CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

The News&Observer

What could new Carolina Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky do in the NHL Draft in Las Vegas?

By Chip Alexander

If you're an NHL fan and enjoy trade speculation, free agency scuttlebutt and contract chatter, this is your week.

If you're a Carolina Hurricanes fan, you're in the middle of all of it, with free agents galore and players to be signed and possibly one or two — yes, winger Martin Necas is the name everyone is mentioning the most — to be traded.

A week from today, the Canes might have a new look. They already have a new general manager, Eric Tulsky, who likely has his idea of how he wants the team to look.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour also has an idea of how he wants it to look — pretty much the same. He's also wise enough to know that won't be the case, noting everyone "understands the other side of it."

That is, players looking to get paid what they're worth and willing to change teams to get it as the NHL salary cap rises to $88 million for 2024-25.

Tulsky's academic background is in physics and chemistry and his hockey background started with a heavy dose of analytics. That's how he first latched on to the Hurricanes and proved his worth, but he was quick to quip last week that the team "didn't hire ChatGPT" to be the new general manager.

It's safe to say this already has been one of the busiest weeks of Tulsky's hockey life. When his introductory press conference ended at PNC Arena, he was jokingly told being the GM and having to talk to the media in that kind of sterile setting might be one of the toughest, thankless parts of his new job.

His reply: Try dealing with agents every day.

"We're trying to do everything at once," he said. "We're trying figure out what we can do. We will try every angle to get get better."

That's been his job this week leading up to leaving for Las Vegas for the NHL board of governors meeting and the NHL draft on Friday and Saturday at the Sphere in Las Vegas. Two days later, on July 1, NHL free agency begins.

The Hurricanes have the No. 27 pick in the first round of the 2024 draft and nine selections overall in the seven rounds, including three in the sixth round.

Eric Tulsky is the new general manager of the Carolina Hurricanes, replacing Don Waddell, the team's former president and general manager.

Eric Tulsky is the new general manager of the Carolina Hurricanes, replacing Don Waddell, the team's former president and general manager. Chip Alexander

Tulsky, who heads up the team's pro scouting, has Darren Yorke to continue to handle the amateur scouting and draft. Tulsky and Yorke have worked closed together for years as assistant general managers under former president and GM Don Waddell, and Yorke has Tulsky's confidence in putting together the draft list.

"Under Darren's leadership, the scouting group and the development staff have found and nurtured some outstanding prospects who can keep raising the bar for us," Tulsky said.

The mock drafts are all over the board on possible Canes picks for Friday night in Vegas and the first round. NHL.com mentioned center Cole Beaudoin of Barrie in the Ontario Hockey League as a possibility. The Hockey News mock draft has another OHL center, Jett Luchanko of Guelph.

The New York Times mock draft has the Canes possibly eyeing another Russian, center Egor Surin of Lokomotiv Yaroslavl. So it goes.

It should also be noted Carolina traded away its first-round pick, No. 27, to Nashville in 2021 for a pair of second-round selections. With one pick, they took defenseman Scott Morrow.

The Canes made Bradly Nadeau their first-rounder a year ago — 30th overall — and the 5-10 forward, who played well on the college level last season at Maine, might have a chance to crack the Canes roster in a year or two.

Alexander Nikishin, a third-round pick by Carolina in 2020, has been in Russia's KHL and at age 22 is generally considered one of the best defensemen not in the NHL.

Such players as winger Seth Jarvis and goalie Pyotr Kochetkov recently have been drafted by Carolina and developed into proven NHL players who should be an important part of the team's future success. They followed forwards Andrei Svechnikov and Necas, the team's first-round pick in 2017.

Necas, 25, has played the wing for the Canes and Brind'Amour. He'd like to play center. He might like to play center for another team and might soon get the opportunity to do it.

"Center is still open to me," Necas said last season. "I know how to play there. But we have a lot of centermen. You never know what's going to happen."

There are several trade scenarios being bandied about in social media banter: Necas to Winnipeg for forward Nikolaj Ehlers; to Nashville in a deal that would include goalie Juuse Saros; or to Montreal for defenseman Mike Matheson.

There also has been talk of the potential of an offer sheet for Necas, a restricted free agent with arbitration rights. Necas would have to sign it to put it in play, agreeing to the contract terms. The team tendering the offer sheet would need to be able to provide the required compensation if Carolina did not match the offer and let Necas leave.

Before the NHL trade deadline last season, and his name in play, Necas said he tried not to pay attention to any social-media guesstimates about his future. He's likely taking the same approach now.

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

The Athletic

NHL goalie trade market: Analyzing the top names and the teams that should target them

By Shayna Goldman

The 2023-24 season seemed ripe for a goalie trade.

It just didn't happen until there were two Stanley Cup Final games left on the schedule.

The Jacob Markstrom trade did two things. It finally kick-started the goalie market. And it took the New Jersey Devils, a team desperate for an upgrade in net, off the board.

Just hours later, the Los Angeles Kings made their move by bringing in Darcy Kuemper. The Kings may not be finished just yet, but likely aren't in the market for anything splashy.

And then on Monday night, just before Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final, the Boston Bruins shook the goalie market even more by trading Linus Ullmark to the Ottawa Senators, and taking back Joonas Korpisalo in return.

Bruins trade Linus Ullmark to Senators for 2024 first-rounder, Joonas Korpisalo, Mark Kastelic

Even if the Kings, Devils, and Senators are out on the remaining goalies, there should be teams looking for a goalie boost this summer. Some could turn to the free-agent market to avoid having to pay anything other than cap space for a goalie, but the options are slim.

Anthony Stolarz, Kevin Lankinen and Scott Wedgewood could serve as solid 1B options after their impressive 2023-24 campaigns. Ilya Samsonov, on the other hand, doesn't quite meet the "safe and reliable" profile some teams may be searching for. Chris Driedger brings an element of uncertainty as well. Cam Talbot, Laurent Brossoit, Martin Jones, James Reimer and Antti Raanta would be more fitting in backup capacity at this point.

That makes the goalie trade market all the more intriguing this summer.

Which goalies are on the trade market?

Filip Gustavsson, Minnesota Wild

A year ago, a Filip Gustavsson-Jesper Wallstedt crease could have made sense for the 2024-25 season. Gustavsson was coming off a career year when he saved 24.5 goals above expected in 39 games, which landed him seventh in the league. As impressive as his year was, it wasn't clear just yet if that caliber was a sign of things to come considering his track record to that point. That's why the Wild took a more cautious approach last offseason with a three-year contract worth $3.75 million a year, on average.

That looks like an even better decision after Gustavsson's 2023-24 season. In 17 games, he allowed almost eight goals more than expected when accounting for his workload. While the Wild had some serious penalty kill struggles to open the year and the defense showed cracks without Jared Spurgeon, more was expected from the goalie they penciled in as their 1A for the year.

So now that Marc-Andre Fleury signed a one-year extension in Minnesota, it seems like Gustavsson could be the odd man out with Wallstedt waiting in the wings to jump up to the NHL level full-time. A three-goalie situation may give a team options, but it usually doesn't benefit any of the players involved.

How should the Wild handle their complicated goaltending decision? Diving deep on the options

Juuse Saros, Nashville Predators

Juuse Saros is one of the biggest wild cards in the goalie market because Nashville could extend him long-term this summer. He's eligible for an extension as of July 1, which could end up as high as the $9 million range.

While general manager Barry Trotz intends to talk to Saros and his representation this summer, his name will likely be featured in trade rumors until an extension is done. As much as the Predators may not want to lose their workhorse starter, the big question is whether it makes sense for the team to ink their starter and block prospect Yaroslav Askarov's path.

Not every team will be able to afford a Saros extension or even the cost of acquisition. It's going to be steep for good reason — this is a workhorse goaltender who can be counted on to start a lot of games at a high level. Last year he was not only one of the best goalies in the league, but in the analytics era. And even this year after a slow start, he bounced back when it mattered most to help the Predators' playoff push.

Of the potentially available goalies, no one's name has been in the rumor mill as long as John Gibson's. (Ronald Martinez / Getty Images)

John Gibson, Anaheim Ducks

Of the potentially available goalies, no one's name has been in the rumor mill as long as John Gibson's.

Gibson's timeline doesn't line up with the rebuilding Ducks, so it may be in management's best interest to move him sooner rather than later before they risk losing value on him. Lukas Dostal's progression and push for more playing time could hurt Anaheim's leverage in this situation.

Gibson has another three years under contract at $6.4 million a year, on average. If the Ducks leverage their cap space and three retained salary slots, they could bolster a potential return for Gibson. The goalie has some say in his landing spot, with a 10-team no-trade list. But unlike Saros, his next contract isn't of concern so the Ducks can truly consider 22 different landing spots for him.

The big question with Gibson is what he has left in the tank and how much the Ducks' defense has weighed on his game. He finished slightly above average relative to his workload this past season but has four iffy years behind that. In some years, he starts strong before really dropping off in the second half, and the team in front of him likely has a lot to do with it. Still, Gibson's durability and caliber have dropped since his three excellent seasons between 2016 and 2019.

Which teams are looking for a goalie, and which ones make the most sense?

Colorado Avalanche

Alexandar Georgiev rebounded from an awful start to the postseason, but at a certain point, Colorado may want more certainty in net. The Avalanche don't need perfection with all their strengths in front of the blue paint. But the team may want two things: 1) less of a wild card as their starter 2) and more support behind them. With only a year left on Georgiev's contract, management has to decide whether or not he is the starter to invest in despite some of his flaws.

Gustavsson carries some risk but is pretty inexpensive. Getting him at a bargain could make sense for a team without a ton of assets to spend. Even Gibson with salary retained could make sense. Maybe in return for a goalie upgrade, Ross Colton could be of interest.

Detroit Red Wings

Alex Lyon and Ville Husso are both signed for next season, so technically the Red Wings could maintain the status quo. But management will still look to the goalie market to see if there are any sensible options out there.

Steve Yzerman already acknowledged that he doesn't want to move too many prime assets for a short-term option. So maybe that takes Gibson out of the picture if the price hasn't come down over the years; at least management could have some confidence that he can handle playing behind a less-than-stout team. With the Senators trading for Ullmark, that takes another goalie out of the mix.

Saros (plus an extension) could click if Nashville decides to move on from their starter, as well. With Lyon and Husso, the Red Wings technically have a 1B at the ready so they may not need to go that big anyway.

Vegas Golden Knights

Big names on the trade board? That's the Golden Knights music!

Adin Hill was excellent with Vegas on its way to a championship in 2023. And he put up some quality play both in the regular season and postseason for the Golden Knights this year. But there were some inconsistencies in his game, which led to Logan Thompson taking over more down the stretch. Plus, there are durability concerns. That could give Vegas pause on extending him when his current contract expires in 2025.

Ullmark would have made sense here. But maybe instead, Gibson could with salary retention. It's a pretty safe bet that he would rebound considering the differences between the Golden Knights' defense and the Ducks' defense. And we can never count out Saros if he becomes available considering their trade tendencies.

How can Vegas swing this deal when it has no cap space? When there's a will, there's a way even if it means dumping cable players off for nothing but cap space in return.

Carolina Hurricanes

In each of the last two postseasons, the Hurricanes have turned away from starter Frederik Andersen for a game or two. The 34-year-old has another year on his contract, but maybe it's time to look in a new direction.

Carolina may not need a true number one of Saros' caliber, and should instead splurge on a scoring winger. But they could use another goalie partner for Pyotr Kochetkov. Gibson should have an easier time getting back to his heights behind the Hurricanes' stout defense. Or maybe it's worth giving Gustafson a look as a 1B, if none of the free-agent options appeal.

Washington Capitals

Like Carolina, the Capitals don't need to go big. By trading the remainder of Kuemper's contract to the Kings, Washington management signaled that they're ready to roll with Charlie Lindgren as their No 1. Lindgren earned the starter's net and was pivotal down the stretch. At this point, the Capitals could just go for one of those backup free-agent goaltenders to complete their crease. But maybe Gustavsson could be worth betting on as a reclamation projection, especially if Lindgren falters in this new role.

Calgary Flames

The Flames could proceed with the status quo now that Markstrom's been traded, and just lean on Dustin Wolf and Dan Vladar. But there could be room for improvement in Calgary, as well. Calgary is retooling and doesn't need a Saros right now. But Gustavsson could make sense, especially if the team is worried at all about Wolf's readiness at the NHL level full-time.

The Flames and Capitals could both be in the goalie market post-trade, and that could be the case for Anaheim or Nashville (for backup-1B types) depending on how they proceed. Say a team like Utah moves Karel Vejmelka, who is in the last year of his deal, then maybe they join the conversation. Even recent extensions can change the makeup of the trade market; Joseph Woll extending (per Kevin Weekes' report) in Toronto for three years should take the team out of contention for a starter. At most, maybe they aim a bit lower for Gustafson or Gibson to solidify the crease with Woll's durability in mind. But like the aforementioned teams, that could be a backup plan if they don't land one of the higher-end 1B options on the free-agent market.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

Which NHL teams need goaltender upgrades? Ranking all 32 teams by current quality

By Sean Gentille and Dom Luszczyszyn

With draft-floor trades and the first day of unrestricted free agency just days away, it's time to break down where each team stands on a position-by-position basis.

That means striking a balance between what each franchise already has in the fold and what it still needs going into the offseason.

Using Net Rating, we looked at how much value each team is currently expected to carry at each position and the holes they have to address. Teams without franchise talent (top-32 forward, top-16 defenseman, top-eight goalie) were penalized further for having a more glaring need. With that as a baseline, we added some subjectivity as a finishing touch.

Here's how we'd rank each team's goaltending depth, from best to worst, as the offseason kicks off and the window to improve begins.

1. Winnipeg Jets

Current quality: 98th percentile

Looking for: Backup goalie

No single goalie is more valuable than Connor Hellebuyck. He brings quality and quantity to the equation, enough to singlehandedly put the Jets in first place. This spot belonged to the Bruins before they shipped Linus Ullmark to Ottawa, since two fantastic goaltenders are better than one. Ullmark's exit, though, swung things in Winnipeg's favor.

A potential issue for the Jets, though, is their lack of a backup — great as Hellebuyck is, someone else will need to start 20 games or so.

2. New York Rangers

Current quality: 84th percentile

Looking for: None

There's a strong argument to be made that if you needed one goalie to start a Game 7, the best choice is on the Rangers roster. Igor Shesterkin is one of the absolute best goalies in the world and without a doubt the best playoff performer at the position.

We're giving a slight edge to Hellebuyck, the likely Vezina Trophy winner from the 2023-24 season, especially after a subpar-by-his-standards regular season from Shesterkin. But his postseason run was good enough to almost completely close the gap.

3. New York Islanders

Current quality: 95th percentile

Looking for: None

We're still high on Ilya Sorokin as a franchise-caliber starter despite a slip in his performance last season, and Semyon Varlamov remains one of the very best backups in the league. Both are signed long-term, and both are huge reasons the Islanders have persisted as a playoff team.

4. Nashville Predators

Current quality: 89th percentile

Looking for: None

There are very few goalies who can be consistently counted on to deliver consistently high-end performances year after year. Juuse Saros is one of them, even after a down year.

Saros was better once he and the rest of the Predators settled into Andrew Brunette's system, and the model still views him as a franchise goalie.

The trump card for the Predators is his backup, Yaroslav Askarov. The 22-year-old was picked 11th in 2020 and is widely regarded as one of the best goalie prospects in the world. He gives the Predators serious depth — and an interesting conundrum between the pipes with Saros' contract up at season's end.

5. Boston Bruins

Current quality: 84th percentile

Looking for: None

You can only start one goalie at a time and that fact finally came to a head in Boston. That the Bruins land in the top five and the Senators aren't far behind speaks to how fruitful the Jeremy Swayman and Ullmark combination has been for Boston. Together, the duo would've ranked first here and the Bruins parlayed that strength into a first-round pick.

This is Swayman's net now and he looks like the real deal, a true franchise guy. It remains to be seen how he fares with a full starter's workload, but his resume to date suggests he has what it takes. He looked like a special breed in the playoffs and is just entering his prime.

Behind him now is Joonas Korpisalo, one of the worst-rated goalies in the league. He had one flash-in-the-pan season in 2022-23 and could bounce back to that level behind a structured Bruins defense. But it's a risky bet given his body of work.

NHL trade grades: Senators get Linus Ullmark from Bruins for Joonas Korpisalo

6. Vancouver Canucks

Current quality: 72nd percentile

Looking for: None

The biggest reason to believe in the Canucks as a Cup-caliber team is the elite talent they have at the top of each positional group, and Thatcher Demko is a big part of that. He returned to franchise-goalie form in 2023-24 and Vancouver reaped the benefits.

When an injury knocked Demko out of the postseason, Arturs Silovs filled in admirably, looking very much like a long-term backup with the potential for more.

7. Ottawa Senators

Current quality: 83rd percentile

Looking for: None

The Senators ranked relatively high at center, wing and defense; goaltending is their Achilles' heel. All that has changed with their big-time acquisition of Ullmark, one of the league's best goalies. With Ullmark in and Korpisalo out, the Senators took a massive leap from 31st into the top 10.

Trading for Ullmark likely solves a lot of Ottawa's problems, but it doesn't come without risk. Few goalies have delivered more value than Ullmark over the last two seasons, but his subpar body of work before that can't be ignored. He's also never played more than 50 games and may struggle to live up to the hype on a less structured team.

The model loves Ullmark; he was the best bet out there. His track record looks far better than Matt Murray's or Korpisalo's did at the time and the Senators have clearly learned from those blunders. He didn't come at a high cost either.

But goalies are always tricky and those red flags are still worth mentioning. Ottawa should finally have stability between the pipes next season, but it's never a guarantee with goalies.

The Senators acquired Linus Ullmark from the Bruins and dealt out Joonas Korpisalo, bumping them from 31st into the top 10. (Philip G. Pavely / USA Today)

8. Dallas Stars

Current quality: 67th percentile

Looking for: None

Let's be honest: This was a trying season for Jake Oettinger. Among starters, he ranked 24th in goals saved above expected thanks to a .905 save percentage. We expect a lot better from him.

We hold Oettinger in high regard, and though he bounced back in the playoffs, he needs to return to form next season. Dallas' place in the top 10 and his next contract depend on it.

9. Edmonton Oilers

Current quality: 71st percentile

Looking for: Backup goalie

A few rocky patches in the postseason may have obscured just how good Stuart Skinner played during the regular season. That, combined with his bounce-back performance during the playoffs, should quell some doubt. He's a legit starter on an elite team. Edmonton should still look into adding a quality backup, though; Jack Campbell, for a variety of reasons, doesn't seem like a feasible option.

10. Tampa Bay Lightning

Current quality: 46th percentile

Looking for: None

Reputation goes a long way in goaltending circles, and it's the only thing keeping Tampa Bay in the top 10.

Andrei Vasilevskiy had a tough time after returning from injury, finishing with an .899 save percentage. It was his first season since 2015-16 in which he finished with a below-average save percentage. Some of that was on the team in front of him, but his goals saved above expected was negative, too.

We expect a bounce-back, but Vasilevskiy's season is proof that even the best goalies can be mortal. Add a shaky backup behind him and Tampa Bay slides to the back of the top 10 from its usual spot near the top.

11. St. Louis Blues

Current quality: 64th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent

Jordan Binnington bounced back from the two worst seasons of his career with a run that should've put him on Vezina ballots. He was the single biggest reason the Blues hung around on the playoff periphery.

His relative lack of track record over the past few years stops him from landing in the franchise tier, but he's far from a problem in St. Louis — and the same goes for quality backup Joel Hofer.

12. New Jersey Devils

Current quality: 52nd percentile

Looking for: None

The Devils' glaring weakness has finally been solved. It would've been nice if they traded for Jacob Markstrom last December, January, February or March — but June is fine. It means the Devils are all in on returning to the top of the Metro.

Markstrom is a solid starter, but he is on the older side which creates some risk. The Devils are set with him and Jake Allen as a tandem and while it may be an above-average one, it's probably not elite. If the rest of the roster can play up to the level of the 2022-23 group, that's more than enough.

13. Carolina Hurricanes

Current quality: 68th percentile

Looking for: Non

Both of Carolina's goaltenders qualify as solid time-share options — and neither as a true starting-caliber guy. Injuries have been an issue for Frederik Andersen (50 appearances over the last two seasons), enough for Pyotr Kochetkov to beat him on projected value.

Kochetkov is also 24, which helps his projection, and put up a .911 save percentage in 42 appearances. It's easy to imagine him taking over as Carolina's primary starter permanently.

14. Buffalo Sabres

Current quality: 60th percentile

Looking for: Franchise player

If we had done this exercise last season, Buffalo's position would've been much weaker. The Sabres had a lot of uncertainty in net and a lot riding on Devon Levi being the answer.

Levi wasn't that in his first season, but he showed promise while the Sabres found answers elsewhere. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen took the starting job and never looked back,

saving 22 goals above expected — one of the highest marks in the league.

That took some pressure off Levi and now gives Buffalo a lot of stability in a very exciting package. Luukkonen, who's still young himself at 25, can comfortably be the team's starter while Levi develops. He gives Buffalo two blue chips, and in a position as volatile as goaltending, that's a big win.

We still expect Levi to be the top dog one day, but Luukkonen has made things a lot more interesting. His surge toward looking like a capable starter gives Buffalo one of the stronger positions in the league.

15. Florida Panthers

Current quality: 29th percentile

Looking for: None

If this seems low for Sergei Bobrovsky, know that his recent playoff track record actually earned him a few bumps up the ladder. In the regular season, he's been solid but not spectacular. Anthony Stolarz, a pending UFA, outplayed him last season in plenty of ways.

If Stolarz leaves, Spencer Knight is on track to return to the Panthers' roster after a strong finish to his season with AHL Charlotte. Formerly a top prospect, he's still just 23 years old.

16. Vegas Golden Knights

Current quality: 48th percentile

Looking for: None

The Golden Knights are so strong defensively that they don't need a world-beater between the pipes. They proved it with their 2023 Stanley Cup and it remains true today. They have one of the best goaltending duos in the league in Adin Hill and Logan Thompson, with both capable of getting hot at a moment's notice. While neither looks like an elite starter by any means, this system is good enough for Vegas.

17. Colorado Avalanche

Current quality: 51st percentile

Looking for: None

The middle of the rankings seems like the right place for the home of Alexandar Georgiev, who followed up a solid first season in net for the Avs with a below-average one. He brings an element of volatility to Colorado's overall situation.

Justus Annunen, meanwhile, is an interesting backup. He's 24, put up a .928 save percentage in 14 appearances last season and could be a half-decent Plan B if Georgiev hits some dry spells in 2024-25.

18. Montreal Canadiens

Current quality: 69th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent

Don't let Sam Montembeault's .902 save percentage over the last two seasons fool you — he's been a lot better than that for the Canadiens. Behind a porous blue line, he's managed to save 33.5 goals above expected, which ranks seventh in the league between Swayman and Skinner.

He comes out looking great per the model, but we're a little more hesitant to anoint him an above-average starter. It would help his case if he was able to play an actual starter's workload, but for now, we're comfortable putting him right around average.

19. Utah HC

Current quality: 59th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent

Connor Ingram solidified his standing as a legit starting goaltender in 2023-24, at times looking capable of dragging his team into the playoff race. He tailed off at the end, as did the Arizona Coyotes, but he's certainly earned a second look at the big job. Behind him is Karel Vejmelka, who's had some strong runs of his own over the last few years. Still, Ingram is the more intriguing option.

20. Los Angeles Kings

Current quality: 39th percentile

Looking for: None

Turning Pierre-Luc Dubois — and everything the Kings traded to acquire him — into the husk of Darcy Kuemper doesn't feel ideal.

Kuemper is the latest answer for Los Angeles' goalie woes, but he doesn't inspire a lot of confidence. The Kings' defensive ability means they don't need an elite option and Kuemper should be serviceable along with David Rittich. That doesn't make him an inspiring option, though.

The Kings acquired Darcy Kuemper from the Capitals for Pierre-Luc Dubois. (Eric Bolte / USA Today)

21. Toronto Maple Leafs

Current quality: 44th percentile

Looking for: 1B goalie

Toronto seems to be committing to Joseph Woll, with reports of a three-year extension being imminent. The AAV could prove to be a bit rich for Woll, but he was also Toronto's most consistent goaltender in 2023-24 (.907 save percentage in 2025 starts) and seems to be a better fit than pending UFA Ilya Samsonov.

Woll's track record is short, though, and the Leafs should invest in a quality option to either play behind him or split time.

22. Pittsburgh Penguins

Current quality: 26th percentile

Looking for: None

As far as starting goalies go, Tristan Jarry does not inspire confidence. His numbers aren't great, he's often injured and he struggles to rise to the occasion. The model has him in the 20-25 range which is not ideal for a team with playoff aspirations.

The Penguins needed a legitimate 1B who could push Jarry. Instead, they settled for Alex Nedeljkovic, a familiar face who momentarily stole the starting job last season — mostly as a result of stronger goal support than anything he actually did.

They make for a low-upside duo that will cost almost $8 million next year. Yuck.

23. Minnesota Wild

Current quality: 20th percentile

Looking for: None

We've got an interesting situation in Minnesota, where Filip Gustavsson still profiles as a solid starter despite a disappointing 2023-24 and Marc-Andre Fleury drags down their projections significantly. That shouldn't be a surprise — Fleury turns 40 in November and is coming off the worst regular-season save percentage (.895) of his career.

If Gustavsson regains his form from 2022-23, Minnesota will be set. The possibility that he doesn't, combined with Fleury's apparent decline, should be a concern.

24. Seattle Kraken

Current quality: 42nd percentile

Looking for: Franchise player

A midseason injury to Philipp Grubauer thrust Joey Daccord into the Kraken's starter slot and he never looked back. The question is whether he's up for a repeat performance.

Goalies can be tricky and without a track record for Daccord, it's difficult to have a lot of faith in him as a legitimate starter. What hurts more here is Grubauer, who looks washed at 32.

Seattle's duo could work fine, but it's a scary duo to go into a season with. With the team in desperate need of franchise talent, it would be nice to see Daccord build on last season and prove he's the guy to fill that void for Seattle.

25. Washington Capitals

Current quality: 44th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent, backup goalie

The Capitals wouldn't have sniffed the playoffs without Charlie Lindgren, who put up a career-high .911 save percentage and the ninth-most goals saved above expected in the league, winning a score of one-goal games along the way.

On one hand, given his career backup status before 2023-24, there's very real flash-in-the-pan potential here. On the other, he projects to provide starter value. Either way, he's as easy to root for as they come.

26. Anaheim Ducks

Current quality: 15th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent

John Gibson seems to have lost whatever goodwill he's earned off a reputation that was built over half a decade ago. It's been a long time since he's shown he can be a playoff-caliber starter. Lukas Dostal took up a bigger chunk of the game share last season and may be the future after outperforming Gibson for the second straight season.

The present is still murky, though, because "outperforming Gibson" is not a high bar in 2024. The Ducks are where they are due to a lack of high-end talent. A miraculous return to form from Gibson or a breakthrough from Dostal is desperately needed.

27. Calgary Flames

Current quality: 14th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent

Flames fans love 23-year-old Dustin Wolf for good reason — all he's done is play well and win hockey games, from juniors to the AHL. Success in the NHL, though, hasn't yet followed (.893 in 17 appearances). He's about to get an extended shot at holding the starter's net in the wake of Markstrom's departure. In the meantime, Calgary could probably use better insurance than Dan Vladar.

28. San Jose Sharks

Current quality: 24th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent

Two New Jersey expats don't make for a serious duo. It's worth noting, though, that both Mackenzie Blackwood and Vitek Vanecek have shown some promise at points over the last two seasons. As bad as the Sharks were last year, Blackwood held the fort. As bad as Vanecek was last year, he was legitimately good the year prior.

It's ugly, but it's not as bad as what some other bottom-feeders have going for them.

29. Chicago Blackhawks

Current quality: 10th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent

Credit to Petr Mrazek, who still manages to grade out as a decent time-split option despite spending two seasons behind an absolutely atrocious team. That's less true for Arvid Soderblom, but on balance, goaltending is pretty low on Chicago's list of issues.

30. Detroit Red Wings

Current quality: 16th percentile

Looking for: Franchise player, starting goalie

Over the last two seasons, Alex Lyon and Ville Husso have shown stretches of high-level hockey. They've also shown exactly why they can't be depended on in a bigger role — they buckle under a heavy workload.

That's the dilemma here for the Red Wings: They've got two 1Bs, if that, but no alpha.

31. Philadelphia Flyers

Current quality: 27th percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent, starting goalie

Samuel Ersson, 24, took over as the Flyers' starting goalie in January when Carter Hart was granted a leave of absence after being charged with sexual assault in connection to an alleged incident that occurred in 2018 in London, Ont. In his first full NHL season, Ersson started 51 games and ran out of gas down the stretch, finishing with an .890 save percentage. He was replaced by KHL import Ivan Fedotov, who didn't fare any better. The Flyers eventually faceplanted their way out of the postseason.

The hope should be that Ersson performs better with more regular rest and that Fedotov adequately adjusts to facing NHL shooters. It'll be quite the challenge.

32. Columbus Blue Jackets

Current quality: 2nd percentile

Looking for: Franchise talent, starting goalie

New GM Don Waddell wasn't mincing words about Elvis Merzlikins. "Let's be honest, nobody is going to trade for that contract. Nobody," Waddell told The Athletic's Aaron Portzline last week. "People say, 'Well, why don't you buy out the contract?' It's a six-year buyout, and there are years three, four, five and six, when you might need that cap space."

Waddell's only real option? To hope Merzlikins plays well enough to rehab his reputation. He's put up .876 and .895 save percentages the last two seasons, so … nowhere to go but up. Backup Daniil Tarasov is coming off a .908 save percentage in 2023-24, so things could be worse. Not much worse, but worse.

Ready for next hockey season? Hurricanes open preseason play Sept. 24

By Brian Murphy, WRAL

The Florida Panthers hoisted the Stanley Cup on Monday night,

In three months, the Panthers will be skating at PNC Arena in a preseason game. The NHL season waits for no one, not even a franchise winning the Cup for the first time.

The Hurricanes, who have an eventful off-season ahead with first-time general manager Eric Tulsky and a bevy of free agents, announced the schedule for their six preseason games, including two against the Panthers.

Ticket information will be released later.

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

Sept. 24 at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.

Sept. 27 vs. Florida, 7 p.m. (PNC Arena)

Sept. 28 at Florida, 7 p.m

Oct. 2 vs. Nashville, 7 p.m. (PNC Arena)

Oct. 4 vs. Tampa Bay, 7 p.m. (PNC Arena)

Oct. 5 at Nashville, 7 p.m.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

Top NHL free agent forwards: Guentzel, Stamkos likely available

By NHL.com

With the NHL free agent signing period beginning July 1, there are several teams in the market for a forward who can boost them into a Stanley Cup contender.

