

Prospects Pulse, Part II

Written by Justin Goldman

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Over the past week, very little free agent goalie movement took place. But this was an expected occurrence, as spots get filled quickly and many goalies that had fantasy value last season turn up homeless. Such is the situation currently facing goalies like Ray Emery, Marty Turco and Pascale Leclaire, along with some solid AHL goalies like Tyler Weiman and Mike Brodeur.

So the spotlight continues to shift, as teams are essentially done bringing in new names and now taking care of their restricted netminders. Over the past week, Jeff Frazee, Jeff Zatkoff, Marc Cheverie and Tyler Plante all re-upped with their respective teams. But Jhonas Enroth, Chad Johnson and Riku Helenius still have to agree to terms.

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Enroth's decision clearly has the biggest fantasy impact, as his opportunity to post good stats in around 20 games behind Ryan Miller is on the line. Enroth does deserve a little more money for what he brings to Buffalo, but if he loses this opportunity, he may never get one again. The Sabres also have plenty of options outside of Enroth, so I hope he bites the bullet and agree to terms before it's too late.

The free agency winds also swept Martin Gerber over to Vaxjo in the Swedish Elite League, while Barry Brust, who really flew under the radar for the Binghamton Senators last season, signed to play in Germany's DEL for the Straubing Tigers. Coming back over from the KHL are Yann Danis and former Flyers prospect Scott Munroe, both of which fill a veteran role in the AHL. The Charlotte Checkers also signed former Boston College goalie John Muse to a new two-way contract.

So with this movement in mind, here's the next set of fantasy updates and advice in Part II of the Prospects Pulse series.

EDMONTON – With both Barons goalies on the move and Bryan Pitton an UFA, the Oilers added former Devils and Islanders prospect Yann Danis into the mix last week. Danis played in the KHL last season and posted a 3.10 goals-against average and .910 save percentage in 31 games for Amur Khabarovsk.

Although it is unclear who the Oilers sign to play with Danis, I like the fit because he's a former

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AHL Calder Trophy Champion (2007 with Hamilton as a backup) and has 49 games of NHL experience with Montreal, New Jersey and the Islanders.

Now the burning question is whether or not Danis' counterpart will be Olivier Roy, or if the Oilers sign another UFA instead. It must also be pointed out that many analysts (including myself) feel that the Oilers should be looking to replace Nikolai Khabibulin. This team simply has no time to waste on a goalie that lacks consistency. If they want to make the playoffs, they'll make a move.

This means it's time to put a vested interest in Devan Dubnyk's fantasy value. This hinges on the fact that I consider him as the most improved full-time NHL goalie from last season. He played with confidence in October, but his movements and rebounds were really uncontrolled. But by April, he had proved legitimate starter upside and had improved all areas of his game, including his durability.

So with a summer to further refine his game, there's no reason why Dubnyk can't earn 50-55 starts this season. Depending on Edmonton's actual faith in his abilities, they could sign an UFA like Turco or Emery to be that veteran presence, thus making Khabibulin quite expendable, possibly even available to join Danis in OKC.

My advice? Expect Dubnyk's value to rise and Khabibulin's to drop. Expect Roy to begin his pro career in the ECHL, which isn't great for his NHL-readiness timeline, but better for his overall development. You can also expect Tyler Bunz's long-term fantasy value to keep rising, as he

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continues to close the gap between him and Roy. He should have a very strong season for Medicine Hat in the WHL.

FLORIDA – To quickly dissect the tandem of Jose Theodore and Scott Clemmensen, my early pre-season projections for playing time are a healthy split between the two. Clemmensen is much better when he's playing on a more regular basis and he'll get that chance because Theodore will take some time to re-adjust to a larger role on an Eastern Conference team.

Statistically speaking, I expect both to have save percentages in the .915 ranges and GAA's in the 2.40 range, mainly because the team's defense will be much stronger than in years past.

In the AHL, things are status quo. Markstrom will have to put together an All-Star caliber season to live up to his expectations and get a good shot at making the Panthers as Theodore's backup for the 2012-13 season. His long-term value gets a huge boost, however, as the organization is clearly paving a way for him to take over the crease as a starter in two more seasons. It's a perfect path for him.

Markstrom will once again be pushed by the underrated Tyler Plante, who agreed to his qualifying offer last week. I'm also excited to see Marc Cheverie agreed to his qualifying offer as well. He'll continue to develop in the ECHL and I look forward to scouting him at the second-annual DU Pro Alumni Camp in August.

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My advice? Continue to harvest Markstrom as one of the best “no-brainer” fantasy prospects in the world. Don’t expect Plante’s value to rise at all, and continue to keep a close eye on the underrated Cheverie.

LOS ANGELES – Things are staying status quo in Kings country, but it looks as if J-F Berube will begin his pro career in the ECHL with Ontario since Jeff Zatkoff agreed to his qualifying offer. Their top-flight prospects in goal were the big buzz coming out of their development camp, as both Martin Jones and [Christopher Gibson impressed the coaching staff](#) .

Although he has to face the pressure of duplicating his rookie season’s success, [Jones’ fantasy value is steadily rising](#)

. The same can be said for every prospect in their system, however, as their guidance alongside the goalie coaching duo of Bill Ranford and Kim Dillenbaugh continues to be one of the best in the NHL. It definitely helps to have Ron Hextall in the front office as well.

My advice? Stay away from Zatkoff in keeper leagues, but do whatever you can to snag Jones, Berube and Gibson...in that order.

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MINNESOTA – With the Wild re-signing Josh Harding, his chance to get the exposure he needs to earn a starting opportunity with another franchise is finally here. All he has to do is stay healthy and be ready and perform up to his level. I expect this to happen, and I expect Harding to be a legitimate fantasy value this season as a good #3 goalie. This will go a long way in further building his long-term value, so owners should harvest some legitimate hope – this could be a life-changing year for Harding.

Looking down at Houston's situation, Dennis Endras seems to be stuck between a rock and a hard place. The Wild might want to put Darcy Kuemper in the AHL with Matt Hackett, so where Endras and Kuemper end up is a total unknown. I won't project any fantasy value for the upcoming season, other than to say three goalies are fighting for two AHL spots, and one will go to Hackett.

My advice? Snag Kuemper while you can and don't be afraid to take a risk by drafting Harding...he'll most likely be available.

MONTREAL – Even though Peter Budaj had very little fantasy value as an Avalanche backup, I feel strongly that his new role behind Carey Price will breed better stats. The main reason for this is due to him working with Pierre Goulx, Montreal's full-time goalie coach. Think about Budaj in an Avalanche uniform, and why he was never able to take that next step in his development, even though he's still a tremendous athlete with NHL-caliber skills. What's the main missing piece?

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A full-time goalie coach working on his game. [But he'll get that guidance in Montreal](#), and it will pay dividends. It doesn't mean he'll play more than 20 games, but it does mean he will finally improve his overall game and therefore improve his fantasy value.

In the AHL, Nathan Lawson has found a way to extend his professional career by getting a terrific shot to be the starter in Hamilton. That leaves Peter Delmas and Robert Mayer to fight for the second role, leaving one of them to play in the ECHL. [Click here to read more about Delmas' value](#) with Montreal following a new three-year contract and why it's on the rise.

My advice? Definitely take Delmas over Mayer in your keeper leagues.

Be sure to check back next week when we continue to assess the fantasy value of prospects throughout the NHL!