

Goalies at the Trade Deadline: Part II

Written by Justin Goldman

Thursday, 16 February 2012 15:09 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 February 2012 20:58



Last week, Part I of this four-part series identified some teams that were desperate for a goaltending upgrade. It looks as if that list has stayed relatively the same over the past week; Chicago is still on a downward spiral, Toronto just barely broke a four-game losing streak last night in Edmonton, the Lightning are just 1-1-1 over the past week, and the Blue Jackets are like the lame kids at lunch trying to trade that gross bologna sandwich known as Steve Mason.

The only real shift in a team's situation would be with the Avalanche, as J-S Giguere suffered a groin injury in the first period of last night's 3-1 loss to the Canucks. It does not appear to be serious, [*but I still broke down who they might recall*](#), since Cedrick Desjardins and Trevor Cann are both still injured.

**Update – Desjardins is at least healthy enough to have just been recalled by the Avalanche. Thank goodness.*

Jimmy Howard is set to return on Sunday against Nashville, so Ken Holland has to make a decision regarding Ty Conklin and Joey MacDonald. My guess is that MacDonald stays – he's

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earned it, and he's playing well enough to warrant this backup swap. Whether or not the odd man out ends up on the trading block is fodder for the rumor-mongers, but I doubt there's a market for Conklin; he simply hasn't played well enough in his limited chances.

With today's segment dedicated to identifying the "perfect fit" for the teams I've mentioned above, remember that Part III of this series (next Thursday) preps us for the deadline by updating all of these potential goalies to be moved. Part IV will then evaluate the carnage from Feb. 27 by projecting the movers' fantasy value for this season and beyond.

When it comes to the "perfect fit" goalie, you want to focus on symmetry, cohesiveness, and comfort level. Has the goalie played in a big market before? How are they playing right now, and what is their rhythm like? What experience do they have dealing with the adversity and pressure of being traded to a new team? Does a trade begin a new chapter in a career that still has potential, or is it merely a move born out of desperation?

I spoke last week about the confidence factor a GM and head coach has in their goalies, so the best place to start this week continues to be in Chicago, where the urgency to win is the highest. [Corey Crawford gets a chance to instill some of that confidence](#) in his bosses as he takes on the Rangers tonight.

Do I think he'll have the type of performance worthy of re-injecting some confidence in his coach and teammates? Actually, I do. He's still a dynamic entity in the eyes of the Rangers, so he

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could play quite well with his back against the wall. But clearly Stan Bowman and Joel Quenneville could have only lost confidence in their current tandem since last week. That being said, I think the “perfect fit” for the Blackhawks right now is still Nikolai Khabibulin.

The Bulin Wall has been a Blackhawk before. He knows the pressures of playing in that market. He knows what it is like to be under a Quenneville regime. He’s healthy. He can handle a heavy workload at this point in the season. He’s capable of being consistent, regardless of the pressure he faces. He has won a Stanley Cup before, and that is what is demanded of the Blackhawks once again. They can also easily fit his pro-rated \$3.75 million salary under their cap.

I have mentioned a few times that the Blackhawks should give Alex Salak a recall in order to change the chemistry in the crease. I feel this is as good as an option as any, as he’s talented enough to provide a spark. Remember, he actually out-performed Ray Emery in the preseason, but the Blackhawks elected to go with experience over raw skill.

That hasn’t worked out for them right now, so even if they put Emery through waivers in order to recall Salak, it’s an option the Blackhawks should look at very closely. If I were Bowman, I would have the phone ready to call Rockford if Crawford can’t come up with a promising effort tonight.

I would be remiss to not discuss the overpowering rumors of Ryan Miller being traded for

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Patrick Kane. It makes sense in principle, and I don't think it's as egregious as it originally seemed a few weeks ago. But there's no way the Sabres are going to rely on Jhonas Enroth as their starter. He has that long-term upside, but he's clearly not ready to be a true starter workhorse yet.