NHL.com takes a closer look at the top unrestricted free agent forwards (listed in alphabetical order):

Tyler Bertuzzi, Toronto Maple Leafs

The 29-year-old had 43 points (21 goals, 22 assists) in 80 regular-season games for the Maple Leafs this season and four points (one goal, three assists) in seven Stanley Cup Playoff games. Selected by the Detroit Red Wings in the second round (No. 58) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Bertuzzi has 261 points (113 goals, 148 assists) in 406 regular-season games for the Maple Leafs, Boston Bruins and Red Wings and 14 points (six goals, eight assists) in 14 playoff games.

Jake DeBrusk, Boston Bruins

The 27-year-old had 40 points (19 goals, 21 assists) in 80 regular-season games for the Boston Bruins this season and 11 points (five goals, six assists) in 13 playoff games. Selected by Boston in the first round (No. 14) of the 2015 NHL Draft, DeBrusk has 266 points (138 goals, 128 assists) in 465 regular-season games and 47 points (27 goals, 20 assists) in 86 playoff games.

Anthony Duclair, Tampa Bay Lightning

The 28-year-old had 42 points (24 goals, 18 assists) in 73 regular-season games for the Lightning and San Jose Sharks this season, including 15 points (eight goals, seven assists) in 17 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Sharks on March 7. Duclair had two assists in five playoff games. Selected by the New York Rangers in the third round (No. 80) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Duclair has 303 points (146 goals, 157 assists) in 563 regular-season games for the Lightning, Sharks, Florida Panthers, Ottawa Senators, Columbus Blue Jackets, Chicago Blackhawks, Arizona Coyotes and Rangers and 16 points (five goals, 11 assists) in 39 playoff games.

Matt Duchene, Dallas Stars

The 33-year-old had 65 points (25 goals, 40 assists) in 80 regular-season games for the Dallas Stars this season and six points (two goals, four assists) in 19 playoff games. The No. 3 pick by the Colorado Avalanche in the 2009 NHL Draft, Duchene has 809 points (341 goals, 468 assists) in 1,056 regular-season games for the Stars, Avalanche, Ottawa Senators, Columbus Blue Jackets and Predators and 31 points (12 goals, 19 assists) in 51 playoff games.

DAL@COL R2, Gm6: Duchene roofs rebound in 2OT, wins series for Stars

Max Domi, Toronto Maple Leafs

The 29-year-old had 47 points (nine goals, 38 assists) in 80 regular-season games for the Toronto Maple Leafs this season and four points (one goal, three assists) in seven playoff games. Selected by the Phoenix Coyotes in the first round (No. 12) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Domi has 417 points (130 goals, 287 assists) in 661 regular-season games for the Maple Leafs, Dallas Stars, Chicago Blackhawks, Carolina Hurricanes, Columbus Blue Jackets, Montreal Canadiens and Coyotes and 26 points (seven goals, 19 assists) in 50 playoff games.

Jonathan Drouin, Colorado Avalanche

The 29-year-old had an NHL career-high 56 points (19 goals, 37 assists) in 79 regular-season games for the Avalanche this season and three assists in three playoff games. Selected by the Tampa Bay Lightning with the No. 3 pick in the 2013 NHL Draft, Drouin has 337 points (96 goals, 241 assists) in 564 regular-season games for the Avalanche, Montreal Canadiens and Lightning and 24 points (six goals, 18 assists) in 36 playoff games.

Warren Foegele, Edmonton Oilers

The 28-year-old had NHL career highs with 20 goals and 41 points in 82 regular-season games for the Oilers this season and eight points (three goals, five assists) in 22 playoff games. Selected by the Carolina Hurricanes in the third round (No. 67) of the 2014 NHL Draft, Foegele has 163 points (80 goals, 83 assists) in 431 regular-season games for Oilers and Hurricanes, and 24 points (12 goals, 12assists) in 80 playoff games.

Jake Guentzel, Carolina Hurricanes

The 29-year-old had 77 points (30 goals, 47 assists) in 67 regular-season games for the Hurricanes and Pittsburgh Penguins this season, including 25 points (eight goals, 17 assists) in 17 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Penguins on March 7. Guentzel had nine points (four goals, five assists) in 11 playoff games. Selected by Pittsburgh in the third round (No. 77) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Guentzel has 491 points (227 goals, 264 assists) in 520 regular-season games for the Hurricanes and Penguins and 67 points (38 goals, 29 assists) in 69 playoff games. Guentzel won the Stanley Cup with the Penguins in 2017.

Adam Henrique, Edmonton Oilers

The 34-year-old had 51 points (24 goals, 27 assists) in 82 regular-season games for the Oilers and Anaheim Ducks this season, including nine points (six goals, three assists) in 22 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Ducks on March 6. He had seven points (four goals, three assists) in 17 playoff games. Selected by the New Jersey Devils in the

third round (No. 82) of the 2008 NHL Draft, Henrique has 530 points (263 goals, 267 assists) in 912 regular-season games for the Oilers, Ducks and Devils and 45 points (nine goals, 11 assists) in 45 playoff games.

Tyler Johnson, Chicago Blackhawks

The 33-year-old had 31 points (17 goals, 14 assists) in 67 games with the Blackhawks this season. Signed by the Tampa Bay Lightning as an undrafted free agent on March 7, 2011, Johnson has 431 points (193 goals, 238 assists) in 738 regular-season games for the Blackhawks and Lightning and 65 points (32 goals, 33 assists) in 116 playoff games. He won the Stanley Cup twice with the Lightning, in 2020 and 2021.

Patrick Kane, Detroit Red Wings

The 35-year-old had 47 points (20 goals, 27 assists) in 50 games with the Red Wings this season. The No. 1 pick by the Blackhawks in the 2007 NHL Draft, Kane has 1,284 points (471 goals, 813 assists) in 1,230 regular-season games for the Red Wings, Rangers and Blackhawks. He has 138 points (53 goals, 85 assists) in 143 playoff games and won the Cup three times with the Blackhawks (2010, 2013, 2015). He was named one of the 100 Greatest NHL Players as part of the League's centennial celebration in 2017.

Elias Lindholm, Vancouver Canucks

The 29-year-old had 44 points (15 goals, 29 assists) in 75 regular-season games for the Vancouver Canucks and Calgary Flames this season, including 12 points (six goals, six assists) in 26 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Flames on Jan. 31. He had 10 points (five goals, five assists) in 13 playoff games. Selected by the Carolina Hurricanes in the first round (No. 5) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Lindholm has 557 points (218 goals, 339 assists) in 818 regular-season games for the Canucks, Flames and Hurricanes and 27 points (13 goals, 14 assists) in 40 playoff games.

Anthony Mantha, Vegas Golden Knights

The 29-year-old had 44 points (23 goals, 21 assists) in 74 regular-season games for the Golden Knights and Washington Capitals this season, including 10 points (three goals, seven assists) in 18 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Capitals on March 5. He did not have a point in three playoff games. Selected by the Detroit Red Wings in the first round (No. 20) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Mantha has 296 points (142 goals, 154 assists) in 494 regular-season games for the Golden Knights, Capitals and Red Wings and no points in 14 playoff games.

Jonathan Marchessault, Vegas Golden Knights

The 33-year-old led the Golden Knights in points (69) and goals with an NHL career-high 42 in 82 games this season. He had four points (two goals, two assists) in seven playoff games. Signed by the Columbus Blue Jackets as an undrafted free agent on July 1, 2012, Marchessault has 487 points (230 goals, 257 assists) in 638 regular-season games for the Golden Knights, Florida Panthers, Tampa Bay Lightning and Blue Jackets and 76 points (36 goals, 40 assists) in 102 playoff games. He won the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP when he had 25 points (13 goals, 12 assists) in 22 games to help the Golden Knights defeat the Panthers in five games and win their first Stanley Cup championship in 2023.

Sean Monahan, Winnipeg Jets

The 29-year-old had 59 points (26 goals, 33 assists) in 83 regular-season games for the Jets and Montreal Canadiens, including 24 points (13 goals, 11 assists) in 34 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Montreal Canadiens on Feb. 2. Monahan had one assist in five playoff games. Selected by the Calgary Flames in the first round (No. 6) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Monahan has 538 points (244 goals, 294 assists) in 764 regular-season games for the Jets, Canadiens and Flames and 22 points (10 goals, 12 assists) in 35 playoff games.

David Perron, Detroit Red Wings

The 36-year-old had 47 points (17 goals, 30 assists) in 76 games for the Detroit Red Wings this season. Selected by the St. Louis Blues in the first round (No. 26) of the 2007 NHL Draft, Perron has 768 points (310 goals, 458 assists) in 1,131 regular-season games for the Red Wings, Blues, Vegas Golden Knights, Anaheim Ducks, Pittsburgh Penguins and Edmonton Oilers and 61 points (24 goals, 37 assists) in 104 playoff games. Perron won the Stanley Cup with the Blues in 2019.

Sam Reinhart, Florida Panthers

The 28-year-old had NHL career highs with 94 points and 57 goals in 82 regular-season games for the Panthers this season, ranking second in the NHL in goals behind Auston Matthews of the Toronto Maple Leafs (69). He led the NHL with 27 power-play goals and was tied for second with 11 game-winning goals. Reinhart had 16 points (10 goals, six assists) in 24 playoff games to help the Panthers win the Stanley Cup. Selected by the Buffalo Sabres with the No. 2 pick in the 2014 NHL Draft, Reinhart has 538 points (255 goals, 283 assists) in 696 regular-season games for the Panthers and Sabres and 33 points (21 goals, 12 assists) in 55 playoff games.

Jack Roslovic, New York Rangers

The 27-year-old had 31 points (nine goals, 22 assists) in 59 regular-season games for the Rangers and Columbus Blue Jackets this season, including eight points (three goals, five assists) in 19 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Blue Jackets on March 8. He had eight points (two goals, six assists) in 16 playoff games. Selected by the Winnipeg Jets in the first round (No. 25) of the 2015 NHL Draft, Roslovic has 221 points (80 goals, 141 assists) in 445 regular-season games for the Rangers, Blue Jackets and Jets and 13 points (two goals, 11 assists) in 36 playoff games.

Steven Stamkos, Tampa Bay Lightning

The 34-year-old forward had 81 points (40 goals, 41 assists) in 79 regular-season games for the Lightning this season, and led them with five goals in the playoffs. The No. 1 pick in the 2008 NHL Draft, Stamkos has 1,137 points (555 goals, 582 assists) in 1,082 games over 16 seasons, all with the Lightning. Since entering the NHL, Stamkos is second in goals, behind only Alex Ovechkin (690) and fourth in points, behind Sidney Crosby (1,302), Ovechkin (1,240) and Patrick Kane (1,212). He has 101 points (50 goals, 51 assists) in the playoffs and has won the Stanley Cup twice (2020, 2021).

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

Chandler Stephenson, Vegas Golden Knights

The 30-year-old had 51 points (16 goals, 35 assists) in 75 regular-season games for the Golden Knights this season and one assist in seven playoff games. Selected by the Washington Capitals in the third round (No. 77) of the 2012 NHL Draft, Stephenson has 270 points (89 goals, 181 assists) in 495 regular-season games for the Golden Knights and Capitals and 39 points (15 goals, 24 assists) in 95 playoff games. Stephenson has won the Stanley Cup twice, with the Capitals in 2018 and with the Golden Knights in 2023.

Vladimir Tarasenko, Florida Panthers

The 32-year-old-had 55 points (23 goals, 32 assists) in 76 regular-season games for the Panthers and Ottawa Senators this season, including 14 points (six goals, eight assists) in 19 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Senators on March 6. Tarasenko had nine points (five goals, four assists) in 24 playoff games to help Florida win the Stanley Cup. Selected by the St. Louis Blues in the first round (No. 16) of the 2010 NHL Draft, Tarasenko has 629 points (293 goals, 336 assists) in 751 regular-season games for the Panthers, Senators, New York Rangers and Blues and 73 points (49 goals, 24assists) in 121 playoff games. Tarasenko also won the Stanley Cup with the Blues in 2019.

Teuvo Teravainen, Carolina Hurricanes

The 29-year-old had 53 points (25 goals, 28 assists) in 76 regular-season games for the Hurricanes this season and six points (two goals, four assists) in 11 playoff games. Selected by the Chicago Blackhawks in the first round (No. 18) of the 2012 NHL Draft, Teravainen has 459 points (155 goals, 304 assists) in 670 regular-season games for the Hurricanes and Blackhawks and 50 points (23 goals, 27 assists) in 90 playoff games. He won the Cup with the Blackhawks in 2015.

Tyler Toffoli, Winnipeg Jets

The 32-year-old had 55 points (33 goals, 22 assists) in 79 games for the Jets and New Jersey Devils last season, including 11 points (seven goals, four assists) in 18 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Devils on March 8. Selected by the Los Angeles Kings in the second round (No. 47) of the 2010 NHL Draft, Toffoli has 521 points (260 goals, 261 assists) in 812 regular-season games for the Jets, Devils, Calgary Flames, Montreal Canadiens, Vancouver Canucks and Kings and 46 points (20 goals, 26 assists) in 93 playoff games. Toffoli won the Stanley Cup with the Kings in 2014.

James van Riemsdyk, Boston Bruins

The 35-year-old had 38 points (11 goals, 27 assists) in 71 regular-season games for the Boston Bruins this season and five points (one goal, four assists) in 11 playoff games. Selected by the Philadelphia Flyers with the No. 2 pick in the 2007 NHL Draft, van Riemsdyk has 629 points (311 goals, 318 assists) in 1,011 regular-season games for the Bruins, Flyers and Maple Leafs and 36 points (21 goals, 15 assists) in 82 playoff games.

Alex Wennberg, New York Rangers

The 29-year-old had 30 points (10 goals, 20 assists) in 79 regular-season games for the Rangers and Seattle Kraken this season, including five points (one goal, four assists) in 19 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Kraken on March 6. Selected by the Columbus Blue Jackets in the first round (No. 14) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Wennberg has 335 points (91 goals, 244 assists) in 712 regular-season games for the Rangers, Kraken, Florida Panthers and Blue Jackets and 19 points (eight goals, 11 assists) in 58 playoff games.

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

ESPN

NHL free agency 2024: How all 32 teams can earn an A grade

Ryan S. Clark and Kristen Shilton

Every front office is trying to maximize its chances at reaching the Stanley Cup playoffs and lifting the most famous trophy in sports next spring. Here's how each of them can nail this offseason and the cap space that each team has, as well as a look at key players hitting restricted and unrestricted free agency.

ATLANTIC DIVISION

Boston Bruins

2023-24 result: Lost in the second round

Key players hitting UFA: F Jake DeBrusk, F Danton Heinen, D Derek Forbort, D Matt Grzelcyk

Key players hitting RFA: F Jesper Boqvist, G Jeremy Swayman

Cap space: $21,599,16

What they should do: The Bruins' first priority is signing Jeremy Swayman to a long-term deal and solidifying his position as their No. 1 goaltender. Getting that done required trading Linus Ullmark first, though. Boston took care of that by swapping Ullmark to Ottawa this week for a package including goaltender Joonas Korpisalo. Removing Ullmark's $5 million cap hit for next season -- and replacing it with just 75% of Korpisalo's $4 million salary -- provides GM Don Sweeney space to give Swayman the raise he deserves. And Boston should benefit from Korpisalo in a backup spot, where he has been more comfortable in his career than as a starter.

Now, the Bruins can focus on boosting their forward depth, particularly at center. Steven Stamkos, Elias Lindholm or Alex Wennberg are all potential targets who could fill that role well in Boston. Re-signing DeBrusk is a great in-house option for Sweeney to get over the line quickly, and then Boston can fill in around the edges with veteran skaters such as Tyler Toffoli or Viktor Arvidsson. If there's cash left on the books, expect Sweeney to spy some blue-line help from third-pairing possibilities such as Shayne Gostisbehere or Brenden Dillon.

Buffalo Sabres

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Zemgus Girgensons, F Victor Olofsson, G Eric Comrie

Key players hitting RFA: F Peyton Krebs, D Jacob Bryson, G Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen

Cap space: $23,518,930

What they should do: Buffalo has a new (old?) coach in Lindy Ruff, and he'll be working closely with GM Kevyn Adams to figure out how the Sabres can finally return to the playoffs in 2024-25. An easy win would be re-signing Luukkonen to establish him as Buffalo's starter; when Devon Levi faltered last season, Luukkonen took his opportunity to shine, and he deserves to be rewarded with a solid raise. Levi could still be a viable backup option for Buffalo, which would close the door on a return for Comrie.

The Sabres could use depth on the wing as well, especially if Olofsson and/or Girgensons are out the door in free agency. Adams should be looking to replace not just the on-ice skills, but also some of the leadership the Sabres lost when Kyle Okposo was traded in March. Jonathan Marchessault, Arvidsson and Tanner Pearson can fill spots in the lineup and provide a strong veteran presence in Buffalo's room. Plus, there's playoff (and championship) pedigree there to inspire the Sabres. One center option for Buffalo to target might be Wennberg; he was excellent in a third-line role for the New York Rangers this season and could provide for Buffalo in similar fashion.

Detroit Red Wings

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Christian Fischer, F Patrick Kane, F David Perron, F Daniel Sprong, D Shayne Gostisbehere, G James Reimer

Key players hitting RFA: F Lucas Raymond, F Joe Veleno, D Moritz Seider

Cap space: $32,767,360

What they should do: Detroit won't truly be able to assess its free agent/trade options until Raymond and Seider are locked into new contracts. They are cornerstone players for the Red Wings, and coming to terms with both burgeoning stars will eat into Detroit's available cap space.

Once Raymond and Seider are done, the Red Wings will want to round out their top-six forward depth by either re-signing Kane and/or Perron or focusing on the free agent market, where Jonathan Marchessault would be an ideal replacement. Detroit might also be aggressively chasing a trade for Martin Necas' rights or the recently extended Kaapo Kakko.

The Red Wings' overall defensive efforts have been a problem in recent years, so adding some punch there is another priority. Depending on how GM Steve Yzerman wants to invest, the Red Wings could go more low-key (and potentially more physical) with a player such as Joel Edmundson or Matt Dumba. Detroit would be swinging for the fences though going after Brett Pesce or even Chris Tanev.

If Yzerman believes his group is only one or two players away from being a contender, then pursuing those latter options makes sense. The Red Wings are fortunate to have decent draft capital, and those assets come in handy when Yzerman starts really working the phones.

Florida Panthers

2023-24 result: Won the Stanley Cup

Key players hitting UFA: F Nick Cousins, F Sam Reinhart, F Vladimir Tarasenko, D Oliver Ekman-Larsson, D Brandon Montour

Key players hitting RFA: F Anton Lundell

Cap space: $19,516,666

What they should do: Florida's core is basically intact save for two important players: Reinhart and Montour. Both are pending UFAs and will be looking for paydays reflective of their being part of back-to-back Stanley Cup Final runs. Can GM Bill Zito find a way to make that work on the Panthers' books while knowing Lundell needs a new deal? It'll be tough. Expect Zito to make a hard decision there and prioritize Reinhart over Montour. Florida could target other (potentially cheaper) free agent blueliners such as Nikita Zadorov, Tyson Barrie or Derek Forbort.

The Panthers' success will make them a desirable landing spot for most free agents, and that's an asset for Zito to wield in negotiations. If Reinhart remains, Florida will have retained the majority of its top-tier scoring, leaving room for depth additions such as Patrick Kane, Matt Duchene or Chandler Stephenson. The key, though, is whether Reinhart is sticking around, and at what number. It's not likely Florida would find a more valuable top-six forward via trade anyway, so working with Reinhart ASAP on an extension is in the Panthers' best interest.

Montreal Canadiens

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Tanner Pearson

Key players hitting RFA: D Arber Xhekaj

Cap space: $9,413,750

What they should do: Montreal has stayed committed to a slow and steady rebuilding process centered on players within the system, and that doesn't project to be changing anytime soon. Therefore, getting Xhekaj signed to a new deal is atop GM Kent Hughes' offseason itinerary. The Canadiens have two other RFAs -- Jesse Ylonen and Justin Barron -- who will require consideration, but neither has mirrored Xhekaj in showing they're ready to be full-time NHLers.

Montreal will also be adding defenseman Lane Hutson into their lineup this season after Hughes signed the Boston University product to an entry-level contract in April. The Canadiens are deep with left-shot blueliners, so Hughes would be wise to target some right-side help in free agency. Alexandre Carrier and Henri Jokiharju are mid-20s skaters who could be relatively inexpensive additions.

Again, it hasn't been Hughes' MO to go wild making big trades or supplementing the Canadiens' strong young core with flashy signings. Montreal's build will continue to be gradual.

Ottawa Senators

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Dominik Kubalik

Key players hitting RFA: F Boris Katchouk, F Shane Pinto, D Erik Brannstrom

Cap space: $11,300,953

What they should do: Ottawa's captain Brady Tkachuk said it best in April when he lamented how the Senators "[hadn't] done a thing" in the six years he has been with the team. That has to change -- immediately. Ottawa has done the steady rebuild thing. It didn't pan out. There's a new coach and front office in place to get the needle moving this season, so credit to Ottawa for not wasting time.

The Senators' goaltending had been in flux until Ottawa shipped underperforming Joonas Korpisalo to Boston for bona fide No. 1 Linus Ullmark. That's a significant boost for the Senators' crease and should help them in another key area, too -- their defensive play.

Ottawa must upgrade its blue line, and the Senators were reportedly interested in doing that before the last deadline with Chris Tanev. Ottawa cannot expect Thomas Chabot and Jakob Chychrun to be vastly improved (and the Senators are open to offers on either player too). Regardless of how, the Senators' back end needs outside help. Beyond that, Ottawa will undoubtedly re-sign Shane Pinto and could look at free agents like Warren Foegele or Daniel Sprong to fill in some gaps.

Tampa Bay Lightning

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: F Anthony Duclair, F Tyler Motte, F Steven Stamkos, D Haydn Fleury

Key players hitting RFA: F Logan Brown

Cap space: $5,335,000

What they should do: Does Tampa Bay bring back Stamkos? That's the starting point here. Stamkos is the Lightning's captain and a top-line skater; he will leave a void in both the lineup and the leadership realm if he departs as a free agent.

GM Julien BriseBois might have no choice but to let it happen given limited cap resources. BriseBois could try making room by trading Conor Sheary (and his $2 million cap hit) after an unproductive season, but even that might not be enough to keep Stamkos and make the other upgrades needed to be competitive.

The Lightning would benefit from an upgrade at backup goaltender so the load doesn't fall so heavily on Andrei Vasilevskiy. Anthony Stolarz excelled in that role for Florida this past season, and he could be a cheap option for Tampa Bay in free agency. The Lightning would also ideally want to keep Duclair and have some cash to add a depth defenseman (such as TJ Brodie or Nikita Zaitsev). The Lightning's future hinges greatly on whether they can free up some space by trading current players (but what else is new?) Expect BriseBois to use every tool available to keep Tampa Bay in position to contend.

Toronto Maple Leafs

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: F Tyler Bertuzzi, F Max Domi, D TJ Brodie, D Joel Edmundson, D John Klingberg, D Ilya Lyubushkin, G Ilya Samsonov

Key players hitting RFA: F Noah Gregor, F Nicholas Robertson, D Timothy Liljegren

Cap space: $18,830,333

What they should do: Toronto needs a No. 1 goaltender. Is that Joseph Woll? Given Woll's relative inexperience and disappointing injury history -- coupled with the Leafs being in win-now mode -- he's likely not Toronto's best option. Neither is Samsonov, so don't expect a return.

The goalie free agent class is sparse -- there's Laurent Brossoit or maybe Cam Talbot for the Leafs to potentially pursue. GM Brad Treliving would have more options on the trade front, though. Linus Ullmark feels like an obvious option to pursue, Juuse Saros could be ideal if Nashville doesn't extend him post-July 1, and perhaps Filip Gustavsson could benefit from a fresh start.

Beyond goaltending, the Leafs will be in on the likes of Chris Tanev and Brett Pesce to aid a blue line that failed Toronto in its biggest moments last season. Liljegren is another factor on the back end; he has had an inconsistent career with the Leafs, and Treliving might decide it's time to move on and make way for other skaters to take on bigger roles.

Re-signing Bertuzzi and Domi should be among the easiest decisions for Treliving. They both want to return and project to fit in seamlessly with new coach Craig Berube's style of play. Oh, and don't anticipate fireworks in the Mitch Marner situation -- Treliving would rather keep Marner than trade him, and there's another year left for the two sides to figure something out.

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

Carolina Hurricanes

2023-24 result: Lost in the second round

Key players hitting UFA: F Jake Guentzel, F Jordan Martinook, F Teuvo Teravainen, D Brett Pesce, D Brady Skjei

Key players hitting RFA: F Jack Drury, F Seth Jarvis, F Martin Necas, D Dylan Coghlan

Cap space: $23,874,167

What they should do: Carolina's offseason program hinges on one contract getting done, and it's for Jarvis. The pending RFA has vastly outperformed his expiring entry-level deal and will be in line for a well-deserved pay raise. New GM Eric Tulsky should be zeroed in on how to keep Jarvis happy with the Hurricanes for years to come. Until Tulsky knows what Jarvis' number is, it'll be difficult for Carolina to tap into the free agent market.

One move Tulsky can make sooner than later is moving Martin Necas (either with a sign-and-trade or simply swapping his rights). Necas had a down season and is arbitration-eligible, but that wouldn't totally limit the Hurricanes' possibilities in orchestrating something for the versatile forward. Tulsky has to be cognizant of hoarding cap space for the current extensions, particularly Martinook's or Teravainen's, as well as future ones, because Carolina's blue line and goaltending is aging and will need reinforcements.

Expect Tulsky to spy some inexpensive depth on the wing, perhaps in a Jack Roslovic or Luke Kunin.

Columbus Blue Jackets

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: None

Key players hitting RFA: F Yegor Chinakhov, F Kirill Marchenko, F Cole Sillinger, F Alexandre Texier, D Jack Bean

Cap space: $21,675,000

What they should do: Columbus has already undergone seismic change in the past month with the insertion of new GM Don Waddell and the firing of head coach Pascal Vincent (with no successor yet named). It wouldn't make sense for Waddell to start tinkering too much with the Blue Jackets' roster until a bench boss is in place to be part of the process. However, there are decisions those parties will eventually have to make.

First is what to do with Elvis Merzlikins. He and Daniil Tarasov limped through last season, and Merzlikins could absolutely benefit from a fresh start elsewhere. Columbus might look for a veteran netminder such as Cam Talbot to come in and give them a good season or two while they figure out the future. But something must be done to upgrade Columbus' battery in the crease.

The Blue Jackets will then parse through a landslide of pending RFAs to figure out what help they might require from the outside. Marchenko and Sillinger in particular are key members of Columbus' future, and locking them in would be a good start for Waddell. Bean is another burgeoning young talent whom the Blue Jackets can build around.

Columbus can then explore some defensive changes, perhaps through trading Adam Boqvist and targeting a free agent with more experience (Matt Roy or Tyson Barrie could add leadership and contribute in third-pairing slots). And what of a Patrik Laine trade? That's on the radar as well. It could be difficult to execute given Laine's inconsistent performances the past few seasons, but Waddell will try to find him a fresh start.

New Jersey Devils

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Tomas Nosek, G Kaapo Kahkonen

Key players hitting RFA: F Dawson Mercer

Cap space: $15,273,603

What they should do: New Jersey settled its first offseason task in naming Sheldon Keefe as the team's new head coach. Now, what will the Devils look like under Keefe's reign?

New Jersey absolutely had to solidify its goaltending and did so by acquiring Jacob Markstrom from Calgary last week. That's a significant upgrade for the Devils over Jake Allen -- who was serviceable last season taking over from Vitek Vanecek -- and he'll be a fine backup now for Markstrom. New Jersey's goalie woes have been a serious issue over the past two seasons, and having a bona fide, experienced

No. 1 in Markstrom should put the Devils in good position to get back into the playoff picture.

However, there is more work to do. GM Tom Fitzgerald has said being "tougher to play against" is a priority for New Jersey, and that should play into his personnel decisions. The Devils are reportedly working hard to reel in Brett Pesce, and Brendan Dillon would fit that bill on the back end too. Middle-six skaters such as William Carrier or Jordan Martinook are winners with some edge who can elevate the Devils' attack by supplementing their excellent young core.

Speaking of which, Fitzgerald will also be grappling with a possible extension for Mercer. The 22-year-old has produced consecutive 20-plus-goal seasons and should at least be in the mix for a bridge deal. New Jersey doesn't need a major overhaul (other than the one they already made in net). Fitzgerald can be scrupulous in how he improves the Devils' depth.

New York Islanders

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: F Cal Clutterbuck, D Sebastian Aho, D Mike Reilly

Key players hitting RFA: F Oliver Wahlstrom

Cap space: $5,812,500

What they should do: New York has two key players on its wish list: a top-six forward, and a top-four defenseman. What the Islanders don't have is much cap space to acquire either. That puts New York firmly on the trade path. If it could leverage Jean-Gabriel Pageau (along with his $5 million cap hit), it would allow the team to free up some space to sign Anthony Duclair (who has a history with head coach Patrick Roy) or even Jake DeBrusk. Identifying targets for the Islanders does hinge on whether they can clear space; GM Lou Lamoriello will need to be active.

The Isles also need to better the blue-line group. Brady Skjei or Nikita Zadorov would be ideal additions to the back end (although they're potentially pricey options). Would Lamoriello reunite with Nikita Zaitsev (a steady stay-at-home defender when on his game) or go for a low-key veteran like Matt Dumba? Again, the dollars and cents will play a significant role. Lamoriello will also be looking at the Islanders' own. Wahlstrom has struggled in recent seasons and could be shopped, while Aho might be a cheap(er) choice to keep for blue-line depth.

New York Rangers

2023-24 result: Lost in the conference finals

Key players hitting UFA: F Jack Roslovic, F Alex Wennberg

Key players hitting RFA: D Ryan Lindgren, D Braden Schneider

Cap space: $12,848,476

What they should do: New York's short-term decision-making is tied to a long-term extension for goaltender Igor Shesterkin. The Rangers' starter has one year left on his deal, but knowing Shesterkin will take up a significant chunk of cap space will influence how GM Chris Drury moves through the offseason. Drury already got to work last week placing forward Barclay Goodrow on waivers, a sign Drury won't be standing pat when it comes to restructuring the Rangers for this coming year. Drury also inked Kaapo Kakko to a one-year extension and could use him as a trade chip.

What New York really needs is the top-flight winger it was lacking down the stretch. Head coach Peter Laviolette tried a number of right-wing options with Mika Zibanejad and Chris Kreider that didn't pan out. Depending on how Drury views the Rangers' own impending free agents -- specifically Wennberg, a key third-line center -- would New York go big trying to land Sam Reinhart or Jake Guentzel? Jake DeBrusk could be a match, too, and the Rangers are interested in signing Patrick Kane.

If New York believes its window is wide open, every possibility should be on the table. Drury has time to clear cap space as required and prioritize adding (or re-signing) players who can get New York to the Stanley Cup Final.

