For six elite goaltenders, the All-Star Weekend was a chance for them to showcase their skills to the entire hockey world. For the other 54 NHL goalies, it was a chance to relax for a long weekend, push the proverbial reset button and get refocused in order to play their best hockey of the season down the stretch.

Before I dig into this week's lesson, I wanted to say that the NHL's All-Star Weekend, in my opinion, was much more successful than I expected. I was interested and entertained enough to watch the entire Fantasy Draft and I had some good laughs during the Skills Competition. I'll never forget the goalie race between Cam Ward and Tim Thomas, both of who are tremendous skaters, but with completely different forms.

The All-Star Game was a good one, especially when it came to the second period goaltenders. Jonas Hiller, who faced the most shots of all six goalies, was by far the most impressive of them all. I also nominated Carey Price and Henrik Lundqvist as my other Three Goalie Stars of the Game. Lundqvist had a pair of ridiculous saves on Danny Briere and Martin Havlat and Price's calm demeanor was on display for the entire second period.

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With roughly 10 weeks left in the regular season, a number of goalies, especially in the Western Conference, will be relied upon more heavily to win games. As we've seen in the previous five years, the sense of urgency from here on out suddenly surges and we'll easily be able to feel that glorious playoff atmosphere each and every night.

From a goalie's perspective, just a few of the game dynamics that they'll have to process include drastic momentum swings and a rise in a game's speed and pace. As a result, goalies will need to find the energy – both physically and mentally – to be even more durable, focused, consistent and timely than they were before the All-Star break.

These obvious aspects of goaltending following the All-Star Weekend mean one thing; Goalies must adjust as quickly as possible. Since things happen faster and outcomes mean so much more in the playoff race, they're forced to improve every element and aspect of their game…almost overnight.

With that in mind, let's take a look at some goalies that I think will not only play well in this crucial stretch of games, but boost their team's playoff chances. One goalie that definitely deserves to be on this list is Tomas Vokoun. But you won't find him included below because I think we all know by now just how well he can play down the stretch.

MIIKKA KIPRUSOFF – He only posted a .885 save percentage and 3.09 goals-against average in January, going 5-2-1 in 10 games and being pulled twice. And yes, those are pretty abysmal numbers for a goalie that was expected to be one of the top fantasy goalies to own this season.

Everyone knows Kipper's confidence was shot down in early-January, but due in large part to energy drain and simply failing to snap out of a rut, his struggles extended through most of the month. But I point to a momentum-swinging reflex glove save in the first period against the Canucks as the exact moment when his confidence and timing returned. He made 41 saves on 44 shots in that morale-boosting shootout win and has since gone on to win his next two starts. He only allowed one goal against in both of those games.

With a weekend of much-needed rest under his belt and a revived sense of confidence, Kiprusoff could easily be one of the stronger fantasy goalies down the stretch. Is it enough to push the Flames into a playoff spot? That depends on how the team plays around him and how the other playoff-bubble teams perform. But Kipper has his swagger back, and we know what he's capable of doing when the confidence is there and the positive energy is flowing in Calgary.

RYAN MILLER – Another goalie that should see his fantasy value benefit from some much-needed rest is Buffalo's golden boy. He did rattle off an 8-2-1 record in January, but his 2.81 goals-against average was the weakest mark for any month of his season so far. But as of today, the Sabres still sit six points out of a playoff spot, so expect his focus to be at a much higher level.

There are a few things to keep in mind when looking at Miller's ability to improve his fantasy value down the stretch. First of all, the two-plus weeks he missed in early-November does parlay over to this point in the season, meaning he hasn't played as much as he did last year, nor faced as many total shots. Secondly, remember what Miller did at this point a year ago for Team USA in the Winter Olympics? He sure does. And he's sure to draw upon that experience to help his team make the playoffs.

As a 30-year-old goalie with an economical and durable butterfly style, very few elements lead me to believe he won't have the wherewithal to improve his fantasy value. He knows what it takes to step up when it matters most and he's clearly capable of doing so. Oh, and he's won his last four starts, stopping 125 of 133 shots during that stretch.

HENRIK LUNDQVIST – Although he went just 5-4-1 in January, he posted season-bests in goals-against average (1.97) and save percentage (.934) compared to previous months. With 21 wins in 40 games played, many of his fantasy owners might look at this as being below expectations. But there's still a lot of hockey left to be played.

As of today, Lundqvist is on pace to play 70 games and win 36. But why do I feel so strongly that he's still going to push for the 40-win plateau? He has the ability to make the big, timely save when games are close. That ability was clearly on display in the All-Star game. Although he suffered the loss, some of saves he made (on Havlat, Briere and Matt Duchene's penalty shot) were a clear indicator of his timeliness and elite skills.

Looking at some of Lundqvist's splits, he has allowed 27 goals in the first, 35 in the second, but only 26 in the third period. His .924 save percentage at home is consistent with his .925 save percentage on the road. He also has seven shutouts (tied for first with Thomas) and is on pace for four or five more.

Finally, Lundqvist has what both Kiprusoff and Miller have – experience. And because of that crucial attribute, I expect him to finish the season with better numbers than what his current statistical pace dictates.

ANTTI NIEMI – I'll be honest. It's not hard to predict a stronger fantasy value down the stretch for Niemi, who only has a 13-13-3 record with a 2.69 goals-against average and .912 save percentage coming out of the All-Star break. But as you can see, he won four games in a row before losing in overtime to the Kings last Wednesday. Things are clearly going in the right direction for the Finnish enigma.

Because Antero Niittymaki suffered from nagging injuries in January, the ball has fallen in Niemi's court. And nobody on that Sharks team will overlook what Niemi accomplished last season in Chicago. Therefore the chances are high that the team not only plays with more confidence in front of Niemi, but that he plays with more confidence in himself.

It has been a pretty inconsistent season for Niemi as a whole. He's had two four-game losing streaks, a four-game winning streak, and only what I would consider "average" statistics for a goalie with "average" butterfly skills. But he truly excels where it matters most – in the mental toughness areas.

And as all School of Block students know, that asset trumps any statistical evidence that could possibly be found.

But I won't leave you without one pertinent stat. Niemi's .901 power play save percentage is a quality number that can't be underestimated down the stretch. He has only allowed 15 PP goals on 152 shots, which is one of the best numbers for goalies that have started more than 20 games. Only Thomas (.921), Pekka Rinne (.921) and Vokoun (.920) have higher save percentages, while Marc-Andre Fleury has a .901 PP save percentage as well.

NON-PLAYOFF CONTENDERS – The four goalies above are all on teams just inside or

outside of the playoff race. But what about some of the goalies that don't have any playoff pressure on their shoulders? In that regard, expect ***Devan Dubnyk*** to improve his fantasy value down the stretch. He continues to evolve in all areas of the game, making him a quality sleeper pick.

Martin Brodeur

will also continue to be, as I advised a few weeks ago, a quality goalie to own down the stretch. Finally, since Evgeni Nabokov is suspended,

Kevin Poulin

should get some good minutes in February and continue to post a quality save percentage. A .925 mark in his first seven games played is a brilliant number to have on a weak team.