CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

The News & Observer

Welcome 'home': Hurricanes' Mikko Rantanen scores in home debut, a win over Chicago

Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes went to Long Island a week ago with Martin Necas and Jack Drury on the charter flight.

They returned to Raleigh with Mikko Rantanen and Taylor Hall.

Things can change that quickly in the NHL, and Rantanen was in the lineup for his first home game Thursday against the Chicago Blackhawks at the Lenovo Center. But not Hall, who missed the game because of illness, as did Sebastian Aho.

Rantanen, in his third game with the Canes since the stunning Friday trade with Colorado, scored his first goal in a 3-2 victory, was named the game's first star and had Canes fans chanting his nickname -- "M-ooose."

"He was impactful," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "He could have had a couple tonight. He was really good."

Seth Jarvis picked up his 20th goal of the season, a shorthanded strike in the first period, and Jaccob Slavin scored in the second for the Canes (32-16-4), who have a seven-game point streak (6-0-1). Rookie forward Ryan Suzuki, rushed to Raleigh, made his NHL debut and goalie Pyotr Kochetkov earned his 19th win, allowing goals to Connor Bedard and Ilya Mikheyev.

"The guys make it easier. They've been great and make it easy to come into, you know?" Rantanen said of the transition. "It's going to take a little more time to get fully comfortable. It's getting better every day."

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Mikko Rantanen (96) skates with the puck past Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Louis Crevier (46) during the first period at Lenovo Center.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Mikko Rantanen (96) skates with the puck past Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Louis Crevier (46) during the first period at Lenovo Center. James Guillory James Guillory-Imagn Images

Being able to trade for Rantanen was a major coup for the Canes and general manager Eric Tulsky. In came a former All-Star and one of the league's most productive scorers, a big Finnish winger who was drafted by the Avalanche and played 10 seasons in Denver, winning a Stanley Cup in 2022.

Then, he was traded for Necas and Drury. In January, not at the NHL trade deadline.

"It's a hard business and it's not always in your hands what happens," Rantanen said after Thursday's morning skate.

His new coach knows as well as anyone. Brind'Amour had spent parts of nine seasons with the Philadelphia Flyers before his sudden trade to the Hurricanes in January 2000.

Brind'Amour seemed to be in a daze at first, Rantanen was told.

"Yeah, I totally understand it," Rantanen said. "When you've been with an organization for 10 years, just knowing how the team works and having the same coach the whole time, the routine being the same for 10 years. …

"When you're expecting something to happen, you already mentally are switching. But when it comes like that, it's a lot to handle. A lot of emotions."

It was different for Hall, who was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 NHL draft by the Edmonton Oilers. A former Hart Trophy winner as the league's MVP, he's now with his seventh NHL team after being sent to the Canes by the Blackhawks.

"Not everyone's career goes exactly the way you want," Hall said Thursday. "I can sit here and feel sorry for myself or beat myself up, but I'm excited to be here. I'm proud of my career and think there's a lot more ahead of me.

"I've played almost 900 games and have a chance to win a Stanley Cup. That's kind of my mindset."

After the Friday night mega trades, which sent ripples through the NHL, Rantanen and Hall were in the lineup Saturday for the Canes' overtime loss to the New York Islanders, then the 4-0 win over the Rangers on Tuesday at Madison Square Garden.

Rantanen was slotted on Aho's line in the first two games, allowing him to rejoin a player he has known since their junior hockey days in Finland a decade ago — the two will serve as alternate captains for Team Finland in the 4 Nations Face-Off event.

With Aho out Thursday, Jack Roslovic centered Rantanen and rookie Jackson Blake, who assisted on Slavin's second-period goal.

Hall, unlike Aho, participated in Thursday's morning skate. He later talked with the media about being traded by the Blackhawks, about facing them so soon after the trade. Then, the absence come game time.

Suzuki was hastily recalled Thursday from the AHL's Chicago Wolves. A former first-round pick by the Canes, he arrived at the arena 15 minutes before the pregame warmups to give the Canes an 11th forward to play with six defensemen.

For Rantanen and Hall, it's about absorbing Brind'Amour's system and getting comfortable with the Canes' style of play – Hall called it "in-your-face" — and the team.

"They're smart hockey players and hockey is hockey," Brind'Amour said Thursday morning. "When you're a good

player, you can adjust quickly and those players have been around."

Hall noted the Hurricanes soon will have their bye week and the break for the 4 Nations Face-Off.

"The timing works out well," Hall said. "I think me and Mikko have a lot of runway to get used to the group, get used to everything and our surroundings before the playoffs."

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

The Athletic

Taylor Hall on Blackhawks: 'I was happy to be traded'

Mark Lazerus

RALEIGH, N.C. — In the weeks leading up to his trade to Carolina, Taylor Hall repeatedly said he wanted to stay in Chicago, that he wanted to be a part of what the Blackhawks were building, that he wanted to settle down in one city in the twilight of his peripatetic career.

But following his first morning skate in his new home arena, the Lenovo Center, Hall struck a different note. Not bitter, but relieved — and more than anything, excited.

"My playing time in Chicago, for whatever reason, was not what I would have liked it to be," Hall said. "So I was happy to be traded, and I was happy to come to a really good team that has a culture in place and a structure that I feel fits well with me."

As the Blackhawks pivoted toward a youth movement in the past month — calling up players such as Frank Nazar and Colton Dach and moving them up in the lineup — Hall saw his role dwindling. As of Jan. 8, he was averaging more than 15 minutes per game. That plummeted to 12:36 per game when he was dropped to the fourth line.

By that point, he could see the writing on the wall.

"They're on a different timeline than my career is, right?" Hall said. "So I get it, I understand it. I wanted to play more. I'm definitely a better player than the amount I was playing. But you also understand where they're coming from. They wanted to play young guys, they wanted to play guys up in the lineup. It was what it was. I still have a lot of respect for the people there and I did like being a Blackhawk a lot and loved the city. Just the way it worked out."

There had been friction between Hall and former coach Luke Richardson, who scratched the former MVP without warning Nov. 16 in Vancouver. Hall later said he was "blindsided" by the move, but Richardson said he apologized and smoothed things over. When Anders Sorensen replaced Richardson as interim head coach, Hall saw more time on the top line with Tyler Bertuzzi and Connor Bedard, but it didn't last very long.

Hall had nine goals and 15 assists in 46 games with the Blackhawks. He played just 11 minutes in his first game with the Hurricanes but played 18:18 against the Rangers on Tuesday, and had a primary assist.

"I like Anders a lot, honestly, I think he's a really good coach," Hall said. "(Ryan) Donato and myself, I felt like we produced pretty well five-on-five and we were both playing pretty far down the lineup. He's a free agent at the end of the year, too. I just don't know if we were in their plans. Specifically, I don't know if I was in their plans for the future, and that's just the way it goes."

Sorensen demurred when asked if there was an organizational decision to play younger players higher in the lineup.

"There's opportunities for everybody, right?" Sorensen said. "I'm not sure if we're looking exactly what age you are. But if you're playing well, and you're contributing the way you're expected to, then you'll get your opportunities."

The Hurricanes are Hall's seventh NHL team, a rather shocking number for a No. 1 draft pick. After six years in Edmonton, he's played three and a half seasons in New Jersey (winning the Hart Trophy in 2018), a half a year in Arizona, a half a year in Buffalo, two full seasons in Boston and a year and a half in Chicago.

Even Hall marvels at how circuitous his career has been. But he says Raleigh's suburban lifestyle suits him, his wife and their 1-year-old son, and he's glad to be on a team with a legitimate chance at a Stanley Cup, something he's never won.

"Not everyone's career goes exactly how they want," he said. "I can sit here and feel sorry for myself or beat myself up or whatever it may be, but I'm excited to be here. I've played almost 900 games and I have a chance at a Stanley Cup this year. That's my mindset. I became a free agent during Covid, probably the worst-ever time to become a free agent. Right before that, I was traded to a team in Arizona where the future was very murky, and I got offered a contract I didn't want to take. And then Covid free agency was what it was. I didn't want to get traded from Boston. I got traded to a rebuilding team (Chicago) that their timeline just didn't fit, and now here we are. There's a lot that goes into it. A lot of guys don't play their careers with the same team. I know I went No. 1 and a lot of guys stick with that team when they go No. 1. But I'm proud of my career and I think there's a lot more ahead of me."

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

What we learned about the NHL in January: Impact of the Mikko Rantanen trade and more

Shayna Goldman

There is always a lot to analyze around an NHL trade — the cost of acquisition on both sides of the deal, the fit and the ripples throughout the trade market. But maybe one of the most interesting elements to consider is the timing of a deal, especially for in-season trades.

The timing of a trade can affect the cost in some cases. A middle-six center can be worth one thing in late January and a lot more in early March, depending on how other teams set the market and the demand for that position around the league. When elite talent is involved, though, the bar starts high and stays high no matter the timing. Trading for Mikko Rantanen in late January versus the deadline likely wouldn't have drastically changed the cost unless there was a dramatic market shift over the next few weeks or an outright bidding war. And by making this deal weeks out from the deadline, Carolina gets more bang for its buck — up to 14 extra games of action with Rantanen (and Taylor Hall) in the fold.

Not only does this make the deal more cost-effective, it also gives everyone a chance to assess the situation before the rapidly approaching deadline. Players have more time to adjust and gel in their surroundings, which can help the decision-making process on both sides of the equation. In Rantanen's case, he has more time to decide whether or not he likes playing with the Hurricanes. Management has an opportunity to evaluate the team with Rantanen and Hall in the fold, which should help shape the team's direction in the weeks leading up to March 7. The same goes for the Avalanche, who brought in Martin Necas and Jack Drury and now have a bit more cap space to work with before the deadline.

The advantages of that timing need to be front of mind for the rest of the league, especially in the days leading up to the 4 Nations Face-Off break.

Special teams impact of Colorado's additions

Despite rolling out a top unit of Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar and Rantanen this season, the Avalanche's power-play attack has been far from lethal. From the season start to Dec. 31, Colorado's expected goal generation of 8.31 per 60 was just below league average, but its scoring rate (9.01 goals per 60) brought the team up to ninth place.

That production dried up in January, with Colorado falling to 28th in expected goal generation (6.71 per 60) and second-to-last in scoring with just 2.77 goals per 60 in its 11 games before the trade.

Rantanen was far from the problem in Colorado, but adding Necas should infuse a new element into an area of play that needs it. There is only so much to draw from three games and less than 11 minutes of power-play time, but the early returns are positive for Necas on the advantage.

Just take their 2:22 minutes of power-play time against the Rangers last Sunday. Necas earned a secondary assist on Makar's power-play goal in the first.

Then, on the Avalanche's second opportunity of the game, the Rangers managed one early clear. After that, Colorado's top unit pinned them in their own zone for the remaining 1:27 of the advantage. Necas helped cycle the puck in the zone, set up his new teammates and generated two dangerous chances that hit the post. If that's a sign of what's to come, it could breathe some life into a unit that surprisingly struggled through much of January.

On the other end of the ice, Drury could add some support to a short-handed unit that needs it.

Colorado's penalty kill also trended down in January to allow the fourth-highest rate of expected goals against, at 10.9 per 60. Those short-handed lapses haven't always been as glaring because goaltending has held a lot off the scoresheet. Mackenzie Blackwood and Scott Wedgewood have saved a league-high 5.4 goals above expected in January while short-handed.

Drury wasn't a leading penalty killer with the Hurricanes, but he still played about 26 percent of the available short-handed time before the trade. And that should help fill a void left by Valeri Nichushkin's absence, and even last year's trade deadline addition Yakov Trenin, who departed as a free agent.

Rantanen and Hall's influence on the middle of the ice

The Corsi Canes have stayed true to their name, with the most shot volume at five-on-five and the highest expected goal rate. But one area of the ice could use more emphasis: the middle. The heat map below visualizes that, with the Hurricanes' heaviest areas of offensive creation pictured in red.

Via HockeyViz

Adding both Rantanen and Hall should help change that.

One of Rantanen's biggest strengths is generating scoring chances. He's a dynamic winger who can win puck battles and drive his shots right to the middle of the ice at five-on-five. Rantanen's scoring ability draws defenders in, which can open up his teammates for a high-danger pass.

That was already on display in Rantanen's first two games with his new team. The Canes had a 16-10 shot attempt advantage and a 79 percent expected goal rate in his minutes against the Islanders last Saturday. The numbers weren't as tilted against the Rangers, but the winger still affected the scoresheet.

It's only been a few games, so the question is how well he will fit there in the long run, especially without Nathan MacKinnon. Rantanen hasn't always had to be the play driver on his line, and he isn't much of a puck transporter at five-on-five. He never had to be, with a zone-entry machine at his side. And one of the Canes' best carriers, Necas, went the other way in this deal.

So the complexion of Carolina's offense will change, and so will Rantanen's approach because as good as Sebastian Aho is in transition, he isn't in the same stratosphere as MacKinnon. But if the early returns are a glimpse of what is to come, Rantanen should help his new team kick their offense up a level.

Hall should also help, just in a different capacity in the middle six. His five-on-five scoring rate plummeted in Chicago over the last year, but it wasn't for a lack of trying. Hall ranked

highly not just relative to the Blackhawks but across the league in controlled entries and primary shot assists this year, according to All Three Zones.

Against the Rangers on Tuesday night, his puck movement shined with setups to Andrei Svechnikov and Eric Robinson.

With Svechnikov in particular, this is something to watch. His shot volume and quality are up this year at five-on-five, but he has struggled to convert on those chances. Maybe Hall's passing can help change that, giving the Hurricanes more reliable goal scoring from the middle.

Thompson earns himself an extension in Washington

Despite Charlie Lindgren's emergence as the Capitals' starter down the stretch last season, management still looked for reinforcements in the offseason. And now Logan Thompson is shaping up to be one of their most savvy deals of 2024.

While the workload distribution has been perfectly even through most of the season, with the two rotating every other game, Thompson has shined the most. Through his first 21 games, he saved 16.5 goals above expected and earned a 0.919 save percentage. But his most impressive stretch of the season came after that when Thompson took a true starting role while Lindgren was injured. He gave the Capitals a chance to win with quality starts in all five of his consecutive starts and saved 11 goals above expected along the way.

The Capitals have since returned to their even split in net now that Lindgren is back, but that stretch of play was encouraging for when (or if) this team needs Thompson to take over the starter's net. Based on past precedent for teams with a shared crease, that could be the plan for the playoffs.

Thompson's first half in Washington (plus his time in Vegas) was enough for Washington to bet on him for another six years at $5.85 million a year on average. Since he doesn't have an extensive track record as a true starting goalie, or even a 1A, there is some risk associated with the signing. However, it aligns with the goalie market reset earlier this year after some key signings, such as Jeremy Swayman in Boston and Joey Daccord in Seattle.

Extreme special teams in Vegas

The Golden Knights' power play has truly become an advantage. Vegas came into the season hot on the power play before slowing down in mid-November and December. But the team got back on track in January. The Golden Knights have notched at least one power-play goal in 10 of their last 12 games before Thursday's tilt against the Blue Jackets.

Most of that success comes from a top unit led by Jack Eichel, Mark Stone, Tomas Hertl and Shea Theodore. Pavel Dorofeyev rounds out that group as a shooting presence on the wing.

Heading into Thursday night, the team converted on 28.3 percent of its opportunities through 50 games, which landed them third in the league behind the Devils and Jets. And their play below the surface backs that up. The team does a lot of damage from the high-danger areas in the net-front area, up the middle of the ice and from the circles. That adds up to about 10.1 expected goals per 60, which ranks behind only the Devils. Vegas' scoring efficiency and expected goal creation this season are the best of its eight-year existence.

But not all special teams are an advantage for Vegas. Surprisingly, its penalty kill has been somewhat of a weakness. In January, the team slipped into the bottom 10 in expected and actual goal suppression even while matching up to lesser teams like the Sharks and Blackhawks.

The Golden Knights went six-for-six while short-handed against the Stars and Panthers earlier this week, which is at least a step in the right direction after some concerning trends throughout the month.

The Panthers' declining rush game

Once upon a time, the Panthers were one of the best rush-based teams in the league. In 2021-22, that was Florida's signature style. The big question then was whether that style would be crushed in a playoff environment or if the Panthers needed more diversity in their attack.

Paul Maurice was hired in the 2022 offseason, and the rest is history. The Panthers built up a strong, grinding forecheck that has worn down opponents, helping them win their first Stanley Cup last June.

The team is elite at recovering dump-ins, wearing down its opponent along the boards, cycling the puck in the offensive zone and generating second-chance opportunities. But even as the Panthers evolved into more of a forechecking force, they still had some balance in their attack thanks to their play off the rush. It's just faded over the last couple of seasons — and that's especially obvious this year.

Via All Three Zones

The Panthers' change in strategy is evident on a team-wide and individual basis through tracking from All Three Zones. One of the biggest downticks is from Carter Verhaeghe, who tends to be one of the more reliable threats in transition around the league. He has only generated 5.67 shots per 60 off the rush this year, compared to last year's 10.7. Evan Rodrigues and Matthew Tkachuk have also taken noticeable steps back, along with Sam Bennett. That may be a contributing factor behind the dips in each of their five-on-five scoring rates from last year.

Howling for Wolf in the Calder Trophy race

High-scoring first-year players tend to draw more attention in the rookie race. Macklin Celebrini, Lane Hutson and Matvei Michkov are bound to earn many votes this spring. But Dustin Wolf is also making a strong case to finish in the top three.

Similar to the Hart Trophy race, the challenge of the Calder is measuring players of each position against each other. Comparing forwards and defensemen is challenging enough, but a goaltender? That's all the more complicated.

With Wolf, it's easier to measure him up against the top goalies in the league. And so far this season, he stacks up to some of the league's best. Heading into Thursday night, Wolf ranked sixth in the league with 18.7 goals saved above expected, behind only Daccord, Lukas Dostal, Igor Shesterkin, Thompson and Connor Hellebuyck. With 20 quality starts in 28 appearances, he has given the Flames a chance to win most nights, which is a major reason why

Calgary is in the playoff picture. That seems more than worthy of top honors as a rookie of the year.

January Stars

Leon Draisaitl is doing everything and more this season in Edmonton. He is scoring goals at a career-high rate to lead the league, driving the Oilers' second line, winning puck battles to generate dangerous chances and has been a shutdown presence defensively. Draisaitl shined in a star-studded matchup against the Avalanche in January and stepped up against the Capitals and Canucks while Connor McDavid was suspended. All together this month, he scored nine goals and 20 points in 14 games while earning a 62 percent expected goal rate.

Speaking of team MVPs, there is Dylan Larkin. His impact is felt all over the ice. The Red Wings count on him to retrieve pucks and transition the puck up the ice. In the offensive zone, he is a skilled playmaker and a clutch goal-scorer. That scoring has helped the Red Wings earn pivotal points in a tight playoff race. Just take his performance against Montreal, when he scored two points and outright dominated his five-on-five minutes to earn a season-high 4.15 Game Score against a team competing for the same playoff seed. He capped off January with a strong game against Edmonton, where he scored the tying goal and the game-winner in the shootout.

Filip Forsberg made a strong case for the third star. So did Thompson, Wolf, Darcy Kuemper and Spencer Knight, who put up sparkling numbers over the last month. But Barzal, who has helped fuel the Islanders' 9-3 record in January, earned the honors.

Barzal's 11 points over his last 12 games may not stack up to the rest of the league, thanks to the Islanders' putrid power play. But he is excelling at five-on-five. Barzal is one of the best in the league at creating scoring chances in transition, which has helped the Islanders control play with a 58 percent expected goal rate in January and a 16-3 scoring edge with their star forward on the ice.

— Data via Evolving-Hockey, HockeyViz, HockeyStatCards, All Three Zones and Natural Stat Trick. This story relies on shot-based metrics; here is a primer on these numbers.

NHL trade board 5.0: Where the market stands after the Rantanen blockbuster

Chris Johnston

The tremors from the Mikko Rantanen blockbuster were still echoing around the league when another bomb dropped in Vancouver this week, with Canucks president Jim Rutherford publicly declaring that he felt the relationship between J.T. Miller and Elias Pettersson had reached a point where it's beyond repair.

Cue more trade winds!

While we are unlikely to see another deal that matches Carolina's all-in play on Rantanen in terms of its overall scope, plenty of big names are still cycling through the rumor mill with five weeks to go before the NHL's March 7 trade deadline.

Vancouver remains at the epicenter of activity.

Here's our latest Big Board. Players are listed by how closely they demand watching, based on their potential impact and the current amount of buzz around them.

Note: Net Ratings and market values are via Dom Luszczyszyn's model and are projected for the full season based on statistics through Jan. 29. Goals saved above expected (GSAx) are via Evolving-Hockey, also through Jan. 29. Contract info is via PuckPedia.

Miller is in possession of a full no-movement clause in his contract and likely will only waive it for U.S.-based teams in the East. That's why a return to the New York Rangers, who drafted him 15th in 2011, makes so much sense. Miller is an all-situations forward who produces top-of-the-lineup offense while being counted on to kill penalties and log tough defensive minutes. His versatility is a major asset, as is his competitive nature, which is something he needs to rein in from time to time. Miller would immediately become a top-two or top-three forward on basically any team in the league.

Player type

All-situations top-liner

Nelson is a big, sturdy forward who has scored at a 35-goal pace across the past three seasons. He can be slotted as a second-line center or slide into a wing spot on the top line. As a pending unrestricted free agent, he's exactly the kind of difference-maker contending teams would be falling over themselves to get their hands on if — and it remains a massive 'if' — the Islanders fade from the playoff picture and choose to move him before the deadline. Plenty of contenders are monitoring this situation closely.

Player type

Big veteran second-liner

What he lacks in size, he makes up in tenacity and feistiness. Gourde is a strong skater and two-way player who owns a couple of Stanley Cup rings from his time with Tampa Bay. His offensive numbers and ice time are down this season, but he's drawing attention with Seattle fading from the playoff picture. One thing worth monitoring is Gourde's health as he's missed a couple of different stretches already this season.

Player type

Feisty playoff performer

Rangy and reliable, there's nothing flashy about Pettersson's game. But he has proven in recent years that he can handle 20-plus minutes per night while helping drive play at even strength, and he should be able to slot in as a second-pairing defenseman on a competitive team. Penguins general manager Kyle Dubas has a big project on his hands, but Pettersson is his most attractive asset to peddle at this year's deadline, and Dubas seems motivated to start turning over his roster. He is looking for young NHL players or prospects back in return, rather than draft picks.

Player type

Reliable second-pair defenseman

The retooling Flyers are short on rental players to take to market in the lead-up to the deadline, but they could be

compelled to part with the big, physical defenseman who has some term remaining. Ristolainen plays a rugged style best suited for third-pairing duty, and he's taken meaningful steps forward over the past 18 months toward becoming a more reliable defender in his own zone. With a contract that stretches two seasons beyond this one, some salary retention might be needed to make a trade work.

Player type

Rugged veteran defenseman

A Big Board mainstay, this may finally be the season Gibson finds his way back to a competitive team. He's lost the No. 1 job in Anaheim to Lukáš Dostál and is inching ever closer to the end of his contract with two years remaining on it after this one. That's been the biggest impediment to finding him a new home. While Gibson's numbers in recent seasons don't jump off the page in a positive way, they should be viewed with the understanding that he's played behind some horrific defensive teams. He's also had a major bounce-back performance so far this season. On a trade market with very few goaltending options available, Gibson has the highest ceiling.

Player type

Former ace in need of a fresh start

You can add his name to the long list of underperforming Bruins, but it's worth noting Frederic is only months removed from an 18-goal, 40-point breakout campaign. He's a big man who skates well and can effectively be deployed as a checker. With senior leadership in Boston acknowledging publicly that the team is considering becoming a seller ahead of the deadline, Frederic is a hot commodity.

Player type

Checker who can score

A relentless high-motor player who is enjoying a career season in Chicago, Donato is starting to attract some attention on the trade market. As a pending unrestricted free agent, he profiles as an attractive deadline rental who can bring versatility and depth. Donato appears to have made some strides with his skating this season and has the hands to bury offensive chances when he gets them.

Player type

High-motor depth player

Now into his ninth NHL season of averaging at least 23 minutes per game, this all-situations defender is delivering strong play-driving results for a Blue Jackets team that has been more competitive than many were expecting this season. Still, no one is losing sight of the big picture in Columbus. The team has started engaging the pending unrestricted free agent on extension talks but doesn't seem willing to break the bank. If someone steps up with an offer of a first-round pick for Provorov, the Blue Jackets will likely part with him.

Player type

All-situations defender

The Canucks may prefer to move Miller, the older of their two star forwards, but they've kept an open mind (and open phone line) when it comes to Pettersson. They went well down the road in talks with Carolina before the Hurricanes landed Mikko Rantanen. Pettersson is an elite offensive play-driver in the prime of his career, and he's in a tier of player that rarely gets traded in the NHL. But he's also among the league's highest-paid forwards, and his production has cratered since signing a $92.8 million, eight-year extension in March.

Player type

Superstar scorer

With the Sabres languishing at the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings and in need of some kind of shakeup, there have been plenty of outside inquiries about Cozens. Even amid a down season, the 6-foot-3 center holds plenty of appeal. He's got great speed and skill for a player of his size and already has a 30-goal NHL campaign under his belt at age 23. Here's the rub, though: It's going to take a meaningful offer to pry him out of Buffalo. So far that hasn't materialized.

Player type

Speedy young blue-chip asset

The veteran right-shot winger remains a serious scoring threat into his 15th NHL season. He hit 30 goals in 2023-24 and is on pace to comfortably cruise past 20 this season. As a pending unrestricted free agent, Palmieri is an attractive rental option, especially with his willingness to battle his way to the hard areas of the ice. Not unlike the situation with teammate Brock Nelson, the only real question is if general manager Lou Lamoriello will willingly part with a valued member of his team, even if the Islanders seem destined for the draft lottery rather than a playoff race.

Player type

Veteran scorer

A rough-and-tumble winger who boasts an impressive fight card, Olivier has caught the attention of at least a couple of teams currently eyeing potential depth forward options. The 27-year-old pending UFA has even managed to chip in more than his share of expected goals this season. But what makes him most attractive is his size, strength and willingness to embrace an energy role. Olivier is built for playoff hockey and will have suitors if Columbus can't get him signed to an extension.

Player type

Rough-and-tumble energy winger

All signs point to the pending unrestricted free agent winger getting dealt ahead of the deadline with the Kraken falling out of the playoff chase. Tanev is known for playing a grindy game that wears on opponents, and he's an excellent penalty killer who leads Seattle in short-handed ice time. He certainly doesn't back down when faced with a contested piece of ice. As a bonus, he also comes with 46 games of playoff experience.

Player type

Grindy penalty-killing forward

Montreal's acquisition of Alexandre Carrier in December likely sealed Savard's fate. At a minimum, it made the veteran defenseman on an expiring contract much more

expendable. Savard should have suitors as a depth option and penalty killer, and it certainly doesn't hurt that he carries the experience of a Stanley Cup win with Tampa Bay in 2021 after being acquired midway through that season. He's also a right shot who routinely sacrifices his body to block shots, both of which are attributes good teams can always use more of.

Player type

Veteran defensive defenseman

Traded from Edmonton to San Jose over the summer in a cap-clearing move, it's hard to imagine the veteran right-shot defenseman finishing this campaign with the rebuilding Sharks. Not only is he a pending unrestricted free agent, but he's also shown himself capable of handling the rigors of playoff hockey during three runs with the Oilers. Most notably, he was an important part of the penalty kill that was a massive difference-maker for the Cup runners-up in the spring. While Ceci has his detractors, his blend of experience and defensive attributes should hold some appeal to teams looking for added depth before the playoffs.

Player type

Depth D and penalty killer

On the younger side of Pittsburgh's pending unrestricted free agents, O'Connor profiles as a bottom-six forward who plays a power game. Big and stong, he's unafraid to finish a bodycheck or engage in a battle for the puck. While he shouldn't be looked at to produce much offensively, O'Connor can kill penalties and make life difficult on the opposition at five-on-five.

Player type

Big, strong bottom-six forward

A huge winger at 6-foot-6 and 230-plus pounds, Greenway is on the radar for contenders seeking a bottom-six upgrade. As a pending unrestricted free agent, he can be acquired as a rental ahead of the deadline and the cost shouldn't be too prohibitive given his limited offensive output this season. Consistency is a bit of a question mark here.

Player type

Huge depth winger

Playing on an expiring contract, the depth center is having a career year at the perfect time. Evans appears poised to blow past previous career highs of 13 goals and 29 points. While the Canadiens like him, his surge in production may turn him into trade bait rather than someone they keep around with another contract. Evans isn't overly big, but he's a quick skater and effective penalty-killer. He'd be a quality fourth-line option for a contender.

Player type

Quality fourth-line option

The Chicago Blackhawks aren't believed to be shopping the veteran right-shot defenseman, but it hasn't kept other teams from calling. Jones carries a sizeable cap hit for a lot of years, but he's got a skillset that's in short supply around the league. Jones is an all-around defender who can log major minutes and handle a shutdown role. He also holds a no-movement clause but may be enticed to waive it with Chicago still likely years away from completing its rebuild.

Player type

Major-minutes defenseman

The Sabres certainly aren't shopping the 23-year-old defenseman, but he may be the piece they have to put in play in order to make a significant shakeup. Byram is an elite skater who can log big minutes and should still have his best and most productive seasons ahead. He's also due for a new contract after the season as a pending restricted free agent. The Sabres control his rights, but they're a team with a lot of money and years already tied up in their blue line, so decisions are looming.

Player type

Blue-chip prospect

The 2019 Conn Smythe Trophy winner has two more seasons remaining on his contract and has already indicated a desire to stay in Nashville. However, it might not ultimately be his call. The organization wants to do right by O'Reilly, but general manager Barry Trotz will be forced to make a decision if he gets a strong trade offer amid a disappointing season for the team. O'Reilly is an excellent two-way center who can be counted on to chip in offensively and has the ability to be a true difference-maker for a contender. As an added bonus, he's a menace in the faceoff circle, too.

Player type

Top two-way center

With Laughton signed for one season beyond this one, the Flyers are under no pressure to trade him amid a campaign in which he's scoring at nearly a 20-goal pace. But if a contender is willing to part with a first-round pick, they might do it. Laughton would be a bottom-six upgrade for a lot of contending teams. He's a glue guy who kills penalties and plays with an edge.

Player type

Veteran glue guy

Reliable right-shot centers who can fill a depth role always have currency come deadline time. Bjugstad has shown that before — getting traded in 2022 from Arizona to Edmonton in a deal that brought back a third-round pick and defenseman Michael Kesselring — and he's trending toward being that kind of asset again for Utah HC. He's a reliable play-driver who profiles as an ideal bottom-six utility man.

Player type

Bottom-six utility man

With Granlund producing at nearly a point per game across the past two seasons in San Jose, the biggest question for any potential suitor here is fit. As in: Where does Granlund fit on a deeper roster? He's been the Sharks' top-line center, and they may still make a pitch to lock him up to an extension. That appears to be a 50/50 proposition right now. If he ends up on the trade market instead, Granlund brings extensive playoff experience and versatility. Not only is he a forward with a strong track record of power-play production but he also kills penalties.

Player type

Proven scorer and playoff vet

A veteran left-shot defenseman with two Stanley Cup championships on his resume, Dumoulin profiles as a nice depth addition for a contender. Big and mobile, he can be trusted to move the puck effectively while handling a steady workload. He's not known for being overly physical, but he won't be pushed around. The 33-year-old is on an expiring contract and should be an easy piece for the Ducks to ship out before the deadline.

Player type

Depth defenseman with Cup rings

A mountain of a man at 6-foot-6 and 232 pounds, McCarron may find himself in demand since he's playing on an affordable cap hit for one more season. He's a right shot who can kill penalties and win some draws. Even if he's limited offensively, there's value to be found in a fourth-liner who plays his style of game.

Player type

Mountainous depth forward

Another giant depth forward at 6-foot-5 and 220 pounds, Brazeau traveled the long road to the NHL and has earned a raise on his league-minimum $775,000 contract. He's already hit the 10-goal mark for the first time in his career this season. Brazeau is a hard-working player who doesn't hesitate to finish his checks.

Player type

Late-blooming power forward

Lindgren is poised to potentially walk as a free agent on July 1 and also has had a hand in some of the Rangers' defensive struggles this season. That's not a great combination. A frequent partner of former Norris Trophy winner Adam Fox, Lindgren has still seen his team take on water during his five-on-five minutes. However, he's still considered a high-character player who doesn't shy away from physical play and is at an age where he likely hasn't yet hit his ceiling.

Player type

Struggling veteran

A minute-munching, shot-blocking defenseman who has drawn trade interest in the past, Ferraro is a valuable commodity. Signed through the end of next season at a $3.25 million cap hit, the 26-year-old is a strong puck mover and penalty killer with a competitive streak to match.

Player type

Minute-munching shot-blocker

Robertson has bit his lip since a summer trade request went unfulfilled by the Leafs, but the situation could still come to a head before the deadline. He has at least helped his trade value with some more productive outings since a brief string of scratches in December. However, in the big picture, Robertson hasn't gained much traction under new head coach Craig Berube, and he may still get his desired fresh start once the Leafs begin looking at other acquisitions.

Player type

Diminutive winger who can score

Nyquist has found a nice home in Nashville and might prefer a new contract to getting dealt away as a rental. That will leave the Predators with a decision in a season in which they appear destined to finish well outside the playoffs. Nyquist is coming off a 75-point season at age 34 and is one of the best chips they have to play at the deadline. He is a talented playmaker who remains a strong skater and isn't showing any obvious signs of slowing down.

Player type

Veteran playmaker

(Top illustration: Demetrius Robinson / The Athletic, with photos of J.T. Miller, Dylan Cozens and John Gibson by Michael Reaves / Getty Images, Jeffrey T. Barnes / Associated Press and Sean M. Haffey / Getty Images)

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

NORTH STATE JOURNAL

As blockbuster trade broke, Hurricanes waited in uncertainty

Cory Lavalette

Hurricanes center Jesperi Kotkaniemi chases the puck during Carolina's 4-0 win over the Rangers on Tuesday in New York. (Seth Wenig / AP Photo)

RALEIGH — "I thought I was gone for 13 minutes," Jesperi Kotkaniemi said, "but I came back."

The Hurricanes center found out about what would become the Mikko Rantanen and Taylor Hall for Martin Necas and Jack Drury trade the same way as almost everyone in the universe.

"We were leaving dinner and things started to come up on social media, like, 'Oh, what's going on?'" Kotkaniemi said Tuesday morning in New York. "There were a lot of names — my name and other guys' names out there. So we were like, 'What's happening?' No one really knew what's going on."

As the news spread on social media last Friday night — first that Hall would be coming to Carolina and then of the bigger deal including Rantanen — the group text the players share got active.

"It blew up pretty quick," defenseman Sean Walker said.

Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky — at the request of his counterpart in Colorado, Chris MacFarland — kept an airtight seal on negotiations with the Avalanche, which started in the offseason but heated up in recent weeks.

"I've only been a part of a few sudden ones midseason that are kind of more out of the blue than normal," Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal said.

Not that Kotkaniemi was completely blindsided. His name had been bandied about in rumors of Carolina's discussions with the Canucks regarding both Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller.

Following last Thursday's home win against Columbus, I had asked Kotkaniemi if it was difficult dealing with the persistent trade rumors.

"Na, at the beginning of the year, they think you're great," he said of pundits and others putting his name out there, "and in the middle of the year, they think you're s–t."

About 24 hours later, he was right in the middle of it, not knowing his future.

"Those are big things," he said. "Everyone has families and houses, apartments wherever they play. So there's a lot of things going through your mind when those things come up."

Less than 20 minutes after Daily Faceoff's Frank Seravalli — who had first reported Rantanen would be headed to Carolina — had posted on X that it "sounds like both Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Martin Necas are going" to the Avalanche, ESPN's Emily Kaplan, at 9:06 p.m., posted that it would be Drury, not Kotkaniemi, as the second piece in the deal.

At 10:08 p.m., the Hurricanes officially announced the trade following a negotiation that Tulsky called "a complicated dance."

The players gathered in their hotel in Garden City on Long Island to say quick goodbyes to Necas and Drury — the Avalanche were set to play Sunday at 1 p.m. in Boston, and both players had to leave immediately to arrive in time to make their Colorado debut against the Bruins.

"We all just got together," Kotkaniemi said. "It was nice that everyone showed up, and it's nice to say a couple last words to those guys for a while (because) we don't play (Colorado) anymore this season. So it was a little hectic there."

Staal added, "We were trying to take a little time together and say bye to a couple family members."

While the excitement of the additions bubbled under the surface, there were still the emotions of losing two players who were drafted and developed by the team and had become part of the culture.

"I love both those guys so much. Obviously, you've got to lose big pieces to get big pieces. So I just can't wish enough well on Nechy and Jacko because those are friends you'll have for a long time — geez, emotion," said Jordan Martinook, pausing to compose himself. "But bringing in

Hallsy and Rants, those are two unbelievable players. It's going to make our team better, and I'm excited to see how it all plays out."

With the NHL trade deadline just over five weeks away, everyone can't exhale yet.

"It's part of the business," Kotkaniemi said. "Anything can happen at any moment, so it's good to kind of be ready for that."

Rantanen gets 1st goal with Hurricanes in 3-2 win

Cory Lavalette

Hurricanes forward Mikko Rantanen battles with Blackhawks' rookieFrank Nazar during Carolina's 3-2 win Thursday in Raleigh. (Karl DeBlaker / AP Photo)

RALEIGH — Welcome to Raleigh, Mikko Rantanen.

In his first home game at Lenovo Center, Rantanen scored the go-ahead goal in the second period of the Hurricanes' 3-2 win over the Blackhawks on Thursday.

With the game tied 1-1 early in the second period, Jack Roslovic started a rush up ice and moved to the middle at the Chicago blue line.

Rantanen cut behind him and Roslovic — centering Carolina's top line with Sebastian Aho out with an illness — put a drop pass right on his new teammate's stick. Rantanen shot from the left circle, and the puck trickled through Arvid Soderblom for his first goal with the Hurricanes and 26th of the season, triggering "Moose!" chants in the arena.

"Roslovic made a heck of a play on the entry, the drop pass, and this time it went in," Rantanen said. "So I was glad to help the team that way."

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said clearing another hurdle can help Rantanen settle in with his team.

"He knows he wants to come here and help contribute right away," Brind'Amour said, "and you've got to be on the score sheet. … And now he has. He's got his goal, and he was impactful. He could have had a couple tonight. He was really good and nice to see him get that, and now he doesn't have to worry about it."

Sixty-seven seconds after Rantanen's goal, defenseman Jaccob Slavin extended the lead to 3-1.

Rookie Jackson Blake pulled the puck out of a scrum in the Blackhawks' zone, made a few quick moves to create space and snapped a shot that hit Soderblom (24 saves) and then the crossbar. Slavin crashed the net on the backside, outmuscled Chicago forward Phillip Kurashev and shoveled in the rebound for his fourth goal of the season at 5:59 of the second.

Juha Jaaska, playing his 14th NHL game, picked up an assist — his second of the night after he set up a shorthanded goal to open the scoring.

The Hurricanes didn't allow a shot on goal for the first 15 minutes of the game but found themselves on the penalty kill whenCarolina defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere was called for tripping.

But it was Carolina that benefited from Chicago being on the power play.

Seth Jarvis forced a turnover at the Carolina blue line and rushed up ice with Jaaska for a 2-on-1. Jarvis gave the puck up to Jaaska at center ice and slashed to the middle. Jaaska saucered a pass over Blackhawks defenseman Alec Martinez's stick that Jarvis quickly settled and shot past Soderblom to give the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 16:57 of the first.

"He was so hyped. I was so hyped," said Jaaska, who now has three assists and recorded his first career multipoint game. "Those are the moments when you get the emotions. I don't know, it's super cool, especially when you don't (score) much points and then you, do you are like, 'Oh my,' they feel so good."

Brind'Amour has called on Jaaska to kill penalties since Jack Drury was sent to Colorado in the Rantanen trade, and the 26-year-old Finn made the most of it.

"That was a heck of a play there; nice touch," Brind'Amour said. "Out of necessity, we were looking for killers. We're running out of them, and he stepped up. That was a crucial moment, really."

The Blackhawks finally registered a shot with just under three minutes left in the period, and shortly after, the visitors tied the game.

A puck got past Gostisbehere along the boards in the neutral zone, leading to a quick-developing 2-on-1. Blackhawks captain Nick Foligno passed the puck ahead to Ilya Mikheyev for a breakaway, and he scored his ninth goal of the season to tie the game with 1:22 left in the first period.

Down two goals in the third period, Chicago cut the lead in half when Connor Bedard scored his 15th goal of the season past Pyotr Kochetkov (18 saves).

Carolina, playing with just 17 skaters because both Aho and Taylor Hall were out with an illness spreading through the locker room, found just enough to get by the woebegone Blackhawks to extend its point streak to seven games.

"Considering what we're missing, and then we have couple guys that were not feeling 100%, that's for sure," Brind'Amour said. "So we gutted it out, and we'll move on."

Notes: The Hurricanes honored Frederick Andersen before the game after he recently played his 500th career game and earned his 300th win. … Teuvo Teravainen played his first game against the Hurricanes since signing with Chicago in the offseason.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025



Mikko Rantanen scores as the Hurricanes beat the Blackhawks 3-2

WRAL

RALEIGH, N.C. — RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Mikko Rantanen scored his first goal with Carolina, helping the Hurricanes beat the Chicago Blackhawks 3-2 on Thursday night.

Seth Jarvis and Jaccob Slavin also scored for the Hurricanes, who won for the sixth time in seven games. Pyotr Kochetkov made 18 saves.

Connor Bedard and Ilya Mikheyev scored for Chicago. Arvid Soderblom stopped 24 shots.

The Hurricanes got Rantanen from Colorado as part of last weekend's three-team trade that also involved Chicago. He picked up an assist in Tuesday night's 4-0 win at the Rangers.

Taylor Hall, who was traded from Chicago to Carolina as part of the deal, was sidelined because of an illness.

Rantanen gave Carolina a 2-1 lead in his home debut when he scored his 26th goal of the season 4:52 into the second period. Slavin added his fourth goal at 5:59.

Blackhawks: The last-place Blackhawks likely will be a popular seller in the runup to the NHL trade deadline. Eight different teams had scouts at Thursday's game.

Hurricanes: With Hall and Sebastian Aho both sidelined by an illness, Carolina only dressed 11 forwards and 17 skaters. Center Ryan Suzuki, the team's 2019 first-round pick, made his NHL debut.

Jack Roslovic set up Rantanen's goal by drawing three Chicago defenders in the middle of the ice before feeding Rantanen in the left circle.

Jarvis' short-handed goal in the first period was his 11th goal in the past 13 games. The Hurricanes are 62-5-5 in the regular season when the fourth-year winger scores.

The Blackhawks travel to Florida on Saturday, and the Hurricanes host Los Angeles on Saturday.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

Recap: Rantanen Scores, Suzuki Debuts In Canes' Win Over Blackhawks

Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Canes extend their point streak to seven games despite playing with just 17 skaters

RALEIGH, N.C. - Forward Mikko Rantanen etched his first goal with his new team on Thursday, playing a pivotal role in the Carolina Hurricanes' 3-2 win over the Chicago Blackhawks.

GAME SUMMARY | BOX SCORE | UPCOMING HOME GAMES

It was a whirlwind day for Rod Brind'Amour's group, who went into battle without Sebastian Aho and Taylor Hall due to an illness spread throughout the locker room. Although they had Jack Roslovic, who missed Tuesday's win in New York because of that same bug, the team had to recall 2019 first-round draft pick Ryan Suzuki to round out their still-shorthanded lineup.

Playing in his first NHL game after 199 in the American Hockey League, the longtime prospect watched his team nab the first goal of the night, a shorthanded connection between once Wolves teammate Juha Jaaska and Seth Jarvis.

Chicago would counter before the conclusion of the first frame, but Carolina picked up right where they left off in the front half of the second stanza. Roslovic had a dazzling setup to bring Rantanen's first in Raleigh to light and just 67 seconds later, Jaccob Slavin doubled the team's insurance.

The insurance proved to be necessary because the lone goal for the remainder of the contest belonged to 2023 first-overall selection Connor Bedard, who made it a one-goal game. That would be as close as Chicago would get, though, as Pyotr Kochetkov kept the door closed from there and improved to 19-9-3 after stopping 18 of his 20 shots faced.

CHI at CAR | Recap

Stats & Standouts

Before the action got underway tonight, goaltender Frederik Andersen was honored pre-game with a ceremony celebrating his accomplishment of 500 games played. Flanked by family and teammates, "Zilla" was presented with several gifts, including a piece of art made completely of LEGOs (a Danish invention), a custom helmet by his longtime mask designer DaveArt, and of course, a silver stick.

After parts of five seasons in the AHL from 2020-2025, Ryan Suzuki made his NHL debut on Thursday, skating in 6:12. With Suzuki's appearance, each of Carolina's first-round picks since 2010 has now gone on to play at least one game for the club.

Juha Jaaska recorded his first multi-point game in the NHL posting two helpers on goals by Seth Jarvis and Jaccob Slavin to lead all skaters in the contest. He's the 18th Hurricane to log two or more points in a game this season.

Speaking of Seth Jarvis, his third shorthanded goal of the season moves him into a tie for second among all NHL skaters. Only Florida's Sam Reinhart (5) has more this season.

With that goal, Jarvis also reached the 20-goal mark for the second time in his career. He is the fifth player in Canes team history (since relocation) to record multiple 20-goal seasons before turning 23, joining Andrei Svechnikov, Sebastian Aho, Jeff Skinner and Eric Staal.

Mikko Rantanen's first goal with the Hurricanes gives him points in back-to-back games since his debut on Jan. 25. His 26 tallies rank seventh among all NHLers.

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour following the win...

"It wasn't pretty, but we had some good segments in there. We were able to get ahead, and I guess - I don't want to say 'stop playing,' but we kind of hung around. But yeah, considering what we were missing, and having a couple guys who were not feeling 100%, that's for sure, we gutted it out and we'll move on."

Rod Brind'Amour on Mikko Rantanen scoring his first goal with the Canes...

"He wants to come in here and help contribute right away, and you know you've got to be on the scoresheet, that's what everyone's looking at. And now he has, he's got his goal. He was impactful, he could have had a couple tonight. He was

really good, and it's nice to see him get that and now he doesn't have to worry about it.

Mikko Rantanen on how he is adjusting after the trade...

"It's getting better every day. After every skate we have, the more time I hang out with the guys and after every game, it's going to feel more comfortable and comfortable. Just a really good team, I can tell that right away, so I'm obviously happy to play in a good team."

Ryan Suzuki on his whirlwind debut day...

"I didn't really get to think about it. I feel like if I had had a night to sleep on it, I probably would have worked myself up a little bit. It was nice to just get here and get onto the ice."

Juha Jaaska on notching his first career multi-point game...

"Maybe in the first games I wouldn't have been able to do that, but now I've built some poise. I don't try to push too much, don't rush and relax a little more, enjoy playing."

What's Next?

The Canes are scheduled to practice on Friday and will return to game action on Saturday night against the Los Angeles Kings.

