

## From Start to Finnish

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 29 June 2009 10:50 - Last Updated Monday, 29 June 2009 16:28

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Eat your heart out, Garth Snow. Just as you were a big brute between the pipes, so too shall be the goalies you draft. You surprised me by taking a huge Finnish goalie to start the second day of the NHL Entry Draft, but I was not surprised to see the day end with another hulking Finnish goaltender, Petteri Simila, being chosen at #211.

The pick at #211 is an interesting one for a couple of reasons. First of all, this final pick was actually traded for. Yes, the Montreal Canadiens made a deal with the Penguins to secure the lowest pick possible in the Draft. This was done partially in homage to the local fans, but partially because of the potential they saw in Simila. Secondly, the number 211 is the rare result of a compensatory pick given to the Rangers due to the death of Alexei Cherepanov.

Simila, who is listed at 6-foot-6, an inch taller than Koskinen, is quickly becoming known for his similarities to the Vantaa Vulture. Little has been documented on his play other than the obvious statistics and recognition of his size, but reports are saying that he moves well laterally, displays a lot of poise for his age and recovers quickly from the butterfly. So even though nobody uttered Simila's name over the last three months, come draft day, he had instant appeal due to the fact he was just another massive Finnish goaltender.

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(For Karma, name two other current NHL players that were chosen last in the NHL Entry Draft.)

Ultimately, you can thank Snow for viciously reinforcing the trend of drafting the bigger goalies sooner rather than later. His bold statement to take Koskinen to start the second round and Anders Nilsson to start the third round was not only a shock (considering the other goalies available), but also because Rick DiPietro is signed until 2020. When all was said and done, Snow's bold moves reinforced the culture of drafting behemoth goalies for another year.

I could debate endlessly whether or not Snow should have snagged Koskinen in a later round, thus adding another quality skater to the organization, but it's already a moot point. The Islanders have reportedly passed on offering Peter Mannino a qualifying offer, which leaves the door wide open for Snow to bring Koskinen over to North America and have him battle it out with Nathan Lawson in Bridgeport. Lawson actually signed an NHL contract in early-March, which brings him closer to playing for the Islanders, but a shoulder injury has hampered his progress just a little bit.

Overall, these moves might make Snow look like a goalie prospect tyrant to some fans. But honestly, this is one of those instantaneous "all or nothing" situations. Many times I've mentioned that a Finnish goalie benefits greatly from playing in their native homeland as long as possible, so bringing Koskinen over right away is a major risk, without a doubt. But at the same time, the move could work. Koskinen is easily capable of handling AHL play without needing more coaching in Finland, so he could thrive in Bridgeport and become a great replacement for doughboy DiPietro.

The Islanders goalie conundrum is an obvious situation for fans to analyze, right? Well, the most frustrating question I had after the Draft ended was, "Why on earth did Olivier Roy drop all the way down to #133?!"

Did I miss something? Did the scouts find out a negative aspect about his game, something about his past that caused his value to drop like this? I mean, regardless of his size compared to that of Koskinen, Lehner and Morrison, Roy was one of the top-ranked North American goalies available. A few have asked me why this happened and I honestly have no answer.

Regardless of his slippage, give the Oilers credit for snagging him. That's a tremendous steal in my opinion, especially with all of the questions surrounding the 39-year-old Dwayne Roloson. He's expected to test the free-agency market on Wednesday, which I feel would be a huge blow to the Oilers. Not only is Roloson a workaholic, but he ignites passion in his teammates and does whatever it takes to stop the puck (Tim Thomas).

Edmonton will need to bring in a goaltender with some veteran leadership, as Jeff Deslauriers is simply not ready for the starting role, and Devan Dubnyk is even further away from NHL duties. Who could come in and fill the void left by Roloson? I really think Craig Anderson is a perfect fit in Edmonton, but nobody really knows at this point.

