

50 Goalie Prospects to Ponder (Part I)

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 15 June 2009 13:13 - Last Updated Monday, 15 June 2009 13:25



A few weeks ago I was asked to list my Top-10 Keeper League [Goalie Prospects](#) in the DobberForums. Since then, I've taken some more time to expand the list to include 50 total prospects. In this two-part series, we'll take an in-depth look at the Top-30 prospects for fantasy keeper leagues, along with ten goalies I consider "off the grid" and ten more you shouldn't touch with...well...how about a ten-foot pole?

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Because most of the “legitimate” goalie prospects are still so young (anywhere from 16 to 24 years old), realize they are in the very early stages of their professional-level development. This makes the process of ranking them by fantasy value a much tougher project than it seems. Had this been a one-year prospects list simply by talent or ability, the process would have been much easier...but where’s the fun in that?!

What I’ve learned about compiling a keeper-league prospect list is that video is vital. Any time I can actually see a goalie that nobody has ever heard of, whether through Youtube or another goalie site, it’s pure gold. Fortunately, I’ve kept a close eye on McKeen’s and of course Dobber’s websites to aid in my search. So along with my understanding of how a goaltender must develop efficiently from the ages of 16 to 24, this should be a pretty solid resource for Dobber’s faithful followers.

The Revised Top-10 List

I already listed more than 10 in my original post, but since then some changes have already been made. Here’s the revised Top-10 without their scouting report, since that was already included.

1. TUUKKA RASK
2. JONATHAN BERNIER
- *3. MICHAL NEUVIRTH
4. JHONAS ENROTH
5. CORY SCHNEIDER
6. JACOB MARKSTROM
- *7. CHET PICKARD
- *8. JONAS GUSTAVSSON
9. RICHARD BACHMAN
10. JOHN CURRY

The more I watch and read about Michal Neuvirth, the more he continues to climb. Evidence for his keeper-league appeal can be seen in the fact that Jose Theodore is inconsistent and Simeon Varlamov is almost a band-aid boy. Neuvirth has had his share of injuries as well, but the poise and confidence he displayed in the AHL Finals was remarkable. Mark one down for smaller goalies, as he totally out-played Cory Schneider over the course of the series.

The same appeal is noticeable in Gustavsson as well. It’s not so much what The Monster accomplished in Sweden or what his statistics prove, but how he’s holding himself in such high esteem. The kid seems to have a lot of confidence that is probably considered by many to be borderline “cocky” for someone who has never played a game in North America. Regardless, scouts and GM’s are very high on him.

This just might be one of the best scouting reports I’ve ever read on a goaltender...enjoy this as much as I did!

“A large butterfly goaltender that fills the net and can make athletic stops. Gustavsson's

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bread and butter is stationing himself near the top of the crease, taking away most of the net from the shooter before hitting his compact butterfly. When in the butterfly his height is advantageous because it allows his shoulders to cover the upper portion of the net while his legs fill the lower half. Has a very low sagging stance in which he advertises a gaping five-hole, however he collapses into the butterfly on every save to instantaneously shut it. Typically will exploit his size and sound positioning by hitting the butterfly to play the percentages against shooters in tight, but he also boasts the flexibility and quickness in his lower extremities to make sudden kick saves to stone a crafty shooter. Effectively plays the middle of the net and can snap pucks out of the air with his trapper." - Max Giese, McKeen's Hockey

One reason why a McKeen's scouting report is perfect for goaltenders - their chief scout was a former pro goaltender. A lot of things he wrote about Gustavsson, we've analyzed in previous School of Block sessions. Yeah, I think being a pro goalie scout just might be the most amazing job in the world. Alas, here are the next 20 prospects on our list.

The Rest of the Top-25

11. MIKE MURPHY

Murphy is an absolute steal for the Hurricanes organization. He's a smaller goalie with incredible acrobatic flair and a very high compete level. With Tom Barrasso working on refining his sometimes outlandish style, Murphy is still a prized keeper league prospect. He will soak up so much information from Barrasso about being more positionally sound, how to take away more time and space by playing higher up in the crease and how to stay consistent. Similar to Barrasso's impact on Ward, Murphy could succeed on the NHL stage sooner than you think. The skills, desire and work ethic is already in place, the only thing left to do is be patient and execute when opportunity strikes.

