In terms of sheer depth at the 2011 Colorado Avalanche Training Camp, I can safely say it was the most talented group of defensemen and goaltenders I have seen (since 2006). With a star in Semyon Varlamov and a mentor in J-S Giguere, this new tandem, if they stay healthy, will be flat out sick. But by adding the steady Jan Hejda, the burly Shane O'Brien, the healthy Kyle Quincey and a fully acclimated Erik Johnson into the mix, both fragile goalies are bubble wrapped and on their way to being potential fantasy darkhorses.

Here's another not-so-bold prediction: Colorado will not finish last in total goals against (287, which was 25 more than Edmonton) or penalty killing (a dismal 76.2%). Not as long as Varlamov continues to stay healthy and play up to his abilities.

I have already gone into extensive detail on The Goalie Guild in terms of what I've seen from Varlamov in camp. In a nutshell, he's moving very well so far and *showing improvements on the glove side*, which is the toughest skill area for a young goaltender to hone. This camp was my first chance to evaluate him up close, confirming my original thoughts that he's a naturally gifted reflex goalie with tremendous flexibility and explosiveness.

From a fantasy perspective, I can safely say that the attitude around camp is that Varlamov enters the pre-season with the same role that Craig Anderson had two years ago. The starter's gig is all his and he will be given all the games he wants. But the reality is that most of us are just praying for more than 30 starts, which is already three more than the most he's been able to play in one full season.

Varlamov got better as camp went along, then tuckered out in the final scrimmage. But if he continues to get comfortable playing in altitude, by the time the season begins, he will be in a very familiar atmosphere to that of Anderson a few years back. There's a lot of talent on this team, there's a lot of promise, but they just have to keep the kids and the goalies healthy.

Opening Night for Colorado is at home against Detroit on October 8. Peter Forsberg is retiring and the team is also honoring Karlis Skrastins and Ruslan Salei. It will be an extremely emotional and energetic sell-out night in Denver. So I expect a big performance from Varlamov and a similar surge of early-season winning similar to Anderson's October run in the 2009-2010 season.

Even if he struggles for a few games to start the season, Varlamov will still stop a ton of pucks and reach around the .920 save percentage mark. This is expected of him on paper and in terms of sheer ability, especially when you look at his healthy play in Washington. Add in the big boys (O'Byrne, O'Brien, Hejda, Quincey and Johnson) on the blue line and Colorado's days of being feeble around their net and being totally pinned in their zone are most likely over.

But how much of an improvement can we expect to see compared to last season? I would say at least a half of a goal per game. That's from a 3.50 GAA mark (again, last in the NHL) to anywhere from a 2.75 to a 3.00 total GAA. I don't expect good numbers from Giguere, but he will provide so much more in terms of leadership, guidance and experience.

Fantasy managers need to keep in mind the residual impact Giguere will have on Varlamov. He's not a fantasy value unless he's your third or fourth goaltender, but he'll still help Varlamov (mostly in an indirect manner) to play a more positionally-sound and economical style, which will go a long way in keeping him healthy. Just by watching Giguere in practice and games, Varlamov might pick up a thing or two about playing in a more positionally-sound manner.

Of course there's still a ton of question marks in goal for the Avalanche. One injury to either goaltender and the team's whole world gets turned upside down. Combine that with the unfortunate news that Cedrick Desjardins is still off the ice with his off-season shoulder surgery and the Avs are without a legitimate #3 goaltender. Trevor Cann is not ready to fill that role and it means there's nobody to step up and play in Denver if Giguere or Varlamov go down.

It led me to ponder this: if David Aebischer's tryout with Winnipeg doesn't work out as planned, could the Avalanche make a phone call and be re-united with their former Swiss starting goaltender? It's not entirely out of the question since *he told Patrick Williams from NHL.com* that he's willing to play in the AHL in order to once again be an NHL goaltender. It would be an option, that's for sure.

GOALIEPOST QUICKHITS

With the new GoaliePost format taking over, every week will include a set of QuickHits. To get these types of fantasy updates on a daily basis, many of which are sent directly to your e-mail inbox, purchase a GoaliePost membership from *DobberHockey Store* today!

BOSTON: Just last week, we advised you that Claude Julien was most likely going to work Tuukka Rask into more games. On Friday, *that coaching philosophy was publically confirmed* . This is a great move by the Bruins for so many reasons, all of which I have discussed before, mainly in my piece *Leave No Throne Unthreatened* . Rask will have more opportunities compared to last year, so I think it is not out of the question to see him play at least 35 games and win as many as 25

GP Advice: Just like we said last week, Rask's fantasy output will be higher than last year, and Thomas' will be slightly lower. But now it looks like Rask could play closer to 35-40 games, not the previous expectations of 25-30.

BUFFALO: I've heard good things coming out of Buffalo, as people seemed impressed with the trifecta of Ryan Miller, Jhonas Enroth and Drew MacIntyre. *Their pre-season action gets underway tonight* , as MacIntyre seems to be getting a good look with the start, while Enroth will come off the bench like he did most of last season.

GP Advice: There's not much of a movement issue here, but it is a sign of MacIntyre's fantasy value as a #3 goalie. He's underrated, that's for sure. We still like the workload split of 56-26 in favor of Miller in Buffalo.

CHICAGO: From what I've learned, Ray Emery had a good camp, but was a little rusty in goal. Alex Salak impressed many fans and was neck-and-neck with Emery in the scrimmages. So while Emery is still un-signed, a contract could fall in his lap at any given moment during the preseason. When this type of situation arises, it could be a single save that locks up the backup gig to Corey Crawford. So while that battle rages on, keep in mind that even if Salak wins the backup job, Emery could still be signed to play in Rockford. Alec Richards is kind of like the Trevor Cann in Colorado – just not ready to be an AHL starter. If they don't sign Emery, then they might elect to roll with Carter Hutton and Richards.

GP Advice: It doesn't sound like Emery was as dominant as we first expected, so this battle will

rage on into pre-season action. I still expect Emery to land the backup role, but the gap is closer than it originally appeared.

LOS ANGELES: *A tweet from ESPN's Pierre LeBrun* acts as a perfect post-script to last week's GoaliePost Update on Terry Murray's coaching philosophy. As you can see, now the term "riding the hot hand" has been revealed. Adjust projections accordingly. It's going to be a pretty wild ride between these two goalies all year long, but since they're talented, young and energetic, this is a great situation for the Kings as a whole.

GP Advice: We still feel Bernier will have more fantasy value compared to his production last year, while Quick will have less value compared to last year's stellar output.