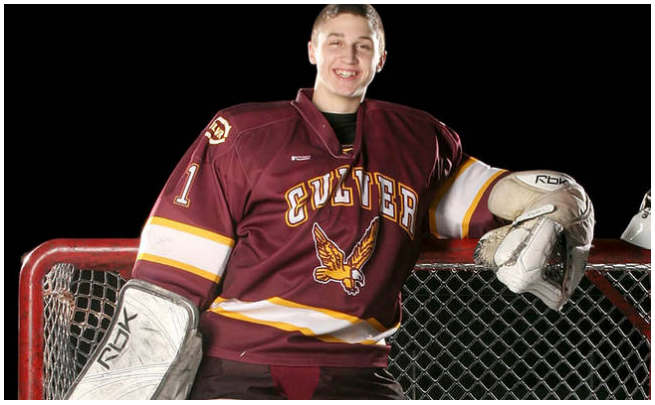

The 2011 NHL Entry Draft came to a close on Saturday with 19 goaltenders being selected by 17 total teams. After three goalies were selected in both the second and third round, seven were chosen in the sixth round and four more were snagged in the seventh round.

When I finally get to the point where I have absorbed how the draft went down for the individual goalies, I love to reflect on trends. And probably the first trend that will come to many people's minds is size. Would teams keep drafting big, or might we see a few smaller goalies selected?

As it turned out, things clearly stayed status quo. Only three goalies under 6-foot-2 were drafted – Christopher Gibson at 6-foot-1, Adam Wilcox at 6-foot-0 and the most puzzling pick of them all, the 5-foot-11 Steffen Soberg.

In regards to no goalies being drafted in the first round, the trend of “drafting late” was clearly reinforced as well. It just goes to show that it doesn’t matter when you’re taken, but what you do afterwards that counts. I am excited to see, however, that *all three goalies I discussed last Monday* were still selected.

Three goalies were listed at 6-foot-5, including Magnus Hellberg, Samu Perhonen and Nathan Lieuwen. No goalies came in at 6-foot-4, but six are listed at 6-foot-3. That includes John Gibson, David Honzik, Jason Kasdorf, Laurent Brossoit, Lars Volden and the Petteri Simila of 2011 – Johan Mattsson.

That leaves seven goalies to file in at 6-foot-2. That included St. Louis’ two new goalies, Jordan Binnington and Niklas Lundstrom, The similar-sounding Matt Mahalak and Stephen Michalek, then Frans Tuohimaa, Anton Forsberg and the Guelph Storm’s Garret Sparks.

In regards to nationality, we had five goalies selected from the USA, four from both Canada and Sweden, three from Finland, two from Norway and one from the Czech Republic. This is great news for Norway, as both Volden and Soberg were selected from a country that is unfortunately regarded as a barren wasteland in the goalie world.

After size and nationality, it’s time to get into the fun stuff – potential fantasy value. And for any

draftee, the main area to dissect is opportunity in relation to their team's depth and volume. Right away, three teams with weak depth – St. Louis, Buffalo and Carolina – opened the door for four goalies to establish a bright presence in their system.

Binnington has probably benefitted the most from joining the Blues, as they are relatively dry behind Jake Allen.

Still just 17 years old, by the time Jordan turns pro, Ben Bishop should be a full-time NHL'er and so too could Allen. Jaroslav Halak's contract would be coming to an end as well. So for a goalie that showed me so much poise and composure in the Memorial Cup Tournament, he should be quite the prized prospect in two more seasons.

I don't know much about Niklas Lundstrom, but I do know he is a well-regarded prospect for Sweden's AIK program. He has a good frame at 6-foot-2 and AIK is known around the goalie world for developing (and signing) very good goaltenders. He also posted the best GAA (2.14) in the U-18 World Juniors and won a Silver Medal for Sweden.