Philadelphia Flyers

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Denis Gurianov

Key players hitting RFA: D Egor Zamula

Cap space: $803,572

What they should do: Philadelphia knows there's a looming contract negotiation with Travis Konecny before his current deal expires next season. If the Flyers want to get Konecny locked in soon, it will dictate how much they do in the coming weeks. Philadelphia's defensive depth is weak -- especially with veterans Marc Staal and Erik Johnson hitting the open market -- so GM Danny Briere will be spying for replacements. Ilya Lyubushkin, Tyson Barrie or Calvin de Haan would suffice as second- or third-pairing choices with some special teams potential.

There's been buzz around the Flyers possibly trading one of Morgan Frost, Scott Laughton or Rasmus Ristolainen. Philadelphia would in that case target reinforcements (depending on what they receive back in various deals). Bottom-six skaters such as Sean Monahan or Daniel Sprong could slide in nicely to a lineup spot. Philadelphia also has its own wild card in the mix now that Matvei Michkov -- whom the Flyers selected seventh overall in the 2023 draft -- has officially left the KHL and is heading to North America. How will he transition into the NHL game and a potential top-six role for the Flyers? We'll be watching to find out.

Pittsburgh Penguins

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: None

Key players hitting RFA: F Emil Bemstrom, D Pierre-Olivier Joseph

Cap space: $10,745,658

What they should do: Pittsburgh was too top-heavy, too slow and too old when it bowed out of postseason contention for the second straight year. Now is the time to pivot. The Penguins have to get younger, especially with their scoring depth (which is lacking, to put it mildly). Jake DeBrusk, Anthony Duclair or Jack Roslovic could help there and wouldn't break the bank. Chandler Stephenson is a veteran option down the middle with a winning pedigree.

The Penguins' goaltending is (still) in a precarious position. Tristan Jarry is the clear No. 1 given his contract status and Pittsburgh re-upped Alex Nedeljkovic on a two-year deal to keep him from hitting free agency. That tandem wasn't the Penguins' answer in 2023-24, though. Will upstart Joel Blomqvist get in some reps? Will GM Kyle Dubas make other goaltending-related moves?

Pittsburgh might want to allocate resources to its blue line, too. And open extension talks with Sidney Crosby, or even Marcus Pettersson. One way or another, there will be a busy summer ahead.

Washington Capitals

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: F Max Pacioretty

Key players hitting RFA: F Connor McMichael

Cap space: $3,735,000

What they should do: Washington wanted to become more dynamic, particularly up front. And the Capitals had cap space to make it happen. Even so, Washington sent jaws dropping when it traded for Pierre-Luc Dubois last week, adding the big forward from L.A. with seven years remaining (at $8.5 million per season) on an eight-year pact he inked last summer. The move made sense for Washington on several levels -- the Capitals got younger overall, and it provided needed center depth (Nicklas Backstrom's future is still in flux after all). The trade also allowed Washington to dump underperforming goaltender Darcy Kuemper (and his $5.25 million cap hit) on the Kings. Onward to other business.

It's likely Washington will work to re-sign McMichael after he approached the 20-goal mark a season ago. Then the Capitals should consider some other forwards for their top-nine mix, including Anthony Duclair (who might be a nice fit after his solid season in Tampa Bay).

Head coach Spencer Carbery also spoke at season's end about adding size and speed to the Capitals' blue line. Brady Skjei, Brandon Montour and Alexander Carrier could all fill the void in Washington. The Capitals have prioritized staying competitive even while rebuilding, and they were rewarded with a playoff berth last season. It was a swift first-round exit, but it provided invaluable experience for the younger group of Capitals. Now they have have to factor in elevated scoring punch -- especially if T.J. Oshie can't return immediately because of his ongoing back issues -- to start making some progress.

CENTRAL DIVISION

Chicago Blackhawks

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Colin Blackwell, F Tyler Johnson, D Jaycob Megna, D Jarred Tinordi, D Nikita Zaitsev

Key players hitting RFA: F Joey Anderson, F MacKenzie Entwistle, F Taylor Raddysh

Cap space: $32,940,000

What they should do: Continue concentrating on the future. Finishing with the second-fewest points in the NHL while being 46 points away from the final Western Conference wild-card spot are examples of how the Blackhawks are in a rebuild. At some point, they'll make the transition from a lottery team to one that could challenge for a playoff spot. For now, it appears they could use this offseason to strengthen their roster.

It's what Blackhawks GM Kyle Davidson did last offseason. He went out and acquired veterans such as Nick Foligno and Taylor Hall to help insulate the franchise's young core led by Connor Bedard and Kevin Korchinski. They could opt to use that strategy again, with the premise that whomever they sign could be potentially moved ahead of the NHL trade deadline which would allow the Blackhawks to obtain even more draft capital.

Colorado Avalanche

2023-24 result: Lost in the second round

Key players hitting UFA: F Jonathan Drouin, F Brandon Duhaime, D Jack Johnson, D Sean Walker

Key players hitting RFA: None

Cap space: $10,466,250

What they should do: Whatever it takes to win another Stanley Cup. The offseason gives the Avalanche another chance to restructure the roster around their star-studded core in hopes of winning what would be a second Stanley Cup since 2022. Doing that, however, means they could be faced with quite a few difficult decisions.

They already took care of one of those decisions prior to July 1 when they re-signed Casey Mittelstadt to a three-year contract worth $5.75 million annually. Getting a new deal done for Mittelstadt allowed the Avalanche's front office to focus on the additional areas they'll need to address to challenge an already crowded field in the Western Conference.

Dallas Stars

2023-24 result: Lost in the conference finals

Key players hitting UFA: F Matt Duchene, F Craig Smith, D Chris Tanev

Key players hitting RFA: D Thomas Harley, F Sam Steel

Cap space: $16,246,259

What they should do: Whatever it takes to win a Stanley Cup. The Stars made their third Western Conference finals appearance in five years and lost the conference final in six games for a second straight year. These are signs that show how tantalizingly close the Stars are to reaching a Stanley Cup Final. Even though coming up short raised questions, it strengthened the belief that the Stars' championship window is open and could be for some time.

They have a decision to make when it comes to players such as Duchene and Tanev, while figuring out a number that works for Harley, the latest to come off the Stars' assembly line.

Arguably the biggest question facing the Stars this offseason is whether they will revamp their defense. They have only three defensemen under contract for next season as two are RFAs while three are UFAs.

Minnesota Wild

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: D Alex Goligoski, D Dakota Mermis

Key players hitting RFA: F Mason Shaw

Cap space: $6,256,412

What they should do: Get creative with their cap space as they try to find a way back to the playoffs. Missing the final wild-card spot by just 11 points when their team had so many injuries places the Wild in an interesting spot. Especially when they were in the bottom-third of goals per game and goals allowed per game.

But this also comes with the understanding that they have a little more than $6 million in cap space to make those improvements, which could prove difficult. Much of that stems from the combined Zach Parise and Ryan Suter buyouts costing the franchise a collective $14.743 million in cap space before that figure shrinks to $1.66 million for the next four years.

Could the Wild look at possibly moving some money around to create more space? Or do they believe they can add around the edges and field a roster that can compete for what would be a fifth playoff berth in six seasons?

Nashville Predators

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: D Tyson Barrie, F Anthony Beauvillier, D Alexandre Carrier, F Jason Zucker

Key players hitting RFA: None

Cap space: $26,345,801

What they should do: Be strategic in Year 2 of their project. Trading Ryan McDonagh back to the Lightning was the latest example of how Predators GM Barry Trotz is more than fine making the necessary deal if he feels there's a benefit. Moving on from McDonagh and his $6.75 million cap figure gave the Predators even more space to strengthen their roster.

But what moves make the most sense for them? Especially when Trotz has been up front about wanting to continue to use their farm system, which is why they've made a point to get several draft picks. They've had success with recent homegrown talents such as Luke Evangelista and Tommy Novak, and goaltender Yaroslav Askarov could be next.

It's possible the Preds could strike a balance somewhere in the middle by getting the help they need while also having potential opportunities for the next wave led by Egor Afanasyev, Joakim Kemell, Zachary L'Heureux and Fedor Svechkov.

St. Louis Blues

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Samuel Blais, F Kasperi Kapanen, D Marco Scandella

Key players hitting RFA: F Nikita Alexandrov, D Scott Perunovich

Cap space: $14,792,738

What they should do: Spend now or risk paying for it later. Being six points out of a playoff spot is another reminder of how the Blues are close but still need a bit more help. Where it does get a little complicated is determining how the Blues should spend that money. They went from being 27th in goals allowed per game in 2022-23 to being 15th with the premise they were eighth in team save percentage in 5-on-5 play.

So while it's possible they could use some of their cap space to address their defensive issues, they could also use some scoring help. They were in the bottom five in terms of scoring chances per game and high-danger scoring chances per game, while being in the bottom 10 of goals per game and the power play. Even though there could be available options in free agency, the Blues will have to be strategic about their choices given they have less than $16 million in cap space unless they can find a way to move more money.

Utah Hockey Club

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: D Joshua Brown, D Travis Dermott, F Liam O'Brien

Key players hitting RFA: D Sean Durzi, F Barrett Hayton, D J.J. Moser, D Juuso Valimaki

Cap space: $43,564,524

What they should do: Go throw the bag(s) and become one of the most attractive options in free agency. There's a growing belief that a new city and new ownership means the artist formerly known as the Coyotes could be inclined to spend money. For years, the Coyotes were known for doing what they could to reach the cap floor and being conservative with how they used their cap space.

Could this be the year they change philosophies? And if so, what does that look like? They were 21 points out of the wild card at season's end, but were certainly in the playoff race until a 15-game losing streak saw them go from being above .500 to essentially out of the playoff picture. Getting new deals done for Durzi, Hayton, Moser and Valimaki are expected to be a priority, as they are part of the club's young core.

But to use free agency to bolster that core and challenge for a playoff spot in Year 1 could be the sort of statement that hasn't always been possible. Do they swing for the big names like Guentzel, Reinhart or Montour?

Winnipeg Jets

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: D Brenden Dillon, D Colin Miller, F Sean Monahan, F Tyler Toffoli

Key players hitting RFA: F David Gustafsson, F Cole Perfetti, D Logan Stanley

Cap space: $8,752,976

What they should do: Be selective with their free agency decisions. The Jets have a chance to revamp their defensive personnel. They have a chance to add new forwards. They also have a chance to potentially move money. This all amounts to the Jets having options and trying to sort through

which set of options will allow them to reach the second round for the first time since the 2020-21 season.

They initially began with less than $14 million in cap space but saw that number change upon re-signing defenseman Dylan DeMelo. Even before DeMelo signed, it appeared that the Jets might be in a position to move money to create more flexibility.

That's what makes the situation around Nikolaj Ehlers one to watch. He has a year left on his deal and moving on from him could allow the Jets to save $6 million they could apply elsewhere. It all amounts to the Jets trying to figure out their next flight plan now that Scott Arniel is at the controls of a team that's trying to chart its course in the Western Conference.

PACIFIC DIVISION

Anaheim Ducks

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: D William Lagesson, F Ben Meyers

Key players hitting RFA: D Jackson LaCombe, F Brett Leason, D Gustav Lindstrom, D Urho Vaakanainen

Cap space: $33,305,833

What they should do: Continue concentrating on the future. Last offseason saw the Coyotes emerge with what was considered to be one of the strongest offseason hauls. They added veterans to their young core and took another step forward in their project. It's possible that the Ducks could be the team to follow that model this summer.

They've insulated their young core of Leo Carlsson, Cutter Gauthier, Mason McTavish, Pavel Mintyukov and Troy Terry with veterans such as Alex Killorn, Ryan Strome and Frank Vatrano over the past few years. That's in addition to what they already had with Cam Fowler and John Gibson.

It's time to find out if this group can challenge for the playoffs, and if not, any of the veteran signings from this summer can be flipped at the deadline for additional draft capital.

Calgary Flames

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F A.J. Greer, D Oliver Kylington

Key players hitting RFA: None

Cap space: $23,199,167

What they should do: Continue to reshape their team. It appears there could be a clearer direction with the Flames which was not the case last offseason. They were in something of a holding pattern because of the uncertainty surrounding the collective futures of Noah Hanifin, Elias Lindholm, Chris Tanev and Nikita Zadorov. All four of them were traded prior to the deadline, which provided some insight into the Flames' direction.

Even more insight was gained June 19 when they traded goaltender Jacob Markstrom to the Devils in a deal that saw them receive defenseman Kevin Bahl and a protected 2025 first-round pick. After the trade, the Flames have a little more than $23 million in cap space. It could provide them with a level of flexibility to address their needs and get out of that middle ground of being a team that was 17 points out of the final wild-card spot while being 34 points clear of the worst record in the conference.

Edmonton Oilers

2023-24 result: Lost in the Cup Final

Key players hitting UFA: F Connor Brown, D Vincent Desharnais, F Warren Foegele, F Adam Henrique, G Calvin Pickard

Key players hitting RFA: D Philip Broberg, F Dylan Holloway

Cap space: $10,033,333

What they should do: Whatever it takes to win the Stanley Cup. This offseason has a chance to be one of the most important in recent franchise history.

It was the first time they reached the Stanley Cup Final in the Leon Draisaitl-Connor McDavid era. There's a strong chance they could get there again in 2024-25. Doing that, however, likely means strengthening areas that were a problem at times throughout their postseason run.

Namely, they need consistent secondary and tertiary scoring help. It's been a longstanding need with the Oilers. There were moments when that presence was visible and times when it wasn't. The Oilers having eight unrestricted free agent forwards, which gives them a chance to revamp that part of the roster with the aim of keeping their two-way prowess intact.

The same goes for their defensemen. They'll need to move money around or get creative. They have a little more than $10 million in available cap space to bolster a roster that's trying to win a Stanley Cup as Draisaitl enters the final year of his contract.

Los Angeles Kings

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: F Viktor Arvidsson, G Pheonix Copley, F Trevor Lewis, D Matt Roy, G Cam Talbot

Key players hitting RFA: F Quinton Byfield, F Carl Grundstrom, F Arthur Kaliyev, F Blake Lizotte, D Jordan Spence

Cap space: $23,450,000

What they should do: Whatever it takes to get out of the first round. Every franchise that has struggled reaches a point when they become a playoff team. Eventually, making the playoffs will not be enough. It's about winning at least one round with the promise that they can win even more. This is the reality facing the Kings as they seek to make the transition from simply being a playoff team to one that can live up to its potential as a legitimate contender.

Those struggles were amplified with the decision to trade Pierre-Luc Dubois to the Capitals in exchange for Darcy Kuemper. Moving on from a top-six center less than a year after trading three players and a draft pick (and signing him to an eight-year deal worth $8.5 million annually) is a mea culpa of sorts.

Now the work begins to get over the hump -- with no shortage of pressure after three straight early postseason exits.

San Jose Sharks

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Justin Bailey, F Alexander Barabanov, F Ryan Carpenter, G Devin Cooley, F Mike Hoffman, F Kevin Labanc

Key players hitting RFA: D Calen Addison, F Luke Kunin, F Filip Zadina

Cap space: $29,329,166

What they should do: Continue building for the future. An argument could be had that the Sharks have already had one of the best offseasons before free agency even starts. It started with them winning the draft lottery, and the chance to draft the consensus No. 1 pick in Boston University center Macklin Celebrini. From there, they signed Boston College freshman center Will Smith, the fourth pick of the 2023 draft, to his entry-level contract.

Just like that, the Sharks added two players who project as top-six centers. Celebrini and Smith are the latest to join what the Sharks believe can be a rather promising future that already includes homegrown talents such as Thomas Bordeleau, William Eklund and Mario Ferraro. Claiming Barclay Goodrow off waivers and trading for Ty Dellandrea gives the team some depth options to help make them a tougher out on a nightly basis (as opposed to what we saw in 2023-24).

Even with that much potential, the Sharks are still coming off having the NHL's worst record and are expected to need more time under first-year head coach Ryan Warsofsky. Sharks GM Mike Grier could use this offseason to add veterans who they could then potentially trade ahead of the deadline in order to gain more draft capital.

Seattle Kraken

2023-24 result: Missed the playoffs

Key players hitting UFA: F Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, D Justin Schultz

Key players hitting RFA: F Matty Beniers, F Tye Kartye

Cap space: $23,424,167

What they should do: Use this offseason to establish an identity. Going from a lottery team in Year 1 to a playoff team in Year 2 created the belief the Kraken could be the sort of franchise that challenges for the playoffs every season going forward. Those plans were scuppered by a third season which witnessed various inconsistencies as their biggest consistency.

They've since brought in new head coach Dan Bylsma and have a chance to be one of the more aggressive teams in free agency. While they still need to sort out new deals for Beniers and Kartye, the Kraken should still have the sort of cap space that could allow them to address their needs and improve a team that finished in the bottom five of shooting percentage last season. Do they take a swing at landing the biggest free agent targets? Or hope for improvements internally while adding around the edges?

Vancouver Canucks

2023-24 result: Lost in the second round

Key players hitting UFA: F Elias Lindholm, F Dakota Joshua, D Ian Cole, D Tyler Myers, D Nikita Zadorov

Key players hitting RFA: D Filip Zadina

Cap space: $16,053,333

What they should do: Avoid regression at all costs. They have recently drafted a franchise forward (Elias Pettersson), a franchise defenseman (Quinn Hughes) and a franchise goaltender (Thatcher Demko) while making other moves that appeared to have set them up for the future. Finding a way to connect that promise with tangible results has been the issue in Vancouver. Until this season, that is, when the Canucks came within a win of the Western Conference finals.

That outcome has created an expectation, but also a major question: Are the Canucks for real, and can they do it again? Part of the reason the Canucks emerged as one of the season's biggest surprises was the front office's ability to retool the lineup on the fly. It's something Canucks GM Patrik Allvin and his front office staff will have to do again next season, as they have three defensemen who are pending UFAs, while Zadina will be a pending RFA.

And once they are done with that, they'll have to figure out the next steps when it comes to re-signing Lindholm -- or figuring out how to replace him.

Vegas Golden Knights

2023-24 result: Lost in the first round

Key players hitting UFA: F Michael Amadio, F William Carrier, F Jonathan Marchessault, D Alec Martinez, F Chandler Stephenson

Key players hitting RFA: F Pavel Dorofeyev

Cap space: $1,197,516

What they should do: Whatever it takes to win another Stanley Cup. Winning at all costs comes with a price, and this year it appears the cost could be losing both Marchessault and Stephenson. Being forced to move on from a pair of top-nine forwards could prove catastrophic for the Golden Knights. Especially when they are going to have $1.197 million in cap space while trying to address other needs such as filling out their bottom six.

Then again, they are the Golden Knights -- finding solutions when none seem feasible has become an essential part of how they operate. Somewhere in suburban Las Vegas, there's a chance GM Kelly McCrimmon has a dry-erase board filled with hypotheticals the club could explore that involve moving money, making a few savvy additions and still fielding a team that could win a second Cup in three seasons.

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

SPORTSNET

Rumour Roundup: Latest on McGroarty, Guentzel, Jarry and more

By Sportsnet Staff

It sounds like the Winnipeg Jets could make a move on Rutger McGroarty sooner rather than later.

"Somebody told me, be ready right after the Final," Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman said on the 32 Thoughts podcast on Tuesday, less than 24 hours after the Florida Panthers beat the Edmonton Oilers 2-1 in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final.

The Jets' first-round pick in 2022, McGroarty has expressed concerns about the team's plan for him. The American forward plans to return to the University of Michigan for a third season next year.

Two of McGroarty's Michigan teammates, Chicago's Frank Nazar and Columbus' Gavin Brindley, suited up in NHL games following their collegiate season in 2024. That did not happen for McGroarty, and there was no guarantee he'd start next season in Winnipeg. An AHL start was considered a possibility.

2024 NHL Draft on Sportsnet

Macklin Celebrini headlines a talented group of prospects waiting to hear their names called at the 2024 NHL Draft. Sportsnet will have complete coverage leading up to the draft, and fans can watch every pick live from the Sphere in Las Vegas on June 28-29 on Sportsnet and Sportsnet+.

Complete coverage

"If you're McGroarty, you see your friend get a chance to make their debut and you don't get to do it, there's probably some level of FOMO. And then, you hear next year 'You know, we're not sure you're ready yet,' you're not guaranteed a spot, and if you have a choice between going to a third year at Michigan or playing in the AHL in Manitoba, I don't know a 20- or 21-year-old kid who wouldn't pick ... Michigan," Friedman said.

The Jets do not own a first-round pick in this week's draft. That could change with a McGroarty trade.

"I do think there's a lot of interest there," Friedman said. "The Jets are going to be able to make a pretty interesting deal here. Somebody said to me their leverage is gone now that everybody knows (McGroarty wants out). I'm not buying that.

"I also think they're going to be able to use this if they want to move into the first round or maybe there's a deal where you can do both, you get a first-round pick and established players.

McGroarty could be one of the first moves in what's shaping up as a wild week in the NHL, with the opening of the buyout window, the draft and free agency all on tap.

"I think this is going to be a bananas week," Friedman said. "I think there are going to be things that happen here that we absolutely do not see coming. On one level, I'm kind of bracing for the crazy. On another level, I'm really looking forward to it."

Could Penguins move Tristan Jarry?

Now that the Pittsburgh Penguins have signed Alex Nedeljkovic to a two-year extension, there is trade speculation surrounding fellow goalie Tristan Jarry.

Teams in need of a goalie could have their eyes fixed on Jarry after the Ottawa Senators acquired Linus Ullmark from the Boston Bruins on Monday.

"I wonder if he's in play out there, too," Friedman said.

Jarry has four years left on a contract with an average annual value of $5.375 million.

Jarry, 29, has a career goals-against average of 2.70 and a save percentage of .912, but has been hampered by injuries in recent years.

Guentzel watch

All eyes are on the Carolina Hurricanes as forward Jake Guentzel gets set to hit unrestricted free agency on July 1.

The Hurricanes could trade his rights before he becomes a UFA.

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

32 Thoughts: The Podcast with Jeff Marek and NHL Insider Elliotte Friedman takes a weekly deep dive into the biggest news and interviews around the hockey world.

Latest episodes

"I had someone tell me there's a lot bubbling under the surface there," Friedman said. "There are some really good teams that you wouldn't think can do it that are wondering, 'How can we do it?'"

The Chicago Blackhawks and San Jose Sharks have previously been mentioned as possibilities, but those are teams in rebuilds. Perhaps some contenders are poised to swing a big move.

Buyout buzz

Teams can start buying players out of contracts on Wednesday night.

"I think (Jeff) Skinner is the one we're all watching," Friedman said.

The Buffalo Sabres forward has three years left on a contract with an average annual value of $9 million.

Other names that have been mentioned as possibilities are Oilers goalie Jack Campbell, Jets defenceman Nate Schmidt and New York Islanders forward J-G Pageau.

Are Jackets a fit for Nelson?

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

After winning the Calder Cup for a second year in a row with the Hershey Bears on Monday, coach Todd Nelson could be a candidate for the Columbus Blue Jackets' open job.

Nelson previously worked with new Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell as an assistant coach with the Atlanta Thrashers.

The 55-year-old Nelson has brief NHL head coaching experience with the Oilers (46 games in 2014-15).

"I do think he's at least on their radar," Friedman said.

SB NATION CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes Release Preseason Schedule - Brind'Amour Snubbed Again for HHOF

By Bob Wage

Carolina Hurricanes v New York Rangers - Game Two

Photo by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

The Carolina Hurricanes released their schedule for the coming preseason today. There are no surprises, just more of the same opponents they have had in recent years.

This all makes sense since these are close destinations for travel.

In other news, the Hockey Hall of Fame made their decisions for inductees this year.

Obviously, Captaining your team to a Stanley Cup Championship is not a prerequisite.

I am working on a Draft preview and hopefully it will be ready before the end of the day tomorrow.

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

The Hockey News

Andrei Svechnikov, Dmitry Orlov, Alexander Nikishin to Take Part in NHL/KHL Charity Match in Russia

By Ryan Henkel

The event will take place on July 20 at CSKA Arena in Moscow.

A big-time event will be taking place in Russia this summer as current NHL stars will be facing off against some of their KHL counterparts for the first time since 2010, although this match isn't sponsored by either league.

Instead, the event has been organized by two current Russian NHL players.

The game is a credit to both Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman Mikhail Sergachev and New York Rangers forward Artemi Panarin who helped set up the monumental match and who are also sponsoring it through their foundations.

The official website for the event states:

"For the first time in history, two teams are meeting: the best hockey players playing in Russia, and a team of our foreign players from overseas. Hockey superstars, the best players - everyone you dreamed of seeing on the ice - will play against each other."

And the Carolina Hurricanes will have quite a few representatives as Andrei Svechnikov, Dmitry Orlov and Alexander Nikishin are all slated to participate.

The game will take place on July 20 at the CSKA Arena in Moscow, Russia and tickets for the event can be purchased from the official website.

In addition, the majority of proceeds from the event will go to charities organized by the players.

The website also states that the event will be more than just the game:

"Fans of the star match who gathered at the CSKA Arena will be treated to a big show program, a colorful opening ceremony, a variety of activities for the whole family, autograph sessions with popular players and coaches, as well as many, many surprises. This will be a real hockey festival in the middle of summer!"

Here's the current list of everyone who will be taking part in the game:

Team NHL

- Alexander Ovechkin (Washington Capitals)
- Artemi Panarin (New York Rangers)
- Mikhail Sergachev (Tampa Bay Lightning)
- Evgeni Malkin (Pittsburgh Penguins)
- Sergei Bobrovsky (Florida Panthers)
- Valeri Nichushkin (Colorado Avalanche)
- Dmitry Orlov (Carolina Hurricanes)
- Andrei Svechnikov (Carolina Hurricanes)
- Pavel Buchnevich (St. Louis Blues)
- Ilya Lyubushkin (Toronto Maple Leafs)
- Evgenii Dadonov (Dallas Stars)
- Vladislav Gavrikov (LA Kings)
- Alexander Romanov (New York Islanders)
- Nikita Zaitsev (Chicago Blackhawks)
- Kirill Marchenko (Columbus Blue Jackets)
- Yegor Chinakov (Columbus Blue Jackets)

The team will also be coached by some Russian legends in Igor Larionov, Sergei Zubov and Alexei Zhamnov

Team KHL

- Ilya Kovalchuk
- Alexander Radulov
- Vladimir Tkachyov
- Nikolai Goldobin
- Vladim Shipachyov
- Alexander Nikishin (Carolina Hurricanes)
- Pavel Poryadin
- Sergei Tolchinsky
- Dmitrij Jaskin
- Vasili Atanasov
- Damir Sharipzyanov
- Anton Burdasov
- Alexander Volkov
- Evgeny Svechnikov
- Yegor Yakovlev
- Andrei Mironov
- Grigori Panin
- Bogdan Konyushkov (Montreal Canadiens)
- Anatoli Golyshev
- Nikita Nesterov
- Ilya Nabokov
- Mikhail Berdin

Maxim Dorozhko

The team will be coached by Andrei Razin and Igor Nikitin.

*Make sure to follow HockeyNewsHub, the best source for KHL and Russian hockey information, on Twitter/X for more updates on the game and event.

Carolina Hurricanes Reveal 2024 Preseason Schedule

By Ryan Henkel

The Canes will once again be facing the Preds, Bolts and Cats.

The Carolina Hurricanes today announced their preseason schedule which once again will feature six total games split against the Nashville Predators, Tampa Bay Lightning and Florida Panthers.

The schedule kicks off on Sept. 24 in Tampa and finishes Oct. 5 in Nashville.

There will be three games at PNC Arena: Sept. 27 (vs. Florida), Oct. 2 (vs. Nashville) and Oct. 4 (vs. Tampa Bay).

Here's the full schedule:

@ Tampa Bay Lightning - 7pm, Tuesday, September 24

vs. Florida Panthers - 7pm, Friday, September 27

@ Florida Panthers - 7pm, Saturday, September 28

vs. Nashville Predators - 7pm, Wednesday, October 2

vs. Tampa Bay Lightning - 7pm, Friday, October 4

@ Nashville Predators - 5pm, Saturday, October 5

Recent Articles

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

BLEACHER REPORT

NHL Trade Rumors: Jake Guentzel, Hurricanes Discussing Contract Ahead of Free Agency

By Julia Stumbaugh

There are "talks ongoing" between Carolina Hurricanes and winger Jake Guentzel before the Monday opening of NHL free agency, according to TSN's Pierre LeBrun.

Guentzel slotted in on the Hurricanes' top line beside Sebastian Aho after his midseason trade acquisition from the Pittsburgh Penguins. He recorded 25 points in 17 regular season games, and nine in 11 playoff contests.

The winger is due for a raise from his previous $6 million AAV deal, and The Fourth Period's David Pagnotta reported earlier this month that he is "expected to test free agency."

Guentzel has also been connected to the Vancouver Canucks, as well as a potential reunion with Sidney Crosby and the Penguins, per the Daily Faceoff's Frank Seravalli and The Athletic's Josh Yohe.

The veteran winger, who turns 30 in October, said in May he would like to "sign here long term" in Raleigh.

"This team for sure can win the Stanley Cup," Guentzel said after the Hurricanes were eliminated from the second round by the New York Rangers, per NHL.com's Kurt Dusterberg. "I think it's right there. This puts you in a good spot to do that. I want to do that more than anything, and that's all I care about. That definitely plays a factor into it. Hopefully you can kind of get some stability and be able to sign here long term."

But with a host of other pending free agents to consider, including Tuevo Teravainen, Brett Pesce and Brady Skjei, the Hurricanes may not have the cap space to make Guentzel a higher offer than what he could find on the open market.

Despite being sidelined for almost a month with a rib injury, Guentzel's 77 total points in 67 games of the 2023-24 regular season rank third among all pending free agents. That could net him offers north of $8 million per year in free agency.

Guentzel made his NHL debut in 2015 and went on to help the Penguins win two Stanley Cups during his first two seasons. He has recorded 491 points in 520 regular-season games, and 67 points in 69 career playoff contests.

After spending the majority of eight seasons on Crosby's wing and clicking with Aho during the Canes' playoff push, Guentzel has proven he can provide consistent scoring on a team's top line. That valuable position could make it expensive for the Hurricanes to secure a long-term commitment from Guentzel before he tests out free agency.

TODAY'S LINKS

https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article289525200.html
https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5587970/2024/06/25/nhl-goalie-trade-market-targets/
https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5588102/2024/06/26/nhl-goalie-depth-ranking-offseason/
https://www.wralsportsfan.com/ready-for-next-hockey-season-hurricanes-open-preseason-play-sept-24/21497800/
https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/free-agency/2024-nhl-free-agency-best-available-forwards
https://www.espn.com/nhl/insider/story/_/id/40408142/nhl-free-agency-2024-teams-best-players-contracts-salary-cap
https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/rumour-roundup-latest-on-mcgroarty-guentzel-jarry-and-more/
https://www.canescountry.com/2024/6/25/24185965/hurricanes-release-preseason-schedule-brindamour-snubbed-again-for-hhof
https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/svechnikov-orlov-nikishin-to-take-part-in-nhl-khl-charity-match
https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/carolina-hurricanes-reveal-2024-preseason-schedule
https://bleacherreport.com/articles/10126030-nhl-trade-rumors-jake-guentzel-hurricanes-discussing-contract-ahead-of-free-agency

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

SportScan

Articles from outlets covering the Hurricanes' upcoming opponents and league-wide news

1221640 Websites

The Athletic / Pavel Datsyuk, Shea Weber selected to Hockey Hall of Fame: Takeaways on the 7-member 2024 class

By Max Bultman, Lukas Weese and more

On Tuesday, the Hockey Hall of Fame revealed the newest members that will be enshrined among the sport's legends. Pavel Datsyuk, Shea Weber, Jeremy Roenick, Krissy Wendell-Pohl, Natalie Darwitz, Colin Campbell and David Poile make up the 2024 class to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame this November.

