Back by popular demand - players who are earmarked for success. We'll label the players as stand pat, buy or sell candidates based on what we've seen so far this campaign. We'll begin this series by examining the two top goalies from each of the 15 Western Conference teams.

There are a couple of key indicators to look for in terms of predicting success for a goaltender. There's your basic GAA, save percentage along with overall record. Of the three mentioned, GAA and overall record could be directly influenced by the skill of the team in front of them. For example, if a team is highly offensive (Colorado), their goalie is going to pick up more wins than a team who's weak offensively (Toronto). On a similar scale, GAA could also be affected by the team's selected style of play (St. Louis) versus the run-and-gun style of Washington/Tampa Bay. One true indicator to determine how well a goalie is playing is examining their save percentage. If a goalie stops nine shots in every 10 he owns a .900 save percentage, if he stops 27 in every 30 he also maintains a .900 save percentage. In the end, save percentage rarely lies about how well a goalie is playing. I generally like to draw an arbitrary line at .905. If they are above that line they're generally helping your team, if they're below they're a detriment. However looking at just those three stats mentioned above, won't reveal the entire story. Another vital, and possibly the most important indicator, that isn't as well known to the general public is how defensively a team plays in front of their goalie. The easiest way to examine that

indicator is by looking at the amount of shots a team allows to the opposition per contest. Obviously, the lower the amount of shots the team allows to the opposition the lower the chance a team is going to be fishing the puck out of the back of their own net. The opposite is also true, the more shots they allow their opponents, the higher the chance of puck going in. With these four indicators, it should paint you a pretty clear picture to give you a better outlook at 30 of the goalies from the Western Conference. **NOTE:** These ramblings are based on one-year leagues, and not meant for keeper/dynasty leagues.

Anaheim

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Jonas Hiller

9

3.13

.916

3-5-1

Buy-Low

Curtis McElhinney

3

3.86

.909

1-2-0

Stand Pat

I just had a quick glance back at the column I wrote 12 months ago, and it's very interesting to see how things look from a hindsight perspective. Exactly a year ago, the Ducks had a pretty hot goalie controversy going on, but it sorted itself out by mid-season when J.S. Giguere was moved to Toronto. This year the Ducks don't have that luxury of competition. McElhinney won't provide as much of a push to Hiller as Giggy did. What I also found very interesting is where the Ducks place in terms of shots allowed per game compared to a year ago. The Ducks started off very slowly last campaign as they were ranked second last (giving up an average of 35.5 per contest) at the time of the column. This year they're dead last (giving up an average of 38.8 per contest). A couple of things you can take away from that is probably that his GAA is going to be sky-high, but the save percentage will generally be above average as a number one fantasy goalie. Anaheim is better than their current 33 win percentage team, so the wins should be pretty decent by the end of the season. If you're willing to make the sacrifice of GAA for wins and save percentage, Hiller is probably a solid buy-low candidate at the moment. Traditionally speaking, October is the worst career statistical month for the young Swiss net-minder (3.14 GAA and .901 sv%) as he generally bounces back in the month of November (career 2.38 GAA and .924 sv%), so look for the overall numbers to improve in November.

Calgary

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Miikka Kiprusoff

9

2.78

.901

5-4-0

Sell

Erik Karlsson

2

4.32

.847

1-1-0

Stand Pat

I'm kind of on the fence with the status of Kipper. On one hand I think he's a solid sell candidate, but the other tells me that if you keep him, he could be very valuable over the course of a season. If you look at his game log, he's had a complete boom or bust cycle. For three out of the nine starts this season, he's either pitched a shutout or a one-goal game (excellent for fantasy owners). The other six however, he's allowed three or more goals (detrimental for fantasy owners). I'm a big fan of consistency, but with Kipper and his erratic Jekyll and Hyde numbers, I tend to want to avoid those types of situations. The plus note is that Kipper does have his number one, "70 starts", status pretty much cemented, so if your league places a bigger emphasis on games started, wins and total saves, he holds much more value than a standard 6x4 Yahoo! league. Erik Karlsson has been highly-touted, but he hasn't shown enough consistency or the numbers to really challenge Kipper for the number one gig.

Chicago

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Marty Turco

11

2.67

.916

6-3-1

Buy

Corey Crawford

3

3.03

.901

1-3-0

Stand Pat

Turco was picked up, on the cheap, as a free agent in the off-season to fill the gap that was left behind after the Hawks declined the arbitration result for Antti Niemi. So far he's turned out alright, but not exactly spectacular. A lot of it probably isn't Turco's fault as the Hawks haven't been as defensive this year (31.9 SOG allowed per contest, ranked 21st overall) compared to last year (25.1 SOG allowed per contest, ranked first overall). The injury to Brian Campbell also caused a ripple effect to the defensive line up of the Hawks, as its forced Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook to log much more ice-time than they are probably used to, as well as the team

having to leaning on Jassen Cullimore, Jordan Hendry, and John Scott a lot more than usual. Once Campbell returns, the defensive line up should settle down a bit more, which should then give Turco an opportunity to garner better numbers. If you have an opportunity to snag him, certainly make a pitch. Crawford will get his share of opportunities, but hasn't played well enough to unseat Turco from the number one gig.

