As most loyal Dobber readers know, some players are more prone to injury than others. When they're on your fantasy team, they hurt your team's performance, but a player can very easily return from injury and still be just as good (as long as the injury is not a serious one). But major or frequent injuries at a young age can derail development by reducing playing time or negatively affecting long-term health.

Adrian Foster was a first-round pick of the New Jersey Devils in 2001. Foster was a highly touted player before arriving in the WHL, but played only seven games with the Saskatoon Blades as a 17-year-old and five games as an 18-year-old. Despite his talent, it was an off-the-board pick by the Devils because of his lack of playing time.

After the Devils drafted him, he played only 27 games in the WHL as a 19-year-old. Foster played just 39 regular-season games over three seasons, but still offered a glimmer of hope with a point-a-game playoff effort in 15 games. Unfortunately, the injury bug struck again and he played just nine games in his rookie season as a pro.

It wasn't until the 2007-08 season that Foster managed more than 51 games in a season. Even then, he only played 70 games and managed to put up just 38 points with Houston of the AHL. He left for Europe and after a season in Austria, moved on to the KHL for a brief stint and was looking for work after just 10 games. He'll soon be 28 and has yet to play a game in the NHL.

Foster is an extreme example, to be sure, but knowing injury history at the junior or college level can help you make a more realistic projection of a player's upside and his ability to reach it.

One of my favourite prospects a few years ago was Logan Couture of the San Jose Sharks. Couture is off to a great start as a rookie with the Worcester Sharks. Ranked No. 15 on Dobber's list of top prospects, Couture notched 35 points in his first 25 AHL games this season. He's also earning frequent flyer miles as he's been called up to San Jose five times since the start of the season. In 11 NHL games, he's managed just one goal and one assist in limited ice time – never playing more than 8:53.

Couture's production this year and last year comes as a surprise to me as I thought his development was stunted a bit by injuries. I am wondering how good he might be now had he been able to stay healthy during his second and third year of junior hockey.

For the last two years, Couture has been able to stay healthy, but you should do your homework on his injury history if you're looking to acquire him. When a player gets injured as often as Couture – and one of the recurring injuries is a concussion – alarm bells should be going off.

It's a common question among Dobberites. Is it bad luck or is he brittle? Couture has suffered a knee injury that hurt his stock in his draft year. Couture also suffered a nasty cut on his leg at a team Canada summer tryout camp and the cut became infected.

The year before his draft, he was rated as the top prospect for the 2007 draft by one independent scouting agency (ISS). It wasn't the first time he was rated as a top prospect and fell. As a 15-year-old standout with the Junior B St. Thomas Stars, Couture was rated the top prospect for the 2005 OHL Draft – until the OHL granted exceptional player status to John Tavares. Miffed by the move that bumped his son from the top spot, Couture's dad, Chet, threatened to boycott the OHL and said his son would try to play in the NCAA instead. Many teams were scared off and Couture fell to the 12th overall pick where Ottawa grabbed him.

Last year, Couture was snubbed by Team Canada for the world junior tournament. He used that as motivation and finished off his junior career by putting up his best numbers – much like Wojtek Wolski did as a 19-year-old and Sam Gagner did after failing to make Canada's under-18 team for the Ivan Hlinka tournament before his draft year. Rejection is often a great motivator for a player.

The Sharks moved up on draft day in 2007 because they wanted Couture for his mature, two-way game. The kid oozes character and hockey sense, but he lacks some physical tools. He's not very big and he's not that fast. At the world under-18 championship in Finland just before his draft year, Couture's skating was exposed as a weakness on the international ice surface.

Couture is an excellent playmaker and tends to favour that part of the offensive game, but his finishing skills are good enough to keep teams honest. He's a two-way player and will likely kill penalties for any team he plays for. He's not very physical and doesn't take many penalties.

With Joe Thornton and Joe Pavelski holding down the top two centre spots, the opportunity for Couture to earn significant points in the NHL is limited for the next few years. That could change if the Sharks are unable to keep Pavelski in the fold this summer when he becomes a restricted free agent.

The Sharks might decide to let Couture ease into NHL duty on the third or fourth line. If Scott Nichol (UFA) leaves and Torrey Mitchell can't stay healthy, there will be some opportunity for Couture next year, especially if he continues to show that he can handle the AHL with aplomb.

Couture could arrive full-time in the NHL as early as 2010-11, but top six duty depends on Pavelski's and Thornton's presence.

Upside: If given top-six duty, 30-50-80.