

Welcome to another fantasy hockey season. It's been a pretty interesting offseason for many teams. Lots of new faces in new places (looking at you, Tavares). With the NHL season around the corner, that also means another fantasy hockey season is about to start! In this section, we'll take a look at some draft rules that could help you win your league. Are these rules going to work? Maybe, but it doesn't hurt to give them a try, right? You can use a combination of these rules, or all of them! Let's get right to it.

Always Draft the Best Player Available

I can't stress this one enough. I've seen people do some terrible things because they "absolutely" have to draft a certain position because of "scarcity." Don't be like the Montreal Canadiens-- draft the best player available!

Many experts will talk about how deep the C position is, and that's true. If you look at the [top-20 player rankings in fantasy for 2018-19](#), there are 11 centres, seven wingers and two goalies. Some of those players have duo-position eligibility (we'll look at that later on), but the majority are listed at C.

This doesn't mean that you should be drafting a winger ahead of a centre! Lots of leagues have UTIL spots, which should be used to roster centers. If you put yourself in a position where you feel the need to pass up on a player because you can't fit them into your lineup, don't!

You can always draft a player and trade them immediately after the draft or at the beginning of the season to another owner who's lack at that same position. I've used this strategy in MLB (drafting a ton of good SPs and moving them for hitters during the season) and it's worked out pretty well for the last couple of years. The science isn't exactly the same, but it's not far.

Every fantasy team will experience injuries, so having bench players who can produce is a huge bonus. It's usually the difference between winning a league, and losing one. If you're in a deep league (16 or more teams) or your league has a really deep bench, this becomes even more important.

It's rare that all 32 NHL teams will play on the same night, so there's a good chance that he will still be in your lineup more often than not. It will happen that you'll have to make some tough decisions on a Saturday, but game matchups/injuries/line matchups will dictate your decisions.

There's really no reason to pass up on the best player available at the draft. Don't get cute with your picks, just stick to what the board allows you to draft.

Drafting a Goalie

Drafting a goalie has become somewhat of an art in fantasy. If you play NHL DFS, you know how hard it is trying to pick a goalie every night that isn't going to be terrible. In season long, it's all about timing. Everyone wants an elite goalie on their team, but what is considered an elite?

For the last couple of years, I've used the 30 win plateau as a benchmark to evaluate elite goalies, but then I had a Snickers and realized that isn't a good way of evaluating goalies. Instead, I've gone with a more modern formula-- winning percentage. Take the number of games a goalie starts and divide it by the number of wins. Simple math that gives you a pretty decent number.

You can't stop there though, you also have to look at other stats. To simplify life, I use a 2.50 GAA and a .920 SV% as a benchmark to evaluate if a goalie is elite or not. The goal is to narrow down a list of goalies that have a 60+ winning percentage, a below 2.50GAA and a SV% above .920. If you want to get really technical, you can look at five-on-five SV% and GAA to give you a more accurate breakdown.

If you exclude the 60% winning percentage, seven goalies from last season have a GAA below 2.50 and a SV% above .920%:

- John Gibson
- Sergei Bobrovsky
- Jonathan Quick
- Connor Hellebuyck
- Pekka Rinne
- Antti Raanta (yes, it's true)
- Marc-Andre Fleury

If you now adjust the winning percentage to those seven goalies, only three make the list: Pekka Rinne (71%), Connor Hellebuyck (68%) and Marc-Andre Fleury (63%).

Those are your three elite goalies from last season that I would be looking to target again this season. This doesn't mean that a goalie like Andrei Vasilevskiy isn't a good pick, It just means that he isn't considered elite (in my books) and that if you wanted to reach a round on any of those three, you probably should. Is there some risk that Las Vegas doesn't repeat their magic from last season? Yes. Is it possible that Rinne loses his starting job to Saros? Yes. These are all factors to consider, but when you look at the numbers, these are the goalie that are worth targeting in your upcoming draft.

Don't be afraid to draft any of the other four who didn't hit the 60% winning percentage. If you are in a points league that penalizes you for a goalie loss, those four goalies above don't maximize your return quite as well as the three others. If you league has no penalty, or you're in a category league, all seven of those goalies are a great pick (we'll look more are different type of leagues in another article).

“Undraftable” Players

Let me start off by saying one thing--no player is “undraftable in fantasy hockey. Undraftable should be forgotten from every ones vocabulary. Not only is it not an actual word, but there no reason to pass up on a player may hold value just because you have some preconceived idea that’s probably not true.

My favourite is the “ I can’t draft player X because he’s always gets hurt.” First name that people yell out is usually Evgeni Malkin. I’ll give people some credit--Malkin hasn’t played 82 games since 2008-09 and last season was the first time since 2011-12 that he played [more than 70 games in a season](#) (excluding the lockout season of course).

That being said, Malkin has averaged over a point-per-game since he entered the league back in 2006-07. Last season, he finished with 98-points in 78 games, giving him 1.26 points per game, his highest total since 2011-12.

Some players get hurt a lot (looking at you Kris Letang too), but that doesn’t mean you should be passing up on these players! I’ll take a point-per-game player in the top-5 EVERY DAY of the week.

Second excuse people love to say is “player X had a terrible preseason, so I can’t draft him” or the “he’s going to lose playing/ power play time to player Y, so he’s not worth drafting anymore.” You can’t predict an 82 game schedule, period. Can the preseason hurt a player? No, because it’s the preseason, and nothing counts. People love to buy into the hype of players having a good preseason, but that shouldn’t add to a players value (with the exception of rookies).

If Sidney Crosby has one point the entire preseason, he shouldn’t be knocked in your rankings because of that.

It’s simple-- you draft a player that can give you the most value. Is Milan Lucic good? of course not, but I’ll take a risk on him in round-15 of a 12-team league if there’s a chance that he plays with McDavid again. At worst, he flops and five weeks into the season he ends up on the bench.

Rookie Drafting

I love drafting rookies late in fantasy hockey. It’s become an art that I try to improve on every year. The motto in any fantasy league is still true-- you can’t win a league on draft day, but you can lose it.

Rookies are a high risk/ high reward that can help you win a league. Draft the wrong ones too early, and you’re passing up on a player that could have made the difference for you. Rookies

hold value in leagues, but you can't get carried away with reaching for a kid who just may not work out.

In keeper and dynasty leagues, the formula is different, but in redraft leagues, it's important to evaluate rookies as they are--unpredictable. This season, Most people will be looking at Dahlin, Zadina and Svechnikov as early targets, but the real targets to look at late in drafts are Yamamoto (EDM), Tolvanen (NSH) and Mittelstadt (BUF). Of course, it's still early for rookies and the preseason will help us better understand which players we should be targeting. I'll have a rookie section in the draft kit updated as we start to clear up which players could stick around for the season, and which players are probably heading back to juniors.

If you have any questions, you can find me on twitter @fuzzychris91! Happy drafting!