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.

One of the fun things about this gig is that I get to see different leagues played in different game

systems. Most leagues that I see are at Yahoo but it can be even more fun to see how CBS or ESPN play the game. This past month I went to ESPN to see Andrew Wilson's 16 team H2H fantasy point league keeper. This league is different than just about any other I've looked at because ESPN gives you options for your league that other systems just don't allow. This particular league gave extra value to goals than assists and it also tracked faceoff wins, faceoff losses, blocks and hits. Do you have any idea how that changes the value of a checking center in the NHL? Or the defensive defenseman who's a shot-blocker? Or just a PIMy hitter who gets ice time and spends all night running people over? This was truly a lot of fun.

Andrew Wilson is a Leaf fan who plays in a league that has the following fantasy point settings: G(5), A(3), +/-(.5), PIM(.6), PPG(4), PPA(2), FOW(.5), FOL(-.3), HAT(3), SOG(.3), HIT(.4), BLK(2), SHP(6), W(5), L(-3), GA(-1), SV(.5), SO(6) and OTL(1). That's a lot of stuff to track but thankfully ESPN also provides a free stattracker and provides you with a season average fantasy point total for every player you inquire about. If you wanted to find a few diamonds in the rough you just had to search a little for shot blockers and C's with good FW% and then you found options that are outside the norm in your standard hockey pool. Additionally this 16 team league started with a premise that you could grandfather in 3 keeps off the team that you represent in the real NHL plus an additional 7 keeps outside of that. It should be pointed out that Andrew only took control of this team after the season had begun so he was already hamstrung with a bad roster.

First things first though, let's look at the **Carolina Hurricanes**. I'll provide you with each guy's fantasy point average in brackets after their names. You'll get to keep 3 Canes and another 7 options after this season

C **Eric Staal** CAR (7.5) – **Cane keeper** – during a normal season he'll be your best scorer but this one has been a bit of a nightmare for him. He'll be fine so don't worry about this keep. Do not trade him and most guys in your league are going to ask about him since his fall this season

has been immense.

C **Brooks Laich** WAS (6.5) – **keeper** – most of the stats he generates in this system are directly due to the offense that he generates. He doesn't hit, block or get SOG much and he doesn't win enough faceoffs for his value to spike up so most of his points come straight from his offense. I like his offense to increase and I expect his SOGs and hits to go up too as his career continues to grow.

C **Steve Ott** DAL (5.7) – **keeper** - PIMs and hits are his currency in your league and this year has been a bit of a down year for him so far. I expect a return to hardnosed offense he put up last year (7.5 in 2008-09).

LW **Evander Kane** ATL (4.3) – **keeper** – I expect that as he grows into his NHL career his goal, SOG and hit totals will go up a lot.

LW **Andrei Kostitsyn** MON (5.4) – **keeper** – again most of his points are generated out of the pure offensive categories he contributes to. He doesn't shoot enough, he's not PIMy and he doesn't really hit or block either but the offensive upside is still pretty significant so that, along with his age makes him a keeper in my books. The fact that he's injured right now is immaterial because you've pretty much thrown in the towel this year anyway.

LW **Ray Whitney** CAR (5.0) – he doesn't hit, block or shoot much and most of his stats are generated from the significant ice time he gets in Carolina. Unfortunately the fact that he's 37 years old makes him an unattractive option for the future in this league.

RW **Tuomo Ruutu** CAR (6.2) – **Cane keeper** – offense and hits are what he brings to the table. I was never a fan when he was a Hawk but he's stayed healthy as a Cane and he's hitting guys. He's a 30 goal guy in waiting too.

RW **Steve Sullivan** NAS (4.0) – see Ray Whitney except he's 35 and not as good at offense.

RW **Tom Kostopoulos** CAR (4.0) – I wanted to tell you to turf this guy immediately before I realized that you didn't have a better option at RW to fill in for him. We'll have to figure something out here and failing that you do have a couple IR guys who are eligible at RW.

