Welcome back to An Expert's Audit. Every month we'll take a look at a reader's keeper league team in the hopes of helping him toward a championship. If you're interested in getting an audit for your own keeper team you can begin the process by emailing Dobber about it.

I've noticed around the site that there are grumblings about the lack of auction league articles posted so I thought I'd take a run at an auction league for this month's victim of EA. I will point out that I myself wrote a 2008 summer article for auction leagues that if you can sort through the math I thought was pretty good. In order to try and address some of the salary/auction league complaints I introduced myself to Girth. He plays in an 11-team roto auction league where players are kept for extended years at auctioned or free agent prices. It's actually pretty convoluted and I suspect that sometimes it requires a degree in business admin just to figure

out what to do from season to season. The roto cats in this league are
G, A, PIM, +/-, SPG
(Specialty Goals = PPG(1) + SHG(2)), and
GLpts
(Goalie Points - W=2, OTL = 1, Shutout = 2). Players are drafted and signed to a 3 year contract, designated as A, B, and C. After their B season they either enter an option year and become a free agent after C or they are signed to another contract for up to 3 more seasons, those contract designations could be noted anything from D, E, F, G, H, I or X. An X contract has signed a second contract and is on the roster for up to 3 more years with rising salaries each season.

The contracts can be a bit cumbersome to explain and I'm being purposefully vague since contracts in most auction leagues can be laid out differently depending on the league constitution. At any rate, let's take a look at **Girth**.

F **John Tavares** NYI ($6.50 XG) – there are 4 more years on his contract and I finally expect to see the 30-40 goal output I've been expecting from him. The Isles are putting some talent around him up front and their captain is an underrated offensive option from the back end. If he isn't close to 35 goals this season then I'll wear an Isles jersey at my own birthday party next year. Yeah, like any of you guys will hold me to that.

F **James Neal** PIT ($4.50 XG) – Four more seasons with your team and he should be lining up with Gino or Sid for many years to come too. I was shocked at this kid's goal production to start the season and I sure hope he can keep a similar pace going for much of the season. It's not like I'm expecting a 20-something scorer to jump up to 50-something but it'd sure be nice.

F **David Krejci** BOS ($1.50 B) – you'll sign him to an extended contract and have him around another four seasons after this one. The B's got off to a really slow start this season and Kraitch also had a single point in October. November has been a lot nicer to the B's and to Kraitch at the same time.

F **Phil Kessel** TOR ($4.75 XC) – for a good chunk of October there was a lot of MVP/best player in the game talk about Phil and although I am a Leafs fan I can't pretend that Phil is the best player on the planet right now. The Leafs rely on him a tonne and he has shown some extended periods where he has dominated a game so the most I could say is that he's the most valuable to his team right now but even that is different within the MVP debate.

F **Claude Giroux** PHI ($4.50 XG) – another 4 year contributor to your team and I absolutely LOVE this guy as an offensive option. Like total man-crush. Have you seen this kid with the puck? Now that's dreamy. I realize that you're a Pens fan and I will point out that it's not just Penguins who hate the Flyers in the NHL but even so, you have to set aside those things for the sake of your fantasy team.

F **Steve Downie** TB ($2.50 XC) – say goodbye because he's moving off your team after this season. Dude's a bit of a headcase on the ice but I kinda dig that about him. PIM options who can score always have a place on my fantasy team and if you don't realize their value I'll just cuff you upside the head like Downey would do if he were sitting next to you.

F **Jeff Carter** CBS ($4.50 H) – only two years left on this contract but his move to C-bus is going to hurt his value anyway so when you need to bidding on him again in a couple years he might come at a cheaper price. He's a triggerman who needs somebody slick alongside him and who knows that may be Yakupov very soon since the Jackets are falling down a deep, dark hole.

F **David Backes** STL ($5.00 E) – also only two years left on this contract but he's another guy with a PIM outlook who can also get goals in bunches. The price may be a little steep but I also doubt you could get him back cheaper in an auction.