Of the seven names, five were players and two were builders. It is the first time since 2010 that two women are being inducted into the same Hockey Hall of Fame class.

Datsyuk played 14 NHL seasons, all with the Detroit Red Wings. During his career, he recorded 314 goals and 604 assists. Nicknamed the "Magic Man," Datsyuk will be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.

Shea Weber played 16 years in the NHL, 11 with the Nashville Predators and five with the Montreal Canadiens. Playing 1,038 career games, Weber tallied 224 goals and 365 assists. Weber, a two-time first-team All-Star, won two Olympic gold medals with Team Canada in 2010 and 2014 along with world championship gold in 2007.

Jeremy Roenick played for 20 seasons in the NHL and was a member of five different teams. Drafted No. 8 in 1988, Roenick began his career with the Chicago Blackhawks (1988 to 1996), before playing with the Phoenix Coyotes (1996 to 2001, 2006-07), Philadelphia Flyers (2001 to 2004), Los Angeles Kings (2005-06) and San Jose Sharks (2007 to 2009). Roenick scored 513 goals during his career, making him one of 47 players to record 500-plus NHL goals.

Wendell-Pohl played college hockey with the Minnesota Golden Gophers. In 2004-05, Pohl set an NCAA record for most shorthanded goals during a season (seven). Internationally for Team USA, Pohl won silver at the 2002 Olympics, bronze at the 2006 Olympics and gold at the 2005 women's world hockey championship.

Darwitz captained the U.S. national women's team for several seasons in her career. She won three world championship gold medals, two Olympic silver medals and one Olympic bronze.

Introducing the Hockey Hall of Fame Class of 2024! #HHOF2024 | #HHOF pic.twitter.com/jpVpB8QdWT

— Hockey Hall of Fame (@HockeyHallFame) June 25, 2024

Colin Campbell worked with the NHL in hockey operations, officiating and central scouting for the past 25 seasons. He won a Stanley Cup as an associate coach with the New York Rangers in 1994.

David Poile was the general manager with the Nashville Predators from 1997 to 2023 and with the Washington Capitals from 1982 to 1997. After the 2017-18 season, Poile became the longest-tenured GM in NHL history. He won the NHL's General Manager of the Year award in 2017, the same season the Predators reached the Stanley Cup Final. During Poile's tenure as GM of the Capitals, Washington clinched a playoff spot 14 times.

The 2024 Hockey Hall of Fame class induction ceremony occurs on Nov. 11.

Profiling the 2024 class

Everyone who thought about it was trying to figure out what the Hockey Hall of Fame selection committee might do with all the available Russian players up for election this year.

On Tuesday afternoon, we got the answer.

Breaking with a five-year tradition, in which no Russian player had been voted in since Sergei Zubov in 2019, the Hall elected Datsyuk as part of a seven-member class of 2024 that also included Weber, Roenick, Darwitz, Wendell-Pohl, Poile and Campbell.

Like Datsyuk, Weber was selected in his first year of eligibility. By contrast, Roenick, the other player chosen in the male player category, had been retired for 15 years and was eligible for 12 before he finally got in. It was a curious class on some levels, noteworthy because, among others, Alex Mogilny, Keith Tkachuk, John LeClair and Rod Brind'Amour remain on the outside looking in.

If sentiment had entered into the equation, then there might not have ever been a better year to elect Tkachuk. On Monday night, his son, Matthew won the first Stanley Cup in family history — and celebrated with his mom, his dad and his brother present. Had Keith gotten the call from the Hall, that would have been a memorable 24-hour period for the Tkachuk family clan. That might have been the primary narrative had it gone that way.

Instead, most of the attention was centered on Datsyuk, the long-time Red Wings' star who won seven major NHL trophies — three Selkes, four Lady Byngs and two Stanley Cups.

Internationally, he is a member of the IIHF's exclusive Triple Gold Club — players who've won the Olympics, the Stanley Cup and a world championship. After completing his NHL career, he returned to Russia and played the final five seasons of his career in the KHL, winning the Gagarin Cup in 2017.

But Russia — and Russian players — have become a flashpoint on the world hockey scene, ever since the war in Ukraine. The International Ice Hockey Federation has banned both Russia and Belarus from international competition, as a protest against the war. When the NHL set up its 2025 Four Nations tournament, the first attempt to get best-on-best play restarted, Russia — one of hockey's traditional powers — was excluded from the event.

By contrast, Datsyuk represented a different challenge because his all-around credentials made him harder to overlook.

Mike Gartner, in an interview on TSN, reiterated comments he's made nearly every year since taking over as committee chair from John Davidson. Just because someone doesn't get in this year doesn't mean it's forever.

"It's a process," said Gartner. "At the end of the day, if they're a Hall of Famer, they're going to get into the Hall of Fame. It might not be right now. It might not be next year. But they'll get into the Hall of Fame sometime in the future."

The dilemma facing the committee in 2024 was whether to elect Datsyuk right away or push his candidacy into the future.

"We're certainly aware of what's going on in the world," Gartner said. "However, we look at our responsibility as a selection committee that it has to do with the game of hockey. So we look at it and try to make determinations on what is happening and what has happened with these players and builders in the game of hockey over the course of their careers."

Datsyuk wouldn't have been the first player with sparkling credentials who didn't get the call in his first year of eligibility.

A player couldn't have played any meaningful hockey in three years before becoming eligible for selection, which is why Weber was under consideration. The 38-year-old, who played 1,038 career games over 16 seasons with first Nashville, then Montreal, hasn't officially retired yet, though the cumulative effect of his injuries means his playing career is over.

As a player, Weber was known for his lethal slapshot and his big-bodied presence. He recorded 589 career points, was a Norris Trophy finalist as the NHL's best defenseman three times, and also produced an impressive international resume. Representing Canada on the world stage, Weber won gold at the 2005 World Junior Hockey Championships, the 2007 IIHF World Championships in Russia, the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, the 2014 Sochi Olympics and the 2016 World Cup of Hockey in Toronto.

Of the three male players selected, Roenick was arguably the most surprising, given that he'd been eligible since 2012. However, he did have the most points (1,216) among eligible players not in the Hall. But he was considered one of the most complete two-way players in the game; even though he never won a major individual award or a Stanley Cup. Gartner noted that he played alongside Roenick for a time in the Phoenix Coyotes' organization.

"Every time when we were playing against the Chicago Blackhawks, his name was circled on the board," said Gartner. "Those are the players that make a difference in the game. The longer you have your name circled on the board, over the course of a career, the more chance you have to get in the Hall of Fame.

"Jeremy Roenick had a passion for the game. He played the game hard. He was flashy, at a time when flashy wasn't all that in. Now it is – and the players nowadays can thank someone like Jeremy Roenick for that."

Among the more prominent players eligible in the first year that didn't get in were Patrick Marleau, the NHL's all-time leader in games played (1,779), and goaltenders Pekka Rinne and Ryan Miller, each of whom won a Vezina Trophy in their careers.

Gartner noted that the discussions are "so honest and so lively … I can tell you we obviously everybody we selected are worthy of Hall of Fame induction status — and yet there are a number of players who didn't get selected, and they're usually the ones that cause the most controversy and discussion."

There were several strong candidates in the women's player category, but ultimately the committee chose two American players, Darwitz and Wendell-Pohl, who were mainstays of their national program for a decade. The fact that Jennifer Botterill, eligible since 2014, remains on the outside looking in is puzzling.

Poile is the NHL's all-time winningest general manager, beginning with Washington in 1982, until he stepped down last year as the first and at that point, only general manager in Nashville Predators history. Poile's father, Bud, is also in the Hall of Fame as a builder. Interestingly, Poile serves on the selection committee. By rule, he would have to recuse himself from the discussion of his candidacy.

Campbell, meanwhile, was also a long-time selection committee member, who has worked in the NHL front office for most of Gary Bettman's time as NHL commissioner as the senior executive vice president of hockey operations.

The committee is chaired by Gartner (HHOF class of 2001) and also includes David Branch, Brian Burke, Cassie Campbell-Pascall, Mark Chipman, Marc de Foy, Ron Francis, Cammi Granato, Anders Hedberg, Jari Kurri, Igor Larionov, Pierre McGuire, Bob McKenzie, Scott Morrison, Mike Murphy, Poile, Luc Robitaille and Joe Sakic.

Full disclosure: I served on the committee for 15 years between 2004 and 2018, and it is a daunting task — and frustrating sometimes because you only get one vote; and ultimately, the supermajority rules. The committee elected the maximum number of female players and builders but left one spot unfilled in the male player category — presumably, because of a split vote.

By rule, a candidate must get 14 out of a possible 18 votes to gain induction. I would have liked to have seen Tkachuk make the grade. That would have rounded out the class nicely. — Eric Duhatschek, senior NHL writer

Darwitz and Wendell-Pohl: Teammates on the ice and in the Hall

Two women are being inducted into the same Hall of Fame class for the first time since 2010, and only the second time ever.

It's a bit of a surprising Class of 2024, given there were some high-profile or more freshly eligible candidates, like Meghan Duggan, Julie Chu and Botterill. But that doesn't mean that Darwitz and Wendell-Pohl were not deserving on their own merit. That they are only being enshrined in 2024 speaks to the broader issue that has been facing the Hockey Hall of Fame over the last decade — a growing backlog of qualified female athletes.

Let's start with Darwitz, who led PWHL Minnesota to the league's first-ever championship only four weeks ago, and was let go as the team's general manager only days after lifting the league trophy. She is a Minnesota hockey icon with a resume that has long been destined for Hall of Fame enshrinement.

She made her Team USA debut as a 15-year-old at the 1999 women's world championship and led the 2002 Olympics in goals as a teenager only a few years later. Darwitz won eight medals at world championships (three gold, five silver) and three medals (two silver, one bronze) at the Olympics. She was named to multiple all-star teams, led tournaments in scoring and was named the best forward at the 2008 world championships, her first tournament as captain of Team USA.

In 55 games at world championships and the Olympics, Darwitz scored 43 goals and 83 points.

Darwitz — from Eagan, Minn. — also won two NCAA championships in three years for the University of Minnesota and was a finalist for the Patty Kazmaier Award in each season she played college hockey. Nobody had more points than Darwitz over her college career, with 102 goals and 246 points in 99 games from 2002 to 2005. The next highest scorer? Wendell-Pohl (106 goals and 237 points).

It's actually quite fitting that Darwitz and Wendell-Pohl are being inducted into the same class, given their time together on Team USA and the Golden Gophers. The duo won back-to-back NCAA championships together at Minnesota and played on Team USA together for nearly a decade.

In 2004-05, Wendell-Pohl won the Patty Kazmaier, as the top player in women's college hockey, a gold medal at women's world championships and was named tournament MVP. With Team USA, Wendell-Pohl won six medals at world championships (one gold, five silver) and two Olympic medals (one silver, one bronze).

She was captain of the 2006 Olympic team and led the team in scoring at two women's world championships. Wendell-Pohl was more than a point-per-game player at major international events tallying 25 goals and 69 points in 39 games at the Olympics and world championships combined. — Hailey Salvian, women's hockey staff writer

The Pulse Newsletter

Free, daily sports updates direct to your inbox. Sign up

What was Datsyuk's legacy?

Datsyuk was one of the defining players of his generation, a magician with the puck who was also an elite defensive forward. He won three Selke Trophies in his career, finished top-five for four more, and added four Lady Byng Trophies for sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct.

He finished his NHL career with 918 points in 953 games and two Stanley Cups, and is a member of the Triple Gold club having won the Cup plus Gold medals at the World Championship and Olympic Games.

But numbers and awards are only part of Datsyuk's legacy, as his legendary dekes and puckhandling made him an icon of the game. He made the NHL's 100 Greatest Players list in 2017-18 and now enters elite company as a first-ballot Hall of Famer. — Max Bultman, Red Wings beat writer

Remembering Roenick's peak with Chicago

Much of the Hall of Fame discussion among Blackhawks fans over the last decade or so has focused on Steve Larmer, the brilliant iron man two-way standout who has long been overlooked. But three years after franchise great Doug Wilson was finally inducted, Roenick got a somewhat surprising nod. So maybe there's hope for Larmer yet.

Roenick's selection might have come somewhat out of left field, but his peak was sensational, all of it coming with Chicago. He had 190 goals in a four-season span from his second to his fifth NHL seasons, including back-to-back 50-goal seasons and three straight 100-point seasons.

He settled into more of a Hall of Very Good run for the rest of his career, never again topping 32 goals or 78 points in a season. Roenick never won a major award, but was a nine-time All-Star.

Roenick's peak was brief, but as a member of the 500-goal club (513) and the 1,000-point club (1,216), his offensive excellence was undeniable. As for his occasionally offensive statements, it's fair to wonder if that's one of the reasons he's been kept out for so long (Roenick retired in 2009). Roenick himself certainly did.

But in the end, those four years when he was one of the best players in the NHL were enough to elevate him in the eyes of the committee. — Mark Lazerus, Blackhawks senior writer

The Athletic LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221641 Websites

The Athletic / Past captains on Aleksander Barkov, first Panther to lift the Stanley Cup: 'Wonderful, wonderful player'

By Michael Russo

SUNRISE, Fla. — A few weeks ago, Bill Zito made a call to Brian Skrudland, the heart-and-soul checking center who helped guide the Florida Panthers to their first Stanley Cup Final appearance in just their third year of existence in 1996, to offer him two tickets to Game 3 of the team's series against the Edmonton Oilers.

Skrudland has lived in Calgary, three hours south of Edmonton, since he retired, and Zito, the Panthers' president of hockey operations and general manager, thought it would be nice to have the beloved "Screwy" at the game.

"And of course, being me, I said, 'Well, I'll tell you what, Bill, I've got two son-in-laws, as well as my son. If there happens to be two more tickets around, I'll take them,'" Skrudland said, laughing. "So Bill was so kind to set us up with four tickets, and man alive, what a hockey game, and man alive, what a hockey game by their captain."

Barkov assisted on Sam Reinhart's goal and scored the eventual winner that night as the Panthers took a 3-0 lead in the Stanley Cup Final — a series that looked all but done at that point.

That was before the Oilers reeled off three consecutive wins to force a winner-take-all Game 7 on Monday — a collapse that would have been the worst in league history had Barkov not played a huge role in holding Connor McDavid to no points for a second consecutive game in Monday's Game 7 triumph.

This came after a Game 6 in which Barkov was by far Florida's best player, scoring the lone goal on a highlight-reel move and having another overturned because Sam Reinhart was a hair offside.

Silky stuff from the Panthers captain. 🔥 pic.twitter.com/5HPm5LrTCf

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) June 22, 2024

Now, all that stress and pressure of three straight losses is long forgotten. Barkov became the first Finnish-born captain to guide his team to the NHL's pinnacle Monday night and the first Panthers player to lift the Cup.

"It's a great honor," Barkov said. "Finland is a huge, huge hockey country and there have been lots of great captains from Finland."

If not for McDavid's record-breaking postseason and the fact he scored eight points in two games to help the Oilers climb back in the series, Barkov would have been the first Finnish-born Conn Smythe winner. He received 15 second-place votes on the 17 ballots cast. McDavid received 16 first-place votes.

Barkov is the 10th Panthers captain in history and first to hoist Lord Stanley's Cup.

woke up a Stanley Cup Champion pic.twitter.com/fbx8MyxZEB

— Florida Panthers (@FlaPanthers) June 25, 2024

Skrudland, the team's first captain and first to guide Florida to a Cup Final, has a soft spot for Barkov, and not only because of the success he's led the team to.

Skrudland, who won two Stanley Cups in his 15-year career and went to five Stanley Cup Finals, always took care of the defensive side of the puck, just like Barkov does. He was always tasked with going up against the opposing team's top players, just like Barkov is. And he was part of the Panthers' staff as director of player development when Dale Tallon and Scott Luce selected Barkov second in the 2013 NHL Draft.

Remember the year Nathan MacKinnon went No. 1 to Colorado and most felt the Panthers would take Seth Jones or Jonathan Drouin second and some criticized them for not?

"It was a true surprise," Skrudland said. "Dale Tallon and Scott Luce did a hell of a job keeping that under wraps until the day of the draft. And then they pulled up all these videos of this kid, and it was like, 'Oh, my good lord. Look at this, and look at this.' It was highlight-reel stuff, and we thought, 'OK, maybe we didn't need MacKinnon.' I mean, if there was going to be a replacement for Nathan MacKinnon, you couldn't get any better than this fella."

Watching now, Skrudland can't help but think back to what Barkov was like as a rookie and how far he has come.

"The biggest change in Aleksander since is that he's really taken on the North American-style game," Skrudland said. "He's one of the best, in all positions — a complete 200-foot player. The nasty side of Aleksander Barkov is his willingness to take a hit, to make a play, sacrifice his body on the (penalty kill). He does it all, both offensively and defensively. And we knew, of course, that he was very capable of that.

"He's not a small man either, so he earns the ice he gets and just works his ass off. So composed and such a great skater, such a great puck handler. All the assets of an MVP type of a guy, year in and year out."

In January, Zito flew Skrudland and his wife, Lana, to Florida for '90s Night against the Los Angeles Kings. Barkov invited Skrudland down after the game to say hello and take a picture with him and Kings captain Anze Kopitar.

"He's just such a kind guy," Skrudland said. "I remember him as a rookie. He was so quiet. So when they won the Eastern Conference, I was elated to see the way he was acting at the podium with Matthew Tkachuk. Having fun and showing off his personality and smile and that joy. He's matured into a wonderful, wonderful player and person. You can't get a better person to captain this franchise."

Barkov's impact is felt well beyond the stats. Not that the stats don't show it, too.

He scored 80 points in 73 games in the 2023-24 regular season and won his second Selke Trophy as the league's best defensive forward. He had eight goals and tied for the team lead with 22 points in 24 playoff games, collected while also drawing the Panthers' toughest assignments. In four rounds, Barkov matched up largely against Nikita Kucherov, David Pastrnak, Mika Zibanejad, McDavid and Leon Draisaitl. Those stars had no goals and five assists against Barkov at five-on-five.

Simply, Barkov was Florida's best player in the playoffs. He's scored four game-winning goals and had eight multi-point games. He was a huge part of the Panthers' penalty kill that went 21-for-24 against the Oilers and finished second in the playoffs at 88 percent.

He is Florida's all-time leader in playoff games (71), assists (40), points (59), power-play points (18), multi-assist games (nine) and multi-point games (17).

There's a pride in wearing the "C" for any franchise. And that pride is returned by past Panthers watching the current championship team. Along with Skrudland, The Athletic reached out to former Panthers captains Scott Mellanby, Olli Jokinen and Ed Jovanovski to get their view of what Barkov is doing and his place in Panthers history.

Scott Mellanby

The second captain in Panthers history, Mellanby is the man who triggered the 1995-96 “Year of the Rat” when he slapped a rat against the locker room wall at Miami Arena then went out to score twice in a win over the Calgary Flames for what became known as a “rat trick.”

Mellanby ranks fourth in Panthers history with 157 goals and fifth with 354 points. Now a senior adviser with the St. Louis Blues, here’s what he said about Barkov:

“He is one of the best defensive forces in the league, and he’s offensive, too. Reminds me a little bit of Kopitar in Kopitar’s prime. Maybe better. Maybe another level. But just a phenomenal player. At the end of the day, the thing to me is I was a good leader. A really good leader. I wasn’t a great player. I was a good player. But when your best players are your best leaders, because they come to the rink every day and they’re great pros, everybody has no choice, no excuse but to follow.

“That’s what I saw with Barkov. Like leadership, to me, it’s not about giving speeches. Occasionally, yeah, you’re going to kick a few guys in the ass or pat a few guys on the back. Sometimes you’ve got to give guys a hug and ask about their families. But when your best players are your top leaders, that’s when you have a chance to win. And that’s what this guy is.

“The Panthers have everything. They’ve got talent, but they’ve become about character and compete and grit. I think the one thing Bill Zito and his staff have done a great job of, and I go back a few years, they brought in guys Patric Hornqvist, they brought in Radko Gudas, they brought in competitive, competitive bastards. They brought in Tkachuk, and to me — I don’t want this to sound the wrong way because I’ve always been a Barkov fan — but he’s gotten to another level of competitiveness that I don’t think five years ago he had.

“He’s never going to be a guy that runs around looking for hits, but he engages now much more in the battle than he ever did. And not that he was not in the battle — don’t get me wrong — but he’s taken it to another level. And I think that’s a result of playing with guys like Gudas and Hornqvist and Tkachuk and Carter Verhaeghe. When your top guys start playing that way and doing that, everyone follows suit, and it's just tripled down there.”

Olli Jokinen

After one year of Pavel Bure and Paul Laus serving as co-captains and then the Panthers having no captain in 2002-03, Jokinen was named the third full-time captain in Panthers history before the 2003-04 season. Jokinen became one of the best goal scorers in Panthers history and ranks third in goals and points behind Barkov and Jonathan Huberdeau with 188 goals and 419 points, respectively, in 567 games.

After three years coaching Jukurit in the Finnish Elite League and being named coach of the year in 2021-22, Jokinen is entering his first year coaching Timra in the Swedish Hockey League with the hope it’ll be a stepping stone toward one day returning to North America to coach in the NHL.

After his 17-year NHL player career, Jokinen retired in Parkland, Fla., and got to know Barkov, his Finnish countryman, well. In fact, when playing in Winnipeg, Jokinen once got a call from a teenaged Barkov after he made the Panthers.

“He said he was too young to lease a car and asked if he could borrow one of my cars,” Jokinen said, laughing.

They were also teammates in the 2014 Olympics until Barkov got injured two games in.

“Before that, I knew the guy, I heard about the kid because I followed a little bit of Finnish League, played against his father (Alexander), and there was a lot of talk, especially early in the career, comparing him to his father,” Jokinen said. “A lot of similarities, but obviously the kid has been taking off big-time now.

“There’s not many players you can compare to Barkov. Maybe he’s Florida’s (Patrice) Bergeron, but not to disrespect Bergeron, he’s almost like a better version of Bergeron. I think with Barky, it’s that offensive talent that sets him apart. If he was more selfless, he would win the scoring (title), too. He could be a 150-point guy, but he chooses not to be that guy because he can help the team other ways. Playing the game the right way and stuff like that.

“It’s been nice to see his growth as a person, too. He’s become a better leader and is becoming a little bit more open about it in the media. He’s a very private person — very, very private guy and you really have to know him.”

It’s the humility that blows Jokinen away. Reporters have learned that if you want to shut Barkov down, you ask him about himself and how good he is.

“He’s never going to do anything that benefits him; he does things that benefit the team,” Jokinen said. “And you have a lot of team guys and team players and stuff like that, but very rarely you have a young guy entering the league, when he came as an 18-year-old, being so responsible without the puck and playing both ways immediately in high traffic. So that tells me that the father probably had a big influence for him growing up: teaching about the game, the fundamentals, what this game is all about. End of the day it’s about winning and people want winners.

“His Hockey IQ, that’s his biggest asset because he understands what he needs to do in that exact moment, that shift to get the job done, that it benefits the team. And you don’t have many of those guys. Just look at the Reinhart goal in Game 3. Barkov generates the takeaway from (Evan) Bouchard with that active stick. As a coach, my requirement is that every player should generate two takeaways every period, which becomes six per player, which becomes a lot of takeaways per game if everyone was able to get to that goal. But Barky, he generates four or five takeaways per period. That’s something that is unbelievable.”

Jokinen is proud that Barkov, who hails from his native country, is the player who has broken all of his team records.

“To have a Finnish guy on the team I care the most about in the NHL lead the team and play the game the right way, it’s amazing,” Jokinen said. “He’s not just the top player on the Panthers but one of the top players in the whole league. And that’s just amazing, obviously very proud.”

Ed Jovanovski

Named the seventh captain in Panthers history during his second stint with the organization, Jovanovski was the No. 1 pick in the 1994 draft and a rookie nicknamed “Jovo Cop” on the 1995-96 Cup Final team.

Once a teammate of Barkov’s, Jovanovski also watches Barkov all season as a studio analyst on Bally Sports Florida.

“What I love about Barkov is I’ve got to believe that he’s at his stall before every game,” Jovanovski said. “It’s just his drive. First guy on the ice in practice. Last guy off. Working at things that you don’t see guys really work on in practice. Always approachable, and I think that’s a key thing because you’re speaking for the team in a lot of sense. You’ve got to deal with the coach. You’re going in there, you’re expressing, ‘Hey, listen. The guys are feeling like this.’

“And so you’ve got to have that good communication, and that’s where Barky has grown. He’s a pretty shy guy coming in, expectedly, coming from Finland and the language barrier. So I think that’s what’s really helped him become a great leader. And then let’s not forget the most important thing: going on the ice and being, on most nights, right at the top of the class as far as leading the way, not only scoring points but playing on the other side of the puck, which is not always fun.

“I think (Paul) Maurice’s systems really suited Barky and was right in his wheelhouse on how you got to play. … When you’re battling against top lines each and every night and having that crazy matchup with facing the top two defensemen of opposing teams and not complaining, and putting your head down and going to work, that says a lot about your leader.

“It’s hard to see your captain and your leader go out there and pay the price and do a lot of the heavy lifting and then not be inspired to follow suit.”

OUR CAPTAIN pic.twitter.com/pP3sobEt5t

— Florida Panthers (@FlaPanthers) June 25, 2024

The Athletic LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221642 Websites

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

The Athletic / NHL goalie trade market: Analyzing the top names and the teams that should target them

By Shayna Goldman

The 2023-24 season seemed ripe for a goalie trade.

It just didn't happen until there were two Stanley Cup Final games left on the schedule.

The Jacob Markstrom trade did two things. It finally kick-started the goalie market. And it took the New Jersey Devils, a team desperate for an upgrade in net, off the board.

Just hours later, the Los Angeles Kings made their move by bringing in Darcy Kuemper. The Kings may not be finished just yet, but likely aren't in the market for anything splashy.

And then on Monday night, just before Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final, the Boston Bruins shook the goalie market even more by trading Linus Ullmark to the Ottawa Senators, and taking back Joonas Korpisalo in return.

Even if the Kings, Devils, and Senators are out on the remaining goalies, there should be teams looking for a goalie boost this summer. Some could turn to the free-agent market to avoid having to pay anything other than cap space for a goalie, but the options are slim.

Anthony Stolarz, Kevin Lankinen and Scott Wedgewood could serve as solid 1B options after their impressive 2023-24 campaigns. Ilya Samsonov, on the other hand, doesn't quite meet the "safe and reliable" profile some teams may be searching for. Chris Driedger brings an element of uncertainty as well. Cam Talbot, Laurent Brossoit, Martin Jones, James Reimer and Antti Raanta would be more fitting in backup capacity at this point.

That makes the goalie trade market all the more intriguing this summer.

Which goalies are on the trade market?

Filip Gustavsson, Minnesota Wild

A year ago, a Filip Gustavsson-Jesper Wallstedt crease could have made sense for the 2024-25 season. Gustavsson was coming off a career year when he saved 24.5 goals above expected in 39 games, which landed him seventh in the league. As impressive as his year was, it wasn't clear just yet if that caliber was a sign of things to come considering his track record to that point. That's why the Wild took a more cautious approach last offseason with a three-year contract worth $3.75 million a year, on average.

That looks like an even better decision after Gustavsson's 2023-24 season. In 17 games, he allowed almost eight goals more than expected when accounting for his workload. While the Wild had some serious penalty kill struggles to open the year and the defense showed cracks without Jared Spurgeon, more was expected from the goalie they penciled in as their 1A for the year.

So now that Marc-Andre Fleury signed a one-year extension in Minnesota, it seems like Gustavsson could be the odd man out with Wallstedt waiting in the wings to jump up to the NHL level full-time. A three-goalie situation may give a team options, but it usually doesn't benefit any of the players involved.

Juuse Saros, Nashville Predators

Juuse Saros is one of the biggest wild cards in the goalie market because Nashville could extend him long-term this summer. He's eligible for an extension as of July 1, which could end up as high as the $9 million range.

While general manager Barry Trotz intends to talk to Saros and his representation this summer, his name will likely be featured in trade rumors until an extension is done. As much as the Predators may not want to lose their workhorse starter, the big question is whether it makes sense for the team to ink their starter and block prospect Yaroslav Askarov's path.

Not every team will be able to afford a Saros extension or even the cost of acquisition. It's going to be steep for good reason — this is a workhorse goaltender who can be counted on to start a lot of games at a high level. Last year he was not only one of the best goalies in the league, but in the analytics era. And even this year after a slow start, he bounced back when it mattered most to help the Predators' playoff push.

John Gibson, Anaheim Ducks

Of the potentially available goalies, no one's name has been in the rumor mill as long as John Gibson's.

Gibson's timeline doesn't line up with the rebuilding Ducks, so it may be in management's best interest to move him sooner rather than later before they risk losing value on him. Lukas Dostal's progression and push for more playing time could hurt Anaheim's leverage in this situation.

Gibson has another three years under contract at $6.4 million a year, on average. If the Ducks leverage their cap space and three retained salary slots, they could bolster a potential return for Gibson. The goalie has some say in his landing spot, with a 10-team no-trade list. But unlike Saros, his next contract isn't of concern so the Ducks can truly consider 22 different landing spots for him.

The big question with Gibson is what he has left in the tank and how much the Ducks' defense has weighed on his game. He finished slightly above average relative to his workload this past season but has four iffy years behind that. In some years, he starts strong before really dropping off in the second half, and the team in front of him likely has a lot to do with it. Still, Gibson's durability and caliber have dropped since his three excellent seasons between 2016 and 2019.

Which teams are looking for a goalie, and which ones make the most sense?

Colorado Avalanche

Alexandar Georgiev rebounded from an awful start to the postseason, but at a certain point, Colorado may want more certainty in net. The Avalanche don't need perfection with all their strengths in front of the blue paint. But the team may want two things: 1) less of a wild card as their starter 2) and more support behind them. With only a year left on Georgiev's contract, management has to decide whether or not he is the starter to invest in despite some of his flaws.

Gustavsson carries some risk but is pretty inexpensive. Getting him at a bargain could make sense for a team without a ton of assets to spend. Even Gibson with salary retained could make sense. Maybe in return for a goalie upgrade, Ross Colton could be of interest.

Detroit Red Wings

Alex Lyon and Ville Husso are both signed for next season, so technically the Red Wings could maintain the status quo. But management will still look to the goalie market to see if there are any sensible options out there.

