Fantasy managers must realize that the world of goaltending revolves due to the forces of cause and effect. What one goalie accomplishes over the course of a season plays a major role in the development path of another. With each NHL team averaging at least six goalies in their system, it is impossible to place every prospect in a perfect setting. For as I have explained before, when one goalie plays, another goalie is forced to sit and watch.

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With that in mind, General Managers rarely have the luxury of making an easy, clear-cut decision. The path they expect a goalie to take, no matter how positive it may seem, can be

detoured at any moment. There are too many internal and external forces applying pressure on a goalie that you simply can't predict what will happen next.

There's no better example of this than the Anaheim Ducks, who were sitting pretty with Jonas Hiller for the first half of the season, then rolled through three more goalies before Ray Emery, maybe the least likely candidate, found a way to rattle off six straight wins. Case in point - every time you think you have a good grip on a team's goalie situation, something happens to force that situation back into a state of chaos.

Take Toronto, for example. I truly believe that no team has improved their goaltending depth more in the past 10 months than the Maple Leafs. But now they are faced with some very tough decisions. James Reimer came out of nowhere in January to become one of the biggest goaltending stories of the season, while Jussi Rynnas and Ben Scrivens – both added as free agents over the summer - have displayed the potential to be an AHL starter.

So what should the Leafs do over the summer to keep things moving in a positive manner? Well, it has been publicly stated more than a few times that Reimer will have a chance to be Toronto's starter heading into training camp. There will be no juicy off-season signing, especially not Ilya Bryzgalov. And with Jonas Gustavsson signed through next season, the main issue clearly becomes a matter of placement.

If J-S Giguere retires or walks, I consider a Reimer-Gustavsson tandem as a huge risk. But that

move is considered beneficial for Scrivens and Rynnas, who would be allowed to duke it out for AHL minutes. If the Leafs feel like they need a veteran to support Reimer's development, Giguere is clearly the best fit, since he's the best possible mentor to reinforce the Allaire "blocking" style.

There are other good "filler" goalies to play with Reimer, but think about the impact another goalie will have on the rest of the system. With Gustavsson signed through next year, does he really belong in the AHL? If he does play with the Marlies, it forces either Rynnas or Scrivens back down to the ECHL. And in that regard, you might be better off putting Scrivens in the ECHL, just so that he can play as much as possible.

In a perfect world, maybe Giguere retires, but becomes Allaire's assistant goalie coach. That allows him to continue working with Reimer as a mentor, allows Gustavsson to play in the NHL, which then allows Rynnas and Scrivens to get the development they need in the AHL.

Clearly, Brian Burke must be extremely careful how he manages his goaltending depth this summer. If he truly feels Reimer is ready to take on the task of carrying the starting role as a sophomore, Burke better be ready to support him with a veteran when James goes through some of the typical second-year hurdles all goalies face. If he doesn't, it will be a huge risk when Reimer begins to struggle and nobody is there to pick up the team and keep things positive.

And as much as I love Reimer, he simply can't win on faith alone. No matter how successful he has been this year, nothing can prepare him for the rigors of a full sophomore year. Every goalie is prone to struggling, so he will be put to the test in a way he has yet to experience at any point in his life.

Do I think Gustavsson can be successful in that supporting role? Yes. He not only deserves a chance to prove he's capable of playing consistently and in a confident manner, but the experience he gained by going through an AHL conditioning stint and then watching from the press box for the last month will elevate his sense of urgency and get him to work even harder over the summer to win a job with the Leafs for next season.

Are you starting to see the monumental influence that even the simplest decision could have on an NHL team's goalie depth chart? It's a fragile, volatile, slippery slope of logic – one wrong move and it could all come crashing down. Furthermore, even a move that feels right on the surface could turn into a devastating one. This is the life of a NHL GM, one where fate can go from friend to foe in a heartbeat.

And since I can't be found inside 30 GM offices, much less one, it's my sworn duty to try and create clarity out of chaos.

Because of this, I've been working hard on a new premium scouting feature I call Power Rankings. This will take my *NHL Depth Charts* feature to the next level by shedding more light

on every NHL team's strength in goal. The Power Rankings feature will be released over the summer and will be bundled with the rest of my monthly scouting features.

This is not official by any means, but as of right now, the top five teams with the most powerful depth in goal (in no particular order) is Nashville, Vancouver, Washington, Los Angeles and Florida. They all have high-caliber prospects, quality, full-time goalie coaches and the stable structure needed to develop their prospects into legit NHL netminders.

In Nashville, you have a system six goalies deep with one of the world's finest goalie coaches in Mitch Korn. Pekka Rinne, Anders Lindback, Mark Dekanich, Chet Pickard, Jeremy Smith and Atte Engren all have NHL upside and all are young goalies with terrific skill sets and good size. Pickard is clearly the weak link right now, but with Korn at the helm, there's no mistaking that the Predators have one of the best depth charts in the NHL. Even Engren, who came over from TPS in Finland less than two weeks ago, has already experienced some success in Milwaukee (AHL).

Vancouver's top three goalies rival all others in the NHL. Roberto Luongo is having his finest season as a workhorse, Cory Schneider is one of the most coveted young goalies in the league and Eddie Lack has come out of nowhere to establish himself as a future stud in the NHL. With a full-time goalie coach in Rolie Melanson already improving those top three, Tyler Weiman, Joe Cannata and Jonathan Iilahti provide depth and upside for many years to come.

Washington also has a terrific trifecta in Michal Neuvirth, Semyon Varlamov and Braden Holtby. Due to a very large volume of depth with nine total goalies in the system, goalie coach Arturs Irbe has plenty of ingredients to work with over the next five years. Dany Sabourin, Todd Ford and Dan Dunn don't have much upside right now, but Philipp Grubauer, Jared DeMichiel and Brandon Anderson most certainly do.

In Los Angeles, we all know what Jon Quick and Jon Bernier are capable of accomplishing in a Kings uniform. Jeff Zatkoff was just awarded the AHL Goalie of the Month Award for March and the undrafted Martin Jones has been one of the most impressive AHL rookies this season. Behind the mentoring of Bill Ranford, the future looks bright with QMJHL standout J-F Berube as well. They're only five deep, but with that kind of high talent level, they're clearly one of the strongest systems in the NHL.

In Florida, no European prospect has been more highly touted than Jacob Markstrom. He did suffer a setback with a season-ending injury in March, but he'll clearly be 100-percent for next season. Things are on shaky ground with the future of Tomas Vokoun in jeopardy, but they have amazing depth with the likes of Tyler Plante, Marc Cheverie, Sam Brittain and Brian Foster.

Consider that a little preview of what you'll find when I publish the inaugural release of the all-new Power Rankings. I'll rank each NHL team from top to bottom and provide a few paragraphs on why they deserve that specific spot. Although this is tentative, expect the first release to come after the 2011 NHL Entry Draft!