Columbus

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Steve Mason

8

3.30

.894

4-4-0

Sell

Mathieu Garon

2

1.61

.938

2-0-0

Handcuff

After a pretty dismal sophomore year last year, Mason hasn't exactly shown that he's completely gotten over the hump. If you look at the splits from last season, he actually had a pretty favourable home/away numbers of: 2.60 GAA and .914 save percentage at home compared to 3.65 GAA and .886 save percentage away. So far this year, there's no such luck with 3.38 GAA and .887 save percentage at home, and 3.14 GAA and .907 save percentage away. The Mason situation reminds me a lot of the Cam Ward situation. After winning the Stanley Cup with the Hurricanes as a rookie in 2005-06, it took him a full two years before returning back to rookie form. Mason had a great rookie year, a terrible sophomore year, but will it take him another year to get back to his rookie form? Much like the Pittsburgh situation with M.A. Fleury, Mason is the Jackets' "golden boy", where he'll continue to get his starts, but with Garon putting up such dazzling numbers, you'd have to think that coach Scott Arniel will scale back some Mason's starts and give more time to the "hotter" goaltender.

Colorado

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Craig Anderson

7

3.15

.907

3-4-0

Stand Pat

Peter Budaj

4

3.43

.875

3-0-1

Buy

Well, the first major goalie casualty of the season could potentially belong to the Avs' Anderson. He went down last week with a right knee injury during warm-ups and is currently being listed on the Avs' IR list. The good news is that he doesn't require surgery, but will be out indefinitely. This might just be the opportunity that Budaj needs to re-establish himself as a number one goalie in the NHL. The positive is that he is supported by the second most potent offense in the league (3.46 goals for per contest), so even if he does give up three goals to the opposition, he could still be in line for the W.

Dallas

Name	GS	GAA	SV%	Record	Status
Kari Lehtonen	9				

2.93

.908

5-4-0

Stand Pat

Andrew Raycroft

1

0.00

1.00

1-0-0

Buy

After starting the season 5-1 (.927 save percentage), Lehtonen followed it up with three consecutive losses and is slowly returning back to Earth (.846 save percentage in the losses). Lehtonen has traditionally been a band-aid boy, so the injury cloud is certainly always looming above his head. If you are a Lehtonen-owner, it'd be a smart move to pick up the handcuff in Raycroft to protect your assets, especially since he pitched the SO against the Sabres on Saturday night. I could see this situation turning into a 70/30 split than the current 90/10 that's happening at the moment.

Detroit

Name
Jimmy Howard

GS
5

GAA
2.14

SV%
.925

Record
4-0-1

Status

Stand Pat

Chris Osgood

4

2.76

.893

2-2-0

Stand Pat

It’s a bit early to draw a conclusion, but it looks like Jimmy Howard has avoided the dreaded goalie sophomore slump. He’s posting terrific numbers and is certainly playing with plenty of confidence. He’s suffering from back spasms at the moment, but it doesn’t appear serious as he’s slated to start on Wednesday night against Calgary. At the moment it’s closer to 50/50, but with Howard posting great numbers, and Osgood playing fairly ordinary, the starts will move towards 60/40 probably 70/30 as the season progresses.

Edmonton

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Nikolai Khabibulin

8

3.38

.901

3-4-1

Sell

Devan Dubnyk

1

1.85

.951

0-0-1

Stand Pat

After starting 2010-11 2-0, the Bulin wall returned back to Earth with five consecutive losses before snapping that streak on Friday night with a victory over the Blackhawks. The Oilers are a very young team, and will have their ups and downs all season long. They're giving up 35 shots to their opponents per contest and that's probably not something a soon-to-be 38-year old goaltender, with a career .908 save percentage, needs. I'd wait for the next hot streak from the Bulin wall, and then move him for a "safer" option. Devan Dubnyk hasn't had a lot of game time to see what his real fantasy value is really at, so stand pat for now. A third option might be Jeff

Deslauriers, but he's been riding the press box since the start of the season, and probably won't make much of a fantasy impact with both Khabibulin and Dubnyk in the mix.

Los Angeles

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Jon Quick

8

1.84

.936

7-1-0

Stand Pat

Jon Bernier

3

2.68

.910

1-2-0

Stand Pat

There was some talk in the off-season of this being a transition year for Bernier, but Quick's hot start to the season has quashed some of that talk. He's currently tied for first in victories, as well as owning the fourth best GAA and third best save percentage amongst all goaltenders in the NHL. If he keeps those numbers up, there will be no shot for Bernier to steal the number one gig in LA while it appears that Bernier will need to wait another year before making a serious shot at a full-time NHL gig.

