

2011 World Juniors Goalie Primer

Written by Justin Goldman

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The biggest key to a goalie's success in the World Junior Championships is making the first few saves in their first game. Accomplishing this can not only set a positive tone for the opening game, it can also dictate the pace of their entire tournament. And in such a pressure-filled event comprised of so many elite players, a goalie's confidence can make or break a trip to the medal round, and ultimately a spot on the podium.

[FANTASY MAILBAG – DECEMBER 27](#)

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Every goalie in the World Juniors, regardless of experience and skill, must be able to manage their nerves in the first game. Every team relies on their goalie to provide a calming influence right away, so the difference between a medal and going home early will often depend on which goalie can calm their nerves and settle into a rhythm the fastest.

On Sunday afternoon, analysts on TSN and the NHL Network discussed the importance of teams improving their cohesion in every game. They also mentioned the importance of having an identity and then reflecting that identity in every game. In that regard, a goalie must follow that paradigm by displaying confidence, relaxation and timeliness as often as possible. There's no room for error, as one weak goal can shatter an entire team's morale and momentum.

So when it comes to the 2011 WJC goalies, keep an eye on those dynamics. Will Olivier Roy reflect the same strong work ethic that makes him so successful in the QMJHL? Will Jack Campbell continue to be Team USA's leader and catalyst? Can Robin Lehner display the same intensity and energy we've seen in the first half of the season?

IGOR BOBKOV – [Despite giving up six goals in the 3-6 loss to Canada](#), I feel Bobkov played a terrific game. A lot of his success stemmed from a terrific first period. He made an excellent high blocker save on the first shot he faced and then absorbed the next two shots fired his way, including a routine shot to the glove side that was going wide. Those early stops allowed his comfort level to soar and he made a number of saves look easy in the first 20 minutes. His timeliness and confidence gave his teammates the composure they needed to skate well against Canada.

When it comes to stance and mechanics, Bobkov displayed some very promising traits. He has a very lanky frame, where he appears thinner and taller as opposed to shorter and wider. He keeps his hands very active, as they are placed way out in front of his body. This revealed a true strength in his game, which is his blocker side. Finally, most Russian prospects will bend more at the shoulders, but Bobkov bends more at the knees, giving him a terrific crouch.

If you look back at the six goals Bobkov allowed, you could not fault him for more than a few. The first goal came on a power play and was a result of coincidental contact. Canada's second goal was due to a shot fired wide by Matt Ellis. Three of Canada's six goals came on the power play. Aside from certain areas of technique and butterfly recovery, the one clearly defined weakness in Bobkov's game was serious energy drain in the second period. He simply wore down too quickly and was unable to sustain his sharp focus and solid mechanics.

From a fantasy perspective, Bobkov's effort against Canada raised his long-term value. The key to take from this game when projecting his future was his ability to provide Russia with a calming presence and then make timely stops on the big stage. He needs to work on maintaining and sustaining higher levels of energy when he experiences a heavy workload early in a game, but overall, Bobkov's combination of size and speed makes him a quality goalie to own in keeper leagues. If he continues to play this way, a rise in my [Top-100 Prospects Rankings](#) is in order.

OLIVIER ROY – Although Roy was visibly tense and nervous throughout the 6-3 win, he stopped the first shot he faced. But he was beat just a few minutes later on a slap shot by Maxim Kitsyn that found space glove side just 3:57 into the game. Because of the early goal, Roy struggled to calm his nerves and move in a fluid manner. He clearly suffered from this tension and did not provide Canada with the calming influence that Bobkov was giving Russia.

Although he calmed down when it mattered most in the third period, a very weak goal scored by Nikita Dvurechenski at 11:51 of the second applied an alarming amount of pressure on his shoulders. It happened again when the game was tied 3-3, but Roy made the necessary stops in the final minutes of the second and throughout the third period. He came up with a huge right pad save on a turnaround shot in the third and that stop sparked his confidence and composure to the highest level of the game.

