Despite losing to Finland in the Gold Medal game of the 2011 World Championships, Viktor Fasth proved throughout the tournament that he's ready for a bigger challenge. That challenge could be the NHL, as three teams have already expressed interest in him. But which team gives him the best chance to play games and improve his fantasy value?

FANTASY MAILBAG – MAY 16

Voted as the Tournament MVP, the Best Goaltender and a member of the All-Star Team, Fasth played seven games for Sweden, posted three shutouts, a 1.71 goals-against average and a .946 save percentage en route to a Silver Medal.

Fasth's success in the World Championships was an extension of his awesome season in the Swedish Elite League. In 42 games for AIK, he posted a 2.26 goals-against average and .925 save percentage, which earned him a two-year contract extension (signed on 2/9) and then the

Honken Trophy as the SEL's Goaltender of the Year.

Despite being on a weaker team that finished just 20-23-4-8, he helped AIK earn the final playoff spot and a first-round matchup with HV71, the regular season champions. Fasth shocked all of Sweden when he sparked his team to a 4-0 series sweep by winning games 4-2, 3-0, 3-1 and 4-1. In the second round, however, AIK got a taste of their own medicine, as they were swept by Farjestad, the eventual league champions.

A QUICK SCOUTING REPORT

In eight playoff games, Fasth posted a 1.78 goals-against average and a .945 save percentage. Do those stats sound familiar? Time for a bigger challenge, buddy, and NHL teams are knocking on your door.

Listed at 6-foot-0 and 190 pounds, Fasth plays a refined Swedish butterfly style that relies on positioning and simplified footwork. He reminds me of a hybrid mix between Henrik Lundqvist and Jonas Gustavsson. He plays deep in his crease, has an extremely wide stance, a strong core and big upper body. His wide stance sets his knees lower to the ice, which allows him to seal the bottom two feet of the net very quickly.

He's tough to beat down low, he's extremely confident and he stays centered in his net. On top of all this, he has quick hands and a straight back, so he makes strong lateral pushes and can make the shoulder saves on a steady basis. He also proved this year that he has the mental toughness, composure, consistency and goaltending IQ needed to succeed against more skilled players.

Of course the transition to North America won't be easy, but at 28 years of age, I think it would be much smoother and more seamless than that of a 23 or 24-year old.

In regards to his chances of heading overseas this summer, the NHL's agreement with the IIHF stipulates that Fasth must sign with an NHL team by June 15. So if he's not signed by then, he will probably continue to play with AIK.

FASTH'S VALUE IS TIED TO WHERE HE PLAYS

Many media outlets have reported that at least three teams – the Oilers, Rangers and Lightning – are interested in signing Fasth as a free agent. In fact, there are many reports that prove Oilers General Manager Steve Tambellini has been scouting Fasth way before the World Championships even started.

If Fasth signed with Edmonton, he wouldn't start off in the NHL. Both Nikolai Khabibulin and Devan Dubnyk are signed through next season. But both Jeff Deslauriers and Martin Gerber are set to become UFA's on July 1, so openings will exist in Oklahoma City.

I think the Oilers would love to have Fasth start in the AHL and eventually replace Khabibulin, but with Dubnyk shattering my expectations as a future long-term starter in the NHL, I don't think Fasth's opportunity is that strong. Another option would be for the Oilers to move Dubnyk next summer (he's an RFA and will be looking for a bigger salary) and then replace him with Fasth.

If Fasth signed with the Rangers, he would also have to start off in the AHL. The Rangers are set for another year with Lundqvist and Martin Biron, but the Connecticut Whale could harvest a spot for Fasth. Chad Johnson is set to become an RFA and Cameron Talbot is signed through next season.

Fasth's opportunity in New York is essentially the same as in Edmonton. Biron is only signed for one more year, meaning the door would open for Fasth next summer to come in and back up Lundqvist. That would make an awesome Swedish 1-2 punch for sure, but all that hinges on the Rangers signing CJ to a new deal this summer. If they pass, Fasth would still have to spend a year in the AHL.

If Fasth signed with Tampa Bay, he could start off in the NHL. I still think the Lightning will re-sign Dwayne Roloson to a new one-year deal, but they have no backup right now. Mike Smith is an UFA on July 1, while Cedrick Desjardins, who I still like as the best backup option, will be an RFA. Dustin Tokarski and Jaroslav Janus are still not NHL-ready.

If the Lightning sign Fasth, but also re-sign Desjardins, that would set up one heck of a battle in training camp. If Fasth did win that hypothetical battle, his fantasy value would be excellent. Roloson would most likely play 50-55 games, giving Viktor a good 25-30 game workload behind a strong offense and a well-coached team.

Aside from the three teams that have publicly stated interested in Fasth, I feel there are other teams that provide a much stronger opportunity. His fantasy value would clearly be higher in Tampa Bay than in New York or Edmonton, but if Fasth is looking for the best chance to play NHL games right away, better options exist.

Take Detroit, for example. Chris Osgood and Joey MacDonald will be UFA's on July 1. Jimmy Howard, who really matured this season, needs not only an older mentor behind him, but someone that will push him to play at his best. Fasth, despite it being his first year in North America, could clearly fill that void. And we all know what kind of fantasy value a skilled goalie has in Detroit.

Ottawa is another example. A team that must sign a durable, reliable, experienced backup to Craig Anderson, both the Senators and Fasth would benefit from a potential marriage. Anderson, as strong as he was after the trade from Colorado, is a volatile personality. If things go bad or he's stuck in a rut, Fasth could salvage their season, and his fantasy value, both short and long-term, could soar.

LEGIT SKILL DOESN'T ALWAYS LEAD TO SUCCESS

There are other options out there that could provide Fasth with an even better opportunity, namely Colorado, Columbus and Phoenix, but that's not the thought I want to leave you with.

Think about this instead. Even if Fasth has a solid rookie season in the NHL, there is no guarantee he will get the exposure needed to turn into a long-term keeper. He will be 29 in August, which allows me to present you with Exhibit A - Henrik Karlsson.

Karlsson simply didn't play enough behind Miikka Kiprusoff this year to get a ton of exposure. Did he prove he has the potential to be a starter in the NHL? To me, absolutely. But his lack of playing time this year, especially at his age, damaged his chances of elevating his role and games played for next year. Other GM's might not be as sure as I am.

An UFA on July 1, the Flames ultimately have to choose between re-signing him, trying to trade him for another backup, or simply letting him walk and then graduating Leland Irving to the NHL. Maybe if Karlsson would have played another 10 games, the decision would be a no-brainer and he would have already been re-signed.

But he isn't, and so a similar situation could play out with Fasth. Like Karlsson, his short and long term fantasy value will be directly tied to games played. At Fasth's age, he needs exposure. And exposure stems from logging minutes.

Regardless of his skill level or impressive resume, there is simply no guarantee he transitions to the smaller ice without some struggles. If Fasth signs with a team that provides him with a chance to play 25-30 games, at least that exposure would be good enough to give him a chance to stick around for the next couple of seasons and beyond.

But if Fasth signs with a team that has a legit workhorse and he only ends up playing 15-20 games, he might not get the exposure he needs to transition to the NHL smoothly or increase his long-term fantasy value.

My advice? Sit tight until June 15. Let's see where he goes, then evaluate from there. Feel free to roll the dice if you so choose, but it's a tough pill to swallow when clear-cut skill and upside

still doesn’t guarantee any fantasy value.