Minnesota

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Niklas Backstrom

9

2.08

.929

4-3-2

Stand Pat

Jose Theodore

1

5.00

.857

0-1-0

Sell

After a pretty dismal down year last year, Backstrom has returned back to vintage form with dazzling numbers so far. The Wild aren't a great offensive team (2.60 goals for per contest, ranked 21st overall), so the wins will be hard pressed to come by but if you are looking for above average peripheral stats, Backstrom is certainly a viable option. With Backstrom playing lights out, it appears that Theodore will see less and less ice-time as the season progresses. If you are a Theo owner, now might be a good time to return him back to the waiver wire.

Nashville

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Pekka Rinne

6

2.41

.928

2-2-2

Stand Pat

Anders Lindback

4

2.55

.925

3-0-1

Stand Pat

A small knee injury setback early for Rinne opened the door briefly for Lindback to steal a few starts. I don't know what training program they have for goalies in the Nashville organization but they seem to always seem to churn out a plethora of undervalued/underrated goalies (Chris Mason/Dan Ellis/Tomas Vokoun) and now Rinne/Lindback. Something must be mixed in the Kool-Aid there... Nashville is Rinne's team, but with Lindback appearing that he's fully capable of handling NHL work, look for 20-25 starts from Lindback this campaign.

Phoenix

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Ilya Bryzgalov

8

2.61

.922

3-2-3

Buy

Jason LaBarbera

2

4.56

.891

0-2-0

Sell

Well, it hasn't been a smooth ride for Bryzgalov so far to start the season as the numbers show above. The main problem is that the Coyotes don't resemble a typical Dave Tippet coached team. They're giving up a whopping 35.1 SOG to their opponents (27th) so far this season, which definitely bucks the trend compared to the rest of the Tippet-coached teams (5th, 4th, 2nd, 2nd, 1st, 5th and 12th). Look for Tippet to make adjustments in the next 10 games or so, and bring back that stifling defensive team that we saw last season. Now might be a great time to acquire Bryzgalov on the down-low to set you up for the rest of the season. LaBarbera started in 13 contests last season, which is a similar amount that I'd expect him to start this season, which won't be enough to be of fantasy value for owners.

San Jose

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Antero Niittymaki

5

1.88

.929

4-0-1

Buy

Antti Niemi

4

4.49

.854

1-3-0

Sell

Heading into the season, we knew that there was going to be a goalie controversy in San Jose, but nine contests in and we seem to have found a temporary solution. Niemi seems to be suffering from the dreaded sophomore slump, while Niitty seems to be seizing the most of this opportunity. It's going to the a goalie split-time situation all season long, where one goalie slumps, the other will get the nod, and vice-versa, the pendulum swings back the other way. It's

going to be a headache all season long. I'd steer clear if you have the opportunity.

St. Louis

Name

GS

GAA

SV%

Record

Status

Jaroslav Halak

8

1.71

.932

6-1-1

Stand Pat

Ty Conklin

1

1.85

.920

0-0-1

Stand Pat

The Halak attack is certainly in full force in St. Louis as he and the Blues are off to a flying 6-1-2 start. They're certainly going to give Chicago and Detroit a run for the Central crown come April. The only downside is that the Blues are stingy on allowing opponent SOG, which means that if your league counts total saves, it could diminish Halak's fantasy value quite a bit. With Halak playing so well, Conklin won't make much of a fantasy impact this season. However, if an injury was to occur, Conks' fantasy value could skyrocket. Until then, leave him on the waiver wire.

Vancouver

Name
Roberto Luongo

GS
7

GAA
2.56

SV%
.918

Record

Status

3-3-2

Stand Pat

Cory Schneider

2

0.86

.968

2-0-0

Buy

After starting the season with a 1-3-2 record, Luongo has now responded with back-to-back victories. Traditionally speaking, October is a statistically off month for the Montreal-native, but he generally rounds into form for November. The return of Alex Burrows will probably help the cause. With two starts, two victories and a sub one GAA, Schneider deserves some monitoring. Much like the Bernier case above, he probably won't get much of a look with a world class goalie ahead of him in the depth charts, but if he can show that he can maintain those numbers in a backup role, I wouldn't be surprised to see Alain Vigneault give him 15-20 starts throughout the season. The Canucks have eight back-to-back games remaining this season, so expect Schneider to appear in all of those pairings, plus a few more spot starts here and there.

Questions or comments? Like always I'll be ready and willing to discuss them with you in the comments section below. We'll see you next week, as we go through the Fantasy Indicators of Success 2010 for defenseman from the Western Conference.