

Timeless

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 25 January 2010 10:01 - Last Updated Monday, 25 January 2010 19:41



Of all the topics that surface while discussing goalies, maybe the most intriguing one to ponder is *Demeanor*. In fact, if I had to give you one piece of solid fantasy scouting advice, it just might be to never underestimate the revealing power a goalie's demeanor has on their fantasy value.

When I think of the word *Demeanor*, my mind triggers the fairly common definition of how someone behaves or acts in any given situation. And while this is a simple and effective way to approach understanding one's mannerisms and attitude, I can't help but wonder what the word truly means to a goaltender.

Timeless

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 25 January 2010 10:01 - Last Updated Monday, 25 January 2010 19:41

To me, a goalie's demeanor is the way he or she reacts to different aspects of time. By dissecting this dimension, I come to find that it's inescapable. It rules and governs all games, all things. Goalies either want to speed it up, slow it down, stretch it out or skip to a different moment. In fact, that's a word coaches often use when teaching a goalie how to handle time.

"Stay in the *moment*, Jimmy! Don't force things. Let the puck hit you!" In other words, "Don't succumb to the pressure of time. Just focus on the puck." This is a somewhat cliché, but still a very valuable lesson, mainly because you can easily see timing issues in a goaltender. They struggle with rebounds. They mishandle pucks with their gloves. They punch out at pucks with their blocker. They play deep in their crease. The list goes on and includes mental aspects as well.

The impact of time on a goalie (and a human) is always tied to the individual. By this I simply mean that every goalie manages a 60-minute game differently. And with the endless situations a goalie will face in a game, some will be impacted by bad goals more than others. This is why veteran goalies seem to manage time better than rookies.

So demeanor, which includes how a goalie handles timely things like being scored on, pressure and a heavy or light workload, is not only what makes a goalie unique, but also a way of determining their strengths and weaknesses. Demeanor reveals traits, traits reveal potential and potential acts a way to determine a goalie's overall fantasy overall.

Timeless

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 25 January 2010 10:01 - Last Updated Monday, 25 January 2010 19:41

One way you can really see a goalie's demeanor is through the "timely" save. A timely save is made very early and very late in periods, in one-goal or tied games, when momentum is boosted in their team's favor, when it is least expected, while shorthanded or also those made with extreme desperation and flexibility.

I could go on and on about different ways to dissect demeanor, but the main lesson here is that every year you'll discover a few goalies with the demeanor found in fantasy gems. For at the core of time, the enigma surrounding a timely save often determines the difference between a winning and losing goalie.

JAROSLAV HALAK

Not only has this been a tormenting season due to all of the controversy and media hype around a potential trade, he has also suffered from the normal stresses that come with being a young goalie in Montreal. But if you look at Halak's last five starts, they act as a perfect example of what makes him such a special and valuable goalie.

I like to describe Halak (and many other young goalies) as an amalgam of veterans. Put him under the microscope and you will find slivers of Martin Brodeur's composure, Evgeni Nabokov's positioning and Craig Anderson's focus. He's rarely rattled. He's even-keeled and

Timeless

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 25 January 2010 10:01 - Last Updated Monday, 25 January 2010 19:41

doesn't exhibit much outward emotion. He's cool, calm and collected, off in his own little world. He has proficient positioning, awesome angles and a stalwart, solid, sealed butterfly.

That's not bad for a ninth round draft pick (271st overall in 2003) who has only played in five games this month, just 23 this season and only 79 in his entire career. His .927 save percentage also happens to be fourth in the league.

It's still unclear what comes of Montreal's goaltending situation. Can two young studs create a winning recipe? Sure. Is it worth continuing in this fashion? As long as they're winning. But one thing I know for sure is that Halak is playing to get traded. No goalie with his potential wants to be stuck with another talented, young goalie. It's not fair to either of them. They don't play enough consistent minutes to warrant a steady improvement in weak areas of their game.

So while the Canadiens continue to skate in circles with their current situation, you can trust in one thing that should now be perfectly clear. Whenever one of them is traded, only then will both of them finally be able to reveal their true value and potential. Otherwise they will soak up each other's precious minutes to the point their potential is harmed.

How long until things start going downhill is impossible to say, but I sure wouldn't want to take many chances.

TOMAS VOKOUN

Lo and behold, another ninth round draft pick (226th overall in 1994) by Montreal is on fire! The flames are gulping everywhere! He's started 12 straight games, surpassed Anderson for the most shots against in the league and has the second-best save percentage. Nobody try and put this guy out, because he has six shutouts and his glove is hotter than lava.

There's not much else to say about the 33-year-old, other than to realize he might have entered a golden age in his career where the demeanor is extremely rock solid. Sure he struggled (again) to start the season, but his recent play has made up for any qualms the naysayers, even myself, may have. This guy should be played almost every game.

This great recent play by Vokoun brings up a sticky depth chart situation for the Panthers. They still have Scott Clemmensen signed for two more years and Vokoun is signed through next season. They have Jacob Markstrom peaking in Europe, Alexander Salak exploding in Rochester and Marc Cheverie shredding the WCHA. Sooner or later something has to give, as it makes me wonder why Clemmensen is even worth keeping around anymore.

Timeless

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 25 January 2010 10:01 - Last Updated Monday, 25 January 2010 19:41

ANTERO NIITYMAKI

Niittymaki has been all over the place statistically since Mike Smith went down with a cervical injury. He was pulled in a few games and spectacular in a few others. But none was more interesting to watch than his latest outing, which was a 2-1 shootout win against the Atlanta Thrashers on Saturday night.

Yes, Niittymaki is now a perfect 15-0 against the Atlanta Thrashers. He did it again, this time in dramatic fashion. Niittymaki made brilliant timely saves when it mattered most - very late in the third period and throughout overtime. Ultimately, his timing in this game was picture perfect - the confidence and focus was sky high in the 65th minute.

Patience was the key to his success in the shootout, which revealed a lot about his demeanor. He handled the pressure with ease, even when his timing was iced while the previous shootout attempt was under review. No head fake or deke fazed him, nothing distracted him. He was in tune to one thing only – tracking the puck into his body.

Sure, Niittymaki will only be as valuable as Smith is injured, for we know that Tampa Bay is committed to giving Smith every chance possible to be a starter. But at least in the meantime we've learned something about Niittymaki. He's an extremely patient goalie, his poise in

Timeless

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 25 January 2010 10:01 - Last Updated Monday, 25 January 2010 19:41

pressure situations is outstanding and his timing is dead on.

SCHOOL OF BLOCK PODCAST

I'm starting to do a quick 10-15 minute podcast a few nights a week that goes through that night of NHL action and brings some of my goaltending insight and analysis. So many goalies and so little time to type everything up, the first two have been a ton of fun. I guarantee you in each installment you will learn *something* about goaltending. Check out the latest [School of Block podcast](#) here!

right