For those that suggest Miller is frustrated with his team and wants out of Buffalo, I would say that he was probably more frustrated with components of the team's performance and actions in the first half. But once you start winning again, you enjoy coming to the rink every day, you build camaraderie with those players, and having trudged through the trenches to win the war with your platoon, you want to stick together and see it out until the very end.

For Toronto, I think you look no further than Detroit for some veteran support. MacDonald has done wonders for the Red Wings since Howard broke his finger, and [my advice for the MacDonald vs. Conklin fantasy paradigm](#) came to fruition. Because of MacDonald's strong play, you have to believe he's drawing some attention from other GM's.

MacDonald makes a perfect fit for the Maple Leafs because he has been a part of that system before. Furthermore, he's fully comfortable playing the Francois Allaire style. He already implemented those elements into his game, and I have seen it in his performances over the past 10 days. He'll have no problem sliding right back into the blue and white jersey, especially if James Reimer and Jonas Gustavsson continue to display inconsistency. Like Khabibulin, he's unfazed due to experience, and he's playing well right now. There's no cap hit issues to worry about, either.

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Another perfect fit for the Maple Leafs would be Antero Niittymaki. They like Finnish goalies (Toskala, Rynnäs), he has experience, and he's at least finally playing in Syracuse. In three games for the Crunch, he is 1-2-0 with a .939 save percentage, stopping 77 of 82 shots. Scott Clemmensen is another option, as he is similar to MacDonald in the sense he's a stabilizing veteran presence that has been a member of the organization before.

For teams looking to solve their problems in the future, but probably won't make any moves until the off-season, I think Columbus should look at acquiring Ben Bishop from the Blues. He is exactly what they need in terms of age, AHL conditioning (something Mason never received), upside and overall size. Tampa Bay should continue to look at options like Cory Schneider, possibly even guys like Michal Neuvirth and Jonathan Bernier. Essentially, it should continue to be Yzerman's main summer project, which I think is something most of us would agree with.

Actually, [*Neuvirth's situation is really interesting right now*](#). The decision Dale Hunter made to start Braden Holtby over Neuvirth was concerning, for sure. As you read in the link above, I didn't like the decision one bit, and I didn't like Hunter's quote, either. If this was a way of "motivating" Neuvirth, it's the wrong way, and the wrong time, to do it.

Neuvirth is more emotional than most goalies. He has to be nurtured a little bit, especially since Vokoun has played so well and soaked up so many minutes. To expect Neuvirth to be motivated by saying he would be starting if he were "standing on his head" every night is faulty – it's more likely to backfire than spark a surge in play. Neuvirth has been better than the stats show, and his play in a string of starts earlier this season was very solid. You have to show him some love from time to time, not chastise him for not standing on his head in sporadic starts as a sophomore.

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At the end of the day, I won't be surprised if Neuvirth is ultimately moved between now and the start of next season, and Holtby becomes the next Capitals backup.

Many other goalies acting as "perfect fits" will slowly float to the surface between now and Feb. 27, but for now, I think we're looking at Khabibulin, MacDonald, Bishop, Clemmensen, a Sharks goaltender (Greiss, Alex Stalock, Harri Sateri, Niittymaki) and possibly a Caps goalie on the move. Either way, keep in mind that a lot of other potential trades make sense, but these are the ones I am most focused on right now.

The Starting Goalie Rating Index Results

I'm just over two weeks into publishing the daily [Starting Goalie Rating Index](#), so I had Jason punch in the results and determine what kind of success rate we've had. Obviously that rate is relative to your own fantasy goalies, but in general terms, the results have been slightly better than I expected. They're not mind-blowing by any means, but it reinforces my original belief that the SGRI is solid, and it's the exact "well-roundedness" I had hoped for.

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A quality start is three goals or less, with at least a .910 SV% or higher.

If a goaltender rates 7.0 or higher, they have a quality start rate of 84.9%.

If a goaltender rates between 4.0 and 7.0, they have a quality start rate of 67%.

If a goaltender rates 4.0 or lower, they have a quality start rate of 25% (1 out of 4).

The highest rated goalie in a matchup has won 59.5% of the time.