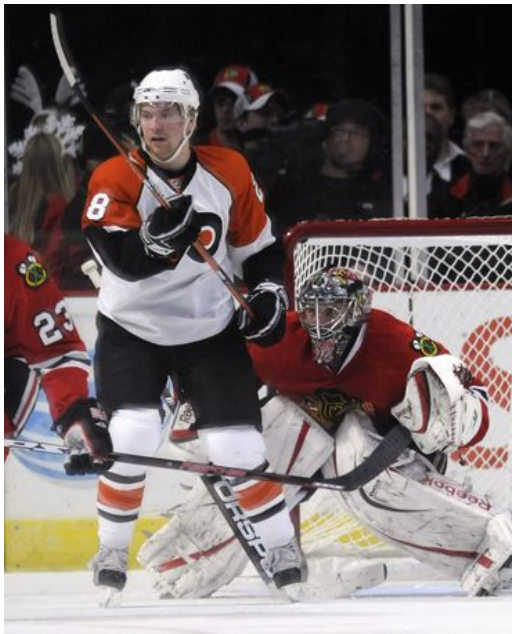

Here's a little twist on Dobber's fantasy prospects rankings.

Dobber's Rankings
1 Nikita Filatov CBJ
2 Claude Giroux PHI
3 Cody Hodgson VAN
4 Mikkel Boedker PHO

Stu's Slant
1 Claude Giroux PHI
2 Nikita Filatov CBJ
3 Mikkel Boedker PHO
4 Cody Hodgson VAN

1) Claude Giroux

Although considered offensive and small, Giroux is a relative giant compared with other small players on the top prospects list. Giroux is a full six inches taller than mighty-midget Nathan Gerbe. Currently listed at 5'11, 172 pounds, he will fill out considerably, as there is ample room on his frame for more muscle. He'll probably play at 185 pounds, hitting a height and weight exactly the same as Wayne Gretzky and Steve Yzerman.

Giroux is not Wayne Gretzky, but he can be compared to Martin St.Louis in a heartbeat. Giroux is actually faster and bigger than St.Louis, but has a long way to go to before his career rivals that of the former Art Ross winner. The one thing that bodes well for Giroux is his grit. He's gritty enough to put himself in position to score, but doesn't play an overly physical game otherwise. That's a good thing for fantasy pool owners because he's less likely to get injured. An injured talent is pointless (literally) as any owner of Tim Connolly or Marian Gaborik will tell you.

Giroux is a playmaker, yet another bonus for fantasy owners unless yours is a goal-based pool. Assists are much easier to produce consistently and playmakers almost always outscore goal scorers in the long run. Give me Giroux over Filatov any day. Nikita is a great name for a Siberian Husky or an ex-girlfriend but not a hockey player.

2) Nikita Filatov

Filatov is a much higher-end prospect than Claude Giroux. He has more talent. Filatov loses his No. 1 rank on this list because of his slight frame and the potential for injury. Ideal pool players include Ilya Kovalchuk and Joe Thornton, because both can produce on their own, both are thick bodied and both avoid the rough stuff. Kovalchuk is 6'1, 225 pounds. That kind of thick body greatly lowers the chance of injury. Filatov is listed at 6'0, 172. His listed weight is a crock. He's much lighter than 172 pounds. His 7-game leg injury this season lends credence to the padded-weight theory. Sure he'll fill out, but injuries this early in his career do not bode well. Filatov is also a sniper. Most snipers have to get their noses dirtier than dealers, increasing yet again his injury potential.

3) Mikkel Boedker

Boedker has come a long way very quickly. Two years ago he was an unknown in Sweden, and this year he's flirting with a 35-point NHL season at the tender age of 19. Short but very stocky, this speed burning winger has met every challenge he's faced in his short career. If he continues to improve at this pace, he'll top out as a high-end, playmaking winger like Daniel Alfredsson. Boedker is lucky to be surrounded with a lot of young talent. He'll grow with and be supported by other offensive weapons like Peter Mueller, Kyle Turris, Martin Hanzel, Keith Yandle, Viktor Tikhonov and Enver Lisin. All of this bodes well for him reaching his top-end potential. He was under ranked at No. 4 and may still be under ranked at No. 3. Grab this kid.

4) Cody Hodgson

Moving from prospect status to consistent NHL producer is a pressure producing endeavour. Cody Hodgson has repeatedly proven himself in pressure situations, ranging from the 2008 Canada-Russia ADT Challenge to the 2009 World Junior Championships. The Russians had a good team at the ADT Challenge this season. They split their series against both the QMJHL and the WHL. They could easily have split against the OHL if it wasn't for Hodgson's play in game three in Guelph. After two periods in a tight 3-3 game, Hodgson scored twice in the third period to lead the OHL to victory.

Hodgson displayed that same clutch ability in the World Junior Championships a month later, leading the tournament in scoring. Hodgson has the type of leadership that winning teams require, and he'll likely be sought out for that quality throughout his career. Because of this, Hodgson might find himself surrounded with more quality
line mates than the first two players on this list. That is exactly what happened to Ron Francis, a player Hodgson has been compared to in this space. Francis spent his prime years toiling on a mediocre team, but his leadership was required on a team that was a player away from a Cup. This helped his statistics later in his career. This kind of thing could easily happen to Hodgson who comes by his leadership honestly. Hodgson's father Chris was a cabinet minister in Mike Harris' Ontario government from 1997 to 2002. The one drawback for Hodgson is that he plays a good all-around game. This may hurt his offensive production because he can be used in a defensive role.