prefer less emphasis on design and more substance. It is a delicate balance.

Articles are generally fantasy relevant as well. One piece floats the possibility of a dominant Crosby someday having his assists and goals split, ala Gretzky in the 80s. Another article discusses whether or not a fantasy GM would make a good NHL GM. There are other short articles to go with the UFA, rookie, and sleeper sections. Each section comes with a ranking to make for easy evaluation if you are not one to want to read the articles. The only article that seemed to stray from fantasy relevance was about the resurgence of Martin St. Louis last season. Although entertaining, many fantasy players would probably prefer the space be spent on greater depth in projections, rookies or sleepers.

Overall, the articles don’t really steal a lot of the magazine space. If you want a culprit, it would

be the visual elements taking up the most area. THN still does a good job of keeping the guide focused on rankings, projections, skinnies and statistics. The rankings in each statistical category from last year are useful. However, the eight pages donated to team by team statistics lists could probably be used for something more pertinent.

The player projections are very nice. They provide almost everything you need on a player. Each profile includes three-year history, career stats, team, point projection, skinny, salary, durability, and the vital stats like age, position etc. This is a superb projection section as it is set up now. You could even build an entire team based on who has the goofiest headshots! For that team, I would take Labarbera and Leclaire as my tenders!

Although it's great, the projection section doesn't cover enough of the depth and long-term players you may want information on in deeper leagues. It also would be nice if they could somehow show long-term potential and a percentage likelihood of achieving those numbers, like Dobber has been known to do.

In general, Dobber's 2007/08 Pool Guide provides deeper, more significant fantasy content in 62 pages than THN does in 188. Still, if you prefer more visuals and articles, THN may be something for you. Those things won't really help you win your league, but I guess it may be important to some readers. It is really just a matter of preference. THN provides good content… just not nearly as much of it.
Stars: ****

Russ Miller adds:

On Florida's team write up, they totally ignored Cory Murphy's addition for the first unit power play. No mention of him, even though he is written up as a power play specialist on virtually every website on the internet. The magazine lists him as the #5 defenseman, but fails to mention him anywhere else. He is potentially their power play quarterback. That's significant and needed to be mentioned.

On several teams, the depth/line charts appear to be out of order and at times conflicts with the players point projections.

Svatos is listed as playing right wing on Colorado's top line and first power play unit, but they predict he'll get 39 points. Hejduk is projected as third line right wing and 66 points, but not on the first power play unit.

Matt Carle is not listed as being on the first power play unit for the Sharks. They predict that this year Carle will get 48 points, the most of any Sharks defenseman. He can't do that without significant power play time. Last year Carle had the most power play points of any Sharks defensemen and fourth most overall on the team.

Prospects
J Status:

The cover provides all you need to know about this area. It advertises offering the "10 Rookies to Grab." This just isn't a strong area for the THN guide. They provide you with a solitary page article and ranking on the rookies. These are essentially the "no brainers" that we have all heard about.

Each team page also provides a top five prospect ranking, but instead of showing potential upside, they only show what they have done in their past season. Really, this doesn't help you a lot considering all the different leagues there are and the variables that go into a player's stat line. They need a written skinny for each of these prospects or at least just upside statistics. It would be better if they took one more page and put all the top five prospects of the teams into a top 100, 50, or even top 25 list. Dobber does it. Is that too much to ask?

They also don't have an article and ranking on the 2007 draft players. They should. Even if they do have an entire magazine just dedicated to the draft or prospects, the Ultimate Fantasy Guide, should include a couple lists as well. This is relevant information for many pools. THN has just created a guide for the short term. The future has been neglected.

Stars: *

Russ Miller adds:

The prospects listed on the team pages almost useless from a fantasy pool perspective. There were no write ups or projections as to how long it might be before the prospect might make the NHL.

Sleepers
J Status:

"The Contrarian Pick" **(Disclosure: J Status may not have caught this, but this article was written by Dobber)** article is the THN equivalent to sleeper discussion and rankings. This is the last page of the magazine. Sleepers deserve more respect! They can

make or break your fantasy draft! This similar area is in the same depravity as the prospects. Sleeper info can be found on this one page and scattered throughout the projections in individual profiles. Besides the one page article, you would essentially have to read through the whole projection section and make your own. Not to mention, the projections aren't nearly deep enough to get all the sleepers you should be aware of anyway. Sleepers/prospects like Francois Bouchard and Bryan Little are nowhere to be found in the rookie or sleeper discussion. They don't even have projection profiles. It would be nice if they had a section on "if they make the team" players. Just like prospects, the lack of sleeper information is sinking the THN ship.

