The current state of Edmonton Oilers goaltending is a somewhat gloomy and shallow affair. There are a few bright spots in the organization, but overall, the depth chart is considered a weak one. This season could even be viewed as a small disaster, as Nikolai Khabibulin's back problems have kept him out of the lineup for most of the year. That led to him making the news recently for another unfortunate reason – an intoxicated run-in with the Arizona authorities.

Combined with a lengthy contract, which still has three years remaining at 3.75 million each season (an UFA in July, 2013), there's not a lot of positive energy surrounding Khabibulin's future right now. His off-ice issues, combined with dehydration, health and consistency issues on the ice, adds up to one giant question mark heading into the summer.

But all of those things aside, why do I really consider Khabibulin a liability right now?

Because rust never sleeps. It slowly eats away at a goalie's game. It builds up over time and hinders effective game management and rebound control. It causes a trip down the rehab road to be time-consuming and emotionally taxing. Goalies like Rick DiPietro and Manny Legace know all too well that certain injuries take longer than others to properly heal. Even then, some goalies are never the same again. And the older they get, the harder it is to play at their best.

Khabibulin will surely be motivated to get back into great shape in time for next season, but as of right now, it's pretty unclear if that will happen. So, if you can somehow lift your eyes from the horrible train wreck that is Khabibulin's season, only then will you see a few rays of sun shining through the burning, twisted metal.

Jeff Deslauriers. He has not only proven himself as a legitimate prospect with a bright future, he's continually improving and gaining confidence as time goes on. Regardless of wins and losses or hot and cold streaks, he has been a very consistent goalie. He's focused, hard working, has great size, long legs and quick, active hands. He catches right, makes spectacular saves and can handle a heavy workload. All of that adds up to a giant exclamation point, as the Oilers have arguably one of the best young "backups" in the league. And he's only getting better.

Ultimately, however, the Oilers are currently in a situation that forces them to rely on an injury-prone veteran to keep the depth chart balanced. Because of that uncertainty, there's a bright future for any talented prospects in the system. But unfortunately, as you will soon see,

the pickings are slim right now in Oil country.

How many more years before Olivier Roy is in the NHL? What is his fantasy ceiling?

Olivier Roy is at least one more year away from seeing any kind of professional duty, so I think at least two more full seasons before he plays a game in an Oilers uniform. Because of Deslauriers' strong season, I don't think the Oilers are in any rush with Roy. This is only his third year with Cape Breton (QMJHL) and does have plenty of quality playoff experience, but it's just not the same as pro hockey experience. He still has room for improvement at the junior level and will need his last year of junior eligibility, plus at least one year at the AHL level before he's ready for the NHL.

Because he's a valuable prospect, the Oilers will probably work Roy into AHL and NHL pretty quickly. It would be one thing if the Oilers had other quality prospects in the system, but he's all alone in that regard. Remember, he was drafted much lower than many expected, so I think the Oilers realize he's a low-risk, high-reward prospect. This is partially due to lowered expectations that came with a lower draft call, but either way, it's a positive for his future.

Roy (born July 12, 1991) is currently 18 years old, so he still has one more year of QMJHL eligibility before the Oilers can even entertain thoughts of signing him to an entry-level contract. There's no legitimate prospect between Deslauriers and Roy right now, so this could potentially be a perfect marriage for Springfield, but not until he turns 20.

Because Roy is a pure butterfly goalie that relies on a heavy workload and tons of shots, he needs to own the starting role in either the AHL or the ECHL. If Roy is developed in a slow manner, but he plays a ton of minutes, he'll only need 1-2 years to build the confidence needed to excel in the NHL. I personally think he's AHL material, however.

As such, I feel his fantasy ceiling will continue to rise as next season rolls along. It was already fairly high to begin with, but the more he plays and wins, the higher that ceiling goes. Talent wise, he has the potential to be one of the best out there, but the Oilers have to be patient and give him ample time to develop confidence as a professional.

Do you see any Oilers goalie being their future go-to tender, or are they likely to sign someone? Will they trade for a future goalie?

I think Deslauriers has a very bright short-term future. If the Oilers can field a competitive team next year, his future will continue to be bright. With the NHL Entry Draft producing more and more instant assets, the Oilers could just as easily be this year's Colorado Avalanche, once next season starts. I think Deslauriers' strong work ethic and his focus has been on display for most of the time this year, so it's clear he has a thick skin and the ability to win NHL games.