Next Game: Saturday, Feb. 1 vs. Los Angeles | 7:00 p.m. | Tickets | Parking | Upcoming Theme Nights

Examining The Biggest Trades In Canes History

Peter Dewar

A look back at some key player swaps, from Rod Brind'Amour to...Patrick Marleau?

Mark Recchi (center) and Doug Weight (right) celebrate Carolina's 2006 Stanley Cup Championship in the locker room.

© Elsa/Getty Images

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes sent a shockwave through the hockey world late last week, acquiring perennial top-5 scorer Mikko Rantanen from Colorado and 2018 Hart Trophy winner Taylor Hall from Chicago, while sending high-quality pieces in Martin Necas, Jack Drury and multiple draft picks the other way(s).

To say a trade involving multiple point-per-game players swapping colors and in which a former league MVP is considered a secondary piece is rare would be an understatement. Deals of this magnitude, if they happen, usually occur in the offseason or around the trade deadline, let alone in the middle of the season, and almost never involve teams that BOTH sit near the top of the standings.

For Carolina, it's a show of confidence and a sign of how the franchise views itself within the NHL ecosystem. And while swinging for the fences to this degree is something of an unfamiliar step for the Canes, it's far from the first time the club has made headlines in pursuit of adding new talent to its lineup.

Looking back chronologically, a handful of trades stand out as particularly impactful for the club, on and/or off the ice.

January 23, 2000

The Trade:

CAR acquires Rod Brind'Amour, Jean-Marc Pelletier and a 2nd-round pick

PHI acquires Keith Primeau and a 5th-round pick

The phrase "franchise-altering" can sometimes be overused, but it's safe to say the deal that brought current Canes Head Coach Rod Brind'Amour to Raleigh was key to the club finding its footing in the early 2000s and beyond.

With all due respect to Jean-Marc Pelletier, who appeared in 281 professional games but none with the Hurricanes, the outcome of this deal hinged on Brind'Amour's success in the City of Oaks. Keith Primeau had recorded 176 points in 234 games with Carolina but had reached a contract impasse with the club, putting the Canes in a situation where they needed to deal a star with less leverage than they would have liked.

The somewhat public trade process yielded Brind'Amour, who had enjoyed eight seasons and part of a ninth as a budding leader on a stacked Flyers team. He, alongside Mark Recchi (remember that name for later...) and Eric Lindros, was a key part of what would eventually be 11 straight playoff appearances for Philadelphia, and brought postseason pedigree and a track record of success to Carolina.

The following season, Brind'Amour wore an "A" for the Canes. One season after that, he helped guide the club to its first Stanley Cup Final appearance. And four years later, he brought Carolina all the way to the top of the mountain, captaining the club to the championship in 2006.

Brind'Amour retired in 2010 with 473 points in 694 regular-season games in a Carolina sweater - good for fifth in franchise history, but he wasn't done there. Brind'Amour became the team's head coach in 2018 and has led it to six straight playoff appearances since then. Earlier this year, he reached his 300th career victory faster than any head coach in NHL history, doing so in 488 games - eight fewer than previous record-holder Bruce Boudreau.

Suffice to say - if there are people who have had a greater impact on the Hurricanes in their 27-year history than Rod Brind'Amour, it's a very short list.

January 16, 2002

The Trade:

CAR acquires Kevin Adams, Bret Hedican, Tomas Malec and a 2nd-round pick

FLA acquires Sandis Ozolinsh and Byron Ritchie

When the Hurricanes traded for Sandis Ozolinsh six months and one day after acquiring Brind'Amour, they believed they were bringing in a premier offensive defenseman who could change a game from the blue line.

The 2000 draft-day deal came at a stiff cost, with fourth-year blueliner Nolan Pratt, a first-round pick and two second-round selections going to the Avalanche, but it was supposedly worth it to pick up a player whose 257 points

across the five prior seasons ranked fifth among all NHL defensemen.

Flash forward to the 2001-02 campaign - Ozolinsh's impact had begun to dwindle in his first season with Carolina, and midway through his second, he was flipped to the Florida Panthers alongside depth forward Byron Ritchie in a bold move for the Canes.

Seeking more balance in the roster as the club cruised toward its second division title since relocation, Carolina's return was headlined by 11-year veteran Bret Hedican and former first-round pick Kevyn Adams.

The move paid immediate dividends as the Canes climbed all the way to the Stanley Cup Final later that season, with Hedican and Adams beginning to cement themselves as key members of the locker room on and off the ice.

In 2006, as Carolina again charged up the standings and through the postseason, Hedican - then in his 14th year in the NHL and logging massive minutes on the blue line - and Adams - often sporting an "A" on his chest as one of the team's designated leaders alongside Brind'Amour, Cory Stillman, Glen Wesley and Ray Whitney - were once again centerpieces for a team that took a huge gamble in acquiring them as they finally lifted the Cup.

Ozolinsh was meant to be a crown jewel in the Canes' lineup, but rather than forcing the improper fit in hopes of a turnaround, Carolina took the harder, riskier road, trading the beleaguered blueliner for a pair of players who lacked his high ceiling.

And yet, after 765 combined games in Carolina and a Stanley Cup for Hedican and Adams, it's safe to say they went exactly in the direction they needed to.

January 30, 2006 & March 9, 2006

The Trades:

CAR acquires Doug Weight and the rights to Erkki Rajamaki

STL acquires Jesse Boulerice, Mike Zigomanis, a 1st-round pick, two 4th-round picks and the rights to Magnus Kahnberg

And...

CAR acquires Mark Recchi

PIT acquires Krystofer Kolanos, Niklas Nordgren and a 2nd-round pick

The Hurricanes weren't "supposed" to be a good team during the 2005-06 season, with bookkeepers giving them the second-longest odds to win the Stanley Cup ahead of that campaign. But with Peter Laviolette at the helm, Brind'Amour wearing the captain's "C" and Eric Staal in the midst of the team's only 100-point season to date, the Canes were cooking up something special.

Looking to catch more lightning in a bottle, GM Jim Rutherford swung a pair of key trades to bring in a pair of widely respected veterans to bolster his lineup. His first statement maneuver arrived in January of that year, swooping to acquire St. Louis' leading scorer and then-four-time All-Star Doug Weight while Carolina cruised atop the NHL standings.

Just over five weeks later, Carolina was again the talk of the hockey town as Mark Recchi waived his no-trade clause to join the team just before the 2006 trade deadline. The loss of Erik Cole had left the team with a hole in its forward corps, and Recchi - who won the Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh in 1991 - was Rutherford's choice to help fill the gap.

The duo didn't light up the scoreboard as they adjusted to their new surroundings during the regular season but ranked tied for fifth in team scoring during that fateful playoff run, each posting 16 points en route to the only championship in franchise history. More importantly, they were key figures in establishing a championship standard that guided the team through the playoff gauntlet.

Weight was barely able to hold the Cup after sustaining a shoulder injury in Game 5 of the series with Edmonton, but as Kevyn Adams handed him the only Stanley Cup he would win in his decorated career, nothing was keeping him from relishing the moment he had long dreamt of. The trophy then found its way to Recchi by way of Cory Stillman - two of just four players on the roster not lifting the trophy for the first time. (Skip to 3:43 in the video below)

Both players were unrestricted free agents in 2006 and, oddly enough, returned to sign with the teams they had left to join Carolina. But both left Raleigh as champions, their lasting images as Hurricanes some of the happiest of their career.

June 22, 2012

The Trade:

CAR acquires Jordan Staal

PIT acquires Brandon Sutter, Brian Dumoulin and a 1st-round pick

Like the one that brought his head coach to town in 2000, the deal to acquire Jordan Staal from the Pittsburgh Penguins was a franchise-defining move.

In the summer of 2012, Staal was at a crossroads in the Keystone State. Set to be an unrestricted free agent after the following season, he held off on putting pen to paper on an extension with the Penguins, leaving them a choice as to whether they would try to continue negotiating or recoup assets for their 2006 first-round pick.

As fate would have it, June's NHL Draft took place in Pittsburgh, where Carolina - captained by Jordan's older brother Eric - stepped up to acquire the 23-year-old in front of what was his home crowd, dealing three significant assets to the Penguins in return.

Staal, meanwhile, was otherwise occupied when the trade went down, celebrating his wedding to his wife Heather as the news broke. What was surely a whirlwind summer for the Staals was a thrilling one in Raleigh, where Caniacs eagerly anticipated the debut of their new brotherly duo.

And while Carolina struggled through many of the years the Staal brothers spent together, they each established themselves as franchise icons in their own way. As Eric's No. 12 was raised to the Lenovo Center rafters earlier this month, Jordan continues to captain the club through its longest period of sustained success, inching closer and closer to the ultimate goal.

"It's a huge, huge deal to get a player who I think is a franchise player," said Brind'Amour in 2021 as Jordan approached his 1,000th career contest. "You want to keep these guys forever. The reason is they help build your culture. You build around these players, and they're hard to find. When you get them, you want to keep them. I think it's great that we were able to get him at a young age, and he had already had an experience of winning and being around people that won."

In the 13 years since the trade, Jordan has celebrated his 1,000th NHL game in a Hurricanes sweater, recorded more than 450 points with Carolina - ranking fifth in franchise history - and has now been captain for seven seasons, as his brother was before him.

January 17, 2019

The Trade:

CAR acquires Nino Niederreiter

MIN acquires Victor Rask

Hurricanes Color Analyst Tripp Tracy had a front-row seat to Nino Niederreiter's heroics during the 2019 campaign that saw the team snap a 10-year playoff drought in Raleigh.

Acquired in January of that year from the Minnesota Wild, the former fifth-overall selection had previously struggled in the State of Hockey with 23 points in 46 games to start the 2018-19 campaign. The change of scenery worked wonders - Niederreiter quickly endeared himself to the Caniacs with five goals in his first five games, finding instant chemistry alongside Sebastian Aho.

As the team inched closer to its return to the dance, the newest member of the Canes continued to deliver, and as Niederreiter wired a wrister past Cory Schneider to give the Canes a two-goal lead in a game that would put them in the postseason with a victory, Tracy had seen enough.

"The trade of the year!"

Hyperbole? Depends on your perspective. But even so, who could blame Tracy for getting caught up in the moment?

That moment - the one the Carolina community had waited for was finally there, arriving off the stick of a player who perhaps didn't yet understand what his goal would mean. But after a decade of waiting, Niederreiter and his new club were off to the playoffs.

Finishing the regular season with 30 points in 36 games - good for third on the team since his acquisition - Niederreiter proved to be the player Carolina needed to get over the hump and kick off a run of six straight playoff runs.

The Swiss sniper went to net 69 goals, 68 assists and 137 points in 234 games with the Canes - but perhaps none bigger than the one on April 5, 2019.

NJD@CAR: Niederreiter roofs puck over Schneider

June 22, 2019

The Trade:

CAR acquires Patrick Marleau, a conditional 1st-round pick and a 7th-round pick

TOR acquires a 6th-round pick

Patrick Marleau is a hockey legend. His resume speaks for itself, with 1,197 points in an NHL-record 1,779 games - but, despite being dealt to Carolina five years ago, none were played as a Hurricane.

No, this trade is surprisingly not about the only named player involved. Instead, it's about Seth Jarvis, who Caniacs may know as another in a long line of homegrown talents, a drafted-and-developed Hurricane who became a fan-favorite in the same way as players like Sebastian Aho, Jaccob Slavin, Eric Staal and more.

But he wouldn't be here without some shrewd salary cap management and, yes, a trade.

Toronto, in need of cap relief with star winger Mitch Marner and others due for new deals that summer, asked Marleau to waive his no-trade clause during the 2019 NHL Draft in order to send him to a team that would, in all likelihood, buy out the remainder of his contract and allow him to sign where he pleased as a free agent. He obliged, and Carolina GM Don Waddell stepped up to the plate, offering to take on Marleau's salary - for a price.

The Leafs attached first- and seventh-round selections with Marleau to Carolina in exchange for a sixth. The first-rounder would arrive in 2020, and given the talent Toronto featured on a nightly basis, would likely be in the last 10-15 picks of the round. Still - another opportunity to add a top-31 (at the time) player in a given draft class was a worthwhile add.

Then, things got weird. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2019-20 regular season was cancelled in February, leading the playoffs to be contested in "bubble" facilities in Toronto and Edmonton later in the summer.

In the interest of fairness, teams that were in the mushy middle and below of the wild-card standings at the time of cancellation were placed into a play-in round of sorts. Winners would move on to the official Stanley Cup Playoffs. Losers were placed in the 2020 NHL Draft lottery with teams that did not qualify.

Carolina won its preliminary round against the New York Rangers, which indirectly led to them getting the first-overall selection, Alexis Lafreniere. Meanwhile, Toronto fell to the Columbus Blue Jackets, which meant their pick - the one previously shipped to Carolina - went into the lottery.

Certain protections had been written into the trade, namely deferring the pick to 2021 if it landed in the top 10 of the 2020 draft. But the ping pong balls yielded pick #13 for the Hurricanes - a much higher pick than what would have been expected beforehand, and one that would, fortunately, stick with the Canes through the unique circumstances at play that season.

Rather than picking in the late teens, 20s or even 30s, Carolina had a shot at a premier prospect, and the club settled on the 5-foot-10, 172-pound standout from the Portland Winterhawks of the Western Hockey League.

Four seasons, 274 games and 184 points later, "Jarvy" is a key member of the Hurricanes' core after inking an eight-year deal in the summer of 2024 - all from a draft pick that wasn't even meant to belong to the team that drafted him.

Honorable Mentions

March 5, 2002

CAR acquires Kevin Weekes

TBL acquires Chris Dingman and Shane Willis

January 20, 2004

CAR acquires Justin Williams

PHI acquires Danny Markov

June 23, 2018

CAR acquires Dougie Hamilton, Micheal Ferland and the rights to Adam Fox

CGY acquires Noah Hanifin and Elias Lindholm

February 24, 2020

CAR acquires Brady Skjei

NYR acquires a 1st-round pick

CAR acquires Vincent Trocheck

FLA acquires Erik Haula, Eetu Luostarinen, Lucas Wallmark and Chase Priskie

July 13, 2022

CAR acquires Brent Burns and Lane Pederson

SJS acquires Steven Lorentz, Eetu Makiniemi and a 3rd-round pick

March 7, 2024

CAR acquires Jake Guentzel and Ty Smith

PIT acquires Michael Bunting, Vasily Ponomarev, Ville Koivunen, Cruz Lucius and a 2nd-round pick

Aho, Rantanen Named To Finland's 4 Nations Face-Off Leadership Group

Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Finnish Ice Hockey Association, in conjunction with the NHL and the NHL Players' Association, announced its leadership group for February's 4 Nations Face-Off on Thursday. Carolina Hurricanes forwards Sebastian Aho and Mikko Rantanen were named assistant captains.

Aho, 27, will represent his home country on the international stage for the first time since the 2017-18 season when the puck drops on the 4 Nations Face-Off next month. The star center put on a show at both the World Cup of Hockey and IIHF World Championship that season, combining for 37 points in 17 games between the two tournaments.

This season he has 51 points in 51 games for Carolina, marking the sixth time in his career he's reached the 50-point park in 50 games or fewer.

Rantanen, 28, played in that same 2017-18 World Cup of Hockey with Aho, producing 11 points in eight games. More recently, he dressed for Finland at the 2023 IIHF World Championship, giving his country nine points, all assists, in eight games.

Acquired by Carolina on Friday, Jan. 24, Rantanen ranks tied for sixth among all NHL skaters in scoring with his 66 points.

The two, along with San Jose Sharks forward Mikael Granlund, will flank Florida Panthers star Aleksander Barkov, who was named Captain.

To learn more about the 4 Nations Face-Off, click here.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mikko Rantanen trying to fit in with the Carolina Hurricanes

Updated 11:01 PM EST, January 30, 2025

RALEIGH, NC (AP) — There was one thing Mikko Rantanen needed after he was traded to the Carolina Hurricanes: his number.

Jack Roslovic had the No. 96 for Carolina before Rantanen was acquired in a blockbuster three-team trade last week that also involved the Chicago Blackhawks.

Rantanen made a deal with Roslovic for the number. It was Roslovic who set up Rantanen's first goal with the Hurricanes during Thursday night's 3-2 win over the Blackhawks.

"That was a great play by Ros, the drop pass," Rantanen said. "I was able to help the team, which was good."

When it comes to his number, Rantanen said all he had to do was ask Roslovic.

"He's a nice guy," he said. "I told him I'd buy him a nice watch."

Carolina also got Taylor Hall from Chicago in the trade. But Hall missed the win over the Blackhawks because of an illness.

Carolina is hoping Rantanen's goal in his home debut with the Hurricanes is the first of many in his new jersey.

The 28-year-old forward was an elite scorer in his nine-plus seasons with Colorado, recording a career-best 105 points in 2022-23 and 104 last year. He is on track to pass 100 points again this season.

Carolina hasn't had a player record 100 points in a season since Eric Staal in 2005-06 — the only time the Hurricanes have won the Stanley Cup.

"He knows he wants to come in here and help contribute right away," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "You've got to be on the scoresheet. That's where everyone is looking. Now he has. Nice to see him get (the first one). Now he doesn't have to worry about it."

It was Rantanen's third game with Carolina. He had an assist in Tuesday night's 4-0 win at the New York Rangers for his first point with the Hurricanes.

Rantanen helped the Avs win the Stanley Cup in 2022. But he is eligible for free agency after this season.

The deal with the Hurricanes puts Rantanen on another good team with a group of his Finnish countrymen, notably center Sebastian Aho. That has made the transition easier.

"The guys have been great," Rantanen said. "They're a resilient group and they work really hard. You can tell they've had success in the last couple of years and they play really well together. I'm glad to be part of it."

Mikko Rantanen scores as the Hurricanes beat the Blackhawks 3-2

Updated 9:59 PM EST, January 30, 2025

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Mikko Rantanen scored his first goal with Carolina, helping the Hurricanes beat the Chicago Blackhawks 3-2 on Thursday night.

Seth Jarvis and Jaccob Slavin also scored for the Hurricanes, who won for the sixth time in seven games. Pyotr Kochetkov made 18 saves.

Connor Bedard and Ilya Mikheyev scored for Chicago. Arvid Soderblom stopped 24 shots.

The Hurricanes got Rantanen from Colorado as part of last weekend's three-team trade that also involved Chicago. He picked up an assist in Tuesday night's 4-0 win at the Rangers.

Taylor Hall, who was traded from Chicago to Carolina as part of the deal, was sidelined because of an illness.

Rantanen gave Carolina a 2-1 lead in his home debut when he scored his 26th goal of the season 4:52 into the second period. Slavin added his fourth goal at 5:59.

Takeaways

Blackhawks: The last-place Blackhawks likely will be a popular seller in the runup to the NHL trade deadline. Eight different teams had scouts at Thursday's game.

Hurricanes: With Hall and Sebastian Aho both sidelined by an illness, Carolina only dressed 11 forwards and 17 skaters. Center Ryan Suzuki, the team's 2019 first-round pick, made his NHL debut.

Key moment

Jack Roslovic set up Rantanen's goal by drawing three Chicago defenders in the middle of the ice before feeding Rantanen in the left circle.

Key stat

Jarvis' short-handed goal in the first period was his 11th goal in the past 13 games. The Hurricanes are 62-5-5 in the regular season when the fourth-year winger scores.

Up next

The Blackhawks travel to Florida on Saturday, and the Hurricanes host Los Angeles on Saturday.

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

NHL trade grades: Report cards for the Flyers-Flames swap - ESPN

Ryan S. Clark, Greg Wyshynski

The NHL trade deadline for the 2024-25 season is not until March 7, but teams have not waited until the last minute to make major moves.

Read on for grades from Ryan S. Clark and Greg Wyshynski, and check back the next time a big deal breaks.

Here's a look at how each GM operated and what it all means.

Even after this trade, the Flames still have more than $17.5 million in cap space (per PuckPedia), which is the second most in the NHL behind the Columbus Blue Jackets ($18.75 million).

Plus, the Flames still have two first-round picks for 2025 along with two first-round picks in 2026.

It's a level of asset management and financial flexibility that could prove vital in their bid to reach the playoffs. At some point, they'll have to weigh whether it's worth parting with a first-round pick to land another player who would help their quest to secure a playoff spot; currently, they hold the second wild-card position in the West.

The question of what to do next will be determined over the next few weeks. For now, they have more pressing concerns. The main one being: What kind of production can they get immediately from Farabee and Frost?

Losing three-time 20-goal scorer Anthony Mantha to season-ending knee surgery in November meant the Flames needed additional scoring help. The promise Kuzmenko showed after he was traded to the Flames last season -- with 14 goals and 25 points in 29 games -- withered away, as he's mustered only four goals and 15 points in 37 games this season.

Placing Connor Zary on injured reserve earlier this month only reinforced that need to find top-nine help. The scoring totals just don't add up if this team is fighting for the playoffs.

Farabee and Frost could potentially help the Flames address their offensive concerns. Farabee is a two-time 20-goal scorer who scored 50 points last season, while Frost could notch his third consecutive 40-point campaign.

Thus far, Farabee has scored eight goals, averaging 0.39 points per game, which has him on pace to finish with 12 goals and 29 points in 77 games. If he continues at that projection, it will result in his poorest offensive season since his rookie season in 2019-20 when he scored 21 points in 52 games.

Frost, on the other hand, has an opportunity to get back on track after spending the last two seasons coming under fire from Flyers coach John Tortorella. He's on pace for 17 goals, which would be the second most of his career, while his 39-point projection over 76 games would just fall short of the 41 points he accrued in 71 games last season.

Making the playoffs for the first time since the 2021-22 season appears to be a priority for this franchise. Another is the need to find stability, considering the Flames' many trades over the last three seasons.

Any role Farabee and Frost can play in that playoff pursuit could further justify whatever plans the Flames may have for them down the road.

Kuzmenko was in the final season of a two-year deal ($5.5 million average annual value), while Pelletier was a pending restricted free agent. Swapping them for Farabee and Frost provides the Flames with more certainty.

Farabee has three years left on his contract carrying a $5 million AAV. Frost is a restricted free agent who is coming off a two-year bridge deal that saw him earn $2.1 million. The Flames would have one more year of control after this season before Frost becomes an unrestricted free agent at the end of the 2025-26 campaign.

They were able to add two players that could help them now and possibly in the future while holding only losing a minimal amount of cap space and keeping those first-round picks.

Those are the circumstances that gives Flames GM Craig Conroy the sort of options ahead of the trade deadline most in his role would covet.

Philadelphia Flyers

Grade: B+

Moving on from Farabee could play a significant role in whatever path the Flyers opt to take in the offseason.

Initially, the Flyers were slated to have $12.88 million in available cap space heading into the summer. But the only money coming off their books was the combined $3.4 million between Rodrigo Abols and Erik Johnson on expiring contracts, along with the Tony DeAngelo buyout at $1.67 million.

Shedding Farabee's salary (and with Kuzmenko on an expiring deal) means they are projected to have $17.88 million in cap space entering the offseason, according to PuckPedia.

In addition, the second-round pick they received in this deal gives them seven in the first two rounds, including three in the first.

But just how the Flyers choose to spend their money in the summer could hinge upon how Kuzmenko performs.

Part of Kuzmenko's appeal is that he has found ways to have instant success in new places. His first season with the Canucks was a breakout, with 39 goals and 74 points. His second season was a step back, with just eight goals and 21 points in 45 games before he was traded to the Flames; he got off to a hot start again, with 14 goals and 25 points in 29 games.

That trend is what makes him a possibility on the second line where he could play alongside Sean Couturier and former SKA St. Petersburg teammate Matvei Michkov. The "high-scoring newcomer" version of Kuzmenko would be highly useful, as the Flyers are five points out of the second wild-card spot.

The scoring will help, but Kuzmenko's play in the defensive zone will dictate quite a bit. Especially with the Flyers in the top five in the fewest shots allowed per 60 and ranked 12th in the fewest scoring chances allowed per 60, according to Natural Stat Trick.

As for Pelletier, the Flyers hope he can continue to build upon what has been his strongest professional season to date. He began the campaign in the AHL, where he had 19 points in 20 games, before he was called up to the Flames in early December.

He has gradually made a case for more playing time. Pelletier went from averaging a little more than 11 minutes per game in December to just under 15 minutes per game in January. It resulted in an offensive return of four goals and 11 points in 24 games, while also logging more than 33 minutes of short-handed ice time.

Like Frost, he's a pending RFA. But Pelletier's $800,000 cap hit means that he could become a more cost-effective option compared to what Philly would have had to pay Frost. --Clark

Jan. 24: Rantanen to the Hurricanes, Necas to the Avalanche

Quiet. Quiet. Quiet. Then the NHL got loud Friday with the first blockbuster trade in recent memory.

The Colorado Avalanche traded winger Mikko Rantanen in a three-team deal involving the Carolina Hurricanes and Chicago Blackhawks. Both Taylor Hall and Rantanen went to the Hurricanes, with Jack Drury and Martin Necas going to the Avs. The Avs also received a 2025 second-round pick and a 2026 fourth-round pick from the Hurricanes. The Blackhawks reacquired their 2025 third-round pick while retaining 50% of Rantanen's salary. Prospect Nils Juntorp went from Chicago to Colorado then to Carolina.

How did each GM perform on a landscape-altering trade? Let's find out.

Carolina Hurricanes

Grade: A+

Quite simply, the Hurricanes are coming for everyone.

The franchise that built its success from drafting and developing has now added an aggressive edge to be active in free agency, while pursuing the sort of trades that make them an even stronger Stanley Cup contender.

Already one of the NHL's more legitimate championship front-runners, the Canes getting Rantanen and Hall only heightens the expectations that they have a roster capable of winning it all this season.

Rantanen provides a level of goal scoring and playmaking ability that could make a potential first line featuring Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov one of the most dangerous in the NHL. Rantanen's ability to facilitate play while using his powerful 6-foot-4 frame to fend off defenders could be the detail that allows Aho and Svechnikov the needed time to find the type of space that puts opponents in a difficult spot.

Trading Necas takes away one of the Canes' most consistent two-way players. But it hypothetically moves Jackson Blake to the second line while Hall is part of a middle-six winger pool that also features Seth Jarvis, Jordan Martinook, Jack Roslovic and Eric Robinson.

Suddenly, a team that was averaging the fifth-most goals per game in the NHL this season has added more options in the form of Rantanen -- one of the game's most consistently prolific players -- while Hall, a one-time Hart Trophy winner, could potentially finish the season with 20 goals. Those additions could also jump-start a power play that came into Friday ranked 17th.

And this is being done with the Blackhawks retaining half of Rantanen's $9.25 million cap hit while Hall, who is also a pending UFA, carries a $6 million cap hit.

First-year Canes GM Eric Tulsky, who was previously one of their assistant GMs, has set a tone that the priority is to win this season. But this is also the sort of trade that is going to provide Tulsky with another test.

Can he re-sign Rantanen?

Rantanen is a pending unrestricted free agent who can land one of the NHL's richest contracts over the coming months. It's possible the Hurricanes could strike a deal for him. But it will take some work.

They have nine contracts coming off the books this offseason, with the most notable being Frederik Andersen ($3.40 million), Brent Burns ($5.28 million) and Dmitry Orlov ($7.75 million). PuckPedia projects the Canes will have $22.98 million available in cap space, which could be used to re-sign Rantanen while leaving enough left over to strengthen the rest of the roster.

But for now, Tulsky and his team get the highest marks.

Rangers trade Jacob Trouba to the Ducks

Check out some numbers behind Jacob Trouba's time with the Rangers as he is traded to the Anaheim Ducks.

Colorado Avalanche

Grade: B+

Practically any conversation about what has made the Avs one of the NHL's most successful teams over the past six seasons has included Rantanen's name.

His ability to create for himself, create for others, and do it in a way that could either complement Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar -- but wasn't reliant on MacKinnon and/or Makar -- is what made Rantanen quite valuable. He is a five-time 30-goal scorer and also hit the 50-assist mark five times.

And maybe all of that was the problem for the Avs and Rantanen when it came finalizing any sort of deal.

Rantanen was a pending unrestricted free agent in the final season of a six-year deal that saw him earn $9.25 million per year. At the time he signed the contract, he was the Avs' highest-paid player. Entering this season, he was second behind MacKinnon, who is in the first year of a deal that sees him earn $12.6 million annually.

Each month that passed without both sides agreeing to a deal led to talk that maybe the Avs could move on from Rantanen. But it initially appeared that the talk was, well, just that.

Until it wasn't.

It appears the impasse the Avs were facing with Rantanen was the premium that comes with having a third superstar. Even though the salary cap will continue its rise in the coming years, there were still financial considerations the Avs' front office had to ponder.

They have three more years of Valeri Nichushkin ($6.31 million per year) and Devon Toews ($7.25 million). Ross Colton ($4 million), Samuel Girard ($5.75 million), Arturri Lehkonen ($4.5 million) and Casey Mittelstadt ($5.75 million) are part of a group that has two years left on their deals.

Then there's the money they didn't expect to take on this season when their original goaltending tandem of Justus Annunen and Alexander Georgiev began to struggle and cost the team wins.

Annunen's and Georgiev's deals cost a combined $4.237 million cap hit that brought an extra layer of financial flexibility. Annunen is a pending restricted free agent and Georgiev was going to be a pending UFA.

But then, the Avs replaced them with Mackenzie Blackwood and Scott Wedgewood. While it strengthened the weakest area of the team, it came with a cost. Blackwood signed a three-year deal less than a month after they acquired him, which saw his salary go from $2.35 million annually to $5.25 million annually next season.

Now the Avalanche have $6.75 million committed to their goalies through 2025-26.

Having that much money wrapped up in those players -- along with the Gabriel Landeskog uncertainty, and the fact he has three more years left at $7 million on his contract -- comes against the backdrop of what the Avs must contend with after the 2026-27 season when Makar will need a very large new contract.

It's possible Makar could command the biggest contract in the NHL. And if so, it would leave the Avs needing as much financial flexibility as possible in an offseason that also sees Colton, Girard, Lehkonen and Mittlestadt reach free agency.

That's one of the hypotheticals facing the Avalanche. Another was why take the risk in losing one of the NHL's premier wingers for nothing?

Although Necas is not a prolific producer like Rantanen, he does provide the Avs with a consistent two-way center who can anchor their second line in a way in which others have struggled since Nazem Kadri left in free agency after winning the Stanley Cup in 2022.

Necas is averaging a career-best 1.12 points per game this season, with the belief those figures could either sustain or increase given the Avs have a history of seeing new players succeed in their system.

There's also the financial implication in that Necas has one more year left on his deal at $6.5 million before he hits free agency. Should the Avs look to re-sign him, the expectation is it would hypothetically come at a cost that is much cheaper compared to whatever Rantanen would have commanded.

While the chances of finding a like-for-like trade might have proved difficult, the Avs still received a two-way top-six center in Necas, with Drury giving them another bottom-six option.

Chicago Blackhawks

Grade: C-

Asset management is everything for rebuilding teams. The Blackhawks know this, which is what makes their return in this trade rather puzzling.

Hall was expected to be moved ahead of the trade deadline. The Blackhawks were perceived to be looking to receive draft capital in return for a player who could either be a top-six or at least top-nine option for a contender.

Getting a third-round pick for Hall whether the Blackhawks retained any of his salary? OK, bet. Getting a third-round pick for retaining 50% of a salary to facilitate a deal as a third-party broker? Sure, that's the price of doing business.

But to receive only a single draft pick while giving up Hall and retaining 50% of Rantanen's salary? That raises quite a few questions about why the Hawks couldn't attract more in this deal, particularly upon the realization that the Avs received a 2025 second-round pick and a 2026 fourth-round pick in addition to getting two NHL players in Drury and Necas.

The Blackhawks are not struggling for draft capital. They entered Friday with eight picks for 2025, nine picks for 2026 and seven picks in 2027. They'll have four picks in the first two rounds this summer, including two first-rounders. But no franchise in a rebuild has ever openly complained about having too many draft picks.

They couldn't get more than a single pick here?

There was always the hypothetical that Hall's $6 million cap hit meant they would have had to retain salary. But retaining 50% of Rantanen's salary costs more than it would have to retain the same percentage of Hall's.

Moving on from Hall now means the Blackhawks have other pending UFAs who could be used to attain more draft capital. It's a group that includes Ryan Donato, Pat Maroon and Alec Martinez among others, as the franchise is in line for its fourth consecutive top-10 pick and its third straight top-three pick.

Donato carries a $2 million cap hit and Maroon is at $1.3 million, which makes their salaries more affordable for an interested team. Martinez has a $4 million cap hit. -- Clark

Dec. 18: Kakko to the Kraken, Borgen to the Rangers

Another member of what was once considered the New York Rangers' future is now gone, with the club trading Kaapo Kakko to the Seattle Kraken.

The Kraken received Kakko in exchange for defenseman Will Borgen, a 2025 third-round pick and a 2025 sixth-round pick.

Here's a look at how both front offices performed with this trade and what it all means.

New York Rangers

Grade: C-

Shortly after the trade was announced, it was reported that Kakko's quote to reporters before the team's 2-0 loss Tuesday against the Nashville Predators did not play a role in the trade.

The 23-year-old forward was a healthy scratch in a 3-2 loss Sunday to the St. Louis Blues, which led to him saying, "I know you've got to do something as a coach when you're losing games, but I think it's just easy to pick a young guy and boot him out. That's how I feel to be honest."

Kakko had four goals and 14 points in 30 games. He was on pace for 11 goals and 37 points, entering the final season of his contract as a player who had yet to reach the heights of what was expected when he was the No. 2 pick of the 2019 draft.

Now Kakko is gone, and he becomes the latest personnel move in a season that has led to questions about where the Rangers go next -- and if it could still somehow result in the club reaching the Eastern Conference finals for the third time in four years.

The Rangers had lost five in a row and six of their past seven games around the time GM Chris Drury sent a memo to the rest of the league to inform them the Rangers were open for business. It led to them trading captain and defenseman Jacob Trouba to the Anaheim Ducks on Dec. 6, a move that added salary cap space with Trouba still having another year left on his contract worth $8 million.

Moving on from Trouba meant Braden Schneider and Victor Mancini would receive more opportunities. Those plans changed with K'Andre Miller going on injured reserve Friday, which put a strain on a Rangers team that is 2-6 since Trouba was traded.

It's why Schneider was partnered with rookie Zac Jones on the second pairing, with Urho Vaakanainen, who was acquired in the Trouba trade, on the third pairing with veteran journeyman Chad Ruhwedel.

Losing on Tuesday to the last-place Predators gave the Rangers a third straight defeat, during which time they were outscored 10-3.

Then came the trade that saw them get Borgen, send Mancini to the AHL and recall forward Matt Rempe.

Adding Borgen gives the Rangers another right-handed defenseman who has shown he can play top-four minutes while logging heavy minutes on the penalty kill -- something the Rangers needed with Trouba still leading them in short-handed ice time as of Wednesday.

It's also a move that provides them additional financial flexibility going forward. One of the challenges facing Drury and his front office staff was figuring out their cap situation ahead of next offseason. And that was before they signed superstar goaltender Igor Shesterkin to a long-term extension worth $11.5 million annually.

Jones, Kakko, Miller and Will Cuylle were all pending restricted free agents, while top-pairing defenseman Ryan Lindgren is a pending unrestricted free agent.

By flipping Kakko for Borgen, a pending UFA, it allows the Rangers another outlet to get money off their books with Borgen earning $2.7 million this season. It now leaves the Rangers with a six-player UFA class that also includes Jonathan Quick and Reilly Smith, among others.

This allows Drury & Co. more money to play with as the Rangers seek to keep their coveted core together. A core that no longer features a player who was once thought to be one of the faces of the future. And that's the bottom line here; while Borgen is useful to fill the Trouba-sized hole, Kakko might have some runway left in his development, which will now be revealed in a Kraken sweater.

Seattle Kraken

Grade: B

Kraken GM Ron Francis was able to take Borgen, who was the team's pick from the Buffalo Sabres in the expansion draft, eventually turn him into a top-four defenseman, and trade him (with Day 2 draft picks) for a potential top-six forward in Kakko.

The key word being potential.

Development is one of the items that makes the NHL distinctive -- and also makes it complicated. A 23-year-old in another professional sport would be met with the understanding that they're not a finished product at such a young age.

That's what the Kraken are banking on. It's what the Rangers were also banking on, before pulling the rip cord on a forward who has played the second-most games of his draft class yet is sixth in points; for context, his fellow Finland countryman, Matias Maccelli, was taken 96 picks later and is separated by nine points despite playing 131 fewer games.

Kakko's best season came in 2022-23 when he had 18 goals and 40 points in 82 games, averaging 15 minutes,18 seconds in ice time. Since then, he has scored 17 goals and 31 points in 91 games, while averaging 13:16 in ice time.

Coming to Seattle should lead to Kakko receiving opportunities that were much harder to come by in New York. Whether it be with Matty Beniers, Tye Kartye, Ryker Evans and now Shane Wright, the Kraken have shown they are willing to give young players a chance to earn minutes. Especially with captain Jordan Eberle being on long-term injured reserve, while Yanni Gourde has been day-to-day since last playing on Dec. 10.

Getting the most out of young players is one of the reasons why the Kraken hired coach Dan Bylsma and assistant

Jessica Campbell. The work they did developing and winning with quite a few of the Kraken's prospects at the AHL level could potentially lead to Kakko finding more continuity in Seattle.

Again, the key word here being, potentially.

Playing time isn't the only thing that's at stake. Kakko is a pending RFA who has one more year of team control before his UFA years start kicking in before the 2026-27 season.

How he performs this season could at least lead to a one-year deal, with the idea that the Kraken might also be tempted to give him more than that if he becomes a key player for them.

Entering Wednesday, the Kraken were four points out of the final Western Conference wild-card playoff spot. They played an extra game more than the team holding the last spot -- the Calgary Flames -- while the Utah Hockey Club is three points behind but has played three fewer games.

The Kraken were expected to be part of a grouping of teams that could potentially challenge for a wild card, with the notion they might have to decide their path (and role) ahead of the trade deadline.

Spending big money in the offseason to sign Brandon Montour and Chandler Stephenson signaled their intent about what they could do this season and beyond. Adding Kakko only adds to the belief of what this season could potentially mean for the Kraken. -- Clark

Dec. 14: Fowler traded to St. Louis

After 991 games wearing an Anaheim Ducks uniform, Cam Fowler will now wear a St. Louis Blues sweater.

The Blues acquired Fowler and a 2027 fourth-round pick from the Ducks in exchange for a 2027 second-round pick and prospect defenseman Jeremie Biakabutuka. The Ducks will also retain 38.4615385% of Fowler's salary.

Here's a look at how both front offices did with the trade.

St. Louis Blues

Grade: B+

There are two versions of the Blues in 2024-25: The first version was struggling under Drew Bannister; the second version is under the guidance of Jim Montgomery, who was hired to replace Bannister less than a week after his own dismissal by the Boston Bruins.

In Montgomery's eight games, the Blues have found a defensive cohesion that's been missing. That problem has been one of the largest challenges facing GM Doug Armstrong in his bid to get the Blues back into the playoffs.

Having four defensemen with no-trade clauses was also a massive hurdle when it came to making changes. What opened the door was when one of those defensemen, Torey Krug, sustained an ankle injury that required season-ending surgery in September.

That played a role in them adding Philip Broberg via offer sheet, with the idea that they could be tempted to potentially add more should a deal that fits within their parameters become available.

Enter Fowler, who now represents another potential change in a season that has already seen quite a few.

His future with the Ducks was already in question following the Jacob Trouba trade. To have another top-four option available at a price that could fit within their salary cap structure made Fowler an attractive option for St. Louis.

Now it's a matter of determining what sort of role Fowler, who has one more season after the 2024-25 campaign left on his contract, can play on a roster that's allowing the sixth-fewest goals per game since the Blues hired Montgomery on Nov. 25.

Part of what has helped the Blues is they now have a team save percentage that's fourth in the league in Montgomery's eight games in charge; they have risen to 14th for the whole season. They are allowing the eighth-fewest high-danger chances, while sitting 13th in fewest scoring chances allowed per 60 minutes, and are around league average in shots allowed per 60.

That's one area where Fowler could play a role. Another could be a power play that has struggled before and after they hired Montgomery. They are 20th since Montgomery took over and are 25th on the season.

This could be a win-win deal. Fowler gives the Ducks someone with experience operating a power play. The Blues provide Fowler with the ice time he wasn't receiving on the man advantage, as he had just 10:07 in power-play ice time this season after reaching the 100-minute mark in all but one season since making his debut in 2010-11.

Fowler could pair with Colton Parayko, a duo that could be the latest building block Montgomery could use to find more consistency.

The Blues entered Saturday four points out of the final Western Conference wild-card spot, and this is a move made with erasing that gap in mind.

Anaheim Ducks

Grade: B

Ducks GM Pat Verbeek knew what this season's climate was like for teams needing a top-four defenseman, having just acquired Trouba for Urho Vaakanainen and a 2025 fourth-round pick.

But the Ducks were facing a different situation with trying to move on from Fowler than what the Rangers were going through before they sent Trouba to Anaheim.

What helped Verbeek is that he had the necessary time to find what he felt was the strongest possible trade. And he made a deal that attained more draft capital for a franchise that's believed to have one of the NHL's brightest and strongest farm futures.

There's that word. Future.

The future is one of the major reasons the Ducks moved on from Fowler, who was less than 10 games from playing No. 1,000 for the club. Drafting and developing young defensemen has become a hallmark of what the Ducks have done over the past few years.

It's why they've brought up Jackson LaCombe, Pavel Mintyukov and Olen Zellweger. And while Drew Helleson

was acquired in a trade, he's a 2019 second-round pick with promise and size.

The improvement by the young defensive core is why Fowler's power-play minutes significantly diminished this season. And once the Ducks got Trouba, it meant that playing Fowler came at the expense of not playing one of those younger defensemen like Helleson or Zellweger, given LaCombe and Mintyukov have already established themselves as nightly fixtures.

And for a franchise that has shown it is beyond comfortable giving young players a chance to play? Building that young core ultimately led the Ducks down the path to where Fowler was expendable. Getting Trouba, who has one more year left on his deal after this season, was essentially the final push that allowed the Ducks to feel comfortable moving on. -- Clark

Dec. 9: Blackwood to Colorado, Georgiev to San Jose

With goaltending being a major problem for the Colorado Avalanche, could Mackenzie Blackwood be the solution?

The Avalanche acquired Blackwood and forward Givani Smith in a trade with the San Jose Sharks that sees goalie Alexandar Georgiev, forward Nikolai Kovalenko, a 2025 fifth-round pick and a 2026 second-round pick head to the Bay Area. The Avs also retained 14% of Georgiev's salary.

How did both GMs fare in the trade? Let's find out.

Colorado Avalanche

Grade: B

The Avalanche's defensive structure ranks in the top 10 of fewest scoring chances allowed per 60 minutes and shots allowed per 60. Unfortunately, their save percentage as a team is second worst in the NHL.

That defensive zone disconnect is why changes needed to be made for an Avs team that's fighting for a wild-card spot as mid-December draws closer -- despite its status as a preseason Stanley Cup favorite.

But it's also symptomatic of a larger problem with the Avs in that they've had issues building a consistently strong supporting cast around their core led by Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar and Mikko Rantanen.

Having that supporting cast is what helped them win a title in 2022. Lacking that cast is why they were knocked out of the first round a year later and lost in the second round last season.

Georgiev averaged 39 wins per season in his first two with the team. But that came with questions: Was Georgiev the sole reason he won so many games in Denver? Or was it the structure around him that led to his success?

All Avs GM Chris MacFarland needed was 18 games this season to answer those questions.

It started when Colorado traded Justus Annunen to the Nashville Predators to get Scott Wedgewood. But it became even clearer when Wedgewood's first win came in relief of Georgiev on Dec. 3 -- when the latter allowed four goals on eight shots in the Avs' 5-4 win over the Buffalo Sabres.

Now the Avalanche are turning to Blackwood and hope he can steady the ship. His .911 save percentage is 12th among goalies with more than 10 games played, while his goals saved versus average is in the top 20.

Blackwood is not perfect, and there are questions about the newest Av:

Is he the answer for a team that has Stanley Cup aspirations? Is he different from the goalie who forced the New Jersey Devils to find alternatives when they made the playoffs in 2023? And while the Avs needed to make a move, was the price they paid to add Blackwood too much given he has never played in the postseason?

We'll find out the answers to all of these in the coming weeks and months.

Kaapo Kakko's goals from the 2024-25 season

Check out some of Kaapo Kakko's goals with the New York Rangers after his trade to the Seattle Kraken.

San Jose Sharks

Grade: B+

Every move Sharks GM Mike Grier makes for the foreseeable future is about building a better tomorrow for the Sharks. The return package for Blackwood will play a role in those plans.

Go back to when Grier acquired Blackwood in 2023. The Sharks parted with a 2023 sixth-round pick to get him from the Devils. Now fast-forward to Monday, and the return Grier received goes well beyond the sixth-round pick he sent to the Devils.

And he still has two pending unrestricted free agent goalies on the roster.

Georgiev's arrival will impact the Sharks at the NHL level and beyond. He will join a tandem with Vitek Vanecek for a team that came into Monday seven points behind the Avs for the final wild-card spot and seven points ahead of the Chicago Blackhawks for the NHL's worst record.

Adding Georgiev gives the Sharks seven pending unrestricted free agents. It's possible that the Sharks could attain additional draft capital ahead of the trade deadline if there's a team seeking goaltending depth. That's another reason getting the Avs to retain 14% of his salary was crucial.

All three of the Sharks' retained salary slots are filled because of previous trades involving Brent Burns, Tomas Hertl and Erik Karlsson. It's what makes the need for the Sharks to present their pending UFAs as affordable to playoff hopefuls even more crucial.

But where it gets more captivating is how the Sharks now have two experienced options in net, meaning they can take their time with developing top goalie prospect Yaroslav Askarov, who had a 1.96 goals-against average and a .927 save percentage in two games before he was returned to the AHL.

Kovalenko is another player who could also help the Sharks this season and possibly beyond. He gives the Sharks a ninth player younger than 25 on the roster, in a group that includes Macklin Celebrini, William Eklund, Mario Ferraro

and Will Smith, among others. Kovalenko, who has four goals and eight points in 28 games, could possibly challenge for a top-nine role. He's also a pending restricted free agent, which means the Sharks could look to sign him to a new deal or move on from him via another trade.

All in all, another tidy piece of business for Grier. -- Clark

Dec. 6: Trouba to the Ducks

The New York Rangers traded defenseman Jacob Trouba to the Anaheim Ducks, ending a tense few months of speculation about their captain's future.

The Ducks sent defenseman Urho Vaakanainen and a conditional 2025 fourth-round pick to the Rangers for Trouba. Anaheim takes on all of Trouba's contract, which carries an $8 million average annual value against the salary cap through the 2025-26 season.

The Rangers will receive either the Ducks' or the Detroit Red Wings' fourth-round pick, depending on which one is lower in the draft order.

New York Rangers

Grade: A

The marking period for this trade began on July 19, 2019. That's when then-Rangers general manager Jeff Gorton signed defenseman Jacob Trouba to a seven-year, $56 million contract to avoid salary arbitration.

