Back in the early days when I was getting my feet wet as a commissioner, the midseason draft was a much-anticipated staple of our annual fantasy hockey calendar.

We usually made it part of the All-Star Weekend festivities, gathering together to watch the game, scarf some pizza, talk some trash and make some picks. I fondly recall watching Owen Nolan call his shot against Dominik Hasek in between selections.

We started with a one-round redraft draft in our first season, expanding it to two or three rounds in subsequent years. For each player you added, you had to drop one to make room on your roster. Participation was optional, but rare was the team that didn't use all their picks – despite the fact that long-term injuries seemed to be much rarer in those days.

The nature of our league at the time made the midseason draft essential. These were the dark ages, when I rushed home from school each Tuesday clutching the weekly stats page, and then spent two hours ignoring homework and entering numbers into a Microsoft Works spreadsheet to update our league standings. That being the case, we kept things simple: no players on the bench, no injured reserve, no farm team and no in-season add/drops. In other words, the midseason draft was the only chance we had to replace injured players (or those who just plain sucked).

Not only that, but because of the structure of our league, there were always plenty of missed gems available for drafting midseason. I remember one early season in particular when Kevin Stevens was snagged with the first overall midseason pick and immediately became a top-5 player in our league, vaulting his team up the standings over the course of the last three months of the season. (Click here to read about our scoring system that made Stevens such a stud.) The midseason draft was a genuine turning point in the season, and a lifeline to struggling squads.

But those days are long past. As I write this, I'm trying to remember the last time I participated in a midseason draft. 1997, maybe? Whenever it was, it was a long time ago. Since then, I've played in close to 50 fantasy seasons in various leagues, and not one of them has included a January redraft.

Has the midseason draft gone the way of the dodo bird? I think it has. The reasons for this are many, but the biggest cause is the establishment of the internet and the development of online pool managers like Yahoo, Fantrax, Office Pools and the like. These sites have taken the work out of managing a fantasy league, allowing us to incorporate daily or weekly transactions throughout the season, which most leagues take advantage of. In a league that allows ongoing transactions, changes are made on the fly, and there really is no role left for the midseason draft.

In short, as fantasy hockey evolved, it outgrew the need for the midseason draft. Like an extraneous limb that no longer serves a useful purpose, the midseason draft steadily decreased in importance and eventually disappeared from the modern fantasy game altogether. Though I'm nostalgic for the days when I actually had a reason to be excited about the All-Star Game, the ship has sailed and there's no going back.

But don't think that means you don't need Dobber's Midseason Guide . On the contrary, it's more important than ever! Rather than having to make a handful of picks in a January draft, you need to be prepared for all the opportunities and challenges you'll face throughout the next

three and a half months. The work of building a champion never ends!

How about you – does your league still have a midseason draft? If so, how does it work? And who is the best midseason pick-up you've ever made?