Steve Yzerman already acknowledged that he doesn't want to move too many prime assets for a short-term option. So maybe that takes Gibson out of the picture if the price hasn't come down over the years; at least management could have some confidence that he can handle playing behind a less-than-stout team. With the Senators trading for Ullmark, that takes another goalie out of the mix.

Saros (plus an extension) could click if Nashville decides to move on from their starter, as well. With Lyon and Husso, the Red Wings technically have a 1B at the ready so they may not need to go that big anyway.

Vegas Golden Knights

Big names on the trade board? That's the Golden Knights music!

Adin Hill was excellent with Vegas on its way to a championship in 2023. And he put up some quality play both in the regular season and postseason for the Golden Knights this year. But there were some inconsistencies in his game, which led to Logan Thompson taking over more down the stretch. Plus, there are durability concerns. That could give Vegas pause on extending him when his current contract expires in 2025.

Ullmark would have made sense here. But maybe instead, Gibson could with salary retention. It's a pretty safe bet that he would rebound considering the differences between the Golden Knights' defense and the

Ducks' defense. And we can never count out Saros if he becomes available considering their trade tendencies.

How can Vegas swing this deal when it has no cap space? When there's a will, there's a way even if it means dumping cable players off for nothing but cap space in return.

Carolina Hurricanes

In each of the last two postseasons, the Hurricanes have turned away from starter Frederik Andersen for a game or two. The 34-year-old has another year on his contract, but maybe it's time to look in a new direction.

Carolina may not need a true number one of Saros' caliber, and should instead splurge on a scoring winger. But they could use another goalie partner for Pyotr Kochetkov. Gibson should have an easier time getting back to his heights behind the Hurricanes' stout defense. Or maybe it's worth giving Gustafson a look as a 1B, if none of the free-agent options appeal.

Washington Capitals

Like Carolina, the Capitals don't need to go big. By trading the remainder of Kuemper's contract to the Kings, Washington management signaled that they're ready to roll with Charlie Lindgren as their No 1. Lindgren earned the starter's net and was pivotal down the stretch. At this point, the Capitals could just go for one of those backup free-agent goaltenders to complete their crease. But maybe Gustavsson could be worth betting on as a reclamation projection, especially if Lindgren falters in this new role.

Calgary Flames

The Flames could proceed with the status quo now that Markstrom's been traded, and just lean on Dustin Wolf and Dan Vladar. But there could be room for improvement in Calgary, as well. Calgary is retooling and doesn't need a Saros right now. But Gustavsson could make sense, especially if the team is worried at all about Wolf's readiness at the NHL level full-time.

The Flames and Capitals could both be in the goalie market post-trade, and that could be the case for Anaheim or Nashville (for backup-1B types) depending on how they proceed. Say a team like Utah moves Karel Vejmelka, who is in the last year of his deal, then maybe they join the conversation. Even recent extensions can change the makeup of the trade market; Joseph Woll extending (per Kevin Weekes' report) in Toronto for three years should take the team out of contention for a starter. At most, maybe they aim a bit lower for Gustafson or Gibson to solidify the crease with Woll's durability in mind. But like the aforementioned teams, that could be a backup plan if they don't land one of the higher-end 1B options on the free-agent market.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221643 Websites

ESPN / Ranking the top prospects for the 2024 NHL draft - ESPN

Rachel Doerrie

Rachel Doerrie is a professional data consultant specializing in data communication and modelling. She's worked in the NHL and consulted for professional teams across North American and Europe. She hosts the Staff & Graph Podcast and discusses sports from a data-driven perspective.

Reactions

NHL draft week is officially upon us. The Stanley Cup was awarded Monday night after one of the greatest Finals in decades. The attention turns away from the game's brightest stars, away from the silver trophy and toward players who teams hope can be part of their Stanley Cup success in the future.

For the San Jose Sharks, a franchise cornerstone awaits. For the other 31 teams, a plethora of talented forwards and impactful defensemen.

What the draft may lack in generational star power, it makes up for in depth. Many of the players selected this weekend will go on to have brilliant NHL careers, win Stanley Cups and blow expectations out of the water.

The final ranking accounts for model projections, model confidence, viewings, combine results and industry intel. Moreso than previous iterations, players will rise and fall in this ranking based on viewings and industry expertise. Be it belief in a player's ability to make things happen, defensive play that isn't weighed as heavily in the model or industry hesitancy surrounding the player, there are many reasons players move up and down a list. I prefer to weigh upside and potential more than those within the industry but have gained an appreciation for players with lower ceilings and more projectable development curves.

No one wins or loses the Stanley Cup on draft day, but you can't win one without nailing a few draft picks along the way. The first step to glory starts Friday.

Here is my final Big Board, with coverage beginning Friday (7 p.m. ET, ESPN/ESPN+) and Saturday, June 29 (11:30 a.m. ET, ESPN+).

1. Macklin Celebrini

F, Boston University

Previous ranking: 1

A franchise cornerstone center who will have an immediate impact, Celebrini is the top prize of the class for good reason. There is no area of the game where legitimate concerns exist. Simply put, he does not have a weak point. He excels as a 200-foot player, making significant contributions on both ends of the ice. A talent so rare, he became one of the few true freshmen to win the Hobey Baker as the top player in college hockey.

Offensively, he navigates the middle of the ice, disrupts defensive schemes and finds passing lanes that others cannot. His puck protection skills, willingness to play through contact, spin off defenders and maintain play are qualities that will translate well to the NHL. Even without the puck, he remains a scoring threat due to his ability to find open spaces, keep his stick away from defenders and release the puck quickly.

His exceptional toolbox suggests that he will be an elite play driver and two-way center at the NHL level. He's a player whom coaches will be comfortable using in all situations against other team's best players. While not generational, he is transformative for a franchise and someone a team can build a Stanley Cup contender around.

2. Ivan Demidov

F, SKA St. Petersburg (MHL)

Previous ranking: 2

If there were guarantees about his contract situation, Demidov would likely be the second player selected, and he still might be. Offensively, he's the complete package and is projected to be a top-6 difference-maker in the NHL.

His dynamic ability to create offense combines an outstanding release, elite vision and elite puckhandling skills, perhaps the best in this draft class. He's bigger and more physically mature than originally thought, which drew attention at the Florida showcase. Capable of driving play offensively, Demidov consistently took over games in the playoffs, earning the MVP award.

He ranks in the top 5% for shooting and passing metrics and is a transition threat. He drives the middle from the outside and consistently gets himself to the dangerous scoring areas. As a versatile offensive player, Demidov has the potential to be a 40-goal, 40-assist producer and is the only player with a ceiling close to Celebrini's.

3. Artyom Levshunov

D, Michigan State

Previous ranking: 3

The Belarusian is widely regarded as the best defender in the draft class, impressing scouts in many areas. A right-shot defenseman, he imposes himself physically and dictates offensive play. His rapid development has

led scouts to believe he could quickly become an impactful two-way defenseman in the NHL.

He excels at making good first passes, finding shooting lanes and taking control of the game from the blue line. Though still raw defensively, he has tremendous upside due to his physical attributes, excellent skating ability and high puck battle success rate. Consistently engaged and a play driver at both ends of the ice, he has the potential to shift momentum. Levshunov could become a top-pairing defenseman who dictates play in transition and tilts the ice in his team's favor.

4. Cayden Lindstrom

F, Medicine Hat Tigers (WHL)

Previous ranking: 4

Lindstrom combines speed, size and skill, making him a dominant force at the junior level. He effectively uses his 6-4 frame to protect the puck, win battles and play through contact in challenging areas of the ice. His physical package and skating ability make him a formidable opponent on the rush and in puck battles. If he continues to develop his ability to play through contact, he has the tools to be an excellent power forward at the NHL level. His speed in transition keeps defensemen on their heels and he changes gears to create space.

Without the puck, he reads off his linemates well and finds open pockets of space. As a versatile offensive player, he knows when to use his physicality to create scoring chances or hold the puck to set up plays in the offensive zone. Although his injury history is a concern, projections indicate that Lindstrom could become a second-line center with the potential to score 70 points over a long period. He may take longer to develop, but a player with his toolbox is intriguing to many teams.

5. Zayne Parekh

D, Saginaw Spirit (OHL)

Previous ranking: 5

Parekh is the top offensive defenseman in the draft, without question.

He has all the makings of a game-breaker on the blue line. His statistics and model projections stand out, surpassing every other defenseman except Levshunov. He is clearly in the top tier, projected as a top-4 offensive catalyst with an over 80% chance of playing 200+ NHL games.

Right-handed offensive dynamos are rare and seldom available via trade. Parekh has all the qualities of a top-notch power-play quarterback and even-strength play driver, capable of scoring upward of 60 points per season in the NHL. He had one of the best draft-eligible seasons in CHL history, which should not be overlooked. His elite four-way mobility allows him to evade opponents and create space effortlessly.

His defensive game improved throughout the OHL season, and while it's not as robust as some might prefer, his skating and hockey sense equip him to defend effectively at the NHL level. His offensive instincts are innate and form the foundation of his play-driving offense. Combine his offensive instincts with demonstrated ability to move pucks to dangerous areas, create shooting opportunities and get pucks through, and Parekh presents an intriguing package. His ceiling is the highest among defensemen in the draft, confidently projecting him as an impactful top-4 defenseman over a lengthy NHL career.

6. Zeev Buium

D, University of Denver

Previous ranking: 7

One of the best defensemen in college hockey this season, Buium is confidently projected as a top-4 defenseman in the NHL. He consistently stands out by joining the rush, defending well in transition and excelling in man-to-man defense in his own zone. He's an elite two-way defenseman at the college level, and is likely the most efficient puck mover in this draft class. He shows elite hockey sense and seems to be two to three plays ahead, allowing him to make plays that other players can't.

Defensively, he maintains a tight gap, adapts to changes in pace and uses excellent edgework to avoid getting beaten in tight situations. His puck skills, combined with various head and shoulder fakes, enable him to create space and passing lanes. If there is a better one-on-one defenseman in this draft, I've yet to see him.

Buium elevates his play as games intensify and was one of Team USA's best players at the World Juniors as an underage player, in addition to being a crucial part of the NCAA champion Denver blue line. With all the qualities of a play-driving, momentum-shifting defenseman, Buium could be ready for the NHL by the end of the 2024-25 college season.

7. Tij Iginla

F, Kelowna Rockets (WHL)

Previous ranking: 8

One of the biggest risers in the draft class, the second-generation Iginla finds himself at No. 7 here with a well-rounded offensive package. A good skater with the agility to beat opponents in a straight line or change pace to catch defenders off balance, Iginla is a formidable presence in the offensive zone.

His natural offensive instincts and lethal wrist shot make him a serious goal-scoring threat both with and without the puck. His puck skill steadily improved this season, and he became a serious offensive threat. When he has possession, Iginla displays excellent puckhandling, strong protection, and a release that surprises goaltenders. He has a unique understanding of how to blend competitive physicality with elite skill, a dangerous combination.

Without the puck, he finds open spaces, forechecks tenaciously and exhibits the competitiveness his father was known for. Although he needs to improve his defensive play, his combination of skating, puck skills, tenacity and shooting ability should enable him to contribute consistently in a top-six role, with a ceiling of a top-line winger.

play

1:26

Meet the top prospects of the 2024 NHL draft

Meet the top prospects ahead of the 2024 NHL draft, including Macklin Celebrini, Artyom Levshunov, Cayden Lindstrom and Zeev Buium.

8. Anton Silayev

D, Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod (KHL)

Previous ranking: 6

At 6-7, this hulking defender played significant minutes for one of the KHL's better teams, a rarity at age 17, and this greatly enhances his projection. While he isn't expected to be dynamic in the NHL, his developing offensive skills suggest he could become a 35- to 40-point producer.

He skates very well, with good edgework and agility, which is evident in his defensive transitions and his movement along the offensive blue line. If he can add strength without losing mobility, he could become a high-minute defenseman in the NHL, capable of shutting down the opposition's best players.

His floor is higher than other top defensive prospects due to his proven ability to succeed in the KHL. Scouts are high on his skating ability, physicality and transition defense. There are concerns about his ability to read the play and make good puck decisions. He will need time to enhance his ability to facilitate breakouts, transition offense and read pressure.

9. Cole Eiserman

F, United States U18 (NTDP)

Previous ranking: 10

Eiserman is considered the best pure scorer in the draft, though opinions about him vary widely.

His impressive goal totals with the national team development program are hard to ignore, yet he often leaves scouts wanting more. With the best shot in the draft, his projection suggests he could score 35-40 goals per season if he reaches his ceiling. As a young player in the draft, he has more runway to improve his decision-making and develop a well-rounded offensive game. While habits can be fixed and skating will

continue to improve, scoring instincts and the ability to catch and release the puck from awkward positions are innate, and Eiserman excels in both areas.

There are times he tries to do too much with the puck, leading to turnovers and forced shots -- habits that can frustrate scouts and coaches. Despite this, his potential as a 40-goal scorer is undeniable if developed with patience. The model is confident he will produce at the NHL level in a top-six role. Eiserman has the talent to be an even-strength scorer, power-play asset and most importantly, a difference-maker.

10. Berkly Catton

F, Spokane Chiefs (WHL)

Previous ranking: 11

Catton is one of those "get you out of your seats" players. He's dynamic with the puck, reading defensive structures, slicing through coverage and a nightmare to defend in one-on-one situations. His ability to manipulate defenders with his speed and skill is pure brilliance. He's one of the most dangerous transition players in the draft, and even at 5-11, he's shown an ability to execute high-skill plays in traffic.

As is the case with any player of this skill set, he needs to pick his spots a little better to improve his offensive efficiency. The turnovers are not going to fly at the NHL level, and he'll need to develop his ability to create offense when he's not in transition. The same manipulation, stick skill and deception he uses on the rush needs to be applied in smaller areas. If he can take pucks off the wall and get to the middle, there is a better chance he hits his ceiling of a top-six, point producer.

He's already a dual threat with a promising arsenal of releases and shot types. Given that he understands how to put defenders in vulnerable postures, it is not a stretch to believe his offensive game will continue to improve. I'm not sure he's a center in the NHL, but the dynamic dual threat should be an entertaining player to watch for years.

11. Sam Dickinson

D, London Knights (OHL)

Previous ranking: 9

There is a lot to like about the big, fleet-of-foot defenseman, and he showed every bit of it on London's run to the Memorial Cup Final. Dickinson is one of the best all-around skating defensemen in the draft, and it is particularly evident in transition.

Offensively, he carries the puck with ease, evades defenders, cuts to the middle and creates scoring chances.

Defensively, he maintains a good gap, matches opponent's speed and finishes his checks. His shot is above average, but he is unlikely to overpower goalies at the NHL level. His skating and defensive abilities will carry him in the NHL. These are all attributes scouts and coaches love. It is easy to see why the model projects him to be a top-four defender with a puncher's chance of being a top-pairing guy.

The big question with Dickinson is decision-making on both sides of the puck. At the junior level, he's so evasive and above his peers in the skating department, that it masks some awareness issues. On the rush, he can skate himself into trouble and make life more complicated when a simpler play exists. In the defensive zone, he gets caught on the wrong side of players and makes questionable decisions with the puck after he wins a battle. He's a natural athlete who will play in the NHL, but time will tell if he can develop his awareness and reads to take advantage of his toolbox and become a difference maker.

12. Konsta Helenius

F, Jukurit (Liiga)

Previous ranking: 12

There are three things scouts and coaches love about players and Helenius excels at all three: awareness, compete level and versatility. Add in that his draft year production is in the category of Aleksander Barkov, Kaapo Kakko and Mikael Granlund, and you've got the makings of a fairly confident top-six player projection with a third-line floor.

Helenius is excellent defensively, and his play is immediately projectable to the NHL. Offensively, he is effective, not flashy. He retrieves pucks, enters the zone with possession, creates space with effective body positioning, and relies on his elite hockey sense to make sound decisions with the puck. The combination of his competitiveness, hockey sense and puck management make him a highly effective and reliable player in all three zones.

He lacks dynamic attributes that other players in the draft class possess, but he makes up for that his in his ability to be the engine of his line. He consistently drives play and showed flashes of offensive creativity, but Helenius does not have a standout offensive attribute. He's a well-rounded, 200-foot player who will be impactful on both sides of the puck at the NHL level. Scouts see some Mikael Backlund in him, which is high praise for the young Finn.

A second-line center/top penalty killer who can drive play at even strength is something every contender needs. That is Helenius. If his offense develops, there's a chance he fits the mold of a Joel Eriksson Ek or Elias Lindholm type of player.

13. Beckett Sennecke

F, Oshawa Generals (OHL)

Previous ranking: 14

Sennecke's rise felt like a meme stock this season. He had a quiet start where scouts liked his toolbox, and his production exploded in back half of the season and took another step in the playoffs. As the games got more important, he got better. The model values development over a season, and Sennecke's development curve is the exact prototype of a player whose stock benefited greatly from that. In November, he sat in the mid-40s in the rankings with a mediocre projection. In June, his most likely NHL outcome is a second-line player.

Offensively, it is difficult to find a weakness. He is a dual-threat menace in the offensive zone and dropped more jaws in one-on-one play than any other draft-eligible player in the OHL this season. His ability to force defenders into bad spots and manipulate his way around them is terrifying. Not only is he a threat in tight situations, but he's also a threat in transition. The puck follows him around the ice, and he slices defensive coverage with ease through excellent reads, decisive passing and a quality shot.

Off the puck, he uses his awareness to win pucks back. As the season progressed, he became a nightmare on the forecheck, routinely hemming players in and winning pucks back. For lack of a better word, he's a gamer. If he wants the puck, he's more than likely going to end up with it on his stick. He's not an elite skater, but he gets to where he needs to go, plays two steps ahead of his peers and makes his teammates better. There are teams that have him in their top five, and while that is a little high for me, it is easy to understand why scouts believe Sennecke could be a top-line player.

14. Carter Yakemchuk

D, Calgary Hitmen (WHL)

Previous ranking: 13

The right-handed defenseman is impossible to miss when he's on the ice. Standing 6-3, he had a better offensive season than every draft-eligible defenseman not named Zayne Parekh. He's got a bomb from the point that he utilizes well, and he should be a threat in the NHL. He's immediately noticeable on the ice because he activates consistently in the middle of the play, trying to make a difference.

Yakemchuk is an offensive difference-maker at the junior level and showed glimpses of excellent puck distribution. He dictates the power play from the point, but he'll need to develop the ability to facilitate offence to take advantage of his shot in the NHL. He manipulates defenders with excellent hands, fakes and sheer power. The lack of an explosive skating stride makes him easier to defend than a more elusive skater.

Defensively, he's a work in progress. His skating mobility needs to improve to be an effective transition defender in the NHL. Scouts and executives love his mean streak, as he hits to leave a mark. He gets caught puck-watching or stepping out of position to be physical. He lacks the skating step to catch opponents when they beat him in those situations, an area he will need to develop before making the jump.

The offensive skills and shot are undeniable. Yakemchuk's physical play, handedness and size will earn him more chances than similar players of smaller stature. There are tools, but there are warts. If Yakemchuk can improve his transition game through his skating and puck distribution, and understand how to use his size without running out of position, there is a chance he becomes a minutes-eating, second-pairing defenseman.

15. Trevor Connelly

F, Tri-City Storm (USHL)

Previous ranking: 19

The case of Trevor Connelly is one where much ink has been spilled. He is, without a doubt, the biggest wild card in the draft. He is a top-10 talent in the draft. Scouts love his hands, elusive skating and transition offense. When he's playing his best, he is elite offensively and gets fans out of their seats. He's all over social media feeds and highlight reels.

His offensive game is well-rounded and packs a dynamic punch that stands out in transition. He beats defenders using his speed, change of pace, excellent agility and elusiveness -- he's very difficult to contain. In tight areas, he dictates pace and keeps defenders on their heels, slicing through the tightest of areas. Like all players with his toolbox and raw talent, he has more than his fair share of frustrating turnovers in dangerous areas. His instincts are fantastic, but he'll need to understand when to attack and when to make the simple play to hit his ceiling in the NHL.

On talent and talent alone, the model projects him to be a top-six forward with a fair chance at a top-line role. There are only a few players with better offensive attributes than Connelly, and they will go in the top 10. He leaves a lot to be desired defensively but should get a healthy dose of defensive development at Providence College. He is unlikely to be a two-way player, and that's not his style. His style is flash, dash and pizzazz -- a player with a true "wow" factor.

Connelly has a lot of maturing to do on and off the ice. The selfish major and misconduct at the under-18 championship kick-started the collapse against Canada in the gold medal game. Quite a few teams have designated him as "do not draft" due the information revealed in a story from the Athletic. As one NHL head scout put it, "top-10 talent, bottom-10 character. Can't do it."

Ultimately, he has a lot of questions to answer if he is to convince a team to draft him in the first round. If he makes it, he could be the steal of the draft. In a league that can't get wax poetic enough about "high character" and aims to avoid the PR nightmare that accompanied Mitchell Miller, one wonders which team has the risk appetite to select a player with the potential to be a real difference maker. The definition of high-risk, high-reward for all the wrong reasons.

16. Liam Greentree

F, Windsor Spitfires (OHL)

Previous ranking: 17

Greentree has many attributes that scouts love -- he plays in the middle of the ice, sees the ice very well, is an adept playmaker and a throwback build in the style of a power forward. He ranks highly across the board from his physical game to his hockey sense to his high-end playmaking. He lacks in the most important, yet most easily improvable, area: skating. Were Greentree an average or slightly above average skater, we're likely talking about him as a potential top-10 pick because he's that good in the other areas of his game.

Greentree was effectively a one-man show on a rebuilding Windsor team. His production is likely 20% better on a team that doesn't finish near the bottom of the OHL standings. Not only is he a quality offensive driver, but he is also reliable defensively. He gets himself in good positions, wins puck battles and routinely outmuscles opponents all over the ice. He's fun to watch because you wonder how he is as effective as he is with his skating deficiencies.

Scouts and executives have expressed an admiration for his game. His puckhandling, vision and shot make him a problem to deal with in the offensive zone. There are a lot of tools to work with and wouldn't be the first prospect to improve his skating after being drafted. The problem with Greentree's skating is that it is enough of a concern in today's league that if it doesn't improve, he may not be able to keep up. Functionally big and skilled power wingers are hard to find nowadays and Greentree is exactly that. If he does add a step or two to his game, there's a real chance he's a top-six point producer at the NHL level.

17. Adam Jiricek

D, HC Plzen (Czechia)

Previous ranking: 16

The most polarizing defenseman in the draft would be closer to the top 10 had concerns about his knee injury been less prevalent. The 6-2, right-handed defenseman has been on scouting radars for years, allowing for his game to be put under the microscope. He's competitive, makes good puck decisions and activates in the play.

Losing nearly a full season of development during the most crucial years makes for a more difficult evaluation and model projection. Jiricek's numbers are very volatile, and the draft year sample is not large enough for a confident projection. The tools to be an impactful defenseman are there, with good reads, aggressive defensive posture, strong puck retrieval skills and physicality. He needs the skating, which obviously took a developmental hit when he tore his ACL, to improve by a step and half or two to take advantage of his other skills. His stride lacks the explosive and aggressive attributes to complement the rest of his game and will hinder his ability to utilize other skills if he can't keep pace.

He has a longer runway to develop because he's rawer and lost nearly a year of development to his injury. There is a real chance he becomes a second-pairing defenseman and an outside shot at the top pair. A team with multiple first-round selections or one that lacks a blue chip defensive prospect would do well to nab him in this range.

18. Michael Hage

F, Chicago Steel (USHL)

Previous ranking: 15

A big, right-handed center who is a dual threat in the offensive zone and showed one of the most promising development curves of the season? Check. Check. Check. A dynamic transitioner of the puck, Hage is a cerebral player who picks apart defensive schemes in transition with ease. He gets the puck off the wall to the dangerous areas of the ice better than most players in the draft.

The deceptiveness of his shot and the array of shots in his arsenal makes him equally dangerous with and without the puck. He can pull the puck and fire it through defenders as easily as he receives the puck and releases in a single motion. A heady player, Hage understands how to manipulate defenders and open shooting lanes up. If he can add a step to his pace, he will be able to take advantage of the compromising positions he puts defenders in.

There are many parts of Hage's game that scouts love, outside of his physical gifts. He wins puck battles, gets to the net front and makes his teammates better. He will develop hard skill by improving his ability to take contact and use it to his advantage. The details of his game are a strong point. He supports the puck well, and his ability to impact the game will only improve as his skating takes a step. The model sees him as a middle-six player with an outside chance at hitting his second-line ceiling.

19. Michael Brandsegg-Nygard

F, Mora IK (Hockey AllSvenskan)

Previous ranking: 20

An impressive physical package complements a modernized power game with projectable two-way play. The Norwegian forward is one of the most well-rounded players in the draft. The blend of grit, skill and in-tight scoring ability has scouts believing he is a Swiss army knife at the NHL level. There is belief that he could be the best two-way forward in the draft not named Celebrini.

Defensively, he may be the best forward in the draft. He is consistently in the right positions, makes excellent reads in defensive transition and reads off his teammates well to support the puck. His ability to retrieve pucks, win puck battles, and position his body in ways that make is nearly impossible to knock him off the puck will only improve has he physically matures and adds strength. He's unafraid to deliver a board-shaking body check to shift momentum, but does not put himself out of position to do so. He separates opponents from the puck, drives forward

and uses his powerful frame to cut to the middle or the net. Truthfully, if there is a weakness in his defensive game, I have yet to find it.

The drawback with Brandsegg-Nygard is that he isn't dynamic. His ceiling isn't as high as other players', but his floor is higher than nearly every forward outside of the top five. There is little doubt he will be a middle-six power forward who will be deployed to shut down opponent's best players and finish offensive opportunities in tight. As one scout put it, "He isn't the guy you build around, but certainly the type of player that every contender wants in the middle of their lineup."

20. Ryder Ritchie

F, Prince Albert Raiders (WHL)

Previous ranking: 18

He's flash and dash. He's not a straight-line player in that can beat you with speed; in fact, his skating needs some work. However, the speed at which he makes plays, reads defenders and squeaks by opponents is among the best in the draft class. What he lacks in speed, he makes up for in elusiveness. He's difficult to contain because he's able to handle the puck in tight areas, catch the defense off balance and execute passes before his opponents recognize the threat.

He's a high-ceiling player, and those players get harder to find the further you get from the top 10. Ritchie's ability to impact the game in transition was noticeable all season and is largely transferrable to the NHL. He understands how to attack off the rush, create scoring opportunities at the net front and have patience to hit the trailer in space. He dictates the pace of the play in transition and forces defenders to play to him, a task of which many are incapable. A dual-threat offensive player, Ritchie's shot must be respected, making it more difficult for goalies and defenders to cheat the pass. Ritchie is an equal opportunity creator and will attack in a variety of ways, using deft puck skill and elusiveness.

His lack of uptick in production is concerning, and when accounted for, the model sees him as a top-six forward with less confidence. A factor that cannot be overlooked is Ritchie is one of the youngest players in the draft class and has nearly a full year less of development than many of his peers. The runway is longer for him to physical mature, improve his strength and, with that, add some explosiveness to his skating.

21. Igor Chernyshov

F, Dynamo Moskva (MHL)

Previous ranking: 21

There is a lot to like about Chernyshov's game, starting with his play style. He's a modern power winger who beats opponents with soft hands or his ability to power through checks. No matter what style the game is played in, he creates chances because he's a well-rounded offensive player. More enticing, he's got the footspeed and physicality to be unpredictable on the rush.

A good playmaker, Chernyshov dominated the MHL with soft skill and appropriately adjusted his game in the KHL to use more physical, hard skill. He's got the hands to make moves in tight, making the powerful inside drive with a quick finish over the goalie a transferable skill in the NHL. He reads defenders well and understands how to catch them in bad posture to beat them cleanly and create scoring opportunities.

Chernyshov lacks an elite skill but has many tools to be an impactful power forward in the NHL. He needs to improve his first few strides to be more powerful, and his hands in tight areas, if he is to take advantage of the opportunities that his skill set and competitive nature afford him. It is rare to see a player at this age with unpolished soft and hard skills. There is a unique opportunity to work with a player and meld those skills into a toolbox that may prove lethal.

The model sees a middle-six forward, with a fair chance at a top-six winger spot to produce offense. However, if he doesn't stick offensively, his defensive details and physical game bring a different style and the model is confident in Chernyshov hitting the 200-game mark.

22. Nikita Artamonov

F, Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod (KHL)

Previous ranking: 23

You want speed? He's got it. You want skill? He's got it. You want consistent compete level? He's got that, too. Not only that, but Artamonov produced at the KHL level, a rare feat for a draft-eligible player. His development curve had a sharp uptick, going from a relatively unimpressive draft-minus-1 season to one of the best draft-year seasons the KHL has seen.

For a midsized player, Artamonov understands his body, positions it well and gets himself in positive positions on both sides of the puck. Off the puck, he supports well, forechecks with tenacity and applies pressure to disrupt the transition game. He's an excellent puck handler, a skill he can become over reliant on when he doesn't have his A game. Instead of overhandling and turning pucks off, development will help rely on his passing skill to simplify and use his teammates more effectively.

The playmaking and intelligence are his calling card. Artamonov understands defensive patterns and how to break through them to create advantageous positions with the puck. When he's at his best, he picks apart coverage, gets pucks to dangerous areas and creates scoring chances. His two-way game is more polished than most at his age, and should be a good fallback if his skating and offense don't click in the NHL. The production level indicates he's got top-six potential and a fair shot to be a long-term NHL player in a team's middle six.

23. Andrew Basha

F, Medicine Hat Tigers (WHL)

Previous ranking: 29

Well-rounded, elite compete level and high-end hockey sense -- that's Andrew Basha. Taking advantage of the hole that Cayden Lindstrom left in the lineup, Basha's production exploded this season. More importantly, his underlying numbers showed the production uptick was no fluke, and only adds to the belief he can be an effective two-way player in the NHL.

Basha demonstrated an ability to be an impactful transition player, using his pace, agility and a strong skating base to drive the puck through zones, draw defenders in and beat them off the wall with ease. He understands how to read the rush when he's not carrying the puck and finds open space to receive the puck. He needs to add changes of pace and understand when to slow the rush down to become less predictable with his on-puck plays.

There are questions about his ability to execute the plays his vision computes. It is clear he reads the play well, particularly on the defensive side. He positions himself well on the forecheck, uses his skating to close angles and quickly turns forced turnovers into scoring chances. To be an offensive threat at the NHL level, he'll need to improve his shot to prevent becoming too predictable as a playmaker. Failing that, he has the speed, sense and competitiveness to become an effective energy player in a third-line role who can chip in offensively.

24. Sacha Boisvert

F, Muskegon Lumberjacks (USHL)

Previous ranking: 25

Boisvert is a shooter. But his playmaking ability is underrated, largely because of questions about his ability to read the game. He is a deft passer, but he doesn't read coverage as sharply and leads many to believe he'll be a power forward.

Boisvert can really shoot the puck, and regardless of where he receives the puck, he is a threat. He gets pucks through layers with accuracy and has excellent hands to finish plays at the net front. There is reason to believe his deceptive release will transfer to the NHL level, but if it does not, his ability to finish plays in tight will surely make him worthy of attention.

