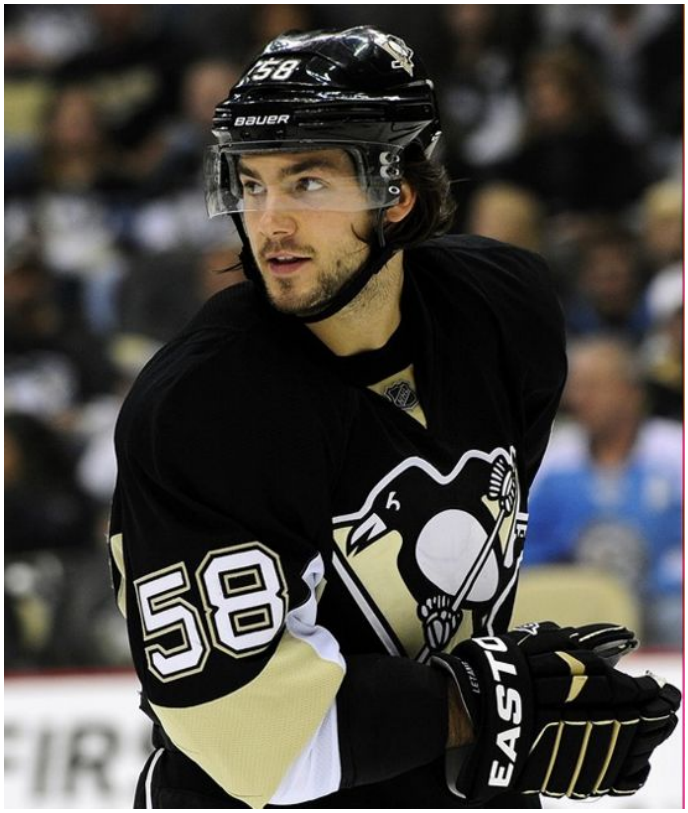

Few mechanisms have changed fantasy hockey in recent seasons as much as Twitter.

Admittedly, I was way late jumping onto the Twitter scene. I didn't initially see the positive applications of it. Honestly, it just seemed like an alternative to Facebook for people updating their friends and family on their latest mundane activity.

I was completely in error.

Don't get me wrong. Twitter is still basically a tool for tools to show how much of a tool they really are.

But as an application to disseminate valuable information – tweeting is really second to none.

A few Sundays ago I touched on how Twitter and advanced mobile technology had dramatically affected how quickly poolies can get info and we saw that again at the trade deadline this past week, where NHL players themselves were finding out they were dealt from social media before their own teams were able to contact them.

When it comes to people like me who are in the business of trying to provide value-added content to readers, Twitter has really changed and greatly improved how I'm able to do my job. That, in turn, makes my product more valuable and, hopefully, makes me more important to you. It's pretty symbiotic that way. You rely on me to hopefully raise your fantasy IQ and I depend on your readership to stay gainfully employed and put food on the table. And I likes me some food.

On its simplest plane, Twitter is a way you can link to my latest blog on your phone as soon as it's released.

In its laziest form, Twitter and my iPhone would technically allow me the opportunity to spend each trade deadline in bed if I wanted instead of getting up at 5am Pacific. I'm not on TV. Who the hell would know the difference? Mental note for 2013...

But to today's point: how specifically has Twitter improved my ability to help you?

For starters, the dynamic of information gathering has shifted. The onus is no longer as much on me to go out and find the proverbial nuts and berries intel, gather it all up and then bring it back to the hut and share it with you. As much as I still do that for my own general knowledge and for the Hockey Hearsay blog weekdays in particular (I go through 60-70 newspapers online daily for HH), now we have the option of a centralized source of knowledge comprised of beat writers, NHL teams themselves and the main breaking news people from the Sportsnets and

TSNs of the hockey world. Instead of having to visit each site for the latest tidbit, we now have the option of perusing tweets for a quick hit and then following up on the sites themselves when more detail is needed.

This consolidated system allows for a myriad of helpful knowledge which is then passed along to you, either via Twitter or the live nightly blogs. From a change in line combos at the morning skate (which can give you the jump on adding a free agent ahead of time for that game) to who'll be getting the start that night (invaluable, especially for tandem-like situations) to injuries happening during a game I'm not watching at the time (which lets you know you'll need to find a replacement and potentially give you some ideas as to who may take that guy's place), Twitter sees all.

A few examples on the injury front happened just last week and, honestly, by pure coincidence. I happened to on the Pittsburgh game as the Eric Nystrom/ Kris Letang collision happened and it didn't look good for Letang, especially given the recent concussion history. So I was able to tweet the info right away, giving a heads-up to Letang owners. Same thing with Niklas Backstrom early in that contest against the Habs. I saw it live and thought it looked like something that would keep him out of action for at least a few games, so the Josh Harding alert was able to go out before Backstrom reached the dressing room.

And let's face it... just the ability to be able to get breaking news makes Twitter an incredible resource. Yes, there are plenty of instances of erroneous info getting out there. But that's why it's important to follow sources of info you trust (and make sure it's the legit account of them and not a fake).

As a consumer, you can get the same tweet I receive from the news-breakers and learn of the signing, trade or whatever as soon as I do and begin to make your decision as to how you want to apply that directive to your fantasy team. You're then able to get my thoughts, along with whoever else, on the same item when the news is still fresh and act on whatever you decide is the best course of action.

Incidentally, it's at times like the trade deadline or free agency in July where you can really learn who knows their stuff. Twitter offers instant insight into what people are thinking when this info comes out, so over the course of time it'll separate the contenders from the pretenders in the business of what we do. There's no way to get everything right, naturally, which any vet knows. But faulty logic and atrocious instincts will steer you down a bad path more often than not... so pay close attention around those times in particular and you'll have a much clearer idea of who is worth your time and who isn't.

Some personal observations from my foray with this particular social media app...

By and large, the beat writers do wonderful, objective and under-appreciated work. They have a similarly horrid travel schedule as the players, but endure it for a fraction of a fraction of what the people they cover earn.

That said, there are a couple of beauties on the NHL beat. Bitter, angry, conspiracy-theory lunatics. Twitter just accelerates their ability to showcase their erratic behaviour. And no, I'm not going to name names.

To ease the workload burden, it seems as if most NHL teams have a couple of different people responsible for updating their team's tweets. A reasonable thing to do. And it's also fair enough that readers may want to know when a certain person is on duty, since maybe they'll have a certain flair for humour or good info that the other lacks.

But how big would your ego have to be to "sign" (with initials of some sort, which can range from two to five or more characters in a limited-character setting) EVERY SINGLE TWEET that goes out that night when you're live tweeting a game? Here's an idea... how about a welcome "Hey, this is so-and-so covering the team tonight" at the beginning of the shift and then a sign-off when someone else takes over? Some teams' tweeters are more obnoxious than others in that regard.

On the whole though, Twitter rocks. Like anything else in life, it's something in which you can get out of it exactly what you choose and you can make the experience as positive or as negative as you want.

Follow people you enjoy. Unfollow the ones you don't.

Should you be so inclined, follow me on Twitter for NHL and fantasy info as a safe mobile notifications options with minimal self-involved dreck in 140-character spurts.