Despite being one of the league's most effective defensemen at that point -- which is why the Rangers acquired him from the Winnipeg Jets in the first place -- many thought that Trouba's $8 million annual cap hit was overcompensation, considering the bell curve of a physical defenseman's effectiveness in the NHL. The Rangers certainly took that into account: That overcompensation bought them flexibility in the final two years of Trouba's contract, which carried a no-movement clause from 2020-24 before switching to a 15-team no-trade clause.

That no-trade clause still gave Trouba some agency over his future, as the Rangers discovered last summer when his refusal to submit a list of approved teams early reportedly torpedoed a potential trade with the Detroit Red Wings. But it couldn't protect him from the Rangers using their nuclear option, which is what ultimately led to Trouba's trade to Anaheim.

Please recall when the Rangers placed forward Barclay Goodrow on waivers in June, clearing the last three years of his contract off their books when the San Jose Sharks claimed him in a prearranged move. There's no question that GM Chris Drury pointed to that example and told Trouba, "This could happen to you."

You could be on a rebuilding Chicago Blackhawks team that just fired their coach. Or the San Jose Sharks. Or the Red Wings, with whom you didn't want to play last summer. Or shuffle back up to Canada, not as a Winnipeg Jet but as a Montreal Canadien. Such was the waiver wire.

Or Trouba could select from the potential trade destinations placed in front of him, waiving his no-trade clause for one of them.

With that, the captain of the New York Rangers is now a member of the Anaheim Ducks.

Part of this grade goes to the Rangers' front office in 2019, when Drury was an assistant GM, for having the foresight to create this pressure point. And part of it goes to Drury, who exerted that pressure to move Trouba's cap hit off the books, remove an ineffective defenseman from his blue line and send a shock to the system of a struggling team.

The Rangers are 13-10-1 this season. They're in a wild card. But they've lost six games in regulation out of their past seven. Drury was so displeased with what he saw that he put out a memo to 31 other NHL teams telling them he was open for business and mentioning Trouba by name.

Trouba has been a liability all season. He's in the negatives across the board analytically relative to his teammates, including a 47.5% expected goals percentage. He has just six assists in 24 games, skating to a minus-3. Even the one thing the Rangers used to depend on from Trouba -- physicality -- was down, as he averaged 4.87 hits per 60 minutes after averaging 7.81 last season.

Of course, it should be said that Drury basically made him a lame duck, and that has to impact his performance.

In the immediate term, the trade opens up ice time for Braden Schneider and Victor Mancini, two players the Rangers are eager to see develop.

(Vaakanainen, whom they received from Anaheim, is a spare at this point, and was a healthy scratch for the Ducks this season.)

But taking the long view, we've now seen the other shoe drop for the Rangers: Clearing Trouba's salary allowed them to finally sign goalie Igor Shesterkin to his new contract worth $11.5 million against the salary cap -- a record for NHL goalies. Which certainly alleviates one point of long-term planning stress for Drury and only increases this grade

Whether or not the roster shake-up goes beyond Trouba remains to be seen. Don't forget, Chris Kreider's name was in that Drury memo, too.

But getting Trouba off the books and off the ice was something the Rangers had been attempting for months. With more than a gentle nudge, he has sailed to the Pacific.

Nothing like trading your captain through pitiless means to get a locker room's attention.

The highlight reel Mackenzie Blackwood is taking to the Avalanche

Check out some of Mackenzie Blackwood's best saves with the Sharks as he gets traded to the Avalanche.

Anaheim Ducks

Grade: B

I don't hate this from the Ducks' perspective.

Trouba is a better defenseman than the majority of the blueliners on the Anaheim roster. That's assuming some of his poor play was due to the Rangers basically standing in the doorway with his bags packed for six months, which will certainty weigh on a guy.

At least now he's with a team that he begrudgingly picked, with a couple of former teammates (Ryan Strome and Frank Vatrano) and a general manager in Pat Verbeek who says kind things such as "on the ice, he competes every shift, leads by example and is a presence on the blue line every night."

Verbeek also called him "a big part of our future success," and hopefully that means as a mentor to young defensemen rather than signing Trouba until he's 37 when his contract runs out after the 2025-26 season. The Ducks have up-and-comers such as Pavel Mintyukov, Olen Zellweger, Drew Helleson and Jackson LaCombe on the roster, with players such as Stian Solberg and Tristan Luneau in the pipeline. Trouba can be a "lead by example" type, having excelled offensively and defensively during his career. After six seasons in Winnipeg and six more in New York, he has seen some things.

It's safe to say that Trouba is in decline at 30 years old. He might have been a liability with the Rangers, but the bar is set rather lower in Anaheim. This is an atrocious defensive team. The Ducks are giving up 3.14 expected goals against per 60 minutes at 5-on-5, last in the league and the only NHL team over three expected goals against on average this season. They earn only 45% of the shot attempts in a game, 31st in the NHL. No one gives up more high-danger shot attempts (13.5 per 60 minutes) than Anaheim -- although please note that the Rangers were right behind them (13.1).

The Ducks have prioritized physicality, and Trouba can bring that. The idea that Anaheim can roll out Radko Gudas and Trouba on the same defense should have Western Conference opponents already reaching for the Advil.

They didn't give up anything for him. Even if Vaakanainen was playing, which he wasn't, the Ducks were dealing from a position of depth. The fourth-rounder is expendable, given they had two. The $8 million salary cap hit shouldn't impact them much next season: While Mason McTavish will need a new deal this summer, Leo Carlsson's big-ticket second contract won't be until after Trouba's expires.

Plus, if he finds his game in Anaheim and the Ducks aren't in the playoff mix next season, they could always retain salary and flip Trouba at the 2026 trade deadline. He's exactly the kind of defenseman who has value for contenders at the right price.

Verbeek said, "It's rare you are able to acquire a player with Jacob's experience, stature and ability."

Despite this decline and the growing flaws in his game, that's undoubtedly true, and especially for this compensation. The Ducks need more adults in the room. They landed themselves an NHL captain, who can hopefully find more effectiveness in a place where he's wanted. -- Wyshynski

Nov. 30: Jiricek traded to the Wild

In need of a change, defenseman David Jiricek found one Saturday when the Columbus Blue Jackets traded the former No. 6 pick to the Minnesota Wild.

The Wild received Jiricek and a 2025 fifth-round pick, with the Blue Jackets receiving a top-five protected 2025 first-round pick, a 2027 second-round pick, a 2026 third-round pick, a 2026 fourth-round pick and defenseman Daemon Hunt.

Minnesota Wild

Grade: B+

Last season allowed the Wild to draw two conclusions about the state of their defense.

The first was that they appear to have a legitimate franchise cornerstone in Brock Faber, who finished second in Calder Trophy voting. The second was that the team needed to figure out how to continue to get younger on the back end, especially with injuries ravaging a unit that had quite a few players -- Zach Bogosian, Jonas Brodin, Jon Merrill and captain Jared Spurgeon -- all older than 30.

That process began in 2021 when they used one of their two first-round picks to select Winnipeg Ice defenseman Carson Lambos. They acquired Faber in 2022 in the Kevin Fiala trade with the Los Angeles Kings. In June, they used their first-round pick (No. 12) to draft University of Denver defenseman Zeev Buium. Now, they have added Jiricek, the sixth pick in the 2022 draft.

As for what this all means for this season?

Much of that could depend upon Jiricek. Part of what made him available in the first place was the belief that he was unhappy with his role in Columbus. He was averaging 11:11 in six games while logging less than 10 minutes over what became his final three contests before he was sent to the AHL.

Jiricek will remain in the AHL, where he will use his time with the Wild's affiliate to push for a role at the NHL level. Jiricek is a 6-foot-4 puck mover, and those traits have come through in the AHL, where he's scored 15 goals and 60 points in 88 games. This season, he has two goals and three points in four games.

Whether he can find a way to translate his AHL production to the NHL is the looming question. If he can, he'll give the Wild another facilitator with size who could be trusted to play key minutes. Beyond that, he could give the Wild those minutes on his entry-level contract, which is important for a franchise that's had to become adept at spending cap space because of the combined Zach Parise and Ryan Suter buyouts that currently cost $14.7 million but will fall to $1.66 million next season.

The Wild (15-4-4) were two points behind the Winnipeg Jets for the best record in the NHL and the Western Conference entering Saturday. They're allowing the fewest goals per game in the NHL this season, the fewest high-danger scoring chances per 60 and rank in the top 10 in the fewest scoring chances allowed per 60.

Not only have they established consistency, but the Wild also have the depth to go with that continuity. Faber is one of three defensemen who have played in every game, while four of their defenseman have appeared in more than 16 games this season.

Maintaining that level means the Wild don't have to be in a rush to call up Jiricek and can let him settle into their system. And if the Wild can remain in the hunt for a top seed, they've essentially added a one-time top-six pick for what will ultimately become a first-round selection that's toward the bottom of the draft.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Grade: B+

Moving on from a one-time top-10 pick such as Jiricek comes with the question about if a franchise has received or has come close to receiving a return of equal value.

It appears that Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell was able to achieve that by getting a sizable haul along with a defenseman who can play right now with Hunt.

At the time of the trade, the Blue Jackets (10-9-3) look as if they could go in a few directions this season. On Saturday, they were two points out of the final Eastern Conference wild-card spot while also being within five points of having the NHL's worst record.

The fact Jiricek struggled to get minutes and was sent to the AHL before being traded shows that the Blue Jackets were comfortable with their dynamic in the interim. But how this could work out for them in the future is where it gets interesting.

Waddell's time in charge of the Carolina Hurricanes saw the club rely upon the draft to build a roster that has since become one of the NHL's perennial favorites to win the Stanley Cup. One of the ways the Hurricanes reached that destination was to have as many draft picks as possible.

With this trade, the Blue Jackets now have 27 draft picks over the next three seasons.

Another detail that could factor into the decision to move on from Jiricek is the defensive youth the Blue Jackets have on their NHL roster and in their farm system. Five of the seven defensemen on the Blue Jackets' active roster are younger than 27. That does not include Hunt.

They also have youth in their system. They used one of their three first-round picks in 2021 to draft Corson Ceulemans. A year later, they used one of their two first-rounders to take Denton Mateychuk. Of course, the other player they drafted in the first round that year was Jiricek. They also used four of their six picks to draft defensemen in 2024, with the most notable being Charlie Elick, who went in the second round. -- Clark

NHL Power Rankings: 1-32 poll, January trends for each team - ESPN

ESPN staff

ESPN staffJan 31, 2025, 07:00 AM ET

Reactions

Friday marks the final night of games for the month of January in the 2024-25 NHL season. In addition to our latest updated Power Rankings, let's check in on how all 32 teams performed this month.

How we rank: A panel of ESPN hockey commentators, analysts, reporters and editors sends in a 1-32 poll based on the games through Wednesday, which generates our master list.

Note: Previous ranking for each team refers to the previous edition, published Jan. 24. Points percentages, paces and January stats are through Thursday's games.

1. Washington Capitals

Previous ranking: 1

Points percentage: 72.55%

Alex Ovechkin or no Alex Ovechkin, this team just keeps winning, and January was no different; the Caps racked up 22 points in 14 games, extending their lead atop the Metropolitan Division.

Next eight days: vs. WPG (Feb. 1), vs. FLA (Feb. 4), @ PHI (Feb. 6)

2. Winnipeg Jets

Previous ranking: 2

Points percentage: 70.75%

No, this isn't the dominant team that was setting records in the season's first weeks. But they'll take an 9-3-2 record any month, given the sizable lead they built in October and November.

Next eight days: @ WSH (Feb. 1), vs. CAR (Feb. 4)

3. Edmonton Oilers

Previous ranking: 4

Points percentage: 66.67%

Some teams that lose in the Stanley Cup Final swoon in the following season. That hasn't been the case for Edmonton, and a 10-3-1 January has them atop the Pacific Division.

Next eight days: vs. TOR (Feb. 1), @ STL (Feb. 4), @ CHI (Feb. 5)

4. Carolina Hurricanes

Previous ranking: 5

Points percentage: 65.38%

Carolina's point percentage was the fifth highest in the league in January -- and most of those games were played without Mikko Rantanen and Taylor Hall. Are those two additions enough to finally get the Canes back to the Stanley Cup Final?

Next eight days: vs. LA (Feb. 1), @ WPG (Feb. 4), @ MIN (Feb. 6)

5. Vegas Golden Knights

Previous ranking: 3

Points percentage: 65.38%

Just as some other teams quietly crept up the standings in the month of January, the Knights stumbled a bit (at least in a relative sense); a 6-6-3 record isn't in line with what we've come to expect out of one of the NHL's elite contenders.

Next eight days: @ NYR (Feb. 2), @ NYI (Feb. 4), @ NJ (Feb. 6)

6. Dallas Stars

Previous ranking: 8

Points percentage: 65.00%

An injury this week to Miro Heiskanen puts his participation in the 4 Nations Face-Off in jeopardy. What's not in jeopardy is the Stars' playoff positioning, particularly as they have gone 10-4-0 in January.

Next eight days: vs. VAN (Jan. 31), vs. CBJ (Feb. 2), @ ANA (Feb. 4)

7. Florida Panthers

Previous ranking: 9

Points percentage: 60.58%

The Panthers started strong this season, which was good because January wasn't their best month ever: the Cats had a 7-6-1 record, despite a plus-6 goal differential.

Next eight days: vs. CHI (Feb. 1), vs. NYI (Feb. 2), @ WSH (Feb. 4), @ STL (Feb. 6)

8. Toronto Maple Leafs

Previous ranking: 6

Points percentage: 60.78%

If the Maple Leafs are playing the long game, dropping to second in the Atlantic might make sense -- they'll likely avoid the Bruins in the first round of the playoffs. In that regard, a 7-6-0 January gets a thumbs-up?

Next eight days: @ EDM (Feb. 1), @ CGY (Feb. 4), @ SEA (Feb. 6)

9. Minnesota Wild

Previous ranking: 7

Points percentage: 63.46%

Given their negative goal differential in January, the Wild are lucky to escape with a record north of .500. And thanks to their early success, there remains a gap between Minnesota and the teams behind it.

Next eight days: @ OTT (Feb. 1), @ BOS (Feb. 4), vs. CAR (Feb. 6)

10. New Jersey Devils

Previous ranking: 11

Points percentage: 60.38%

Some nights, the Devils look as strong as any team in the league; other nights, not so much. (Just look at the two different results against the Flyers this week.) Accordingly, they'll finish January with a 5-5-3 record.

Next eight days: @ BUF (Feb. 2), @ PIT (Feb. 4), vs. VGK (Feb. 6)

11. Los Angeles Kings

Previous ranking: 10

Points percentage: 59.18%

The Kings are looking up at the Oilers and Golden Knights in the Pacific Division, as those two clubs appear to be on another tier at this point. A 5-7-1 January didn't help the cause, and they are teetering close to being caught from behind (though they have games in hand on all the teams chasing them).

Next eight days: @ CAR (Feb. 1), vs. MTL (Feb. 5)

12. Colorado Avalanche

Previous ranking: 12

Points percentage: 57.69%

The Avalanche remain in the driver's seat for a wild-card spot (if not a higher position in the Central Division), although their January results leave a bit to be desired, with a 6-6-2 record.

Next eight days: vs. STL (Jan. 31), vs. PHI (Feb. 2), @ VAN (Feb. 4), @ CGY (Feb. 6)

13. Ottawa Senators

Previous ranking: 15

Points percentage: 56.86%

Is this the season the Senators make it back to the playoffs? An 8-5-2 January -- despite a minus-10 goal differential -- has kept them right in the mix.

Next eight days: vs. MIN (Feb. 1), @ NSH (Feb. 3), @ TB (Feb. 4), @ TB (Feb. 6)

14. Tampa Bay Lightning

Previous ranking: 13

Points percentage: 57.00%

The good news for the Lightning: Racking up a bunch of points earlier this season meant they had some wiggle room. The bad news: a month of 46.90 points percentage hockey has reduced that space to the smallest of wiggles.

Next eight days: vs. NYI (Feb. 1), vs. OTT (Feb. 4), vs. OTT (Feb. 6)

15. Calgary Flames

Previous ranking: 14

Points percentage: 57.00%

The Flames have more or less held serve in January, with a 7-6-0 record. Thanks in large part to rookie goaltender Dustin Wolf, they remain on the wild-card bubble.

Next eight days: vs. DET (Feb. 1), @ SEA (Feb. 2), vs. TOR (Feb. 4), vs. COL (Feb. 6)

16. Columbus Blue Jackets

Previous ranking: 17

Points percentage: 57.00%

It's unquestionable that the Blue Jackets are the best "story" of the 2024-25 season, and their quest for a playoff return was greatly aided in January: a record of 9-3-1 generated the sixth-best points percentage for the month.

Next eight days: @ UTA (Jan. 31), @ DAL (Feb. 2), @ BUF (Feb. 4), vs. UTA (Feb. 6)

17. Vancouver Canucks

Previous ranking: 20

Points percentage: 56.00%

The well-reported locker room strife between Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller was confirmed by general manager Jim Rutherford this week, lending more credence to the idea that one of the two stars will be traded. Hopefully that will spur the team to earn more wins, as a month of .500 hockey isn't a great sign looking ahead.

Next eight days: @ DAL (Jan. 31), vs. DET (Feb. 2), vs. COL (Feb. 4), @ SJ (Feb. 6)

18. Boston Bruins

Previous ranking: 18

Points percentage: 52.83%

The Bruins have gone 5-7-2 this month and appear more in need of the 4 Nations Face-Off break than many other teams. Is there a trade in the works to shake things up?

Next eight days: vs. NYR (Feb. 1), vs. MIN (Feb. 4), @ NYR (Feb. 5)

19. New York Rangers

Previous ranking: 19

Points percentage: 52.00%

As the Rangers collapsed earlier this season, there was no shortage of fan frustration along with takes on how to properly fix them. Quietly, they've charged back up the standings, due in part to an 8-3-3 January.

Next eight days: @ BOS (Feb. 1), vs. VGK (Feb. 2), vs. BOS (Feb. 5)

20. Detroit Red Wings

Previous ranking: 24

Points percentage: 53.92%

Detroit's 2024-25 season has been a bit of a roller coaster, including the dismissal of coach Derek Lalonde and hiring of Todd McLellan. This month has been a high point, with a 10-3-1 record that has the Red Wings back on the wild-card bubble.

Next eight days: @ CGY (Feb. 1), @ VAN (Feb. 2), @ SEA (Feb. 4)

21. Montreal Canadiens

Previous ranking: 16

Points percentage: 51.96%

The fact that the Canadiens remain on the fringes of the playoff race into February is remarkable, and their 7-5-2 record in January is a big part of that. Does the front office add to the roster before the trade deadline, or keep the slow build process going?

Next eight days: @ ANA (Feb. 2), @ SJ (Feb. 4), @ LA (Feb. 5)

22. New York Islanders

Previous ranking: 26

Points percentage: 53.00%

Are we all sleeping on the Islanders? Patrick Roy has his team pointed back in the right direction after a rough start, going 9-3-0 in January.

Next eight days: @ TB (Feb. 1), @ FLA (Feb. 2), vs. VGK (Feb. 4)

23. Philadelphia Flyers

Previous ranking: 22

Points percentage: 49.06%

The Flyers' build back into a contender continues apace, though their minus-8 goal differential for the month would surely be helped if they had better goaltending on a consistent basis.

Next eight days: @ COL (Feb. 2), @ UTA (Feb. 4), vs. WSH (Feb. 6)

24. Utah Hockey Club

Previous ranking: 23

Points percentage: 50.00%

The Hockey Club remains mathematically alive for a playoff berth but will have to reverse trends from a month in which it had fewer standings points (12) than games played (13).

Next eight days: vs. CBJ (Jan. 31), vs. STL (Feb. 2), vs. PHI (Feb. 4), @ CBJ (Feb. 6)

25. St. Louis Blues

Previous ranking: 21

Points percentage: 49.02%

Does this week's Brandon Saad contract termination mean that an addition is on the way? Something must be done if the Blues are going to make a move back into the playoff mix during a 5-7-0 January.

Next eight days: @ COL (Jan. 31), @ UTA (Feb. 2), vs. EDM (Feb. 4), vs. FLA (Feb. 6)

26. Pittsburgh Penguins

Previous ranking: 25

Points percentage: 47.17%

How much of the Penguins' current roster will be on the team after March 7? The club's 4-7-3 record in January was better than only the "fun bad" Sharks; Pittsburgh's results seem way less fun, and simply bad.

Next eight days: vs. NSH (Feb. 1), vs. NJ (Feb. 4)

27. Nashville Predators

Previous ranking: 28

Points percentage: 43.88%

The Predators are no strangers to wild turnarounds within the same season -- they pulled one off last season. It's not entirely out of the realm of mathematical possibility that they make the playoffs, and a 7-4-0 mark since the calendar turned to 2025 is a strong start.

Next eight days: @ BUF (Jan. 31), @ PIT (Feb. 1), vs. OTT (Feb. 3)

28. Anaheim Ducks

Previous ranking: 30

Points percentage: 47.06%

Although it hasn't made a huge dent in the overall standings, the Ducks have been a middle-of-the-flock team in January -- with a 6-7-2 record despite a minus-8 goal differential. In which direction will they fly from here?

Next eight days: vs. MTL (Feb. 2), vs. DAL (Feb. 4)

29. Seattle Kraken

Previous ranking: 27

Points percentage: 46.23%

Goaltender Philipp Grubauer -- one of the Kraken's early, big free agent signings -- was put on waivers recently, and it wouldn't be shocking if the club made additional moves ahead of the trade deadline. A 6-8-1 January record has kept them well below expectations.

Next eight days: vs. CGY (Feb. 2), vs. DET (Feb. 4), vs. TOR (Feb. 6)

30. Buffalo Sabres

Previous ranking: 29

Points percentage: 43.00%

A 45.83 points percentage in January has actually raised the Sabres' seasonlong mark, but it's still not good enough to get them out of the Atlantic Division basement.

Next eight days: vs. NSH (Jan. 31), vs. NJ (Feb. 2), vs. CBJ (Feb. 4)

31. Chicago Blackhawks

Previous ranking: 31

Points percentage: 36.27%

This hasn't been the best season in Blackhawks history. But at least for the month of January, they haven't been dead last. (Chicago's points percentage is 29th for the month.)

Next eight days: @ FLA (Feb. 1), vs. EDM (Feb. 5)

32. San Jose Sharks

Previous ranking: 32

Points percentage: 33.33%

The Sharks began the month among the NHL's basement dwellers in the standings, and that trend will continue into February.

Next eight days: vs. MTL (Feb. 4), vs. VAN (Feb. 6)

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

SPORTSNET™

NHL Roundup: Rantanen scores first goal with Hurricanes in win over Blackhawks

Associated Press

Seth Jarvis and Jaccob Slavin also scored for the Hurricanes, who won for the sixth time in seven games. Pyotr Kochetkov made 18 saves.

Connor Bedard and Ilya Mikheyev scored for Chicago. Arvid Soderblom stopped 24 shots.

The Hurricanes got Rantanen from Colorado as part of last weekend's three-team trade that also involved Chicago. He picked up an assist in Tuesday night's 4-0 win at the Rangers.

Taylor Hall, who was traded from Chicago to Carolina as part of the deal, was sidelined because of an illness.

Rantanen gave Carolina a 2-1 lead in his home debut when he scored his 26th goal of the season 4:52 into the second period. Slavin added his fourth goal at 5:59.

WILD 4, CANADIENS 0

MONTREAL — Marc-Andre Fleury made 19 saves for his first shutout of the season in likely his final game in Montreal, helping Minnesota beat Montreal.

The 40-year-old Fleury, from Sorel-Tracy about 50 miles northeast of Montreal, is retiring after the season. He has 76 career shutouts — three at Bell Centre, where more than 100 friends and family cheered him Thursday.

Liam Ohgren and Devin Shore each scored their first goal of the season. Marco Rossi had a goal and an assist and Frederick Gaudreau added an empty-netter.

The Wild improved to 3-0 on their five-game trip. They beat Chicago 4-2 on Sunday night and topped Toronto 3-1 on Wednesday night.

Jakub Dobes stopped 23 shots for Montreal.

LIGHTNING 3, KINGS 0

TAMPA, Fla. — Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 28 shots, Brandon Hagel scored two goals and had an assist and Tampa Bay beat Los Angeles.

Anthony Cirelli scored his fourth short-handed goal of the season for the Kings. The shutout was Vasilevskiy's second this season and 37th of his career.

David Rittich finished with 30 saves for Los Angeles, which has lost four straight. The Kings were shut out for the second consecutive game and fell to 2-7-1 in the past 10 games.

Hagel opened the scoring at 4:45 of the first period and opened up some breathing room with his second with less than five minutes to play. Cirelli scored an empty-net goal with 1:17 left.

JETS 6, BRUINS 2

BOSTON — Mark Scheifele scored his 30th and 31st goals of the season and Western Conference-leading Winnipeg beat Boston.

Vladislav Namestnikov had a goal and assist, and Nikolaj Ehlers, Parker Ford and Kyle Connor also scored for the Jets. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 27 shots.

It was the fifth straight win for Winnipeg, which took the season series after beating Boston 8-1 in December.

Brad Marchand and Elias Lindholm had goals for Boston, which has lost two in a row. Joonas Korpisalo finished with 21 saves.

Trailing 2-1 and down a man with Marchand in the penalty box at the start the third period, Boston's Pavel Zacha won a faceoff and found Lindholm, who muscled it past Hellebuyck to tie it. But 24 seconds later, Scheifele added his second goal of the night, followed by a tap-in from Nikolaj Ehlers to give the Jets a two-goal cushion just 77 seconds into the final period.

SENATORS 5, CAPITALS 4 (OT)

OTTAWA, Ont. — Alex Ovechkin moved within 19 goals of breaking Wayne Gretzky's NHL record, scoring on a late power play in Washington's overtime loss to Ottawa.

Ovechkin scored his 23rd goal of the season to push his career total to 876. Gretzky scored 894 goals in the NHL.

Ovechkin pulled the Capitals to 4-3 on a long wrist shot with 6:59 left. The 39-year-old Russian star then set up Dylan Strome's tying goal with 5:29 remaining. Thomas Chabot scored for Ottawa at 1:46 of overtime.

Josh Norris scored for Ottawa on a second-period penalty shot and Ridly Greig, Shane Pinto and Jake Sanderson added goals, with Pinto also missing on a penalty shot. Anton Forsberg made 31 saves.

Stromme scored twice and Connor McMichael also scored for Washington. Charlie Lindgren stopped 29 shots.

ISLANDERS 3, FLYERS 0

PHILADELPHIA — Ilya Sorokin made 23 saves for his third shutout of the season, Marc Gatcomb scored his first NHL goal and New York won their sixth straight game with a victory over Philadelphia.

Simon Holmstrom and Kyle Palmieri also scored for the Islanders, who leapfrogged the Flyers and the idle New York Rangers in the Metropolitan Division standings and are three points out of a wild-card spot.

It was the 21st career shutout for Sorokin, who won his fifth straight game and has allowed just four goals in that span. New York has outscored opponents 21-7 during its streak.

The Flyers were blanked for the second consecutive game. Ivan Fedotov made 25 saves for Philadelphia.

FLAMES 4, DUCKS 1

CALGARY, Alberta — Matt Coronato had two goals and an assist, Dustin Wolf made 30 saves and Calgary beat Anaheim.

Coronato set up Ben Coleman's goal that gave Calgary a 2-1 lead with 44 seconds left in the second period. Coronato doubled the lead with 3:50 left, scoring off goalie John Gibson's turnover, and added an empty-netter with 2:23 to go.

Frank Vatrano opened the scoring for Anaheim midway through the first period. Adam Klapka tied it 15 second into the second.

Gibson stopped 26 shots.

RED WINGS 3, OILERS 2, SO

EDMONTON, Alberta — Dylan Larkin tied it in the second period and scored in a shootout to help Detroit beat Edmonton.

Lucas Raymond also scored for the Red Wings in the tiebreaker, while Connor McDavid and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins failed on their chances against Alex Lyon, who made 45 saves in regulation and overtime.

Edmonton took a 2-0 lead in the first period. Leon Draisaitl scored his 36th goal of the season and Jeff Skinner also connected.

Michael Rasmussen scored at 9:59 of the second and Larkin tied it with 8:13 left in the period.

Stuart Skinner stopped 32 shots for the Oilers.

BLUE JACKETS 2, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 1, OT

LAS VEGAS — Cole Sillinger, who missed the previous three games because of an upper-body injury, scored on a rebound 52 seconds into overtime to give Columbus a victory over Vegas.

Adam Fantilli, skating in his 100th career game, scored the other Blue Jackets goal, and Elvis Merzlikins stopped 25 shots.

Tomas Hertl scored his 20th goal of the season for the Golden Knights and Ilya Samsonov made 22 saves.

Hertl extended his point streak to 11 games (nine goals, six assists), just one off the club record set by Jack Eichel during the 2023-24 season. It is the NHL's longest active streak. Hertl also had eight goals in his past eight games.

Columbus has points in 10 of the past 12 games, going 9-2-1.

By picking up a point, the Golden Knights remained in a tie for first place in the Pacific Division with the Edmonton Oilers with 68 points.

Eichel's goal streak (three games) and point streak (seven) ended.

KRAKEN 6, SHARKS 2

SEATTLE — Brandon Montour scored two of Seattle's four second-period goals and they pulled away for a win over San Jose.

Chandler Stephenson, Oliver Bjorkstrand, Jaden Schwartz and Eeli Tolvanen also scored for Seattle while Joey Daccord had 26 saves.

Carl Grundstrom and Tyler Toffoli scored for San Jose, which has lost six of its last seven games.

Montour broke a 20-game scoreless streak with his first goal at 2:54 of the second to give the Kraken a 3-1 lead. He scored again at 7:52 to make it 5-1.

Stephenson gave Seattle the lead with a goal 3:55 into the game, but Grundstrom tied it at 1-1 with a goal that bounced off Kraken center Shane Wright with just over two minutes remaining in the period.

Stephenson also had two assists.

Bjorkstrand put Seattle ahead to stay at 17:57 of the second.

Ryan Suzuki, brother of Canadiens captain, to make NHL debut with Hurricanes

Sportsnet Staff

It's been a long road for first-rounder Ryan Suzuki, but he's finally landed himself in the NHL.

Suzuki, brother of Montreal Canadiens captain Nick Suzuki, is set to make his NHL debut with the Carolina Hurricanes, nearly six years after being selected 28th overall at the 2019 NHL Draft.

The 23-year-old has spent the last five seasons playing for the Hurricanes' affiliates in the AHL. He had his most productive season in 2022-23, scoring 13 goals and 32 points in 50 games for the Chicago Wolves. In 38 games this season, Suzuki has six goals and 24 points — two points away from tying a career-high.

The London, Ont. native has struggled with injuries throughout his playing time, including a career-threatening eye injury he suffered while playing for the OHL's Barrie Colts in November of 2019. He was able to return to the lineup the following month, but played with a blind spot.

He also suffered a minor shoulder injury in Oct. 2023, for which he was sidelined a short amount of time.

The Hurricanes are dealing with several injuries, including to Sebastian Aho (day-to-day), Jack Roslovic (day-to-day), Tyson Jost (injured reserve), and William Carrier (indefinite).

Revisiting some of the biggest NHL trades in the salary cap era

Ally Chesham

What started out as a relatively quiet Friday night in the NHL last week quickly turned into anything but.

It began with social media buzzing over reports that Taylor Hall was being traded from the Chicago Blackhawks to the Carolina Hurricanes — a notable move but hardly a blockbuster. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, the real bomb

dropped: Colorado Avalanche star Mikko Rantanen was also reportedly heading to Carolina.

As everyone frantically refreshed feeds for the latest updates, insiders scrambled to piece together the details. Eventually, a three-team trade involving the Blackhawks, Hurricanes and Avalanche was revealed. Carolina landed Rantanen and Hall; Colorado received Martin Necas, Jack Drury, a 2025 second-round pick and a 2026 fourth-round pick; and Chicago picked up a 2025 third-round pick while retaining 50 per cent of Rantanen's salary.

Now that's a blockbuster.

It's safe to say the deal caught nearly everyone off guard — including its centrepiece. Following his debut with his new team, Rantanen told reporters he was shocked and hadn't seen it coming. A day later, the 28-year-old pending UFA told The Athletic's Peter Baugh he had been "willing to take a significant discount" on a contract extension to stay with Colorado, the team that drafted him 10th overall in 2015 and with whom he won a Stanley Cup in 2022.

Given all the factors involved, the trade sparked discussions about whether it could be the biggest in the salary cap era. First and foremost, Rantanen is a bona fide star — with two 100-plus-point seasons and ranking sixth in league points at the time of the trade (64 in 49 games), his credentials speak for themselves. Then there's the package he commanded which included Necas, who was tied for 11th leaguewide in points with 55 in 49 games at the time.

The shock factor adds another layer, from the timing of the trade to the fact that Rantanen had been with the Avalanche for 10 seasons and was expected to remain there for the foreseeable future. Lastly, and crucially, two of the teams involved are contenders, with the Hurricanes currently sitting second in the Metropolitan and the Avalanche occupying the first wild-card spot in the West. The addition of Rantanen should significantly impact the Hurricanes' season, including their division title and Stanley Cup aspirations, as well as their long-term success if they re-sign him.

The deal undoubtedly ranks near the top of the salary-cap era rankings, but recency bias may play a role in that perception. Let's take a trip down memory lane and revisit some other blockbuster contenders potentially worthy of that distinction.

Hockey fans already know the name, but this is not the blog. From Sportsnet, 32 Thoughts: The Podcast with NHL Insider Elliotte Friedman and Kyle Bukauskas is a weekly deep dive into the biggest news and interviews from the hockey world.

Full deal: The Vegas Golden Knights acquired Eichel and a 2023 third-round pick (Mathieu Cataford) from the Buffalo Sabres in exchange for Alex Tuch, Peyton Krebs, a top-10 protected 2022 first-round pick (Noah Östlund) and a 2023 second-round pick (Riley Heidt).

The Jack Eichel saga dominated headlines for months, stemming from a deteriorating relationship between him and the Buffalo Sabres. At the heart of the dispute was how to treat a herniated disc in his neck — Eichel wanted artificial disc replacement surgery, a procedure never before performed on an NHL player, while the Sabres insisted on disc fusion.

Following the 2020-21 season, Eichel publicly revealed the rift and questioned his future in Buffalo. When training camp for the following season opened, he failed his physical and was stripped of his captaincy. Less than two months later, the centre was traded to Vegas and underwent his desired surgery a week later.

Eichel made his Golden Knights debut 10 months after the procedure, in February 2022. It took time for him to return to form, as he recorded just 25 points in 34 games that season. He bounced back in 2022-23, producing at nearly a point-per-game pace before leading the Golden Knights to their first-ever Stanley Cup in just their sixth NHL season, tallying 26 points in 22 playoff games.

Vegas has remained a contender since, currently sitting second in the Pacific, while Eichel has continued to solidify himself as an impact player with 64 points in 50 games. Buffalo, on the other hand, was a struggling team before the trade and still remains one. It's set to miss the playoffs again this year, extending its drought since 2010-11. As for the Sabres' trade haul: Tuch has become a key piece, Krebs has produced at a bottom-six rate and Östlund is currently developing in the AHL.

P.K. Subban for Shea Weber

Date: June 29, 2016

When this swap of defencemen took place between two teams that had drafted and developed their respective players, the entire league was stunned. The Canadiens fanbase had mixed reactions, especially given that Subban was a fan favourite and a former Norris Trophy winner. The deal was made just two days before the 27-year-old's no-trade clause was set to take effect. Meanwhile Weber was 30 and known for his physical style, which led to concerns about his future durability and whether his best hockey was behind him.

Both players had successful campaigns in the first season following the trade, leading their teams to the post-season. The Predators reached the Stanley Cup Final, ultimately falling to the Pittsburgh Penguins. The following season, Weber suffered a broken toe requiring surgery, causing him to be shut down for the rest of the year. The Canadiens missed the playoffs, while Subban had another strong year with Nashville, playing all 82 regular-season games and recording 59 points, plus nine more in 13 playoff games.

In 2018-19, Subban struggled, and the Predators experienced an early post-season exit. Weber, still recovering from surgery, missed part of the season, but he continued to perform well in his return for the Canadiens despite the team missing the playoffs for a second consecutive year. In June 2019, Subban was dealt to the New Jersey Devils, which, for many, answered the question of who won the initial trade. Weber, meanwhile, remained a Canadien and enjoyed a Cinderella run during the 2020-21 COVID-impacted season, making it to the Stanley Cup Final before losing to the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"In the bigger picture, I wish Shea had never been traded. I'm being very honest with you when I say that," former Predators general manager David Poile said on Nashville's Robby & Rexrode radio show last year.

Sportsnet's Matt Marchese and former Los Angeles Kings executive Mike Futa take you around the league on Sportsnet 590 The FAN's national hockey show, airing live across the country daily from noon-2 p.m. ET.

Latest episode

Joe Thornton

Date: Nov. 30, 2005

Full deal: The San Jose Sharks acquired Thornton from the Boston Bruins in exchange for Brad Stuart, Wayne Primeau and Marco Sturm.

This deal earns significant consideration as one of the biggest trades in the salary cap era. Nearly 20 years ago, the Bruins traded their captain to the Sharks in a move that would have lasting impacts on both franchises. San Jose was already a strong team, having had made the playoffs in seven of eight seasons after Patrick Marleau was drafted second overall in 1997 — right after Thornton — and reaching the conference finals for the first time in 2003-04.

But the Sharks reached new heights with Jumbo Joe. Thornton was an instant success, recording 92 points in 58 games with San Jose after having already accumulated 33 points with the Bruins before the trade. He went on to win both the Art Ross Trophy and the Hart Memorial Trophy that year. Over the course of his career with the Sharks, Thornton played 1,104 games and recorded 1,055 points. The Sharks led the NHL in points from the day he joined until his final game in 2019-20, reaching the conference finals four times and advancing to the Stanley Cup Final in 2016.

Former Sharks general manager Doug Wilson explained how the trade came together in an interview with The Athletic's Corey Masisak two years ago.

"Their GM was a good friend of mine, Mike O'Connell. We had played together in Chicago… I was talking to a lot of different teams because we weren't playing very well and something was needed… when Joe's name was mentioned, I said, 'OK, what are you looking for?'… It was one of those deals when a player like that is available, you go full speed ahead."

The return for Thornton didn't pan out as well for Boston, aside from Marco Sturm, who played 302 games over five seasons, recording a respectable 193 points. It may have seemed like a losing trade for the Bruins, but some argue it was the catalyst for their 2011 Stanley Cup win. O'Connell was fired four months after the trade, and his eventual replacement, Peter Chiarelli, hired Claude Julien as coach. With Thornton gone, Patrice Bergeron and David Krejci took on larger roles, and with the added cap space, Boston signed Zdeno Chara.

Jeff Carter

Date: June 23, 2011

Full deal: The Columbus Blue Jackets acquired Jeff Carter from the Philadelphia Flyers in exchange for Jakub Voracek, a 2011 first-round pick (Sean Couturier) and a 2011 third-round pick (Nick Cousins).

Carter spent six seasons in Philadelphia after being drafted 11th overall by the Flyers in 2003, recording 343 points in 461 regular-season games. During this span, the Flyers made the playoffs five times, with Carter contributing 21 points in 47 post-season games. In November 2010, he signed an 11-year, $58 million contract extension with a limited no-trade clause to stay in Philadelphia — but before the deal took effect, the Flyers traded Carter to the Blue Jackets in a move he did not anticipate.

Carter's time with the Blue Jackets in the 2011-12 season was short and troubled. He struggled with injuries and reported attitude issues. After just 39 games, in which he recorded 25 points, Columbus shipped him to the Los Angeles Kings. It was a regrettable situation for Columbus; they had acquired Carter at a high price, only to sell him off low. Carter went on to win a Stanley Cup with the Kings that season and again in 2013-14.

The clear winner was the Flyers. They received three assets for a player who only played a fraction of a season with his new team. Philadelphia acquired a 22-year-old Voracek, who recorded 604 points in 727 regular-season games over 10 seasons before being traded back to the Blue Jackets in 2021. They also used their two 2011 draft picks to select Couturier and Cousins.

Couturier is still with the Flyers and serves as their captain. He has 522 points in 843 career games over 13 seasons with the team and is currently in the midst of an eight-year, $62 million contract, ensuring he'll be with the Flyers for the foreseeable future. Cousins played with the Flyers until 2017 when he was traded to the Arizona Coyotes for a prospect and a 2018 fifth-round pick.

Livestream Hockey Night in Canada, Scotiabank Wednesday Night Hockey, the Oilers, Flames, Canucks, out-of-market matchups, the Stanley Cup Playoffs and the NHL Draft.

Broadcast schedule

Date: July 11, 2022

Full deal: The Florida Panthers acquired Tkachuk and a conditional 2025 fourth-round pick from the Calgary Flames in exchange for Jonathan Huberdeau, MacKenzie Weegar, Cole Schwindt and a lottery-protected 2025 first-round pick.

Tkachuk informed the Flames during the 2022 off-season he had no interest in signing a long-term deal with the team, prompting both sides to work to find a trade destination where he would commit to an extension. It was a significant blow for Calgary, which had already lost Johnny Gaudreau to the Columbus Blue Jackets in free agency. At the time of his trade request, Tkachuk was coming off a career-best 104-point season, and the Flames had just won a division title.

Over 431 games across seven seasons in Calgary, Tkachuk scored 382 points, ranking second in his draft class behind Auston Matthews. Once a deal was struck between the Flames and Panthers, Tkachuk immediately signed an eight-year, $76 million contract extension. In his first season with the Panthers, the feisty winger registered 109 points in 79 games, adding 24 points in 20 playoff games as Florida reached the Stanley Cup Final, where it fell to the Vegas Golden Knights.

Tkachuk's offensive numbers dipped slightly the following season, with 88 points in 80 games. The Panthers again reached the Stanley Cup Final, this time winning their first

championship in franchise history by defeating the Edmonton Oilers. Tkachuk contributed 22 points in 24 playoff contests.

Huberdeau, coming off a career-high 115-point season, was originally viewed as the biggest piece of the deal for Calgary. But since joining the Flames, he has yet to replicate that success, posting 55- and 62-point seasons in his first two full years. Weegar, meanwhile, has arguably emerged as the best part of the trade for Calgary, establishing himself as a top-tier blueliner and posting a career-best 52 points last season.

Schwindt, the prospect included in the deal, spent two seasons with the Flames' AHL affiliate and appeared in four NHL games in 2023-24. The Flames re-signed him to a one-year, two-way contract in September 2024, but he was claimed off waivers by the Golden Knights a month later. While then-Flames general manager Brad Treliving did well in salvaging a difficult situation and acquiring valuable assets, the Panthers are the clear winners of this trade to date.

Chris Pronger x 2

Dates: Aug. 2, 2005 and July 3, 2006

Full deals: The Edmonton Oilers acquired Pronger from the St. Louis Blues in exchange for Eric Brewer, Doug Lynch and Jeff Woywitka. Then, the Anaheim Ducks acquired Pronger from the Oilers in exchange for Joffrey Lupul, Ladislav Smid, a 2007 first-round pick (Nick Ross), a 2008 second-round pick (Travis Hamonic) and a 2008 conditional first-round pick (Jordan Eberle).

The Oilers made a bold move, landing Pronger in a three-for-one trade following the 2004-05 lockout — a game-changer for a small-market team that historically struggled to keep star players. The introduction of a salary cap created additional opportunities when big-market clubs like the Blues were forced to shed contracts.

Pronger was a coveted defenceman, having won the Hart and Norris in 2000 after posting 62 points in 79 games with the Blues. Edmonton quickly signed him to a five-year, $31.25 million deal — one of the largest contracts in league history at the time. Pronger maintained his high level of play in his season with the Oilers, recording 56 points in 80 games. He was also a key figure in Edmonton Stanley Cup Final run, where it fell to the Carolina Hurricanes. His 21 points in 24 playoff games marked the best post-season of his career. Meanwhile, the Blues — reeling from Pronger's departure — missed the playoffs for the first time in 25 years.

Edmonton's hopes of building around Pronger quickly unravelled when he requested a trade that same summer, citing personal reasons. His departure had an immediate and lasting impact on the Oilers, who fell to sixth-last in the standings in 2006-07 and finished with the fewest goals in the league. It marked the beginning of a painful stretch where Edmonton missed the playoffs for 10 consecutive seasons.

While some considered the price Anaheim paid for Pronger risky, the future Hall of Famer made an immediate impact, helping the Ducks win the Stanley Cup in his first season. The return for the Oilers, who did their best in a tough situation, turned out to be hit-and-miss. The most notable pieces were Smid, a stay-at-home defenceman who played 474 games with Edmonton, and the 2008 first-round pick used to select Eberle, who recorded 382 points over seven seasons with the Oilers.

Honourable mentions: The Golden Knights acquiring Mark Stone (Feb. 2019); the Senators trading Erik Karlsson to the Sharks (Sept. 2018); the Sabres sending Ryan O'Reilly to the Blues (July 2018); the one-for-one swap of Taylor Hall for Adam Larsson (June 2016); the Panthers bringing back Roberto Luongo (March 2014); the Flames trading Jarome Iginla to the Penguins (March 2013); the Thrashers sending Ilya Kovalchuk to the Devils (Feb. 2010); the Penguins landing Marian Hossa (Feb. 2008); the Lightning moving Martin St. Louis to the Rangers (March 2015); and the Maple Leafs dealing Phil Kessel to the Penguins (July 2015).

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

CBS SPORTS

2024-25 NHL injury tracker: Wild's Kirill Kaprizov, Stars' Miro Heiskanen expected to miss several weeks

Chris Bengel

In the last couple of weeks before the 4 Nations Face-Off, injuries are starting to pile up for star players across the league. Among them are Minnesota Wild forward Kirill Kaprizov and Dallas Stars defenseman Miro Heiskanen, who are expected to miss several weeks.

Just three games after returning from an earlier injury, Kaprizov will miss at least four weeks after undergoing surgery to repair a lower-body injury he suffered against the Chicago Blackhawks on Jan. 26. The Wild will now be without their leading scorer for another month, but the 4 Nations Face-Off will provide some time for Kaprizov to heal.

When he has been on the ice, Kaprizov has been incredibly effective with 23 goals and 29 assists in 37 games.

Heiskanen suffered a knee injury when Vegas Golden Knights captain Mark Stone dove into his legs while going after a puck. Now the Stars have listed Heiskanen, one of the best two-way defensemen in the game, as week-to-week. Heiskanen was supposed to represent Finland in the 4 Nations Face-Off, but he will now have to sit out the international tournament.

Here is a list of many of the marquee players that are currently sidelined due to injury.

