

Listen to the Coach

Written by Justin Goldman

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Jonathan Quick was arguably the most undervalued fantasy goaltender last season. He entered training camp as the “not-so-clear-cut” starter in LA, but put pundits in their place by winning 35 games (the league-high was 38), posting a 2.24 goals-against average, a .918 save percentage and six shutouts. Considering he did all of this in just 61 games, those numbers were pure, unexpected fantasy gold.

Heading into this season’s fantasy draft frenzy, Quick’s value will not be underestimated. Not only will his skill and upside put him much higher on most people’s draft lists, but it’s also very easy to look at the improvements the Kings made over the summer and expect even more fantasy points from him this year. I mean, if he snagged 35 wins and six shutouts in 61 games last year, then surely he’s destined to post even better stats this year, right?

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Unfortunately, it's not that easy.

The second part of this equation, Jonathan Bernier, played in 25 games last season and went 11-8-3 with a 2.48 GAA, a .913 SP% and three shutouts. As the regular season came to a close, he finally started to catch fire. Because of his strong finish, he proved to the coaching staff that he had matured as a goaltender, so he's destined to see more playing time this season. More importantly, he's earned the confidence of his head coach, Terry Murray.

"There will probably be more games there," said Murray to the local media last week regarding Bernier's playing time. "I don't have it planned out as I did last year at this time. Quick is our number one goaltender. That's the way it is coming [into training camp]."

Now in most instances, if a coach essentially says he hasn't planned things out, then I'm led to believe it means he has no expectations for either goalie, but has still formed some kind of personal rudimentary "workload blueprint" in his mind. So unlike last season, Murray is putting Bernier on a higher level, one that is closer to Quick in terms of potential.

"Bernier, post-All-Star game, his game really improved," Murray continued. "He really stepped up. So it's going to be exciting here in camp, in exhibition games. We'll get going at the start of the year, and see where everything is at."

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So as you can see, the goaltending philosophy in the eyes of the head coach has changed. But even if Bernier does play more, remember that when he played well last year, as hard as he pushed for more starts, Quick pushed back even harder.

This season, Bernier will have a much better understanding of how to come off the bench and play with more consistency. For him, even if he is labeled the “backup” heading into camp, when he does play, he will look way more comfortable. How this translates to the amount of games he earns is unknown, but I can safely say that Murray’s revealing quote has opened the door for Bernier to play more.

So no matter how much you value either Kings goalie right now, realize the powerful influence a coach’s words can have on situations heading into camp. Quick played 61 games last season, but I have a feeling that number will be closer to 53 this year. He can still post around a 2.25 GAA, but in terms of sheer volume (total shots, etc), I have no problem saying his value will be lower.

But no matter what you hear a coach say, take it all with a grain of salt. Things happen fast and coaches constantly mold their goalie philosophy over time, depending on how each goalie competes every day in practice. And since the Kings have two young, promising, prized prospects, neither has the type of reputation that allows them to just be handed games. They will have to earn them.

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Keeping these quotable coaching quotes in mind, here are a few more NHL teams that have the same tandem as last year, but their roles will inevitably change due to a change in the coach's philosophy. At [GoaliePost](#), we are committed to helping you uncover these juicy tidbits, so be sure to check the QuickHits area as camps get underway.

It's easy to look at teams that have the same tandem as last year and automatically project similar numbers. But by taking the time to research what coaches have to say about their goalies' workload will give you a better idea of their true potential fantasy value.

DALLAS: Here's another example of Dallas' new head coach [Glen Gulutzan spelling out his goaltending philosophy](#) heading into the season. What does that tell you about the projected workload of Kari Lehtonen and Andrew Raycroft? This is just another example of where NHL teams are starting to realize that less is more for their workhorse starter.

GP Advice: Lehtonen is still going to play around 65 games since the Stars will be pushing all year for one of the final playoff spots.

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WINNIPEG: It may sound trivial, but relocation does manipulate a goaltender's comfort level. In Winnipeg, there's no doubt that Chris Mason will benefit from the move. Not only is he back in the much more familiar Western Conference, but he's playing close to his home town, he has very low expectations and he should stay healthy. We've seen Mason put together stellar stretches of hockey with the Predators and the Blues, so a healthy stretch of games with the Jets shouldn't surprise anyone. In a situation like this, all it will take is a bit of a lapse from Ondrej Pavelec and Mason could be on his way to rebounding from last year's disaster.

GP Advice: Mason could be one of the biggest fantasy sleepers this season, so don't forget about him in the later rounds of your draft.

BOSTON: Because Tim Thomas was so amazing last season (.938 SP% and 35 wins), you have to expect some real changes in Boston's goaltending situation. But what will Claude Julien's philosophy actually be this season? We know he's covert in numerous ways, especially announcing his starting goalies. Remember last year's openers in Europe against Phoenix? Tuukka Rask actually started the first game, but unfairly suffered the loss (he played well). In Game 2, Thomas got an early chance to prove he could still compete after off-season hip injury...and the rest is history. Now there's no denying Thomas will be at the top of his game again this season, but I have a strong feeling we'll see Rask on a more consistent basis. Why? If the Bruins want him to truly develop and grow into their next starter, they have to get him into more games. Practices don't cut it anymore.

GP Advice: We'll see a similar workload split from last season, but Rask's fantasy output will be higher than last year, and Thomas' will be slightly lower. You can't expect Thomas to match last season's .938 SP%, but 35 wins is certainly doable.

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VANCOUVER: I've dubbed this season as the "Cory Schneider Showcase" for the Canucks. Just looking at some of the moves they've made in goal, I'm led to believe that they're preparing for the inevitable trade. First they brought in Matt Climie to play with Eddie Lack in the AHL. On the surface, it seems like a harmless move to bolster their depth after losing Tyler Weiman to free agency. But when you consider the fact that Lack is a future stud, and therefore needs to play as many games as possible, it doesn't make much sense to acquire another legit #3 goalie in Climie. That is, unless Climie is expected to back up Roberto Luongo once Schneider is traded.

Then you have the recent news that Manny Legace has earned a tryout with the club. This adds even more fuel to the fire that the Canucks are searching for someone that can back up Luongo when Schneider leaves. I don't see these moves (Climie and Legace) as desperate cries for AHL help, but rather a safeguard for a Schneider trade, so that Lack is not sitting on the bench behind Luongo.

GP Advice: Schneider is probably traded before the season ends. The sooner he's moved, the more fantasy value he'll have.