

December edition - audit your fantasy squad

Written by Ian Fergusson

Friday, 11 December 2009 23:32 - Last Updated Saturday, 12 December 2009 10:30



Welcome once again to “An Expert’s Audit”. This audit will be posted here as well as on my fantasy hockey blog at www.fantasyhockey.hockeyanalysis.com . I also do weekly reviews of teams for people who email in to me for a look-see. 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 (contact link at bottom of website) about it. But

send it in by the 15th

, as I will be starting on my next one at that point.

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Last month we had the first woman step up for an Expert's Audit in the whatever number of years that I've been doing this thing and I thought, that was fun let's do that again. So along came Leah, a Bruins fan who wanted to step out and show that not only do women play fantasy hockey, they win at it too.

Leah is a part of a 14 team 2 division H2H keeper league full of folks the world over. The settings for her league are **G, A, P, +/-, PIM, PPG, SHG, GWG, SOG, FW and W, L, GAA, S% and SHO**. That my friends is a crapload of categories that heavily value goals and shooters. Additionally, each roster can only start one goalie a day and they have a minimum goalie start per week requirement of three. My initial reaction was that since there are so many skater categories then you limit the value of your goaltending when you look at your league as a whole. To succeed in this league you should make sure to get at least 1.5 starters in goal and then you'd probably be on your way to dominating with better skaters if you hit your minimum start requirement weekly and only concentrated on winning the two ratio categories; you'd lose most of the goalie cats but there are fewer of those anyway and you'd have better skaters to create better offense. Some teams have loaded up with six goalies on their roster but that simply isn't necessary in this system because 3-4 of those goalies physically CAN'T get into your lineup on a given night with only have one starting slot. So anyway, my best advice is don't concentrate on goaltending much, go get shooters and you have a decent shot at winning this league.

Let's take a look at ***Fresh Meat***. Leah is a fantasy hockey rook and if she continues to do as well as she has so far this season she'll change the name to something that reflects her dominance amongst these children who call themselves fantasy owners.

C Jeff Carter PHI – there's a pretty big difference between his production so far this year and his production last year but last year was just so huge for him that we can't really expect him to repeat that at the same level. He's probably a solid 30 goal option in any season and

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occasionally he'll put up a 40 goal season. Expect big things from him though, just as soon as that Flyers squad finds some heart and man's-up.

C Paul Stastny COL – I engineered a Stastny + for a Miikko Koivu + deal early in the season because I believe wholeheartedly in this kid's production. I'm pegging 80 points out of him this season, 25 of which will be goals. He's leading his team in offense and when healthy he's a 2nd tier C that gets overlooked because he was hurt so much last year.

LW Kris Versteeg CHI – he isn't producing at the same pace as he did during his rookie season last year but he's still just a kid and he'll blossom into some really nice ice time over the next decade. He's not supposed to be your best LW option but the best candidate for that mantle is presently injured again so he'll just have to do.

RW Corey Perry ANA – there's a reason why many were touting him as a top 5 pick in drafts this season, he just flat out owns the fantasy stat sheet on any given night. He skates, he hits, he's got a mean streak and he's got great hands around the net. When I look at your RW options I just shake my head at the embarrassment of riches for your team.

W Martin St. Louis TB – the old man is just plain skilled. With all the hype around Stamkos in TBay this year it is often forgotten that much of the PP work is being anchored by St. Louis. He's 34 yrs old but it doesn't look like he's slowing up in the least.

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F Antoine Vermette CBS – he’s really surprised me in the amount of stats he’s put up this season but the inclusion of FW as a category in your league boosts his value even more. He’s contributing some really decent offense that many weren’t expecting and he’s your best FW guy right now. I don’t see his opportunity lessening soon so he’ll be well worth keeping around.

D Lubomir Visnovsky EDM – Loob can be Rafalski type good in the right situation. If he has a trigger man to play off of then he distributes offense very effectively. He’s an excellent complement to bigger stars and in so doing he becomes a star of his own. Fantasy folk overlook him too often and he can be drafted later than the upper tier of D’s while putting up similar stats. I like him ... you should too.

D Mike Green WAS – why are some saying he shouldn’t make the Canadian Olympic team? For me he’s among the first couple picks for the squad but nobody’s asking me about it. He’s leading all D in points, his +/- is excellent and the goals are going to pick up. The kid is monstrous and he should remain on your roster for the next decade.