Anaheim Ducks

Brock McGinn (LW)

Type of Injury: Torn ACL

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: 2025-26 season

Last Played: 12/23/24

Boston Bruins

Hampus Lindholm (D)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown (expected to miss multiple weeks)

Last Played: 11/12/24

Charlie McAvoy (D)

Type of Injury: Undisclosed

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/11/25

Buffalo Sabres

Jordan Greenway (LW)

Type of Injury: Mid-body injury

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: February 2025

Last Played: 12/15/24

Calgary Flames

Connor Zary (C)

Type of Injury: Knee

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/7/25

Carolina Hurricanes

Jesper Fast (RW)

Type of Injury: Neck

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 4/16/24

William Carrier (LW)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Month-to-month

Last Played: 1/4/25

Chicago Blackhawks

Connor Murphy (D)

Type of Injury: Groin

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 12/31/24

Craig Smith (C)

Type of Injury: Back

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

Last Played: 1/8/25

Colorado Avalanche

Gabriel Landeskog

Type of Injury: Knee

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 6/26/22

Columbus Blue Jackets

Erik Gudbranson (D)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 10/15/24

Boone Jenner (C)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 3/28/24

Yegor Chinakhov (RW)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 11/27/24

Sean Monahan (C)

Type of Injury: Wrist

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/7/25

Dallas Stars

Tyler Seguin (C)

Type of Injury: Hip

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: 4-6 months

Last Played: 12/1/24

Mason Marchment (LW)

Type of Injury: Facial fracture

Injured Reserve: No

Approximate Return Date: 4 weeks

Last played: 12/27/24

Miro Heiskanen (D)

Type of Injury: Knee

Injured Reserve: No

Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week

Last Played: 1/28/25

Nils Lundkvist (D)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/21/25

Detroit Red Wings

Jeff Petry (D)

Type of Injury: Undisclosed

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/2/25

Patrick Kane (RW)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/21/25

Edmonton Oilers

Evander Kane (LW)

Type of Injury: Hip, hernia surgeries

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: February 2025

Last Played: 6/10/24

Minnesota Wild

Jonas Brodin (D)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/7/25

Marcus Johansson (C)

Type of Injury: Concussion

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week

Last Played: 1/15/25

Kirill Kaprizov (LW)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: 4 weeks

Last Played: 1/26/25

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

Montreal Canadiens
Emil Heineman (LW)
Type of Injury: Lower-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Unknown
Last Played: 1/11/25
Nashville Predators
Jeremy Lauzon (D)
Type of Injury: Lower-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Unknown
Last Played: 12/31/24
Luke Evangelista (RW)
Type of Injury: Lower-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week
Last Played: 1/7/25
New Jersey Devils
Jacob Markstom (G)
Type of Injury: Knee
Injured Reserve: No
Approximate Return Date: 4-6 weeks
Last Played: 1/22/25
Nico Hischier (C)
Type of Injury: Upper-body
Injured Reserve: No
Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week
Last Played: 1/25/25
Erik Haula (LW)
Type of Injury: Ankle
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Unknown
Last Played: 1/4/25
New York Islanders
Mike Reilly (D)
Type of injury: Upper-body
Injured Reserve: No
Approximate Return Date: Day-to-day
Last Played: 11/1/24
Semyon Varlamov (G)
Type of Injury: Lower-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Unknown
Last Played: 11/29/24
Noah Dobson (D)
Type of Injury: Lower-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week
Last Played: 1/20/25
Ryan Pulock (D)
Type of Injury: Upper-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Unknown
Last Played: 1/25/25
Ottawa Senators
Linus Ullmark (G)
Type of Injury: Back
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Late January 2025
Last Played: 12/22/24
Philadelphia Flyers
Ryan Poehling (C)
Type of Injury: Upper-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Uknown
Last Played: 1/16/25
Pittsburgh Penguins
Evgeni Malkin (C)
Type of Injury: Lower-body
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week
Last Played: 1/25/25
San Jose Sharks
Logan Couture (C)
Type of injury: Groin
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Unknown
Last Played: 1/31/24
Vitek Vanecek (G)
Type of Injury: Head
Injured Reserve: Yes
Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 12/14/24

Seattle Kraken

Jordan Eberle (RW)

Type of Injury: Pelvic surgery

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: February 2025

Last Played: 11/14/24

Yanni Gourde (C)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/2/25

St. Louis Blues

Torey Krug (D)

Type of Injury: Ankle surgery

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: 2025-26 season

Last Played: 4/10/24

Nick Leddy (D)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 10/15/24

Tampa Bay Lightning

J.J. Moser (D)

Type of Injury: Undisclosed

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: 8-10 weeks

Last Played: 12/12/24

Toronto Maple Leafs

Anthony Stolarz (G)

Type of Injury: Knee surgery

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: February 2025

Last Played: 12/12/24

Calle Jarnkrok (C)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Late October 2024

Last Played: 9/22/24

John Tavares (C)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: February 2025

Last Played: 1/14/25

Matthew Knies (LW)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/22/25

Utah Hockey Club

Dylan Guenther (RW)

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/8/25

Vancouver Canucks

Kiefer Sherwood (LW)

Type of Injury: Undisclosed

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Unknown

Last Played: 1/23/25

Vegas Golden Knights

William Karlsson (C

Type of Injury: Lower-body

Injured Reserve; Yes

Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week

Last Played: 1/20/25

Washington Capitals

Sonny Milano (LW)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week

Last Played: 11/6/24

Winnipeg Jets

Adam Lowry (C)

Type of Injury: Upper-body

Injured Reserve: Yes

Approximate Return Date: Week-to-week

Last Played: 1/20/25

Morgan Barron (C) Type of Injury: Undisclosed Injured Reserve: No Approximate Return Date: Unknown Last Played: 1/20/25

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

yahoo!sports

Taylor Hall's 'happy' admission after Blackhawks trade to Hurricanes

Michael Whitaker

Veteran forward Taylor Hall has joined his seventh team last week, as he was included in the blockbuster three-team trade between the Chicago Blackhawks, Colorado Avalanche and Carolina Hurricanes; he was traded from Chicago to Carolina, and it's a move that he approves of.

Hall explained that he's happy to be in a new location with a structure that is more suited to his game along with increased playing time, via TSN.

“My playing time in Chicago, for whatever reason, was not what I would have liked it to be,” Hall said. “So I was happy to be traded, and I was happy to come to a really good team that has a culture in place and a structure that I feel fits well with me.”

“Not everyone’s career goes exactly how they want,” Hall said. “I can sit here and feel sorry for myself or beat myself up or whatever it may be, but I’m excited to be here. I’ve played almost 900 games and I have a chance at a Stanley Cup this year. That’s my mindset.

“I became a free agent during Covid, probably the worst-ever time to become a free agent. Right before that, I was traded to a team in Arizona where the future was very murky, and I got offered a contract I didn’t want to take. And then Covid free agency was what it was.

Hall, the former first overall pick of the Edmonton Oilers in the 2010 NHL Draft, knows that while some first overall picks play their entire careers with the club that drafted them, that's not the case with his career.

“A lot of guys don’t play their careers with the same team. I know I went No. 1 and a lot of guys stick with that team when they go No. 1. But I’m proud of my career and I think there’s a lot more ahead of me.”

Hall and the Hurricanes host his former Blackhawks teammates at Lenovo Center on Thursday night.

Hurricanes forward Taylor Hall is a former Hart Trophy winner

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Taylor Hall (71) skates against the New York Islanders during the first period at UBS Arena.

Brad Penner-Imagn Images

The former first overall pick of the Edmonton Oilers in the 2010 NHL Draft, Hall spend the first several years of his career with the team before being traded to the New Jersey Devils; he won the Hart Trophy in 2018 as the NHL's Most Valuable Player.

He's also played for the Arizona Coyotes, Buffalo Sabres, Boston Bruins, and Blackhawks.

Hurricane Drunk: Hurricanes 3, Blackhawks 2

Despite a late goal by Connor Bedard, the Chicago Blackhawks couldn’t come back from being down 3-1 heading into the third period, falling 3-2 on the road to the Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday.

The Hurricanes opened the scoring with 3:03 left first period with a shorthanded goal. Seth Jarvis started the play with a takeaway from Philipp Kurashev, then had a give-and-go with Juha Jaaska before scoring to put the Hurricanes up 1-0.

— NHL Goals (@nhl_goal_bot) January 31, 2025

The Blackhawks evened the score just a couple of minutes later, though. Ilya Mikeyev received a backhand pass from Nick Foligno and skated in alone to beat Pyotr Kochetkov low with a wrister, making it 1-1.

— NHL Goals (@nhl_goal_bot) January 31, 2025

Mikko Rantanten gave the Hurricanes back the lead five minutes into the second period. Jack Roslovic drew several Blackhawks players to him before dropping a pass back to Mikko Rantanen, who beat Arvid Soderblom five-hole.

— NHL Goals (@nhl_goal_bot) January 31, 2025

Jaccob Slavin extended the Hurricanes lead to 3-1 a minute later, knocking in the rebound created after Jackson Blake’s shot hit the crossbar. Blackhawks players lost the puck battle along the boards before Blake’s initial shot.

— NHL Goals (@nhl_goal_bot) January 31, 2025

Connor Bedard got the Blackhawks back within one with 13:31 remaining in the third period. A stretch pass from Seth Jones found a streaking Bedard coming up the right boards, and Bedard beat Kochetkov with a sneaky five-hole shot, cutting the Hurricanes’ lead to 3-2.

— NHL Goals (@nhl_goal_bot) January 31, 2025

Unfortunately, the Blackhawks wouldn’t be able to to finish a comeback, and 3-2 was the final score of the game.

Notes

Much like the last first period against the Hurricanes, the Blackhawks were dominated in terms of shot metrics — to an even more absurd degree. The Blackhawks were out-attempted 18-6, out-chanced 10-2, and had just 20 percent

of the expected goals at 5-on-5. The one saving grace is the Blackhawks managed to keep the actual shots on goal low — just 5-2 — but one of those shots was a goal. The second period was a bit loose between both teams which kept the pace closer, but the Blackhawks made several more mistakes than the Hurricanes. There were quite a few mistakes in the first 40 minutes that saw the Blackhawks coughing up the puck a bit too easily under pressure or falling into deceptions by the Hurricanes to disrupt coverage.

The Blackhawks did have a pretty good response after the Hurricanes second goal, pushing back quicker and getting more chances in a span of 5-6 minutes than they did most of the rest of the game. They even finished positive in shot attempts (54.84 percent) and were even in terms of shots on goal (50 percent), though quality chances were still skewed against them (only 40.27 expected). The Blackhawks kept it more even through the first half of the third, with a little burst of pressure that resulted in the Bedard goal, before the Hurricanes shut them down like the elite team they are. The third ended pretty close but favoring the Hurricanes for shot attempts (12-10), shots on goal (5-6), and expected goals (0.53-0.43).

Overall, I didn't mind this game from the Blackhawks. Yes, the Hurricanes were a force in the first 30 minutes or so, but the response when down was strong from the Blackhawks and the third was solid.

Jones spoke after the game about the Blackhawks needing to just shoot more. That is true, because 20 shots on goal isn't great, but they also do need to be smart about their shooting. As analyst Mike Kelly points out, too many shots from the perimeter can lead to more harm than good in terms of possession. The Blackhawks won the last matchup against the Hurricanes despite Carolina having 48 shots on goal because less than half of those shots (22) were considered scoring chances. Tonight, the Hurricanes had only 27 shots on net, but just about 70 percent (19) were scoring chances. Three fewer chances between the games, but the Hurricanes were smarter about their shot choices and not allowing the Blackhawks to turn around with the puck likely made a difference between those two games.

Perimeter shots lead to a loss of possession far more often than a goal. Since the start of last season, it's little more than 50/50 for teams with 40 or more shots on net – win % 52.7 percent.

— Mike Kelly (@MikeKellyNHL) January 31, 2025

Again: yes, Jones is right that the Blackhawks do need to shoot more in general, but not without a plan, either. Jones has been getting points individually lately in part because his decision making with his shots has been much better — it's been noted several times in the comment sections. Jones has also been very good with his passing and his transition game has looked worlds better than it was at the end of December and the start of this month. Tonight was no exception either, Jones looked good at both ends of the ice, for the most part, and he extended his point streak to seven games. He talked about how he's been feeling and performing post game:

"I feel good. It starts with my breakouts and finding options there, putting guys in good spots. And then it goes to the neutral zone and my game works up from there. [I'm] trying to find plays offensively when I can, but it starts defensively, having a good stick all over the ice and keeping pucks out of my net."

Seth Jones has been quietly excellent since the "infamous Calgary game," and he was great again tonight — even in a losing cause.

"It starts with my breakouts."

Blackhawks postgame notebook from Raleigh: https://t.co/e8VN9ZwOWg

— Ben Pope (@BenPopeCST) January 31, 2025

Soderblom's numbers weren't that great tonight, with just a .889 save percentage, but his game was fine overall. He made some big saves early when the Hurricanes were pouring it on, but he also probably wants that Rantanen goal back (caveat being obviously that Rantanen is a top-10 player in the league and three different Blackhawks puck watched to leave Rantanen wide open). Soderblom's first period was good, second was a bit shakier, and the third was nice enough.

Big early save from Soderblom on Svechnikov sliding left to right pic.twitter.com/fdjifSIvDO

— BHF (@BlackhawksFocus) January 31, 2025

After a couple of solid games from Kurashev, tonight was a letdown. Two major mistakes, one of which was costly, and then being mostly invisible is just a turn away from how he had been playing as of late. He wasn't the only one: Foligno, despite his point, was mediocre. Tyler Bertuzzi was ineffective. Frank Nazar had some major issues (gravity was his greatest opponent tonight, it seemed, but that turnover on the Rantanen goal was gross), and more.

The best line for the Blackhawks was unsurprisingly the one with Jason Dickinson. Outside of one bad game and a handful of quiet ones, Dickinson has consistently been one of the better play drivers on the team, even if it's not resulting in a lot of points for him. When he, Teuvo Teravainen, and Ilya Mikheyev were on the ice together, the Blackhawks out-attempted (10-3) and outshot (5-2) the Hurricanes, and they owned 73.80 of the expected goals. Now, the quality of competition was on the low side — they faced Carolina's third line with Jordan Staal more than anyone else — but the numbers are still impressive.

No other Blackhawks line was in the positive in terms of shot metrics, and as a result, there was a bit of line shuffling as the game went on. The two most noticeable were Landon Slaggert getting time with Bedard and Bertuzzi (5:49) in place of Nazar and Ryan Donato shifting with Lukas Reichel and Foligno (3:10). Also not surprising that Slaggert and Donato got rewarded with promotions: both play a high-effort, smart, but hard-nosed style that can help spark others and they were having good games when other players were lagging. It might have been more fun to see Slaggert with Bedard and Nazar, but Sorensen has been reluctant to put three kids together and Nazar wasn't at his best to start this game (though neither was Bertuzzi).

Slaggert has been particularly effective at translating his strong forechecking ability from NCAA and AHL to the NHL this season.

— BHF (@BlackhawksFocus) January 31, 2025

And he’s always willing to drive to the net:

Nice move by Bedard but can't find Slaggert in front pic.twitter.com/9r9raoV3Wc

— BHF (@BlackhawksFocus) January 31, 2025

Speaking of Bedard, Jones was asked about Bedard seeming to “defer” this season instead of shooting more, and his answer is below. Again, Jones isn’t wrong in that we’d all prefer Bedard to be shooting instead of Bertuzzi, but the issue most of the season has been Bedard having little playmaking assistance on his line, so he’s had to perform that role himself. He has been shooting a lot more lately, and he had a solid four attempts (tied for third most on the team) and two on goal (tied for second most). Another answer that isn’t technically wrong but also there were a lot of other players that the “shoot more” advice should go to.

(This was not a criticism, to be clear. I asked him the question.)

— Mark Lazerus (@MarkLazerus) January 31, 2025

Other young players like Alex Vlasic, Nolan Allan, and Reichel all had individually decent to good games. There are the types of players the Blackhawks can mold and use in the future potentially.

Alex Vlasic completely neutralizes a 1on1 break pic.twitter.com/rwIGWO5a0C

— BHF (@BlackhawksFocus) January 31, 2025

Nice hit by Nolan Allan on Svechnikov pic.twitter.com/EEacbM4uVu

— BHF (@BlackhawksFocus) January 31, 2025

Reichel's had 2 bursts this year over 22mph and I think this may be the 3rd https://t.co/GqcIxROt0t

— BHF (@BlackhawksFocus) January 31, 2025

There was no revenge game by Taylor Hall tonight: the recently traded former Blackhawks forward was sidelined with an illness — possibly the same one that kept Sebastian Aho out of the game as well — right before the game began.

Sebastian Aho and Taylor Hall will each miss tonight's game against Chicago due to illness.

— Hurricanes PR (@CanesPR) January 30, 2025

Game Charts

Three Stars

Mikko Rantanen (CAR) — 1 goal

Juha Jaaska (CAR) — 2 assists

Connor Bedard (CHI) — 1 goal

What’s Next

The Blackhawks are still on the road, heading to Florida Saturday for a Noon start against the Panthers.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

SB NATION CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes 3, Blackhawks 2

Bob Wage

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Chicago Blackhawks, 3-2 on Thursday night at the Lenovo Center. The win gave the Canes seven straight games in which they earned at least one point.

The bug is hitting Carolina as Sebastian Aho and Taylor Hall were too ill to play. After the game, Rod Brind'Amour said that a few other players were not feeling their best either.

Ryan Suzuki was called up from Chicago at the last minute and made it just before game time. It was his first NHL game and the center said the afternoon was such a rush he didn't have a chance to get nervous.

Even with Suzuki, the Canes still skated down one forward.

Before the game there was a nice ceremony for Frederik Andersen, who had recently played his 500th game, a noteworthy achievement for a goaltender.

Pyotr Kochetkov played this game though and made a few key saves on high danger chances for the home team. The two goals he allowed were both on breakaways.

He made 18 saves on the 20 shots he faced.

The Canes started out well and dominated puck possession. The Hawks did not have an official shot on goal until well past the midway point of the first period.

Seth Jarvis got things started with a shorthanded goal about 16 minutes into the first. Juha Jaaska made a beautiful play and got the lone assist.

Jaaska was credited with another assist a bit later and registered his first career NHL two point game.

That was the 20th goal of the season for Jarvis.

Chicago tied things up before the end of the period on a breakaway chance, on just their second shot of the game.

In the second period the Canes got cooking. Mikko Rantanen scored his first as a Hurricane off a nice set up by Jack Roslovic.

About a minute later, Jaccob Slavin knocked in a rebound to make it 3-1.

Connor Bedard would score on a breakaway in the third period to make things interesting, but that would complete the scoring for the night.

The Canes have Friday off and will next face the Kings on Saturday night.

(Frederik Andersen's ceremony)

NHL: JAN 30 Blackhawks at Hurricanes Photo by Katherine Gawlik/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

Game Summary - https://www.nhl.com/scores/htmlreports/20242025/GS020817.HTM

Event Summary - https://www.nhl.com/scores/htmlreports/20242025/ES020817.HTM

Team's Recap - https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-rantanen-scores-suzuki-debuts-in-canes-win-over-blackhawks

Interviews - https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/for656e1k4iutlkofuzch/AMXEyepQWznxx_m8ygClhQk?rlkey=587calv1p9dad7x3ux1n38mnu&e=1&st=lp1ru0in&dl=0

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025



Rantanen nets first goal as a Hurricane in home debut

Colby Trotter, Sports Editor and Aidan Carlson, Assistant Sports Editor

It may not have been the prettiest of his career, but right wing Mikko Rantanen scored his first goal with the Carolina Hurricanes in a 3-2 win over the Chicago Blackhawks Thursday night at Lenovo Center.

Five minutes into the second period, center Jack Roslovic dropped off a no-look drop pass to Rantanen who snapped a shot through the five-hole of Blackhawks goaltender Arvid Soderblom that trickled into the back of the net after it hit his pad.

“Roslovic made a heck of a play on the entry,” Rantanen said. “Glad to help the team that way.”

It hasn’t even been a week since Rantanen was traded to the Hurricanes, and he has admitted he was shocked when it happened. He loved playing in Colorado so much that he was willing to take a pay cut. But now that he’s had time to process the trade, he’s happy to be on a winning team and his new teammates have made the adjustment easier.

“It's not easy, but the guys make it easier, for sure,” Rantanen said. “They're very tight with each other which is obviously nice to see and easy to come into because it's so tight. It's gonna take a little bit more time to get fully comfortable with everything and on the ice that comes with instinct, no thinking at all, which was better today, for sure.”

With center Sebastian Aho and left wing Taylor Hall out with an illness that is running through the Hurricanes locker room, the Canes were down a skater the whole night. Even with the team recalling center Ryan Suzuki from the Chicago Wolves to make his NHL debut, many players took on an added workload.

“We kind of hung around,” said head coach Rod Brind’Amour. “Considering what we're missing. And then we have a couple guys that we're not feeling 100% that's for sure. So [we] gutted it out and we’ll move on.”

Suzuki had the least amount of time-on-ice of any player for either team as he was thrust into the lineup — only arriving in Raleigh 15 minutes before warm-ups. He is the second Hurricane to make their debut this season joining his Wolves teammate for much of the year left wing Juha Jaaska.

“I didn't really get to think about it,” Suzuki said. “I felt like if I had a night to sleep on it, I would work myself up a little bit. So it was nice to just get here and get on the ice.”

The two were able to find chemistry together on the make-shift fourth line as both of them finished with a positive plus-minus. Jaaska’s two assists on the opening and game-winning goal earned him his first multi-point NHL performance.

“Super cool. I was so happy to see him here,” Jaaska said. “We played pretty good today, pretty good shifts today. It was super cool. I’m so happy for him.”

Jaaska played a key role in giving the Hurricanes a lead when he saucered a pass over to center Seth Jarvis while short-handed. Jarvis settled the pass and fired a shot past Soderblom for a 1-0 lead in the first period.

Jarvis’ goal was quickly answered by Chicago right wing Ilya Mikheyev less than two minutes later as he found some space by defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere and made the Canes pay. The Blackhawks had three shots on goal in the first 20 minutes, but the score was tied heading into the intermission.

Rantanen re-established the lead in the second, and defenseman Jaccob Slavin doubled up the lead a minute later as he finished a shot from right wing Jackson Blake that bounced off the crossbar for a 3-1 lead going into the last intermission.

Despite Blackhawk center Connor Bedard netting his 15th goal of the year 6:29 into the third, Slavin’s tap-in was enough to give the Hurricanes two points. The win extends the team’s point streak to seven games, having won six of those.

The Canes look to extend the streak on Saturday when they take on the Los Angeles Kings in Raleigh. Puck drop is set for 7 p.m.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

The Hockey News

Young Hurricanes Fan Offers to Empty His Piggy Bank to Help Re-Sign Mikko Rantanen

Karl Rasmussen

It hasn't taken long for Carolina Hurricanes fans to warm up to one of their team's newest acquisitions, superstar winger Mikko Rantanen.

Having landed the 28-year-old in a blockbuster trade with the Colorado Avalanche, Rantanen may potentially be just a rental for the Canes as they look to push for a Stanley Cup title. However, fans are hopeful the team will find a way to re-sign him in the offseason when he's due to hit free agency.

Those hoping Rantanen sticks around received a major boost from an unsuspecting source on Thursday. While signing gear for Carolina fans, one young supporter graciously offered to donate his entire piggy bank to the Rantanen fund.

"I'll give you all the money in my piggy bank if you stay," the young fan wholesomely declared to Rantanen.

Rantanen has played in just two games for the Hurricanes since arriving in the three-team trade with the Avs and Chicago Blackhawks. He's registered one point while averaging over 18 minutes of ice time per night. He'll be in the lineup again for Thursday's game against the Blackhawks.

Rantanen's exit from Colorado was largely due to the contract he was expected to receive in free agency. One of the best forwards in the NHL, it was reported the standout Fin was seeking a contract in the range of $14 million annually, similar to the deal Leon Draisaitl signed with the Edmonton Oilers. That would make him the highest-paid winger in the league.

With the backing of their young fan's piggy bank, re-signing Rantanen figures to be a top priority for the Hurricanes this offseason.

Carolina Hurricanes To Play Short A Man As Illness Sweeps Through Room

Ryan Henkel

Both Sebastian Aho and Taylor Hall will miss tonight's game against the Chicago Blackhawks due to illness.

The Carolina Hurricanes will be playing a bit handicapped tonight against the Chicago Blackhawks.

Sebastian Aho, who was originally a game-time decision, is officially out, but so too is Taylor Hall as both forwards are dealing with an illness.

It seems that a bug is sweeping through the Canes' room as Jack Roslovic missed the team's last game against the New York Rangers due to illness as well and now multiple players have been ruled out due to it.

"It's tough," said Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour this morning. "It pretty much ends up pretty much running through everybody. Just the nature of it. We try to keep guys that are sick away and not have them come in like today when you're not feeling great. But it's that time of year."

The Hurricanes had only planned for one absence, Aho, so had called up Ryan Suzuki, but Hall's last minute absence will leave them with just 17 available skaters.

It will be a big challenge for the team to overcome and I'm sure there are players dealing with some degree of illness as well.

Carolina Hurricanes First-Round Pick To Make NHL Debut

Ryan Henkel

Ryan Suzuki will make his NHL debut after five seasons in the AHL.

The Carolina Hurricanes will be ushering in another rookie debut as 2019 first-round pick Ryan Suzuki is set to play his first NHL game tonight.

The 23-year-old center has dealt with a plethora of injuries throughout his career, but has managed to carve out a consistent swathe of play as of late.

The centerman has played 199 AHL games where he's registered 45 goals and 116 points. This season, he has six goals and 30 points in 38 games with the Chicago Wolves.

With Sebastian Aho out with illness and the team having already traded away Jack Drury, they needed another center and the AHL All-Star was next in line.

Suzuki is also the 12th player to make their team debut with the Hurricanes this season and the last first-round pick of the 2019 draft to make their NHL debut.

Sebastian Aho Questionable To Play Against Chicago Blackhawks

Ryan Henkel

The Hurricanes 1C is currently battling an illness.

The Carolina Hurricanes may be without their number one centerman tonight.

As the Canes took the ice this morning for their pre-skate before facing off against the Chicago Blackhawks tonight, Sebastian Aho was not among the group.

"He didn't feel well when he showed up so we sent him back home and we'll see how he feels later today," said coach Rod Brind'Amour following practice.

With Aho out, the Canes had Jack Roslovic centering Mikko Rantanen and Jackson Blake and although Tyson Jost did practice, he isn't close to returning yet.

So if Aho is indeed out, that look will probably be the only new line combination and Riley Stillman will draw back in as the seventh defenseman

The Hurricanes have already dealt with a bit of illness troubles as of late as Roslovic was forced to miss Tuesday's game against the New York Rangers due to being sick and those two certainly won't be the last.

"It's tough," Brind'Amour said. "It pretty much ends up pretty much running through everybody. Just the nature of it. We try to keep guys that are sick away and not have them come in like today when you're not feeling great. But it's that time of year."

Sebastian Aho, Mikko Rantanen Named Alternate Captains For Team Finland

Ryan Henkel

The Finns will be captain at the Four Nations Face-Off by Aleksander Barkov.

Team Finland announced their leadership group for the 4 Nations Face-Off today and both Carolina Hurricanes forwards Sebastian Aho and Mikko Rantanen were named alternate captains.

Finland will be captained by Aleksander Barkov of the Florida Panthers and Mikael Granlund of the San Jose Sharks will also serve as an alternate captain.

Aho, 27, is currently a point-per-game producer for the Hurricanes with 17 goals and 51 points in 51 games. The franchise cornerstone has served as an alternate captain with Carolina for multiple years and he's been an impact player for Finland throuhgout his international career.

Rantanen, 28, is the newest member of the Hurricanes but comes to Carolina with 25 goals and 61 points in 51 games played. Just like Aho, Rantanen wore an 'A' for Colorado and has been an impact for Finland whenever he's had the chance to play in international tournaments.

"It's a big honor," Rantanen said. "First of all, making the team. Growing up, you remember watching the Olympics and all the Finnish great players who played back then and you just dreamed of one day maybe being a part of it. And now to be one of the leaders of the team is a really big honor and hopefully I can do a good job there."

The 4 Nations Face-Off will take place from Feb. 12-20 as Finland faces off against Sweden, Canada and the US.

TODAY'S LINKS

https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article299239354.html
https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6100562/2025/01/30/taylor-hall-blackhawks-trade-hurricanes/
https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6101175/2025/01/31/nhl-mikko-rantanen-trade-avalanche-hurricanes/
https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6101354/2025/01/31/nhl-trade-board-cozens-miller-gibson-pettersson/
https://nsjonline.com/article/2025/01/as-blockbuster-trade-broke-hurricanes-waited-in-uncertainty/
https://nsjonline.com/article/2025/01/rantanen-gets-1st-goal-with-hurricanes-in-3-2-win/
https://www.wralsportsfan.com/mikko-rantanen-scores-as-the-hurricanes-beat-the-blackhawks-3-2/21835486/
https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-rantanen-scores-suzuki-debuts-in-canes-win-over-blackhawks
https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/examining-the-biggest-trades-in-canes-history
https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/aho-rantanen-named-to-finland-s-4-nations-face-off-leadership-group
https://apnews.com/article/carolina-hurricanes-mikko-rantanen-9c2048523b2b110a8b341bed064d31fd
https://apnews.com/article/hurricanes-blackhawks-score-3ebd8ac4739b7e5b1755e889a681d796
https://www.espn.com/nhl/insider/story/_/id/42703935/nhl-trade-grades-2024-25-report-cards-rankings-biggest-deals
https://www.espn.com/nhl/story/_/id/43629983/nhl-power-rankings-2024-2025-best-teams-standings-trends
https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/rantanen-scores-first-goal-with-hurricanes-in-win-over-blackhawks/
https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/ryan-suzuki-brother-of-canadiens-captain-to-make-nhl-debut-with-hurricanes/
https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/revisiting-some-of-the-biggest-nhl-trades-in-the-salary-cap-era/
https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/2024-25-nhl-injury-tracker-wilds-kirill-kaprizov-stars-miro-heiskanen-expected-to-miss-several-weeks/
https://sports.yahoo.com/m/104f7702-34e0-3f64-974e-cf309bf06a39/taylor-hall-s-happy-.html
https://sports.yahoo.com/m/be353a91-9bf7-3471-b47a-77cd7fe500ae/hurricane-drunk%3A-hurricanes.html
https://www.canescountry.com/2025/1/31/24355759/hurricanes-3-blackhawks-2
https://www.technicianonline.com/sports/rantanen-nets-first-goal-as-a-hurricane-in-home-debut/article_797754f4-dfd6-11ef-9b7f-2befee3c187e.html
https://www.si.com/nhl/young-hurricanes-fan-offers-to-empty-his-piggy-bank-to-help-re-sign-mikko-rantanen
https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/carolina-hurricanes-to-play-short-a-man-as-illness-sweeps-through-room
https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/carolina-hurricanes-first-round-pick-to-make-nhl-debut
https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/sebastian-aho-questionable-to-play-against-chicago-blackhawks
https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/sebastian-aho-mikko-rantanen-named-alternate-captains-for-team-finland

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

SportScan

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

1337953 Carolina Hurricanes

Welcome 'home': Hurricanes' Mikko Rantanen scores in home debut, a win over Chicago

Chip Alexander

6-7 minutes 31/01/2025

The Carolina Hurricanes went to Long Island a week ago with Martin Necas and Jack Drury on the charter flight.

They returned to Raleigh with Mikko Rantanen and Taylor Hall.

Things can change that quickly in the NHL, and Rantanen was in the lineup for his first home game Thursday against the Chicago Blackhawks at the Lenovo Center. But not Hall, who missed the game because of illness, as did Sebastian Aho.

Rantanen, in his third game with the Canes since the stunning Friday trade with Colorado, scored his first goal in a 3-2 victory.

"He was impactful," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "He could have had a couple tonight. He was really good."

Seth Jarvis picked up his 20th goal of the season, a shorthanded strike in the first period, and Jaccob Slavin scored in the second for the Canes (32-16-4), who have a seven-game point streak (6-0-1).. Goalie Pyotr Kochetkov earned his 19th win, allowing goals to Connor Bedard and Ilya Mikheyev.

"The guys make it easier. They've been great and make it easy to come into, you know?" Rantanen said of the transition. "It's going to take a little more time to get fully comfortable. It's getting better every day."

Being able to trade for Rantanen was a major coup for the Canes and general manager Eric Tulsky. In came a former All-Star and one of the league's most productive scorers, a big Finnish winger who was drafted by the Avalanche and played 10 seasons in Denver, winning a Stanley Cup in 2022.

Then, he was traded for Necas and Drury. In January, not at the NHL trade deadline.

"It's a hard business and it's not always in your hands what happens," Rantanen said after Thursday's morning skate.

His new coach knows as well as anyone. Brind'Amour had spent parts of nine seasons with the Philadelphia Flyers before his sudden trade to the Hurricanes in January 2000.

Brind'Amour seemed to be in a daze at first, Rantanen was told.

"Yeah, I totally understand it," Rantanen said. "When you've been with an organization for 10 years, just knowing how the team works and having the same coach the whole time, the routine being the same for 10 years. …

"When you're expecting something to happen, you already mentally are switching. But when it comes like that, it's a lot to handle. A lot of emotions."

It was different for Hall, who was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2010 NHL draft by the Edmonton Oilers. A former Hart Trophy winner as the league's MVP, he's now with his seventh NHL team after being sent to the Canes by the Blackhawks.

"Not everyone's career goes exactly the way you want," Hall said Thursday. "I can sit here and feel sorry for myself or beat myself up, but I'm excited to be here. I'm proud of my career and think there's a lot more ahead of me.

"I've played almost 900 games and have a chance to win a Stanley Cup. That's kind of my mindset."

After the Friday night mega trades, which sent ripples through the NHL, Rantanen and Hall were in the lineup Saturday for the Canes' overtime loss to the New York Islanders, then the 4-0 win over the Rangers on Tuesday at Madison Square Garden.

Rantanen was slotted on Aho's line in the first two games, allowing him to rejoin a player he has known since their junior hockey days in Finland a decade ago — the two will serve as alternate captains for Team Finland in the 4 Nations Face-Off event.

With Aho out Thursday, Jack Roslovic centered Rantanen and rookie Jackson Blake, who assisted on Slavin's second-period goal.

Hall, unlike Aho, participated in Thursday's morning skate. He later talked with the media about being traded by the Blackhawks, about facing them so soon after the trade. Then, the absence come game time.

Ryan Suzuki was hastily recalled Thursday from the AHL's Chicago Wolves and made his NHL debut. A former first-round pick by the Canes, he arrived at the arena 15 minutes before the pregame warmups to give the Canes an 11th forward to play with six defenseman.

For Rantanen and Hall, it's about absorbing Brind'Amour's system and getting comfortable with the Canes' style of play – Hall called it "in-your-face" — and the team.

"They're smart hockey players and hockey is hockey," Brind'Amour said Thursday morning. "When you're a good player, you can adjust quickly and those players have been around."

Hall noted the Hurricanes soon will have their bye week and the break for the 4 Nations Face-Off.

"The timing works out well," Hall said. "I think me and Mikko have a lot of runway to get used to the group, get used to everything and our surroundings before the playoffs."

News Observer LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337954 Carolina Hurricanes

Mikko Rantanen opens his Carolina Hurricanes account, but real returns on trade await

Staff Report

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

5-6 minutes 31/01/2025

Raleigh

When Mikko Rantanen was traded to a high-flying Stanley Cup contender, he probably didn't envision making his debut in his new city playing next to a pair of AHL call-ups, Juha Jaaska and Ryan Suzuki.

Yet that's where Rantanen found himself in the second period Thursday, double-shifting on the fourth line as the Carolina Hurricanes played a man short with Sebastian Aho and Taylor Hall — their other newcomer — both calling in sick against the woebegone Chicago Blackhawks.

On his next shift, playing with NHL veterans, Rantanen opened his account with his new team. A no-look, behind-the-back drop pass from Jack Roslovic sprung Rantanen into open space on the left wing, and Rantanen scored his 26th of the season and first with the Hurricanes in his first game at the Lenovo Center, a 3-2 win.

"It was great," Rantanen said. "Playing here as an away team, it was always one of the toughest buildings, so I was happy that we only came here once. I like the city and everything, but the building is tough to play in, so I'm happy to be on the home side. And the crowd was great. Got some chills."

With Aho and Hall both out — Roslovic missed one game with the bug that's running rampant through the dressing room, so presumably not for long — Hurricanes fans will have to wait a bit longer to see their new battle station fully operational, not that it mattered against the Blackhawks. Jaaska and Suzuki would have found the talent level on the lower half of Chicago's roster rather familiar.

Fans certainly recognized one of the players on the upper half of that roster; Teuvo Teravainen had an atypically broad smile in response to the team's acknowledgment of his return.

A week after the Hurricanes sent seismic waves through the NHL by acquiring Rantanen, a top-three player at his position in the prime of his career, the reverberations were finally starting to fade as the league got its mind around the possibilities of a player like Rantanen in a system like the Hurricanes surrounded by players like Seth Jarvis and Andrei Svechnikov and Aho, if not the latter Thursday.

Seeing him at home, on this ice in the black sweater, finally makes it feel real — less like a trade someone made on the PlayStation, editing Rantanen onto the Carolina roster, more like the tangible future.

Because it is still a little hard to believe. Players like this don't often get traded, and when they do, it doesn't happen in the middle of a season. Even parting with Martin Necas and Jack Drury, the Hurricanes found a way to substantially upgrade their talent level, and that's even if Hall doesn't do much. (The suspicion here is that he will, especially in the playoffs when matchups always loom larger.)

It's also impossible, at this point, to assess. The real returns remain so far down the road. In the postseason, depending on whether he can help the Hurricanes progress farther than they have previously. In the offseason, depending if he re-signs and converts this from a high-profile, pre-deadline rental into a long-term, franchise-changing commitment.

There's no way to make any judgments in January. The Hurricanes were and are a playoff team with and without Rantanen; his arrival raises their ceiling but the Hurricanes are months away from finding out just how high it is.

"He wants to come in and contribute right away," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour. "And you know, 'You got to be on the scoresheet,' everyone's looking at you, and now he has. He's got his goal and he was impactful. He could have had a couple tonight."

On this night, it was good enough that he was here. And on the scoresheet. The rest can wait.

News Observer LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337955 Carolina Hurricanes

Rantanen gets 1st goal with Hurricanes in 3-2 win

January 30, 2025

Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports

RALEIGH — Welcome to Raleigh, Mikko Rantanen.

In his first home game at Lenovo Center, Rantanen scored the go-ahead goal in the second period of the Hurricanes' 3-2 win over the Blackhawks on Thursday.

With the game tied 1-1 early in the second period, Jack Roslovic started a rush up ice and moved to the middle at the Chicago blue line.

Rantanen cut behind him and Roslovic — centering Carolina's top line with Sebastian Aho out with an illness — put a drop pass right on his new teammate's stick. Rantanen shot from the left circle, and the puck trickled through Arvid Soderblom for his first goal with the Hurricanes and 26th of the season, triggering "Moose!" chants in the arena.

"Roslovic made a heck of a play on the entry, the drop pass, and this time it went in," Rantanen said. "So I was glad to help the team that way."

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said clearing another hurdle can help Rantanen settle in with his team.

"He knows he wants to come here and help contribute right away," Brind'Amour said, "and you've got to be on the score sheet. … And now he has. He's got his goal, and he was impactful. He could have had a couple tonight. He was really good and nice to see him get that, and now he doesn't have to worry about it."

Sixty-seven seconds after Rantanen's goal, defenseman Jaccob Slavin extended the lead to 3-1.

Rookie Jackson Blake pulled the puck out of a scrum in the Blackhawks' zone, made a few quick moves to create space and snapped a shot that hit Soderblom (24 saves) and then the crossbar. Slavin crashed the net on the backside, outmuscled Chicago forward Phillip Kurashev and shoveled in the rebound for his fourth goal of the season at 5:59 of the second.

Juha Jaaska, playing his 14th NHL game, picked up an assist — his second of the night after he set up a shorthanded goal to open the scoring.

The Hurricanes didn't allow a shot on goal for the first 15 minutes of the game but found themselves on the penalty kill whenCarolina defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere was called for tripping.

But it was Carolina that benefited from Chicago being on the power play.

Seth Jarvis forced a turnover at the Carolina blue line and rushed up ice with Jaaska for a 2-on-1. Jarvis gave the puck up to Jaaska at center ice and slashed to the middle. Jaaska saucered a pass over Blackhawks defenseman Alec Martinez's stick that Jarvis quickly settled and shot past Soderblom to give the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 16:57 of the first.

"He was so hyped. I was so hyped," said Jaaska, who now has three assists and recorded his first career multipoint game. "Those are the moments when you get the emotions. I don't know, it's super cool, especially when you don't (score) much points and then you, do you are like, 'Oh my,' they feel so good."

Brind'Amour has called on Jaaska to kill penalties since Jack Drury was sent to Colorado in the Rantanen trade, and the 26-year-old Finn made the most of it.

"That was a heck of a play there; nice touch," Brind'Amour said. "Out of necessity, we were looking for killers. We're running out of them, and he stepped up. That was a crucial moment, really."

The Blackhawks finally registered a shot with just under three minutes left in the period, and shortly after, the visitors tied the game.

A puck got past Gostisbehere along the boards in the neutral zone, leading to a quick-developing 2-on-1. Blackhawks captain Nick Foligno passed the puck ahead to Ilya Mikheyev for a breakaway, and he scored

his ninth goal of the season to tie the game with 1:22 left in the first period.

Carolina, playing with just 17 skaters because both Aho and Taylor Hall were out with an illness spreading through the locker room, found just enough to get by the woebegone Blackhawks to extend its point streak to seven games.

“Considering what we’re missing, and then we have couple guys that were not feeling 100%, that’s for sure,” Brind’Amour said. “So we gutted it out, and we’ll move on.”

Nsjonline LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337956 Carolina Hurricanes

As blockbuster trade broke, Hurricanes waited in uncertainty

January 30, 2025

Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports

RALEIGH — “I thought I was gone for 13 minutes,” Jesperi Kotkaniemi said, “but I came back.”

The Hurricanes center found out about what would become the Mikko Rantanen and Taylor Hall for Martin Necas and Jack Drury trade the same way as almost everyone in the universe.

“We were leaving dinner and things started to come up on social media, like, ‘Oh, what’s going on?’” Kotkaniemi said Tuesday morning in New York. “There were a lot of names — my name and other guys’ names out there. So we were like, ‘What’s happening?’ No one really knew what’s going on.”

As the news spread on social media last Friday night — first that Hall would be coming to Carolina and then of the bigger deal including Rantanen — the group text the players share got active.

“It blew up pretty quick,” defenseman Sean Walker said.

Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky — at the request of his counterpart in Colorado, Chris MacFarland — kept an airtight seal on negotiations with the Avalanche, which started in the offseason but heated up in recent weeks.

“I’ve only been a part of a few sudden ones midseason that are kind of more out of the blue than normal,” Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal said.

Not that Kotkaniemi was completely blindsided. His name had been bandied about in rumors of Carolina’s discussions with the Canucks regarding both Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller.

Following last Thursday’s home win against Columbus, I had asked Kotkaniemi if it was difficult dealing with the persistent trade rumors.

“Na, at the beginning of the year, they think you’re great,” he said of pundits and others putting his name out there, “and in the middle of the year, they think you’re s–t.”

About 24 hours later, he was right in the middle of it, not knowing his future.

“Those are big things,” he said. “Everyone has families and houses, apartments wherever they play. So there’s a lot of things going through your mind when those things come up.”

Less than 20 minutes after Daily Faceoff’s Frank Seravalli — who had first reported Rantanen would be headed to Carolina — had posted on X that it “sounds like both Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Martin Necas are going” to the Avalanche, ESPN’s Emily Kaplan, at 9:06 p.m., posted that it would be Drury, not Kotkaniemi, as the second piece in the deal.

At 10:08 p.m., the Hurricanes officially announced the trade following a negotiation that Tulsky called “a complicated dance.”

The players gathered in their hotel in Garden City on Long Island to say quick goodbyes to Necas and Drury — the Avalanche were set to play Sunday at 1 p.m. in Boston, and both players had to leave immediately to arrive in time to make their Colorado debut against the Bruins.

“We all just got together,” Kotkaniemi said. “It was nice that everyone showed up, and it’s nice to say a couple last words to those guys for a while (because) we don’t play (Colorado) anymore this season. So it was a little hectic there.”

Staal added, “We were trying to take a little time together and say bye to a couple family members.”

While the excitement of the additions bubbled under the surface, there were still the emotions of losing two players who were drafted and developed by the team and had become part of the culture.

“I love both those guys so much. Obviously, you’ve got to lose big pieces to get big pieces. So I just can’t wish enough well on Nechy and Jacko because those are friends you’ll have for a long time — geez, emotion,” said Jordan Martinook, pausing to compose himself. “But bringing in Hallsy and Rants, those are two unbelievable players. It’s going to make our team better, and I’m excited to see how it all plays out.”

With the NHL trade deadline just over five weeks away, everyone can’t exhale yet.

“It’s part of the business,” Kotkaniemi said. “Anything can happen at any moment, so it’s good to kind of be ready for that.”

Nsjonline LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337957 Carolina Hurricanes

Taylor Hall on Blackhawks: ‘I was happy to be traded’

Mark Lazerus

5-6 minutes 30/01/2025

RALEIGH, N.C. — In the weeks leading up to his trade to Carolina, Taylor Hall repeatedly said he wanted to stay in Chicago, that he wanted to be a part of what the Blackhawks were building, that he wanted to settle down in one city in the twilight of his peripatetic career.

But following his first morning skate in his new home arena, the Lenovo Center, Hall struck a different note. Not bitter, but relieved — and more than anything, excited.

“My playing time in Chicago, for whatever reason, was not what I would have liked it to be,” Hall said. “So I was happy to be traded, and I was happy to come to a really good team that has a culture in place and a structure that I feel fits well with me.”

As the Blackhawks pivoted toward a youth movement in the past month — calling up players such as Frank Nazar and Colton Dach and moving them up in the lineup — Hall saw his role dwindling. As of Jan. 8, he was averaging more than 15 minutes per game. That plummeted to 12:36 per game when he was dropped to the fourth line.

By that point, he could see the writing on the wall.

“They’re on a different timeline than my career is, right?” Hall said. “So I get it, I understand it. I wanted to play more. I’m definitely a better player than the amount I was playing. But you also understand where they’re coming from. They wanted to play young guys, they wanted to play guys up in the lineup. It was what it was. I still have a lot of respect for the people there and I did like being a Blackhawk a lot and loved the city. Just the way it worked out.”

There had been friction between Hall and former coach Luke Richardson, who scratched the former MVP without warning Nov. 16 in Vancouver. Hall later said he was “blindsided” by the move, but Richardson said he apologized and smoothed things over. When Anders Sorensen replaced

Richardson as interim head coach, Hall saw more time on the top line with Tyler Bertuzzi and Connor Bedard, but it didn't last very long.

Hall had nine goals and 15 assists in 46 games with the Blackhawks. He played just 11 minutes in his first game with the Hurricanes but played 18:18 against the Rangers on Tuesday, and had a primary assist.

"I like Anders a lot, honestly, I think he's a really good coach," Hall said. "(Ryan) Donato and myself, I felt like we produced pretty well five-on-five and we were both playing pretty far down the lineup. He's a free agent at the end of the year, too. I just don't know if we were in their plans. Specifically, I don't know if I was in their plans for the future, and that's just the way it goes."

Sorensen demurred when asked if there was an organizational decision to play younger players higher in the lineup.