Deslauriers is currently an RFA making $700,000 this season, so his new contract will have to be for more than that. I think the Oilers would be wise to sign him for two or three years, worth around $1.5 million each year. This would be a smart move, especially with the uncertainty surrounding Khabibulin's ability to handle a big workload. Deslauriers doesn't deserve a crazy, bloated contract, but at least a fair amount that allows him to fight for the starting job.

Devan Dubnyk is also an RFA making $700,000 this year, while Bryan Pitton is signed next year for $500,000. It's nice to see Dubnyk win his first two games against Detroit and then San Jose, but he's not what I would consider a quality prospect with a bright NHL future.

The Oilers still have an AHL affiliation with the Stockton Thunder and that's where you'll find sub-par prospects in Aaron Sorochan and Andrew Perugini. You can take it one step further and look to Colorado Eagles goalie Andrew Penner as another prospect, but he doesn't have much value either.

So to answer the question, I think Deslauriers has an opportunity to be the future go-to tender. A trade is never out of the question, but it won't happen unless he no longer shows signs of improvement or effectiveness. The focus is probably on re-signing him as insurance, while giving Dubnyk and Pitton another year to develop in the AHL. Meanwhile, Roy will be in his final year of juniors and be more than ready to turn pro the following year.

Next season, do the Oilers ride Khabibulin and Deslauriers in a platoon, or do they go back to riding Khabibulin? Who should they start more next year?

First of all, thanks for asking who they ***SHOULD*** start more, as that's a question I can answer. I have no idea what they will actually end up doing, especially since it's only March.

But fantasy managers should realize there's a certain understanding that comes with a tandem like Deslauriers and Khabibulin. One was brought in for a reason, is considered a stalwart veteran and has a Stanley Cup ring. The other is a blossoming prospect with plenty of potential, but is still developing his game. As such, Khabibulin will most likely be pegged as the starter heading into next season. Depending on how he performs, however, Deslauriers will get a correlated number of opportunities to put together winning streaks of his own.

Ultimately, Edmonton's situation depends on how the goalies look in training camp. Like most NHL teams, whichever goalie is gives their team the best chance to win will ultimately receive the bulk of the starts. If Khabibulin is healthy and competes hard in training camp, the Oilers will give him the bulk of the starts to kick off the season.

Edmonton's situation could play out like Detroit's. Khabibulin, a proven but aging winner, will be inconsistent for the first 10-15 games. Deslauriers, like Jimmy Howard, will take over from there and be the guy for most of the season. Either Khabibulin will be hurt, or he won't be in the lineup consistently enough to get into a good rhythm. Although it will probably look different when next

season's guide comes out, expect 55-60% of the starts to go to Deslauriers.

Prior to signing Khabibulin, there were rumblings of Bjorn Bjurling, whom they have the rights to, possibly coming to North America. Has that boat long sailed away?

Bjorn Bjurling is like the old pirate ship ghost of the goalie world. He's a 30-year-old voyager, which is beyond ancient in prospects terms. However, the Oilers do retain his rights, as he was drafted 274th overall back in 2004. Bjurling is currently out of the lineup with a cyst in his shoulder, but is with Södertälje in the Elitserien and has a 3.21 GAA and .866 save percentage in 36 games so far this season.

Bjurling is one of the well-liked and well-traveled old-school goalies that works hard to keep his style refined, but that's about it. Still, the Oilers do retain his rights and at the very least is considered their only European prospect.

How does the Oilers' goaltending depth compare to other NHL teams?

I would say it's one of the weakest depth charts in the NHL. Other than Deslauriers and Roy, the Oilers have little long-term potential in the goalie cupboard.

One interesting thing to look at is Pitton's value compared to Roy's. They were both drafted 133rd overall. I think that goes a long way in showing just how low Roy was drafted and how good goalies are really found in every round. It would bode the Oilers well to draft a goalie or two this summer. They have no young European prospects to pull from, two weak ECHL prospects and two AHL goalies not even listed on my Top-100 Fantasy Prospects Rankings.

If I had to compare the Oilers to the Senators (last week's profile), I would say Edmonton is slightly weaker, mainly because the Senators have the advantage with Chris Holt and Robin Lehner over Dubnyk and Roy.

I hope you enjoyed this week's ***The Current State!*** *Be sure to visit* ***School of Block*** *to vote on the next team!*