Stars: *

Player Profiles
Russ Miller:

The alphabetical order to the player profiles makes it easy to navigate. The statistics listed there are alright, but it would be helpful if all the key statistics were found on these pages. That way, if I need to look up a player quickly at one of my drafts, I can find all the relevant info in one place. Being able to see the last three years is excellent along with career NHL totals, age and height/weight listings.

Overall, 525 player points projections are great, as is separating projected defense scoring.

Good work on the goalie projections pages. I especially like that they project not only wins, but goals against average, save percentage and shutouts. One statistic that was omitted from this section was minutes played.

The goalie projections are solid, with all the right categories listed. Sixty goalies are deep enough for most pools, but it will not be enough to satisfy the hard core poolie.

Bang for your Buck
J Status:

This magazine does a good job of giving you quality information and a decent amount of it, in a presentable package. The newsstand price is listed at $7.99 US and you do get your money's worth.

As long as you know you are essentially getting a medium depth, one-year league magazine, I think THN delivers.
Stars: ***

Overall
J Status:

This magazine is really not ideal for most keeper, dynasty, or very deep leagues. It just does not delve enough into the future of players and depth of organizations. The projections only go to about 500 players, so this may not provide the depth of knowledge some leagues demand. Still, I feel the magazine would be sufficient for many leagues and is beyond adequate for casual or beginning players.
It's a pleasant guide to read. I enjoy the layout of the magazine, and feel that alone makes it a worthy addition. It is a useful tool when making decisions quickly at the beginning and middle of your draft. Just know what you are buying. Remember the guide's limitations with depth. Determine your needs in the type of leagues you participate in. Also, remember that THN has one of the earlier releases for its guide, so some information, like the Penner nabbing, may not be up to date.

Overall, if you would like a traditional magazine guide to supplement your Dobber guides, I

definitely think The Hockey News Ultimate Fantasy Guide 2007-08 is a solid option.

Stars: ***

Russ Miller adds:

The Hockey News Ultimate Pool Guide is packed with lots of useful information, but narrowly misses the mark in some key areas for keeper fantasy pools. If you're looking for information on deep sleepers or detailed rookie prospects, you should look elsewhere.

It's a good read for the hockey fan and casual poolie who's into one-year only pools. The hard core hockey pool enthusiast looking for insight beyond the coming season will likely be disappointed.

Next, J Status takes a look at the SCORE Hockey Forecaster…

The Score Sports Forecaster 2007-08 NHL Preview
By J Status

This magazine is really a hybrid of fantasy prediction and general NHL preview. As a result, the information isn't always as fantasy targeted, as you may find in other mags. Still, the information is quality, packed in, and may be organized in a style you find helpful.

Layout Design

The Score is a guide within a guide. The majority of the first 40 pages of the magazine are dedicated to fantasy only sections. The Score refers to most of this as THE EDGE (Disclosure: J Status did not know this, but Dobber penned much of this section, as well as a decent portion of this magazine). This is followed by a nice Young Guns area and a UFA section.

Unfortunately, the layout doesn't make for a quick-reference guide. It doesn't provide a large, alphabetized player projections section. Often times fantasy players have heard the name but might not know the team they play for or any of their stats. In this case it might be difficult to find the player quickly in a draft. However, a player index in the back does help.

Also, it would be nice if the player info were located in one spot. This magazine provides their situational information (ex. rising star) in the fantasy section and their projection and rank in a separate list within the section. Meanwhile, their vital stats (age, height, weight), one-year retrospective, career trend and deeper skinny are all hidden far away in the back of the magazine under their team's section. This is where the ease of use comes up short compared to a layout like THN provides. The information is there, it just isn't all in one place. In a draft, that means extra time and effort.

Stars: ***

General Content

The Score does a good job of providing some of the nice visuals you expect from a magazine while not allowing the content to suffer significantly. As mentioned, the front portion of the magazine is packed with fantasy classification and rankings while the back provides the team-by-team analysis. The team sections are the only portions that really provide anything resembling articles. To many poolies, this is a great thing. The magazine doesn't waste space with articles dwelling on the past and telling you how good Sidney Crosby is. Still, sometimes articles are nice if they are fantasy relevant. If you like that, this isn't your magazine.

The Calder section provides a top 25 candidate ranking as well as the top forecasts for rookies this year at forward, defense, and goaltender. The magazine then goes into prospects with ETAs of late 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-2010. The categories are great for determining your risk and long-term/short-term expectations with each player.