"There's opportunities for everybody, right?" Sorensen said. "I'm not sure if we're looking exactly what age you are. But if you're playing well, and you're contributing the way you're expected to, then you'll get your opportunities."

The Hurricanes are Hall's seventh NHL team, a rather shocking number for a No. 1 draft pick. After six years in Edmonton, he's played three and a half seasons in New Jersey (winning the Hart Trophy in 2018), a half a year in Arizona, a half a year in Buffalo, two full seasons in Boston and a year and a half in Chicago.

Even Hall marvels at how circuitous his career has been. But he says Raleigh's suburban lifestyle suits him, his wife and their 1-year-old son, and he's glad to be on a team with a legitimate chance at a Stanley Cup, something he's never won.

"Not everyone's career goes exactly how they want," he said. "I can sit here and feel sorry for myself or beat myself up or whatever it may be, but I'm excited to be here. I've played almost 900 games and I have a chance at a Stanley Cup this year. That's my mindset. I became a free agent during Covid, probably the worst-ever time to become a free agent. Right before that, I was traded to a team in Arizona where the future was very murky, and I got offered a contract I didn't want to take. And then Covid free agency was what it was. I didn't want to get traded from Boston. I got traded to a rebuilding team (Chicago) that their timeline just didn't fit, and now here we are. There's a lot that goes into it. A lot of guys don't play their careers with the same team. I know I went No. 1 and a lot of guys stick with that team when they go No. 1. But I'm proud of my career and I think there's a lot more ahead of me."

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337989 Los Angeles Kings

Kings' struggles continue as Lightning hand them 2nd straight shutout loss

By ERIK ERLENDSSON The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — A two-game visit to the sunshine state didn't brighten the outlook for the Kings' goal-starved offense.

Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 28 shots, Brandon Hagel had two goals and an assist and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Kings, 3-0, on Thursday night, handing the visitors their second straight shutout loss and their fourth consecutive defeat overall.

Anthony Cirelli scored his fourth short-handed goal of the season for the Lightning. The shutout was Vasilevskiy's second this season and 37th of his career.

David Rittich finished with 30 saves for the Kings, who have lost eight of their past 10 games (2-7-1), scoring just 15 goals over that extended stretch and just 19 goals in their past 12 games.

Florida Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 29 shots in handing the Kings a 3-0 loss on Wednesday night.

"You've got to keep on going really," Kings captain Anze Kopitar told NHL.com. "We do have chances, but for whatever reason the pucks are not going in. It's very hard, obviously mentally, when you're not scoring and losing tight games.

"It ends up being 3-0 tonight, but it was tighter than the score. We've got to find a way. That's the bottom line. There's no other way to put it."

Thursday's game was the fourth stop of a five-game trip, with the Kings (26-17-6, 58 points) set to play at Carolina (32-16-4, 68 points) on Saturday night.

Hagel raced past defenseman Jordan Spence with an inside move and beat Rittich for the game's first goal 4:45 into the opening period. Vasilevskiy was credited with the secondary assist.

Neither team had a power play in the first period as Tampa Bay held an 11-8 advantage in shots.

The Kings appeared to pull even right as the game's first power play ended when Jacob Moverare popped out of the penalty box and fed Quinton Byfield for a breakaway goal at 7:44 of the second.

However, the Lightning successfully challenged that Moverare was offside and the goal was waved off.

"[Moverare] was over with possession … his skates … when he released the pass to [Byfield] the puck wasn't fully over the blue line yet," Kings coach Jim Hiller told NHL.com. "A couple inches, millimeters maybe. We needed one. That was a big goal. What do you do, right? That's the rules. We just missed it."

Rittich kept the score 1-0 at 10:31 of the second with a diving glove save on Brayden Point at the near post on a 3-on-2 rush.

In the third, Vasilevskiy made a key save on Anze Kopitar's breakaway four minutes in, and Hagel gave Tampa Bay some breathing room with less than five minutes left after Rittich stopped Nikita Kucherov's breakaway.

With an assist from Hagel, Cirelli tapped added an empty-net goal with 1:17 left with Rittich pulled during a power play for a 6-on-4 advantage.

After playing 23:51 in his season debut on Wednesday night, Kings defenseman Drew Doughty was back in the lineup on Thursday, logging nearly 28 minutes on the ice. Doughty, who suffered a broken ankle during the preseason, was a minus-2.

The Kings, so strong at home this season, fell to 11-14-2 on the road.

"I don't think our confidence is there right now," Spence told NHL.com. "Obviously we have some chances to score some goals. We're not capitalizing on our chances. At the end of the day, we're not playing well right now. We just have to reset, forget about tonight and get ready for [Carolina]."

ICE CHIPS

Kings defenseman Mikey Anderson left the game in the first period with an upper-body injury and did not return. Hiller said he was concerned about Anderson's injury but expects him to travel to Carolina. … Tampa defenseman Victor Hedman, who on Thursday was named captain for Team Sweden for the Four Nations Face-off, became the 10th Swedish-born player to appear in 1,100 career regular-season games. Vasilevskiy recorded his 21st career assist.

UP NEXT

Kings at Carolina, Saturday, 4 p.m. PT

Orange County Register: LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337990 Los Angeles Kings

FINAL - Kings 0, Lightning 3 - Kopitar, Spence, Hiller

Zach Dooley For LAKingsInsider.com

The Kings droppped their fourth consecutive game on the road, falling by a 3-0 final score on Thursday evening against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Just shy of five minutes into the game, the Lightning opened the scoring. Forward Brandon Hagel, skating in transition, pulled a move on Kings defenseman Jordan Spence in a 1-on-1 situation before skating in on a breakaway. Hagel shot five hole on Kings netminder David Rittich, scoring his 21st goal of the season to give the hosts an early 1-0 advantage.

For the third time in four games, the Kings had a goal taken off the board, one that would have tied the game midway through the second period. Out of the penalty box, defenseman Jacob Moverare appeared to gain the offensive zone and find a charging Quinton Byfield, with the latter scoring his 12th goal of the season, but Moverare was judged to be offsides on a Tampa Bay coaches challenge, keeping the score 1-0 Lightning.

With fewer than five minutes to play in the third period, Tampa Bay doubled its advantage, as Hagel buried his second goal of the game. With forward Nikita Kucherov on a breakaway, Rittich aggressively charged out and made a sprawling save on the first attempt, but Hagel followed up on the play and put home the rebound from close range, giving the hosts a two-goal lead.

With the Kings on a late, 6-on-4 power play, Tampa Bay forward Anthony Cirelli hit the empty net from distance, bringing the game to the 3-0 final score.

Hear from Anze Kopitar, Jordan Spence and Jim Hiller following tonight's game.

Anze Kopitar

On the team's struggles offensively right now

It seems like we're doing the right things, it's just you've got to keep on going really. I mean, we do have chances but for whatever reason, the puck's are not going in. It's very hard mentally now, when you're not scoring and losing tight games. It ends up being 3-0 tonight but it was tighter than the score. We've got to find a way, that's the bottom line, I mean, there's no other way to put it, really. We're going to have to score goals, whether that's on on the power play, 5-on-5, we've just got to find a way.

On the team's frustration level, with the work and compete being there, without the offense

Yeah, it's pretty frustrating. The goalies are doing a really good job of keeping us in the game and everything. We're not giving up a whole lot, it's just like I said, putting the puck in the net. It falls on this group and me being on the top of that list to get the offense going.

On where he feels the team's confidence level is right now

I wouldn't say the confidence is sky high right now, but sometimes all it takes, it's a little bounce, a little something to spark the group. We're still obviously confident that it's within this room.

On if three disallowed goals over four games feels like "when it rains, it pours"

Yeah, it sure does, but can't look back. We've just got to refocus and make sure that on Saturday, we're ready to go again and keep on grinding away.

Jordan Spence

On the offensive struggles of the group right now

I don't think our confidence is there right now. Obviously we have some chances to score some goals and we're not capitalizing on our chances. At the end of the day, we're just not playing well right now. We've got to just reset, forget about tonight and be ready for Carolina.

On the frustration level right now when the puck isn't going in for the team

It's been tough. We're not doing our job to score goals. At the end of the day, we have to score goals to win games and we're not doing that. At the end of the game, I think we're showing our emotions on why we're mad and I think, overall, it wasn't our game. We just have to stop it.

On the momentum downswing that disallowed goals give the team

At the end of the day, it's hockey, it happens, teams go through slumps, but I think good teams, they get back up and try to do the best to win games and that's what we've got to try and do. We're getting some bad bounces right now, but think if we if we play our game, if we do the right things on the ice, good things will always come. We're just going to try and get our confidence and our mojo back.

On having Drew Doughty back with the group again

He's a key part of our team, on and off the ice. We're really happy to have him back and every shift that he goes out there, he gets better and better. Big to see that. It's unfortunate that we've lost two games in a row but at the end of the day, it's good to get that leader that's vocal, on and off the ice, to get us going, get our get our groove back and try to win games.

Jim Hiller

*Hiller confirmed before the game that defenseman Brandt Clarke would be a healthy scratch in tonight's game. He added that he has had a conversation with Clarke about the situation, but did not elaborate on Clarke's status beyond that.

Notes –

• Goaltender David Rittich turned aside 30 of the 32 shots on goal he faced in tonight's game. This marks Rittich's first 30-save performance since he made 31 stops on March 30, 2024 at Calgary.

• The netminder's new single-game high in saves comes the day after his partner, Darcy Kuemper, made 36 saves on 38 shots faced against the Florida Panthers, his highest single-game total this season.

• The Kings were shutout this evening for the fourth time this season and the second time in two nights. In total, the Kings have just four goals on their current trip to date and have scored an NHL-low 22 goals in 13 games during the month of January.

The Kings have a scheduled team off day tomorrow in Raleigh, after the back-to-back. The team will return to the ice on Saturday, February 1 for a full-team morning skate in North Carolina.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337991 Los Angeles Kings

1/30 Preview - Offensive Progress The Focus + Back-To-Back, Doughty/Clarke, 5-on-3's

Zach Dooley

WHO: Los Angeles Kings (26-16-6) @ Tampa Bay Lightning (26-20-3)

WHAT: 2024-25 Regular-Season Game

WHEN: Thursday, January 30 @ 4:00 PM Pacific

WHERE: Amalie Arena – Tampa Bay, FL

HOW TO FOLLOW: VIDEO: FanDuel Sports Network – AUDIO – ESPN LA App – TWITTER: @dooleylak & @lakings

TODAY'S MATCHUP: Quick turnaround for the Kings, as they visit the Tampa Bay Lightning to complete a back-to-back set in Florida.

HEAD-TO-HEAD: The Kings skated to a 2-1 victory over Tampa Bay earlier this month back in Los Angeles.

Defenseman Mikey Anderson and forward Adrian Kempe scored in the victory, with Kempe burying the game-winning goal in the third period.

Since joining the Kings in 2021, forward Phillip Danault has led the team with four goals and six points versus the Lightning, including three points from three games here in Tampa Bay. Dating back to his time in Montreal, Danault led the Canadiens against Tampa Bay in scoring as well, with seven points (2-5-7) from nine games played.

KINGS VITALS: With the back-to-back, the Kings did not hold a morning skate in advance of tonight's game.

With goaltender Darcy Kuemper getting the nod last night in Florida, expect goaltender David Rittich to start tonight's game against the Lightning. Rittich has five career appearances against Tampa Bay, with a record of 0-2-1, a .862 save percentage and a 4.22 goals-against aveage.

For reference, here is how the team lined up last night in Florida –

Tonight's @LAKings Line Rushes –

Turcotte – Kopitar – Kempe

Foegele – Danault – Moore

Fiala – Byfield – Laferriere

Jeannot – Lewis – Thomas

Anderson – Gavrikov

Edmundson – Spence

Moverare – Doughty

Kuemper

Rittich

— Zach Dooley (@DooleyLAK) January 29, 2025

Biggest question facing the Kings lineup decision tonight – will Drew Doughty go back-to-back?

Certainly didn't have any training wheels on Game 1, playing just shy of 24 minutes in his return to the lineup. I certainly won't be the guy suggesting that Drew Doughty can't or won't do something. There's also defenseman Brandt Clarke, who missed his first game of the season last night in Tampa Bay. Feels like a reset opportunity for a young player. Expecting him back in the lineup soon.

Should the Kings look to make any additional changes, defensemen Kyle Burroughs and Andreas Englund are also available, along with Clarke.

LIGHTNING VITALS: Similar to the Kings, Tampa Bay enters tonight's game with four losses from their last five games played.

Per Gabby Shirley of FanDuel Sports Network Florida, here's how the Lightning aligned on Tuesday in Chicago –

a look at the #Bolts lines and D pairings from warmups:

Guentzel – Point – Kucherov

Hagel – Cirelli – Geekie

Girgensons – Paul – Goncalves

Eyssimont – Glendening – Chaffee

Hedman – Raddysh

McDonagh – Cernak

Carlile – Perbix

🥅 Johansson

— Gabby Shirley (@Gabby_Shirley_) January 28, 2025

Tampa Bay has two Kings draft picks currently in their lineup – defenseman Erik Cernak and forward Mikey Eyssimont.

Forwards Nikita Kucherov and Zemgus Girgensons did not practice yesterday, both designated with a "body maintenance" day. Both players are expected to play tonight against the Kings. Kucherov has nine goals and 23 points in his career versus Los Angeles.

Storyline Of The Day – Scoring Goals

Here are two quotes from last night's post-game interviews. One from Drew Doughty, one from Warren Foegele.

Doughty – We've got to get more bodies to the net for sure. I know that's the old saying, but we had some shots at the end, just floaters through that we didn't get any sticks on, any bodies in front. Got to do that and it's just about bearing down.

Foegele – At the end of the day, we've got to get bodies to the net and then we've got to get the puck to the net when guys are there. They kind of go hand in hand. It's just winning battles at the end of the day, that's what hockey is really about, winning 50/50's. Pucks to the net, bodies to the net, don't get beat up the ice, things like that. The margin is so close.

Pretty lockstep.

I thought Foegele had an interesting take, beyond this quote. He used a different word than the standard lines we've heard. In a separate quote from the one above, he said "possession." What he meant was that while he wants to see the Kings get shots and get second opportunities, simply shooting it for the sake of shooting it isn't working. That's what Doughty was talking about. The power play has certainly been guilty of not shooting enough and you can't circle the zone endlessly without any output. There's a balance there.

Few goaltenders will get beat regularly on clean shots from the outside. And, let's face it, the Kings don't have a ton of guys who are scoring from those areas on a regular basis, especially right now. I think sometimes, though, the notion of keeping things simple could have the wrong consequence. I've preached it and while there's merit to it, I was intrigued by Foegele's comments as well. Possession in the offensive zone is important too, even if it's just an extra cycle to get an extra body outside the crease. Both Doughty and Foegele think the team can do a better job of taking the right shots, the shots through traffic and the shots that lead to second and third chances and opportunities. That's how this team can score.

There weren't too many of those in Florida and that'll have to change to get any kind of result tonight in Tampa Bay. There haven't been very many this entire month, obviously. The Kings are last in the NHL in goals scored in January.

It's not one thing that will get the Kings out of this. Will take a heck of a lot more than that. Kings can't survive slumps offensively from 8-10 forwards and the defensive core at the same time. So, they need multiple players to get one. Then two. And build. Not going to be easy and the schedule tonight isn't going to help. Time to dig in and work.

3 To Watch For –

– On Brandt Clarke, my understanding is that this is a bit of a reset for him. Jordan Spence had one early in the season. Alex Laferriere had one last year. If I recall back to when he was a younger player, I believe Adrian Kempe had one as well.

Seemed to work out well on all fronts there. Ultimately, I don't know how Clarke will respond. I'd like to think he'll bounce back exactly as Spence did back in October and how Laferriere did last season. For both of those players, it was one game out and right back in.

Yesterday, Jim Hiller spoke about how Clarke was thrust into Top-4 minutes pretty early in the season. At first, he handled it exceptionally well and Hiller reiterated that yesterday. He's played a lot of good hockey. The grind has gotten tougher of late. It's hard to think about this being Clarke's first season in the NHL on a full-time basis. He's never gone through this. A small dip in his play isn't all that crazy.

I don't know yet if he will play tonight. Will ask pre-game for sure. Hoping, certainly, that we see this in the long run as the same blip on the radar as many others have.

– Joke's on us with Doughty, eh?

23:51 in his first game of the season. Played an extended shift late in the third period with the Kings down 2-0. He played on the first power-play unit and had 3 shot attempts. Only saw a bit of PK duty and admitted that he doesn't fully know the system yet and it'll take time for him to become familiar and contribute there. It's also more taxing, so Doughty stayed off the kill by design.

So, will he play again tonight? I'm done making predictions. I would've taken the under on 23 minutes and I'd have lost my money. Immediately after the game, Doughty seemed to be feeling pretty good. Not always the same the next day, though. Again, will speak with Hiller at the rink in a few hours and will get a firm update on Doughty's status and second-night availability.

– A troubling statistic, beyond the offense – The Kings have given up a 5-on-3 goal in back-to-back games. More troubling is that three of the four penalties committed have come in the offensive zone.

Warren Foegele took the lone defensive-zone penalty last night and took accountability post game for putting the team in a bad spot. I didn't request to talk with Trevor Lewis but I'd imagine he'd have done the same. The penalty on Lewis was in the offensive zone, 200 feet from danger. Can't take that penalty. Foegele's came after the Kings nearly survived with a strong kill. Five seconds later, 1-0 was 2-0.

Right now, the margin for error is razor thin. I don't know about you all, but the goal to make it 2-0 felt like a backbreaker. Hard to see three goals in the third period right now for the Kings, especially against Florida. No excuses on those types of penalties and when goals are as hard to come by as they are right now, can't have those types of lapses.

Kings and Lightning, second to last of five straight here on the road. Time to turn things around.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338084 Winnipeg Jets

Jets blow game wide open in 6-2 win over Bruins

Ken Wiebe

9-11 minutes 31/01/2025

BOSTON — It probably won't be much longer before Mark Scheifele stands alone on this list, but that didn't prevent him from taking time to soak in the moment.

The Winnipeg Jets centre scored twice on Thursday to lead his team to a 6-2 victory over the Boston Bruins at TD Garden.

In the process, he joined Ilya Kovalchuk as the franchise leader in goals scored for the Jets 2.0 franchise.

"A huge honour. Very, very special," said Scheifele, who is up to 31 goals and 59 points in 53 games. "And (Kovalchuk) was a fantastic player. Like I've said before, I play with some pretty fantastic players that set me up in those positions, so all (the credit) goes to them.

"It's very humbling. You grow up as a kid obviously hoping to play in the NHL one day, and to reflect on that is pretty special. I'm very happy to be part of this group of guys."

The Jets close out a three-game road trip Saturday in what will be a first-place showdown with Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals.

Scheifele hit the 30-goal mark for the fourth time in his career and sits alone in second spot in the NHL for goals behind Leon Draisaitl of the Edmonton Oilers.

"He realizes that he's more of a threat when he's in that mentality of shooting the puck," said Jets head coach Scott Arniel. "If you become somebody that's sort of one-dimensional and just a passer, the tendencies for the defender to take your options away… Now Mark recognizes when he's alone, or he has a chance to shoot the puck, he has such a great shot as you saw on that breakaway. When he does those types of things, it makes it hard to defend him."

Let's take a closer look at what transpired:

THE RESPONSE

The Jets had a much better start than they did Tuesday in Montreal, building a 2-0 lead before Brad Marchand got the Bruins on the board late in the first period with a power-play marker.

With the Jets on the power play to start the third, the Bruins won an offensive-zone draw and got a shorthanded marker from Elias Lindholm to tie the game.

Scheifele responded with a goal 11 seconds later, sparking a run of four unanswered goals by the Jets to earn a fifth consecutive victory as they improved to 35-14-3 for the season.

BUILT FORD TOUGH

He survived his rookie solo lap without falling, he was in the starting lineup and before the night was over, Parker Ford found a loose puck in front and deposited his first NHL goal past Bruins netminder Joonas Korpisalo at 5:57 of the third period.

How's that for an NHL debut for a guy who grew up roughly 90 minutes from Boston and rooting for the Bruins?

"It was awesome," said Ford, who replaced Morgan Barron (upper body, week to week) on the fourth line. "I couldn't draw it up much better than this, honestly."

Ford admitted standing on the blue line during the national anthems and waiting for the puck to drop was a challenge.

"That was probably the hardest part. Just sitting there, my heart is racing. Just gotta relax and settle into the game," said Ford, who quickly settled in. "Yeah, I'd say right at the drop of the puck. Same game I've been playing my whole life. Once the puck dropped it was all good."

Following the game, Ford was met by a large group of friends and family members who were on hand to share in his monumental moment.

Where's the souvenir puck headed?

"Right to the fam, for sure. I threw 'em a couple pucks in warmups, but hopefully that one will mean a little bit more," said Ford, who was asked what went through his mind after seeing the puck go in and the red light go on. "Couldn't really tell you, to be honest. Just blacked out a little bit. It was great."

For those keeping track at home, Ford also scored in his first American Hockey League game with the Manitoba Moose back March 28 of 2023.

Ford's teammates were thrilled for him.

"It's amazing. That's something he'll always remember," said Scheifele. "That's very, very special, and obviously we're all very, very psyched for him. He played great. Blocked some shots, (had) a good stick, did a lot of great things. And you get rewarded when you do that."

"Ah, that was fun. Great to see for a hometown kid come in and get a chance to do that in this building," added Arniel. "He contributed. He was good in a lot of areas. To score that goal was a bonus.

"But I liked that he was blocking shots, he did a good job in his end on the walls, getting pucks out, being responsible, and that's what you hope when some of these young guys come up, that it isn't overwhelming. I thought he did a great job of looking comfortable and doing what he needed to do."

SECOND-UNIT STRIKE

It's been said on multiple occasions one of the big reasons the Jets have maintained their position as the top-ranked power play in the NHL is both units have been productive.

The latest example was provided by the second unit on Thursday, with Vladislav Namestnikov finding a loose puck in front and slamming it home for his 10th goal of the campaign.

Cole Perfetti showed the attack mentality by getting the puck to the net, Nino Niederreiter got to his office near the blue paint and the puck landed on the stick of Namestnikov to complete the play.

Arniel felt the second line with Namestnikov, Perfetti and Ehlers (who added his 16th of the season by forcing Mason Lohrei to turn the puck over early in the third period) did a great job in the contest.

"I liked that line a lot better. I thought that the whole line, they certainly had a lot more zone time," said Arniel. "They have to give us that kind of offensive output, so we're a lot more dangerous than just Scheif's line. You like to see that when we're doing it all together like that."

Namestnikov became the eighth member of the Jets to hit double digits in goals this season.

EXTRA, EXTRA

Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck made his 41st start of the season and made 27 saves to record his 32nd win of the campaign.

“Helly’s Helly. He’s there when we need him. You’re not going through 60 minutes and not giving up chances,” said Arniel. “There’s going to be breakdowns, things happen, but he’s a wall for us.”

Kyle Connor rounded out the scoring with an empty-netter to hit the 30-goal mark for the seventh time in his career.

The Jets made one other change to the lineup, inserting Colin Miller on the third pairing with Logan Stanley, who moved over to his strong side. Miller, who suited up in his 37th game of the season, took 17 shifts for 12:34 of ice time, finishing with one shot on goal, one hit and one shot.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 01.31.2025

1338085 Winnipeg Jets

Ford firing on all cylinders after Winnipeg Jets recall

Ken Wiebe

8-10 minutes 31/01/2025

BOSTON — Parker Ford was in a deep sleep, though this jarring phone call was one he’d been waiting for his entire life.

Read unlimited articles for free today:

BOSTON — Parker Ford was in a deep sleep, though this jarring phone call was one he’d been waiting for his entire life.

As he awoke in a hotel room in the Chicago suburbs preparing to suit up for the Manitoba Moose on Wednesday night, the voice on the other end of the line told him he’d been recalled by the Winnipeg Jets.

This was not a dream though, it was very much a reality.

“We were on a road trip and I was actually pre-game napping and my phone started ringing,” Ford said after the morning skate on Thursday. “I thought it was my alarm, but it was the call. Yeah, just pure joy in the moment.”

Adding to the storybook nature of the circumstances was that the Jets play the Boston Bruins on Thursday at TD Garden, which meant he would have the support of multiple friends and family members as he made his NHL debut.

That joy extended to a phone call to his parents, who made the roughly 90-minute trek to Boston from his hometown of Wakefield, R.I., to share in the monumental moment.

As he spoke Thursday, Ford expressed his gratitude to his folks for the sacrifices they made over the years.

“My whole family, extended family, friends and coaches, they all believed in me from Day 1 and made me believe in myself,” said Ford. “It’s super special. I wasn’t sure I was coming here (to Boston), but when I heard that on the call, I was smiling ear to ear, for sure.”

Ford, now 24, grew up a fan of the Bruins and can pinpoint the moment hockey became his passion.

“Yeah, I was 10 or 11 years old and that was the first time I really fell in love with hockey. Seeing that Cup run,” said Ford, referring to the Bruins Stanley Cup victory in June of 2011.

As for his favourite Bruins player, that was an easy choice.

“Patrice Bergeron,” said Ford. “I was always a centre growing up and he always played the game the right way, really. I really liked his game.”

Ford rounded out that game during four seasons of NCAA hockey with the Providence College Friars, where he served as a co-captain during his senior season.

“Those were a great four years, I really developed as a person and a player there,” said Ford. “I met some of my best friends there. The hockey was great and I got to play a bunch of Boston schools, so it was probably the best four years of my life.”

In 131 career games with the Friars, Ford had 41 goals and 53 assists for 94 points and also suited up for Team USA at the 2020 World Junior Hockey Championship.

“Nah, I’m not surprised. I’m surprised it’s taken this long, to be honest,” Friars head coach Nate Leaman said Thursday. “He always showed up to play hard and the right way. He always made a big impact on the game. He competes. Good on the forecheck, very strong for his size and he’s got a good release.

“For me, he was always a winning hockey player.”

Leaman spoke at length about how Ford was able to overcome some of the obstacles put in front of him and not take on a woe-is-me attitude while riding the buses and playing in the minors.

He also applauded him for battling through concerns about his size that the 5-10, 180-pound Ford has faced for as long as he can remember.

“When he was in college, there were a lot of doubters,” said Leaman. ” Everyone watched him and was intrigued, but ultimately there were some doubters. Winnipeg was one team that always believed in him.”

Ford was scouted heavily by Mark White and after his junior year, the player informed the Jets it was important for him to finish school and go back for his senior season.

At its conclusion, Ford inked a two-year entry-level deal with the organization in March of 2023.

The feisty forward appeared in eight games with the Moose that spring on an amateur tryout offer and took his taste of the pro game into his first NHL training camp fall and turned heads throughout.

Ultimately, Ford was the last forward sent to the Moose, where he enjoyed an excellent season, producing 18 goals and 41 points in 72 games.

He was rewarded with his first NHL recall in April but didn’t appear in the Jets regular-season finale.

The silver lining was that it pushed the NHL debut to Thursday night in Boston.

“It’s a surreal moment stepping out there,” said Ford, noting he took some time to soak in the moment and look at the banners that hang inside TD Garden.

Morgan Barron got hurt late in the third period of Tuesday’s game against the Montreal Canadiens, suffering an upper-body injury after delivering a punishing check to Kirby Dach.

Barron was placed on injured reserve and is officially listed as week-to-week, so that opened up a spot on the Jets’ fourth line as they continue a three-game road trip that wraps up Saturday against the Washington Capitals.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel made the decision to insert Ford alongside David Gustafsson and Alex Iafallo and it wasn’t simply for sentimental reasons.

Ford had scored seven goals in his previous nine games for a Moose team that’s having trouble putting the puck in the net this season.

“He’s a kid that every opportunity, he’s made the most of it” said Arniel. “He works hard, he’s a competitive kid. He’s not big in stature, but he plays hard. That’s kind of why we wanted him in this building.”

Ford plays a robust game and his enthusiasm is contagious.

“It’s just really exciting,” said Jets forward Cole Perfetti. “It takes a lifetime of hard work to get to the NHL. It’s a dream come true. Everyone can relate, I remember how I felt in that first game. It’s the coolest thing in the world.

“To do that against his home team, it makes it even cooler.”

Having the stars align for the debut is something that will make the occasion even more memorable, but Ford isn’t going to be happy with just getting his name in the NHL register.

This is merely the next step in his inspirational journey and he's hoping that there will be many more entries to come.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 01.31.2025

1338086 Winnipeg Jets

Jets put Barron on injured reserve

Ken Wiebe

4-5 minutes 30/01/2025

BOSTON — Morgan Barron is the latest Winnipeg Jets player to be bitten by the injury bug.

BOSTON — Morgan Barron is the latest Winnipeg Jets player to be bitten by the injury bug.

The Winnipeg Jets forward was placed on injured reserve on Wednesday, according to Puck Pedia.

That would leave the Jets with only 12 healthy forwards, so it probably wasn't a coincidence Parker Ford was scratched from the Manitoba Moose on Wednesday night.

An official recall of a forward isn't expected until Thursday morning, since the Jets had already recalled Brad Lambert for the three-game road trip.

Ford, 24, is an energetic winger who was signed by the Jets to a two-year, entry-level contract in March of 2023 after finishing his four-year career with the Providence College Friars of the NCAA.

Ford, who was the co-captain of the Friars during his senior season, turned heads at his first NHL training camp in the fall of 2023 and was one of the last forwards cut by the Jets.

He has seven goals in his past nine American Hockey League games and is up to 11 goals and 17 points in 36 games this season.

Although he was recalled by the Jets for the final game of the 2023-24 campaign, Ford has yet to make his NHL debut and as someone who hails from Rhode Island, having an opportunity to suit up against the Boston Bruins on Thursday would certainly have special meaning for him and his family.

Ford, who shoots right-handed, had 18 goals and 41 points in 72 AHL games as a rookie pro last season.

The timing of the undisclosed injury is unfortunate for Barron, who was playing some of his best hockey of the season.

Barron, who played his college hockey at Cornell, has five goals and eight points in 52 games this season and is doing a solid job on both the fourth line and the penalty kill.

The Jets are already without captain Adam Lowry, who has missed the past four games with an upper-body injury and isn't expected to return to the lineup until after the 4 Nations Face-Off in late February.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 01.31.2025

1338087 Winnipeg Jets

Jets make it five in Beantown, hit Washington on a roll

Paul Friesen

Published Jan 30, 2025

The Jets beat the Bruins in Boston, 6-2, on Thursday, and will carry a five-game win streak into a Saturday tilt with the Capitals.

It's the Jets' longest win streak since November, when they began the season with a record-setting 15-1 mark, and leaves them with 75 points, one more than Washington, the Caps holding two games in hand.

In Boston, Mark Scheifele scored the 327th and 328th goals of his career, matching the franchise-record Ilya Kovalchuk set when it was based in Atlanta.

At the other end of the spectrum, rookie Parker Ford scored his first in his first NHL game, capping a storybook day for the 24-year-old from Wakefield, RI, just 90 minutes down the road.

"It was awesome," Ford told reporters, post-game. "I couldn't draw it up much better than this, honestly. I'd say my whole life I've wanted to do this for my family. It's probably going to be emotional when I go see them… they've done so much."

Despite the lopsided score, the Jets had to deal with some third-period adversity.

Up 2-1 going into the period, they gave up a shorthanded goal just 11 seconds in.

Instead of sagging, they got it right back 24 seconds later on the same power play, Scheifele scoring his second of the night.

Nik Ehlers took advantage of a gift just 42 seconds after that, poking the puck off the stick of Boston defenceman Mason Lohrei and past a helpless Joonas Korpisalo.

That's when Ford got his career in gear, pouncing on a loose puck and notching his first to make it 5-2 and bringing a contingent of family and friends in the stands to its feet.

Asked what went through his mind, Ford had trouble remembering.

"Couldn't really tell you, to be honest," he said. "Just blacked out a little bit."

He was more certain of where the souvenir puck was going.

"Right to the fam, for sure. I threw 'em a couple pucks in warmups, but hopefully that one will mean a little bit more."

Ford had been called up a day earlier to replace an injured Morgan Barron on the fourth line.

Jets head coach Scott Arniel made sure he was in the starting lineup.

"Mom and Dad told me I had to start him. No, just kidding," Arniel said. "That was fun. Great to see for a kid, a hometown kid, to come in and get a chance to do that in this building. (He) and his family are going to remember that for the rest of their life. He was good in a lot of areas. To score that goal was a bonus."

"We're all very, very psyched for him," Scheifele added.

Vlad Namestnikov on a first-period power play and Kyle Connor into an empty net scored the other Winnipeg goals, leaving much of the Boston crowd booing a team that had lost 7-2 to lowly Buffalo two nights earlier.

Shots on goal were 29-27, Boston. The Jets were 2-for-4 on the power play, the Bruins 1-for-3.

After going 0-for-3 two nights earlier in Montreal, the NHL's No. 1 power play got Winnipeg on the board just three minutes into the game.

This time, though, it wasn't the usual suspects doing the damage.

An attempted between-the-legs move by Nino Niederreiter resulted in a loose puck in front for Namestnikov, who made no mistake burying his 10th of the year.

It didn't take long for one of Winnipeg's big guns to weigh in, Scheifele tipping a Neal Pionk shot later in the first to become the first Jet to reach the 30-goal mark. It's the fourth time in 12 seasons Scheifele has hit the big 3-0.

The Bruins got one back on their own power play, Brad Marchand rifling a shot past a screened Connor Hellebuyck late in the first.

But Arniel had no problem with that opening 20 minutes after the dud first period his team had played in Montreal two nights earlier.

“I loved our first period. That was way better than Montreal,” he said. “We knew that Boston was going to be a little ornery after what happened the other night in Buffalo. We didn’t let them get into a rush game. We did a good job of kind of hemming them in their end. We scored early, which was big. And when you do that on the road it gets the opposition on their heels.”

Neither team could find the scoresheet in the second, so the Jets took their 2-1 lead and a power play into the third – then quickly lost it off a faceoff in their own end.

“A bang-bang play,” Arniel said. “But at the end of the day, that’s what you love about your top players. When they respond… the challenge of going back to try and score.”

Scheifele did just that, hitting goal No. 328 in style, off a power-play rush and feed from Ehlers.

“It’s very humbling,” No. 55 said of his franchise milestone. “You grow up as a kid hoping to play in the NHL one day, and to reflect on that is pretty special. Very happy to be part of this group of guys.”

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 01.31.2025

1338088 Winnipeg Jets

Jets coach goes with feisty Parker Ford for game against 'ornery' Bruins

Paul Friesen

Published Jan 30, 2025

Undrafted Winnipeg Jets prospect Parker Ford made his NHL debut in Boston on Thursday, taking the place of injured forward Morgan Barron.

Barron is out a matter of weeks after getting hurt in Tuesday’s win in Montreal.

Ford, a 5-foot-9, 181-pound native of Wakefield, Rhode Island, some 90 minutes out of Boston, was called up from the Manitoba Moose, who were in Chicago, on Wednesday.

“I was actually pre-game napping, and my phone started ringing,” Ford said from Boston Thursday morning on a video posted to the Jets web site. “I thought it was my alarm. But it was the call. Just pure joy in the moment. It’s super special. I wasn’t sure I was coming here, but when I heard on the call, I was just a smile, ear to ear.”

Ford’s first order of business: Call his parents and some friends and get to Boston to get ready to face the team he idolized as a kid.

Thursday’s morning skate under all the Stanley Cup banners, including the one from the 2011 playoffs that grabbed his heart as a 10-year-old, was a moment he won’t forget.

“That was the first time I really fell in love with hockey, seeing that Cup run,” Ford said. “It’s a surreal moment, stepping out there.”

The 24-year-old took Barron’s place on the fourth line, the Jets playing him over first-round draft pick Brad Lambert, even though Lambert was already travelling with the team.

The feisty product of Providence College and the U.S. junior league brings a different skill set, although he was hot with the Moose, scoring seven goals in his last nine games.

“Every opportunity he’s made the most of it,” Jets coach Scott Arniel said. “Whether it’s getting a chance to come to our training camp, to play for the Moose, now to earn this opportunity to be here. He works hard, he’s a competitive kid. He’s not big in stature but he plays hard, and that’s why we want him in this building. Have him go out and do what he can.”

Arniel liked the prospect of adding Ford’s feisty play against a Boston team the Jets thumped, 8-1, when they last met in December. As a result, Arniel expected an “ornery” opponent.

“But there’s been a lot of water under the bridge since that game,” Arniel said. “For both teams.”

As well, the Bruins were coming off a 7-2 loss to lowly Buffalo on Tuesday.

Ford made quite a splash in his first training camp with the Jets two years ago and carried that over to his first season in the American League, scoring 18 goals and 23 assists. This season, he has 11 goals and six assists in 36 games.

“We’ve been struggling to win games down there,” he said. “But I’ve been really working hard and just putting my head down and trying to make an impact every shift I’m out there. The puck’s been going in for me lately. But my work ethic is there every game. Just trying to be consistent.”

He was looking forward to having quite the cheering section at Thursday’s game: his parents, his sister, friends, his girlfriend and her family members, all from Rhode Island.

Parker says without his support network he wouldn’t have realized his dream.

“The sacrifice they give, my whole family, extended family, friends and coaches — they all believed in me, from Day 1, and made me believe in myself.”

Arniel’s pre-game message to Parker was to soak it all up.

“Enjoy the moment,” the coach recalled telling him. You hear guys always talk about their first games and for him to do it here in Boston, that’s special. But have fun. Don’t get too stressed out.”

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 01.31.2025

1338089 Winnipeg Jets

Injury bug bites another Jets forward

Paul Friesen

Published Jan 30, 2025

Morgan Barron has joined captain Adam Lowry on injured reserve, taking him out of the lineup for Thursday’s game in Boston.

The fourth-liner recorded 12:10 of ice time on 15 shifts in Tuesday’s 4-1 win in Montreal. He’s played all 52 games this season, registering five goals and three assists, with an average 10:27 of ice time.

Lowry remains on the shelf for a fourth straight game.

The Jets could insert prospect Brad Lambert against the Bruins, as he was a healthy scratch in Montreal, or call up another player from their AHL farm team and dress him.

They’ll likely call one up as insurance even if they don’t play immediately play him.

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 01.31.2025

1338090 Winnipeg Jets

Winnipeg Jets trade targets: Which top forwards would be that elusive perfect fit?

Murat Ates

16-20 minutes 30/01/2025

Kevin Cheveldayoff made it clear to us last week that his trade conversations are still in their earliest stages.

“Right now there’s still a lot of dancing going around, a lot of conversations that are (still) at 30,000 feet,” Cheveldayoff said. “Everyone might have these guys out there in trade rumours or trade talks and stuff like that, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that’s what’s happening behind the scenes on the phone calls. Some teams might extend some players, some teams might decide to keep their own rentals because that’s where they’re at.”

Then Mikko Rantanen was traded to Carolina in a three-team blockbuster. Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky followed that up by telling Pierre LeBrun he’s going right back to his phone to look for more deals, while Avalanche GM Chris MacFarland seeks to use some of the cap space Rantanen left behind.

All of this stokes the fires of more trade speculation. It’s open season now — a perfect mix of too soon for the market to have crystallized, while following on the heels of a spectacular trade. It gives us the leeway to talk about all of the biggest names rumoured to be available — and how they might fit in Winnipeg.

We’re focusing on the NHL’s top forwards in today’s piece. What would J.T. Miller, Elias Pettersson — or a third Canuck, with closer ties to the Jets organization — look like on Winnipeg’s roster? What about Brock Nelson or Ryan O’Reilly?

And who is the Jets’ best bet to replicate Paul Stastny’s massive impact during Winnipeg’s deepest playoff run?

J.T. Miller, C, Canucks

Age: 31

Contract: $8 million cap hit, full no-movement clause, UFA 2030

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill

Production: 9 goals, 25 assists, 34 points in 39 games played

Canucks president of hockey operations Jim Rutherford has spoken openly about needing a new plan, admitting to The Globe and Mail that Miller and Pettersson are at the heart of Vancouver’s problems.

On the ice, Miller’s a great hockey player whose standard production rate is a point-per-game. He hit 103 points last season, still has 34 points in 39 games in this disappointing follow-up and is a force when he’s at his best: tough to play against, an elite faceoff man and a driver of play. Harman Dayal has written that Miller oscillates between hard-nosed, dominant force and something much less than that, even when he’s scoring points.

The assumption in discussing Miller to Winnipeg is that playing for a Cup contender would awaken the beast mode. The best-case outcome would see him take over Winnipeg’s second line, getting to the tough areas of the ice and helping Nikolaj Ehlers and Cole Perfetti produce playoff points. It would involve none of the off-ice conflicts that made headlines during Miller’s Canucks career. And it would see the 31-year-old Miller keep playing his hard-nosed game through the duration of a contract that pays him $8 million for five seasons after this one. If it all worked out, Winnipeg would have the pieces to stay dominant while Connor Hellebuyck and Mark Scheifele are still at the height of their powers.

It’s also a big bet — one that would come at a considerable cost, according to Dayal and Shayna Goldman. Winnipeg could afford the cap hit; the Jets are also uniquely positioned to afford to pay a first-round pick, a middle-of-the-lineup NHL forward and a younger player. That’s just a lot to give for a player whose intensity sometimes seems like a double-edged sword. Would you trade Cole Perfetti, Alex Iafallo, a first-round pick and a prospect for your memory of Blake Wheeler?

Remember, the worst-case scenario is a locker room problem with a full no-move clause who ages out of effectiveness and takes up a hefty chunk of cap space through 2029-30.

Brock Nelson, C, Islanders

Age: 33

Contract: $6 million cap hit, 16-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: First line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, second-unit penalty kill

Production: 15 goals, 17 assists, 32 points in 49 games played

Nelson strikes me as an ideal stylistic fit for Winnipeg, matching speed and scoring with size and faceoff success. I think he’d perform really well on a sheltered second line with Ehlers and Perfetti and have written at length to that effect.

The problem — at least for the moment — is that no one told the Islanders they’re supposed to be sellers. They’re 8-2-0 in their last 10 games, four points back of a wild-card spot and have a game in hand over every team between themselves and Tampa Bay. Maybe Ilya Sorokin cools off, maybe the goals dry up, but until they do Nelson is a 6-foot-4, goal-scoring speedster who will help the Islanders make their playoff push.

Ryan O’Reilly, C, Predators

Age: 33

Contract: $4.5 million cap hit, UFA 2027

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill

Production: 14 goals, 14 assists, 28 points in 45 games played

O’Reilly is the closest thing to a 2018 Stastny on our trade board. He’s a veteran with great faceoff results and an elite two-way resume; Stastny was the same. O’Reilly is scoring at a 51-point pace; Stastny was scoring at a 52-point pace. O’Reilly plays a key role for a team that’s underperforming; Stastny was available partly because the Jets beat St. Louis on the Friday before the 2018 deadline. Winnipeg could help end the Predators’ playoff hopes for good when they play in Nashville on Feb. 27, potentially ensuring O’Reilly’s availability.

O’Reilly is about to turn 34, mind you — Stastny was 32 when Winnipeg acquired him. He’s still thought to have top-line impact, helping the Predators dramatically outchance their opponents despite playing tough opponents at five-on-five, and check this out: O’Reilly’s 2.0 points per 60 minutes at five-on-five would land him third among Jets scorers, behind only Ehlers and Kyle Connor. His usage has changed and his power-play impact has dropped but O’Reilly can still score.

He’s also won a Stanley Cup (and a Conn Smythe Trophy along the way) which would make him unique on that front in Winnipeg. He has two more years left on his contract after this one — a perk whether you’re Nashville thinking about keeping him or Winnipeg making your pitch to acquire him.

Dylan Cozens, C, Sabres

Age: 23

Contract: $7.1 million cap hit, UFA 2030

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, second-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill

Production: 10 goals, 16 assists, 26 points in 50 games played

I don’t understand this one. If I’m Buffalo, I might have some regret paying for Cozens’ percentage-driven offensive explosion in 2022-23 but he’s still a good, young player. His $7.1 million cap hit comes with sticker shock but Cozens is young, the cap is going up and it would be very easy for Buffalo to wait a couple more years for Cozens to grow into his contract.

For what it’s worth, Cozens doesn’t have trade protection — yet. A five-team no-trade clause kicks in starting 2027-28.

Yanni Gourde, C, Kraken

Age: 33

Contract: $5.167 million cap hit, 23-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, second-unit penalty kill

Production: 6 goals, 10 assists, 16 points in 35 games played

Gourde won back-to-back Stanley Cups with Tampa Bay in 2020 and 2021 before being taken by Seattle in the expansion draft. He's been a versatile middle-of-the-lineup player for the Kraken since that time but has struggled with injuries this season. Gourde recently skated in a non-contact jersey after missing most of January with a lower-body injury.

The upshot of a Gourde acquisition is that he's fast, feisty and an excellent penalty killer with strong underlying numbers at even strength. His 8-team no-trade clause would be a barrier, while his AAV seems more like a reason the acquisition cost should be affordable than a problem in and of itself.

Trent Frederic, C/LW, Bruins

Age: 26

Contract: $2.3 million cap hit, UFA 2025

Usage: Third line at five-on-five, occasional penalty kill

Production: 7 goals, 7 assists, 14 points in 50 games played

Frederic is best known in Winnipeg for knocking David Gustafsson out in a fight that never should have been offered. Frederic's fight card is extensive; Gustafsson's consists of that single abbreviated fight. If the Jets want to add that element — perhaps alleviating their concerns about taking Logan Stanley out of the lineup — then Frederic is a big, capable, affordable third-line player they might look into. He also skates well enough to fit into Winnipeg's forecheck, making him more useful before the whistle is blown than many of the alternatives.

Jean-Gabriel Pageau, C, Islanders

Age: 32

Contract: $5 million cap hit, 16-team no-trade list, UFA 2026

Usage: Third line at five-on-five, second-unit power play, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 9 goals, 15 assists, 24 points in 46 games played

Pageau strikes me as a prototypical Islanders player: underrated outside of his market, shy on offence and annoying to play against. He hasn't been as effective on special teams this year as through most of his career, but Pageau is what most teams tend to get from the Adam Lowry spot in their lineup.

The Jets get more than most teams do, though — part of what makes Winnipeg's depth a formidable asset — which makes Pageau a thought worth exploring only if Winnipeg decides to keep the Lowry-Ehlers duo intact when Lowry returns from injury. I'm not sure that's in the cards.

Pageau comes with one more year on his contract after this one but has a 16-team no-trade clause.

Scott Laughton, C, Flyers

Age: 30

Contract: $3 million cap hit, UFA 2026

Usage: Third line at five-on-five, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 10 goals, 15 assists, 25 points in 48 games played

Laughton has one more year left on his contract and has a more productive scoring resume than Pageau does. Laughton is a versatile player on the ice and glue guy off of it in Philadelphia, making him a desirable acquisition for many teams — and an important player for Philadelphia to keep.

If the Jets were to acquire Laughton, he might not be a substantial upgrade to Vladislav Namestnikov at centre so much as another helpful, versatile bottom-six option.

