Another day, another debate. Which goalie should to start and why? This is the main question that plagues you, and for good reason, for there are so few guarantees when it comes to who will get the call on any given night. Even a number of NHL coaches are making questionable decisions in net, ultimately affecting every single fantasy team in some way or another. Therefore, it's time for a lesson in how decisions can negatively and positively affect a team.

I decided to focus my energy on the Avalanche and the Panthers and their goaltending over the course of a week. Part of this was because they were both 10th place in their respective conferences and also because both teams played each other yesterday afternoon, making it a great opportunity to watch what happens when worlds collide.

It begins with Andrew Raycroft's stellar performance in a 3-2 win against Detroit last Monday. The fact he even got the start was surprising, especially since Peter Budaj had started 22 of the last 25 games. Sure enough, Detroit had read the scouting report on Raycroft (high glove side) and they went after him hard in the first period.

Well, Raycroft's glove ended up being a major factor in Colorado winning the game and this proved to me a couple of things. One, Jeff Hackett's coaching wizardry seems to be continuing well into his second season. Secondly, Raycroft stays as cool as the other side of the pillow in one-goal games. And considering Colorado is tied with the most one-goal games in the league at 20, playing with a lead is of utmost importance to the Avalanche making the playoffs.

Now the decision to go back to Budaj after Raycroft's win in Detroit was an easy one for Tony Granato to make, mainly because it was a back-to-back situation. But Budaj struggled in his previous game in a 3-4 loss to Chicago, so the pressure was on him to perform well in Philadelphia and follow up Raycroft's big performance. But Budaj was a huge step behind, allowing five goals on 24 shots in a 5-2 loss. His confidence was draining with every Flyers goal.

The next game for Colorado was in Tampa Bay and Raycroft was rewarded for his win in Detroit with another start. He put up a second straight strong performance with 37 saves on 38 shots and capped a 2-1 shootout win with a huge glove save on Martin St. Louis. Two big wins for Raycroft in two games, two tough losses for Budaj in two games. Despite all that had transpired, Granato still chose to go back with Budaj on Sunday against Florida.

On the surface it seemed like a simple assertion that Budaj is the undisputed #1 in Colorado. But the major gaffe was that Raycroft, who played better in each game, was not rewarded with a third start. Granato essentially rolled the dice again and chose to start Budaj over Raycroft, the one that was coming off two very strong games.

Not lost in all of this of course are the Panthers. Craig Anderson had started eight out of the last 10 games until he allowed five goals on 30 shots against Vancouver in a 5-3 loss. Regardless, many still believe he had already taken over the starting job, mainly because he was so proficient when he faced more than 40 shots. Tomas Vokoun had played strong in their previous game, however, making 35 saves in a 3-2 win over the Flames.

Then after Anderson had his struggles in the loss to Vancouver, it was Vokoun who, like Raycroft, got the next start in Carolina. Again he made 35 saves and allowed two goals, but this time it was a losing effort. That didn't have any impact on how well he played, however, as Vokoun continued to build on his previous game.

So exactly like Colorado had done, Anderson struggled in two consecutive starts, while Vokoun played strong in his two latest starts leading up to Sunday. The big difference came when Vokoun was rewarded with a third start. So instead of going back to Anderson just because he may be touted the #1, Florida went with the hot hand.

Lo and behold the two teams collided on Sunday and it resulted in a 3-0 shutout victory for Vokoun. And therein was the difference in yesterday's game. Florida took advantage of a goalie that played well in his previous two games. Colorado felt that two great games by Raycroft still didn't deserve a third start.

When a goalie is obviously playing extremely well, there is no reason to not feed off of it, especially when the other goalie is struggling. There is no reason to start Budaj when he is

already on pace to start 69 games over the season, which happens to be a franchise record. Granato should have rolled with Raycroft and let things happen naturally.

Now Budaj's struggles look even worse, as he's allowed 21 goals with a 1-5-1 record in his past seven road starts, while Raycroft loses an opportunity to string three strong performances together. Vokoun on the other hand gains confidence from the shutout while Anderson is pushed to work harder in practice in order to earn that next chance.

Flyers starter Marty Biron recovered from a nasty three-day bout with the flu, but that didn't automatically guarantee him the chance to start right away. Backup Antero Niittymaki put together his best performance of the season by making 47 saves against the Washington Capitals on Saturday, and was rewarded by getting the start less than 24 hours later against the Devils. The Flyers lost in a shootout, but Niittymaki still played extremely well in that game and still got the opportunity to do so, thanks to a head coach riding the hot goalie.

Simeon Varlamov should get more playing time in Washington. Steve Mason should keep getting the starts in Columbus and Vokoun should certainly play the next game for the Panthers. Whether or not this happens, well, that's up to the planets to decide. But the lesson is that even if a team has two starters or two backups and regardless of which one is the actual #1 guy, a successful coach and a successful fantasy manager will always ride the hot goalie.