D Duncan Keith CHI – I think he can be Nik Lidstrom good someday. Excellent, steady two way play that you can rely on and anchor a keeper team for a lot of years. As the Hawks offense opens up more down low on the PP then he’ll get more room and more opportunity for goals with the man advantage, although that’s never been his forte.

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D Tobias Enstrom ATL – I was banking on Ron Hainsey being the option for the Thrash this season but he's been bypassed by Bogo and Enstrom. Any D getting time on the PP with Kovalchuk on the ice at the same time is going to produce at a decent pace. As an added bonus Enstrom's +/- looks like it'll be very good for the course of his career which is a rare thing historically for a Thrasher.

Util **Nik Antropov** ATL – he has 30 goal potential but he's playing like he has 3 goal potential. His biggest problem this season is the fact that he's taking just over 1 shot per game on average and that would be why his goal total so far sits at 3. He's still passing the puck so he's getting plenty of assists but that has less value in your league than it would in a typical points league. If he shoots more that'll help him and help you.

G Ryan Miller BUF – he had arguably the hottest start of any goalie in the game and he carried that on through the end of November. He's elite and I can see a Vezina trophy in his future some time.

BN Tomas Vokoun FLA – saves galore. Dude sees a lot of rubber on an annual basis. In leagues that count saves as a category he carries more value than a SV% league like yours.

BN Marian Hossa CHI – when I joined your team this month he was still shelved but this is a

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significant addition to add to any fantasy team, particularly in a 14 team league that values goals. That first game back where he got 2 goals including a shortie sure was a beautiful thing to behold.

BN **Ville Leino** DET – this was supposed to be a bit of a coming out party for Leino this season but it hasn't really been realized for him so far. There have been some significant injuries among the Wings forwards this season and if that gets him more ice then that's good for you. Don't expect huge numbers and you won't be disappointed should he come anywhere near what you hope for him.

BN **Jakub Voracek** CBS – he's a good young kid who's getting some opportunity and showing some decent skills. He's got the upside to be the Jackets 2nd best points producer if he continues to blossom and gets more and more opportunity.

BN **James Wisniewski** ANA – Wiz has always been a bit of an enigma to me. In 2007-08 he put up 26 points and 103 PIMs which caught the eye of many fantasy managers because that sort of combination from a D shows he's ready to jump into some really fantasy worthy stats. He's been hurt a LOT since then though and the point producing troglodyte potential hasn't been seen much. He's in a good position with the Ducks because he can be hard-nosed and still get some PP time. I could see 30 pts and close to 100 PIMs for him this season and as a fantasy D that combination is pretty significant.

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BN **Luke Schenn** TOR – is he going to be Chris Pronger or Adam Foote? Right now I'm voting for Foote and I think that much of the polish is coming off him after a decent rookie season.

BN **Steve Ott** DAL – if Ott stays at his present pace he'll put up 24 pts and 144 PIMs, that's below my pt vs. PIM standard of 30/175 for forwards but it's still decent and he can always pick up the production. There are just some guys that you keep on your roster to put up the occasional point and a bucketload of PIMs and this is one of those guys.

BN **Josh Bailey** NYI – he was taken 9th overall in 2008 so he has some upside and there aren't a lot of options at C on the Island in the first place so he has some opportunity too. He'll be a decent NHL'er one day but it's not like he'll ever be a superstar.

BN **Steve Begin** BOS – well, he gets some FW for you but otherwise there isn't much here to like ... even if you're a Bruins fan like you.

BN **Paul Kariya** STL – he got turfed in a lot of leagues after an absolutely horrid start to the season. He got half of his total points in the last month, he doesn't shoot enough anymore but he's still a fave for a lot of people.

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BN **Brandon Dubinsky** NYR – I really liked this guy to finish in the neighbourhood of 50 points if he had stayed healthy. He's almost back now and I expect him to hit the ice at full stride. He provides decent stats across the board in a system like yours since you rely on him for FW's and he gets decent ice time. He'll provide the extra FW's that your team lacked for the entire month we were perusing your roster.