Brandon Tanev, LW, Kraken

Age: 33

Contract: $3.5 million cap hit, 10-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: Fourth line at five-on-five, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 8 goals, 7 assists, 15 points in 50 games played

It's hard for me to see the Jets sending someone from their typical fourth line of Morgan Barron, Rasmus Kupari and Alex Iafallo to the press box for kicks. They'd need a meaningful upgrade somewhere else in the lineup to justify that — especially now that Gustafsson is getting into games and showing he can help too.

That said, there are fond remembrances of Tanev's tenacity in Winnipeg. He's still fleet of foot and still receives substantial penalty-killing duties. Note that Seattle balances its minutes more than the Jets do; Tanev's fourth-line deployment gives him at least two more minutes per game than anyone on Winnipeg's fourth line. He's scored more than Barron or Kupari have but they've beaten his considerable top speed — and have more impact as forecheckers, too.

Brock Boeser, RW, Canucks

Age: 27

Contract: $6.65 million cap hit, 10-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: First line at five-on-five, first-unit power play

Production: 16 goals, 17 assists, 33 points in 42 games played

Winnipeg liked Boeser a lot at the 2015 draft. Had he not come off the board at No. 23 to Vancouver, the Jets would almost certainly have selected Boeser with the No. 25 pick they used on Jack Roslovic. Winnipeg even considered Boeser at No. 17 — the pick they used on Kyle Connor, one of only eight players from that draft class with more points (548) than Boeser's 417.

It makes loads of sense to me that the Jets would still be interested in Boeser, whether on the trade market right now or as an unrestricted free agent this summer. I don't view his no-trade list as a concern, either, given my understanding of Boeser's relationships with Jets management.

Sources indicate that many teams expect Brock Boeser to be available at the deadline barring a serious Canucks turnaround.

The obvious spot for Boeser to fit would be at second-line right wing. If he were to be acquired for draft capital, that could put Perfetti between Ehlers and Boeser on a scoring line. It's also possible Namestnikov will keep that job while Perfetti gets demoted, although I don't expect Scott Arniel to be of the same mindset that Rick Bowness was a year ago when Perfetti dressed for only one playoff game.

One concern? Boeser has never driven play at even strength, despite his considerable goal-scoring prowess. That concern is easy to mitigate — Winnipeg could keep him on Ehlers' sheltered secondary scoring line, while adding him to the second power-play unit — but it limits Boeser's versatility.

Kyle Palmieri, RW, Islanders

Age: 33

Contract: $5 million cap hit, 16-team no-trade list, UFA 2025

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, second-unit penalty kill

Production: 12 goals, 20 assists, 32 points in 49 games played

Palmieri is a feisty 5-foot-11 right wing who goes to the net hard and gets plenty of shots from dangerous areas. He used to score 20 goals per season like clockwork, is on pace to repeat that feat this year, and hit 30 as recently as last season. All of that is easy to like, despite the $5 million contract, his rental status and his 16-team no-trade clause.

A bigger concern might be that Palmieri doesn't particularly control the flow of play. I don't expect that a worse version of Tyler Toffoli will be on Winnipeg's shopping list — even if the Islanders do become sellers.

Mikael Granlund, C/LW, Sharks

Age: 32

Contract: $5 million cap hit, UFA 2025

Usage: Second line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, first-unit penalty kill

Production: 15 goals, 29 assists, 44 points in 51 games played

Granlund's second-line usage in San Jose sees him hit the ice more often than Miller or Boeser do in Vancouver. His power-play role attaches him to Macklin Celebrini, while his special teams usage helps Granlund lead all Sharks forwards in total ice time per game. On one hand, he's clearly versatile; on the other, it's more than fair to question his ability to replicate his offensive results in Winnipeg.

I'm not sure if the Jets remember Granlund fondly — or the right type of not-so-fondly — from his decade-plus in the Central Division, but he could be a middle-six upgrade with versatility to his game.

Elias Pettersson, C, Canucks

Age: 26

Contract: $11.6 million cap hit, UFA 2032

Usage: First line at five-on-five, first-unit power play, third-unit penalty kill

Production: 11 goals, 20 assists, 31 points in 43 games played

My expectation is that Vancouver will trade the veteran Miller and keep the 26-year-old Pettersson, who is signed until he's 33. It makes the most sense from a team-building perspective, with Pettersson closer to Quinn Hughes' age and still capable of elite offensive production.

That said, those are exactly the same reasons why opposing teams should be willing to give Vancouver more for Pettersson than for Miller. Elliotte Friedman reported Vancouver was close to moving Pettersson to Carolina prior to the Rantanen blockbuster.

Do the Jets have a Martin Necas and Jack Drury-type package to send the Canucks? Could they offer something similar to what Buffalo got for Jack Eichel — a first-round pick, a scoring winger (Alex Tuch) and a quality prospect (Peyton Krebs?) I think Ehlers, Brad Lambert and a first-round pick could get in the ballpark and still fall short — especially with Ehlers as a pending UFA.

Pettersson's contract would blow up the Jets' salary hierarchy. I don't think that matters — Kyle Connor will do the same if they retain him in 2026 — but the Jets might not agree with me there. Pettersson was well worth the big ticket when he scored 102 points two years ago and when he hit 89 points last year. At full health, he could be one of the NHL's top players for the next several seasons, giving the Jets an elite centre duo and a succession plan beyond the heart of Scheifele's career.

If there's reason to believe he can get back to his 90-100 point, play-driving, defensively responsible peak, Winnipeg should join the lengthy list of Pettersson suitors.

If you ask me, O'Reilly is the ideal fit, Nelson would be a tremendous addition if the Islanders moved him, and Boeser makes sense to consider. Miller at his best is a phenomenal player but his contract scares me. And Pettersson's offensive drop-off remains a mystery to me — a mystery I'd bet on if he's healthy, given his age and elite ceiling.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338091 Vancouver Canucks

Canucks Numbers: Elias Pettersson is shooting less, skating slower

Patrick Johnston

Published Jan 30, 2025

The Vancouver Canucks star's NHL Edge data is stark: In the span of two seasons, his top skating velocity has gone from one of the NHL's fastest to below average.

In 2022-23, his top skating burst was measured at 37.5 km/h, which put him in the NHL's 94th percentile. He got over 35 km/h twice that season, but more notably he got over 32 km/h 153 times over the course of the season.

That last figure is notable because even though he had a pretty-quick top burst last season — topping out at 36.2 km/h — he got over 32 km/h just 108 times. That's a pretty big year-over-year decrease.

He mentioned at the end of last season he had dealt with some knee tendinitis in the second half, so if he wasn't feeling totally comfortable in the run out of the season, it does make sense that he wasn't accelerating as much.

This decline in velocity has carried through to this season: Pettersson hasn't reached 35 km/h once this season. In fact, his top speed burst has been 34.7 km/h, which is below the league average of 35.6 km/h. He has clocked over 32 km/h 54 times this season, which is roughly on pace with last season's total.

A source told Postmedia that Pettersson isn't dealing with an injury this year, so his reduced top speed is a bit of a mystery. Pettersson has never been one to admit in-season to dealing with injuries, so an explanation from him hasn't exactly been forthcoming.

It's been a slow season from the star. He's admitted more than once he knows he needs to be better. The Canucks have been carried by Quinn Hughes and Kevin Lankinen and remain in the playoff hunt. Pettersson getting back to the player he was two seasons ago would add a lot of juice to the Canucks' playoff push.

He is being paid $11.6 million a season now. The Canucks, and their fans, need to see him earn those dollars.

Pettersson's overall shot total is way down — and it's actually down even more than you think, given 17 of his shots on goal this season have come off tips.

Tip shots are from pucks that were originally fired by someone else, but the player alters the trajectory by using his stick to deflect the puck's course.

It's quite the skill, of course, and not one to be frowned upon.

But you'd like to see a player use it to add to their shot total, not replace it.

In each of the past two seasons, Pettersson managed 22 tips over the whole season. Again, that he's already near that total isn't a bad thing in isolation, but when we take it as part of the broader picture, it suggests a shift in his overall playing style.

0.15

So far this season, Pettersson is firing just 0.15 slap shots per game, half his rate from last season and just one-quarter of his rate from two years ago.

Slap shots are down across the league in general, but given how often he was able to use his slap shot on power-play one-timers, it's a weapon that he was using effectively, despite the overall league trend.

Teams do seem to have figured out how to defend his one-timer, so it's not a huge surprise it's a weapon that has left his arsenal.

First, there was Thatcher Demko's performance on Wednesday in Nashville. According to Clear Sight Analytics, the Canucks gave up 33 scoring chances.

That's high for them.

But the good news was that Demko played well, looking just about how he's been in past seasons. He was steady in the net. There are still some small technique concerns, such as how he is sealing on the ice, but against the Predators the Canucks did need him to make a couple big saves and he delivered in that regard.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338092 Vancouver Canucks

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

Canucks Coffee: Why the great J.T. Miller-Elias Pettersson divide? Lack of respect

Ben Kuzma

Published Jan 30, 2025

I have witnessed impactful personalities, who with a dutiful demeanour or menacing presence, brought a galvanizing energy and pied-piper effect in the locker room. I've also seen inflated egos, indifference to direction, independent-contractor personas, and the clash of personalities.

Todd Bertuzzi was no day at the beach. He was rough and gruff, but the imposing winger also packed the right stuff.

He would even challenge what you wrote and sometimes it led to a heated debate. His dominant production and presence extended to getting the most out of teammates.

And if there was a culture problem in the room — somebody squawking about the vibe or a rookie bemoaning a lack of playing time — he would seek it out and snuff it out.

Bertuzzi, Naslund would bicker

Bertuzzi would also bicker and chirp linemate and captain Markus Naslund like they were an old married couple. However, the polar opposites — Bertuzzi the testosterone-charged, alpha-male Canadian and Naslund the quiet and respectful Swede — knew being frank and fair with each other led to respect and resolved to grind it out for the good of the team. And not them.

At end of the day, they would have a good laugh and get back to leading the high-scoring club. You don't pile up 272 points in the 2003-04 season as the famed West Coast Express, which included Brendan Morrison at centre, without debates in how to go about it and that turned up the temperature.

It was quite common.

Ryan Kesler was a moody and brooding centre of too much media attention. It rubbed the Selke Trophy winner the wrong way and the trickle-down effect could be felt in the room. There was that uneasiness, but I always enjoyed the challenge of getting Kesler to open up. And he did.

He was harder on the opposition than us, but it got to the point where scrutiny led to a trade suggestion and completion and an exit to Anaheim.

Which brings us to J.T. Miller and Elias Pettersson and the continuing sorry saga of the great personality divide. They are like oil and water, they just don't mix.

Miller is the loud-and-proud, old-school, stick-slamming, F-bomb dropping dynamo, who commands the room with bark and bite because he often backs it up by dragging the Canucks into the fight.

Pettersson is the quiet and reserved star with a variety of interests and has always believed his playmaking ability and strong two-way game can do all the talking.

You have to think they tolerated each other last season because, let's face it, winning solves everything. Or at least it can turn down the heat on the discord and send it to the back burner until it flares up again. And, of course it did.

It's to the point where Canucks president of hockey operations Jim Rutherford is considering trading Miller or Pettersson, or even both, to bring back team harmony. The players aren't blind or deaf. They see and hear the discord, but what if the Canucks remain in playoff contention?

What if the club is best served by pressing on and dealing with Miller and/or Pettersson at the trade deadline, if out of contention, or at end of the season? That's probably an easier sell to ownership than getting pennies on the dollar in one-sided trades because the desperate Canucks don't have leverage.

It would also help if the Canucks had a mediator in the room, someone who can reach both parties on a different level and bridge the respect gap. Former Canucks bench boss Bruce Boudreau recently told Postmedia he was aware of the disconnect.

'There's no doubt there's friction'

"There's no doubt there's friction because the personalities are so different," said Boudreau. "The alpha (Miller) can control the room, but one of the great things when I was there was (Tanner) Pearson being a real conduit.

"He sat beside Petey and was a really good friend with Miller. He did a lot of smoothing things out. I don't think they have that one guy like that anymore, maybe Tyler Myers."

It's not unusual to be in a situation where you're at odds with a colleague. You simple don't see the world or the occupation in the same manner and that's never going to be resolved. You still have to work together for the betterment of the product, but you don't have to become besties.

And quite frankly, let's be honest about it all. There's something missing here between Miller and Pettersson. Whether the lack of respect is about the player, the person, or the paycheque — or all of the above — nobody is making a move to mend the fence.

I believe Miller and Pettersson are grateful to reside in a world-class city and for everything the sport has provided to live an idyllic lifestyle. Miller puts up with Lions Gate traffic snarl because his family resides in picturesque West Vancouver. And he's close to a private golf course.

Pettersson also has a life outside the game and has interest in music and fashion. And in that respect, they have a connection but it's away from the arena.

What's in it for me?

The game has also come to a place where star young players know their place in the game and what that's worth.

Former NHL head coach Ken Hitchcock learned the hard way that he couldn't deliver a heavy-handed approach. A two-way dialogue was imperative with skilled and smart players. The kids were bright and had insight into how to reach contract bonuses.

"The big change is we've blown through millennials now — we're into the 'I' generation," stressed Hitchcock. "You have to tell them everything. Even before you finish your conversation, you have to tell them what's in it for them, because they're not going to buy in if you don't tell them what to do and how."

And how that plays out in any room can bring a variety of responses from acceptable to a level of acrimony.

It's why Canucks captain Quinn Hughes is such a refreshing example of how every player should strive to conduct himself. A strong family sporting lineage taught the Norris Trophy winner respect and resolve, and above all, being a good teammate.

And to his credit, Hughes has led by example. He has taken his game to another level, has played through pain, and always addresses the good and bad of team fortunes with measured and thoughtful responses.

You'd think that would help mediate any discord between players. What happened to we instead of me? What happened to being grateful?

The sad part of all this is that it could give Hughes, the ultimate team player, cause to wonder about his future in Vancouver. A fractured environment leads to trade departures and a retool or even a rebuild isn't what he signed up for.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338093 Vancouver Canucks

Vancouver Canucks trade tiers 2025: Who's untouchable? Who could move before NHL deadline?

Harman Dayal, Thomas Drance

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

14-18 minutes 30/01/2025

The Vancouver Canucks are one of the NHL's most fascinating wild cards ahead of the 2025 trade deadline.

This is a club that's managed by one of the league's most prolific traders in president of hockey operations Jim Rutherford. The Canucks are still in the thick of the playoff race in the Western Conference, and could yet realistically end up as a buyer or a seller, or both, ahead of the deadline. And, to top it all off, two of Vancouver's highest-profile stars have been very publicly on the trade block over the past few weeks.

As the trade deadline approaches, we like to kick off our silly season coverage with an annual look at Canucks trade tiers. This article functions as an inventory of Canucks players and trade assets based on a mix of analysis, reporting and informed speculation — which we drop every year just as the NHL's rumour mill kicks into high gear.

This year's edition of our Canucks trade tiers feels especially high stakes. There's a multitude of potential paths through the next five weeks that Canucks management could chart, and it's not hyperbolic in the slightest to suggest that the ramifications of what comes next could define the rest of this decade for the franchise.

A note that all salary, term and bonus information and any notes on trade or movement protection are sourced from CapWages.

Not moving

Quinn Hughes (three years remaining, $7.85 million cap hit)

The only place that Hughes might move before the trade deadline is from Norris Trophy consideration to Hart Trophy consideration.

Filip Hronek (eight years remaining, $7.25 million cap hit)

The other half of the NHL's most impactful defence pair, Hronek is primed to be a fixture on this roster for a long time to come, regardless of what other significant moves the Canucks may make over the next few weeks.

Jake DeBrusk (NMC – seven years remaining, $5.5 million cap hit)

DeBrusk is currently riding out a cold streak, but we know that he'll have an extended run scoring in bunches once the dam breaks. In his first Canucks season, DeBrusk is still on pace to set a career high in goals scored and match his career high in points.

Conor Garland (two years remaining, $4.95 million cap hit)

One of the club's most reliable two-way engines up front, Garland is very quietly having his best and most productive Canucks season.

Dakota Joshua (modified NTC – four years remaining, $3.25 million cap hit)

After undergoing offseason surgery following a testicular cancer diagnosis, Joshua returned to the lineup and just as his game appeared to be gaining traction, he missed an additional four weeks battling through a hip injury. Understandably Joshua hasn't found his stride yet this season, but he's still a valuable piece with a unique profile.

Tyler Myers (NMC – three years remaining, $3 million cap hit)

Even beyond his full no-move clause, Myers has performed at a credible top-four level throughout a trying first 50 games for Vancouver's blue line.

Carson Soucy (NTC – two years remaining, $3.25 million cap hit)

Soucy has followed up his stalwart showing in his first Canucks season with an inconsistent campaign this year. The Canucks very much believe in Soucy's solidity and his defensive game, and in any event, Soucy has both roots in western Canada and a full no-trade clause.

Teddy Blueger (two years remaining, $1.8 million cap hit)

Not only is Blueger a favourite of the coaching staff and management, but Vancouver isn't going to be wiling to subtract a centre right now given the availability of J.T. Miller and Elias Pettersson on the trade market.

Kiefer Sherwood (two years remaining, $1.5 million cap hit)

A revelation in his first Canucks campaign, Sherwood looks like a serious free-agent hit for Vancouver. He's both too affordable and too useful for the club to seriously consider trading at this juncture.

Probably not moving but …

Thatcher Demko (two years remaining, $5 million cap hit)

Demko is one of the most difficult goaltending assets in the league to value right now. When Vancouver's star netminder is healthy and on, as he was in Nashville on Wednesday night, he's an elite force capable of operating at a Vezina-calibre level.

However, there are serious durability concerns about Demko and that was true even before his major knee injury, which sidelined him for seven months. No NHL goaltender has ever suffered the specific injury Demko has returned from, making it difficult to project his outlook moving forward. Demko has mostly struggled since returning, posting a .877 save percentage in 13 games, but given his extended absence and evident star-level talent, it's too early to read too much into his uncharacteristically permissive performance.

The Canucks would probably be best off being patient with Demko and using the next three months to gather as much information as possible on him. If he bounces back, the club will be incentivized to keep him next season. If he underperforms down the stretch, the front office can make an informed decision on whether to keep or shop him in the offseason.

Vancouver will likely hold Demko through this season before deciding on his future, but in the highly unlikely event that a contender was to blow the Canucks away with an exceptional offer, surely management would have to consider it given the risk in his projection.

Kevin Lankinen (UFA this summer, $875,000 cap hit)

Lankinen has exceeded all expectations and succeeded as the Canucks' de facto starter this season. Vancouver's front office has already engaged Lankinen's camp regarding contract extension talks, as The Athletic reported earlier and in an ideal world, the Canucks would sign Lankinen to a reasonable deal to keep him as a key part of the club's goaltending tandem moving forward.

However, the NHL's goalie market is rapidly inflating. MacKenzie Blackwood recently signed a five-year, $5.25 million AAV extension with the Avalanche and Logan Thompson inked a six-year, $5.85 million AAV deal with the Capitals. Blackwood and Thompson are higher-tier, more proven goaltenders than Lankinen and slightly younger, so this isn't to say that Lankinen will command an extension that large, but Blackwood and Thompson aren't far removed from being out-of-favour goaltenders. It won't be cheap to retain Lankinen given his high level of achievement this season, and there's risk involved with committing significant term and dollars to a netminder with a small sample of success as a starter.

There's a scenario where Lankinen could get dealt, but it feels like a long shot. It would require extension talks going so poorly that the Canucks decide they can't afford to keep him beyond this season and the club slipping out of the playoff race to the point where management feels it's necessary to recoup an asset for him rather than letting him walk for nothing. Odds are, however, that he'll remain a Canuck through this season.

Tough decisions tier

Nils Höglander (three-year, $3 million cap hit extension kicking in next season)

With just four goals and 11 points in 46 games, it's no secret that Höglander is going through a nightmare season. He's routinely found himself in Rick Tocchet's doghouse to the point where we wonder if the player and coach will ever be compatible long-term. There's also a risk that his three-year, $3 million AAV extension, which kicks in next season, could become inefficient if he can't carve out a larger role and produce more consistently.

All of those are compelling reasons to consider shipping Höglander out, but this decision isn't as straightforward as it may appear on the surface. Vancouver's front office still believes in Höglander's potential. His trade value is also relatively distressed because of his struggles this season. Is it worth selling him when his value is at an all-time low? It'll be fascinating to see how management approaches Höglander's future.

The too much water under the bridge tier

J.T. Miller (NMC – six years remaining, $8 million cap hit)

Miller has been a central player in mature trade discussions that nearly resulted in a deal on two occasions over the past two weeks, and at this stage, it feels inevitable that the gifted, heavy, playmaking forward will be traded.

Will that occur before the trade deadline? The club certainly seems motivated to find a deal, but it's not a simple trade to pull off in-season, especially given Miller's struggles this season, some of the baggage surrounding his situation, the term and money remaining on his contract and his no-move clause.

A Miller trade still feels more like a question of "when" than "if." It's probable that the best thing for all parties involved would be to find a resolution quickly. There's some complexity involved in actually executing the transaction, however, so we'll just have to watch and see how exactly this all plays out.

Franchise altering decision tier

Elias Pettersson (eight years remaining, $11.6 million cap hit)

Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman reported on Saturday that Pettersson was close to being moved to the Carolina Hurricanes before the Mikko Rantanen trade and that trade talks are ongoing with other teams. The Canucks are clearly open-minded about the possibility of trading their star Swedish centre if the right offer comes along, which matches the public commentary of Rutherford and Patrik Allvin.

There's an enormous risk, of course, in trading away an elite player in his mid-20s. Historically, it's been very challenging to win trades where you're dealing away a franchise player, and it's possible that trading Pettersson would end up aging as poorly as the Sabres' divorce with Jack Eichel.

However, you also can't ignore that there are red flags around Pettersson. Dating back to last year's All-Star break, he's scored 18 goals and 57 points in 77 games. That doesn't even include his disappointing playoff run, where he mustered just one goal in 13 games. We're talking about 12 months of uninspiring play, which is a substantial timeframe. It's also fair to wonder about his leadership and whether he can truly be The Guy to lead a franchise through a deep playoff run.

We'd expect Pettersson to bounce back as a high-end 1C given his early career statistical resume. And if that's the internal belief, it's probably in the club's best interests to hang onto him. But the organization's key decision-makers are clearly still mulling if Pettersson is part of the long-term solution, or whether he should be dealt for a lucrative haul.

On the block tier

Brock Boeser (modified NTC – UFA this summer, $6.65 million cap hit)

Last we checked, extension talks were quiet between Boeser's camp and the Canucks.

The 27-year-old sniper's next contract is going to be quite expensive. AFP Analytics projects that Boeser's next deal will be for seven years and carry a cap hit in the $8.75 million ballpark. Boeser wouldn't be an easy piece for the Canucks to move on from, but at this point, the organization looks unwilling to make that type of monumental commitment. It's also telling that Allvin and Rutherford have been lukewarm about Boeser's future whenever publicly asked about his contract situation.

Vancouver can't afford to lose a player of Boeser's calibre for nothing, especially if it's not more firmly ensconced in a playoff spot. We'd expect the club to shop him ahead of the trade deadline unless the two sides make rapid progress toward a new deal in the coming weeks.

If there's a market tier

Danton Heinen (modified NTC – two years remaining, $2.25 million cap hit)

Outside of his work on the penalty kill, Heinen has been a quiet disappointment in his first Canucks season. His two-way game has been inconsistent, the production has been pedestrian and Heinen's role has largely been relegated to the bottom six, despite the club's efforts to shoehorn him onto a line with Miller and Boeser to open the campaign.

Heinen has somewhat robust trade protection (a 12-team no-trade list), but if there were an interested buyer, Vancouver would have to strongly consider moving on and reallocating his cap dollars elsewhere.

Vincent Desharnais (two years remaining, $2 million cap hit)

The Desharnais experiment hasn't gone as swimmingly as the Canucks had hoped when they signed him last summer. The physical third-pair defender and penalty killing ace has had some good moments, especially in sheltered minutes with a more mobile defence partner, but he's steadily fallen behind Noah Juulsen on the depth chart as the season has progressed. He's also been a mainstay in trade rumours throughout this season, and in this case, where there's smoke, there's fire.

The Canucks will likely explore their options before the deadline, although it isn't always straightforward to move on from depth defenders with term remaining on their deals.

Deadline depth tier

Pius Suter (UFA this summer, $1.6 million cap hit)

Suter has been one of this front office's best bang-for-buck signings. The savvy, versatile forward has shown that he can play anywhere in the team's lineup, whether it be as a third-line centre or as a complementary top-six winger.

If the price makes sense, the Canucks would be wise to try hammering out an extension for Suter. However, if the dollars and term are too steep, management will have to weigh the return that Suter could fetch on the trade market as a useful rental forward against the value of keeping him for the club's playoff push.

There's a case to be made that the Canucks should prioritize selling and collecting assets that could later be spent to acquire win-now help for next season rather than a playoff push now, considering the odds of them going deep this postseason are slim.

Derek Forbort (UFA this summer, $1.5 million)

Forbort will be a coveted depth defenceman if the Canucks decide to sell at the deadline.

The veteran 6-foot-4 defender has the size, experience and defensive acumen that playoff contenders would covet. Yes, his foot speed can be a concern at times, but he's been totally serviceable at even strength for the Canucks and is a legitimately excellent penalty killer. Moving Forbort would also give Elias Pettersson, who looked promising in his first two NHL games, an opportunity to become a full-time option for the big club and gain some rapid experience.

Noah Juulsen (UFA this summer, $775,000)

The Canucks have a bit of a logjam on the right side. Hronek, Myers and Desharnais are all under contract for next season.

Meanwhile, Tom Willander, another right-shot defenceman, could be ready to turn pro and play NHL games at the end of his NCAA season. Juulsen wouldn't have much trade value (think late-round pick), but teams are always stocking up on depth blueliners at the deadline. With his size, physicality and penalty killing prowess, Juulsen would be a solid No. 7/8 option for a contender.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338094 Websites

The Athletic / What we learned about the NHL in January: Impact of the Mikko Rantanen trade and more

By Shayna Goldman

There is always a lot to analyze around an NHL trade — the cost of acquisition on both sides of the deal, the fit and the ripples throughout the

trade market. But maybe one of the most interesting elements to consider is the timing of a deal, especially for in-season trades.

The timing of a trade can affect the cost in some cases. A middle-six center can be worth one thing in late January and a lot more in early March, depending on how other teams set the market and the demand for that position around the league. When elite talent is involved, though, the bar starts high and stays high no matter the timing. Trading for Mikko Rantanen in late January versus the deadline likely wouldn't have drastically changed the cost unless there was a dramatic market shift over the next few weeks or an outright bidding war. And by making this deal weeks out from the deadline, Carolina gets more bang for its buck — up to 14 extra games of action with Rantanen (and Taylor Hall) in the fold.

Not only does this make the deal more cost-effective, it also gives everyone a chance to assess the situation before the rapidly approaching deadline. Players have more time to adjust and gel in their surroundings, which can help the decision-making process on both sides of the equation. In Rantanen's case, he has more time to decide whether or not he likes playing with the Hurricanes. Management has an opportunity to evaluate the team with Rantanen and Hall in the fold, which should help shape the team's direction in the weeks leading up to March 7. The same goes for the Avalanche, who brought in Martin Necas and Jack Drury and now have a bit more cap space to work with before the deadline.

The advantages of that timing need to be front of mind for the rest of the league, especially in the days leading up to the 4 Nations Face-Off break.

Special teams impact of Colorado's additions

Despite rolling out a top unit of Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar and Rantanen this season, the Avalanche's power-play attack has been far from lethal. From the season start to Dec. 31, Colorado's expected goal generation of 8.31 per 60 was just below league average, but its scoring rate (9.01 goals per 60) brought the team up to ninth place.

That production dried up in January, with Colorado falling to 28th in expected goal generation (6.71 per 60) and second-to-last in scoring with just 2.77 goals per 60 in its 11 games before the trade.

Rantanen was far from the problem in Colorado, but adding Necas should infuse a new element into an area of play that needs it. There is only so much to draw from three games and less than 11 minutes of power-play time, but the early returns are positive for Necas on the advantage.

Just take their 2:22 minutes of power-play time against the Rangers last Sunday. Necas earned a secondary assist on Makar's power-play goal in the first.

Then, on the Avalanche's second opportunity of the game, the Rangers managed one early clear. After that, Colorado's top unit pinned them in their own zone for the remaining 1:27 of the advantage. Necas helped cycle the puck in the zone, set up his new teammates and generated two dangerous chances that hit the post. If that's a sign of what's to come, it could breathe some life into a unit that surprisingly struggled through much of January.

On the other end of the ice, Drury could add some support to a short-handed unit that needs it.

Colorado's penalty kill also trended down in January to allow the fourth-highest rate of expected goals against, at 10.9 per 60. Those short-handed lapses haven't always been as glaring because goaltending has held a lot off the scoresheet. Mackenzie Blackwood and Scott Wedgewood have saved a league-high 5.4 goals above expected in January while short-handed.

Drury wasn't a leading penalty killer with the Hurricanes, but he still played about 26 percent of the available short-handed time before the trade. And that should help fill a void left by Valeri Nichushkin's absence, and even last year's trade deadline addition Yakov Trenin, who departed as a free agent.

Rantanen and Hall's influence on the middle of the ice

The Corsi Canes have stayed true to their name, with the most shot volume at five-on-five and the highest expected goal rate. But one area of the ice could use more emphasis: the middle. The heat map below visualizes that, with the Hurricanes' heaviest areas of offensive creation pictured in red.

Via HockeyViz

Adding both Rantanen and Hall should help change that.

One of Rantanen's biggest strengths is generating scoring chances. He's a dynamic winger who can win puck battles and drive his shots right to the middle of the ice at five-on-five. Rantanen's scoring ability draws defenders in, which can open up his teammates for a high-danger pass.

That was already on display in Rantanen's first two games with his new team. The Canes had a 16-10 shot attempt advantage and a 79 percent expected goal rate in his minutes against the Islanders last Saturday. The numbers weren't as tilted against the Rangers, but the winger still affected the scoresheet.

It's only been a few games, so the question is how well he will fit there in the long run, especially without Nathan MacKinnon. Rantanen hasn't always had to be the play driver on his line, and he isn't much of a puck transporter at five-on-five. He never had to be, with a zone-entry machine at his side. And one of the Canes' best carriers, Necas, went the other way in this deal.

So the complexion of Carolina's offense will change, and so will Rantanen's approach because as good as Sebastian Aho is in transition, he isn't in the same stratosphere as MacKinnon. But if the early returns are a glimpse of what is to come, Rantanen should help his new team kick their offense up a level.

Hall should also help, just in a different capacity in the middle six. His five-on-five scoring rate plummeted in Chicago over the last year, but it wasn't for a lack of trying. Hall ranked highly not just relative to the Blackhawks but across the league in controlled entries and primary shot assists this year, according to All Three Zones.

Against the Rangers on Tuesday night, his puck movement shined with setups to Andrei Svechnikov and Eric Robinson.

With Svechnikov in particular, this is something to watch. His shot volume and quality are up this year at five-on-five, but he has struggled to convert on those chances. Maybe Hall's passing can help change that, giving the Hurricanes more reliable goal scoring from the middle.

Thompson earns himself an extension in Washington

Despite Charlie Lindgren's emergence as the Capitals' starter down the stretch last season, management still looked for reinforcements in the offseason. And now Logan Thompson is shaping up to be one of their most savvy deals of 2024.

While the workload distribution has been perfectly even through most of the season, with the two rotating every other game, Thompson has shined the most. Through his first 21 games, he saved 16.5 goals above expected and earned a 0.919 save percentage. But his most impressive stretch of the season came after that when Thompson took a true starting role while Lindgren was injured. He gave the Capitals a chance to win with quality starts in all five of his consecutive starts and saved 11 goals above expected along the way.

The Capitals have since returned to their even split in net now that Lindgren is back, but that stretch of play was encouraging for when (or if) this team needs Thompson to take over the starter's net. Based on past precedent for teams with a shared crease, that could be the plan for the playoffs.

Thompson's first half in Washington (plus his time in Vegas) was enough for Washington to bet on him for another six years at $5.85 million a year on average. Since he doesn't have an extensive track record as a true starting goalie, or even a 1A, there is some risk associated with the signing. However, it aligns with the goalie market reset earlier this year after some key signings, such as Jeremy Swayman in Boston and Joey Daccord in Seattle.

Extreme special teams in Vegas

The Golden Knights' power play has truly become an advantage. Vegas came into the season hot on the power play before slowing down in mid-November and December. But the team got back on track in January. The Golden Knights have notched at least one power-play goal in 10 of their last 12 games before Thursday's tilt against the Blue Jackets.

Most of that success comes from a top unit led by Jack Eichel, Mark Stone, Tomas Hertl and Shea Theodore. Pavel Dorofeyev rounds out that group as a shooting presence on the wing.

Heading into Thursday night, the team converted on 28.3 percent of its opportunities through 50 games, which landed them third in the league behind the Devils and Jets. And their play below the surface backs that up. The team does a lot of damage from the high-danger areas in the net-front area, up the middle of the ice and from the circles. That adds up to about 10.1 expected goals per 60, which ranks behind only the Devils. Vegas' scoring efficiency and expected goal creation this season are the best of its eight-year existence.

But not all special teams are an advantage for Vegas. Surprisingly, its penalty kill has been somewhat of a weakness. In January, the team slipped into the bottom 10 in expected and actual goal suppression even while matching up to lesser teams like the Sharks and Blackhawks.

The Golden Knights went six-for-six while short-handed against the Stars and Panthers earlier this week, which is at least a step in the right direction after some concerning trends throughout the month.

The Panthers' declining rush game

Once upon a time, the Panthers were one of the best rush-based teams in the league. In 2021-22, that was Florida's signature style. The big question then was whether that style would be crushed in a playoff environment or if the Panthers needed more diversity in their attack.

Paul Maurice was hired in the 2022 offseason, and the rest is history. The Panthers built up a strong, grinding forecheck that has worn down opponents, helping them win their first Stanley Cup last June.

The team is elite at recovering dump-ins, wearing down its opponent along the boards, cycling the puck in the offensive zone and generating second-chance opportunities. But even as the Panthers evolved into more of a forechecking force, they still had some balance in their attack thanks to their play off the rush. It's just faded over the last couple of seasons — and that's especially obvious this year.

Via All Three Zones

The Panthers' change in strategy is evident on a team-wide and individual basis through tracking from All Three Zones. One of the biggest downticks is from Carter Verhaeghe, who tends to be one of the more reliable threats in transition around the league. He has only generated 5.67 shots per 60 off the rush this year, compared to last year's 10.7. Evan Rodrigues and Matthew Tkachuk have also taken noticeable steps back, along with Sam Bennett. That may be a contributing factor behind the dips in each of their five-on-five scoring rates from last year.

Howling for Wolf in the Calder Trophy race

High-scoring first-year players tend to draw more attention in the rookie race. Macklin Celebrini, Lane Hutson and Matvei Michkov are bound to earn many votes this spring. But Dustin Wolf is also making a strong case to finish in the top three.

Similar to the Hart Trophy race, the challenge of the Calder is measuring players of each position against each other. Comparing forwards and defensemen is challenging enough, but a goaltender? That's all the more complicated.

With Wolf, it's easier to measure him up against the top goalies in the league. And so far this season, he stacks up to some of the league's best. Heading into Thursday night, Wolf ranked sixth in the league with 18.7 goals saved above expected, behind only Daccord, Lukas Dostal, Igor Shesterkin, Thompson and Connor Hellebuyck. With 20 quality starts in 28 appearances, he has given the Flames a chance to win most nights, which is a major reason why Calgary is in the playoff picture. That seems more than worthy of top honors as a rookie of the year.

January Stars

Leon Draisaitl is doing everything and more this season in Edmonton. He is scoring goals at a career-high rate to lead the league, driving the Oilers' second line, winning puck battles to generate dangerous chances and has been a shutdown presence defensively. Draisaitl shined in a star-studded matchup against the Avalanche in January and stepped up against the Capitals and Canucks while Connor McDavid was suspended. All together this month, he scored nine goals and 20 points in 14 games while earning a 62 percent expected goal rate.

Speaking of team MVPs, there is Dylan Larkin. His impact is felt all over the ice. The Red Wings count on him to retrieve pucks and transition the puck up the ice. In the offensive zone, he is a skilled playmaker and a clutch goal-scorer. That scoring has helped the Red Wings earn pivotal points in a tight playoff race. Just take his performance against Montreal, when he scored two points and outright dominated his five-on-five minutes to earn a season-high 4.15 Game Score against a team competing for the same playoff seed. He capped off January with a strong game against Edmonton, where he scored the tying goal and the game-winner in the shootout.

Filip Forsberg made a strong case for the third star. So did Thompson, Wolf, Darcy Kuemper and Spencer Knight, who put up sparkling numbers over the last month. But Barzal, who has helped fuel the Islanders' 9-3 record in January, earned the honors.

Barzal's 11 points over his last 12 games may not stack up to the rest of the league, thanks to the Islanders' putrid power play. But he is excelling at five-on-five. Barzal is one of the best in the league at creating scoring chances in transition, which has helped the Islanders control play with a 58 percent expected goal rate in January and a 16-3 scoring edge with their star forward on the ice.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338095 Websites

The Athletic / NHL trade grades: Flames bet on upside, Flyers hope for short-term Andrei Kuzmenko spark

By Harman Dayal and Sean Gentille

Sean Gentille: It's always fun — or lightly interesting, at least — to watch a trade reveal itself piecemeal, throughout an evening. A decent guide: If it doesn't make sense initially, it will eventually. An hour or so after we learned the details, I'm still not quite there.

On some level, I get why this one was made. The Flames, wild-card spot aside, are an abysmal offensive team, enough for Morgan Frost and Joel Farabee to represent upgrades. Frost's development as a point producer has stalled out since his second NHL season, when he had 46 points in 81 games, but improved defensive impacts have helped him grow as a down-the-middle play driver. Farabee has a little more pop to his game, but he's also spent a large chunk of his career in coach John Tortorella's doghouse and is signed for $5 million per season through 2028. These aren't world-beaters. They're not going to make the Flames good. Better, maybe, but not good.

Philadelphia, theoretically, gets someone who can play — and has played — with Matvei Michkov in Andrei Kuzmenko. He also, with every passing second, gets a little farther from that 39-goal rookie season in Vancouver, and he seems like he was built in a lab to bother Tortorella. He's not physical, isn't a good skater and seemingly needs Elias Pettersson (or a center like him) to reliably produce offense. Jakob Pelletier, meanwhile, has 11 points in 23 games after being waived in training camp. His size didn't stop him from producing in the AHL. A level up, though, it is an issue. Maybe Philly really wanted that second-round pick.

Ultimately, the fact Calgary got two players who belong in an NHL lineup and who also have a teensy bit of upside puts me in their corner. It's a cheap upgrade that could help them get a couple of home playoff games, given their spot in the standings. Philly, meanwhile, dumps Farabee's contract. Perhaps that's all reason enough. Still, though — mediocre teams moving mediocre assets. Don't let the size of the deal fool you.

Flames grade: C+

Flyers grade: D+

Harman Dayal: I like this as a low-risk, modest upside trade for the Flames.

Calgary has received excellent goaltending from Dustin Wolf and is structurally sound defensively this season, but the club ranks 29th in the NHL in goals scored per game. Farabee and Frost have the potential to inject key secondary scoring, and most importantly, as mid-20s players, they could be long-term members of the Flames' retooling core.

Farabee is the most intriguing player. The 24-year-old left winger scored a career-high 22 goals and 50 points last season, but his production cratered to just eight goals and 19 points in 50 games this year, and he's fallen out of favor with Tortorella. Farabee represents a solid buy-low opportunity. His numbers reveal he's still generating shots and scoring chances at a healthy clip, but he's had some unfortunate luck, as his shooting percentage has fallen to just 8 percent.

There's a very good chance Farabee will rebound as a quality middle-six scorer with a fresh start. He costs $5 million against the cap for three years after this season, so there is some risk involved with his contract if he isn't able to find his game in Calgary. However, I'm a believer in his offensive talent, and his cap hit looks reasonable given the rising cap climate.

Frost fits a key positional need for the Flames down the middle. He's a worthwhile reclamation project, and there's no contractual risk because he's a restricted free agent at the end of this season, but I'm less confident he'll fit with Calgary's core. It's easy to get excited by Frost's point totals — he scored 41 points in 71 games last season and 46 points the year prior — but he isn't as valuable of a player as his production on paper indicates.

Frost is a talented, slick playmaker, but there's a reason Philadelphia, which is desperately starved for top-six centers, is happily moving on from him. The 25-year-old was pretty sheltered, matchups-wise, during his time with the Flyers. He doesn't play a heavy, competitive game and is an inconsistent player. Frost is still a worthwhile bet for the Flames because there's very little risk, and they could use another top-nine center. However, I'd expect Farabee to be the more impactful player in the long term.

For the Flyers, losing these two is not the end of the world because they had fallen out of favor. Frost, in particular, didn't have a long-term future in Philadelphia. However, the problem is that the return feels light.

Kuzmenko is a creative, skilled player. He's had offensive success in the past, most notably the 39 goals he scored with the Vancouver Canucks in 2022-23, but that was a flash in the pan, given that he scored on an outrageous 27.3 percent of his shots playing next to Pettersson. Kuzmenko's defensive habits are poor, and he's a very slow forechecker. He doesn't drive play and has landed in the coach's doghouse in Vancouver and Calgary. He's scored just four goals and 15 points in 37 games this season.

Maybe Kuzmenko will get hot for a little bit in the beginning, just like he did with the Flames, but I have a feeling his lack of defensive detail, slow foot speed and soft playing style will be a poor fit with Tortorella. The Flyers would have been better off having an extra $5.5 million of cap space for this season rather than taking back his inefficient contract.

The 2025 second-round pick is easily the most valuable asset the Flyers received. However, it's worth remembering this year's draft class is below average and not very deep after the first dozen or so players. Philadelphia now has three first-round picks this year and four second-rounders. It'll be interesting to see whether they combine some of those picks to try trading up in the draft so their 2025 draft haul leans more toward quality rather than quantity.

Pelletier didn't make the Flames' roster out of training camp and wasn't claimed on waivers, so he isn't exactly a draw. He could turn into a useful depth forward because of his hockey IQ and work ethic (he's produced 11 points in 24 games since being called up by Calgary and has a stellar AHL scoring resume), but he's small and not exactly the fastest player in a straight line.

Flames grade: B+

Flyers grade: C

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338096 Websites

The Athletic / Wasatch out, Outlaws back in the mix as Utah Hockey Club continues march to a permanent nickname

By Chris Johnston

Just like that, Wasatch is off the table as a possible permanent name for Utah's NHL team.

And Outlaws is back in play.

The Utah NHL organization announced the change Thursday after conducting fan voting inside Delta Center during Wednesday's home game against the Pittsburgh Penguins. Fans weren't warm to the idea of Wasatch, which was a late entrant after not being among the original six finalists. It was only introduced after Utah ran into trademark issues with the Yeti cooler company and had to abandon the name as a possibility.

The remaining three choices under consideration are now:

Utah Mammoth

Utah Hockey Club

Utah Outlaws

Those were all among the original six choices identified in the spring, along with Venom, Blizzard and Yeti.

While Utah encountered obstacles with each of those choices when seeking copyrights with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the remaining three presented the fewest issues.

Outlaws and Mammoth were deemed to have no conflicting marks that would bar registration, with only clerical errors needing to be cleared up to secure trademarks. Yeti, Venom and Blizzard were refused due to the "likelihood of confusion" with other registered marks.

In a non-final ruling from the USPTO on Jan. 10, the Utah Hockey Club (HC) was refused because the "mark is primarily geographically descriptive." But the fact that the name is currently in use by the team offers a pathway to securing it.

As part of the voting process, fans are being shown closely guarded logo designs to go with the potential team names. Voting will continue during the team's next three home games — Friday against the Columbus Blue Jackets, Sunday against the St. Louis Blues and Tuesday against the Philadelphia Flyers.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338097 Websites

The Athletic / Canada names Sidney Crosby captain for 4 Nations: Why he was the pick and notable omissions

By Chris Johnston

Captain Canada is Captain Crosby.

In what was arguably the easiest decision team management and the coaching staff had to make ahead of next month's 4 Nations Face-Off, Team Canada officially named Sidney Crosby as its captain for the tournament on Thursday afternoon.

The man who scored the Golden Goal at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics previously wore his country's "C" at the past two best-on-best

international events: The 2014 Sochi Games and 2016 World Cup of Hockey, both of which were won by Canada.

Not only is Crosby the NHL's longest-tenured captain — he's held that honor with the Pittsburgh Penguins for more than 17 years, and counting — but he's also among Canada's most decorated international hockey players of all-time.

The country is 45-5-0 in games when he's worn the sweater.

Crosby's resume includes two Olympic gold medals, a gold from the IIHF World Hockey Championship, a gold at the World Junior Championship and a World Cup title. He was also named MVP of the 2016 World Cup tournament.

So while Crosby may have ceded the unofficial title of "best player on the planet" to Connor McDavid in recent years, there was no serious discussion about anyone else taking the captaincy for the Feb. 12 to 20 tournament. McDavid, named an alternate captain along with Cale Makar, made sure of that.

"It should be Sid. It should be Sid for sure," McDavid told reporters in October when asked about Canada's captaincy decision. "That's not even a question. It's just how it should be. He's Sidney Crosby and he's been there so many times and he's the guy. It's not like I thought about it a lot, it's just such a no-brainer."

Why these picks?

There was nothing ceremonial or nostalgic about the Crosby choice.

At age 37, he'll be the oldest participant in the 4 Nations Face-Off field, but he remains an incredibly impactful player with 55 points in 53 games for the Penguins on the season. That includes scoring the overtime winner in Utah on Wednesday night. Crosby's current rate of production puts him on pace to become the first NHLer ever with 20 consecutive point-per-game campaigns, which would break a record he currently shares with Wayne Gretzky at 19.

Among active Canadian players, his 1,651 career points are nearly 500 more than anybody else. Steven Stamkos (1,170 points) is No. 2 on that list and he didn't receive a 4 Nations invite.

McDavid owns the next-highest total among Crosby's Canadian teammates with 1,048 career points — including 21 goals and 66 points in 44 games this season. He will likely take the mantle as the next Canadian captain once Crosby's playing career is finished. McDavid is in his ninth season serving as Edmonton Oilers captain and won the Conn Smythe Trophy in a losing cause last spring after leading his team to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final.

Makar is the youngest member of the leadership group at age 26. He's a former Conn Smythe winner himself — in 2022 when the Colorado Avalanche lifted the Cup — and he was the only defenseman included among Canada's initial six roster selections in June.

He wears an "A" for the Avalanche and has drawn comparisons to Bobby Orr while compiling 392 points through 367 career NHL games. He's likely to log the most minutes of any of the Canadian skaters at the 4 Nations Face-Off.

Notable omissions

There's no shortage of Canadian players who wear letters with their NHL teams, including present-day captains Brad Marchand of the Boston Bruins and Mark Stone of the Vegas Golden Knights.

Marchand was also included in Canada's initial six roster invites.

Among the other team members who wear an alternate captain's "A" in the NHL are Nathan MacKinnon (Colorado), Colton Parayko (St. Louis Blues), Josh Morrissey (Winnipeg Jets) and Travis Konecny (Philadelphia Flyers).