Without the puck, Boisvert is still impactful. He tracks back well, disrupts transition play and delivers hard hits to separate players from the puck. There's a noticeable edge to his game that will only improve as he gets stronger. His skating posture is off balance, and he lacks the explosiveness required to create more space offensively. An improved skating stride with more power and better ability to read defensive coverage will allow Boisvert to take advantage of his NHL-ready shot and two-way game.

25. Emil Heming

F, TPS (Liiga)

Previous ranking: 24

Hemming is a fun topic of discussion among scouts. He's considered a safe pick by many, with a very high floor and lower offensive ceiling. The model sees him fitting in quite well as a third-line forward who can contribute offensively. Hemming is one of the few players in which the model predicts he has more than an 80% chance of playing 200 NHL games with less than a 10% chance of becoming a star -- true "safe" vibes.

He's a strong two-way player with a quality release that borders on being a separating skill. He can shoot off both legs, off balance and in many catch and release positions. He's a threat to score from distance, gets pucks through defenders and can score when he drives the net. He understands how to use contact to his advantage, wins puck battles, is in excellent spots off the puck and never cheats defensively. Those hard skills should easily translate into a bottom-six role, and he's likely ready for the AHL next season.

Offensively, there have been flashes of good puck distribution and hockey sense. However, he is reliant on his shooting ability and two-way play. If he can add a step to his skating, there is legitimate upside as a power forward who contributes 40-50 points per season, playing on a top penalty-killing unit and secondary power-play unit. The ceiling isn't as high as that of other players, but he is far more likely to play meaningful games.

26. Jett Luchanko

F, Guelph Storm (OHL)

Previous ranking: 26

Another beneficiary of a production uptick, Luchanko has all the makings of a dream bottom-six role. Given the offensive instincts and abilities he has shown this season, Luchanko has a better ability to drive play than many belive. He's an excellent two-way player, a rare feat for a very young player in a draft class. The combination of production, development and a later birthday give Luchanko a projection closer to middle six than bottom six.

Luchanko was the main benefactor of Matthew Poitras' move to the Bruins, allowing him to become the primary driver on both sides of the puck. His skating takes the pace of the game to another level, forcing his opponents to play at speeds in which they are uncomfortable. His ability to dictate the play is eye-opening, beating defenders clean with his speed while being a royal pain to deal with on the forecheck and backcheck. He is in the middle of everything that happens, showing off a detail-oriented game that includes awareness, shiftiness and skill that scouts love.

27. Aron Kiviharju

D, HIFK (Liiga)

Previous ranking: 27

A lot of ink has been spilled about the diminutive defenseman over the last few seasons. One of the first players to hit the scouting radar, Kiviharju has been under the microscope for nearly half a decade. He's recorded gaudy totals in the Finnish junior leagues and made a meaningful appearance as a double under-ager in 2022. He was impossible to ignore, and many thought he could be a lottery pick at some point.

He's struggled to develop offensively, and his overall development stagnated due to injury, playing only seven games in Liiga this season. He's got excellent instincts combined with high-end transition play. As an underage player, his ability to break the puck out is among the best in the draft class, attacking the middle and hitting players in stride. Through this, it is easy to envision a power-play quarterback as a facilitator in his future. He needs to learn to add the deception from his breakout plays to his offensive zone play to take the next step, offensively.

A 5-11 defenseman that lacks elite skating needs to be an excellent puck mover and defend at an elite level. If Kiviharju can develop his skating to be a plus attribute, he has the sense and foundation to be a quality transition defenseman in the NHL.

28. EJ Emery

D, United States U18 (NTDP)

Previous ranking: 28

Stop me if you've heard this before: a big, right-handed defenseman who skates well has scouts enamored. Add in elite transition defense, and EJ Emery has the makings of an impactful defenseman who can anchor a second pairing. Emery is a perfect complementary piece to an elite offensive defenseman who needs a reliable partner to augment their game.

Emery is a top transition defenseman, whose one-on-one defensive play stands out. He maintains excellent posture, effectively uses his stick to guide opponents, take away passes and poke pucks off opponent's sticks. In transition, he maintains good gap control, doesn't allow attackers to beat him to the outside and forces them to relinquish the puck. When the game needs a calming presence, the opponent's best players kept off the scoresheet and a quality defensive play, Emery is that player. From that perspective, he is a coach's dream. His defensive development this season has me believing he will continue to improve and likely become one of the best defenders in the draft class.

Offensively, there is not a lot. That isn't Emery's calling card. That is likely why the model doesn't project him to be more than a second-pairing defenseman. He doesn't activate in the play, makes simple breakout passes and doesn't get caught up ice. While that is generally concerning, as a lack of offense at the junior level leads to a less confident statistical projection, his ability to defend in all three zones, skate well, and win physical battles should make him a top-four defenseman in the NHL.

29. Teddy Stiga

F, United States U18 (NTDP)

Previous ranking: 31

Stiga's development curve this season boosted him in the model, and his overall package of tools is difficult to ignore. He lacks a truly elite skill, but he possesses high-end hockey sense and as coaches say, "he gets the job done." At 5-10, he lacks the size many teams prefer, but he is engaged and effective in all areas of the ice. Playing him must feel like a chess match where you're constantly two moves behind.

He doesn't get knocked off the puck easily; in fact, his puck protection skills are some of the best in the class. His passing game is underrated, finding teammates in open spaces with laser precision. He doesn't manipulate defenders to create space or lanes, and still manages to make things happen.

Without the puck, he wins battles, backchecks efficiently and create havoc on the forecheck. His instincts make him dangerous, given his ability to strip pucks and make a quick pass for a scoring chance. If Stiga can add another gear and learn to manipulate defenders, there's a real chance he becomes an effective middle-six NHLer.

30. Terik Parascak

F, Prince George Cougars (WHL)

Previous ranking: 22

His production is reminiscent of a player who should be selected in top half of the first round. His skating, like Jason Robertson's in 2017, worries scouts. He doesn't have the physical package of Robertson, but his production is much better. Parascak has all the capabilities to be a dual threat at the NHL level if his skating improves.

Parascak's instincts on and off the puck are high-end. He understands defensive schemes and how to penetrate them, but his skating holds him back from driving play. This is evident in transition, where he lacks the pace to attack the middle and relies on his instincts to find open space and arrive at the perfect time. When he gets the puck in space, he's terrifying. His catch and release shot, one-timer and ability to shoot opposite his momentum make him challenging for goalies to stop.

A team taking Parascak is getting a player with an elite hockey sense and many shots in his arsenal. If he can add strength and more power to his skating, there is a real chance he's a top-six, difference-maker in the NHL. He's unlikely to be a true play driver, but a complementary piece that can ignite a power play.

31. Charlie Elick

D, Brandon Wheat Kings (WHL)

Previous ranking: Honorable mention

A towering right-handed defenseman best known for his ability to defend. In every viewing, Elick punished opponents with heavy hits, separated players from the puck and showed astute transition defense. He's got two play styles: one is the calm, reliable defender who makes simple plays. The other is a full-blown physical menace who dictates the tone of the game. Both are effective and his ability to adapt to what the game calls for is impressive.

Elick could go much higher than this and it wouldn't surprise me. He is noticeably effective, consistently breaking up passes, taking away time and space, delivering thunderous hits and winning races to retrieve pucks with ease. On the breakout, he's shown flashes of creativity, always looking to make high-value plays and get pucks to good areas. He lacks the execution to make the plays his offensive vision sees, but the instincts are there, and he can develop his puck-moving ability.

The team that drafts Elick is likely getting a long-term NHL defender, with questions about his ceiling. Scouts believe he is a player you win with because he sets the physical tone and makes life difficult for skilled players. He is unlikely to provide anything but positive defense, but the steady, mobile defender is likely to tilt the ice in his team's favor with his transition defense and devastating physicality.

32. Cole Beaudoin

F, Barrie (OHL)

Previous ranking: Honorable mention

Combine an elite motor, good two-way play and a healthy dose of compete, Cole Beaudoin is simply a gamer. If I was giving each draft-eligible a superlative or vibe, Beaudoin's would be "gamer." The model is lower on him than this ranking, but the belief that he should become a bottom-six player that checks well, kills penalties and bring energy to the lineup.

A big, strong player who may be most effective on the wing at the NHL level, Beaudoin reads the play well, gets into traffic, wins nearly every puck battle and grinds opponents down. There is no OHL player who enjoys going into the corner with him -- and more than a few came out worse for wear. He's got the strength and desire to be an impactful physical player in the NHL. If his skating continues to improve, there is reason to believe he has a higher ceiling than current projections indicate. Teams will need a more patient approach with him, but added pace could see him jump into a third-line role as a player coaches trust implicitly.

33. Maxim Masse, F, Chicoutimi (QMJHL)

34. Dean Letourneau, F, Saint Andrew's College (HIGH-ON)

35. Harrison Brunicke, D, Kamloops (WHL)

36. Stian Solberg, D, Valerenga (Norway)

37. Ben Danford, D, Oshawa (OHL)

38. Marek Vanacker, F, Brantford (OHL)

39. Dominik Badinka, D, Malmo (Sweden Jr.)

40. Miguel Marques, F, Lethbridge (WHL)

41. Tanner Howe, F, Regina (WHL)

42. Alfons Freij, D, Vaxjo (Sweden Jr.)

43. Jesse Pulkkinen, D, JYP (Liiga)

44. Yegor Surin, F, Yaroslavl (MHL)

45. Leo Sahlin Wallenius, D, Vaxjo (Sweden Jr.)

46. Henry Mews, D, Ottawa (OHL)

47. Sam O'Reilly, F, London (OHL)

48. Lucas Pettersson, F, Modo (Sweden Jr.)

49. Justin Poirer, F, Baie-Comeau (QMJHL)

50. Cole Hutson, D, U.S. U-18 (NTDP)

51. Luka Misa, F, Mississauga (OHL)

52. Tomas Galvas, D, Olomouc (Czechia)

53. Julius Miettinen, F, Everett (WHL)

54. Tomas Mrsic, F, Medicine Hat (WHL)

55. Tarin Smith, D, Everett (USHL)

56. Matvei Gridin, F, Muskegon (USHL)

57. Adam Jecho, F, Edmonton (WHL)

58. Lukas Fischer, D, Sarnia (OHL)

59. John Mustard, F, Waterloo (USHL)

60. Adam Kleber, D, Lincoln (USHL)

61. Ryerson Leenders, G, Mississauga (OHL)

62. Brodie Ziemer, F, U.S. U-18 (NTDP)

63. Linus Eriksson, F, Djurgardens (Allsvenskan)

64. Eemil Vinni, G, JoKP (Finland)

ESPN LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221644 Websites

ESPN / Tij Iginla looking to follow his dad Jarome as top draft pick - ESPN

Ryan S. Clark

Books have been written about how being the middle child often comes with not receiving the reverence that's reserved for the oldest, or the amplified attention that's given to the youngest.

When it comes to how he's viewed in hockey, reverence and attention have become extremely familiar themes for Tij Iginla. Especially upon the realization that while there are hockey families, his family might be unlike any that hockey has ever encountered.

His father, Jarome, is a Hockey Hall of Famer. His oldest sibling, Jade, is the star of Brown University women's hockey program, which she has led in scoring for the past two seasons. His youngest sibling, Joe, was a first-round pick by the WHL's Edmonton Oil Kings and had five points in five games this season as a 15-year-old, creating the expectation that he could be the next of his name to have a bright future.

As for the middle Iginla child? There's a chance Tij, the Kelowna Rockets winger could be the next first-round pick in the family, and potentially get drafted even higher than his father, who was the 11th pick of the 1995 NHL Draft.

"That'd be kinda funny and pretty cool to go ahead of him," Tij Iginla said. "The top 10 itself would be a really cool achievement too. I try not to think about that stuff too much. But yeah, that'd be pretty cool to have the bragging rights for that."

Numerous mock drafts have Iginla going in the top 10. The fact he's even in the discussion of being a potential top-10 pick is exactly why the Rockets traded a first-round pick, a second-round pick and Grady Lenton to the Seattle Thunderbirds last June in exchange for Iginla.

Following the trade, Iginla went from a 16-year-old trying to find his way in the WHL to a 17-year-old who scored 47 goals and 84 points in 64 games to get the Rockets to the WHL playoffs, where he added another nine goals and 15 points in 11 postseason contests.

Whatever team drafts Iginla will do it with the belief that they're getting a player who will be a long-term top-six center and help them go from their current state to one of a franchise with legitimate championship aspirations.

That expectation will start once he hears his name at the NHL draft in Las Vegas and walks the stage to accept the jersey and handshakes from the front office that selected him. But there's added significance to

his selection: he has a chance to become a second-generation Black NHL player, which is believed to be a first.

It is believed that the NHL has only seen two generations of a family of color once before, with Ted Nolan, who is a member of the Ojibwe tribe, and his sons, Jordan and Brandon.

"I never really thought about it like that, but that's cool to hear," Jarome said. "Growing up, I remember as a young Black hockey player that it was important for me to see the Black players before me and over my career. I met a lot of young Black hockey players that I was fortunate enough to talk to at hockey schools. It was definitely an honor that some of them looked up to me and I was a role model for them like those guys were for me."

IGINLA WENT FROM six goals and 18 points in 48 games as a 16-year-old, to scoring eight goals and 20 points in his first 12 games in a Rockets sweater.

What was the big change?

"He was playing on a very deep team last year in Seattle as a young 16-year-old," Rockets coach Kris Mallette said. "He was not getting the minutes that he really needed or was able to get. That's the biggest difference."

It was never a question of ability for Iginla. It was more about finding the right opportunity. Scoring 26 goals and 48 points in 32 games as a 15-year-old for the RINK Hockey Academy U-18 team is why the Thunderbirds drafted him ninth in the WHL Bantam Draft in 2021.

Iginla's first full WHL season saw him play for a Thunderbirds team that was in contention to win the Memorial Cup. By the end of the regular season, they would have 16 NHL draft picks on their roster, with six of those prospects playing on the wing.

Even with limited playing time, there were items that the Rockets found enticing about Ignila's game.

"His release is sneaky fast," Mallette said. "We were able to watch it firsthand playing against Seattle and on video, you can see it, but when you see it in person, you see how quickly it gets from his stick to the net. You can't blink. You have to follow it because it can go really quickly."

Iginla was grateful to join the Rockets because it meant he would get a chance to spend more time with his family. Jarome and Kara Iginla decided to move to Kelowna because they wanted to live in a place they would enjoy, while also being in a location that would allow their children to continue their hockey development.

"As parents, we've loved having him back home," Jarome said. "It's been really enjoyable for us. It was good for him last year to move away to Seattle. It was a good challenge. It was hard for him. He didn't play a lot and they were a good team. But he grew in other areas."

Living with his parents provided Iginla with a chance to get in even more work beyond what he did at practice. Jarome said the family has a shooting area along with a separate space to work on stickhandling that was designed for all of their kids to get in extra skill development.

"We put in a good hockey facility at the house so our kids can do that nightly," Jarome said. "It's a chance to keep growing that most people don't have, especially billets."

Having a place to get in extra work while going to a team that could provide him the playing time he needed has allowed Iginla to find success in his draft year.

While Iginla received more playing time, he said what specifically allowed him to finish sixth in the WHL in goals was being trusted to handle the demands of being a top-line forward. He played against other top lines and defensive pairings, while logging minutes on the Rockets' top power-play unit.

Iginla scored 11 power-play goals for a Rockets power-play that finished ninth, while his eight game-winning goals were tied for seventh. His nine playoff goals were sixth in the WHL playoffs, though he played 11 postseason games while everyone else in the top 10 in playoff goals appeared in more than 15.

"When it's your draft year, everyone is thinking about the draft and you're comparing things like points," Tij Iginla said. "But what you're trying to do is stay focused and not worry too much about that. You just try to put it into perspective, too. The draft is obviously huge, but it's one year. It's your 17-year-old year and I don't just want to [just] have a great draft year. I want to have a great NHL career."

That level of perspective partially comes from having a dad who went through the process nearly 30 years ago.

Jarome said his draft year was "exciting but stressful" because it's a step closer toward that lifelong dream of the NHL, while being constantly judged. He said having scouts at every game made every day matter, which can be a lot.

"Outwardly, it does not seem to be too much pressure," Jarome explained. "I know inwardly, there are those certain days when you emphasize how you didn't play well or you didn't have a good game. We try to support them. We do have a lot of stories of when I went through it. I am sure they get sick of it! But there are times when it does get hard."

CALEB AND SETH JONES. Mathieu and Pierre-Olivier Joseph. Anthony and Chris Stewart. Gemel and Givani Smith. Malcolm and P.K. Subban. These are all examples of Black families that have played in the NHL, and it appears that the Iginlas could be the next, while also being the first Black father and son to play in the league.

After Willie O'Ree became the first Black player in NHL history back in 1957, the league still needed more time before it saw others. Mike Marson was next, and he didn't make his debut until 1974. Grant Fuhr, Dirk Graham and Val James were arguably the most prominent Black players throughout the 1980s.

Yet it was in the 1990s when the NHL saw a sizable surge in Black players. There had been 17 Black players who made their NHL debut prior to 1990. Twenty-three Black players entered the NHL from 1990 through 1999.

Jarome was part of a wave that included Donald Brashear, Anson Carter, Mike Grier, Jamal Mayers and Kevin Weekes. He also became one of the faces -- and for a time, the face -- of the NHL. Arguably the strongest example of his reach came when he was selected as the cover athlete for EA Sports' NHL 2003, becoming the first Black player to grace the game's cover. Nearly 20 years passed before P.K. Subban became the second Black player on the cover, when he received the honor with NHL 19.

Iginla also became the first Black player in NHL history to score more than 600 career goals, more than 600 career assists and 1,000 career points.

In 2020, Jarome joined O'Ree and Fuhr as the third Black player to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

"That's something I have grown to appreciate as I got older," Tij said of his father's Hall of Fame career. "When I was a kid just watching, I knew he was a good player, but I never thought about things like that. But with as many people as he's been able to inspire because of what he's done is pretty cool."

The 2000s saw 27 Black players make their NHL debut, including Evander Kane and Kyle Okposo, who played against each other in the 2024 Stanley Cup Final. But the majority of that group -- along with the players who debuted in the 1990s such as Iginla -- have since retired, and are now playing an instrumental role in ushering what stands to be the first set of second-generation Black players.

It's an era that could start with Iginla, and continue with others such as Trevor Daley's son, also named Trevor, along with Georges Laraque's son, Marcus.

Trevor Daley Jr., who is 15, just finished playing for the Florida Alliance AAA program where he scored 75 goals and 142 points in 61 games, whereas Marcus Laraque, who is also 15, is already 6-foot-4 and scored 13 goals and 40 points in 28 games for his club team in Edmonton.

As for the elder Daley, the 40-year-old defenseman last played in the NHL during the 2019-20 season. Playing 1,058 NHL games provided Daley with the longevity that allows him to further appreciate seeing sons follow their fathers. Daley recalled when he was a rookie with the Dallas Stars during the 2003-04 season and was teammates with future Hall of Fame center Pierre Turgeon, who would have his son, Dominic, around the team.

Daley's career would see him join the Detroit Red Wings for his three final NHL seasons. His first season with the Red Wings saw him reunite with a familiar face as Dominic Turgeon played six games for the club that season.

Playing with two generations of Turgeon's made Daley joke that he knew it was time for him to get out of the game. But to see a son follow his father into the NHL was something Daley thought was special. To see that the Iginla's could follow a similar path while knowing the NHL has a chance to see more Black families do the same is something Daley said could help grow the game.

"I have always been so appreciative of the ones before me that I never really thought that a second generation could be coming in," the elder Daley said. "I never looked at it that way and always looked at the guys before me. The fact we can say 'second generation' and having Jarome's kid coming up is pretty cool even for me to soak all that in, to realize we know we have 'Jarome No. 2' coming in."

ESPN LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221645 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / For several reasons, the Oilers aren't done contending yet

Justin Bourne

If the Florida Panthers had lost Game 7 and let the 2024 Stanley Cup go north of the border, they may have been remembered similarly to the Sedin-era Vancouver Canucks, or the Thornton/Marleau-era San Jose Sharks. They would've been among the great teams that won a pile of games and competed like hell in the playoffs, yet got tossed on top of the heap of those that ultimately couldn't get it done.

I say that because it's hard to see Florida getting back into the same position – the Stanley Cup Final — for a third straight year without some very good fortune. It's tough for myriad reasons, but one of those is that they've got some top-end players who are now unrestricted free agents this summer. Fitting them all under the cap or outright losing them is going to result in something their counterpart in Tampa Bay has experienced several times over — if you're good enough for long enough, you're forced to siphon off some talent. And frankly, a team like Florida that succeeds with depth and team play needs every bit of talent more than those with multiple elite stars. It seems likely they'll take a small step back in a league where the margins are thin.

With the Edmonton Oilers, though, you can't make a claim that their push to become champions is even close to over, as they continue their forward progress in the post-season. In 2022 they went to the conference final before losing to the eventual Cup champs, last year they went two rounds before again losing to the eventual Cup champs, and this season they took it the distance before, again, losing to the Cup champs.

There's plenty of talk about how losing teaches teams to win, and there's evidence that old maxim holds some truth. In the five years prior to Vegas' Cup they went to the Stanley Cup Final once and the conference final twice more. Tampa Bay did the same over their five year pre-Cup span, one Cup Final and two conference finals. Colorado played seven playoff rounds over their three pre-Cup years, including a conference final.

It feels like that's the part of the journey the Oilers are at — over their past three seasons they've played nine rounds of playoff hockey, paid their post-season dues, and learned some lessons the hard way. They've lost the nail-biters to the champions, most recently escaping to the dressing room as red-and-gold confetti chased their blue shoulders.

There's only confetti when you're close, though, and it's not so challenging to see the Oilers as the best in the West in 2024-25.

Hockey is a team sport where the "team" with the most elite guys finds their way through. It's been said before, but I'll say it again: the greats tend to find their way to a Stanley Cup save for a few exceptions. And nobody, potentially ever, is as great as Connor McDavid, and he's just 27. Leon Draisaitl is one of the five best players in the NHL, one of the best playoff performers of this generation, and yet he failed to score in a Cup Final where his team fell a goal short. He is just 28, and who would bet against him coming back and being the unstoppable playoff performer we've almost always seen?

The Oilers have all of those players who drove them here locked up. Zach Hyman, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Evan Bouchard, Mattias Ekholm, Stuart Skinner, and most of the next layer of the supporting cast. They'll have work to do to replicate the depth that became a strength, but every team faces some turnover, the cap is going up, and there's no reason Edmonton shouldn't be able to capably fill the bottom of the roster.

They learned a lot about themselves, including a few massive takeaways:

1. When the chips are down, they can, in fact, trust Stu Skinner. From Game 4 on in every series he was lights out, which should give the big 25-year-old immense confidence whenever anything doesn't go perfectly in the future.

2. Evan Bouchard can be trusted defensively. Not only is he an absolute force offensively, but he could also handle the big pressure moments and still be an asset. He came close to scoring multiple times in Game 7, and while he wasn't necessarily perfect on the defensive side, he was as good as anyone else who plays minutes against top guys.

3. The whole team can lock it down and defend. They are not one dimensional, as Florida had a hell of a time scoring the past four games, in large part because they couldn't get to the net.

And,

4. They can hang physically. Maybe a healthy Evander Kane helps out here next year, but generally the Oilers are not the group that gets intimidated and shies away when the going gets rough.

In sum, they have shown they can handle the rigors of real playoff hockey. They have numerous tools aside from their otherworldly offence creation and special teams, and none of those strengths appear to be going away any time soon. They look less like a team that had one last gasp before it all falls apart, and more like a team poised to win a Presidents' Trophy and be the one to beat.

Of course, there's always a ton of uncertainty when you head into a summer, and of course, the Oilers do have numerous UFAs. Nothing is guaranteed, nothing is promised.

But the framework of a team that can take another run is well in place, and so more than ever, the pressure is on the front office, which will undergo some change this off-season as Ken Holland hands off the reins to Jeff Jackson.

As low of a point as today may be for the franchise, the stars, and their fans, this isn't the end. It's OK to feel the hurt and disappointment today, but this group will play in confetti games again. There will be a next time. And when it comes, don't be surprised if it's the blue-and-orange chasing some other colours down a hallway towards these feelings of darkness.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221646 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Healthy habits help Canucks' Quinn Hughes reach new heights

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — Starving for success, Quinn Hughes changed what he eats.

After a visit last summer to a Denver doctor who specializes in nutrition, Hughes stopped consuming alcohol during hockey season, eliminated grains and reduced other sources of gluten from his diet, avoided processed foods and tried to eat natural foods. Any beef he ate was grass-fed.

Hughes ate more meals and fewer snacks. Pretzels had been a favourite.

The Vancouver Canucks captain didn't talk about his diet at all during the National Hockey League season, and he isn't willing to talk much about it now. Claiming his diet does not have a name and isn't as simple as gluten-free, Hughes explained he simply wanted to improve his body to better withstand the rigours of the NHL season.

He played all 95 regular-season and playoff games for the Canucks.

"I was just so disappointed how the last couple of seasons had ended from a team perspective," he told Sportsnet in a telephone interview from his home in Michigan. "It was nothing crazy, but I learned a lot about my body. It's not necessarily the most fun thing to do. But if you're trying to be one of the best in the league, I think that's something that you have to do — the sacrifice I wouldn't have anticipated when I was 19 or 20."

Now 24, Hughes played so well this season that the defenceman should become the Canucks franchise's first Norris Trophy winner when the NHL hands out the last of its individual awards Thursday in Las Vegas ahead of the draft that begins the next night.

Hughes is a first-time Norris finalist, up against 2022 winner Cale Makar and 2020 recipient Roman Josi. But no NHL defenceman was better this season than Hughes.

His 92 points led all blue-liners and only six defencemen in league history have had more assists in one season than the 75 helpers Hughes accrued. He was also plus-38, and on the ice for 57.2 per cent of Canucks shot attempts and 57.7 per cent of scoring chances. Vancouver outscored opponents 92-55 with Hughes at five-on-five. And the five-foot-10 American did all this as a first-year captain amid the searing glare of a Canadian market. The Canucks won the Pacific Division with 109 points and pushed the Stanley Cup runner-up Edmonton Oilers to Game 7 of the playoffs' second round.

"When I got here, he said, 'I'm tired of losing. What have we got to do?'" Canucks coach Rick Tocchet told Sportsnet. "When a guy says that... that was our first conversation. 'I'm tired of losing and we've got to get trust back in this room.' And he delivered. He'll even tell you he wants to be a better captain next year. That's the maturation of a star player.

"I knew he had changed his diet. He was telling our chef, 'I want this, I want that.' Huggy is into anything that will give him an edge. He's always looking for an edge. He made those changes. He even stepped up his recuperation program after games. Maybe two years ago, he put his suit on and took off; that's what young kids do. But now he's got to spend 10 minutes in the weight room, and get a deep stretch, massage. That's great for the organization because all of a sudden other young guys come in — (Nils) Hoglander and (Vasily) Podkolzin — and see their captain doing this and think they better do it, too."

Tocchet last month was named the Jack Adams Award winner as NHL coach of the year. Canucks star Elias Pettersson was runnerup to Jacob Slavin for the Lady Byng, and Vancouver goalie Thatcher Demko is a finalist with Connor Hellebuyck and Sergei Bobrovsky for the Vezina Trophy to be handed out Thursday.

The NHL will also announce winners for the Hart Trophy, Ted Lindsay Award and Calder Trophy.

"I think over the course of the last three, four years, I've developed," Hughes said. "I think after my second year, I was really upset with... just hearing about how I wasn't good enough defensively or that I wasn't a true No. 1 (defenceman). I can remember all the people that said that.

"I'm not trying to prove them wrong but, you know, it's not easy hearing those things. For me, it was always internal to see how good I can personally get. But I did want to be better and... I'm proud of that."

"Quinn is as driven as anybody," Canucks president Jim Rutherford said. "It's about being the best at what he does at his position on the ice. But he's also driven by team success, and that's part of the reason that he is the team captain. Team success is just as important to him as individual success. When I got here, he was already a terrific player, so it's not like he had to do a lot of work to put himself into a role of being a No. 1 defenceman. But his game has matured into an all-round game, playing a lot of minutes every game and being a dominant player. He has matured into a special player and leader."

Although Hughes won't talk much about his diet, he does talk about his peers in what has become a brilliant era for young, dynamic defencemen in the NHL.

He was second to the Colorado Avalanche's Makar, 25, in Calder Trophy balloting by the Professional Hockey Writers Association when the defencemen were rookies in 2019-20.

The New York Rangers' Adam Fox, 26, won the Norris Trophy in 2021. The wave of elite, young defencemen includes the Boston Bruins' Charlie McAvoy, 26, and 24-year-olds Miro Heiskanen of the Dallas Stars, Rasmus Dahlin of the Buffalo Sabres, and Evan Bouchard of Edmonton.

Thursday finalists for the Calder Trophy include 21-year-old defenceman Brock Faber of the Minnesota Wild and 20-year-old Luke Hughes, Quinn's youngest brother, of the New Jersey Devils. They will be runners-up to Chicago Blackhawks star Connor Bedard of North Vancouver.

"Yeah, I think that definitely drives me," Quinn Hughes said of his peer group. "I mean, I want to be up there with those guys. Looking at Makar having a Norris and Fox having a Norris, being the same age as those guys, I wanted to try to drive my game where I could possibly be in that category. I have great respect for all those guys. They are tremendous players and... it pushed me. But I've also pushed myself. I hope I can be fortunate enough to win, but in saying that, there's so many great defencemen in the league that I truly feel humbled to be up there."

Asked the most important thing he has learned since making his debut for the Canucks as a 19-year-old straight out of the University of Michigan, Hughes said: "I just think about how hard it is. (The NHL) is incredibly hard. You have to work on your mental game, you have to work on your body, you have to work on your mindset heading into games, you have to work on different skills each season that you can build upon. I truly think that it's a body of work. I just think about how much better I've gone from age 20 to now. Hopefully from 24 to 28, I can continue on that path."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221647 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Scout's Analysis: Why Ivan Demidov is the No. 2 prospect at the NHL Draft

Jason Bukala

After the San Jose Sharks step to the podium at the Sphere in Las Vegas Friday and select forward Macklin Celebrini first overall, the NHL Draft has the potential to take some twists and turns in the early stages.

My personal draft list has Russian forward Ivan Demidov (SKA St. Petersburg) securely ranked second. I've been high on Demidov dating back to the fall. His combination of speed, skill, and power are elements I believe will translate to a top end scorer in the NHL.

The Chicago Blackhawks hold the second pick. They might value Demidov the way I do, or they could go in a different direction by selecting right-shot defenceman Artyom Levshunov (Michigan State, NCAA). Is there a chance they trade down from number two? I suppose, but only if they see equal value in the next seven or eight prospects on their draft board.

And is there any chance the Blackhawks pass on Demidov at second overall and then the Ducks pass on him as well at three?

