What's better than watching seven days of balls-to-the-wall hockey between teams still relentlessly pursuing the Stanley Cup Playoffs? How about knowing each game is basically a war of trash-talking and attrition in your fantasy league finals, one that could end with you walking away cash money in hand and your opponent left with nothing more than a bloodied ego.

With intensity that mimics a real war, sacrificing the body on the ice has become an ideal cherished and incumbent in all players and goaltenders alike. Just look at Ian Laperriere last night – he had nothing to fight for and still blocked shots like a madman. Peter Budaj has been a scapegoat all season, yet still found a way to shut down the Sedin's.

It makes me realize that running on empty is not only a necessity for goalies on the playoff bubble teams, it's fully expected and virtually embraced. Playing desperately, with no regard to the well-being of the body is a vital part of the archetypical player. They will do anything to sacrifice the body, mind and soul to help the team make the playoffs.

That being said, I think the line has been crossed for a number of goalies that look to be lacking energy and focus right now. In a number of games last week, these goalies showed visible signs of being over-worked and worn down. It didn't bode well for some teams and it could seriously impact some playoff situations heading into the final week.

Sleepy Time

Evgeni Nabokov has only played 59 games this year, but after winning three straight he hit a

wall against Anaheim and allowed five goals on 28 shots…but he did get a break last night in the rematch. Roberto Luongo has only played in 51 games, but after winning two in a row he's lost three straight and allowed 14 goals against. But none was more frustrating than losing to the Avalanche, the spoilers that terrorized the Canucks once again thanks to Milan Hejduk.

Chris Mason played two back-to-back situations in a row (March 28-29 and April 1-2) and went 3-1 in that stretch. But after falling to Chicago 3-1 in a game where he showed visible signs of wearing down in the third period, he somehow pulled out a heroic 5-4 win against Detroit. That was by far the most strenuous game of his season, so it's no surprise he played like a wet noodle in the 5-4 OT loss to Dallas, only mustering enough energy to make 19 saves on 24 shots.

Miikka Kiprusoff is another goalie that has shown signs of being tired over the last week, but not from any real physical strain. He's played 73 games, which is sheer child's play to him. But since the recent shot totals against him have been 15, 17 and 19, it's safe to say that he's more mentally drained than physically speaking right now.

Goalies in situations like this NEED a break or two down the stretch. Sometimes it's not always physical strain, but the mental stress of having to focus and compete at such an intense level for so many minutes. Everyone knows that being physically tired will lead to being mentally tired, which leads to a lack of focus and ultimately a failure to compete at the highest level.

So when being tired is no longer an option and teams and fantasy managers are trying to squeeze or two more wins out of their goalies, you just have to know when to say enough is enough and look to the backup. That's why you desperately need two capable goalies, because they work hand-in-hand late in the season. That one game off for a starter can make all the difference in the world and it sure could help a lot of teams in search of a playoff spot.

Now two goalies that have shown no signs of wearing down whatsoever: Marc-Andre Fleury and Cam Ward. That Pens - Canes game on Saturday night was one of the best goaltending performances of the year. Both goalies were outstanding, but it was Ward that by far made the bigger saves against the better players in a more efficient manner.

Put all technique and positioning aside for Ward, because everyone knows he's quite proficient at the butterfly. His technique and rebound control is not the most impressive thing about him. It's the fact he has played so many games in a row but still has the energy and power to play this consistently.

It really seems like his confidence constantly injects more power and durability into his bloodstream. He's patient, stoic and reading plays perfectly and he's not getting tired at all. It kind of makes me think about which goalie will be hardcore dedicated to getting in better shape this summer - and how it will impact their value come August.

Sneaky, Sneaky!

As teams drop out of the playoff hunt, there are some goalies out there that will get some

sneaky starts and ultimately swindle a win or two from teams that have much more pressure on them to win. Budaj's game last night against Vancouver is a perfect example. So here's a list of teams that have sneaky goalies to watch:

Matt Climie made his first career NHL start and found a way to jab a dagger in the side of the Blues' playoff push after surviving a 5-4 win on Saturday. So even though he wasn't very good in his first game, Turco is on the shelf and the Stars out of the hunt, so he will get a chance to play in this final week. Dallas finishes the season with a back-to-back in Colorado and then Anaheim, so he's going to play one of those games.

Johan Hedberg won five straight games and four in a row since taking over for Kari Lehtonen but suffered a loss last night to Washington. Now Ondrej Pavelec was just re-called from the Chicago Wolves and Dan Turple was sent back down, so look for Pavelec to get a start or two, even though Atlanta doesn't have a back-to-back situation this week.

Mike McKenna and Kari Ramo become the next two obvious choices as sneaky goalies in the final week. Both of them are fighting for the backup role next year, so it looks like Ramo will play in the final home games next week against the Penguins and Capitals, while McKenna will start the last game of the season in Atlanta. McKenna against Atlanta is an obvious choice since Ramo got stuck with the Pens and Caps.

Jaroslav Halak is getting another start tonight against Ottawa tonight. Marc Denis was sent back down and Carey Price is back from the flu. But what if the sickness lingers and Halak gets another start this week? Yoink!

Al Montoya got his first career win in a shutout against the Colorado Avalanche. Not a difficult task. But he still might play another game this week. Colorado played Vancouver last night and Peter Budaj almost shut them out, and the Avs play them again this Saturday, so Budaj could roll off a few more wins before the season ends. Colorado hosts Dallas and St. Louis at Pepsi Center as well before their season finally comes to a close.

You also saw Simeon Varlamov get recalled last week. He might get one more start down the stretch for Washington. Wade Dubielewicz could possibly get one more start for the Blue Jackets. And how about Scott Clemmensen coming back to the Devils lineup since Kevin Weekes is now out for the next three weeks?

So if you need to swindle a win in the most exciting fashion this week, now you have some tricks up your sleeve.