Did you see the thread I started last Sunday in the School of Block forums about ***Roberto Luongo and the main issues surrounding his slow start***
? If you didn't, I highly suggest reading it, because over the last week, it has been proven that crease crashing and traffic in front of the net - and subsequently a goalie's depth in the crease - is a major factor in fantasy goaltending so far this season.

Although it may not directly impact your goalie's value in every game, the dynamics of overall net presence and depth in the net must be understood in order to make even better fantasy goaltending decisions. Do your goalies challenge shooters effectively? Do they get run into more than once or twice a game? Are they complacent, or do they have a fierce side to them? And how strong are the defensive efforts in front of said goalie?

Simply put, the goalies that can effectively combat the rough-and-tumble physical nature of games will be more confident and comfortable in the crease, thus making them less of a liability for your lineup. Those that cannot will be more prone to struggling with their rhythm and having an off night. I discussed last week how depth in the net could affect a goalie's rhythm, so I'll quickly touch on crease-crashing and how that impacts a goalie's momentum as well.

The best way a goalie can fend off traffic and crease-crashing is by being fierce and establishing a presence at the top of their crease. By far the best example of this right now is Craig Anderson. He makes it an obvious point to shove or swipe at any forward that continually crashes him or tries to get in his way. Although he has a weak defensive corps in front of him, Anderson refuses to let contact hinder him from playing high in the crease and he will fight back whenever it's necessary. He's fierce and has an attitude, but he also stays composed and focused on the puck. And as you can see, it's working to perfection.

On Saturday against Detroit, along with Anderson's insane 48-save performance, I noticed he forcefully pushed Holmstrom in the back close to 20 times. It was very effective in creating some space for him to get his pads on the ice without any interference. Ironically, the only goal he allowed was when Kris Draper was crashing the crease and pushing a loose puck underneath his pads. It was an unfortunate goal against, but a good lesson learned. Anderson also does an excellent job of using his lanky size to look around forwards and get a clear view of the puck's trajectory.

Henrik Lundqvist on the other hand plays noticeably deep in his crease, which has the same effective results, but in a different manner. Instead of pushing at players and trying to take away space by creating it, he's more comfortable and more effective by staying deep and having more time to react. Combine this with his extremely wide butterfly stance and his awesome

management of glove-side shots, Lundqvist has mastered the position in a unique and effective way that is unlike any other in the NHL.

So whether a goalie plays deep in his crease and relies on fast reactions, or he has a fiery, bold attitude and pushes forwards out of the way, creating space and establishing a presence in the net is one of the most important things to watch for when it comes to finding an effective and valuable fantasy goaltender.

THE BIG BOYS ARE BACK

Well, I hope you guys stayed patient and listened to my sound advice when it came to the fantasy goalie kings.

Luongo is the most obvious one to turn his game around over the last week – and I warned everyone this would happen (see the Luongo forums link above). He's now playing with a ton of confidence again, but more importantly, he's playing at the top of his crease and his defensemen are doing a better job of giving him space and sightlines to see the puck. His last three games have been the complete opposite of his first three. How much traffic did he have to deal with in last night's shutout over the Edmonton Oilers compared to the first three games? Exactly.

And then there's Martin Brodeur, who has also won his last three starts, allowing only three goals in that span. ***Marty Turco is also starting to turn up the heat*** , as his last three games have also been much stronger. It looks like if you still own these goalies, your patience is going to start paying off.

TOP-50 KEEPER LEAGUE PROSPECTS

The updated ranking for my ***Top-50 Keeper League Prospects*** is a good one. There were a ton of changes, mainly due to Tuukka Rask's graduation. Antti Niemi highlights a class of rising prospects, thanks in large part to his surprising play behind Cristobal Huet. But since he has started five NHL games, his next start for the Blackhawks will cause him to graduate from the list as well.

I have also dropped a few goalies from the list and injected two others. Alex Stalock, last year's standout WCHA goalie for Minnesota, has absolutely shocked people with a strong start to his AHL career for Worcester. Peter Delmas has also deserved a spot in the bottom 10, as his play with Patrick Roy behind the net has really improved.

But the one goalie that has impressed me the most, thus making the biggest leap in the last month, is none other than Alexander Salak. It's hard to believe I thought he was going to end up

back in Europe and now he's turning into the AHL's version of Craig Anderson.

THE OTHER ALAK

There's another 'Alak to keep an eye on. Alexander Salak has gone on a rookie rampage in the AHL with a 5-0 start for the Rochester Americans, along with one shutout. There are a lot of aspects of his game I love, but probably the most interesting to me is his hybrid style.

He will do whatever it takes style-wise to stop the puck. He's desperate, energetic, fierce, and has a little flair in him as well. Combined with excellent lateral movements and the fact he's a smaller goalie, he's now on my Top-10 radar.

He also gained some valuable experience making a relief appearance for Tomas Vokoun earlier in the month when Scott Clemmensen was out of the lineup for a few days for personal reasons. He came in with confidence and took advantage of a rare opportunity and I guarantee you the coaching staff and the scouts loved what they saw…I sure did. Considering I was expecting him to return to Europe for this season, you have to be impressed with Salak's progression over the summer.

Overall, he fits the perfect mold for my favorite type of goalie prospect – he's quick, he's energetic, he's smooth laterally and he has an attitude.

THE SHADOWERS PUT ON A SHOW

On the other end of Luongo's net last night was Jeff Deslauriers, playing a brilliant game that included only two goals against a much stronger Canucks club. Deslauriers showed more signs of Mathieu Garon's style, which is a dynamic I explained over a year ago with the ***Of Slumps and Shadowers*** column.

Earlier in the night, it was Thomas Greiss making his third career start a memorable one as he only allowed one goal against the Flyers in Philadelphia. Greiss' style has many shades of Evgeni Nabokov, including a narrowed stance and a little more of an upright butterfly than most other goalies. I'll have to do a little more research and see if Greiss has ever attended the Tretiak Goaltending School, as that is where Nabokov's style was partially developed.