

Desperate Measures

Written by Justin Goldman

Monday, 21 March 2011 13:25 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 March 2011 11:01



Shout it from the hills – the playoffs are here! It's time to polish the trophies, drop your cold hard cash on the table and do whatever it takes to finish first, second or third in your league. If you made it this far, you didn't get here without solid goaltending. And if that's true, you're probably confident with those same goalies heading into the first round. But what if you struggle to start the week and you're left scrambling for points over the weekend?

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Well, desperate times call for desperate measures. That means you'll essentially have to rely on the waiver wire and free agent pool to salvage your week. So allow me to present you with a list of goalies that should be readily available in most leagues and still provide you with a chance for some points over the next few weeks. Before I list them, however, there are a few different dynamics to keep in mind if you're forced to find a goalie in the 11th hour.

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First of all, be sure to check their strength of schedule. If they are playing against playoff-bubble teams, then they might not be able to match the intensity needed to win. Secondly, consider their role with the team and their contract status. If the goalie is set to become an UFA and has an uncertain future, he'll probably play with a stronger sense of urgency. Consider this the Craig Anderson dynamic, as fighting for a new deal leads to motivated, alert, focused play.

Aside from those dynamics, be sure to read [this great thread posted in the Dobber Forums](#). As you can see, there are many different statistical elements to consider when choosing whether to start, bench or pluck a goalie off the free-agent wire. You just have to weigh these factors for yourself, while always trusting your gut! I made sure to leave some of my own thoughts in there as well. In my opinion, my instincts trump almost any other statistical factor.

Just a disclaimer – the goalies below are not listed in any particular order. But just to get some feedback, how would you rank these goalies in order of potential value for the rest of the season? Leave your ranking below and I'll leave mine later this afternoon!

RAY EMERY - One of my finest pieces of advice this season came last week [when I projected Emery would get a few starts and produce valuable fantasy points](#)

. This is exactly what happened, and he was voted as the NHL's 2nd

star of the week for his efforts. You can also

[check out my scouting report from his 2-1 win over the Blues](#)

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Once again, I expect him to snag a few more starts this week and play extremely well. The Ducks have a difficult three-game road trip ahead of them. It includes a back-to-back on Wednesday and Thursday in Dallas and Nashville, then in Chicago on Saturday. Dan Ellis did start last night against the Flames, but narrowly escaped with a 5-4 OT win. But the Ducks were up 3-0 early, so he surrendered a lead and wasn't as sharp as Emery.

CURTIS MCELHINNEY – His two big wins over New Jersey and Tampa Bay last week lend a hand to a few more starts down the stretch. Readily available in most leagues, he's also fighting just to stick around in the NHL, so his level of urgency is extremely high. He looks very comfortable playing in a Senators uniform and I expect that comfort level to be a key to any success he has to finish the season.

But be careful. Anderson just signed a juicy four-year contract, so if he's healthy enough to re-claim the crease this week, McElhinney probably won't play many more games. The Senators also only have one more back-to-back series on Thursday and Friday. If Anderson does play this week, Curtis will probably lose some of the solid rhythm he has right now, which quickly erodes his potential fantasy value down the stretch.

RICK DIPIETRO – Although he's less likely to be available in your league, his 4-3 shootout win coming off the IR on Saturday was the boost of confidence needed to continue playing well. And

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similar to what we saw with Al Montoya, part of his success will be due to the quality support in front of him. Also, this might seem like a trite piece of info, but with DiPietro wearing the old-school Chris Osgood style mask, he can probably see and track the puck a little better.

The Islanders have two more back-to-back series this season, coming on March 30 and 31, then to close out the season on April 8 and 9. I think that DiPietro and Montoya will both see a handful of games and post quality numbers. I've noticed that Montoya has lost some of the sharpness we saw earlier in the month, especially early in games. And that just might be the edge DiPietro needs to claim a few more games when all is said and done.

MICHAEL LEIGHTON – Although he's the least likely to produce any fantasy points, if the Flyers run into any serious goaltending issues over the next two weeks, don't lose sight of Leighton. No team has a need for a goaltender right now, so he would clear re-entry waivers. He's not rusty and capable of playing well right away. I don't expect this to happen, but it's certainly a trick up the Flyers' sleeve if Sergei Bobrovsky and Brian Boucher happen to fall apart.

MIKE SMITH – The Tampa Bay Lightning are now firmly in the playoffs and have a very positive thing going with Dwayne Roloson as their go-to goalie. But with the team set to play three more back-to-back sets in their final 10 games, I expect Smith to at least start three more games. Resting Roloson will be a factor down the stretch for the Lightning, so keep Smitty in the back of your mind as well. All three back-to-back sets include travel as well.

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SCOTT CLEMMENSEN – With the Panthers out of the race for another season, expect Clemmensen to play some games down the stretch. He has started three of the last four games for the Panthers and posted a 4-0 shutout over Toronto back on March 19. The Panthers also have two more back-to-back sets, one of which is on Tuesday and Wednesday. There's also a lot of travel involved this week, as they go from New York to Chicago, then back to Buffalo on Friday before continuing their five-game road trip next week.

JHONAS ENROTH – We all know that the Sabres must keep winning games down the stretch. But they face an uphill battle with four more back-to-back sets. Therefore you are rest assured that Enroth will be called upon to continue his terrific call-up performances over the next three weeks. Ryan Miller really withered away late against the Predators on Sunday, so Buffalo will have to find a way to rest him down the stretch. The Sabres have a back-to-back set this Friday and Saturday, then again next Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday.

BRIAN ELLIOTT – He was the key to Colorado's 3-2 shootout win over the Oilers on Saturday and had his best game in an Avs uniform. This is a risk, but he probably starts on Tuesday at home against Columbus. If he's able to carry over the momentum from Saturday, remember he's extremely streaky and could post a solid run to finish the season. He's also fighting just to stay in the NHL, so he has to find a way to string together some wins right now.