F **Eric Staal** CAR ($9.50 A) – an option here for multiple seasons ahead but a very steep price too. The Canes have been beyond poor this season so far but they have too much talent to wallow at the bottom of the league for long too. Staal has five points and is minus-16 already which means you're getting firecracker power out of this cannon on your team.

F **Zach Parise** NJ ($9.50 A) – another cannon on your roster with options for years at a huge price. This time you're getting two firecrackers worth of power so far this season. Once Zajac returns to this team then I suspect that offensive numbers in general will improve for most of the cannons. It's not like you'd want to trade a guy like this when his value is down anyway since you wouldn't get what you need out of the deal. Wait it out and you'll be fine.

F **Mikko Koivu** MIN ($2.50 A) – that's a really good price for a guy who could easily finish in the top 50 in league scoring. There are so few offensive options in Minny that more and more responsibility will have to be carried by Koivu and Heatley. If he's healthy then I expect close to 20 goals and 70 pts out of Mikko.

F **Tyler Ennis** BUF ($.75 A) – this is a whiff in your projections for forwards this season. Ennis is pointless in seven games and has been week to week with a sprained ankle. The offense in Buffalo is well balanced so that ice time can be spread out too much and value sapped out of secondary options like Ennis. I like his future but I'm sure you could get him back at a decent price in subsequent seasons if you want to.

F **Jordan Eberle** EDM ($1.75 A) – I like the price and I like the idea that you'll have him for a lot of years ahead. I find this kid to be really hard to trade for because some guys really over-value his skills but that's the case because he has 30 goal potential just oozing out of him. As the Oil's offense matures he'll have a front seat for all of the fun.

D **Dustin Byfuglien** WIN ($2.00 B) – the Jets offense looks to work quite well when Buff acts as a rover but unfortunately the Jets defense looks overmatched whenever Buff gets caught roaming too far. I think that perhaps his fantasy value got overinflated with his great start last season. He's probably more like a 40 pt option instead of the 60 pt option people are expecting.

D **Kevin Shattenkirk** STL ($.75 A) – a great price that will be around for a long time. Shatt and Pietr will be the anchors for the Blues for a lot of years and having them on the back end is the main reason why they could afford to move EJ in the Stewart/Shattenkirk deal last year. Shatt is a QB for their PP and most of the value for your team will be in A, particularly PPA.

D **Theo Peckham** EDM ($.25 A) – his only value to your team is in PIM and whatever offense he adds is pure gravy. For this price and since it's the bottom of your roster then I'm perfectly fine with having him here.

D **Erik Karlsson** OTW ($.50 A) – wait a second, nobody bid you up more than two bits for a kid with 45 pts last season and a shot at 60 this season? Was your league asleep when he was nominated? Well, well done. He's going to be rock solid and could easily turn into a Visnovsky type of option.

D **Deryk Engelland** PIT ($.25 A) – you say that your league is full of Pens fans so there is some market for most Penguins players but I've got to think that Eng would have to get in a bunch of fights to have any value whatsoever. We already know that he won't have any offensive value to a fantasy team but if he does put up some PIM value then he'd be minimally effective for your team.

D **Matt Carkner** OTW ($.25 A) – PIM thy name is Carkner. The offense is going to be non-existent for him but whenever someone needs their nose adjusted and Chris Neil is already

occupied then Carks will step up and create the need for plastic surgery.

G **Jonathan Quick** LA ($1.50 B) – you'll need to decide whether to extend him after this season, and the answer is yes, and Bernier is waiting in the wings but I can still see the potential for 40 W's this season and going forward.

G **Martin Brodeur** NJ ($2.00 B) – again, you'll need to decide to extend him or not, and the answer is no, but Marty will still have plenty to add to your team this season and probably next too. He won't put up 40 wins again but he can still give you 30.

