There’s nothing I hate more than sketchy, unstable goaltenders and goalie situations. I’m talking about the Pascal Leclaire, Rick DiPietro, Marty Turco and Nikolai Khabibulin’s of the world. Even though they could easily be key pieces to your fantasy team's puzzle, sheer instincts tell you to stay as far away from them as possible. Why? Because something always seems to go terribly wrong.

What could possibly lead someone to acquire or draft these lepers? Is it desperation? Is it for the adrenaline rush that comes from blindly rolling the dice? Do people have some sort of life-altering lucid dream and foresee change? Either way, you never know what could happen unless you are willing to take a risk.

As entertaining as that might seem, taking the path less traveled will often get you lost. Instead, you might just want to acquire a steady-eddy, low-risk veteran backup. If you decide to take the path more traveled, you can start them without hesitation and focus on the more important things, like winning the offense categories.

But in order to better draft backups, you should first know what makes one more valuable from the other.

When it comes to the NHL backup, the most successful ones somehow appear totally comfortable entering a game when they're actually rusty or unprepared. They also display high levels of confidence regardless of their timing and rhythm being on or off.

The best backups are also mentally ready to perform at the drop of a hat. If the starter gets sick, the best backups don't freak out or lose control of their emotions or pre-game routine. They act like getting the start is no big deal and they play in a pressure-free manner.

The best backups are used to working hard in practice and staying late to support the team. Because of this, they have no problem displaying durability within a game, and their demeanor doesn't change if the pressure rises. They always remain even-keeled and confident, and they always bring a positive and "team-first" attitude to the rink.

Finally, the best backups display leadership qualities. They're often elder statesmen, ones that relied on work ethic and smarts to extend their careers. They also embrace the fact they're not considered the "go-to" goalie anymore. For the best backups, they no longer question if and when that one big chance comes, but rather ask how much longer they can go until retirement ends the journey.

This takes a certain sense of understanding and maturity to swallow that pride, step back and focus on being effective in other areas for the good of the team. Because of this, they often perform in a much more relaxed manner, making them tough to beat on most nights.

THE BADA$$ BACKUPS

Now that you know what makes a great backup, below are five goalies that I feel fit the mold perfectly and provide you with reliable, steady fantasy value in one-year leagues. Most leagues have 12-16 teams on average, so with 30 starters, these goalies have real unassuming fantasy value. But solid backups can help you earn big money, as they are considered real steals if things go their way.

Please keep in mind this list doesn't include backups considered as highly skilled, but inexperienced. That means Tuukka Rask, Henrik Karlsson, Jhonas Enroth, Jonathan Bernier, Cory Schneider, Al Montoya, Mark Dekanich and Michal Neuvirth are omitted.

The list also includes a few goalies that, although they may fit the role of the perfect backup, I suspect will have very little fantasy value. That would include Dan Ellis, J-S Giguere, Andrew Raycroft and Nikolai Khabibulin. You may think otherwise, so keep that in mind.

Johan Hedberg: Experiencing his highest comfort level as a backup, Hedberg's .912 save percentage in 34 games last season included a career-best 2.34 goals-against average. In the 2009-10 season, he played very strong down the stretch and posted 21 wins and a .915 SP% in 47 games. In the three previous seasons, all with Atlanta, he posted sub-.900 save percentages. This season you can expect around 30 starts and about a .915 SP%. His stats are slightly better at home and he plays better in the later stages of the season. Last season he went 7-1-1 in February with a 1.43 GAA and .943 SP% and two shutouts, so he can get hot when it matters.

Ty Conklin: Ready for his second stint with Detroit, Ty's value will be very low on draft sheets, especially due to his weak 3.22 GAA and .881 SP% last season. In 2009-10, he was 10-10-2 with a 2.48 GAA and .921 SP%. In his first stint with Detroit in 2008-09, he went 25-11-2 with a 2.51 GAA. Playing behind Howard, I think Conklin can earn 30 starts. Having him contribute from start to finish will also go a long way in resting Howard for the playoffs, something Detroit

will need to do if they expect him to take the Wings even deeper than last season. Similar to Hedberg, Conklin will be very comfortable coming off the bench, especially against teams in the East.

Jason LaBarbera: Barbs has intimidating size, improved skills and plenty of opportunity now that Mike Smith is the starter. Jason will automatically increase his value just based on games played alone, which also leads to being in a much better rhythm compared to last season. I saw him play extremely well a few times last year, and I'm very confident he's a much better goalie skill-wise compared to two seasons ago (he posted a .928 SP% and 2.13 GAA in 17 games that year). He could even play 17 games in the first 50, so keep that in mind when heading into your draft. You might even play the tandem strategy and snag both he and Smith as your #2 and #3 goalies.

Scott Clemmensen: I wrote in Dobber's Fantasy Guide how I expect Scott to play in a more comfortable manner compared to Theodore. This is even more important to ponder right now, because early in the season is when the roles could switch in a hurry. If Theodore struggles out of the gate, the odds are much higher that Clemmensen takes over the starting job. And as he plays more, he will play better. And as he plays better, it will be that much tougher for Theodore to reclaim the role. Because Theodore is not making a ton of money in Florida, the organization is not under pressure to play him all the time, so this job really is there for the taking.

Mathieu Garon: It's never easy to play behind an inconsistent goalie, or for a head coach with lofty expectations and little patience. Ask Brian Elliott what it's like to play behind Pascal Leclaire, or ask any goalie what it's like to play for Joel Quenneville or Mike Keenan. It's not easy at all. That being said, Garon is sure to thrive playing alongside his former teammate, Dwayne Roloson. In Tampa Bay, Garon has stability and solid support around him. In Columbus, he was thrust in and out of games on a whim and had little help on most nights. Since everyone will be questioning Roloson's ability to continue playing at a high level, let's

apply simple logic to the situation. If Roloson is rested, he will be able to go on a deep playoff run. If Garon gets some starts, Roloson will be rested. You do the math.

Honorable mentions go to Brent Johnson, Peter Budaj and Marty Biron. We all know what Johnson can do in a stretch of starts, but I think Marc-Andre Fleury has a very good season in the cards.

Budaj had terrible fantasy value in seasons past, but with no more pressure to be the starter, for whatever workload he can scrape off Carey Price, it will be more successful than his years in Colorado.

Biron is considered by many as one of the best backups in the league playing behind one of the best starters in the league. He won’t play much, but he still fits the mold of the perfect backup on what should be a very good team.