Alex Pietrangelo would also have drawn serious consideration to serve as one of Canada's alternate captains due to his extensive international experience and Stanley Cup-winning pedigree, but he withdrew from the tournament last week because of an ailment.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338098 Websites

The Athletic / Team USA names Auston Matthews captain for 4 Nations: Why he was the pick and notable omissions

By Michael Russo

Toronto Maple Leafs center Auston Matthews will captain Team USA for the upcoming 4 Nations Face-Off, the NHL announced Thursday.

With an impressive list of leaders to choose from, including four NHL captains and 10 NHL alternate captains, the Florida Panthers' Matthew Tkachuk and Boston Bruins' Charlie McAvoy were chosen as assistants for the international tournament, which is being staged by the NHL and NHLPA.

Matthews, 27, led the NHL with 69 goals last season and won the Hart Trophy in 2021-22, when he scored 106 points in 73 games. The 2016 No. 1 draft pick also won the Calder Trophy in 2017 and has scored 388 goals and 687 points in 598 career games. That's more goals and points than any American player in the NHL since he debuted in 2016. He was named Maple Leafs captain in August and is one goal from tying Darryl Sittler for second in team history despite having played 246 fewer games than Sittler.

Matthews, who has been dealing with an upper-body injury for much of the season, met with United States general manager Bill Guerin on Wednesday morning in Toronto in advance of the Maple Leafs' game against the Minnesota Wild. Matthews told Guerin that unless he has a setback before the tournament, he is good to go.

The Arizona native had a relatively slow start this season with 11 goals in his first 24 games before missing nine games in November and another six from before Christmas until after New Year's.

He has scored in eight of 12 games since returning and has 20 goals in 36 games this season.

This will be the first time Matthews has represented the United States since the 2016 World Championships. He also played in the 2015 and 2016 World Junior Championship (winning a bronze medal in 2016) and won gold at the 2014 and 2015 Under-18 World Championships.

The 4 Nations Face-Off will run from Feb. 12 to Feb. 20 in Montreal and Boston. The U.S. faces Finland on Feb. 13 and Canada on Feb. 15 at the Bell Centre, then Sweden on Feb. 17 at TD Garden. The championship game is Feb. 20 at TD Garden.

Why these picks?

The full U.S. hockey ops group and coaching staff voted on captains, and while Tkachuk got a few votes coming off a 2024 Stanley Cup championship, all tallied Matthews was the landslide selection. Matthews is used to dealing with media attention as captain in Toronto and is widely considered the United States' best player.

There were a dozen good choices to be assistant captain, but the U.S. brass felt Tkachuk and McAvoy will do whatever it takes to win and be emotional leaders who drag teammates into the fight.

Tkachuk — the son of Guerin's longtime Team USA linemate, Keith Tkachuk — goes to the hard areas and can pile up points. McAvoy can contribute offensively, defensively and physically.

Tkachuk, 27, is a two-time 100-point scorer and has hit 40 goals twice. He is a point-per-game player this season with 47 points in 47 games. He was teammates with Matthews on the 2016 World Junior Championship team and at the 2015 Under-18 World Championships.

McAvoy, 27, represented Team USA at the 2017 and 2018 World Championships, as well as the 2016 and 2017 World Junior Championship.

In 499 games, McAvoy ranks eighth in Bruins history among defensemen with 297 points and a plus-146 rating and 10th with 58 goals.

Notable omissions

The U.S. roster includes four NHL captains (Matthews, Quinn Hughes, Dylan Larkin and Brady Tkachuk) and 10 NHL alternate captains (McAvoy, Matthew Tkachuk, Jack Eichel, Adam Fox, Jack Hughes, Chris Kreider, J.T. Miller, Brock Nelson, Jaccob Slavin and Zach Werenski).

If the United States opted to go with three assistant captains, as Finland and Sweden did, Eichel likely would have gotten the third A. He's become a two-way leader for the Vegas Golden Knights, and that was a big part of them winning the Stanley Cup in 2023.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338099 Websites

The Athletic / Team Sweden names Victor Hedman captain for 4 Nations: Why he was the pick and notable omissions

By Fluto Shinzawa

Jan 30, 2025

Victor Hedman has been named Team Sweden's captain for the 4 Nations Face-Off. Sweden opens play on Feb. 12 against Canada.

The Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman has seven goals and 33 assists in 47 games this season. Hedman leads the Lightning with 23:27 average ice time per game. His 40 points place him No. 6 among NHL defensemen.

The Pittsburgh Penguins' Erik Karlsson, Edmonton Oilers' Mattias Ekholm and Toronto Maple Leafs' William Nylander were named alternate captains.

Why these picks?

Hedman was a no-discussion selection. The Lightning did not hesitate to name Hedman their 11th captain in team history following the offseason departure of Steven Stamkos to the Nashville Predators. Hedman is a two-time Stanley Cup champion.

The 34-year-old has appeared in 1,099 career games, most of any active Swede. Hedman, the 2018 Norris Trophy winner, has succeeded Nicklas Lidstrom as his country's most accomplished all-around defenseman. Lightning coach Jon Cooper uses Hedman in every situation, from power play to shutdown minutes.

Karlsson is second to Hedman with 1,055 career games. Karlsson leads all active Swedes with 849 points. Karlsson, a three-time Norris winner, is in his second season with the Penguins.

Ekholm is a veteran of 869 NHL games and helped the Oilers to the Stanley Cup Final last season. Nylander has 51 points in 51 games in 2024-25, on his way to a third straight point-per-game season.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338100 Websites

The Athletic / Aleksander Barkov named Finland captain for 4 Nations: 'We're ready to challenge and we want to win'

By Arpon Basu

Aleksander Barkov will captain Team Finland in the 4 Nations Face-Off, the NHL announced Thursday.

Barkov, captain of the Florida Panthers, became the first Finnish captain to raise the Stanley Cup last season, is the only NHL captain on the Team Finland roster and is one of just eight Finns to ever captain an NHL team.

Barkov was on Team Finland the last time NHL players were involved in a best-on-best format at the 2016 World Cup of Hockey, and he's eager to make amends for the country's performance in that event.

"World Cup, it was a great tournament. I know it didn't go well for Team Finland, we didn't win any games there, but it was a great experience for sure playing against the best players in the world. It was fun playing against them," Barkov said Thursday. "But I think we have a great team now, a great Team Finland, so we're ready to challenge and we want to win. That's our goal."

There was really no possible debate around the selection of Barkov as captain.

Barkov leads all active Finnish players in career points with 753 in 779 NHL games and last week passed Olli Jokinen (750 career points in 1,231 games) to move into fourth all-time behind Teemu Selanne (1,457 points), Jari Kurri (1,398) and Saku Koivu (832).

But he is far from a legacy player. Barkov is a two-time Selke Trophy winner who has taken the torch from Patrice Bergeron as the preeminent two-way center in the NHL, someone who embodies the hard-to-play-against, defensively responsible identity Finland plays with in any international tournament.

"He'll make sure to shut it down," Finnish forward Patrik Laine said recently. "He's one of those guys, shuts it down, no offense, just straight defense."

Laine is close friends with Barkov, two Tampere natives who train together and live close by in the offseason, and when told we would be sure to get those comments out there, he made sure to qualify them.

"Make sure it's clear it was a joke," he said. "I was laughing when I said it!"

Because, of course, Barkov is not just a defensive stopper. He is dynamic and a load to handle down low in the offensive zone. With 42 points in 42 games this season, he is one of only three players on Team Finland averaging at least a point per game, along with new Carolina Hurricanes teammates Mikko Rantanen and Sebastian Aho.

When considering his historic legacy as a Finnish player and his current status as a top player in the NHL, choosing Barkov as captain for Team Finland could not have been an easier decision.

"I just want to be myself. I don't want to be anything else," Barkov said. "I don't want to try to be anything else — just try and lead by example on and off the ice. That's who I am and who I am trying to be."

The NHL also announced Aho, Rantanen and Mikael Granlund of the San Jose Sharks will be Team Finland's assistant captains for the tournament.

"Granlund has been captain of Team Finland and the national teams before and led them to two world championships," Barkov said. "Those guys are natural leaders. They lead their own teams. They lead by example. They lead by their work ethic."

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338101 Websites

The Athletic / Let's help Utah pick a nickname, plus Scottie Scheffler's ravioli incident

By Chris Branch

Good morning! Don't use a wine glass today.

Let's Pick a Name: The Utah ____

The Utah Hockey Club is already a marvel, an NHL team rescued last year from its bad situation in Arizona. Ownership is still quickly building the infrastructure needed to host the franchise long-term, but there is one glaring thing missing: a nickname.

Two points, then we get to the fun part:

We knew this day would come, and the lack of a nickname speaks to how quickly this team moved. Just as the Washington Commanders were the Washington Football Team for two seasons, the UHC moniker has always been temporary.

A few possible nicknames had been floating around for months. Chief among them: the Yetis, which would've been an incredible choice. Sadly, the team lost out on a trademark due to a conflict with the Yeti coolers brand that could not be resolved.

Thus, the franchise has decided on three options for the team name going forward and will allow fans attending the next four home games to vote on it at iPad stations. It's such a good idea that we decided to piggyback off of it.

And we arrive at our next Pulse Poll: What name should Utah fans pick?

Clark won't participate in NBA 3-point challenge

Caitlin Clark has opted against participating in the NBA vs. WNBA 3-point challenge, according to her agents, and will instead make her 3-point contest debut at the WNBA All-Star Game this summer in Indianapolis. Many were excited at the prospect of Clark going toe-to-toe with an NBA star after last year's inaugural contest between Steph Curry and Sabrina Ionescu, which narrowly went to Curry. More details here.

A busy CL match day

The final day of the league phase in the new Champions League setup lived up to the hype yesterday … sort of. We saw a staggering 18 matches happening simultaneously, with spots in the final 8 and the playoff — full explainer on all this here — yo-yoing in and out of existence as each of the 64 goals hit net. The top eight teams are set, but teams Nos. 9-24 in the standings will play for the remaining eight spots in the knockout rounds, and those playoff draws will be revealed today. Keep tabs on that in our live blog.

Not the ravioli, Scottie

On Christmas Day, Scottie Scheffler made a mistake many home cooks, including myself, can empathize with: While making homemade ravioli, Scheffler — using a wine glass to cut the dough — broke the glass, and had the stem stab his right hand, as he detailed for the first time this week. The difference between Scheffler and myself is that his right hand is much more profitable than mine. Scheffler had surgery and will finally make his season debut at Pebble Beach this weekend. No one made such fanfare when I sliced my hand open operating a mandoline for the first time, but I digress.

Also, the comment section on this story had fun with pasta puns:

More news:

The Jets hired Steve Wilks, a former head coach, as defensive coordinator. Solid move for Aaron Glenn's first regime.

Does anyone want to coach my Saints? Both Kliff Kingsbury and Mike McCarthy declined to pursue the job.

Courtney Vandersloot agreed to a one-year deal with the Chicago Sky, who drafted her in 2011.

NBC is hiring Reggie Miller as a lead NBA analyst, sources told The Athletic.

MLS is expanding its coverage, adding a Sunday night game that will go head-to-head with NFL football. Hm.

There is bad timing, and then there is what happened to Matt and Ryan Bewley. You may recognize the names: For a while, the 6-foot-9 basketball-playing twins were the talk of college hoops for … not playing college hoops.

The 21-year-olds are the focus of a moving story yesterday from Brian Hamilton, who found them years after their run of fame, still playing basketball. A quick rundown of why their story is so impactful:

In May 2021, the Bewleys bucked the sport's norms by signing with Overtime Elite instead of playing college basketball. It was a month before NIL became legal. After two years with Overtime Elite, the Bewleys were without NBA prospects and ineligible for NCAA hoops. Brutal.

They floated for years, unable to capitalize on their talents. They tried to gain NCAA eligibility, but logistics became murky. They considered other paths in life, even as thousands of players around the country did what got them in trouble with the NCAA initially: make money to play basketball.

Now, though, as Brian detailed, the Bewleys have found a landing spot: a small junior college in Florida where the two are thriving. They have sights on the rungs above them.

Make some time to read this full story today. It's worth it, and I can't help but think we'll never see another story like it again.

Washington continues to be a marvel, but as our writers penned in the latest NHL Power Rankings, the check engine light is "blinking." Nonetheless, the Caps remain the best team in the NHL. Ottawa is a good candidate for a get-right game, too.

Two of the NBA's best teams that consistently don't get enough shine, and I'm still thinking about Zach Harper's wish yesterday for a trade that lands Jimmy Butler in Memphis. This will be a great game.

Pulse Picks

Here's an incredible story from Brendan Quinn on Finell White, a basketball legend that time forgot. I'll be thinking about this one for a while.

Anthony Slater and Marcus Thompson III emptied the notebook on what they're hearing about the Warriors ahead of the trade deadline. Jimmy Butler? Zach LaVine? See all the intel here.

Need a Super Bowl fix? We have early prop bets to peruse.

I loved this from Dan Pompei on Teddy Bridgewater, who went from NFL retiree to state-champion head coach to Lions backup quarterback in the span of a year. We all love Teddy.

Trent Dilfer has been "humbled" as UAB's head coach, but he's getting another shot. David Ubben tried to figure out if Dilfer can turn things around.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338102 Websites

The Athletic / For late-round picks trying to crack the NHL, all you need is a chip and a chance

By Mark Lazerus

Jan 30, 2025

TAMPA, Fla. — During the 2017-18 season, Brandon Hagel was sure he'd be a Buffalo Sabre someday. During the 2018-19 season, Hagel was sure he'd be a Chicago Blackhawk someday.

During the summer in between, he was pretty sure he'd be a schoolteacher someday. Like, someday real soon.

"Hopefully gym class," he said with a laugh.

That summer, Jason Botterill was a year into his tenure as the Sabres general manager. And he had little interest in an overaged junior forward with modest production in Red Deer. So on June 1, 2018, Buffalo

relinquished its rights to Hagel, whom previous GM Tim Murray had taken in the sixth round two years earlier. Hagel's hockey career was in limbo. And not for the first time.

He had been passed over in the bantam draft. He had been cut from teams, buried in lineups. Hagel was always on the outside trying to claw his way in. Doubted. Overlooked. Ignored completely.

It hurt him, if he's being honest. But it also hardened him.

"I went through that early on in my career, and I knew how to handle it," he said. "The emotions when you're a 15-year-old kid are a little bit different. You're just sad. You're in high school and it's the cool thing to get drafted. But you learn from it. And then as my career went on, not making certain things or getting cut from certain things, and still being able to get drafted — I was fortunate. But (Buffalo) didn't want to take a chance on me."

A Sabres Reddit thread from that day offered a collective shrug at the news that Hagel and two other Sabres longshots wouldn't be signed. "Botterill is amazing at understanding hockey talent," one fan wrote. "If he didn't want these guys, it was for a reason." The Athletic's scouting report on Hagel as a prospect wasn't any more effusive, calling him "an AHL depth guy" who "never really stood out."

Less than five years later, Hagel is a genuine NHL star for the Tampa Bay Lightning. He's played in a Stanley Cup Final. He's had a 30-goal season. He's in the midst of a point-a-game season. And he made perhaps the hardest team in the world to make — Team Canada for the upcoming 4 Nations Face-Off. Along with Ondrej Palat, Mark Stone and Anders Lee, he's one of the best sixth- or seventh-round picks in the 20-year history of the seven-round draft.

And he's still only 26.

Hagel has nothing left to prove to anyone. But he's still trying to. It's ingrained in every late-round NHL draft pick. They don't all end up proving it; the overwhelming majority don't. But those who do never stop trying.

"I think it doesn't matter where you get picked — first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth — you still have to earn a contract and then you still have to make the hockey team," Hagel said. "It doesn't matter at that point. You've got to prove yourself whether it was the first round or the sixth round. But maybe you're not getting as much of an opportunity as a sixth-rounder, so you end up taking a different route. Maybe it toughens you up a little bit, teaches you how to handle adversity. People doubt you, and it's up to you to show them they're wrong."

Forty-three skaters and 10 goalies who were taken in the sixth or seventh round of the NHL draft have played in at least one game this season.

A few have carved out excellent careers, such as Calgary's MacKenzie Weegar, New Jersey's Jesper Bratt (taken three picks after Hagel in 2018), Carolina's Frederik Andersen, Washington's Andrew Mangiapane, Colorado's Josh Manson, Los Angeles' Darcy Kuemper, Utah's John Marino and Minnesota's Jake Middleton, the last pick of the 2014 draft.

Others are solid depth players, while still others are AHL/NHL tweeners. For comparison's sake, 474 skaters and 26 goalies taken in the first or second round have played in the NHL this season. It makes sense, of course. Better NHL prospects get taken earlier. But progress isn't linear, every player develops at their own rate, and late bloomers do exist. And those who take the long path to the NHL, who spend years grinding away on buses in the juniors or the American Hockey League, eating at roadside McDonald's, staying in two-star hotels and toiling in relative anonymity, well, when they do reach the NHL, they often have a different mindset than those who are anointed future stars as teenagers.

They're driven by all the doubts — external and internal — in their wake.

"Well, there's no question," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "Because you're always the guy having to make the team. Those other guys are already on the team. You can't sit here and say guys that are high picks don't have drive. They've gotten to that spot because they do have drive. But those late-round picks that find a way to make their way into the league, those are guys you jump in the foxhole with. Because they've scraped and clawed their whole way here, and probably (have) been overlooked, and there's been setbacks along the way, but they just kept coming at you. It's pretty much how they play the game."

Patrick Maroon was a sixth-rounder, too, taken by the Philadelphia Flyers 161st in the 2007 draft — two slots later than Hagel was taken nine years later. Maroon was big and strong, and coming off a season in which he scored 35 goals and handed out 55 assists in 64 games with the OHL's London Knights, his first major junior season. But he was on the older side, turning 20 near the end of the season.

Flyers president Paul Holmgren liked Maroon enough to draft him, but not enough to promote him. The relationship deteriorated to the point that Maroon was essentially kicked off the team for a month for what he later said was "a bad attitude." But Anaheim Ducks GM Bob Murray saw something in Maroon and acquired him in one of those minor-league trades most fans don't give a second glance. But that nothing trade changed Maroon's life — eventually.

Maroon got two games for the Ducks in the NHL during the 2011-12 season but was still primarily stuck in the AHL. At some point, even the most confident player starts losing hope.

"I was in the minors for five years, and I'm thinking, 'I'm never gonna make it, I'm just an American Leaguer,'" Maroon said.

A dozen years later, Maroon is a three-time Stanley Cup champion with nearly 1,000 NHL games under his belt, counting 163 playoff games, sixth most among active players — ahead of Brad Marchand, Alex Ovechkin and Patrick Kane. He's now a veteran presence in an increasingly young Blackhawks dressing room. And his long, circuitous and doubt-filled journey to the NHL gives him a valuable perspective — one that could be particularly useful to the ready-made stars now populating the Chicago room, first-rounders such as Connor Bedard, Kevin Korchinski and Frank Nazar.

"I feel like there's always still a chip on my shoulder, right?" Maroon said. "When you're in the American League and you have that headache, you feel it. You're sitting at home and watching other guys get called up and you're disappointed. I learned the hard way in Philly, b—ing about it. But when I got traded to Anaheim, I told myself it was a clean slate, just have a good head on my shoulders, be a great teammate, be a good leader and just do your job. If someone gets called up, you can't get mad. Just stick with it, stick with it, and I did."

While high draft picks have clear paths to the NHL, late-round picks almost always need a break, a push, "just one person that likes you," as Maroon put it. For Hagel, it was Red Deer coach Brent Sutter. The day Buffalo cut Hagel, one of the first people he heard from was Sutter, who told him he'd do anything and everything to get Hagel where he wanted to go. He gave Hagel a push and got him (and fellow future Blackhawks long shot Reese Johnson) a new center in Jeff de Wit, and the line tore up the Western Hockey League. Hagel finished the season with 41 goals and 61 assists in 66 games, up from 18 and 41 the previous season. Early on in the campaign, then-Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman came calling. Hagel had other suitors eventually but chose Chicago largely because Bowman was first. That meant something to him after being discarded by Botterill.

For Maroon, it was Syracuse Crunch coach Trent Yawney who offered him a way out with an old-school suggestion.

"I was a big heavy guy who put up points everywhere I went, but you have to adapt," Maroon said. "If what you're doing isn't going to work, you've got to do something else. I've always been a good player, always put up good numbers. But Trent Yawney came up to me and was just like, 'Hey, what if you just started fighting?' So I started fighting and they took a liking to that. I could fight and I could play. This new generation, I don't know if they want to adapt, right? But you've got to adapt if you want to make it in this league."

Maroon fought six times in the 2010-11 season. Eight times in the 2011-12 season. Nine times in 2012-13. By the end of that lockout-shortened season, he was a full-time NHLer with his first one-way contract.

Hagel is a particularly interesting case, because of how quickly he's become a top player in the league. He's 26, in the prime of his career, he's a great skater, he's utterly relentless, he's a good teammate and he's productive. He's, frankly, exactly the kind of winger the Blackhawks are looking for right about now, someone to complement and push Bedard. But he wasn't Kyle Davidson's draft pick, and the new GM had no sentimental difficulty dealing Hagel away for two first-round picks and two NHL bodies in Taylor Raddysh and Boris Katchouk. Those picks turned into top prospects Oliver Moore and Sacha Boisvert, and the tank

did lead to Bedard even though it didn't go exactly according to plan otherwise, so maybe there are no regrets on either side.

But Hagel serves as both a cautionary tale for general managers not to give up on young players so quickly no matter who drafted them and when, as well as a source of inspiration for late-round picks everywhere. Even on Hagel's old team, Louis Crevier — a seventh-round pick in 2020 — is carving out a future for himself in Chicago.

"I think maybe you appreciate it more," Crevier said during his first NHL stint last season. "I mean, everyone appreciates being in the NHL, but it's not a sure thing when you're one of those guys."

Hagel doesn't give Buffalo much thought these days, but he still wonders about what might have been in Chicago. The city and the organization have a soft spot in his heart because Bowman gave him the opportunity Botterill denied him. Everything worked out better than Hagel could have hoped for as the 159th pick in the 2016 draft, a faceless name announced from the table by a team staffer because GMs don't even bother making the picks at that stage of the draft, everyone rushing to get through the last two rounds and make their afternoon flights home.

There's no bitterness in Hagel. But there's still that chip. There's always that chip when you've had to sit through more than 150 names being called ahead of yours.

"It sucks," Hagel said. "But I wouldn't be here, or be the player I am today, without going through all that. A lot of my ups and downs and not making teams and not signing, it grew me as a person and taught me how to find ways to succeed in different ways, and taught me how to go through those emotions — thinking one day I'm going to be a schoolteacher, and the next day I'm signing a contract. It wasn't always easy, but I'm grateful for everything that's happened to me and I wouldn't change a thing."

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338103 Websites

The Athletic / A future NHL GM? Meghan Duggan working toward her own 'huge, lofty goal' as she helps Devils chase theirs

By Peter Baugh

Jan 30, 2025

For the first three decades of her life, reaching the peak of women's hockey was Meghan Duggan's driving force.

She wanted an Olympic gold medal. Needed one.

There was heartbreak along the way — namely a blown third-period lead to Canada in the 2014 gold-medal game — but she eventually got there. In 2018, with Duggan as captain, Team USA beat Canada in a shootout to take the Olympic crown. Duggan dogpiled with her teammates and pumped her fist in elation. She'd done it.

That gold-medal game was the last time Duggan ever played for Team USA.

At 30 years old, it was time for a new chapter for one of the most decorated U.S. hockey players in history. Gone were the grueling practices, the thrills of competition, the chase for a collective goal. Duggan needed to find new sources of purpose and motivation.

Confronting that, she says, was the hardest and most emotional part of the transition.

"Being a player for so long and everything that comes with that, there's always that identity crisis of 'I've thrown my entire life into something since I can remember, and now I'm still a really passionate, driven person, and what can I put that into?'" she says.

What do you do when you've achieved your dreams? You make new ones.

Duggan is not short on drive. She wanted to stay in hockey post-retirement and worked to make it happen. Over the course of her career, people around the sport told Duggan to reach out if she needed anything. Those comments weren't throw-aways to Duggan. She took them up on it and had "probably 25, 30, 35 phone calls and meetings with people in the league."

That initiative ultimately brought the now-37-year-old to the New Jersey Devils and the role of director of player development. It could lead her to even higher peaks in the coming years. She has found the managerial side of her job interesting and plans to continue learning and growing.

Someday, she wants to be an NHL general manager.

"I've always been someone that (thinks), 'Why not set a huge, lofty goal for myself?'" she says. "I did that when I was a young kid. It takes a long time to get there and a lot of hard work.

"But I'm not afraid to set a big goal."

One of Duggan's early phone calls in her post-playing career was to Ray Shero, who won the 2009 Stanley Cup with the Pittsburgh Penguins as general manager and then held the same position with the Devils. She'd connected with Shero through USA Hockey in the past, and he put her in touch with 10 other people to talk to, including New Jersey general manager Tom Fitzgerald and Kate Madigan, then the Devils' director of hockey operations.

When speaking with Duggan for the first time, Fitzgerald was instantly struck by her hockey IQ and passion for the sport. She had a matter-of-fact attitude, and Fitzgerald liked her playing experience.

He also knew she was talking with the Philadelphia Flyers and the Penguins. After the call, he spoke with assistant general manager Dan MacKinnon and Madigan, now an assistant general manager.

"We need to hire her before someone else does," Fitzgerald told them. "I don't want to lose her."

Fortunately for the Devils, they didn't. In May 2021, Fitzgerald hired Duggan as manager of player development, a newly created role, making her the first known openly gay person to work in an NHL front office. A year later, the team promoted her to her current position.

Duggan, who is based in Toronto, views her job as dynamic. It changes every day, which she loves. Some days, she's at the rink with the Devils' AHL players in Utica, at times getting on the ice herself to work with players. She travels frequently, visiting and communicating with prospects playing at the college and junior level.

"Ultimately the way I view my role is to really try to support and help maximize the talent of our young prospects and young pros," she says.

"She's a big help for our organization," adds 21-year-old Luke Hughes, one of the young players the Devils have developed.

Now that Duggan is in her fourth season with the Devils, she has seen players like Hughes go through the full evolution from prospect to player. Defenseman Seamus Casey is another example. Duggan first met him at the draft in 2022, when New Jersey picked him 46th overall. Casey then went to the University of Michigan, where Duggan and development coach Eric Weinrich, now an interim assistant at AHL Utica, looked after his development.

"I was doing video with her and Weinrich and the skills coaches and stuff," Casey says. "It wouldn't be all the time. … 'Strategic' is the right word. It always felt like it was kind of at a time where maybe I needed to hear from them."

In the middle of Casey's sophomore year, for example, he found himself struggling offensively. Duggan hopped on a Zoom call with him. They watched tape and focused on his play with the puck at the offensive blue line, looking at instances in which he could have made plays.

"A lot of times it helps to just look at it with different sets of eyes," Casey says.

Casey is still only 21, but so far he has developed well under the Devils' watch. He made the NHL roster out of training camp, scoring three goals in eight games before going down to Utica, where he has 14 points in 17 games. The Athletic's Scott Wheeler ranks him as New Jersey's No. 3 prospect. Casey says Duggan and the development staff have recently

focused with him on the defensive side of his game. Recently she encouraged him to be more physical on the puck.

Fitzgerald says Duggan has a plan for every prospect in the organization, and she, Fitzgerald and the front office go through those plans to make sure everybody is in sync. He calls Duggan the maestro of the orchestra.

“She’s making sure the skating coach is with so-and-so, and the skill and development coaches are working on X, Y and Z and our assistant coaches are working on wall play, in-game development,” Fitzgerald says. “It really is a fine-tuned machine.”

Along with her Devils responsibilities, Duggan works as a special consultant to hockey operations for the PWHL. Her focuses include rules and competition, how to evolve the game and, of course, player development.

Duggan juggles her professional responsibilities with raising three kids under the age of 5. Duggan and her wife, three-time Olympic gold medalist Gillian Apps, rely on full-time help, as well as family help, so they can both pursue their careers. Duggan travels every week, and she sometimes brings her youngest child, 1-year-old Sophie, along with her.

“I’m not going to sugarcoat it: Balancing being a working parent is really hard,” she says. “But you find ways to make it work.”

Though Duggan is early in her post-playing career, NHL teams have already taken notice of her. She, Madigan and MacKinnon all interviewed for the Penguins general manager opening at the end of the 2022-23 season. Fitzgerald remembers Duggan initially wasn’t sure she wanted to take the interview, but he pushed her to take it. The experience, he believed, would benefit her.

“To put myself through something where I had to be so prepared and so sharp and (get) asked difficult questions, I really enjoyed it from a personal development standpoint,” she says. “At this point in my career, that’s really all I can ask for: ways to learn and grow and be put in scenarios where I can get better at what I’m doing on the day-to-day.”

Duggan doesn’t know her exact timeline for becoming a general manager, but she views it as a set goal. And, as she’s shown throughout her life, she often finds a way to get where she’s striving toward.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338104 Websites

ESPN / NHL execs on Mikko Rantanen trade, next deadline deals to come - ESPN

Greg Wyshynski

Jan 30, 2025

Mikko Rantanen has been a member of the Carolina Hurricanes for nearly a week, but it's going to take a bit longer than that for the shock to subside.

Carolina stunned the NHL on Friday night by acquiring Rantanen from the Colorado Avalanche in a three-way deal that also sent Chicago Blackhawks winger Taylor Hall to the Hurricanes. Colorado received winger Martin Necas, the Canes' leading scorer this season, center Jack Drury, a 2025 second-round pick and a 2026 fourth-rounder from Carolina.

Entering Wednesday night, Rantanen was tied for sixth in the NHL in scoring (65 points). Since the 2021-22 season, the 28-year-old winger was fifth with 365 points in 286 games, including back-to-back 100-point seasons.

The NHL simply does not see this level of offensive superstar traded within the regular season; nor does it see teams with designs on the Stanley Cup move on from foundational core players like Colorado did with Rantanen. But his contract demands as a pending unrestricted free agent, created a significant impasse with the Avalanche, with whom he had played for 10 seasons.

Rantanen told ESPN on Tuesday that he still hasn't reached out to all of his Avalanche teammates, whom he wanted to connect with. Both teams were right back in action in the aftermath of the trade, and Rantanen has been in a personal hurricane of reorienting his new life in Raleigh.

He knows players like Nathan MacKinnon have expressed their disappointment in seeing him traded. The feeling is mutual.

"I thought it was going to be an extension for sure. I can't lie about that," Rantanen said. "It was surprising because there was still some time to the deadline. I totally understand they didn't want to lose me for free. But it surprised me for sure. I didn't expect it at all."

Nor did the rest of the NHL, which is still processing one of the biggest blockbusters of the past decade. We spoke with several NHL executives, agents and players to get a sense of the trade's magnitude and the fallout that could impact more than just the teams involved.

Is this the right gamble for Carolina?

The Hurricanes were in New York when the Rantanen trade went down, with a game against the Islanders on the following evening. The players were at dinner when the news broke about Hall and then Rantanen. The tone and tenor of the meal quickly changed.

"We didn't know who was going the other way. We all tried to figure out who it was," center Jesperi Kotkaniemi said.

Kotkaniemi started getting texts from Finnish friends. "They're really pumped in Finland. They're able to watch the two best players now on the same team. So what could be better for them?" he said of Rantanen and center Sebastian Aho.

But then something else happened on social media: It was erroneously reported that Kotkaniemi would be sent to the Avalanche in the Rantanen trade.

On the surface, it made sense: He's a 24-year-old forward signed through 2029-30 at a reasonable cap hit ($4.82 million annually), but he was never part of the package for Rantanen. Still, his name was out there long enough for another wave of text messages to roll in about his own future, which made the situation a bit more intense for him.

"It was a very hectic 15 minutes there," he said.

It's been a hectic few weeks for Eric Tulsky, in his first season as Hurricanes general manager. The league was buzzing about Carolina being active in the trade market. Sources told ESPN that the Hurricanes and Vancouver Canucks had engaged in negotiations about forwards Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller. The players' longstanding feud had finally reached a boiling point, and Vancouver was seeking to ship one or both of them out before the March 7 trade deadline.

Kotkaniemi and forward Jack Roslovic were discussed in the framework of a Miller trade. Necas wasn't on the table for Miller, but might have been part of a deal for Pettersson.

Meanwhile, Carolina was also engaged in talks with the Avalanche for Rantanen, ones that tracked back to last summer.

Tulsky said last week that there was a desire for all parties to "get their best offers on the table" so the Hurricanes could decide which player to pursue. "Everybody had multiple offers. It was sort of time for everyone to figure out what they wanted to do, and this deal got done," he said. "It was a complicated dance."

When the music stopped, Rantanen and Hall were members of the Hurricanes.

The Avalanche picked up Necas, Drury and the two draft picks. Chicago acquired its own 2025 third-rounder from Carolina for Hall, the rights to Swedish forward Nils Juntorp and 50% retention of Rantanen's $9.25 million salary cap hit. The Hurricanes ended up with Hall, a former Hart Trophy winner, and Rantanen.

"Obviously, Carolina has been coveting a superstar, and this is the way to get one," one agent said.

NHL executives were impressed with the boldness of the swing from Carolina.

"Good for them. Risk and reward," a general manager said. "They're giving up controllable assets for someone that you're not sure you can control. But they have the cap space to sign him. He's a great player who makes them a better team."

The executives we spoke with downplayed the notion that the Hurricanes might have started an "arms race" in the Eastern Conference among contenders. One general manager said that most teams have their own plans in mind for the NHL trade deadline, and those plans won't be torn up because a rival made a blockbuster trade.

There were virtues to all three players the Hurricanes were considering. Miller and Pettersson were both signed with lengthy term. Miller seemed cut from a Rod Brind'Amour mold as a great two-way player who's difficult to play against. (Depending on who you believe, he's also a bit difficult to play with as a teammate.) Pettersson has been underwhelming this season but has incredible upside as an offensive star. In 2022-23, he had 103 points in 80 games for Vancouver.

But Rantanen's combination of size, skill and offensive consistency was too much for the Hurricanes to pass up. Especially when one considers his playoff success: Since 2019-20, Rantanen is fifth in postseason scoring, with 28 goals and 83 points in 63 games.

Carolina has made the playoffs for six straight seasons, each time not producing enough offense to advance past the conference finals. In that span, the Hurricanes have a .486 winning percentage in one-goal games.

The downside to acquiring Rantanen, potentially: They currently don't know whether he'll be one-and-done in Raleigh, a superstar rental for a team that has yet to play for the Stanley Cup with Brind'Amour as their coach.

"Carolina will look stupid if they lose in the first round and he walks away to another team," an agent said. "But I think they're going to sign him. I think he'll like it there."

Did Colorado make the right call?

Nathan MacKinnon was already in a mood after the Avalanche lost to the Boston Bruins on Saturday.

"I wish I could have talked about this not right now," he said.

But this was the first opportunity for the media to ask Colorado's star center about losing Rantanen, his linemate and close friend.

"Just sad, obviously. Losing Mikko ... really great friend for 10 years. Won a Cup together. I don't really know what happened," he said. "It's just unfortunate losing a great friend and a great teammate."

Rantanen was seeking a contract in the neighborhood of the eight-year extension Leon Draisaitl signed with the Edmonton Oilers in September. That deal carries an average annual value of $14 million. Both Rantanen and Draisaitl are represented by agent Andy Scott.

The winger has said he was willing to take less than market value to remain in Colorado, but it's unclear what that number actually looked like.

MacKinnon tried to stay out of Rantanen's business on a new contract. The ticking clock didn't bother him. He assumed it would play out much like Gabriel Landeskog's negotiations with the team did back in 2021, when the latter signed an eight-year, $56 million extension hours before free agency. But MacKinnon was wrong.

"I never thought in a million years he'd leave. It just sucks," he said.

But Rantanen's departure was something the Avalanche and GM Chris MacFarland believed was a possibility. The Avalanche and Hurricanes had been discussing Rantanen since last summer. Tulsky said the teams tabled "serious offers" for the winger during the past six to eight weeks. The Hurricanes were pushing hard to complete the trade in the past two weeks.

Others around the league knew it was a possibility too.

"I wasn't surprised. For me, it wasn't a secret," a GM said. "The potential was there because of their situation -- that he can't go over MacKinnon [in AAV] or whatever. And I know that Carolina wasn't the only team they were speaking with about Rantanen."

MacKinnon makes $12.6 million against the salary cap on a deal that runs through 2030-31. Before signing that deal in September 2022, he talked about taking less than market value -- on a contract that made him the highest-paid player in the league at the time -- in order to "win with the group." It's the same mindset exhibited by Penguins star Sidney Crosby, MacKinnon's friend and mentor.

But the contract that really influenced the Rantanen deal was one that hasn't been signed yet: Cale Makar's next deal, which will begin in 2027-28. Considered by some to be the best offensive defenseman since Bobby Orr, Makar could earn the largest NHL contract ever for a defenseman.

"I think they made a decision that you can have two players but not three players making more than $12 million per season," an agent said. "They knew, ballpark, the number for Cale Makar. So their decision was, 'We can have two, but not three. Who do we keep?'"

So MacFarland had a choice to make: Top-load his roster with three star players gobbling up a large percentage of the salary cap or break up their holy hockey trinity. MacFarland made it clear that in doing the latter, he was acknowledging the team didn't have championship depth and needed the flexibility to get it back.

"It's clear we are not deep enough. I think that you've got to be deep to go four rounds, and hopefully this is going to help that," MacFarland said. "Obviously Mikko is a superstar. You can't replace that. But he's a superstar that earned the right to be a free agent."

One agent was skeptical of the negotiation: "I don't feel they ever really were interested in signing him."

Another agent felt the Avalanche did what they had to do. "It was the right trade for Colorado, because they couldn't afford to pay Rantanen what he wanted within the context of their salary structure. He didn't have full trade protection, so good move by them to trade him," they said.

MacFarland called it "a tough business decision" for the team. "It hurts, right. He's a homegrown talent. He's a superstar person. He's a superstar human being," he said.

Of course, there are other "business decisions" to think about in Denver (or any other NHL market).

"There's an argument to be made that keeping Rantanen makes sense because you're selling tickets. It doesn't really matter ultimately if you win the Cup, but you have to be good every year. That guy is going to allow you to make the playoffs every year," another general manager said. "But I could also make the argument that winning the Cup trumps everything else, and that winning it buys you a few seasons of a steady revenue stream no matter what your success is in those seasons."

MacFarland has made it clear that teams usually have to draft and develop players like Rantanen. "We're going to have to try and replace him in the aggregate; 50-goal scorers don't grow on trees," he said.

But what if he could be replaced?

"You could make the argument that Rantanen is a unicorn, and that you're not finding another player like that," a general manager said. "That said, what's your opportunity cost? Could you find another 100-point winger like that? What could you trade to find that?"

One agent believes the Avalanche could find that player because of MacKinnon.

"Something no one seems to be discussing: I think the Avalanche believe that MacKinnon was a big part of Rantanen's success, and that they would be able to put another guy with MacKinnon, pay him less and have comparable success," they said.

Right now that player is Necas, who was immediately placed with MacKinnon after the trade. The speedy winger, who had 16 goals and 39 assists in 49 games with the Canes (as well as four assists in his first three games with the Avs), has another year left on his contract (for $6.5 million).

MacFarland said it was important to have Necas and Drury, an "emerging player" down the lineup, under contract and "cost-controlled" beyond this season. He said the trade would allow the Avalanche to potentially make more moves before the March 7 deadline. Many sources are wondering if the Avalanche would target a center to play behind MacKinnon, with players like the Islanders' Brock Nelson in the conversation.

"I think we're always sort of looking to get better. Certainly, over the next few weeks that won't change. I think obviously there are a little more bullets in the draft-pick cupboard and some cap space," MacFarland said.

But no Mikko Rantanen any longer.

What is Chicago doing?

The Blackhawks' role in the Rantanen trade had observers around the NHL baffled.

"What the f--- is Chicago doing?" one NHL executive asked.

The Blackhawks retained half of Rantanen's salary and cap hit, while also trading Hall to the Hurricanes. For that, they received their own 2025 third-round draft pick that Carolina had acquired from Chicago at the 2024 draft.

In recent trades, a third-party team retaining 25% of a player's salary to facilitate a transaction has typically received a fourth-round pick. Chicago retaining that much cap space ($4.625 million) for 50% of a player's salary and including a veteran forward with Hall's abilities in a deal for only one third-round pick in return left many criticizing the return for the Blackhawks. But NHL insiders acknowledge there may have been some method to Chicago's perceived madness.

One aspect of the trade that hasn't gotten a lot of attention is the actual salaries for Rantanen and Hall this season. Rantanen's contract has a declining real-dollar value to where he was making only $6 million this season after having a base salary of $12 million in the first two years of the deal. Hall made $5.25 million this season. As one general manager noted, from a base salary perspective, the Blackhawks are paying slightly more for the rest of Rantanen's contract than they would have if Hall finished the season with them.

"Essentially, Chicago was asked to sell a little cap space with the money being the same. They get a third for Hall -- which to me is a little low -- but effectively that's what they're doing," one general manager said.

Davidson said that trading Hall was the logical move now because things frankly weren't going to get better for him in Chicago leading up to the trade deadline. "You run the risk of things like injury, the role was diminishing almost by the game, and it just wasn't heading towards a way that was going to maximize or enhance value," he said.

As one NHL agent put it: "I know Kyle Davidson's taking a lot of heat, but I don't think he probably was going to get much better for Taylor Hall than what he got."

There's no question it hasn't been the happiest season for Hall in Chicago. Former head coach Luke Richardson surprised him by making him a healthy scratch earlier this season. He had nine goals in 46 games. One NHL executive suggested that moving Hall out now could benefit the vibes inside Chicago's dressing room.

But moving him out now also means not having to use Chicago's last salary retention spot to move him later, which Davidson undoubtedly would have had to do to make a trade work at the deadline. Now that slot is available for another deadline trade involving a player like forward Ryan Donato ($2 million AAV) or defenseman Alec Martinez ($4 million AAV), both of whom are unrestricted free agents after the season; or a more coveted player in forward Jason Dickinson, who has two years left at $4.25 million in AAV.

Will Carolina sign Rantanen?

The Hurricanes now have the chance to do something no other team can do for Rantanen this offseason: Give him an eight-year contract. Per the NHL collective bargaining agreement, everyone else can only go as high as seven years.

"Where is he going to go for seven years instead of the eight that Carolina can give him? If they're willing to go eight years and $13 million annually, where else would he want to go that's good that can afford him?" one agent pondered.

Rantanen told me that the Hurricanes' ability to give him an eighth year will be a factor in his eventual free agency decision. But those negotiations are a ways off. He's got other things to think about now.

"To be honest, I haven't had any chance to think about an extension, just trying to get into the group and try to play well," he said. "So I think we'll have to think about those situations in a couple weeks or so."

What has been interesting in chatting with sources about Rantanen and the Hurricanes is that the money doesn't seem to be a concern. Owner Tom Dundon is infamous for his tough negotiations on contracts for everyone from players to his own coaches. But the assumption is that the Hurricanes had a ballpark idea of what Rantanen is looking for on his next contract and were comfortable going there in negotiations.

Obviously, the Hurricanes faced a similar situation when they traded for Pittsburgh Penguins winger Jake Guentzel at the deadline last season and attempted to sign him to an extension, only to see the Tampa Bay Lightning ink him instead.

But Tulsky said the conditions are more favorable to keep Rantanen than they were for retaining Guentzel. Last season, the Hurricanes didn't have the cap flexibility to sign Guentzel and the other players they wanted. This offseason, Tulsky estimates the team could have between $35 million to $40 million in cap space.

"Our team situation is totally different right now," he said. "We don't feel nearly as constrained."

So if it's not the money and it's not the percentage of the salary cap, what is the make-or-break thing for Rantanen staying with the Hurricanes?

"I think they will ultimately sign him, unless he absolutely hates it there," one agent concluded.

Tulsky admitted that the Hurricanes' current approach to Rantanen is "more of a recruiting pitch than a negotiation in my mind." They have to sell him on the franchise, the system, the players on the roster and on the way and, most of all, spending the next eight years of his life in Raleigh.

Sebastian Aho has not affixed "Ambassador" to his name, but it might as well be there. He's been a friend and Finnish national team teammate for Rantanen throughout their lives. Aho has starred with Carolina since 2016-17. No one on the Hurricanes is better equipped to sell Rantanen on Raleigh and the franchise.

"I guess it's just about making him feel comfortable, making him feel welcome. I think that goes a long way," Aho said. "But obviously if he wants to go play a round of golf, I'm not saying no to that."

What if Rantanen goes to market?

There isn't yet certainty on the NHL's salary cap in the near term. Some projections have it jumping from $88 million to upwards of $97 million next season. From there, the sky's the limit.

One agent said that as the salary cap rises, some teams will claim they have an internal cap that only allows them to offer so much money to players. But after one or two huge contracts are handed out that elevate teams to the new ceiling, that dogma will go out the window.

"Competitiveness is going to kick in. GMs and owners are going to decide that they need to spend more to stay competitive," the agent said.

The opportunity has never been greater for a player like Rantanen to maximize his earning potential on the open market. Leon Draisaitl's contract with the Oilers was $112 million over eight years, or $14 million AAV.

"I think he'll get Draisaitl-like money as a UFA," one agent predicted.

"There are probably some good teams that might be willing to go seven years at $14 million annually to get him," another said.

Draisaitl's contract is one factor, but there's another winger potentially going to market this summer seeking a big contract: Mitch Marner of the Toronto Maple Leafs, who is in the last year of a six-year contract with a $10.903 million AAV.

As far as possible suitors, two of the NHL's richest franchises come to mind:

The New York Rangers continue to aggressively try to reshape their roster. They nearly completed a trade for Miller with the Canucks in recent weeks, with center Filip Chytil as the centerpiece. But salary retention and draft pick conditions were reported sticking points. If they're

able to create the necessary space -- moving out a veteran like Chris Kreider or Mika Zibanejad -- Rantanen is the kind of shiny new toy the franchise finds hard to resist. Consider also that winger Artemi Panarin will be in the last year of his contract in 2025-26 at an $11,642,857 AAV.

The other team is already paying part of Rantanen's salary: The Chicago Blackhawks. They're expected to be in on every player they can this offseason in an attempt to quickly build a contender around young star Connor Bedard. The 19-year-old phenom has shown some discontent at dwelling in the Central Division cellar in the first two seasons of his NHL career. Putting a top five scorer like Rantanen on his wing would certainly put a smile on his face. Needless to say, Chicago has the money and the cap space to attempt it -- if not the competitive team that Rantanen might be compelled to join.

Then there's a wild card suggested recently by insider Andy Strickland, who is the rinkside reporter for the St. Louis Blues on FanDuel Sports Network. On his "Cam & Strick" podcast, Strickland said Rantanen will sign with the Edmonton Oilers this summer.

"They're going to be able to pay him and I think there would be some interest from him," he said, noting that Draisaitl and Rantanen share an agent. Strickland said the acquisition of Rantanen would also be an enticement for star Connor McDavid to re-sign, as he becomes an unrestricted free agent in summer 2026.