D **Dennis Seidenberg** FLA (9.2) – **keeper** - brace yourself but he's actually top 20 in scoring in this league because he's the best shot blocker in the NHL and he's top 30 for hits. It's funny how guys who don't get a 2nd look in a roto league are GOLD in a league like yours. This is your biggest asset and we'll shop him pretty hard to all

the big fish.

D **Brooks Orpik** PIT (6.6) – **keeper** – He has a reputation in the NHL for being a hard hitter and he's the 2nd most hitting D in the league so far this season (behind Stephane Robidas). The extra offense he chips in make him of great value to your team.

D **Tim Gleason** CAR (7.9) – he contributes in PIMs, hits and blocks plus he's put up 5 goals for a D corps that needs some help this season.

D **Mark Giordano** CAL (6.2) – I considered him for a keep because of his age but he's also got more than a couple options ahead of him in the pecking order in Calgary so I think his value is a bit further down the road than the next year or so.

D **Cam Barker** CHI (4.9) – he got 40 points in the NHL last year but he was still only a 5.7 option in your league. His struggles this year have been pretty immense and he's gotten himself listed as a healthy scratch which just doesn't work if you're going to rely on him as a keep.

D **Brian Pothier** WAS (5.4) – I don't think he has much fantasy value no matter what system you're playing. He doesn't get enough offense, isn't PIMy and doesn't hit or block so he's not much value for you.

G **Cam Ward** CAR (9.5) – **Cane keeper** – one of the few reasons why getting to keep 3 Canes on your roster is a nice little stroke of luck. You're not going to want to move any of your Cane keeps as long as your grandfather protection clause is in place.

G **Pekka Rinne** NAS (12.5) – **keeper** – a 16 team league with 2 goalie slots means you need to keep at least 2 starting tenders. You've got yourself 2 really good young starters so you're money in goal. Keep them both and don't trade them anytime soon.

BN **Tyler Kennedy** PIT (3.8) – he actually started the season shooting the puck a lot but he completely dropped off the table about 10 games into the season. He's not worth keeping around in this system at all.

BN **Clarke MacArthur** BUF (4.7) – he's on pace for 40 some pts this season and I think in a couple years could blossom into a 30 goal option. He doesn't hit or block and his faceoff percentage is pretty bad but for pure offense there is some potential here.

BN **Kris Russell** CBS (4.8) – there was all sorts of upside here but he hasn't reached any of it. His opportunity is being given guys like Tyutin and Stralman now and I'm not sure that it'll ever come back around his way.

BN **Dan Carcillo** PHI (5.0) – I like PIMy options in fantasy hockey as much as the next guy but I just don't see Carcillo getting back to anything close to 25 pts and 200 PIMs that made him famous a couple years back. He'll get the 200 PIMs easily but he'll fall really short on the points.

BN **Robert Lang** PHX (5.4) – surprising offense but his real value in this league is in the FOW bonus he provides to your team. His age and brittle history make him so that he's not a consideration for a keep though, not even close.

BN **Andrew Ebbett** MIN (3.2) – yeah ... uh no. He's a checking center who doesn't generate offense in any system whatsoever.

BN **Matt Hunwick** BOS (3.4) – he's young, which is his only asset to your squad. He really doesn't help you in this league.

BN **Sergei Kostitsyn** MON (2.1) – again he's young but I can't get past the cloud of trouble that has circled him for the last couple seasons. He still has some keeper value if you can find a taker.

IR **Joe Corvo** CAR (6.0) – he put up 14 goals and 38 points last year and that's nothing to be ignored. He's been hurt for a month now and should be absent for at least one more but when healthy his best value is in his offensive contributions. I'd actually seriously consider him for one of the keeper slots and if you do then the guy I'd look to remove from your keeper consideration is Laich.

IR **Erik Cole** CAR (5.0) – he's a 30 goal guy who has fallen to 15 goal depths. I was tempted to say that he gets injured too much but actually he's played a lot of games over the last couple seasons so maybe it's just that he's lost it.

IR **Chris Neil** OTW (6.0) – I just traded for him in the Expert's League because I needed PIMs and that's pretty much his game. In this league however, he also hits and gets the occasional goal. You have a dearth at RW so I like that you can at least roster him there.