From a fantasy perspective, this game neither hurt nor helped his long-term value. The book will be out on Roy for the remainder of the tournament and he will be in goal again on Tuesday against the Czech Republic. I was slightly surprised by this move, as I think Visentin brings a calming influence that Olivier can't. Roy has a very solid set of fundamentals, but I feel a major fantasy pitfall is that he's too restricted by technique and struggles to the glove side. Improving his ability to just read and react will improve his value and make him more viable in an Oilers uniform.

JACK CAMPBELL – No goalie in the tournament must feel more comfortable and confident than Campbell. Coming off his impressive performance in last year's Gold Medal game, Campbell experienced a high level of familiarity to start the tournament. His first period was flawless, including a few timely saves during Finland's power play chance. This ability to provide a calming influence with technically sound saves was a [*major factor in their 3-2 overtime win*](#)

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His only glaring mistake in the game came in the second period when he turned the puck over behind the goal and was forced to scramble back to his crease. A few seconds later, Finland tied the game 1-1 thanks to a great cross-crease pass by Toni Rajala and a one-timer by Joonas Nattinen that beat him back door and over the right pad.

Another key moment in Team USA's victory came when Iiro Pakarinen tied the game 2-2 at 12:59 of the third period. While most goalies would buckle or tighten up under the pressure of a possible upset, Campbell stayed composed and made a few big saves directly following the goal. That kept the confidence level high, not only for himself but for his teammates. That may have been the tipping point in being rewarded as Team USA's Player of the Game, as Campbell finished with 32 saves on 34 shots.

From a fantasy perspective, this game once again revealed what makes Campbell one of the best goalies to own in a keeper league. His ability to provide leadership and a calming influence, while also displaying a consistent level of energy and effective mechanics, makes him a future star in the NHL. Combined with his presence in a Dallas Stars system that includes one of the most progressive and young goalie coaches in the NHL, Campbell's fantasy future is very bright. It won't come easy, but if he continues to be timely for Team USA, another Gold Medal is in his sights.

JONI ORTIO – No goalie impressed me more during Sunday's action than Joni Ortio. He had a sensational game for Finland and displayed terrific poise and composure throughout the game. While Campbell provided a calming influence for Team USA, so too did Ortio provide the same influence for Finland. He finished with 27 saves on 30 shots and was awarded as the Player of the Game for his team.

Everyone will point to the overtime goal as weak and unacceptable, but in my opinion, it takes very little away from what he accomplished in regulation. What I loved most about Ortio's game was his ability to make a handful of saves in an extremely desperate fashion, while the rest were of the solid, composed and comfortable manner. Most of you know his idol and mentor is Miikka Kiprusoff, and this truly shows. There were a number of Shadowing effects in play, including hand positioning, a strong sense to scramble down low, great rebound control and sheer flexibility.

From a fantasy perspective, Ortio's first game doesn't necessarily improve his long-term value, but it was a valuable learning experience that promoted his skills on a worldwide scale. The main key to take away from his performance was the overall butterfly positioning and rebound control. You can tell he had pro level playing experience in Finland, as his demeanor was solid and he showed no signs of being nervous.

Calgary definitely has another Finnish star in the making, as Ortio has all the tools and traits needed to succeed in North America. The only question is when he makes the journey to begin his career on this side of the ocean. With a great gig in the SM-Liiga for TPS, I wouldn't be surprised if he stays in Finland for another year.

OTHER GOALIES TO WATCH – Washington Capitals prospect **Philipp Grubauer** [*gave up four goals in just 13:25 against the Swiss*](#)

and was replaced a few minutes later with Niklas Treutle. On the other end, the undrafted **Ben Conz**

stopped 32 shots and was perfect in the first period. I wasn't surprised to see Thrashers prospect

Fredrik Petersson-Wentzel

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get the start over Robin Lehner in yesterday's 7-1 trouncing of Norway, as he only faced 11 total shots. I have my radar set on Avalanche prospect

Sami Aittokallio

as well, as he should see a game for Finland.