

## Offseason: What to Do to Help Your Keeper League Team

Written by Ian Fergusson

Monday, 14 April 2008 04:19 - Last Updated Tuesday, 15 April 2008 03:16

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Welcome once again to “An Expert’s Audit”. This audit will also be posted here as well as on my fantasy hockey blog at [www.fantasyhockey.hockeyanalysis.com](http://www.fantasyhockey.hockeyanalysis.com) . These audits will continue to appear here monthly and if you’re interested in having your keeper team “worked over” then you can begin by emailing Dobber ([dobber@dobberhockey.com](mailto:dobber@dobberhockey.com)) about it.

I’ll be writing an article in two parts for the next two months of An Expert’s Audit. My hope is that you can glean something beneficial out of this, particularly you folks in salary leagues.

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### **What vacation?**

Don't take the summer off. This is an absolute must in ANY league. Just like trading PIMs to a guy who can steal a point away from your main competition is a smart move, especially if it also won't hurt you, look at draft and keeper options over the summer to see if you can put yourself in better position for a draft pick in September. Do you have a guy that is a good keeper option but you can't keep? How about moving him to a guy so you can pocket a pick of his? I find in my keepers that nobody looks at that as an option, they just sit and wait for the draft and let things fall where they may. Idiotic. If you can help yourself in July or August then you have to have that discussion, in the very least. Your league's strategy has to go year round and you need to fight year round.

Know the rules of your league. I'm the "secretary" for my two keeper leagues. We only keep three guys from year to year but still, best I can tell, I'm the only guy firing off emails to other guys in the offseason to see if I can gauge interest in moving a couple guys or a keeper and a pick for a better keeper. In our league you're not allowed to trade draft picks so you have to make a deal where you draft a player the other guy wants and then trade him post-draft. It's just like the NBA in that respect, but for vastly different reasons. Get out your fine-tooth comb and take a close look at your league's constitution to see what is permissible for trading in the offseason. If you don't have a constitution then you should begin discussions for setting one because guys like me will look for loopholes everywhere ... and seekers find, my friends.

### **Know your history**

As you prepare for your season, compare your team to the guy's team that won the whole shooting match last year. Essentially you'll need to tier guys to see if you would/could measure up over the course of a season. As an example I'll give you a look at one of Dobber's keeper teams, just bear in mind that every league is going to be different as every setup is different.

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Every guy in every league HAS to have a plan. If you go into an auction or a draft with just a draft list and your favorite fantasy sports mag then you're probably primed to be run over by the guy with a laptop, a spreadsheet, and a plan already laid out.

Comparing your keeper options with last year's winner's team is the way to start. Obviously whatever that guy put out for his team last year was enough for victory so start comparing options off your squad that could perform close to his starters. Dobber's starters, listed in order of importance to his squad, on a team that is going to win this year are:

Evgeni Malkin, Vincent Lecavalier, Marc Savard, Paul Stastny, Jeff Carter, Kristian Huselius, Jaromir Jagr, Dustin Brown, Andy McDonald, Jason Arnott, Rod Brind'Amour, Keith Tkachuk, Ryan Whitney, and Rostislav Olesz. They are all integral to the team's continuance. It's the remainder of the roster that determines where you finish, they represent the chances you take.

The "wildcards" on his team are: Marek Zidlicky, Colby Armstrong, Torrey Mitchell, Tom Poti, and Jason King. It's these guys that will be dropped or traded for picks during the offseason. Dobber apparently is considering putting Keith Tkachuk on his trade list but I'd consider adding Olesz to that list too if he could get a pick worth having.

Now if I were in this league, and I'm not, I'd look at Dobber's team and I'd try to figure out how I can acquire players that could compete with his lineup. The top of his roster has 4 guys with 100 point potential so I'd have to get my hands on 4 other guys with 100 pt potential just to be able to compete. His next tier has a couple guys with as high as 80 pt potential but they're also getting older so let's group Carter, Huselius, Jagr, Brown, McDonald, Arnott, and Brind'amour into a 50-75 pt grouping. If all those guys get 75 pts next year (not likely) then I'd need to find 525 pts out of those 7 starting slots. That's a ceiling mind you so, let's downgrade that to 450 pts. That means that I'd have to find 850 pts out of 11 starting slots in order to compete. That's not that hard to get to actually, I totaled my top 11 scorers in one of my leagues and got close to 800, and I'm not winning that league this year plus it's a 16 team league. In a standard 12 team league you should be able to get close to 850 pts out of your top 11 starters, if you can't you're probably not winning. Sorry to be blunt. The heart of your squad has to match up with your reigning champ's, if you're still in rebuilding mode then ... keep rebuilding, but if you have a shot then set a plan and take the guy out.

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Dobber's team next year will be won or lost with what he does with the remainder of his roster. Maybe he can turn Tkachuk, Zidlicky and/or Olesz into something nice and he shouldn't have to worry about losing guys like Armstrong, Mitchell, and Poti since he should be able to replace them with similar talent at his draft/auction. All he needs to do is pay attention. He starts by tiering starting slots and setting a plan, then he's already well on his way to what could be a solid repeat next year.

### Conclusions

It's all about a little bit of planning. Know your league's rules. Go ahead and look for loopholes, it's the innovative guy that creates the need for constitutions in a keeper league. Constitutions are a good thing, it allows for everyone to understand what is permissible.

Who won last year? Why? Duplicate what he did. Go over his roster carefully because there's a very good chance he's going to try to do to you this year what he did to you last year. Maybe you can't throw Paul Stastny into your lineup like Dobber can, but perhaps Eric Staal gets you there. Maybe you don't have Vincent Lecavalier but perhaps you have Ilya Kovalchuk. No Evgeni Malkin? Maybe Jason Spezza will let you compete. It doesn't matter what names you have for the upper tier because your league won't necessarily be won there, it'll be won by finding guys who'll have career years and top out at 70 pts next season. Winning your league most likely happens on the second tier. Patrick Kane will keep pace with Jason Arnott fairly easily next year, Sam Gagner might be as good an option next year as Jeff Carter was this year, Peter Mueller might be better than Jaromir Jagr next year (if Jagr isn't playing in Russia); those are just examples though. Pay attention in the second half of your draft/auction because that's probably where your league will be won or lost. You have to pick better options for filling out your squad than last year's champ, that's always a crapshoot anyway, just be smarter than him. According to Dobber you only have to be right 53% of the time in order to beat him anyway

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(was that a shot? I think that was a shot).

Next month I plan to talk about inflation and how to keep the right guys. I'm looking forward to it and I hope you will be too.

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