On the downside, 140 pages of this magazine are dedicated to statistics and team evaluations. This is good for the NHL yearbook and preview aspect, but isn't as pertinent to fantasy. The team sections do provide a skinny for each roster player. They also include a small fantasy corner and future player's skinny section, which is nice. The end of the magazine also provides the top 500 players forecasts, although this can be obtained online for free.

Stars: ****

Prospects and Sleepers

For a newsstand source, The Score does a very good job with these two areas. As mentioned, each positional section provides several sleepers to keep in mind under “Sleeper City.” Each has their own skinny and it makes it very easy to find a dark horse in the position you need.

The prospects section is even more impressive. The top 25 Calder candidates is great. Then, The Score goes beyond that and looks at prospects for the next three years. An all-rookie team and all-prospect team listing is icing on the cake.

Finally, even the team sections do well in this area. They provide not only a skinny for each future player, but also an assortment of breaking through, rising star, rookie to watch, sleeper, super sleeper, and pick for the future players to keep in mind in the fantasy corner. Unfortunately, the Score does stay away from long-term upside projections. That is something truly great about Dobber’s guides, which other sources often avoid. The Score could also go a little deeper into the prospect realm, but they still do a good job on it.

Stars: ****

Bang for your Buck

This magazine is a bit of a Jekyll and Hyde. The first 42 pages, where THE EDGE fantasy sections reside, is all glossy, magazine-quality paper. This is also where 15 of the 17 pages of ads are located… of course! The last 146 pages are the cheaper stuff. This probably doesn’t matter to most readers, but still you aren’t getting the material quality you do from a mag like THN. The newsstand price is listed at $9.99 CDN.

Stars: ** *

Overall

This is a quality hockey magazine. If you are looking for a magazine that combines an NHL preview with a fantasy guide, this may be the best. The Score does a good job of balancing both, even though you pay a little extra versus THN. Still, I have The Score sneaking just ahead of The Hockey News Ultimate Fantasy Guide in my rankings. The Score isn't as user-friendly and doesn't have much for fantasy articles, but provides much more depth in prospects and sleepers.
Stars: ****

Next up – the Faceoff Yearbook…again by J Status

NHL Faceoff 2008 Yearbook
By J Status

This is NOT the right guide for you as a fantasy player. This is good only if you want a history lesson or are a 10-year old and in your first fantasy pool. Do not be deceived! Here is why!

Layout Design

There isn't much to critique here, because they didn't even try to fit much fantasy information in while attempting to create a visually appealing, easy-to-use layout. It is all articles, ads and big

goofy pictures.

Stars: **

General Content

The content is awful for fantasy. The front cover advertises providing “Full Fantasy Picks.” I don’t know what they meant by full, but perhaps they just meant fool! You’d be a fool to use this as your fantasy guide. Not only does it only list the top 50 players in fantasy, which you should already know anyway, but it does it poorly. NHL Faceoff thinks Lecavalier is the second best fantasy player in the league this year. That is ballsy, but worse, they think Jagr is still up at No.3. You have to take Heatley or Ovechkin ahead of him, in my opinion. They also think Thornton is only the seventh best fantasy player and Forsberg is still No.37!!! Maybe in a Band-Aid boys hall of fame league!

Besides the extremely shallow, questionable info, the NHL Faceoff 2008 Yearbook is all articles. If you want to learn about “The Art of the Mask,” buy this magazine. If you want to learn how hockey FIGURINES are doing on the collectibles market, BUY THIS MAGAZINE!

Stars: *

Prospects and Sleepers

To my surprise, this magazine actually did discuss guys to breakout in 2007-08. Too bad there were only five of them. To make things worse, they list Scottie Upshall right after Radulov in this list. Then they go on to list O'Sullivan several spots behind Upshall. Upshall doesn't even have the upside to be in there, in my opinion!

The magazine also talks about guys like Vanek and Michalek breaking out… last year!!!

Stars: *

Bang for your Buck

The newsstand price is $9.99 US. The fantasy value is $0.00.

Stars: *

Overall
Do not buy this magazine if you are in a hockey pool with anyone who has ever played fantasy before. Maybe, maybe buy it if you have never watched a NHL game or were in a remote area of Africa last year. In all seriousness though, some may like to read the articles just for fun.

Stars: *

Now, Doran Libin takes over. You may know him as big-dl in the forum.

Hockey: The Magazine
By Doran Libin

Layout and Design:

This is the Jessica Alba (insert your choice of hotty here) of fantasy hockey magazines. It's very glossy and shiny with thick pages. Lots of pictures, and very easy to read. Articles at the front, team section in the middle and player-by-player predictions at the end divided into forward, defense and goalie. At the very back is a large comprehensive stats section from last year and a bit from the year before. Every thing here is well-organized and easy to find, theoretically useful in a draft.