Time will tell. Demidov is one of the early wild cards in this draft, but I'm sticking with him as the best option for the second overall pick. Here's my breakdown of Demidov, supported with some clips from this season.

DECEPTION

Some goal scorers have a "grip it and rip it" approach -- think Steven Stamkos one-timing pucks from the weak side flank on the power play -- while others are more calculated at times. Demidov is the latter.

Demidov is an elite offensive talent with elite hockey sense in high danger scoring areas. He can be deceptive with the puck on his stick when he walks off the wall, or makes plays from below the goal line.

Here's an example of Demidov stepping to the middle of the ice and using the defender as a screen to score a goal through traffic:

POWER

Demidov is plenty strong for the NHL game. He's been measured at 6-foot-and-a-half, and 192 pounds. I've discussed his puck touch and hockey sense going on offence, but there isn't a lot of time and space available in the NHL. More often than not players have to power through checks to create scoring chances. Demidov is difficult to check in motion and in the trenches.

Teams around the world at all levels are using the neutral zone flip pass as a way to generate speed and scoring chances in transition. The following clip illustrates Demidov "loading" in his zone to generate speed, corralling a puck in the neutral zone, and powering to the net.

READ, REACT AND EXPLODE

Today's brand of pro hockey is being played quicker and faster than it ever has before. Players who don't provide some sort of "burst" exiting their defensive zone to go on offence (with and without the puck on their stick) are a dying breed. Players have to read the play and react to what they identify either as a need to defend, or to attack offensively and then explode to the open ice to create scoring chances.

Here's an example of Demidov out-racing his opponents up ice after identifying his teammate had control of the puck:

Almost all offensive talents will frustrate coaches on occasion with a lack of detail off the puck and on the back-check. Players like Aleksander Barkov and Anze Kopitar are a coach's dream because they are rare talents who score and check consistently.

I have to say, Demidov rarely disappointed me with his defensive awareness as I went through the process of breaking down dozens of his games this season. But there is always a coachable moment to be found somewhere in the process.

Here is an example of one of them:

Setting your feet in glide motion from the offensive zone face-off dot all the way back to your zone is never a good look. Like I said, this very rarely happened in any of the games I broke down, but it certainly did in this sequence.

The goal against was scored from the flank, but Demidov needed to be more engaged with the opponent off the puck who was coasting to the middle of the ice hunting a scoring chance.

AWARENESS AND EXTENSION

Extending plays along the wall is a choice. Some players are programmed to battle more than others and Demidov's combination of skill and will is noticeable.

In the following clip he takes on two checks to extend a play down low in the zone. He then travels to the crease looking for a tip or rebound as his group works the cycle from low to high. By the time he gains possession behind the net he makes a sneaky backhand pass that results in a tuck for his team:

When players are in the midst of making a line change, they have very little time to adjust to what's happening as their blades hit the ice. They have to read the play ahead of time from the bench.

In the following clip, Demidov enters the play after a line change. He's defending the middle of the ice and provides back pressure assisting his defenceman. Once the puck is turned over and ends up on his stick, he is off to the races. He has a plan through the neutral zone to dish the puck to his winger on the flank and drive the middle lane to the crease.

Note: I recognize the shot from distance was a muffin that should have been stopped, but the plan and execution from Demidov is what stands out:

Demidov has been in North America for several weeks, based out of Florida with his agent Dan Milstein and the Gold Star Hockey Agency. He skated in front of all 32 NHL clubs at Gold Star's prospect camp last week in Fort Lauderdale.

Demidov has one year left on his contract with SKA and is motivated to come to North America to play in the NHL sooner than later.

For all of these reasons, he's the No. 2 ranked prospect on my list and a player who I envision contributing in the NHL at the beginning of the 2025-26 season.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221648 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Three major contract extensions that could be signed this off-season

Ally Chesham

Rejoice hockey fanatics, for the start of NHL free agency is almost upon us.

Come July 1 at noon (ET), the league's landscape for the 2024-25 season will begin to take shape as this summer's various restricted and unrestricted free agents land new contracts and potentially new teams.

And while the overwhelming majority of signing announcements this off-season will involve players who are free agents as of present, we can expect at least a handful of them to involve those who are actually still under contract. Because, also beginning on July 1, any players heading into the final season of a multi-year contract become eligible to sign an extension.

If we zero in on that specific group, we find there are some major names in the mix. Three in particular that stand out: Leon Draisaitl, Mitch Marner and Igor Shesterkin.

Why these three? Well, as was just established, each of these high-impact NHL superstars is about to enter into the final season of the contracts they signed with their current teams, which will leave them as UFAs upon expiry in 2025. And, more interestingly, despite the unique circumstances surrounding each of their individual futures, they all have the potential to reset the financial market for their respective positions — with Shesterkin being a goaltender, Marner a winger and Draisaitl a centre (though, yes, we know he plays a good chunk on the wing).

Considering the salary cap increase of $4.5 million for the 2024-25 season (setting the upper limit at $88 million) and the expectation that it will maintain a similar climb in subsequent years, the league finds itself heading into some uncharted territory when it comes to the amount of money star players will be able to command moving forward.

Now, before we get too ahead of ourselves, it is worth remembering there is a chance that none of Draisaitl, Marner or Shesterkin ink a new deal in advance of their current one expiring. But, in all three situations, the team — be it the New York Rangers, Toronto Maple Leafs or Edmonton Oilers — and their star player can decide to get a new deal done this summer to avoid said player becoming a UFA next summer and potentially testing the market. One would think each of those teams is relatively motivated to avoid that happening. Though, you never know.

From a player's perspective, meanwhile, there are likely additional variables to consider when making the personal decision of signing an extension or not, and if the decision is yes, what that extension then looks like. We will delve deeper into those variables by examining the current situations of Draisaitl, Marner, and Shesterkin individually.

Mind you, we will be discussing a lot of hypotheticals here. As these three players near extension eligibility, the lone statement we can make with near certainty is to not expect any of them to take a discount.

So, keeping that in mind, here's a look at what these contract extensions could look like and what they would mean against an increasing salary cap.

Leon Draisaitl, Edmonton Oilers

Age: 28 (UFA at 29)

Current contract: Eight years, $68 million ($8.5 million AAV)

Time of signing: August 2017

Cap hit percentage at time of signing: 11.33

With a player of Draisaitl's calibre, it's safe to assume that most of the power rests in his hands. You afford yourself a certain degree of freedom and flexibility when you are a perennial 40-goal, 100-point scorer. If he feels staying with the Oilers is what's right for his future, the team will likely be happy to accommodate in order to keep him and superstar teammate Connor McDavid together.

According to a recent report from Frank Seravalli of Daily Faceoff, the Oilers have already begun discussions with Draisaitl's camp about a new deal. A good sign all around — but the question with Draisaitl is how much he will push his limit.

Oilers' Draisaitl holds himself to 'extremely high standards'

If he extends this summer, there is a chance he will become the league's highest-paid player in terms of average annual value, regardless of whether on a short- or long-term deal. If so, that would likely only hold true until his aforementioned superstar teammate, McDavid, comes up for an extension the following summer.

On another eight-year deal, Draisaitl would comfortably lock in for the long term based on what he has shown the Oilers — and everyone else — he is reliably capable of. If he opts to go the four-year route, like Auston Matthews, he would leave room for another potentially hefty contract at the age of 32. The inherent risk involved there is if his production considerably slows over the next few years, future earning dollars from a long-term deal could have been left on the table. In other words, Draisaitl would be betting on himself, which seems like a reasonably safe thing to do.

Honing in on numbers specifically for Draisaitl, we can conceivably place him in the $13-14 million AAV neighbourhood with the rising salary cap. If we look at recent signees at his position that also became the highest contract in the league at the time, the ball-parking gets a little easier. Matthews signed his four-year deal last summer, which carries a AAV of $13.25 million and accounted for 15.87 per cent of the Maple Leafs' cap at the time of signing. The previous summer, Nathan MacKinnon signed an eight-year extension with the Colorado Avalanche. With an AAV of $12.6 million, that contract took up 15.27 per cent of the team's cap. And when McDavid signed his eight-year, $100 million contract in 2017, the ensuing $12.5 million AAV was an impressive 16.67 per cent of Edmonton's cap.

This is why it feels reasonable to believe that whether Draisaitl signs a four- or eight-year contract extension, he could pull in somewhere around $14 million per year, or more. This would account for at least 15.9 per cent of Edmonton's cap at the time of signing — and 15.2 per cent in the first year of the contract should the cap rise by another $4 million as projected.

Mitch Marner, Toronto Maple Leafs

Age: 27 (UFA at 28)

Current contract: Six years, $65.4 million ($10.903 million AAV)

Time of signing: September 2019

Cap hit percentage at time of signing: 13.38

When it comes to Marner, there's a lot less confidence at present about the player's future with his current club. Will the Maple Leafs look to trade their multi-talented — yet sometimes maligned — star winger? With a no-move clause in hand, Marner has full control over whether or not he allows Toronto to send him elsewhere.

Predictably, the ever-voracious NHL rumour mill suggests several teams would be greatly interested in obtaining the services of this impactful offensive forward. In the case that Toronto was to receive an offer that they felt made sense and Marner could be sold on, we would probably see some kind of sign-and-trade take place.

Why this offseason is crucial for Marner's future with Maple Leafs

"Mitch controls a lot of this whole thing," Treliving told Pierre LeBrun of The Athletic earlier in June. "If there's a way to make our team better, we're going to do it. But we're certainly not going to make a trade just so we can pound our chest and say, 'Look, we're different.'"

So, if a trade doesn't happen, there are two other straightforward ways for this to play out. Either the Maple Leafs ultimately choose to extend him at some point, maintaining their core, or Marner stays in Toronto, finishes out the remainder of his contract and then departs in free agency next summer.

While speculation looms about the potential of his future with Toronto, what remains largely unclear at this point is what Marner actually wants. You would assume the hometown guy would hope to stay, but maybe he would prefer a fresh start somewhere under less market and media scrutiny considering the heat he's been subject to.

With the possibility the Maple Leafs and Marner could still come to an agreement on an extension — though maybe not the most likely outcome — the first place to look for a comparable contract is that of his teammate and fellow winger, William Nylander.

Nylander signed an eight-year, $92 million extension with the Maple Leafs this past January. His $11.5 million AAV made up 13.77 per cent of the team's cap at the point of signing. If we stick to that percentage for Marner on the upcoming $88 million cap, he could be looking at just over $12 million, which would then account for 13 per cent of a $92 million cap the following year.

But does Marner want more? If he went to a team — either via trade or free agency — that didn't already have so much money tied up in a handful of star players then perhaps he could command an even larger raise from his previous contract.

Igor Shesterkin, New York Rangers

Age: 28 (UFA at 29)

Current contract: Four years, $22.67 million ($5.66 million AAV)

Time of signing: August 2021

Cap hit percentage at time of signing: 6.95

After examining two forwards, it's time to discuss the goaltender in the mix. Once established by Carey Price and Sergei Bobrovsky, could Shesterkin be the next netminder to set a new bar for No. 1 goalies? It seems quite likely.

The 2022 Vezina Trophy winner's performance over the past several seasons has clearly set him up to be the highest paid goaltender come his next deal. As per Mollie Walker of the New York Post, "there's reason to believe that Shesterkin's camp is aiming for as high as $12 million a year."

Why Rangers will have to sell Shesterkin on honest and realistic number

While some teams would balk at the idea of tying up that much money in a goaltender, even if they are a starter, maybe the Rangers won't. Maybe the back-to-back Stanley Cup Final appearances by the Florida Panthers has proven it can be a worthwhile investment. Bobrovsky is currently in the fifth year of a seven-year, $70 million contract with a $10 million AAV. And that contract has received its fair share of criticism at times.

Shesterkin's own performance in this year's playoffs — leading the Rangers to the Eastern Conference Final — only served to solidify his value to the team. His fan-favourite status with the Big Apple faithful certainly doesn't hurt either. It seems if it were up to them, Rangers fans would be telling management to pay Shesterkin whatever he wants, as his popularity has only continued to grow amongst the strongly opinionated and vocal group.

Bobrovsky signed his contract as an unrestricted free agent in 2019, and at that time it accounted for 12.27 per cent of Florida's cap. Price's eight-year, $84 million extension with the Montreal Canadiens in 2017 accounted for 14 per cent, with an AAV of $10.5 million, while Andrei Vasilevskiy's eight-year, $76 million extension with the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2019 was only 11.66 per cent of the cap, with an AAV of $9.5 million. If Shesterkin is seriously targeting a $12 million salary, that would account for 13.6 per cent of the team's cap at the time of contract's signing and 13 per cent of a subsequent $92 million cap. In that context, maybe it does make a bit of sense…

Yes, signing a goaltender to a long-term deal, especially one with a double-digit AAV, is undeniably risky business. Shesterkin is approaching his 30s and some natural regression with age isn't out of the realm of possibility. But as of right now, he is a player they simply need in order to remain a contending team. Taking on that kind of risk might be the price they have to pay in order to avoid any kind of riff that could lead the netminder to pack up his talents and try out free agency instead.

When speaking to the media at the conclusion of the Rangers' season, Shesterkin jokingly replied, "I'm sorry, I don't speak English," when asked if he would be considering a long-term contract.

Regardless of how long his extension ends up being, if it does see him make $12 million per year or any amount close to that, he'll be doubling his previous salary and establishing a new league ceiling for the position. Can you really ask for better than that?

To summarize the long-winded thoughts above in the simplest terms available: Draisaitl, Marner and Shesterkin are going to get paid — a lot. It is inevitable. And against a rising cap, they could all begin to reset the post-pandemic market.

*All salary and cap information obtained via CapFriendly

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221649 Websites

TSN.CA / Morning Coffee: Stanley Cup Final Game 7 the most heavily bet NHL game ever

Domenic Padula

The Stanley Cup drought continues for Canada.

The Florida Panthers beat the Edmonton Oilers 2-1 in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final on home ice Monday night to clinch the first championship in franchise history.

Per FanDuel's odds for the exact series outcome, Florida in seven was considered the most likely result at +410 prior to Game 1.

The Panthers were +2000 to win the Stanley Cup at the start of the regular season and +700 as the second choice to win it all at the start of the playoffs.

Florida was -128 to win it all entering Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final.

Anyone who tailed my FanDuel Best Bet for the series with the Panthers to win the Stanley Cup cashed that wager without a sweat.

Well, maybe not, but a win is a win.

The betting favourite to win the series has gone on to win the Stanley Cup five years in a row.

In fact, the betting favourites are a combined 11-2 in the Stanley Cup Final over the past 13 seasons and 18-4 over the last 22 seasons.

While anyone who bet Florida to win the Stanley Cup cashed their tickets last night, there were also plenty of opportunities for those who bet the Oilers at long odds when they trailed 1-0, 2-0, or 3-0 in the series to hedge their bets at FanDuel.

Panthers in seven was considered the most likely exact Stanley Cup Final outcome at FanDuel prior to Game 1.

Nevertheless, no one could have foreseen the convoluted path that led us to that result, with plenty of memorable twists and turns throughout what ultimately became an epic series.

In the end, we ended up with what turned out to be the most bet NHL game in FanDuel's history last night.

This is the Morning Coffee for Tuesday, June 25, 2024.

Stanley Cup Final Game 7 the most heavily bet NHL game ever

Panthers in seven might have been the most likely exact series outcome according to FanDuel's odds.

Nevertheless, even those who placed a wager on Florida to win in seven likely could not have imagined the series playing out the way that it did.

> THE FLORIDA PANTHERS ARE STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONS! 🏆 #StanleyCup | @FanDuelCanada pic.twitter.com/ThMUzsX1Vf
>
> — TSN EDGE (@TSN_Edge) June 25, 2024

The Panthers outscored the Oilers a combined 11-4 as they took a 3-0 series lead in the Stanley Cup Final.

At the time, Edmonton could be found as high as +1700 to win it all at FanDuel.

At that point, most of the people I talked to agreed that the Stanley Cup Final would be over in five or six games.

Then the Oilers outscored Florida a combined 18-5 while storming back to tie the series at 3-3.

Edmonton became the first NHL team since the 1945 Detroit Red Wings to force a Game 7 in the Stanley Cup Final after trailing 3-0 in the series.

At that point, most of the people I talked to agreed that the Oilers had all the momentum and would be a tough out in the finale.

That sentiment was reflected in the betting markets.

> — TSN EDGE (@TSN_Edge) June 24, 2024

Edmonton was a popular pick to win Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final at FanDuel with 73 per cent of the money in the moneyline market.

That support led to the Panthers dropping from a small favourite to win Game 7 at -120 to a pick'em at -113.

The closing number represented the shortest home price for a team in a Stanley Cup Final Game 7 in 37 years.

Per the FanDuel traders, Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final was the most bet NHL game in the company's history. In fact, it wasn't particularly close.

> This is the most bet on NHL game EVER at FanDuel three hours before puck drop 😱
>
> To this point, they've taken 3x more bets on tonight's #StanleyCup Game 7 than their next closest NHL game in the sportsbook's history (Game 5 of this series).@FanDuelCanada pic.twitter.com/fAmFfgb5En
>
> — TSN EDGE (@TSN_Edge) June 24, 2024

While the Oilers were a popular pick to win Game 7, Florida ultimately prevailed with the 2-1 win to clinch the first Stanley Cup in franchise history.

With the win, the Panthers defied several notable trends.

> THE CHAMPIONS. pic.twitter.com/hKkRFE1Arq
>
> — Florida Panthers (@FlaPanthers) June 25, 2024

Florida won the Stanley Cup despite a minus-five goal differential in the series.

That is the worst goal differential ever by the winner of the Stanley Cup Final.

Teams that were outscored in the Stanley Cup Final were a combined 2-14 dating back to 2007-08.

Meanwhile, Edmonton was previously 5-0 when facing elimination this postseason and road teams had won three straight Game 7s.

> woke up a Stanley Cup Champion pic.twitter.com/fbx8MyxZEB
>
> — Florida Panthers (@FlaPanthers) June 25, 2024

While the Panthers deviated from some notable trends, the run to the under in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final continued.

Last night's contest was the 15th straight Stanley Cup Final Game 7 that stayed under 5.5 goals.

Game 7 unders went a combined 4-0 this postseason.

> Make that 15 STRAIGHT games that under 5.5 goals has cashed in Game 7 of the #StanleyCup Final ✅ https://t.co/5rucCEvlQq
>
> — TSN EDGE (@TSN_Edge) June 25, 2024

Connor McDavid won the Conn Smythe Trophy after recording 42 points – the fourth-most ever in a single postseason.

Despite not registering a single point in Games 6 or 7, McDavid was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy as the playoff MVP.

McDavid is the sixth player and second skater ever to win the Conn Smythe Trophy for a losing team.

> Connor McDavid is your 2024 Conn Smythe Trophy winner! 🏆 #StanleyCup | @FanDuelCanada pic.twitter.com/4xp65cXXwc
>
> — TSN EDGE (@TSN_Edge) June 25, 2024

Edmonton is the seventh Canadian team to lose in the Stanley Cup Final since the Montreal Canadiens won it all in 1993.

It's been 30 seasons since a Canadian team won the Stanley Cup.

The previous record for the longest drought for a Canadian team was six years.

While hockey fans in Edmonton will be disappointed with the result, there's no doubt that their team will have the opportunity to reload this offseason with a chance to contend for the Stanley Cup again next year.

There's plenty of reasons for optimism for Oilers' fans.

For now, the drought continues for Canada.

TSN.CA LOADED: 06.26.2024

1221650 Websites

TSN.CA / McKenzie's Final Draft Ranking: Many attractive and diverse options after Celebrini

Bob McKenzie

When it comes to the 2024 NHL Draft, it's quite possible we have, to borrow an old newspaper saying, buried the lede.

Which is to say there's been so much talk about two Russians forcing their way into the conversation in the upper echelon of the draft, and/or how there are at least six blue-chip blueliners with NHL top-pair potential available in the Top 10, that we've glossed over the No. 1 storyline.

That is, this is the Macklin Celebrini Draft.

It was the Macklin Celebrini Draft to start the season; it's the Macklin Celebrini Draft to finish it, and there was never a single moment when it was anything other than the Macklin Celebrini Draft.

Of course, on that basis you could argue that it's old news; just stating the obvious.

Fair enough.

There is undoubtedly more intrigue, excitement, debate and food for thought to discuss the Russian presence at the top end of the draft and the lavish smorgasbord of high-end defencemen, but before we get to that, it doesn't feel right to not give Celebrini his due.

So, let us quickly celebrate the Boston University freshman centre's stellar season that will result in the Vancouver native being chosen first overall by the San Jose Sharks on Friday at Sphere in Las Vegas.

"To start the season, I thought he was going to be very good, but I was wrong, he's going to be great," said one of the 10 NHL club team scouts surveyed by TSN who unanimously cited Celebrini as No. 1. "I can't say enough about what's he's done this season and what he's going to do in the NHL."

"He's an elite prospect; he's a special player. San Jose is incredibly lucky to get a No. 1 centre of that calibre," said another scout.

We all spent time this season trying to figure out what exactly Celebrini is going to be in the NHL, but often times we seemed preoccupied on what he perhaps wasn't.

To wit:

We said he's not Sidney Crosby, and he's not, but Celebrini's style of play bears many similarities.

"When he has the puck on his stick he's the best and most dangerous player on the ice," said another scout. "He's smart, he's creative, he's a passer, he's a shooter, he can do it all. When he doesn't have the puck, he's the hardest worker on the ice to get it back. He's complete; he's elite."

Celebrini discusses potential full circle moment, decision on making jump to NHL

Celebrini discusses potential full circle moment, decision on making jump to NHLProjected first overall pick Macklin Celebrini joins Gino Reda to talk about getting closer to fulfilling his dream of being drafted into the NHL, what will decide whether or not he makes the jump to the NHL right away and more.

We said he's not Connor Bedard, and he's not, but he's still viewed as special.

"I will tell you this," another scout said, "he's more of a natural centre than Bedard is. He's a more complete player [than Bedard]. Bedard's high-end skill is really something, but so is Celebrini's all-around game."

"If Celebrini had been eligible for last year's draft," another scout said, "I believe he would have gone No. 2 overall [ahead of Leo Carlsson, Adam Fantilli and Will Smith]. He's that good."

In some respects, with Celebrini being the foregone conclusion at No. 1 and so many attractive and diverse options on the board after that, the 2024 NHL Draft begins in earnest at No. 2 with Chicago.

Many pundits believe the Blackhawks, who took Bedard first overall a year ago, may be predisposed to take a foundational defenceman at second overall. Others allow for the possibility of Chicago taking another elite forward.

For the purposes of TSN's Final 2024 Draft Rankings, it matters not what the Blackhawks' preference is. Or for that matter what Anaheim at No. 3, Columbus at No. 4, or Montreal at No. 5 might be inclined to do.

TSN's draft list is a consensus ranking based on a survey of 10 NHL club team scouts. It is not a mock draft. No effort is made to match prospects with teams. It is simply an objective numerical exercise conducted in a vacuum based on where TSN's panel of scouts rank the prospects.

This year's rankings, from No. 2 on, would appear to be much more challenging than usual to assemble because of two factors.

First, there seem to be many more divergent opinions and variance on even the top 10 picks in the draft this year than we are used to seeing.

Second, two of the top five picks on TSN's final list this year are Russians — left-shot right winger Ivan Demidov at No. 2 and towering 6-foot-7 defenceman Anton Silayev at No. 4.

There is the so-called "Russian Factor" to consider. More on that in a moment.

In the case of Demidov, he is, in the eyes of our scouting panel, the clear consensus No. 2 choice behind Celebrini. Six of the 10 scouts surveyed had him at No. 2. All 10 had him in their top five. No other prospect in the draft, save Celebrini, had Top 5 unanimity.

Not No. 3 ranked Artyom Levshunov, the Belarussian freshman defenceman from Michigan State University, who was close (three votes at No. 2 and eight of 10 votes in the Top 5), or No. 4 ranked Silayev or No. 5 ranked Medicine Hat Tiger centre Cayden Lindstrom (each of whom had seven of 10 votes in the Top 5).

It is, however, one thing for a scout to rank Demidov at No. 2 overall; it's quite another for an NHL general manager to make the decision to actually take him there.

"I have no problem personally ranking Demidov at No. 2," said a scout, "but I couldn't assure you my team would take him there if we were picking second overall. There's a lot more that goes into it now, especially that high."

No NHL GM, or North American-based executives/scouts, have had live viewings of Demidov this season, who played for SKA's junior team in the Russian MHL.

Because of the various sanctions against Russia due to its attack of Ukraine, the best young Russian players have not been able to play against their international peers in International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) events such as the World Junior Championship, Hlinka Gretzky Cup and U-18 World Championship.

Interestingly enough, Demidov is the only Russian prospect in this draft who has been live, or in-arena, scouted by NHL GMs and/or North American-based scouts.

Demidov, a late 2005 birthdate, was a double underager on Russia's Hlinka-Gretzky Cup team in the summer of 2021. He had two goals and five points in five games that year. He did not make the Russian team that played in the 2021 U18 World Championships in Texas when a couple of kids named Bedard and (Matvei) Michkov went head to head.

Having to scout Russians almost exclusively from video doesn't preclude them from being taken high in the draft — Arizona took defenceman Dmitri Simashev sixth overall last year and Philadelphia chose forward Matvei Michkov eighth overall — but it does give pause to consider, especially depending on the viability of other top prospects.

"If you're going to take a Russian in the top five picks, your owner has to be on board," one scout said. "It's not just a hockey decision. Your GM has to have an idea of how soon that [Russian] player will or won't be coming to North America. It's not insurmountable, but there are added layers to taking a Russian really high in the draft."

Another scout, however, believes the Russian Factor is overplayed.

"The good ones always come over," the scout said. "Maybe you have to wait a year or two or three, but history tells us the good ones come and they're often worth the wait."

And sometimes the wait isn't as long as anticipated. Look no further than the news Tuesday that Michkov is leaving SKA to sign with the Flyers only one year after being drafted when the initial expectation was it would be a three-year wait.

NHL teams welcomed the opportunity to see Demidov in the flesh last week in Florida at a camp run by agent Dan Milstein. Demidov didn't go on the ice — he's recovering from a minor injury — but teams were able to meet and interview him. NHL Central Scouting was there to measure him, and others. He checked in at 6 feet, 1/2 inch and 192 pounds – an inch or more taller than he was previously listed at.

NHL teams who made the trek to Milstein's camp were told Demidov is contractually obligated to play next season in Russia, but he could come to the NHL as early as the fall of 2025.

"It was good to meet the player, talk to him, get a better idea of who he is and a sense of when he might come over," said one scout. "My takeaway was that he very much wants to be an NHL player and there are no big issues on that front."

If that's the case, then the scouts can focus on more traditional prospect evaluations.

Demidov has elite passing and goal-scoring skills. His hockey sense and competitiveness are viewed as outstanding. Some scouts say his skating is only average. Whatever size concerns that existed when he was believed to be under 6-feet tall no longer apply.

"If he isn't a No. 1 offensive winger in the NHL, he'll be a No. 2," said a scout. "He's not an elite skater, like Kirill Kaprizov, but he has elite skills and competitiveness."

But some scouts question the competition he played against in the MHL, suggesting his productivity was inflated because of it.

"Sure, we would have preferred to see him in the KHL or VHL, but if he was there playing only a few minutes a game we would be complaining about that," said a scout, laughing.

Given all of the above, seeing which team, and at which point in the draft he's chosen, is going to be one of the most intriguing storylines of draft day.

If Demidov has to contend with the spectre of the Russian Factor, his countryman Silayev, TSN's fourth-ranked prospect, has to deal with that, plus another big one — the plethora of high-end defencemen available in this draft.

And depending upon the scout you talk to, there's an incredibly varied view of how the blueliners should be ordered.

Levshunov is certainly the consensus top defenceman. He was the only prospect other than Demidov to get more than one second-place vote. Demidov had six; Levshunov had three; Silayev had one. Eight of 10 scouts had Levshunov in the top five; the two who had him outside the top five ranked him six and seven.

And yet, for all that, six of the 10 scouts did not have Levshunov as the No. 1 defenceman on their list. Four did, the same number that had Silayev as the top blueliner. Two more identified Saginaw Spirit offensive dynamo Zayne Parekh as their No. 1.

One-Timers: Button answers rapid fire questions about players in NHL Draft

One-Timers: Button answers rapid fire questions about players in NHL DraftWhich player is most ready to play in the NHL next season? Who is the most competitive prospect in the draft? Which player will teams regret not picking? TSN Director of Scouting Craig Button joins Gino Reda to answer some rapid fire questions.

But each scout's individual ranking of the defencemen was all over the map. So here's how the TSN numbers shook out for the top blueliners:

Levshunov and Silayev are Nos. 3 and 4, respectively, followed by the WHL forward Lindstrom at No. 5.

No. 6 is 6-foot-3, 203-pound London Knight defenceman Sam Dickinson. A marvelous skater and puck mover, Dickinson was ranked as high as No. 5 and as low as No. 16, but eight of 10 scouts had him in their Top 10.

No. 7 is Denver University's Zeev Buium. The highly skilled 6-foot, 186-pound Pioneer rearguard was ranked as high as No. 6 and no lower than No. 11, with nine of 10 scouts slotting him in their Top 10.

No. 8 is Parekh, the Spirit's dynamic offensive defenceman who was ranked as high as No. 3 and as low as No. 13, with seven of 10 scouts placing him in their Top 10; two of them putting him in their Top 5.

By the time you distill all those numbers, the differences between the trio of Dickinson, Buium and Parekh are minimal. Levshunov and Silayev appear to be in a consensus tier just above the other three, but there are varying degrees of crossover with that group of five blue-chippers.

There's actually a sixth consideration, too. That would be TSN's No. 13-ranked Carter Yakemchuk, the big 6-foot-3, 30-goal man from the Calgary Hitmen. He warrants inclusion in the same universe as the others. He was ranked as high as No. 4 on one list and as low as No. 20 on another, with four scouts having him in their Top 10.

"What a year if you're looking for a defenceman," one scout said. "And you've got a real nice mix of types and talent."

Levshunov is probably regarded as having the highest combination of offensive and defensive prowess, though he's better with the puck than without.

"Big body, strong, great skater and aggressive," said one scout.

"All the tools to be a No. 1," said another.

"Played big in big games," said a third. "He's probably NHL ready, and if not, 25 to 40 games in the American League and he is."

"Careless, if not reckless on defence sometimes but he just needs to be coached," said another.

Silayev is repeatedly referred to as a "unicorn."

There are no 6-foot-7 defencemen in this draft who move as well as him. There aren't many 6-foot-7 defencemen on the planet who skate as well as this behemoth. He started the KHL season with a flourish, getting eight points in eight games, but his offensive output really dried up as the season wore on. The early comparisons to Victor Hedman have mostly faded, but the excitement over his future NHL prospects have not.

"At the end of the day, all that really matters is that he's a 17-year-old who played regularly in the KHL and played well and showed he has all the tools be a shutdown NHL defender who can still skate and carry or pass a puck up the ice," said a scout. "That's a unicorn."

