**Lucroy one of many trade deadline targets in keeper leagues**

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I own [Jonathan Lucroy](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30456/jonathan-lucroy) in the [XFL keeper league](http://www.fantasyxperts.com/). He is a player whom I have been protecting for the past few seasons because I acquired him at little cost. In this 15-team mixed league he was a $16 keeper.

For 2015, that was a fair price. Lucroy was coming off a season in which he earned $22 behind a .301 batting average and 13 home runs. In redraft leagues this past March, he was considered one of the top catchers in the game. His average draft position in ESPN leagues was No. 68, behind only [Buster Posey](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30112/buster-posey) among all catchers.

Well, this season has not gone according to plan.

Lucroy came into camp nursing a hamstring injury. Early drafters hedged, and as March rolled on, more questions arose as to his availability. But Lucroy was in the lineup on April 6.

However, the numbers didn't come. After 45 at-bats, he was hitting just .133 with a single RBI before landing on the disabled list with a broken toe. Six weeks later he was back in action, and while his batting average seemingly recovered, his power did not. Now, here near the end of August, he is still batting only .241 (.259 since returning from the DL) with just five home runs. His current Rotisserie earnings are $5.

So, it was somewhat of a surprise when I received the following email from one of the other XFL owners (let's call him Jeff):

"Just checking to see if you're planning on keeping Lucroy for next year. If not, let's talk about a potential trade."

Now, the XFL is a league of sharks. The owner roster reads like an All-Star list of veteran fantasy writers. It also includes a handful of non-industry folk, some of whom have been cleaning our clocks regularly. Jeff is one of those guys.

For many keeper leagues, Aug. 31 represents the trading deadline. It's the last chance for contenders to beef up for the stretch run and for rebuilders to acquire some speculative pieces for the future. Jeff is a contender (again), not typically someone who would be looking to acquire a player like Lucroy right now.

I'm a rebuilder. I've reaped the benefits of owning Lucroy in the past and am reluctant to give up on him after one bad season. He will be priced at $19 for 2016, and as in most keeper leagues, there is always some price inflation on draft day. Is $19 a protectable cost?

I suspect that most fantasy leaguers would take the bait or, sans trade offer, just throw him back. That was my initial reaction. After all, it's tough to justify keeping a player earning just $5 when his future cost would be $19.

This is where recency bias rears its ugly head. Lucroy is not a $5 player. Yes, that is his earnings this year, a season in which he has battled multiple injuries. But when healthy, Lucroy is much more productive. Any trade has to be viewed in the light of future value.

But Jeff is in a battle for the title now. While he did have one weak catching spot, I didn't see how Lucroy provided any improvement. After the negotiations were complete (I'll reveal the results in a minute), I asked him about his motivation.

Jeff: "There's a lot to like about Lucroy. He's likely to continue to get plenty of playing time [20-25 AB per week], which makes him a fairly safe bet to add a few home runs, RBIs and runs down the stretch. Every incremental gain helps. If you set aside his miserable April and then discount his performances since then on account of the [hopefully healed] toe injury, there's reason to think he could be a bargain at $19 next year. I am always looking for guys who I think are primed to bounce back. That's where correlating injuries to performance can provide an edge."

Jeff's last statement hits home. Fighting the urge to be taken in by a player's injury-marred recent performance often opens up future opportunities. That's how I realized some profit this year when drafting players such as [Jason Kipnis](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/31007/jason-kipnis), [Mark Trumbo](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/29322/mark-trumbo), [Brandon Belt](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30901/brandon-belt) and, if things continue to fall right, [Shin-Soo Choo](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/6205/shin-soo-choo).

There are many players beyond Lucroy who might make interesting trade deadline targets in keeper leagues if their 2016 price makes sense:

[Alex Gordon](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/28636/alex-gordon) will end up missing nearly half the season but was putting up some of the best power metrics of his career when he sustained his groin injury.

Another catcher, [Devin Mesoraco](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/29950/devin-mesoraco), could significantly fall in value given how little he played this year. But his 2014 production -- 25-80-.273 -- remains the benchmark for his potential.

[Denard Span](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/29087/denard-span) will likely be downgraded given all the time lost, but his pre-injury peripherals were as strong as they ever were.

[Christian Yelich](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/31283/christian-yelich)'s second-half resurgence put him on pace to surpass last year's numbers before he went down with a bruised knee. Odds are his 2016 value will be based on the numbers he did put up, not on the numbers he was on pace to put up.

Traders will likely shy away from paying full value for star players such as [Giancarlo Stanton](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30583/giancarlo-stanton) and [George Springer](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/32078/george-springer), especially if we don't get to see them at all during the remainder of this season. That reluctance might be justified given both have wrist injuries -- which could sap their power -- but the potential upside might be worth it.

Many pitchers could see significant discounts and could yield big profits if you accept a little risk: [Homer Bailey](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/28668/homer-bailey), [Alex Cobb](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/31086/alex-cobb), [Yu Darvish](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/32055/yu-darvish), [Brandon McCarthy](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/6191/brandon-mccarthy), [Hyun-Jin Ryu](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/32582/hyun-jin-ryu), [Adam Wainwright](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/5403/adam-wainwright) and [Zack Wheeler](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/31267/zack-wheeler).

And Jonathan Lucroy. Jeff offered me two high reserve picks in next March's draft in return for the Brewers' backstop. In this particular league, that is actually a fairly aggressive offer. I pulled the trigger on the deal.