BN **Simon Gagne** PHI – man oh man would your team be smoking if your best LW were healthy and scoring ... but he isn't. He's supposed to return this month though and that'll undoubtedly help your team as much as his presence will help the Flyers. It might be wise to shop Gagne around a little after he's healthy, there isn't much long term value left in those brittle bones.

BN **Cody Hodgson** VAN – I don't imagine he'll have any value at all this season but there are few guys who aren't in the NHL presently with more upside than Hodgson. He'll be the new Linden for the Canucks, except he'll be better.

IR **Kari Lehtonen** ATL – if you can find a taker for him and secure a starting goalie as a replacement then by all means jump all over that. If he gets healthy then he still has value but I'm pretty much staying away from him on all of my teams.

Waiver Wire Options

Steve Sullivan – his start was so abysmal that I was embarrassed I had him on my team ... not embarrassed enough to drop him but embarrassed nevertheless. As all the offensive options have returned to the lineup (Dumont, Arnott) for the Preds then their offense has woken up and Sully has contributed like he actually can again. There is no way that someone with this much offensive upside should be on a waiver wire in a deep 14 team keeper league. We turfed Begin and added Sully pretty early in the discussion.

Mason Raymond – you had already dropped Kariya after his awful start when I came on the scene. I was and continue to be a bit squeamish with this move but at the same time Raymond was showing plenty of chemistry and doing much with the opportunity he was getting.

Brian Elliott – when Leclaire took a puck to the face we discussed the idea of adding Elliott in the short term but the discussion didn't go very far since we agreed that it wasn't really necessary in your system and we couldn't decide on a drop. By the time that Tomas Vokoun took a two-hander to the side of the head and missed a couple starts Elliott had already been snapped up but it didn't matter much because we still couldn't decide on a drop.

Cory Stillman – when we discussed adding Sully we were also toying with the idea of adding

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Stillman to your team. Stillman had been having a bad start to his season but he was in the midst of waking up before he got hurt. We decided to pass on adding Stillman and eventually somebody else snapped him up.

Clark MacArthur – he's presently tied with Tomas Vanek for the goals lead on the Sabres and that's not likely to hold up but if goals are going in then it's likely that they could continue to go in for a guy. If he gets the right amount of opportunity he could sneak up on you and end up in the 25 goal area for the season. I added him to my Expert's League team this month because I needed a bench LW.

Wayne Simmonds – I added this guy to my Expert's League team this month too. I was searching for some PIMs and some goals and this guy fits the bill. He has less value to you because you have different guys in your PIMy role but he still has some good value, particularly if he continues to get top 6 forward exposure.

Trading Options

We began our search for a goal scoring C who'll also provide the FW that we were short of with

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Dubinsky on the shelf. We generated a good deal of interest as soon as we shopped Ryan Miller around a wee bit but we were only going to take an absolute win if we were going to move Miller. Nobody came forward with an offer that worked for us in that regard despite ongoing negotiations with at least 3 teams.

Traded Luke Schenn and Josh Bailey to DT5000 for Viktor Hedman and Tomas Vanek – I couldn't believe this offer when it came across the table actually. We had been in discussions with 5000 for a downgrade in goal in order to get better shooters when he offered this one up. My reaction was, "that'll do, take that". In this deal you upgrade at D and you get a proven goal scorer who shoots a ton when it's on the stick. He's been playing below his usual level of excellence but when everything is firing then so is he. Bailey is young and has a good opportunity to be secondary scoring on the Island but still this is a move that you need to make for your own benefit.

After that deal we just determined that Dubinsky would return soon enough and provide the support we needed in FW and since we had upgraded our goal scoring on the wing then we could just wait for Leah's team to get healthy and dominate.

Conclusions

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Your team was already in good shape so it's not like much was needing to be done. We added some wing offense off the wire and we upgraded your total offense in trade. One of the great things about keeper leagues is when one team has fallen in love with having a young team; adding Vanek was a great move for your team and additionally Hedman has more upside than Schenn so you upgrade there too. In general I'm very pleased with the deal.

I'm not too worried for your team, it's solid. You've flirted with the top spots in the league over the course of the month that I've been watching your progress. You also have the benefit of having an Expert's auditor in your corner whenever you come across a move and wonder if you should make it. I'm just an email away but I don't imagine that you'll be on the wrong end of a move anyway. You'll be fine Leah.