Well ... there's lots of room for improvement here. There's a reason why this team was winless so far this season, it isn't very good at all. Your grandfather options off the Hurricanes aren't having a good season whatsoever and the rest of the squad has a lot of growing to do. Now having said that I like Staal, your goalies, your LW options, your D is remarkably good in this system, and the PIMy options on your squad are well rewarded by the PIM and HIT bonus your system provides. This isn't going to be a quick fix however, your team is a long way away from competing but you have more than a decent shot at Taylor Hall this summer and we'll see what more we can do to help.

Waiver Wire Options

Jonathan Ericsson DET (3.8) – he's young and he's got some good upside. He's hurt so you'll just have to reevaluate his upside at some later point. I like him but only when I use the lens that lets me look at his longterm future. He went on to your IR and Pothier went to the wire.

Bryan Little ATL (3.4) – he's been awful this season but he got 31 freaking goals last season and you just don't forget how to pocket goals. Adding him is a decent gamble because of his youth and he's got a shot at returning to last year's production. He went to your bench and Ebbett went to the wire.

Mikhail Grabovski TOR (5.4) – his value is in offensive stats, FOW and youth. I like his upside for the future and you'll just have to decide on his value at a later date. We added him and Kennedy got turfed to the wire.

Jeff Finger TOR (7.7) – You may not like him as an NHL player and you may agree with many pundits who declare him to be the worst Leafs signing in many years of bad signings but nevertheless he gets a decent amount of blocks and hits and that has value in your league. We put in a claim for him but he got snapped up by someone else.

Kevin Bieksa VAN (5.7) – We actually spent a good amount of time trying to acquire some injured guys who would have value for you down the road. PIMs is his market and he's a fave option of mine when I'm shopping for PIMs in any system. We put in a claim for him and he got snapped up by someone else.

Trading Options

Offered Dennis Seidenberg, Brooks Orpik, and Robert Lang to Columbus for Antoine Vermette, Niklas Kronwall IR, and Nikita Filatov NA – in the end this didn't go through. It was right on the edge of being done and then C-bus had the audacity to insist that Staal be included in the deal. Andrew was giving up a top 5 D in Seidenberg (in this league where blocks give you a bonus), another hitter and a C with some nice FW for a nice FW bonus type in Vermette, an injured young hitter and a kid who may end up staying in Russia after this season. It was unbelievable that we worked on this for so long only to have it implode in front of our eyes.

Offered Tim Gleason and Sergei Kostitsyn to Boston for David Krejci and Michal Frolik – the manager of this team changed hands during the middle of the month I was looking around the league and discussions hadn't gotten very far by month's end. I don't know if this is going to go anywhere but discussions continue.

Offered Dennis Seidenberg and Brooks Orpik to Detroit for Johan Franzen IR and David Booth IR – Detroit was in 4th and could've certainly used an upgrade on two defenseman with the cost being a couple guys who won't help him much this season anyway.

Offered Dan Carcillo and Kris Russell to Philadelphia for James VanRiemsdyk and Erik Karlsson – Philly was in 1st place and this offer actually upgraded both positions for him in the short term but benefitted Andrew long term. We were hoping that he'd want to go after another Flyer who did have some value in a league like this but it didn't "fly".

In many occasions offers sat on the table and weren't responded to. In many cases offers went out that wouldn't work in a standard roto league but had some real value in a league that gave bonuses in FOW, hits and blocks. I just wish that guys would respond, even a no is better than dead air.

Conclusions

It's frustrating when trade offers sit on the table for weeks on end and emails aren't responded to and that's exactly what happened all month. We only had one real trade discussion over the course of the month and that imploded right on the verge of a deal. I'm still annoyed with Columbus over that one. Sigh. Deals can still be made and I'll keep myself available for any advice you care to ask for in the future. Essentially the working relationship is in place and we can continue to fine tune your keeper options in preparation for your next pressure moment, next year's draft.

We did manage to get rid of some of the deadwood on your roster and we added some potential found in a handful of kids on your roster. We'll need to tweak your 10 keeps over the summer and I'll definitely suggest you invest in a Fantasy Guide in preparation for next year's draft.

Good luck Andrew.