

Nabokov Fantasy Fallout

Written by Justin Goldman

Tuesday, 22 June 2010 20:10 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 June 2010 19:20



Evgeni Nabokov's reign in San Jose [*has finally come to an end*](#). The Russian from Kazakhstan has won more games in the last three years than any other goalie, but now joins at least 20 UFA goalies seeking a new empire. I won't speculate on where he goes or who they bring in as a replacement, but I will discuss what this does to San Jose's goalie prospects, from a fantasy perspective of course.

Occam's Razor says San Jose would look to replace Nabokov with another workhorse, like a Marty Turco. I say Turco because he's really the only goalie that could not only log heavy minutes, but compensate for the loss of Rob Blake at the same time. He kills two birds with one stone thanks to his elite puck-moving skills, which allows the Sharks to transition from defense

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to offense much faster. And even though it plays no role in their decision, Eddy Belfour and Arturs Irbe were former Stars goalies that also played for the Sharks, so a relationship exists between both teams. Turco would certainly take a pay cut to play there, as it's a perfect resting place for any goalie over 30.

San Jose could also bring in a goalie that is more cost-effective and can thrive and develop in a 1A-1B situation with Thomas Greiss. This could be way by trade during the Draft, or by signing an unrestricted free-agent like Dan Ellis, who also touts incredible stick-handling and puck-moving skills and ties with the Stars organization.

A 1A-1B situation is more effective in my opinion, as it allows for all goalies in the organization to take a step in their development. [As stated on the Sharks' website](#) , the organization is very confident in their goalie depth chart, as they should:

“This decision boils down to a dedication of dollars in a salary cap system and under this system, teams can't keep everyone. We are excited about the goaltenders coming up through our system and we will also keep an eye on assets that may become available in the coming weeks.”

Without knowing what San Jose will now spend on a goalie, Turco and Ellis are just two examples that reflect the high and low cost spectrum. Either way, expect Greiss to start at least 30 games, maybe 35, and continue to improve his NHL skills and overall confidence. And

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regardless of who San Jose ultimately acquires, here's some insight on how it impacts Sharks goalies from a fantasy perspective:

1. Greiss' one year and keeper league fantasy value just shot through the roof. He's going to play at least 30 games next season, maybe even 35+. Only a workhorse like Turco would limit his games to a number on the low end of that scale and anyone else on the list of UFA's would likely have to roll with a 1A-1B situation.

The good news is that the Sharks have strong faith in him. They not only recognize his high skill level, but his potential to develop into a starter as well. This is a huge boost of confidence for Greiss and exactly why I have been adamant in his #5 rank in my [Top-100 Fantasy Prospects Rankings](#). Greiss clearly has the potential to be an elite goalie and if he performs well in camp and in his first few starts, it could be a very uplifting year for him. It's a huge win for any of his keeper-league owners.

2. Alex Stalock also sees a tremendous boost in his long-term fantasy value. The kid is already special. Now he has the faith of a solid organization and more opportunity than ever before. Remember, he doesn't have that hybrid, refined butterfly stance or style you see with all of the new-wave future stars like Rask, Gustavsson, Price, etc. But don't let that trick you! Stalock's game thrives on being much more of a positional goalie that reads plays like a wizard. He's incredibly steady and focused and hard-working. He's a big-save goalie and plays big in the crease. And he can still make the desperate save if needed.

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Most scouting reports will discuss how Stalock has great size and a lot of strength, but an even stronger mind. He is VERY legitimate due to his history of leadership and playoff success, so his pro era is already off and running, thanks in large part to a great AHL rookie season. Expect him to log another year as an AHL workhorse this season, but now he's only a year or two away from solid NHL duties. This is perfect, in my opinion, as there's no rush, no pressure and low expectations. He just gets to play a ton of hockey and continue to refine his style a little bit. He's a future NHL workhorse, and a successful one as well.

3. Henrik Karlsson's trip to San Jose during their playoff run really paid off. Even though he is slated to play for Dynamo Riga in the KHL this season (thanks to Sentium for that update), a new contract allows San Jose to bring him over at any time. Harri Sateri's value rises as well, and is a better suited to evolve into a long-term keeper due to his age and size. [*His new deal is similar to Karlsson's*](#) and therefore increases his chances for more opportunity.

4. Tyson Sexsmith stays entrenched in Worcester. [*CapGeek.com has him making \\$65,000*](#) in the AHL next season, so I don't expect his fantasy value to rise at all behind Stalock. He's not touted as having very high NHL potential and he's still a work in progress with limited upside. But the move by San Jose still helps his cause.

Overall, the move completely shifts the market for goalies this summer and causes close to half of NHL teams to re-evaluate their current situation. I have to imagine you will probably see some dramatic literature out there over the next week as well, maybe trying to explain whether or not this was a planned move by the Sharks.

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They just re-signed both Sateri and Karlsson in the last month and they are both legitimate prospects, so I understand where that line of reasoning comes from. But that's not the case in this situation, as the moves are long-term, not short-term, so they are merely coincidences. The Sharks are going in a new direction due to salary cap issues, and since they have many strong prospects, they can compete without spending as much money as last year.