Next you have the Carolina Hurricanes getting the steal of the draft in Matt Mahalak, who was taken 163rd overall. Carolina clearly has terrific talent in Cam Ward and Mike Murphy, but after that, *the river runs dry* . Justin Pogge is on his way out, Magnus Akerlund is staying in Sweden for the foreseeable future and Fredrik Andersen is an unranked prospect.

With the addition of Mahalak, I think the Hurricanes essentially snagged the best young goaltender in the OHL. I'll defer you to my last School of Block, where *I discussed what makes Mahalak such a nice pick* for the draft. Knowing he's now with Carolina, a team that is really only three deep and that's it, just put him on the path for a potentially surprising career, as Plymouth has churned out the likes of Matt Hackett, Michal Neuvirth and Scott Wedgewood.

The final "big winner" in regards to opportunity is easily Nathan Lieuwen. Considered the "feel good" goalie selection, his hard work and perseverance has finally paid off. Be sure to read *my written scouting report on his performance* in the Memorial Cup, along with *my Audio Recap on his selection* by the Sabres.

For Lieuwen, the big question is whether or not the Sabres should put him in the AHL behind the re-signed David Leggio. With Jhonas Enroth clearly graduating to the NHL in September, Leggio should have no problem carrying the #3 role. That means the decision must be made to either push Lieuwen into a role where he might not play more than 20 games, or go back to Kootenay for an overage season and play a lot more.

And as you will hear, I think he definitely needs to go back to Kootenay. It would be a good ploy to set up Lieuwen with the *opportunity* to win the job in camp, but even if he performs well

enough to land the job, they should take advantage of the chance for him to play more games, bulk up and try to get back to the Memorial Cup.

Either way, Lieuwen, who was passed over in both the 2009 and 2010 NHL Entry Drafts, all of a sudden has a clear-cut path to the AHL in as little as one season. Connor Knapp, Brad Eidsness and Nick Eno are all collegiate goalies not even ranked on my Top-125 and they won't make it on the Top-150 either. So the Sabres made a great selection by taking Lieuwen, especially if he can continue to develop and play on a consistent basis.

More importantly, the kid really deserved to be drafted and now has another accomplishment to add to his repertoire.

With the true fantasy winners out of the way, the next trend that comes to mind is that of the Edmonton Oilers. Since 1980, they have only drafted two Finnish goaltenders, the most recent being Jussi Markkanen. On Saturday, they drafted two in a row with Perhonen and Tuohimaa. Overall, the Oilers have selected one Swede, two Russians, six Americans and 24 Canadians. Now they have drafted four Finns.

In that regard, I find these choices to be a pretty clear deviation from their usual routine of drafting Canadian goalies. With Devan Dubnyk clearly and quickly evolving into a legit starter for the team, and with Tyler Bunz quickly closing the gap on Olivier Roy, Perhonen's value right now isn't great. Since he's going to stay in Finland for at least two more years, he has to get

some help with a trade, a release or a bottoming-out of another Oilers prospect.

I know very little about Tuohimaa, other than he had very good numbers for Jokerit's U-20 program. He was voted to the league's All-Star team and in the process posted a .931 save percentage in 37 games.

Do the Oilers have success developing Finnish goaltenders? Well, when you consider Jussi Markkanen did post 43 wins and a 2.70 goals-against average in 128 total games for Edmonton, I guess one for two isn't bad at all. Overall, I wouldn't go nuts trying to secure either goalie right now. Perhonen has the skill and size to be a terrific goalie in North America one day, but they don't have the best opportunity in the Oilers organization.

For more insight on the top seven goalies selected, please take a few minutes to *listen to my Audio Recaps*
. I drop a ton of insight and do some projecting and discuss what made them such solid picks. They include Christopher and John Gibson, Hellberg, Perhonen, Honzik, Binnington and Lundstrom.

Overall, as I close the books on the 2011 NHL Entry Draft, I see the Blues, Hurricanes and Flames as being the biggest winners. The Capitals made one of the strangest selections that I can remember with Soberg, and the rich teams like Los Angeles, Nashville and Vancouver got even richer.