12. ALEXANDER SALAK

Why is Salak so high on this list? Very few had heard about him until he signed a deal with the Florida Panthers in late-May. Well, take a closer look at his seasons in Finland for TPS and you'll see he's being mentored and coached by one of the most well-respected European goalie coaches of all time, Urpo Ylonen. I discussed this when Salak was signed, but Urpo's impact on Salak will be huge. The one responsible for guiding Miikka Kiprusoff and Antero Niittymaki to their NHL careers is honing a Czech youngster, which makes the whole dynamic even more interesting to follow. Ultimately, there's a reason why the Panthers signed Salak and there's many more reason to believe he could come over to North America after one more year with TPS in SM-liiga. He's that good.

13. DREW MACINTYRE

MacIntyre's accomplishments in the last two AHL seasons are impressive. In 2007-08 he was named to the AHL Second All-Star team after compiling a 2.24 GAA in 45 games for the Manitoba Moose. This season he was even better for the Milwaukee Admirals, posting an awesome .931 save percentage in 11 playoff games. Only Cory Schneider posted better stats in this year's AHL Playoffs than MacIntyre. And if Nashville's goalie carousel over the last two years is any indication of the future, MacIntyre will be an NHL netminder very soon. He's progressing faster than a lot of the other prospects on my list and because of that pace, he gets

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slated pretty high up.

14. TYLER WEIMAN

Weiman might be considered too high on this list for many of you. But not many know that he has crucial traits that consistently turn a goalie's value from mediocre to "must-own". I've seen his incredible poise and knack for making massive saves at key moments for more than four seasons. He was the best goalie in the most recent Avalanche Training Camp. He's a few years removed from leading the Colorado Eagles (CHL) to a championship as a rookie, but is still developing nicely in Lake Erie. He will take advantage of any opportunity he gets. But it may not come in Colorado, otherwise he would have already played more than five games. Timing will be everything for Weiman.

15. MIKKO KOSKINEN

My thoughts on the Vantaa Vulture are found [here](#) . Obviously he's a work in progress, but with size and mobility like that, it's really only a matter of time until he's playing in the NHL.

16. LELAND IRVING

I'll be honest - I didn't know much about Irving's style until looking at some video more closely (albeit Youtube). Irving employs a "calm" butterfly that brings great rebound control to his arsenal of talents. Letting the puck come to him and waiting for plays to develop are two of his best traits. He's one of the strongest prospects at handling plays coming out of the corners and along the half-boards. Those plays are all about patience and reading the play, so in that regard Irving is a future star. But if he wants to really exceed at the NHL level, he will need to play higher in his crease and play a more aggressive style. Goalies don't need to play deep in order to "show patience". They just need to improve their foot speed and play with more confidence. Ultimately, a few more seasons of "bulking up" and improving overall athletic ability will be the key to Irving's success. Regardless, he's a lock as a future NHL starter.

17. DUSTIN TOKARSKI

Everyone knows this kid has game. If you take what I said about Marc-Andre Fleury's positioning and then watch a Dustin Tokarski clip on Youtube, you'll instantly see some similarities. One thing I can't even begin to stress about Tokarski is the patience and quickness he has. The clip below is an amazing example of what I'm talking about. The thing that sticks out in that clip to me is the amazing transfer of weight. This is why smaller, more agile goalies are so much more proficient with today's butterfly. He drops and transfers weight to his right (on the fake) and only takes a split second to transfer that weight back to his left. With that upright, perfect 90-degree angle to his back, Tokarski is basically frictionless. Bigger goalies have more weight to shift around, so they take longer to transfer more weight.

[youtube:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8_KugCmGxk]

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18. **DANIEL LARSSON**

When compared to Thomas McCollum, Larsson blows him away talent-wise. The only reason you haven't heard much about Larsson is because Detroit is playing the waiting game with him. With the salary cap situation in Detroit starting to cause a few problems, it looks like Larsson will start to move up in the depth charts. Jimmy Howard is expected to be Chris Osgood's backup, which makes Larsson the starter in Grand Rapids. The former Elitserien Rookie of the Year is just scratching the surface of his capabilities. He is similar in style to Gustavsson and I remember that he performed very well in the Traverse City Prospects Tournament last September.

