Q&A runs every other Sunday and today we look at what to do when you have too many centres, along with how you can approach trades in a keeper setting. Maybe now is the time to target P.K. Subban, among others...

CENTRE OVERLOAD

Brandon

“Hey Chris,

I am in the first year of a Head to Head, 10 team keeper league. Our stats are G,A,+/-, S, PIM, Hits, BS, W, GAA,SV%, SO. We play 2 lines and have 4 bench spots available.

My dilemma. I have too many centres and keepers. We can only keep 4 players at the end of the year, and I am having difficulty choosing which centres to play each night since I only have 2 spots.

My Roster:F- Malkin C/RW, Toews C, M. Richards C, Couture C, Skinner C/RW, RNH C, Benn LW/C, Chris Stewart RW, Bobby Ryan LW, D- Seabrook, Edler, Giordano, B. Campbell G- Price, Crawford, Rask

I need another LW eligible player and can upgrade my D/G positions, but who should I deal? who are my keepers going to be? Which G would be an upgrade? I appreciate any help/ suggestions.”

Chris: Brandon, let's tackle the keeper side of things first.

I'd say you have a really wide variety of options. Aside from the clear choice of Malkin, I could potentially see going with Ryan and Skinner, especially with Skinner having dual eligibility, as the next two. Barring something big changing between now and summer, I'd feel pretty solid about locking that pair in now with Malkin.

In terms of the fourth choice, you have a lot of options and I wouldn't really be in a rush to name him now or identify him for trade purposes.

On a side note, I like that you have Malkin, Skinner and Benn as guys who can play in two spots for you. On busy nights you never have to use them in a centre slot, which helps.

Back to keepers. If Stewart has a good year in STL (not exactly off to a good start), maybe he'll make the case to be your fourth as a strong power forward. Toews and Richards are solid no matter what, although being a centre hurts their values somewhat.

IMO, none of those D are strong enough to warrant a keeper spot in a top four situation. I do love the Campbell pick-up in general though. He's been a steal for anyone who took him this year.

An argument could easily be made for Carey Price as the fourth keeper. Let's see what he does this season though. Consistency is the biggest factor when you're talking about only four guys to keep. Can he put up stellar stats – not just decent - every year?

And really, if Crawford can deliver another solid year as a starter – which he's on his way to doing – then it'd be tough to leave him out there for someone else to take. That might be a situation where once the season is over, you package Price and Toews for an upgrade somewhere else and hang onto Crawford as your fourth keeper.

We can likely all agree Rask will be a good one too, but having Thomas around for at least the near future cuts the legs out from Rask in a four-keeper situation.

In terms of who you could trade... keep in mind this is where getting to know your fellow owners really comes in handy. A Hawks fan, especially in a keeper situation, might be really interesting in acquiring Jonathan Toews. He's a legit star too, obviously, but dealing him for a LW would help your team out on a nightly basis. Finding out who really wants Toews or Mike Richards or

Logan Couture –because they're a fan of the team or the player - would help you maximize your trade value.

Keep in mind as well that maybe you can get a better deal on a star LW who is off to a slower start: someone like Henrik Zetterberg, who also has dual eligibility at C. The more of those dual-eligible guys you can acquire in leagues like yours, the better. Zetterberg's owner won't be giving him away, but it's during times like these when you may actually be able to pry him away for a pretty fair price.

Start asking around. Maybe Milan Lucic or Ilya Kovalchuk or Zach Parise (who should be earning a C designation soon, if he hasn't already) or Alexander Semin can be had for a good deal.

Another possibility might be pairing Richards (an extra centre for you who is doing well and should have some decent trade value) and Campbell (fantastic start and in a great position to put up points as the No. 1 guy in FLA) to snag a multi-category young stud on D like P.K. Subban, who is off to a slow start offensively. His mix of points, PIM and SOG will be something around which you could build your D each season. Again, you never know until you ask. That'd be a deal where you'd be looking at the big picture and maybe sacrificing some production in the short term. Then again, you'd also be freeing up a roster spot for a FA grab.

The key to trades in fantasy hockey is identifying another team's needs and then being able to

work something out that can, ideally, satisfy both sides. It really sounds like one of those “duh” things, but think about all of the pools you’ve been in and how many absolutely stupid trades offers you’ve received in that time... because people don’t take the time to really think out a successful strategy. They just want the player they want and that’s as far ahead as they think.

Keep the lines of communication open throughout the season, especially in keeper situations where you’ll be developing long-term relationships with this group of owners. In the long run of retention pools, you really want to make sure your trading partner is happy with the deal too.