Staying in the Northwest Division, the Colorado Avalanche finally gave me a reason to be excited about their future in goal. Outside of their AHL tandem of Tyler Weiman and Jason

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Bacashihua, the cupboard is empty. Yes, Trevor Cann is a quality prospect, but I see no long-term NHL potential there. Everyone else is about as prized as dirty bed sheets.

I'm excited because there's a very interesting dynamic to watch develop between the two goalies Colorado chose. Kieran Millan, the standout freshman for Boston University, is actually a Canadian taking the non-traditional route of developing his game in the NCAA. Brandon Maxwell is a US-born goalie taking the non-traditional route of going from the USJDP to the CHL. In fact, Maxwell is expected to compete for the starting job with the Windsor Spitfires.

So my eyes will be glued to Maxwell and Millan over the next few years to see how a Canadian boy develops in the NCAA, a league that has him playing 35-40 games a season, compared to an American boy developing his game in the CHL, a league that could have him playing as many as 60-65 games in a season. Don't be surprised if it's Maxwell's name you hear first when it comes to Colorado's goaltending future. Honestly, just the fact that the Avs snagged two solid prospects in one draft is an amazing feat. Now they just need to learn how to use them, instead of constantly reeling in garbage goalies out of a dirty pond.

I was most impressed with Minnesota taking Matt Hackett and then following up with one of the best choices of the entire draft, Darcy Kuemper. This kid was extremely impressive for Red Deer and [this video I found is proof of his potential with the Wild](#) . The Coyotes did an awesome job grabbing Mike Lee at #91 as well. Considering the problems they will run into with Montoya and Tordjman, Lee could leave St. Cloud State as early as next summer and compete in the AHL.

Tampa Bay's two goalies were very interesting choices as well. They took probably the weakest goalie of the 21 chosen with Michael Zador at #148, but redeemed themselves by taking Jaroslav Janus at #162. Tampa Bay has had a ton of turnover in net over the last few years, so a combination of Dustin Tokarski and Janus in the system should really excite Tampa Bay ownership.

The Lightning actually has a very interesting situation heading into Wednesday's Free Agent Frenzy. Mike Smith is still recovering from post-concussion syndrome and Karri Ramo just bolted (no pun intended) to the KHL. That leaves the door wide open for Riku Helenius to make the team and play some games, which he's perfectly capable of doing. But will Smith be healthy in time for the season? The last I heard, he hasn't skated at all this summer, which makes things even tougher for Smith. If he isn't the same, can they win with a combo of Helenius and Mike McKenna?

Anyways, there are too many questions for my brain to handle in between the Draft and the Free Agent Frenzy. I'll just let things happen and then analyze the movement afterwards. I'll leave you with some fun prophecies that I honestly have no idea about, but still has some realism to them:

1. Colorado will lose the Gustavsson race and then announce they are not offering Peter Budaj a contract. They will sign Martin Biron to a one-year deal for just under \$3 million. If they pay any more than that, it's a mistake. They will finally listen to me by letting Bacashihua and

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Weiman battle it out for the backup position.

2. Edmonton will let Roloson walk and look at signing Craig Anderson. It will be a great fit on paper, but Anderson will have a high price tag and that will cause some hesitation from the Oilers.

3. Jonas Gustavsson will surprise a lot of people by signing in Dallas instead of Toronto. He will cite the following two reasons: Dallas has more Swedes on the team, they now have an in-state AHL team...and he doesn't have to get new pads because his Reebok's from last season are already green, black and gold. Ha, ha, ha people...it's just a joke.

Finally I would like to end class with a link to my [NHL Entry Draft Goalie Tracker](#) . I provided some insight on all 21 goalies chosen and came out with these numbers to boot:

### GOALIES CHOSEN BY ROUND

- Round 2 – Two
- Round 3 – Five
- Round 4 – Two
- Round 5 – Six
- Round 6 – Five
- Round 7 – One

### GOALIES CHOSEN BY COUNTRY

- Canada – 10
- USA – 4
- Finland – 3
- Sweden – 2
- Russia – 1
- Slovakia – 1