19. **JAROSLAV JANUS**

Another slippery, quick European goaltender, Janus displayed some incredible skills at this year's World Juniors. Through two seasons with the Erie Otters, Janus has sparked a big international buzz for his display of athleticism and passionate play. Similar to Gustavsson, Janus is very mobile while in the tight butterfly and has very quick feet. He's smooth moving laterally and likes to be aggressive and active in the crease at times. But he also stays solid with great positioning. For a goalie with a smaller frame, he has improved very well in his second season in the OHL. I can't wait to see when Janus is drafted...it might be higher than usual.

[youtube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxHlg-s0NNg>]

20. **THOMAS GREISS**

Greiss has developed slower than most of these long-term projects, but this past season was a much-needed mini-breakout season for the German netminder. He set a record for the Worcester Sharks with 30 wins and with only three games of NHL action, he barely falls into the prospects category. With great positioning and elite flexibility, Greiss continues to refine his game and reach a much-needed comfort level as an AHL starter. With all of his international experience under his belt, Greiss will be molded into a solid #1 that can play a lot of games and provide plenty of consistency.

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21. MATT ZABA

The former Colorado College standout was a silent assassin during his tenure with the WCHA's Tigers. He didn't collect many accolades, but he did have a breakout year with the Hartford Wolf Pack this year. He was one of the top AHL rookies in many different categories and was even named the AHL Goalie of the Month for February, which doesn't happen often for a rookie. Zaba has great leadership abilities and has a wide butterfly but still stays very compact when the puck is in tight. He has incredible balance, which is caused by his knees, which are bent slightly more than most butterfly goaltenders. Zaba agreed to terms with the Rangers just a few weeks ago and should get plenty of work as a second-year goalie in Hartford.

22. PETER MANNINO

The former DU Pioneer is probably the most unconventional butterfly goalie I've seen in years. He plays a hybrid style that depends more on standing up and conserving energy than taking away the bottom portion of the net. But Mannino is a confident, strong goaltender with excellent net coverage. He's a big guy that can stand in there and make 35 saves seem like 20. He doesn't waste a lot of energy since he doesn't rely on the butterfly so much. He's a great leader and understands how to come through in big games. His career at Denver was very successful and I was fortunate to spend a few hours on the ice with him. His understanding of the position is bar-none, but his own personal style is very different from what you would come to expect from a prized keeper league prospect.

23. KEVIN LALANDE

It was a mistake for the Calgary Flames to trade away Lalande's rights. Especially considering Curtis McElhinney is not really proving much in the way of prized keeper prospect, the Flames would have been much better off retaining Lalande. After spending four years with the Belleville Bulls, Lalande has jumped around between the AHL and ECHL. This season he played for three different teams, including the Las Vegas Wranglers, the Quad City Flames and then the Syracuse Crunch. Overall he posted a very strong .927 save percentage and 22 wins in 40 games. A full season with Syracuse will give him some much-needed confidence and exposure, as it seems that Lalande has flown under the radar that past few years.

24. JOSH TORDJMAN

Tordjman has taken time to get to the NHL, but he's seen a lot of action along the way. In Victoriaville it was not uncommon for Tordjman to face 35-40 shots in a single game. One season he averaged 31 shots against per game. Somehow Tordjman slipped through the NHL Entry Draft two years in a row and the only conceivable reason I can come up with for that is due to his size. He's only 165 pounds and was reported at 155 just a few years ago. There has been some talk that he struggles to keep weight on, but that it doesn't impact his play much. Technically, Tordjman is as solid as any other prospect at his level and should get his big chance in one or two more seasons.

25. JAKE ALLEN

Allen's value skyrocketed after he went 6-1-0 with a 1.43 GAA in the U-18 World Junior Championships for Team Canada. Allen is a very mobile goaltender with great reflexes and a sharp glove hand. His tight butterfly style is similar to the style that is dominated in the QMJHL.

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Allen displayed a lot of poise during the Traverse City Prospects Tournament back in September and has developed at a tremendous pace the last two years. Allen uses his 6-foot-2 frame to fill the net effectively, but still needs to play more aggressively, which allows him to take up even more space in the net. Even with all of the Blues goaltending prospects muddying up the depth charts, Allen is poised to make an impact at the NHL level.

STAY TUNED FOR PART II, which includes the final 25 keeper-league goalie prospects on our list!