“He’s going to be an elite defender,” another scout said. “A huge minute muncher. That and that alone provides huge value, but he’s not without some offensive ability, but it’s most definitely secondary.”

There are certainly defencemen in the group of six who have way more offensive upside than Silayev. And the Russian Factor could come into a play to some degree as well.

“No doubt, none of us have had eyes [live] on him, so that can complicate a decision,” a scout said. “We won’t ever have met him until we get to Las Vegas. And if you’re picking in the top five or 10 and you want a defenceman, you’ve got a whole bunch of really good ones who you have seen live and who you have talked to and know pretty much everything about.”

It doesn’t hurt that Silayev was coached by Hall of Famer Igor Larionov, who is accessible and well connected with NHL GMs, scouts and executive.

No. 5 Dickinson had an outstanding season for the OHL champion London Knights. He’s big, fast and transports the puck so efficiently.

“Of all the top defencemen this year, [Dickinson] is probably the least risky pick,” said one scout. “He has great size, great mobility. Compared to some of the others [Levshunov, Buium and Parekh, in particular], his offensive ceiling might be more limited, but this kid is going to play in your top four for 15 years.”

“Dickinson is a complete package,” added another. “He’s not the most physical guy; he’s not the most offensive; he doesn’t have the best shot, but he still gives you a LOT of everything. He’s such an easy guy to project as a complementary player on your top pair or the lead guy on your second pair.”

No. 6 Buium is a solid 6-footer, and all the American did was win in the last 13 months — the 2023 U-18 World Championship; the 2024 World Junior Championship; and the 2024 NCAA Frozen Four title.

“He controls the game with his skating and offensive ability,” a scout said. “He doesn’t just walk the offensive blueline, he dives right in and creates offence. He’s going to be on your No. 1 power play.”

“I started the year thinking he was a one-dimensional offensive guy,” said another scout, “but as the year progressed, so did his defensive game. He’s a capable defender and he’s only going to get better.”

“This is a mature kid,” added a third scout. “He has a real pro mentality.”

No. 7 Parekh is a flashy and dynamic presence with the offensive numbers — 33 goals and 96 points in 66 games for Saginaw — to prove it.

He is widely regarded as having the highest offensive ceiling of any defenceman in the draft, but that carries with it an element of risk, too, because he’s not quite as physically developed as the others and he’s more of a damn-the-torpedoes, riverboat-gambler type.

“He doesn’t have a [defensive] conscience,” one scout said. “If he gets scored on because he was out of position or made a big mistake, he comes right back and it’s like he’s thinking, ‘That’s okay, I’ll just go get a couple of goals to make up for it.’”

Some scouts think he’s a little better defensively than he gets credit for — he’s adept at breaking up plays with heady anticipation and an active stick — but his projection is as a No. 1 offensive defenceman.

“If he hits, that’s what he is,” a scout said. “If not…”

One of the scouts who ranked him in the top four of the entire draft said this about him: “He has unique offensive ability, No. 1 power play potential and it’s hard to find that level of offence from a defenceman. He’s a special type of player.”

No. 13 Yakemchuk gets some mixed reviews, but at 6-foot-3, plus a big shot that produced 30 goals for the Hitmen and more than 100 penalty minutes, there’s a lot to like, too.

“He’s big and long,” said a scout who believes Yakemchuk is a Top 5 overall prospect. “He boxes guys out pretty well and he does have some bite. He has great offensive instincts. His skating is a little funky, but he gets there.”

Some have compared Yakemchuk’s game to Edmonton Oiler offensive defenceman Evan Bouchard. They both shoot the puck from the blueline with authority, especially on the PP. Bouchard’s defensive game started to mature this season, but the scouts say Yakemchuk has a lot of room for improvement in that area. Bouchard is an elite NHL passer — and he was in his draft year — but Yakemchuk is a work in progress.

“His skating needs some work and so does his ability to defend, but he’s obviously got some tools,” another scout said. “He’s more of a scorer than a passer. He can be physical but it’s inconsistent.”

If it’s a challenge to separate and order the top six defencemen in the draft, the same dynamic is very much at play with the top six forwards on TSN’s final list.

Yes, Demidov is clearly the second-best forward and consensus No. 2 overall prospect. If you were to take Celebrini and his 10 first-place votes out of the equation, nine of the 10 scouts on our panel have Demidov as the top forward.

We don’t know yet if the Russian Factor with Demidov will be real or imagined on draft day, but if you squint some you could make a not outlandish case that the third-ranked forward and No. 5 overall prospect may be a viable challenger to the Russian winger.

Medicine Hat’s Cayden Lindstrom is 6-foot-3 and 213 pounds. When he has the puck, he uses that size effectively to drive through heavy traffic to the front of the net and score goals, something he did 27 times in an injury-shortened 32-game WHL season. When he doesn’t have the puck, he uses his big body and an aggressive mindset to hit and punish opponents all over the ice.

If the Russian Factor is the yin of the NHL draft, then the Big No. 1 Centre Factor is most definitely the yang.

Which is to say NHL GMs and talent evaluators hold a special place in their hearts for prospects who have all the assets to be a big, productive top-line centre. Lindstrom checks a lot of those boxes.

That’s why our 10 NHL scouts ranked him as high as No. 3 and no lower than No. 9. Seven of the 10 ranked him in the top five; two of them putting the member of Driftpile Cree Nation who grew up in Chetwynd, B.C., at No. 3 overall. One of the scouts who ranked him No. 3 had Lindstrom as the top (non-Celebrini) forward prospect in the draft, ahead of Demidov.

“He has all the tools — size, strength, power, skating, skill, toughness — you would want in a No. 1 NHL power-scoring centre,” said one scout. “He won’t be the stereotypical No. 1 point-producing centre because he’s a shooter, not a passer, but he’s mean and aggressive, too. What’s not to like?”

Well, like all young prospects, he has to get physically stronger to play his game at the next level. No one suggested Lindstrom is without hockey sense but it’s not the strongest part of his game, though as one scout said, “Shooting the puck in the other team’s net is.”

The biggest concern, though, is Lindstrom’s health.

He broke his hand in mid-December, and it required surgery, which in the grand scheme of things is no big deal. Stuff like that happens. But while he was out with the hand injury, he experienced issues with his lower back, which effectively ended his regular season.

He did come back to play in four playoff games but NHL teams with interest in Lindstrom want assurances that the back problem is neither ongoing nor structural in nature.

“If you’re taking a guy in the top five of the draft,” one scout said, “you can’t have any doubts about his back.”

Teams have been supplied with Lindstrom’s medical report, which respective team doctors have been analyzing. No one is suggesting it’s necessarily a red flag, but scouts say their teams are still doing their due diligence to be totally comfortable.

“I don’t believe it’s going to be an issue at all,” one NHL team head scout said. “But you also understand why teams need to have confidence and clarity.”

As intriguing as it to see in which order the top six defencemen are taken on Friday, it’s also going to be fascinating to see how things unfold for

the six-pack of forwards in the top 12. That is, Demidov, Lindstrom and the four ranked between Nos. 9 and 12 on our final list.

No. 9 is Finn Konsta Helenius, a heady, two-way, sub-6 foot centre who put up solid numbers (14 goals and 36 points in 51 games) for Jukurit in Finland's No. 1 Liiga. Helenius was ranked as high as No. 3 overall (by two scouts) and five scouts had him in their top seven while the other five ranked him in a range from 11 to 18.

"He's an exceptional two-way centre," one scout said. "If he's not the smartest or most cerebral prospect, he's certainly one of them."

The question some scouts ask is whether Helenius has enough offensive upside to be a No. 1 NHL centre.

"If you don't think so, maybe you don't want to use a Top 10 pick on him, but worst case, he's going to be a good two-way No. 2 [centre]," a scout said.

"You can't forget he was playing against men, he put up solid point totals in a tough league and when he gets with his peer group in junior events, his skill and sense really took off," another scout added.

No. 10 is Tij Iginla, the son of Hall of Famer Jarome Iginla. The Kelowna Rockets winger scored 47 goals and 84 points in 64 games and has arguably the best shot of any prospect. Iginla was ranked as high as No. 6, no lower than No. 12 and six of 10 scouts had him in their Top 10.

"He literally just kept scoring goals and playing so well this season that he made you pay attention and move him up on your list," a scout said.

"He's not his dad — who is? — but he does have one of the hardest shots and best releases in the draft," another scout said. "He's showing flashes of having a power game; he's hard to contain."

Iginla was outstanding at the U-18 World Championship and demonstrated there he's more than a one-trick (big shot) pony. He also tested and interviewed well at the NHL Central Scouting Bureau Combine in Buffalo.

No. 11 is Beckett Sennecke, the Oshawa General big (almost 6-foot-3) winger who has dynamic skill and, along with Iginla, has rocketed up the draft charts with great buzz and fanfare. Sennecke was ranked by our scouting panel as high as No. 5, no lower than No. 14 and had a total of four Top 10 votes.

"I didn't like his game one bit in the first half of the season," said a scout, "and I absolutely loved everything about him in the second half. From January on, he took off. He was better in February than he was in January; he was better in March than he was in February; he was better in April than March. He had a great playoff."

Sennecke has the potential to provide highlight-reel material every time the puck is on his stick. Scouts expect him to considerably fill out his frame and when he does, there's a sense he could be something special.

"A big forward with size and high-end skill who's just realizing how good he can be, he also seems to have an F-you vibe to his game," said another scout. "I don't think I'm alone in asking this question, but is it possible he could turn out to be the best forward in the draft besides Celebrini?"

"If he goes in the top five of this draft, I wouldn't be overly surprised," said another scout. "I feel like he's still surging."

No. 12 is Berkly Catton, the smallish (5-foot-10, 175-pound) but prolific (54 goals and 116 points in 68 games) Spokane Chiefs centre. Catton was ranked as high as No. 7 and no lower than No. 18, with four Top 10 votes.

All Catton does is produce. He was Canada's best player — "by a country mile," one scout said — at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup last August, scoring eight goals and 10 points in five games. On a middling Spokane Chief team, he put up extraordinary goal and point totals, the most impressive of any player in the Class of 2024.

"The knock on him is obviously his size but he manufactures offence as well or better than any (draft eligible) player," a scout said. "He wasn't surrounded by a lot of elite talent on that Spokane team, and he still shot out the lights."

Catton's best-case scenario pro projection probably tops out at No. 2 centre and No. 1 power-play guy, but a couple of scouts expressed some concern about his size factor perhaps limiting his ceiling.

On the other hand?

"His hockey sense and skills are better than any forward [in the draft] with the exception of [Celebrini and Demidov]," said a scout.

Another closely monitored storyline in this year's draft will be the tale of two Americans.

No. 14 is U.S. U-18 program goal-scoring whiz Cole Eiserman and No. 15 is Trevor Connelly, an offensively gifted left winger who played for Tri-City in the USHL. Each of them is amongst the most highly skilled players available in the draft.

Eiserman is often referred to as the most natural goal scorer and/or having the best shot in the class of 2024.

Small wonder. He had 58 goals and 89 points in 49 games for the U.S. U-18 national team this season and established the career goal-scoring record for the U.S. National Development Team Program (USNDTP) with 127, eclipsing Montreal Canadien Cole Caufield's mark of 126. Eiserman is also second in career USNDTP points (193), behind only New Jersey Devil Jack Hughes' 228.

What's most notable about Eiserman's story is how as his goal-scoring numbers continued to rise this season, his draft stock continued to decline.

In TSN's pre-season rankings, he was ranked No. 2 behind Celebrini. Eiserman and Celebrini, incidentally, are close friends and former teammates/linemates at Shattuck St. Mary's prep school. If Celebrini were to return to Boston University next season for his sophomore season he would be joined by incoming freshman Eiserman, who had previously committed to the Terriers.

Back in September, Eiserman was billed by some as a potential challenger to Celebrini for No. 1. In fact, one of the 10 scouts surveyed back then ranked Eiserman ahead of Celebrini.

In TSN's mid-season rankings in late January, Eiserman dropped from No. 2 to No. 4.

But by the time TSN did its Draft Lottery Edition rankings in early May, he had plummeted all the way to No. 13.

Now he's sitting solidly at No. 14 on our final list.

Eiserman didn't get a single Top 10 vote from any of the 10 scouts in our final rankings. He was slotted as high as No. 11 but no lower than No. 16 on their lists, so he's still a strong consensus Top 15 prospect.

But the slide, for a high-end pick, has been precipitous.

"He's quite one dimensional, he's a one-way shooter," said a scout. "He has a great shot — no one has a better one timer — but is it going to translate [to pro] because he either can't or won't do the other things necessary [to score in the NHL]?"

Some scouts said he exhibits some selfish qualities on the ice, suggesting he's more interested in personal achievement at the expense of developing his overall game or team play. Others, however, believe the criticisms are overblown and his strengths are too enticing to ignore.

"There may be an immaturity there, but there's also a rare ability to put the puck in the net," said another scout. "When [Philadelphia Flyer] Owen Tippett was in junior, he was viewed the same way and you saw this year that [Tippett] finally figured it out. Will [Eiserman] figure it out? If he does…well, look out, because this guy would allow himself to get hit by a truck if he thought he might score a goal on the play."

It may well be that the worst of it — falling from No. 2 to 14 and hearing the disparaging remarks why — is over for Eiserman because there's certainly reason to believe on draft day he will still be highly regarded as a blue-chip Top 15 pick with top six NHL potential.

And then there's the case of Trevor Connelly, TSN's No. 15 ranked prospect.

The native of Tustin, Calif., is a complete wild card.

The 6-foot-1, 160-pound winger is universally regarded as one of the more talented and skilled forwards available. Scouts often compare his on-ice game to a young J.T. Miller in terms of attributes and style of play.

“Top five to top seven talent in the offensive department,” said one scout. “He has great skills, a motor that doesn’t quit and some bite, too.”

And yet…

“He’s on our list but we won’t be drafting him,” said one NHL team head scout. “He’s not a consideration for us.”

Connelly was ranked by our scouting panel as high as No. 8 and no lower than No. 23, but garnered two votes in the Top 10 and six in the Top 15. But those numbers may not be an accurate reflection of the range he will be taken because there is a notable asterisk alongside his name.

NHL teams have been busy sorting through some off-ice character/behaviour-related issues that have been attributed to Connelly, trying to determine what is real or imagined; whether he’s a “bad kid” or an immature one who made some bad decisions. Or where on that spectrum he falls.

The most concerning issue occurred in 2022, when Connelly was 16 years old, playing for the Long Island Gulls. Connelly posted to his Snapchat account a picture of a teammate sitting on the floor with children’s building blocks arranged in the shape of a swastika. Connelly’s post beneath the picture read: “creations.”

The swastika has become a symbol of anti-Semitism, white supremacy and/or Nazism.

Connelly, his family and advisors accepted full responsibility for that specific action and have gone to significant and quite public lengths to own it and atone for it.

“On that particular issue, [Connelly] has been very up front and forthcoming and he has the receipts to show that he’s educated himself, done real work with [the Jewish and Black community],” a scout said. “He’s owned it and learned from it.”

But there have been other allegations, including one that Connelly used a racial slur against an opponent in 2021. Connelly and his family/advisors have denied that ever occurred. Teams have been doing thorough background checks on all of that, and more.

So, too, has The Athletic. Connelly was the subject a long, detailed story by investigative reporter Katie Strang and NHL draft journalist Corey Pronman in February. Here’s a link to that story (which is behind a paywall).

Connelly had more than 20 interviews with NHL clubs at the Draft Combine in Buffalo.

Anecdotally, it would appear some teams have already decided they won’t draft Connelly. But it should surprise no one if there are some other clubs who will have no qualms calling his name, though no one seems to have any sense at which point in the draft that may happen.

“If you draft him, there’s going to be an outcry, there’s going to be some controversy,” one scout said. “The question you have to ask is whether your club is up for that. That’s a decision that gets made by ownership. He’s a helluva prospect. He’s not a criminal. He may or may not be a bad kid. There’s a lot there to process.”

“Character matters,” another scout added. “So, you have to decide whether [Connelly] has a fatal [character] flaw or he’s a young man who made a mistake and is now on the right road. That’s really the bottom line.”

Connelly had 31 goals and 78 points in 52 games for Tri-City Storm in the USHL.

Playing in the Hlinka Gretzky Cup last August for Team USA, he had five goals and 10 points in five games and was one of the better players in the tournament.

He also suited up for Team USA at the IIHF U-18 World Championship and had four goals and nine points in seven games. Team USA won the silver medal, but Connelly took a five-minute major in the third period that keyed a comeback victory by Canada in the gold-medal game.

He also was a standout for Team USA at the World Junior A Challenge last December and scored four goals in the bronze-medal game.

Connelly is committed to Providence College for next season.

So, he has represented his country three times in the last year; played a full season in the USHL, and will be playing in the NCAA next season. It’s not like anything that has or hasn’t happened in his young career has been an impediment thus far.

But now it’s for teams to decide if or when he’s going to be given his opportunity to play in the NHL.

A few final notes, observations and thoughts on TSN’s Final 2024 NHL Draft Rankings:

— It’s a big year for the Vikings. Well, the Norwegian branch anyway.

Norway has not one but two prospects in our Top 32. No Norwegian has ever been taken in the first round of the NHL draft. That drought should end Friday.

Michael Brandsegg-Nygard, an almost 6-foot-1 and 200-plus pound, hard-shooting right winger, is No. 17 on the TSN list and countryman Stian Solberg, a rugged shutdown defender who checks in at almost 6-foot-2 and 205 pounds, is No. 20.

Eight of 10 scouts ranked Brandsegg-Nygard between Nos. 14 and 18; seven of 10 scouts had Solberg between Nos. 15 and 26. Solberg jumped 25 slots from the mid-season to final rankings. It’s fair to say the hottest commodities in the second half of this season were Iginla, Sennecke and Solberg.

'It's a big year for the Vikings': Brandsegg-Nygard, Solberg representing Norway proudly

'It's a big year for the Vikings': Brandsegg-Nygard, Solberg representing Norway proudlyMichael Brandsegg-Nygard and Stian Solberg are set to make history for Norway at the NHL Draft and TSN Hockey Insider Bob McKenzie outlines their different paths this season through the rankings.

As for the other branch of the Vikings, not a good year for Sweden, with zero prospects in our Top 32. In fact, our highest-ranked Swede is No. 40 Lucas Pettersson, a centre who has a shot to creep into the first round but is a consensus second rounder.

— Canada leads the way in our Top 32, with 18 Canadians making the cut, compared to only four Americans, three Russians, two each from Finland, Norway and Czechia. Belarus, of course, rounds it out with one (Levshunov).

It’s not a banner year for the Quebec Maritime Junior Hockey League. Zero prospects in TSN’s top 32, but Quebecois Sacha Boisvert, who plays centre for Muskegon in the USHL, is a solid No. 22.

— As for goalies, five netminders made our top 90 and two more were in the group of 10 honourable mentions. But no goalies were ranked in our top two rounds.

The top-ranked goaltender is No. 69 Mikhail Yegorov of Omaha in the USHL, followed by: Owen Sound Attack’s Carter George at No. 71; Finland’s Eemil Vinni at No. 74; Saskatoon Blade Evan Gardner at No. 78; and Russian Ilya Nabokov at No. 89.

The two honourable mentions are Nicholas Kempf of the U.S. U-18 national team and Finn Kim Saarinen.

It was tough to get consensus on the goalies. A number of them could well be drafted in the second round, but the wide array of opinions on so many of them didn’t create much separation between them.

— One prospect who really slipped over the course of the year was Aron Kiviharju, the 5-foot-9 offensive defenceman from Finland who played only seven games because of a knee injury that required surgery.

He was No. 10 on our pre-season rankings in September; he was No. 52 on the final list.

Undoubtedly, not being able to play was the major impediment but there’s also a fairly strong bias against small D these days. It will be interesting to see who steps up to take him and at what point in the draft.

— Apropos of nothing, one name in our Top 32 that seems to be generating a lot of final week buzz: Guelph Storm centre Jett Luchanko.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

He's No. 19, but several scouts told us they feel he's picking up momentum as we head towards Friday's draft. Someone to keep an eye on.

— Finally, a quick word about this year's rankings: It was a challenging list to put together, even in the top 10 (as was duly noted when talking about the top prospects).

It seems there's a divide of sorts between the top 20 on TSN's list and the next group of as many 20-plus prospects. Famous last words, but it would be shocking if the first 20 on our list aren't surefire first-rounders. Beyond that, though, the prospects ranked 21-32 would appear to be somewhat interchangeable with those ranked 33 to 50.

In particular, there's very little separating the six players from No. 33 to No. 38 — Charlie Elick, Egor Surin, Nikita Artamonov, Dean Letourneau, Matvei Gridin and Jesse Pulkkinen — with those ranked from around No. 25 to 32.

And all but two prospects between 40 and 52 received at least one first-round vote.

Prospects ranked below No. 50 who got first-round consideration from at least one scout included: Rimouski's Spencer Gill at No. 53; Kingston Jacob Battaglia at No. 57; Sudbury's Nathan Villeneuve at No. 73; Niagara's Kevin He at No. 79 and Sweden's Melvin Fernstrom at No. 80.

RK	Player	Team	Pos	HT	WT	GP	G	P
1	Macklin Celebrini	Boston U (NCAA)	C	5'11 ¾	197	38	32	64
2	Ivan Demidov	St. Petersburg (MHL)	LW	6'0 ½	192	30	23	60
3	Artyom Levshunov	Michigan State (NCAA)	D	6'1 ¾	205	38	9	35
4	Anton Silayev	Nizhny Novgorod (KHL)	D	6'7	211	63	3	11
5	Cayden Lindstrom	Medicine Hat (WHL)	C	6'3	213	32	27	46
6	Sam Dickinson	London (OHL)	D	6'2 ¾	203	68	18	70
7	Zeev Buium	Denver (NCAA)	D	6'0	186	42	11	50
8	Zayne Parekh	Saginaw (OHL)	D	6'0 ¼	178	66	33	96
9	Konsta Helenius	Jukurit (SM Liiga)	C	5'11	189	51	14	36
10	Tij Iginla	Kelowna (WHL)	LW	6'0	191	64	47	84
11	Beckett Sennecke	Oshawa (OHL)	RW	6'2 ¾	182	63	27	68
12	Berkly Catton	Spokane (WHL)	C	5'10 ¼	175	68	54	116
13	Carter Yakemchuk	Calgary (WHL)	D	6'3	202	66	30	71
14	Cole Eiserman	USA NTDP (USHL)	LW	5'11 ¾	197	57	58	89
15	Trevor Connelly	Tri-City (USHL)	LW	6'0 ¾	160	48	26	78
16	Adam Jiricek	HC Plzeň (Cze)	D	6'2 ½	167	19	0	1
17	M. Brandsegg-Nygård	Mora (SWE J20)	RW	6'0 ¾	207	41	8	18
18	Liam Greentree	Windsor (OHL)	RW	6'2 ½	215	64	36	90
19	Jett Luchanko	Guelph (OHL)	C	5'11	187	68	20	74
20	Stian Solberg	Oslo (NOR)	D	6'1 ½	205	42	5	15
21	Igor Chernyshov	Moscow (MHL)	LW	6'2 ¾	204	22	13	28
22	Sacha Boisvert	Muskegon (USHL)	C	6'2	183	55	33	68
23	Cole Beaudoin	Barrie (OHL)	C	6'2	210	67	28	62
24	Michael Hage	Chicago (USHL)	C/RW	6'0 ¾	188	50	31	75
25	Terik Parascak	Prince George (WHL)	RW	5'11 ¾	179	68	43	105
26	Emil Hemming	TPS (SM Liiga)	RW	6'1 ¼	205	40	7	11
27	EJ Emery	USA NTDP (USHL)	D	6'3 ¼	183	61	0	16
28	Marek Vanacker	Brantford (OHL)	LW	6'0 ½	178	68	36	82
29	Dominik Badinka	Malmo (SHL)	D	6'2 ¾	185	33	1	4
30	Andrew Basha	Medicine Hat (WHL)	LW	5'11 ¼	187	63	30	85
31	Ryder Ritchie	Prince Albert (WHL)	C/RW	6'0 ¼	177	47	19	44
32	Sam O'Reilly	London (OHL)	RW	6'1 ¼	185	68	20	56
33	Charlie Elick	Brandon (WHL)	D	6'3 ¼	202	65	4	27
34	Egor Surin	Yaroslavl (MHL)	C/RW	6'0 ¾	197	42	22	52
35	Nikita Artamonov	Nizhny Novgorod (KHL)	LW	5'11	187	54	7	23
36	Dean Letourneau	St. Andrew's (PHC)	C	6'6 ½	214	56	61	127
37	Matvei Gridin	Muskegon (USHL)	LW	6'1 ½	189	54	33	73
38	Jesse Pulkkinen	JYP (SM Liiga Jr.)	D	6'6	219	29	2	8
39	Maxim Massé	Chicoutimi (QMJHL)	RW	6'2 ¼	190	67	36	75
40	Lucas Pettersson	Modo (SWE J20)	C	5'11 ½	173	44	27	57
41	Alfons Freij	Vaxjo (SWE J20)	D	6'0 ½	197	40	14	33
42	Leo Sahlin Wallenius	Vaxjo Jr. (SWE J20)	D	6'0	180	43	11	42
43	Teddy Stiga	USA NTDP (USHL)	LW	5'10	178	61	36	79
44	Linus Eriksson	Djurgardens (SWE J20)	C	6'0	189	29	3	11
45	Tanner Howe	Regina (WHL)	LW	5'10	184	68	28	77
46	Julius Miettinen	Everett (WHL)	C	6'3	201	66	31	67

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024

47	Cole Hutson	USA NTDP (USHL)	D	5'10 ½		
165	51	15	51			
48	Henry Mews	Ottawa (OHL)	D	6'0 ¼		
189	65	15	61			
49	Will Skahan	USA NTDP (USHL)	D	6'4 ½		
215	60	5	14			
50	Matvei Shuravin	Moskva (MHL)	D	6'3 ¾		
218	22	0	7			
51	Adam Kleber	Lincoln (USHL)	D	6'5 ½		
215	56	5	26			
52	Aron Kiviharju	HIFK (SM Liiga)	D	5'9 ½		
184	7	1	2			
53	Spencer Gill	Rimouski (QMJHL)	D	6'3 ¾		
186	65	12	46			
54	Ben Danford	Oshawa (OHL)	D	6'1 ½		
191	64	1	33			
55	Gabriel Eliasson	HV71 (SWE J20)	D	6'6		
203	36	1	6			
56	Leon Muggli	ZUG (SUI)	D	6'0 ½		
177	42	3	12			
57	Jacob Battaglia	Kingston (OHL)	LW	6'0 ½		
202	67	31	65			
58	John Mustard	Waterloo (USHL)	C	6'1		
186	53	25	50			
59	Kamil Bednarik	USA NTDP (USHL)	C	6'0 ¼		
187	61	26	65			
60	Adam Jecho	Edmonton (WHL)	RW	6'5		
201	54	23	47			
61	Harrison Brunicke	Kamloops (WHL)	D	6'2 ½		
196	49	10	21			
62	Luca Marrelli	Oshawa (OHL)	D	6'1 ½		
185	67	6	57			
63	Colin Ralph	S-S Mary's (USHS)	D	6'4 ¼		
226	57	8	66			
64	Jack Berglund	Farjestad (SWE J20)	LW	6'3 ½		
210	41	15	34			
65	Max Plante	USA NTDP (USHL)	LW	5'11		
177	51	15	61			
66	Brodie Ziemer	USA NTDP (USHL)	RW	5'11		
196	61	27	70			
67	Miguel Marques	Lethbridge (WHL)	RW	5'10 ¼		
187	67	28	74			
68	Ondrej Kos	KOOVEE (FIN)	LW	6'2 ½		
176	14	3	5			
69	Mikhail Yegorov	Omaha (USHL)	G	6'4		
179	43	3.86	.892			
70	Carson Wetsch	Calgary (WHL)	RW	6'0 ½		
203	67	25	50			
71	Carter George	Owen Sound (OHL)	G	6'1		
194	56	3.30	.907			
72	Luke Misa	Mississauga (OHL)	C	5'9 ½		
174	66	26	81			
73	Nathan Villeneuve	Sudbury (OHL)	C	6'0		
183	56	23	50			
74	Eemil Vinni	JoKP (SM Liiga Jr.)	G	6'2 ¾		
187	37	2.72	.892			
75	Veeti Vaisanen	KooKoo (SM Liiga Jr.)	D			
6'0 ½	188	37	3	22		
76	Kasper Pikkarainen	TPS (SM Liiga Jr.)	RW	6'3		
197	34	12	28			
77	Tomas Lavoie	Cape Breton (QMJHL)	D			
6'4	220	65	3	24		
78	Evan Gardner	Saskatoon (WHL)	G	6'2		
174	30	1.91	.927			
79	Kevin He	Niagara (OHL)	LW	6'0	183	
64	31	53				
80	Melvin Fernstrom	Orebro (SWE J20)	RW	6'0 ¾		
188	45	31	63			
81	Tarin Smith	Everett (WHL)	D	6'1 ¼		
187	67	8	46			
82	Tomas Galvas	Liberec (Cze)	D	5'10 ¼		
153	32	2	7			
83	Aatos Koivu	TPS (SM Liiga Jr.)	C	6'0		
165	28	16	31			
84	Colton Roberts	Vancouver (WHL)	D	6'3 ¾		
204	62	7	27			
85	Raoul Boilard	Baie-Comeau (QMJHL)	C			
6'1	189	68	22	62		
86	Lukas Fischer	Sarnia (OHL)	D	6'3		
182	68	6	34			
87	Ethan Procyszyn	North Bay (OHL)	RW	6'2		
181	62	15	36			
88	Simon Zether	Rogle (SWE J20)	RW/C	6'3		
176	18	11	27			
89	Ilya Nabokov	Magnitogorsk (KHL)	G	6'1		
179	43	2.15	.930			
90	Anthony Romani	North Bay (OHL)	C/RW	6'0		
179	68	58	111			
HM	Ondrej Becher	Prince George (WHL)	C/LW			
6'1 ¼	187	58	32	96		
HM	Alexis Bernier	Baie-Comeau (QMJHL)	D			
6'1	190	67	4	31		
HM	Nicholas Kempf	USA NTDP (USHL)	G	6'2		
190	37	2.99	.897			
HM	Timur Kol	Krylia (MHL)	D	6'3	198	
14	2	8				
HM	Eriks Mateiko	Saint John (QMJHL)	LW	6'4		
201	49	23	43			
HM	Heikki Ruohonen	Espoo (SM Liiga Jr.)	C	6'1		
196	37	20	47			
HM	Kim Saarinen	HPK (SM Liiga Jr.)	G	6'4		
181	23	2.41	.917			
HM	Sebastian Soini	KOOVEE (FIN)	D	6'2 ½		
187	32	0	8			
HM	AJ Spellacy	Windsor (OHL)	C	6'3		
190	67	21	38			
HM	Herman Traff	HV71 (SWE J20)	RW	6'3		
203	26	13	21			

TSN.CA LOADED: 06.26.2024

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 26, 2024