It's April, which means the overbearing stench of frustration emanates from the corpses of fallen fantasy owners.

All but a handful of rotisserie leagues have already been decided, head-to-head groups will be wrapped up shortly and barring the rarest of ties, only one person can emerge victorious from

each bunch; leaving many crestfallen losers across the poolie landscape.

Yes, playoff drafts will start up soon and will offer a fresh chance at redemption.

But it will be an achingly protracted six months before most ’12-13 leagues start up, which leaves us with too much time to stew in our own misery.

If you’ve only gravitated toward single-season leagues to this point, there can be no better advertisement for the upside of keeper formats than the ability to craft your roster year-round. Not only do they generally revitalize the oft-stagnant second half roster activity levels of one-year pools, but they also promote more frequent owner interaction with off-season trading and, if you’re really doing it well, a prospect draft each summer.

You know how there’s such a big difference between watching a hockey game on TV, even with the technological advancements of high definition and the 16 X 9 format vs. the old 4 X 3 garbage, and seeing the action unfold in living colour live at the arena?

The same stunning enrichment can be seen and felt with the jump up from a single-season league to a keeper format. And really, with the ability to interact with so many fellow poolies and prospective leaguemates here in the DH forums there is absolutely no excuse for you not to be trying to get in on the action.

Seriously: if you've never been in a keeper pool before but you love fantasy hockey, you are doing yourself a disservice by not going into at least one of those sorts of leagues. Whether you only keep a handful of players year-to-year, or an in-depth roster with prospects and the ability to trade draft picks (one word for the latter style: heaven)... get in the game. You will not regret it.

Regardless of your current league's format though, either you won or you lost. And if you lost, it's always going to sting on some level. But as you go about the autopsy for your '11-12 campaign, ask yourself one question: did you do everything you could to win?

I've been in a lot of leagues over the years and as much as my winning percentage is pretty decent, especially in keeper formats where long-term planning and scouting acumen in particular pay off, I've certainly lost my share. Coming out on the short end of the stick sucks, plain and simply. It burns.

But there's one thing I know with 100 percent certainty: Never, in my entire life of doing newspaper-based pools as a kid through the next generation evolution of internet fantasy

leagues have I EVER been out-worked in a league. It's never happened.

Do you have to spend hours daily in order to win though? No. It's about concentrating your efforts. Directed bursts of fantasy energy.

I've tried to build my nightly live recaps at Sportsnet.ca around the concept of giving fantasy owners a quick, concise one-stop location to get the core of their day's fantasy notes in an easy-to-pinpoint, target-rich environment.

I spend eight hours a night compiling the line combos, power play times, streaks, stats and rants so that you can compress your fantasy intel sessions into 15-minute surges. Are the recaps perfect? No. I'm one guy and there's a crapload of information to pass along nightly. But it's a dependable and, IMO, valuable source of counsel each evening.

You can read the Daily Ramblings here. There are also more than enough articles at DH on every conceivable fantasy angle to satiate any appetite.

That's all well and fine for information-gathering purposes. What about in your league with your roster specifically though?

If you were in a close race – or maybe you still are in this final week – was there any point in the season where you forgot to set your lineup and you missed out on a shutout or hat trick? Or maybe you had planned to set it right before the games began that night but then something work or family-related came up, preventing you from getting to it?

Something I taught myself after high school - where I was a horrible student – but in the beginnings of college and my early work life - where I excelled - was that routine matters. In the case of fantasy sports, it can be a really good idea to set your roster at the same time each day. Then it becomes a force of habit, rather than something you're struggling to remember on a daily basis.

Even today, with my general fantasy writer work life, I have the same routine each morning as I go about creating Hockey Hearsay. When I'm done that it's always forming the skeleton of that night's Live NHL Recap. Then it's sending in the next day's fantasy notes for each game preview on the site.

Structure and discipline matter. It's not the only way to do things, but it works for me and passing along that methodology has yielded good results to readers over the years.

One final remark...

One of the hardest lessons to learn and then apply in life can also be related to fantasy ownership.

There are things you can control. There are things which are beyond your control. Focus on improving the former annually and don’t dwell on the latter.

In areas where you came up short: own your mistakes. Learn from them. Don’t repeat them.

In areas where forces beyond your dominion changed your circumstances for the worse, don’t let the negativity radiating from that seep into your daily life. Process it. Accept it. Move on.

Easier said than done, to be sure, but if you can stick to that idea it's something that will serve you well so far beyond the fantasy realm. Truly. I know that one well and it's the single-greatest piece of advice I can ever pass along to you.

Here endeth the lesson.

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.