Overall, your D are extremely well priced although the bottom end is close to useless for fantasy value, especially Engelland. Your forwards are a very nice crew to take a run at the championship this season you have most of your guys locked in for the next several seasons. Your goalies are in really good shape too although I imagine you won't need to extend Marty beyond this contract and you'll need to figure out what you want to do to replace him after next season (or before). I should also point out that with Downey, Backes, Byfuglien, Peckham, Carkner and Engelland you'll have PIM out the wazoo and you're in a position of strength for trading in that area.

Waiver Wire Options

Whenever a player gets put on IR then a FA can be picked up to replace him on the roster. All wire options cost $2.50 so that will mean that most FA's won't be kept at that price unless you find a stunning bargain. It also makes your auction that much more important on an annual basis so that you can get longer term options for cheaper prices. That's why you're playing though eh? Who has the best crystal ball available for talent?

Sami Salo VAN – well you had a D get dinged early but from my perspective Sami is a better option than Engelland or Carkner anyway. This was an easy suggestion although the price isn't such that you'd want to keep him around longer term.

Matt Read PHI – he has proven himself to be significant secondary scoring whether he's playing behind Giroux at C or Jagr at RW. I think he's got a fine example of how a smaller statured guy can succeed whenever he looks at Danny Briere so I've got to think that the environment for this guy is pretty close to a comfortable situation.

Johan Hedberg NJ – when Marty went on the shelf this month you needed a replacement and when the wire doesn't have many suitable subs then a good strategy is to bring in the handcuff for the guy you just lost. When Marty returned then Moose returned to the wire.

Max Pacioretty MON – I don't get why a guy like this wasn't on a team already but it's to your

short term benefit to keep him around. You could even consider keeping him around all season and decide in the offseason if $2.50 is too expensive for him or not. If you ask me then I think you could get him back in an auction for less than that.

Ryan Wilson COL – I've seen this kid on too many waiver wires in my travels and he isn't being noticed for what he contributes to the 'lanche. He and Q and EJ are pretty good pillars to build a D corps around.

Teddy Purcell TB – Teddy is a St. John's "bye" who has been a long time with promise on the perimeter until he finally broke out for the Lightning last year. He is and will be adequate secondary scoring for them and I could see a string of 20 goal seasons out of him.

Trading Options

Originally we offered up Downey/Engelland for Ryan Callahan ($1.50 A) and Niklas Kronwall ($.25 B). We knew that wasn't going to fly but we wanted to open up discussions. The other manager emailed back to say that he'd trade those guys for Downey and Shattenkirk. Downey is an X contract who will become a FA after the season and Shatt is a very cheap option with options for the next six seasons including this one. Callahan is a stud offensive option in the Mike Richards mould with options for six seasons while Kronwall will be the main horse for the Wings as early as next season and will provide as much offensive value as Shattenkirk for five

seasons. You could certainly afford to trade the PIM and the upside in offense was mouth watering, plus you were getting good prices while moving out a contract you can't keep anyway. My first reaction was ... take that. Seriously, email the guy right back and take that.

Girth balked. Callahan wasn't producing at the time and he was worried about Kronwall's ongoing health. He decided to get some more advice off the Dobber boards and then guys weren't telling him to snap that deal up (c'mon guys, help a brother out here). After a few days I was able to convince Nathan to inquire into the trade again but by that time the other party wasn't willing to make the move anymore. *&#&@*%$#$!!

Conclusions

Woulda, shoulda, coulda eh? We should've been able to make that deal but in the end we still were able to tweak several roster spots as injuries hit your team over this month. Some of those waiver adds have the potential for some longer term upside (Salo, Read and Pacioretty) and others were just intended to be a short term band-aid (Hedberg, Wilson and Purcell). Man, if only we could've added Callahan and Kronwall too. Sigh. At any rate, it has been a good month and the potential is still there to make some moves, particularly if it means moving out some PIM for some offense. Let me know when the rest of your league comes knocking and I'm sure we'll be able to work something out together.