Stars: *****

Content:

This is why this magazine is theoretically useful in a draft. I assume everyone reading this has Internet access, so you've seen the clip of Miss Teen South Carolina. Well this is her fantasy hockey magazine equivalent. The articles are pretty much useless, unless you haven't figured out that Sidney Crosby is good. Anyone here still in the dark on that one? Some of the projections seem way off, I thought 70 for Stafford was 15-20 high and 65 for Gomez was 15-20 low. They seemed to go more conservative on a lot of players this year where as last year they were bullish on almost everybody. There's also very little in the way of useful information in the team section. All in all this a bottom of the barrel magazine but it doesn't seem to be as off as it was last year.

Stars: 0

Prospects:

Very little to comment on; Top 10 lists in the team section, with no upsides. The projections for players such as Toews, Backstrom, the Johnsons and Mueller seemed really conservative…Toews was the highest at 46 followed by Hlinka at 41 and JJ isn't even in the book.

Stars: 0

Sleepers:

Non-existent. There's no information as to which players may break out or who could have an unexpectedly big season.

Stars: 0

Player Profiles:

Three-year history for each player, with career totals and a projection for this year and arrows indicating a trend just in case you don't know that a player who's last three years have gone 30, 50, 70 is trending upwards.

Stars: ** (they exist, there's lots of them and enough of them seem within reason)

Overall:

"I feel pretty, oh so pretty, I feel pretty..." That's the best way I can think to describe this magazine. It looks nice and that's about you're getting here. This is the hot girl who struggles to become a medical assistant at a technical school, two complete sentences is a stretch.

Stars: *

The Big D-L continues with McKeen's...

McKeen's

By Doran Libin

Layout and Design:

Black and white, no color (obviously), it's not the prettiest fantasy hockey magazine out there. Gets right to the point, not a lot of fluff pieces. Any articles, if you can call them that, are fantasy relevant, namely a list of Calder candidates, a larger, more comprehensive list of prospects, and a short article on how to build a contender. There's a Top 475 projected scorers as well as goalie projections at the back, with a very brief section containing last year's stats. The scoring leaders list also divided up into smaller lists for rookie, defense and forward, which make for an easy ranking of skaters within their position. The meat of the magazine is the team section, which contains all the individual player projections and write-ups.

Stars: ***1/2

Content:

The only set of player projections, other than the 475 projects scoring list, is contained within each team's write-up. The team sections have both in depth skater projections as well as simply a list of the top projected scorers for each team. The write up accompanying each player is useful but does not provide the fantasy relevant information one might hope for. McKeen's also includes the most comprehensive prospect write-ups available in any of the fantasy hockey magazines (those being reviewed that is, so not including Dobber). The prospect write-ups include a rating of the prospects value and potential upside as well as a write-up, which generally includes the prospects likely future role. Where McKeen's really lacks is in the lack of projections for goalies. There's a nice little write-up but they've completely avoided the issue altogether.

Stars: ** (They avoid projecting for an entire position)

Prospects:

There's a list right up front of most relevant prospects for this year as well as brief write-ups within the list of Calder Trophy candidates. This focus on prospects is furthered within the team sections where between four and seven prospects receive more in depth write-ups along with rankings. This is what the magazine does best - it puts a large focus on prospects. This is also what makes McKeen's a fantasy relevant source for poolies.

Stars: *****

Sleepers:

McKeen's looks at sleepers in a very brief fashion, for example it touches on Cory Murphy in the Players to Watch section of the Florida Panthers. However, the Players to Watch section isn't simply sleepers since Jay Bouwmeester and Nathan Horton are also listed there. In short, McKeen's avoids sleepers almost as well as it avoids stepping out on a limb on goalie projections.

Stars: **

Player Profiles:

I touched on this earlier, there's brief write-up on each player in the team section. A lot of the write-ups are pretty pedantic but they do provide information about players you may not otherwise know all that much about. It will give you insights on the skills that players possess but not a lot on their potential upside.

Stars: ***

General:

The skater projections usually more or less hit the mark although they always seem to be a little off. I'm not going to give specific cause they're all relatively close there's just a feeling some of their predictions give me, this causes me to give them a little less credence. This magazine provides two out of the three staples; skater projections and profiles and prospect profiles. The lack of goalies projections is troubling in that it leaves out a major part of most pools.

Stars: ***

(I left it to the writers to try not to be biased, but when the DobberHockey Pool Guide is the best...it's the best. To order Dobber's Fantasy Guide, CLICK HERE)