With another season in the books, are you surprised to find that not a single goalie notched 40 wins? I'm not. More prospects took advantage of more opportunities, while many of the elite workhorses played less. In my opinion, this is a visible change in the workload paradigm that will continue to shift as the clock ticks towards your next fantasy draft.

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This shift stems from two different forces. The first force would be the success NHL teams have had with tandems this season. The second force would be the plethora of prospects proving their worth and taking advantage of opportunities. Let's look at both dynamics and how they

should change your approach in goal for next season.

The Capitals, Flyers, Bruins, Lightning, Sharks, Canucks and Ducks all made the Stanley Cup with goalies that played 60 or less games and had plenty of energy down the stretch. But the Hurricanes and Flames, two teams with two elite goalies that played more than 70 games, once again found themselves on the outside looking in.

Cam Ward logged more minutes (4317:15) than any other goalie this year. He started 74 games, notched 37 wins (tied for 2nd), and stopped more shots (2191) than anyone. He did post a very fantasy friendly .923 save percentage, but when his team needed him in the final game, he clearly lacked the focus and energy needed to win.

Knowing that Ward played more than any other goalie this year, what will the Hurricanes do in regards to his workload next season? Rest assured they will look to play Justin Peters more often in the first half of the season. That way, if they need a major playoff push in March and April, Ward will be much more rested down the stretch.

It’s only a prediction at this point, but there’s no way I see Ward starting more than 70 games next year. Just like the Canucks, the Hurricanes won’t make the same mistake twice. If only the Flames could have paid closer attention.

Miikka Kiprusoff started 71 games this year and although he also notched 37 wins, he only posted a .906 save percentage and fell just short of the playoffs. Henrik Karlsson showed tremendous promise in the limited action he saw, but what can he accomplish if he only plays in 15 games, and only five since late-January?

The only true X-factor this year was Carey Price. He played in a whopping 72 games and still earned a playoff spot. He tied Roberto Luongo with 38 wins this season, yet he played 617 more minutes and faced 394 more shots. At his age and in that market, Price's play is a true testament to the elite skills he has. Clearly, he's already considered as one of the top starting goalies to own next season.

Now compare Ward and Kiprusoff's members to Roberto Luongo. He played just 60 games this season and notched 38 wins. It was clearly his best season ever, and a big reason for this (besides the whole captaincy ordeal) was Cory Schneider. He appeared in 25 games, notched 16 wins and really pushed Luongo to stay sharp during the season.

Because of Vancouver's success employing a successful tandem, one where they enter the playoffs with two rested and confident goalies, it's only a matter of time before more teams start to copy the successful blueprint.

Henrik Lundqvist is another good example of the paradigm shift. He played in just 68 games this year - the first time since his rookie season he tallied less than 70 starts. He had 36 wins, a .923 save percentage and 11 total shutouts. And when the Rangers needed him most – in April – he was there to help his team clinch the eighth spot in the East.

Go down the list and you'll see more of the same. Pekka Rinne played just 64 games and is clearly a Vezina Trophy Finalist. Tim Thomas broke the save percentage record and played in just 57 games. Jonathan Quick played in just 61 games, but had 35 wins and was one of the more underrated goalies this season.

Antti Niemi played just 60 games for the Sharks and also earned 35 wins. But the main reason why he was able to sustain a high level of energy with his 33 straight starts was partially due to all the starts Antero Niittymaki received in the first half of the season.

What does this reveal? Playing your clutch starter less in the first half allows him to be nice and ready for a heavy workload in the second half. It worked for Niemi, Lundqvist and Rinne, so expect teams to pick up on that as time goes on.

So for the first time since the 2003-04 season, a year when shootout wins didn't exist and Martin Brodeur had the most wins with 38, a goalie did not reach the 40-win mark. Will we see a goalie win 40 games next year? Maybe - but the odds will probably be a bit lower.

Remember, the more teams experience success by limiting the games of their workhorse starter, the more you will see other teams start to follow suit. And this shifts the value of those elite fantasy goalies ever so slightly.

Pay Attention to the Plethora of Prospects

The second force that is causing a shift in the workload paradigm is the growing number of quality prospects earning starts around the league. We saw so many stand out and prove their worth this season. The list included Anders Lindback, Braden Holtby, Henrik Karlsson, Al Montoya, Jhonas Enroth and James Reimer, just to name a few.

We also saw shades of greatness from Mikko Koskinen, Kevin Poulin, Mark Dekanich, Anton Khudobin, Ben Bishop, Cedrick Desjardins, Alex Stalock, Robin Lehner, Matt Climie and Richard Bachman. That’s not even rattling off the great rookie seasons posted by Schneider, Sergei Bobrovsky, Corey Crawford and Jonathan Bernier.

So as a fantasy manager, get ready for more of the same next season. Enroth will be a full-time NHL goalie. Bernier will probably play more. Montoya probably plays 50 games paired with Rick DiPietro. Schneider will be pushing Luongo for more starts. Reimer is expected to start around 55 games. Holtby just might earn a full-time gig as well.

You also have to keep in mind the number of entry-level contracts that are pushing other prospects up the ranks. Harri Sateri has played well for Worcester since coming over from Tappara. Thomas Greiss is currently trying to clear waivers, possibly setting up a future trade. Joni Ortio's arrival in North America could push Leland Irving into the NHL. And I'm telling you now – Allen York is terrific prospect soaring up the ranks in Columbus due to their weak depth.

So even though it's way too early to predict any hidden gems for next season, remember the two dynamics that are reinforcing the importance of depth – prospects and workload. You'll still gain major points from the elite workhorses next year, but you can also gain a huge edge by securing a prospect that could end up playing 20-30 NHL games.

Simply put, there will be another Reimer, another Holtby and another Montoya next season. And while it's impossible to know exactly who that will be right now, it's not hard to know which prospect can succeed given the opportunity. By understanding that prospects and depth are more important than ever before, you'll have a huge advantage over your opponents heading into next season's fantasy drafts.