When it comes to ***Brian Elliott***, I can safely say that he has worked extremely hard to earn a new contract extension, and that he totally deserves one. *The Blues signed him to a new two-year deal yesterday*, one that will see him earn $1.7 million next season, then $1.9 million in the 2013-14 season. It's a cap hit of just $1.8 million, a number that falls well within the "bargain" category for the Blues.

Hands down, I feel very strongly that the Blues did an excellent job with this goaltending decision. They bolstered the organization's depth, they secured a valuable asset, and they will continue to reap the benefits as a result.

Elliott was an inexperienced NHL goalie in Ottawa, so much of the criticism he received was, in

my opinion, undeserved. In Colorado, he was never given a chance to get acclimated to his new teammates, and the team had no chemistry or motivation, so it was nothing more than a learning experience.

But his hard work and on-ice diligence during the summer months truly paid off when training camps got underway in September, and now he's reaping the rewards. The success he had in October was bolstered by the arrival of new head coach Ken Hitchcock, and now he's one of those exciting and unique "elite backup that's not really a backup right now" goalies. Oh, and he's headed to the NHL All-Star Game, too.

It is all truly deserved, that's for sure. *I know his game very well* (see point #5) and *have discussed his technique on here many times before*. He's also a student of Elite Goalies, a company I partnered with last March. I know how hard he worked over the summer, I know that he only made a few minor tweaks to his game, and I knew he was going to have a good season in St. Louis.

But I never knew it was going to be this good.

Truth be told, even though I've always seen a lot of potential under the surface of his skill-set, Elliott's game has come a real long way since May, and even watching him today, I still feel like he's a few years away from truly reaching his "prime" as an NHL goaltender. This is great news for the Blues, good news in terms of keeping ***Jaroslav Halak*** thirsty and working hard,

this is good news in terms of the team having interchangeable 1A-1B tandem, and it's good news in terms of the organization developing valuable assets for the future.

That's the most important thing to keep in mind when relating this new contract to their future goaltenders, ***Ben Bishop*** and ***Jake Allen***. Both guys should just be happy being "the future" of a rising NHL club, even if that's the case two years from now. Bishop will have to make a decision, as will the Blues, but to me, only good can come out of this if Bishop understands the power of patience.

Since Bishop's contract is up at the end of the season, *the Blues will have to re-sign him* (RFA status via CapGeek).

Is Bishop a little peeved at the fact Elliott was re-signed before he was? Who knows. I don't. And I don't even care, because all that matters is how patient he is willing to be to truly earn his full-time NHL opportunity. For more of my thoughts on this, *you can listen to my Audio Report on Elliott and Bishop* .

He could easily sign somewhere else, as I am sure 29 other teams would have interest in bringing in such a big and talented goalie. Or he could stay in the same organization, work with the same goalie coach (Corey Hirsch), stay with the same teammates, live in the same city, and just continue to work hard at developing his game.

If he displays patience and loyalty, the odds that it will pay off down the line with more opportunities goes up. The General Manager is a former goaltender…I think it's safe to say that Bishop is more likely to be rewarded than discarded.

If Bishop goes elsewhere, he will have to deal with the potential negatives that come from a major change. Anything could happen at any given moment, so it's an inevitable weighing of possible pros and cons. It's a natural cause-and-effect dynamic that happens when an NHL team signs a goaltender to a new contract. Everyone below that goaltender in the depth chart gets bummed out a little bit, and they question their situation.

But I think you only have to look at ***Leland Irving*** in Calgary to realize that, even though an opportunity to become an NHL goaltender is very rare, patience does pay off.

This leads me to believe that the Blues will inevitably re-sign Bishop, and he will spend one more year in Peoria. He will have the potential to earn some starts with the Blues if they do find a willing trade partner for Elliott, and he will inevitably be given the chance to continue earning a majority of the starts in the AHL.

I think this is what the Blues ultimately want, because they have a valuable asset in Bishop, and they want to see their draft pick succeed. Remember, Bishop is an NCAA graduate, and they tend to develop or graduate a little later in their twenties. Whether it is this summer or next summer, he will evolve into an NHL backup, and he will be successful in that role. I'm nowhere close to being sold that he's capable of being a long-term starter, but Bishop has been ranked in the low 20′s, 30′s and 40′s of my ***Top-150 Prospects Rankings*** for almost two years.

At the end of the day, Bishop's size dictates future success. The evolution of the NHL goaltender is centered around size and natural net coverage. Bishop is the beast of all beasts, and just like we see in Nashville with ***Anders Lindback***, there is something to be said for a slightly less-skilled prospect that stands over 6-foot-6 tall. Their skills can be molded and developed over time, but overall size, Praying Mantis arms, and telescoping legs are something you're simply born with.

So I'd have to think that it's a pretty exciting day for Elliott, and for Blues fans everywhere. Regardless of how patient Bishop is willing to be over the next six months, I think it should be an exciting day for him too. The Blues have shown they value a good goaltending tandem. A tandem means they're comfortable working with interchangeable parts. That means they know the value of a full-time goalie coach, and of a balanced schedule for both goaltenders.

Like I hope all 30 teams come to learn someday, the Blues realize these elements are invaluable resources to have when putting together a viable team that can win the Stanley Cup.

I don't know about you, but to me, I think this could be a perfect situation for Bishop. I'd have to think he sees the value of being a big part of the solution, a big part of the awesome growth the club has experienced over the past two seasons. When it comes right down to it, working his way into a situation where both goalies play at the NHL level is a lot better than trying to claw and scrape his way onto an NHL roster that only relies on one.

But if Bishop lacks patience, and he elects to seek out a better situation elsewhere, there's no guarantee he'll find what he's ultimately looking for.

BOTTOM LINE: *Owning both Halak and Elliott in your one-year fantasy leagues next season will be one of the most effective and efficient tandems you could possibly employ. As more teams slowly morph into using two goalies with a more balanced workload, poolies will be more effective doing the same. I personally like Elliott's game more than Halak's, but truth be told that Halak will be given more opportunities to succeed. I would still want to own Bishop in a keeper league, as he is still one of the Top-30 prospects to own long-term.*