

With only ten days left before the regular season begins, you should have a solid grasp on which two goalies will act as the foundation for your fantasy teams (or have already drafted them). And even though there's really no such thing as an "easy" pick these days, it's fairly straightforward as to which goalies will be taken through the first ten rounds.

But what are you going to do about the third goalie on your roster? Surely you'll have to pick one, maybe even two more if you expect to stay competitive in those categories, right? Do you feel confident making that pick late in the draft and securing a secret goalie hidden in the deepest of pools, or are you just taking a wild stab in the dark?

Written by Justin Goldman Monday, 21 September 2009 15:54 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 September 2009 20:48

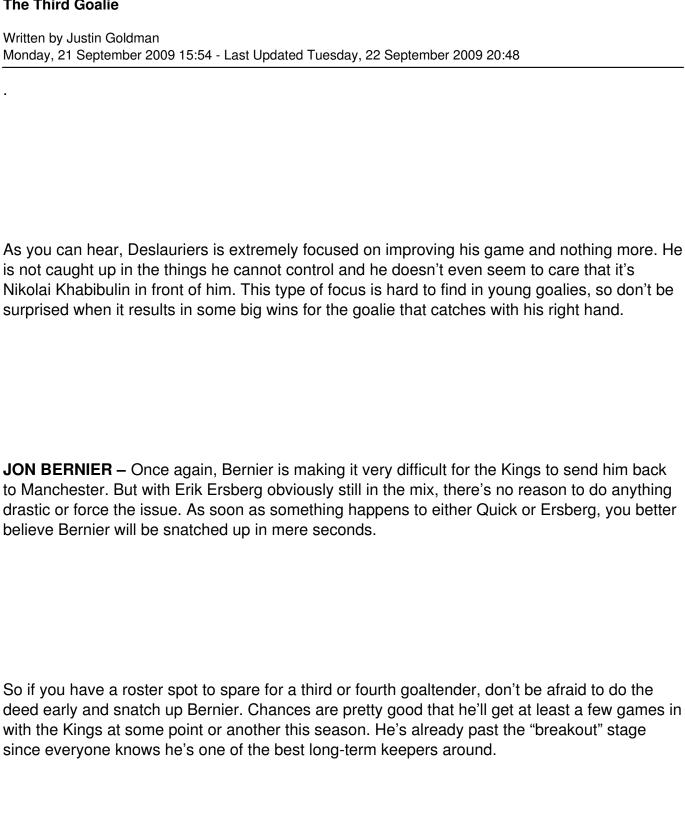
For those that are still in the midst of drafting, I suggest you secure a third goalie that has the ability to not only post good numbers, but totally surprise your opponents. Think about it. In a 14-team fantasy league, only 28 goalies are going to be scooped up in your draft. And since very few managers start the season with only two goalies (most leagues have the three-game requirements in place), that means a total of 42-45 goalies at the most will be drafted.

As a result, at least 15-20 backups and third-string goalies will become free agents in your league before the season even begins. That's a pretty deep pool to choose from when it comes to the final two or three rounds of your draft, so allow me to post who I feel are potent and magical third goalies that will give your fantasy team an edge this season.

JEFF DESLAURIERS – Is in the midst of a sensational pre-season and displayed more focus than any other backup I followed this summer. I don't expect most fantasy leagues to see him drafted until very late, if at all. But be aware of the fact that he's going to play at least 20 games and post a very solid save percentage. Compared to other goalies that have played the same number of NHL games, I don't see many posting the type of solid stats he could.

A big reason why I believe Deslauriers could have a huge break out season was through a radio interview done by Dan Tencer. If you click on one link all year long, <u>make it this one</u>. If I had heard this before I sent in my breakout candidates for the Dobber Fantasy Guide, he would have been near the top. If that link doesn't work,

go here and scroll down to the interview



ONDREJ PAVELEC - Although Atlanta brought in a great goalie prospect in Drew MacIntyre, the newcomer allowed five goals on 36 shots in his first pre-season game. Pavelec on the other hand made 32 saves on 34 shots in a loss against the Lightning, but was spectacular throughout the game. Once again he is proving to the coaching staff that he's a legit starting goalie for the Thrashers.

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Pavelec is probably one of the more recognizable "third" goalies out there, especially since Johan Hedberg is simply a veteran backup and nothing more. Lehtonen is already dealing with back issues and the timetable for his return is unclear, so there's no guarantee he will be 100% healthy for opening night. That means Pavelec's opportunity could come a lot sooner than expected, so it would be a smart move to scoop him up while you have the chance.

RICK DIPIETRO – I know you're already thinking, "What the heck is DiPietro doing on this list?" Well, it looks like he's actually getting back into game-ready shape quicker than expected. And we also know that hardly anyone is going to take a chance drafting him.

This link is just one of many

that discuss the positive rehabilitation currently taking place.

So what happens when (no longer if) he does return to the lineup this season and shows the flashes of brilliance we've seen in the past? You better believe the Islanders are going to make room for him to play as much as he wants. All of a sudden a guy who wasn't even expected to play until sometime in 2010 becomes a viable third goalie for a fantasy team. Give him spot starts at home against weaker teams and you'll most likely reap the rewards.

PETER BUDAJ – He would have to be deaf, dumb and blind to not realize the importance of improving the mental aspects of his game. Although it's the toughest thing to improve for a young goalie, it's the most vital to long-term success. Although he only had one strong pre-season outing so far, his improved focus and poise was noticeable.

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This trend happens all the time when another goalie comes in and straight up steals the starting role. So now that Budaj's job is totally on the line, chances are good that he'll man up and play the most consistent hockey of his career. But how many games will that equate to? That's up to Craig Anderson, who has never played more than 59 games in his career. But you can expect Budaj to play at least 20 games and maybe win half of them.

MICHAL NEUVIRTH – This one has to be obvious to the Dobberite by now, especially if you're a School of Block student. But with so many managers expecting Semyon Varlamov to dethrone Jose Theodore and hold onto the starting job for most of the season, they don't tend to think about Neuvirth's ability to do the same exact thing.

Sure enough, Neuvirth has already been impressing fans and followers in Washington with his poised play and efficiency. This kid is going to surprise a lot of people that don't already know what he's capable of doing in big games. He's the reigning AHL champion and plays with the confidence of a champion. Don't be surprised if Neuvirth plays close to ten games with the Capitals this year, maybe even more.