The magnitude of this trade, and the star quality of the player, lend themselves to this kind of speculation. The Hurricanes have some advantages in seeking to keep Rantanen. But they won't be alone if he tests the market.

"Assuming he doesn't hate the system and the environment there, I think he signs with Carolina," one agent said. "If he doesn't care where he plays, all bets are off."

ESPN LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338105 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames GM Craig Conroy hits home run on trade with Flyers: 'I'm excited'

Eric Francis

CALGARY – Craig Conroy can finally walk the streets of Calgary without being accosted.

Following a very lengthy search for a 23 to 25-year-old centre his club could grow with, the Calgary Flames' patient general manager pulled the trigger on a shockingly attractive deal Thursday night that should help the team now and down the road.

“I think this fills a couple holes that I've been trying to find since the draft last year, and it hasn't been easy,” smiled the Flames GM, looking relaxed and confident his late-night deal serves several purposes.

“And I know, I walk around the city, ‘what are you doing? Is your phone not working?’ I understand that people like to chirp me when I'm walking around, but you don't know when it's gonna happen and when it's the right time.

“Today felt like the right time.”

In a deal Conroy said started Thursday morning for just one player, he wound up swinging a six-piece deal with Philadelphia that landed him 25-year-old centre Morgan Frost and 24-year-old winger Joel Farabee.

In exchange, the Flames traded Andrei Kuzmenko, Jakob Pelletier, a second-round pick in 2025 and a seventh-rounder in 2028.

“I definitely wanted to give the team something – they deserved it," said Conroy, of a team that beat the Anaheim Ducks 4-1 Thursday to move one point up on Vancouver for the final wild-card berth.

“They've earned it, to give them a boost, a shot in the arm. We felt like these two players could do that, and they were at the right age.

“They're not 33, 34-year-old players, but 24 and 25-year-old guys that we can grow with. And that's always been the plan.”

Conroy describes the six-foot, 193-pound Frost as a natural, left-shot, playmaking centre with great hands and vision. The former 19-goal scorer has been on Philly’s first power-play unit and is a pending RFA. The Ontario native isn’t slated to become a UFA for at least another year.

Farabee is somewhat of a bonus in the deal, last seen chasing Martin Pospisil around in a fit of rage when the Flyers visited recently.

“With Joel, he's got some jam and he can score,” said Conroy of the two-time 20-goal man, who is six-feet, 183 pounds and has three years left on a six-year deal that pays him $5 million annually.

“When you watch him, he's like a younger Blake Coleman-type player, where he chips in offensively, but he's got some grit. You feel very comfortable when he's on the ice in all situations.”

Both are first-round draft selections with upsides.

The first hint of a deal came minutes before puck drop when Kuzmenko was a late scratch.

Pelletier was pulled from the game after the first period, fuelling speculation on a night in which the Dome was already buzzing. Despite endless online reports and speculation, the trade wasn’t announced officially until an hour or so after the game, ending one of the stranger nights in recent Dome lore.

The Flames’ plan all along was to trade Kuzmenko this year, adding to the haul the club already received in the Elias Lindholm swap.

But with the oft-scratched pending UFA scoring just four times, it seemed unlikely they’d find any takers.

The Flyers are clearly hoping the former 39-goal scorer can foster a mutually beneficial relationship with fellow Russian rookie Matvei Michkov, with whom he played briefly in the KHL.

Pelletier was the hard part for Conroy, teammates and fans, who were constantly pulling for the undersized first-rounder to find his way in the NHL.

He appeared to start doing just that the last month or so, following a start to the season that saw him go unclaimed on waivers.

Pelletier had emptied his locker and left the rink shortly after the game ended, but not before sharing several teary goodbyes with those who crossed his path.

“He was emotional, I was emotional for him,” said Conroy of the popular winger who loved his team, the city and spoke often of his excitement surrounding the possibility of staying here well past the opening of the new arena.

“I know what it's like to be sitting on that other side. It's not easy. Unfortunately, to get players you have to give up players. And that's what we had to do with this deal.”

Both Frost and Farabee are expected to be in the Flames lineup Saturday when they host Detroit.

“I feel like these players coming in are going to help us this year, for one, but they also fit the wheelhouse for what we’re trying to do,” said Ryan Huska, who said he had a rough idea of how they’ll slot into his lines.

“For me, I think the players did this. They put themselves in a position where you want to see your GM help you out if he can. And I think because of the way our guys have competed this year and played, they kind of earned the opportunity to have Craig act.”

The Flames have plenty of cap space to extend Frost’s contract and accommodate Farabee’s salary.

There’s no debating the merits of this one from a Flames point of view, as the biggest asset going the other way is a second-rounder — a price the team should be ecstatic to pay for the centre they’ve been searching for since Lindholm was traded.

Farabee is a talented bonus — a Boston University standout selected 14th overall in 2018 who posted 20 goals and 38 points in 55 games in his second NHL season.

With increased ice time, his opportunity here will grow.

There will be no salary retention or futures, prompting legions of Flames fans and observers to wonder what the catch is.

This, quite simply, is a home run for Conroy whose patience has proven once again to be one of his biggest virtues.

What's more, he gets the heavy lifting done five weeks before the trade deadline.

"I'm excited," said Conroy.

"I got a chance just to talk to both of them briefly, and they're excited. They're looking forward to it. They know we're in a dog fight for that last playoff spot, and it's not going to be easy, but they're excited about the opportunity to come and get a fresh start for them."

And Conroy's relieved he will be able to walk the streets with a lot less chirping directed his way.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338106 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Fleury earns shutout, hero's send-off in final game at Bell Centre

Eric Engels

MONTREAL — It was just over 44 minutes after the Minnesota Wild completely sucked the life out the Bell Centre that Marc Andre-Fleury offered a rescue breath.

Out he flashed for one last circus save in his home province, sliding onto his right pad and stacking the left one up to steal away the Canadiens' best scoring chance of the night — a quick strike off Josh Anderson's stick from 14 feet out.

It was a gymnastic ode to a fantastic career, and it helped cement Fleury's third and final shutout in Montreal and sent the fans at the Bell Centre into their first frenzy of the night.

And then, roughly 15 minutes later, came their full-throated roar, as the Canadiens paid homage to Fleury's legacy during a television time-out. They belted out his name in unison for what felt like an eternity, extending the pause in play and reducing him to tears.

"It was an honour," the 40-year-old said after the Canadiens lined up to shake his hand, after the Wild paved his way off the ice, after he returned to more chants for his curtain call as the first star.

What it was, was a scene to behold. One only fairytale scribes could dream up.

Marc-Andre Fleury, native of Sorel, Que. and future Hall of Famer, stops every shot he faces in his final game against the team of his childhood.

"Patrick Roy was the first guy I really loved watching," he said. "My dad was a big fan of the Canadiens, and we were always watching them together. Was in bed in '93 and he woke up me up to watch the (Stanley Cup) celebration together and see the team celebrate and stuff, and that really put the dream in my head seeing that."

Fleury rode it to the greatest heights a goaltender can reach, winning three Stanley Cups, Olympic Gold, the Vezina and Jennings Trophies. He took the royal Quebecois goaltending sceptre passed from Roy to Martin Brodeur to Roberto Luongo before him and held it just as high — and always with humility.

We asked Fleury how he'd describe his chapter in that story, and he deflected like we expected him to — with humour.

"I don't know, that's your job," Fleury said. "I just try to stop the puck."

Mission accomplished 19 times on this night.

They were 19 of 31,441 (regular season and post-season combined) saves Fleury's made since stepping into the NHL, and he'll make several more before retiring after this 21st season in the league.

Fleury's brother in blocker and glove, Marc Denis, perfectly summed up his legacy to us.

"It's achievements and championships that define greatness," the former NHL goalie-turned-colour-analyst for RDS said, "but it's attitude and approach as a teammate that transcends the sport."

It's what makes an admired player a universally beloved one, too.

We've all been exposed to Fleury, the merry prankster, who ran gags on Sidney Crosby and the rest of the Pittsburgh Penguins even long after he left the team that drafted him first overall in 2003. We have all heard about how much he lit up locker rooms in Las Vegas and Chicago with his legendary sense of humour and patented toothy smile, and about how he continues to do that with the Wild.

On the ice, we've seen how Fleury's career has been marked by his indefatigable will and his nearly unparalleled acrobatic ability.

The Wild kept him from having to flash it through those first 44 minutes on Thursday, limiting the Canadiens to just 12 shots before Anderson gave him the moment he was looking for.

"I wanted to put on a good show so they could remember me playing well," Fleury said.

There were only five thousand people in the Bell Centre who watched him gift Anderson the tying goal in Game 3 of the 2021 Cup Semifinal, and they all jeered him then — through one of the toughest moments of his career.

But the 21,105 at Thursday's game responded the right way to one of Fleury's most special ones.

So did the Canadiens, who were hoping to prevent a fourth straight loss but couldn't quite find their footing in the game.

The Wild helped sweep it away in this 4-0 win.

"They play heavy, they play on top, and they don't give you a lot of space. They're a good team, so you've got to give them credit," said coach Martin St. Louis.

"I feel like if you're going to beat that team, you need a lot of juice."

The Canadiens didn't have it. It left them frustrated.

But they still extended their hands to Fleury afterwards.

"We lost the game, but we paid our respects to a player who has earned that respect with a long career as a Francophone Quebecer here in Montreal," St. Louis said. "I think it was our obligation to do that, even with the result…"

Fleury took it to heart.

"I don't think they've done that before," he said. "I was surprised. It was very humbling for me that they stayed out, and Marty, too, who I played against for so many years."

For the goaltender to experience it in front of his wife, his kids, and the 100 or so people close to him who attended the game, made it that much more special.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338107 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Should Oilers take a chance on Brandon Saad?

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — How old is too old?

How many rings won in some other city, for some long-ago champion, is too many? How much experience does a hockey team really need?

As Brandon Saad walks away from $5.1 million in salary that was owed to him by the St. Louis Blues, the team now being run by his old general manager from Chicago — Stan Bowman — is musing about whether he'd be a smart add.

It begs the ultimate question:

How many "I used to be pretty good, but now my game is somewhere below that" players can you add to an Edmonton Oilers roster that already has already houses Corey Perry, Jeff Skinner, Adam Henrique, Viktor Arvidsson, Kasperi Kapanen, and perhaps even 32-year-old Mattias Janmark?

"If I were the Oilers I'd be concerned that they have a lot of guys in the same boat as (Saad). Shadows of once good players," a scout texted on Wednesday night.

So we went to the rink on Thursday morning and found Adam Henrique, not so much a "shadow of a once good player" but a centreman who has accepted a lesser role in Edmonton than what he was used to in Anaheim.

All in exchange for the chance to win a Stanley Cup.

"It's a fine line," said Henrique. "There's only so much (ice time) to go around, and everybody's got to buy in, in order to be a top team."

On a 20-man roster, what's the right number?

"I think as many as are willing to buy in and accept a bit of a lesser role than in the past," said Henrique, a nearly 1,000-game player who has never won a Stanley Cup while playing in New Jersey and Anaheim.

Saad, meanwhile, won Cups as a Blackhawk in 2013 and 2015 playing (mostly) on a line with Jonathan Toews and Marian Hossa. Now he's mired in a St. Louis rebuild that he forgave $5.1 million in salary to get away from.

Henrique, as with most any current NHL player, has mad respect for that player and what he could bring to a team.

"Not a ton of guys have experience like that, and have been through those sorts of things or been with players at that level," Henrique acknowledges. "On all those good teams, all those guys have a willingness to buy into a role — otherwise you wouldn't be there. You'd want to go to a team that's not as good, where there's more ice time to be available."

OK, so the experience, the knowledge — all those intangibles — are highly valued in hockey. But the player has to be able to play.

In Saad's case — a 32-year-old, middle-six left-winger who would spend some of his time next to Leon Draisaitl — he has to have certain qualities.

Sure, Saad — who scored 26 goals last season — has better hands than Vasily Podkolzin. But can he dig pucks out for Draisaitl the way Podkolzin does, play defence like Podkolzin does, and skate at anywhere close to the pace that Podkolzin does?

Let's ask some scouts:

"He is better than most of the Oilers' bottom-six currently," said a Central Division scout.

"I don't mind him. Skating and shot not what they used to be. Down low game can be good, but it's inconsistent. He'll be motivated and likely better than he was in St. Louis." — Central Division scout.

"Plays in straight lines. Big, strong power forward-type who plays well in the playoffs. Lost a step but still a functional middle-six guy. Plays best in big games." — Atlantic Division scout.

"Nada. Nothing (left)." — Metropolitan Scout.

"Last one on the ice and first one off. Maybe a change of scenery helps." — Former player.

"Hard player to defend/contain when he has his motor going. Similar to Klingberg, why not take a chance? A free acquisition — if it doesn't work out, no big deal." — Central scout.

So it's a bit of a flyer, like the last scout said, but so what?

The Oilers, already the oldest team in the National Hockey League, are currently taking a similar flyer on defenceman John Klingberg, who is scheduled to make his debut Thursday versus Detroit. Klingberg says he's never played pain-free in the NHL after double hip surgeries at ages 18 and 21.

But after a third surgery he claims to be pain-free today. If it turns out he is a better defenceman than Troy Stecher, Ty Emberson or both, the Oilers will have improved themselves without spending an asset — other than a bit of cap space and the owner's money.

If Saad can take some time away from Podkolzin next to Draisaitl, or be more productive on the third line next to Henrique than Skinner, Kapanen or Janmark, then the same is true in this case.

But he's got to be able to play before any of the leadership and experience qualities mean a thing.

"What we want is best players possible, no matter what their age," said head coach Kris Knoblauch, who was not referencing Saad in particular. "Bringing in talent is the most important thing, and then having roles.

"If you get a bunch of offensive players, they might be the best players but they can't utilize their skill if they're not on the first-unit power play. And we've got a pretty good first-unit power play," he said. "Now, for veterans, it comes down to what they're bringing and how good they are. If they do have some experience, It's going to help with when the team goes through tough times.

"But just because they've got experience, that doesn't mean they're going to be a better player than the guys you already have."

So far, the only veteran acquisitions that have been regrettable is Skinner. That was a Jeff Jackson call, and the Oilers will simply have to eat that $3 million deal if Saad came in and pushed Skinner further down the roster at left wing.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338108 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Senators assistant coach Alfredsson relishes opportunity to shape next generation

Alex Adams

OTTAWA — Some NHL franchise icons lie away on a warm beach never to be seen again. Not Daniel Alfredsson.

He's not only around the Ottawa Senators, he's a coach for them.

After retiring in 2014, Alfredsson had an on-again, off-again relationship with the team under previous owner Eugene Melnyk, which will not be relitigated here. After new owner Michael Andlauer took control of the hockey club in 2023, one of his first acts was to bring Alfredsson back into the fold. Within six months, he was behind the bench as an assistant coach.

For Alfredsson, who had not coached anything higher than minor hockey, it's obviously been an adjustment to coach in the NHL.

"It's been a steep learning curve, I'm still a rookie," Alfredsson said. "This is my first full year, so I'm learning a lot. A lot of teams are kind of similar, but there are small subtleties that everybody does differently. And it's been super interesting learning all that."

He loves being a rookie coach, but he'd still rather be a rookie player if he could.

"It's not comparable to playing, but I guess it's as close as you can get," Alfredsson said. "You're on ice level, to see how fast it is, how good everybody is, and it's just fun to be part of the group and see how they put their work in. And playing some good hockey. And to be a small piece in it. It's fun."

Alfredsson's coaching has evolved since taking the role in December 2023. He sits in on all the pre-scout meetings and is now tasked with making video sessions for the players. The coaching side is coming together for him.

"Yeah, I think I'm better at presenting videos and putting meetings together," said Alfredsson, about how he's improved as a coach. "So that takes a lot of time, when you're not used to it."

Alfredsson credits head coach Travis Green and assistants Nolan Baumgartner and Mike Yeo for helping him learn the trick of the presentation.

In a pivotal game against the Boston Bruins at home recently, Alfredsson's video sessions made the difference when he instructed a game-clinching goal.

"Like he does video for the guys for shootouts," said forward Drake Batherson. "He told Timmy (Stutzle) what to do last time in the shootout (against Boston), and it worked."

Tim Stutzle's shootout move was Alfie-esque, holding onto the puck and waiting out Jeremy Swayman by quickly carrying the puck onto his forehand around the Bruins goaltender to finish the shootout winner.

That's a move Alfredsson could do but isn't one many other coaches could help their superstars pull off.

"He's helped me a lot with how to wait out goalies," Stutzle said. "And how to make them think they know what I'm doing.

"I'm pretty sure (Alfredsson) could have done that move."

It's obvious how much detail and thought Alfredsson puts in, even when analyzing shootout moves, including Stutzle's.

"Stutzle has quickness, and a good shot, but then there's a difference of how you release your shot and what you show the goalie that I kind of introduce," Alfredsson said. "And then it's up to them to implement it or not. And those are small tips. They don't work all the time, but when they do, it's fun."

As effective as Alfredsson is in the video room, he's at his best when he's on the ice, working with players on their skills. Not everyone can have Alfredsson's talent, but he does show it off. At practice, Alfredsson is always launching shots at goalies, helping players with their shots and playing "keep-away" (which he typically wins).

"I catch them when they're a little bit off guard," said Alfredsson, about winning keep-away challenges with Senators players.

"So, I probably look better than I should. I was joking about that today with Cole Reinhardt. We did some one-on-ones, and he was owning me. So, I said, if they saw that today, I probably wouldn't be on the quarter-century team anymore."

Checks notes … he still would be.

Nevertheless, the players notice the talents of the Hall of Famer and a recent unanimous pick for Ottawa's quarter-century team released last week.

"He's just a great athlete. He's good at everything," Batherson said. "He's skating so much now that he's got his hands and he can shoot it. So, I think he can still play a couple shifts."

"No I can't," Alfredsson said without a second thought.

Stutzle called Alfredsson "humble" about his playing skills. Well, he took line rushes earlier this season in practice.

"I'm not close to being in good enough shape," said Alfredsson, about still being able to play. "I need to lose 30 pounds and get a little better stamina.

"But obviously it's muscle memory. I played this sport at a high level for a very long time. I was always a student of the game, so I have the smarts. Could I make it a power-play shift here and there? Yes.

"But there's zero chance I could last a game."

He might not be able to last a game on the ice, but he sure knows it.

"Competing against Alfie, it's always good," Stutzle said. "I can still see him scoring a lot of goals in this league because he's just so smart and now knows what the goalie is doing. He's definitely helped me."

Both Stutzle and Batherson mentioned how Alfredsson has helped with the power play, their own release points on their shots and protecting the puck.

"He's been awesome," Batherson said. "Just the way he sees the game, with his experience, he'll just see something that you did on a certain rep, and he'll come over and just talk to you about what he thinks you could have done differently. And as a player, getting that feedback, you love that."

What was his favourite moment so far as an assistant coach? The win he directly helped seal.

"The favorite moment was the comeback against Boston," Alfredsson said. "Just the atmosphere in the building and how we played extremely well to start the game, and then we got a little bit careless, let them back in it. They had the lead, and then scored two late goals, and then won it in a shootout that was a huge character win."

For Alfredsson, he relishes passing the baton to the next generation.

"That's the best part," he said. "I said at the end of my career, when Erik Karlsson came in, and he was a young guy, I was kind of a little grumpy when you get older, some stuff you don't have the same patience for. You're around young guys like that, it makes it fun again.

"The same thing now with coaching, they're very driven people. They're fun to be around, tons of energy, so it's a very rewarding job that way."

When Alfredsson entered the league in 1995, the Senators had been the doormat of the NHL for years. It changed quickly when then head coach Jacques Martin instilled defensive principles leading to 11 consecutive playoff runs. Thirty years later, Alfredsson thinks this current iteration of the Senators can take a similar step.

"I think this team has shown that this year too," Alfredsson said. "They committed to playing all over the ice, and I think we've shown the results for it. We're in a good spot where they haven't been in the previous years."

Alfredsson has helped mould the Senators into a type of team he used to captain, that's defensively responsible and knows how to win. He is passing the torch of knowledge from the previous face of the franchise to the next in Stutzle.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338109 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Revisiting some of the biggest NHL trades in the salary cap era

Ally Chesham

What started out as a relatively quiet Friday night in the NHL last week quickly turned into anything but.

It began with social media buzzing over reports that Taylor Hall was being traded from the Chicago Blackhawks to the Carolina Hurricanes — a notable move but hardly a blockbuster. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, the real bomb dropped: Colorado Avalanche star Mikko Rantanen was also reportedly heading to Carolina.

As everyone frantically refreshed feeds for the latest updates, insiders scrambled to piece together the details. Eventually, a three-team trade involving the Blackhawks, Hurricanes and Avalanche was revealed. Carolina landed Rantanen and Hall; Colorado received Martin Necas, Jack Drury, a 2025 second-round pick and a 2026 fourth-round pick; and Chicago picked up a 2025 third-round pick while retaining 50 per cent of Rantanen's salary.

Now that's a blockbuster.

It's safe to say the deal caught nearly everyone off guard — including its centrepiece. Following his debut with his new team, Rantanen told reporters he was shocked and hadn't seen it coming. A day later, the 28-year-old pending UFA told The Athletic's Peter Baugh he had been "willing to take a significant discount" on a contract extension to stay with Colorado, the team that drafted him 10th overall in 2015 and with whom he won a Stanley Cup in 2022.

Given all the factors involved, the trade sparked discussions about whether it could be the biggest in the salary cap era. First and foremost, Rantanen is a bona fide star — with two 100-plus-point seasons and ranking sixth in league points at the time of the trade (64 in 49 games), his credentials speak for themselves. Then there's the package he commanded which included Necas, who was tied for 11th leaguewide in points with 55 in 49 games at the time.

The shock factor adds another layer, from the timing of the trade to the fact that Rantanen had been with the Avalanche for 10 seasons and was expected to remain there for the foreseeable future. Lastly, and crucially, two of the teams involved are contenders, with the Hurricanes currently sitting second in the Metropolitan and the Avalanche occupying the first wild-card spot in the West. The addition of Rantanen should significantly impact the Hurricanes' season, including their division title and Stanley Cup aspirations, as well as their long-term success if they re-sign him.

The deal undoubtedly ranks near the top of the salary-cap era rankings, but recency bias may play a role in that perception. Let's take a trip down memory lane and revisit some other blockbuster contenders potentially worthy of that distinction.

Full deal: The Vegas Golden Knights acquired Eichel and a 2023 third-round pick (Mathieu Cataford) from the Buffalo Sabres in exchange for Alex Tuch, Peyton Krebs, a top-10 protected 2022 first-round pick (Noah Östlund) and a 2023 second-round pick (Riley Heidt).

The Jack Eichel saga dominated headlines for months, stemming from a deteriorating relationship between him and the Buffalo Sabres. At the heart of the dispute was how to treat a herniated disc in his neck — Eichel wanted artificial disc replacement surgery, a procedure never before performed on an NHL player, while the Sabres insisted on disc fusion.

Following the 2020-21 season, Eichel publicly revealed the rift and questioned his future in Buffalo. When training camp for the following season opened, he failed his physical and was stripped of his captaincy. Less than two months later, the centre was traded to Vegas and underwent his desired surgery a week later.

Eichel made his Golden Knights debut 10 months after the procedure, in February 2022. It took time for him to return to form, as he recorded just 25 points in 34 games that season. He bounced back in 2022-23, producing at nearly a point-per-game pace before leading the Golden Knights to their first-ever Stanley Cup in just their sixth NHL season, tallying 26 points in 22 playoff games.

Vegas has remained a contender since, currently sitting second in the Pacific, while Eichel has continued to solidify himself as an impact player with 64 points in 50 games. Buffalo, on the other hand, was a struggling team before the trade and still remains one. It's set to miss the playoffs again this year, extending its drought since 2010-11. As for the Sabres' trade haul: Tuch has become a key piece, Krebs has produced at a bottom-six rate and Östlund is currently developing in the AHL.

P.K. Subban for Shea Weber

Date: June 29, 2016

When this swap of defencemen took place between two teams that had drafted and developed their respective players, the entire league was stunned. The Canadiens fanbase had mixed reactions, especially given that Subban was a fan favourite and a former Norris Trophy winner. The deal was made just two days before the 27-year-old's no-trade clause was set to take effect. Meanwhile Weber was 30 and known for his physical style, which led to concerns about his future durability and whether his best hockey was behind him.

Both players had successful campaigns in the first season following the trade, leading their teams to the post-season. The Predators reached the Stanley Cup Final, ultimately falling to the Pittsburgh Penguins. The following season, Weber suffered a broken toe requiring surgery, causing him to be shut down for the rest of the year. The Canadiens missed the playoffs, while Subban had another strong year with Nashville, playing all 82 regular-season games and recording 59 points, plus nine more in 13 playoff games.

In 2018-19, Subban struggled, and the Predators experienced an early post-season exit. Weber, still recovering from surgery, missed part of the season, but he continued to perform well in his return for the Canadiens despite the team missing the playoffs for a second consecutive year. In June 2019, Subban was dealt to the New Jersey Devils, which, for many, answered the question of who won the initial trade. Weber, meanwhile, remained a Canadien and enjoyed a Cinderella run during the 2020-21 COVID-impacted season, making it to the Stanley Cup Final before losing to the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"In the bigger picture, I wish Shea had never been traded. I'm being very honest with you when I say that," former Predators general manager David Poile said on Nashville's Robby & Rexrode radio show last year.

Joe Thornton

Date: Nov. 30, 2005

Full deal: The San Jose Sharks acquired Thornton from the Boston Bruins in exchange for Brad Stuart, Wayne Primeau and Marco Sturm.

This deal earns significant consideration as one of the biggest trades in the salary cap era. Nearly 20 years ago, the Bruins traded their captain to the Sharks in a move that would have lasting impacts on both franchises. San Jose was already a strong team, having had made the playoffs in seven of eight seasons after Patrick Marleau was drafted second overall in 1997 — right after Thornton — and reaching the conference finals for the first time in 2003-04.

But the Sharks reached new heights with Jumbo Joe. Thornton was an instant success, recording 92 points in 58 games with San Jose after having already accumulated 33 points with the Bruins before the trade. He went on to win both the Art Ross Trophy and the Hart Memorial Trophy that year. Over the course of his career with the Sharks, Thornton played 1,104 games and recorded 1,055 points. The Sharks led the NHL in points from the day he joined until his final game in 2019-20, reaching the conference finals four times and advancing to the Stanley Cup Final in 2016.

Former Sharks general manager Doug Wilson explained how the trade came together in an interview with The Athletic's Corey Masisak two years ago.

"Their GM was a good friend of mine, Mike O'Connell. We had played together in Chicago… I was talking to a lot of different teams because we weren't playing very well and something was needed… when Joe's name was mentioned, I said, 'OK, what are you looking for?'… It was one of those deals when a player like that is available, you go full speed ahead."

The return for Thornton didn't pan out as well for Boston, aside from Marco Sturm, who played 302 games over five seasons, recording a respectable 193 points. It may have seemed like a losing trade for the Bruins, but some argue it was the catalyst for their 2011 Stanley Cup win. O'Connell was fired four months after the trade, and his eventual replacement, Peter Chiarelli, hired Claude Julien as coach. With Thornton gone, Patrice Bergeron and David Krejci took on larger roles, and with the added cap space, Boston signed Zdeno Chara.

Jeff Carter

Date: June 23, 2011

Full deal: The Columbus Blue Jackets acquired Jeff Carter from the Philadelphia Flyers in exchange for Jakub Voracek, a 2011 first-round pick (Sean Couturier) and a 2011 third-round pick (Nick Cousins).

Carter spent six seasons in Philadelphia after being drafted 11th overall by the Flyers in 2003, recording 343 points in 461 regular-season games.

During this span, the Flyers made the playoffs five times, with Carter contributing 21 points in 47 post-season games. In November 2010, he signed an 11-year, $58 million contract extension with a limited no-trade clause to stay in Philadelphia — but before the deal took effect, the Flyers traded Carter to the Blue Jackets in a move he did not anticipate.

Carter's time with the Blue Jackets in the 2011-12 season was short and troubled. He struggled with injuries and reported attitude issues. After just 39 games, in which he recorded 25 points, Columbus shipped him to the Los Angeles Kings. It was a regrettable situation for Columbus; they had acquired Carter at a high price, only to sell him off low. Carter went on to win a Stanley Cup with the Kings that season and again in 2013-14.

The clear winner was the Flyers. They received three assets for a player who only played a fraction of a season with his new team. Philadelphia acquired a 22-year-old Voracek, who recorded 604 points in 727 regular-season games over 10 seasons before being traded back to the Blue Jackets in 2021. They also used their two 2011 draft picks to select Couturier and Cousins.

Couturier is still with the Flyers and serves as their captain. He has 522 points in 843 career games over 13 seasons with the team and is currently in the midst of an eight-year, $62 million contract, ensuring he'll be with the Flyers for the foreseeable future. Cousins played with the Flyers until 2017 when he was traded to the Arizona Coyotes for a prospect and a 2018 fifth-round pick.

Full deal: The Florida Panthers acquired Tkachuk and a conditional 2025 fourth-round pick from the Calgary Flames in exchange for Jonathan Huberdeau, MacKenzie Weegar, Cole Schwindt and a lottery-protected 2025 first-round pick.

Tkachuk informed the Flames during the 2022 off-season he had no interest in signing a long-term deal with the team, prompting both sides to work to find a trade destination where he would commit to an extension. It was a significant blow for Calgary, which had already lost Johnny Gaudreau to the Columbus Blue Jackets in free agency. At the time of his trade request, Tkachuk was coming off a career-best 104-point season, and the Flames had just won a division title.

Over 431 games across seven seasons in Calgary, Tkachuk scored 382 points, ranking second in his draft class behind Auston Matthews. Once a deal was struck between the Flames and Panthers, Tkachuk immediately signed an eight-year, $76 million contract extension. In his first season with the Panthers, the feisty winger registered 109 points in 79 games, adding 24 points in 20 playoff games as Florida reached the Stanley Cup Final, where it fell to the Vegas Golden Knights.

Tkachuk's offensive numbers dipped slightly the following season, with 88 points in 80 games. The Panthers again reached the Stanley Cup Final, this time winning their first championship in franchise history by defeating the Edmonton Oilers. Tkachuk contributed 22 points in 24 playoff contests.

Huberdeau, coming off a career-high 115-point season, was originally viewed as the biggest piece of the deal for Calgary. But since joining the Flames, he has yet to replicate that success, posting 55- and 62-point seasons in his first two full years. Weegar, meanwhile, has arguably emerged as the best part of the trade for Calgary, establishing himself as a top-tier blueliner and posting a career-best 52 points last season.

Schwindt, the prospect included in the deal, spent two seasons with the Flames' AHL affiliate and appeared in four NHL games in 2023-24. The Flames re-signed him to a one-year, two-way contract in September 2024, but he was claimed off waivers by the Golden Knights a month later. While then-Flames general manager Brad Treliving did well in salvaging a difficult situation and acquiring valuable assets, the Panthers are the clear winners of this trade to date.

Chris Pronger x 2

Dates: Aug. 2, 2005 and July 3, 2006

The Oilers made a bold move, landing Pronger in a three-for-one trade following the 2004-05 lockout — a game-changer for a small-market team that historically struggled to keep star players. The introduction of a salary cap created additional opportunities when big-market clubs like the Blues were forced to shed contracts.

Pronger was a coveted defenceman, having won the Hart and Norris in 2000 after posting 62 points in 79 games with the Blues. Edmonton quickly signed him to a five-year, $31.25 million deal — one of the largest contracts in league history at the time. Pronger maintained his high level of play in his season with the Oilers, recording 56 points in 80 games. He was also a key figure in Edmonton Stanley Cup Final run, where it fell to the Carolina Hurricanes. His 21 points in 24 playoff games marked the best post-season of his career. Meanwhile, the Blues — reeling from Pronger's departure — missed the playoffs for the first time in 25 years.

Edmonton's hopes of building around Pronger quickly unravelled when he requested a trade that same summer, citing personal reasons. His departure had an immediate and lasting impact on the Oilers, who fell to sixth-last in the standings in 2006-07 and finished with the fewest goals in the league. It marked the beginning of a painful stretch where Edmonton missed the playoffs for 10 consecutive seasons.

While some considered the price Anaheim paid for Pronger risky, the future Hall of Famer made an immediate impact, helping the Ducks win the Stanley Cup in his first season. The return for the Oilers, who did their best in a tough situation, turned out to be hit-and-miss. The most notable pieces were Smid, a stay-at-home defenceman who played 474 games with Edmonton, and the 2008 first-round pick used to select Eberle, who recorded 382 points over seven seasons with the Oilers.

Honourable mentions: The Golden Knights acquiring Mark Stone (Feb. 2019); the Senators trading Erik Karlsson to the Sharks (Sept. 2018); the Sabres sending Ryan O'Reilly to the Blues (July 2018); the one-for-one swap of Taylor Hall for Adam Larsson (June 2016); the Panthers bringing back Roberto Luongo (March 2014); the Flames trading Jarome Iginla to the Penguins (March 2013); the Thrashers sending Ilya Kovalchuk to the Devils (Feb. 2010); the Penguins landing Marian Hossa (Feb. 2008); the Lightning moving Martin St. Louis to the Rangers (March 2015); and the Maple Leafs dealing Phil Kessel to the Penguins (July 2015).

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338110 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL Power Rankings: Looking at each team's smallest players

Ryan Dixon

A generation ago, it felt like the best hope a short guy had of thriving in the NHL was in the crease. Today, the dynamic has largely flipped; if you're under 6-feet tall, you might be able to challenge for a major trophy as a skater, but don't even dream of donning that goalie equipment.

February — the shortest month of the year — begins on Saturday, which is reason enough in this corner to look around the league and highlight the performance of some vertically-challenged players.

To be sure, hockey has never required its heroes be behemoths. Wayne Gretzky played at 6-foot; Steve Yzerman and Joe Sakic were captains of classic 1990s teams and played at 5-foot-10 and 5-foot-11, respectively.

Still, when 5-foot-8 Martin St. Louis won the 2004 MVP and scoring title, it felt like he'd landed from outer space to show us something different was possible on a sheet of ice.

The shifting size conversation gets far more pronounced if you focus on defenceman. Sure, 5-foot-10 Phil Housley was feathering passes all over the ice in the 1990s, but the idea of building your defence corps around a player that size was out of the question.

Today, blue-liners like 5-foot-10 Quinn Hughes, 5-foot-11 Adam Fox and 6-foot Cale Makar are league-defining players who win Norris Trophies and sometimes thrust themselves into Hart Trophy talk. Lane Hutson, a 5-foot-9 rookie, is not only a Calder candidate, but has 26 points since Dec. 1. The only D-men in the NHL who have more in that stretch are Hughes (31) and Zach Werenski (30).

Flipping it around, the '90s were littered with small goalies who made an enormous impact. John Vanbiesbrouck, listed at 5-foot-8, led the

Panthers to the 1996 Stanley Cup Final; his former batterymate, 5-foot-11 Mike Richter, was the backbone of a 1994 Rangers team that won the Cup and 1996 American squad that won the World Cup of Hockey; 5-foot-9 Mike Vernon won the 1997 Conn Smythe Trophy for the Red Wings, who claimed the Cup again the next year with 5-foot-10 Chris Osgood. 5-foot-11 Curtis Joseph stole multiple playoff series for multiple teams and even dominant forces like Ed Belfour (six-foot) and Dominik Hasek (6-foot-1) had, more or less, everyday statures.

In 2025, the only sub-6-foot goalie in the entire league is 5-foot-11 Juuse Saros in Nashville. At 6-foot-4, Darren Puppa seemed like a padded, southpaw freak of nature in the '90s; now, it feels like every team in the league has a 6-foot-5 goalie somewhere in the system.

All that is to say, height conversations remain part of hockey in one form or another. And, for this edition of the power rankings, we're giving shine to every team's short guys.

1. Washington Capitals (34-11-5) Andrew Mangiapane, a pending-UFA, is likely a one-and-done with the Caps. The 5-foot-10 winger is a valued bottom-sixer, though, netting 10 goals so far and playing over 13 minutes per night.

2. Winnipeg Jets (35-14-3) It sure feels like a lot is riding on the shoulders of 5-foot-11 Cole Perfetti. The ups and downs are still there in his third full NHL season, but if he can become a reliable producer on the second line it will be a huge boon to Winnipeg's short- and long-term fortunes.

3. Edmonton Oilers (32-15-3) Two small wingers — 5-foot-10 Viktor Arvidsson and 5-foot-11 Jeff Skinner — have been disappointments in their first seasons as Oilers.

4. Dallas Stars (32-17-1) Meet the rare team with two 5-foot-8 players in its forward group. Winger Logan Stankoven entered the season with Calder Trophy buzz and while he's unlikely to be a finalist, there's no question the Stars hit a grand slam with their 2021 second-rounder. Meanwhile, first-year Star Colin Blackwell has been seeing over 10 minutes a game as a fourth-liner.

5. Carolina Hurricanes (31-16-4) 5-foot-10 Seth Jarvis — who will suit up for Canada at the 4 Nations Face-Off — is really firing lately with 10 goals in his past 16 outings. 5-foot-11 blue-liner Shayne Gostisbehere is producing at a nice 53-point clip in Year 1 of a three-year UFA pact.

6. Minnesota Wild (30-17-4) There's likely not a team in the league that has as many small guys playing big roles as the Wild. 5-foot-8 Mats Zuccarello — 'The Hobbit' — has been one of the best tiny guys in the league for years now and found a whole new gear in his 30s with the Wild. Minny's captain is 5-foot-9 D-man Jared Spurgeon and 5-foot-9 centre Marco Rossi — the ninth-overall pick in 2020 — is having a breakout year. And, of course, injured star Kirill Kaprizov, who stands 5-foot-10, is one of the premier offensive skaters in the NHL when healthy.

7. Florida Panthers (30-19-3) Given their identify as a team that physically punished you, it's not surprising the Cats are a big squad. The only guys under six-foot playing meaningful roles on this team are two 5-foot-11 wingers, Evan Rodrigues and Mackie Samoskevich.

8. Vegas Golden Knights (31-15-5) First-year Knight Victor Olofsson has missed some time, but the 5-foot-11 winger is scoring at a 30-goal pace in 30 outings.

9. Toronto Maple Leafs (30-19-2) It sure feels like 5-foot-9 Nick Robertson could wind up on a new club before the trade deadline. 5-foot-10 Max Domi is having a fairly miserable three-goal season in the first year of a four-year contract. Meanwhile, two six-foot guys — Mitch Marner and William Nylander — are among the most lethal offensive players in the league.

10. New Jersey Devils (29-18-6) It does feel like there's a question hanging over this club in terms of its long-term playoff potential with a forward group that skews small. Two of Jersey's killers up front are 5-foot-10 winger Jesper Bratt and 5-foot-11 centre Jack Hughes. (I guess, at 6-foot-2, Luke Hughes snagged the length in that family.)

11. Los Angeles Kings (26-16-6) Young 5-foot-10 blue-liner Jordan Spence has been playing over 17 minutes per night for the Kings. That might change a bit with fellow righty Drew Doughty back in the lineup, but Spence has shown he's a keeper.

12. Colorado Avalanche (29-21-2) 5-foot-10 defenceman Samuel Girard is playing more than 21 minutes a night on Colorado's second pair. Meanwhile, 5-foot-11 winger Artturi Lehkonen is quietly scoring at a 43-goal pace in 40 contests this season.

13. Ottawa Senators (26-20-4) 37-year-old Claude Giroux could still register close to 60 points this season. The 5-foot-11 winger has had a fantastic career.

14. Tampa Bay Lightning (26-20-3) There's definitely a small-guy heritage in Tampa, the franchise that gave three short, undrafted guys — 5-foot-8 Martin St. Louis and Tyler Johnson, and 5-foot-9 Yanni Gourde — a chance to shine and were repaid in kind. Today, 5-foot-11 Brayden Point and Jake Guentzel team with 6-foot Nikita Kucherov to drive the offence.

15. Calgary Flames (24-18-7) Dustin Wolf, at 6-feet tall, is most definitely a small goalie for this era. He's also a small goalie who could wind up a Calder finalist and a backbone of the Flames for years to come.

16. Columbus Blue Jackets (24-19-7) 5-foot-11 rookie defenceman Denton Mateychuk is one to watch in Ohio.

17. Boston Bruins (25-21-6) Brad Marchand, at 5-foot-9, is a signature undersized guy of the 2000s. Where will the pending-UFA's final NHL chapter play out?

18. Detroit Red Wings (24-21-5) Year 2 in Detroit is going better for 5-foot-8 winger Alex DeBrincat, who could push up to 40 goals this year with a strong finish. 5-foot-11 Patrick Kane has been a north star for small guys with big NHL dreams since he entered the league nearly 20 years ago.

19. Vancouver Canucks (23-17-10) 5-foot-10 Quinn Hughes could be on the poster for what's possible with a smaller frame in the NHL today. He could be a significant Hart Trophy contender this season.

20. New York Islanders (22-20-7) The Isles have two 5-foot-11 forwards — Casey Cizikas and Kyle Palmieri — who have always played much bigger than their frames.

21. New York Rangers (24-22-4) It's kind of hilarious to say two 6-foot-1 goalies — Igor Shesterkin and Jonathan Quick — form a small battery, but it's true. Only four puckstoppers in the league who've played at least 15 games this year are shorter than the Rangers duo.

22. Montreal Canadiens (24-21-5) While the Habs have incorporated some size to the roster in the past couple years, this franchise continues to be defined by undersized players. Of course, it helps that 5-foot-9 Lane Hutson is having one of the best rookie seasons for a defenceman in recent memory and 5-foot-8 winger Cole Caufield is on pace for 41 goals. 5-foot-11 Nick Suzuki is a point-per-game centre who never gets pushed around and 5-foot-9 winger Brendan Gallagher is among the more inspirational small guys of the past decade.

23. Philadelphia Flyers (23-23-6) 5-foot-10 Travis Konecny is elevating to a new tier this season, tracking a 90-point campaign.

24. Anaheim Ducks (21-23-6) 5-foot-10 Olen Zellweger is a super-smart defenceman who should have a long, fruitful top-four career in Orange Country.

25. Utah Hockey Club (21-21-8) 5-foot-10 Clayton Keller has evolved into one of the better point-producing wingers in all of hockey.

26. Pittsburgh Penguins (21-24-8) Sidney Crosby is 5-foot-11, but because he's got tree trunks for legs, we've never really thought of him as small. Still, it's not like the guy had the physical advantage previous Penguins megastars Mario Lemieux and Jaromir Jagr benefited from. At 6-feet tall, Erik Karlsson has done splendid offensive things from the back end in his career.

27. St. Louis Blues (23-24-4) You've really defied the odds when you made the big time as a 5-foot-9 guy who was born in Wales and grew up in Australia. Well done, Nathan Walker.

28. Nashville Predators (18-24-7) Jonathan Marchessault won the 2023 Conn Smythe Trophy with Vegas as a 5-foot-9 winger who came up big during the hardest time of year to do so.

29. Seattle Kraken (22-27-3) 5-foot-9 Yanni Gourde will be a hot commodity on the trade market thanks to his winning pedigree with Tampa. Seattle actually has a few key undersized guys, from injured

captain Jordan Eberle (5-foot-11) to 6-foot centre and 2022 fourth-overall pick Shane Wright to 6-foot defencemen Vince Dunn and Brandon Montour.

30. Buffalo Sabres (19-26-5) It hasn't fully clicked yet for 5-foot-10 winger Zach Benson at the NHL level, but he's still just 19 and nobody questions his skill.

31. Chicago Blackhawks (16-29-5) Sure, ideally you want your franchise centre to be 6-foot-2. Still, that's no reason to believe 5-foot-10 Connor Bedard won't eventually be a dominant force in the league. He's a strong kid navigating a tough NHL landscape with not much in the way of support on a bad team.

32. San Jose Sharks (15-32-6) Macklin Celebrini joked at the NHL Scouting Combine last June that he was disappointed not to make it to six-foot after clocking in at, to be precise, 5-foot-11-and-three-quarters. Lord knows the 18-year-old pivot is not coming up short in his freshman season with the Sharks.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.31.2025

1338111 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Scout's Analysis: Ranking the top 50 prospects for the 2025 NHL Draft

Jason Bukala

By the time the beginning of February rolls around all NHL scouting departments will have concluded their mid-season meetings with both the pro and amateur scouting staffs. The pro staffs are busy strategizing how to approach the March 7 trade deadline, while the amateur scouting staffs are mining through hundreds of reports and building their mid-season draft lists.

What you are about to read is my version of mid-season draft rankings for the 2025 NHL Draft in June. The process involves comparing the body of work to date for draft-eligible players from around the world. I attempt to see every player in person and back up my viewing(s) by further breaking down their results via video scouting.

You will see I reference 10-game segments in many of the following reports. The reason I prefer to scout players in segments is so I can pinpoint anomalies and trends in their overall game.

I approach building my list for Sportsnet the same way I did when I was a scouting director in the NHL with the Florida Panthers. I don't survey members of the scouting community for their opinions. The following player analysis is solely based on what I am viewing throughout the scouting season.

There is one highly touted draft-eligible prospect who has been left off my mid-season list. Roger McQueen, from the Brandon Wheat Kings, is a hulking forward (six-foot-five, 192 pounds) with significant NHL upside. He produced 21 goals and 30 assists last season and looked poised for a breakout year in 2024-25, but was sidelined with a back injury. McQueen has only played eight games this season, contributing eight goals and three assists in the games he played. But he's been out since October.

I'm not forgetting about McQueen. Quite the opposite, I'm hoping he recovers from his injury and returns to form before the end of the season. McQueen projects to be a top-five pick in this draft if he's healthy. The longer he remains out of the lineup makes it harder to justify having him too high on my list at this point. I need to understand what is going on medically and if he projects to be 100 per cent healthy this summer and beyond. I have him listed as "TBD" on my list until I have more information to work with.

The first section of this list is divided into "lottery picks." These picks are viewed as the most valuable in all trade discussions and usually end up being protected or retained when deals are consummated between NHL clubs. This will be a factor as we head down the stretch to the NHL's trade deadline, so I've highlighted the players who I would be considering in that range.

With that, here's my mid-season top 50 player rankings for the 2025 NHL Draft:

LOTTERY PICKS

No. 1: Matthew Schaefer, D, Erie Otters (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 183 pounds

Suffered a broken collarbone at the WJC representing Team Canada. Despite being only 17 years old, his exit from the tournament spoke to how valuable he was to the team. Complete player. Plays fast. Transitions pucks offensively and works to kill plays in the defensive zone. Relentless competitor. Has the hockey sense to be used in all situations. An elite top-pairing NHL defenceman on the horizon.

No. 2: James Hagens, F, Boston College (NCAA)

Height: 5-foot-10 Weight: 177 pounds

Hagens continues to skate on the top line at Boston College. He's flanked by two high-end NHL prospects in Ryan Leonard (WSH) and Gabe Perreault (NYR). In his last 10-game segment at Boston College, he has produced 3G-5A and averaged 18 minutes of ice time. All of his time on ice comes at even strength and the power play. Elite offensive upside. Above average skater. A threat to create off the rush. Leans playmaker more than pure shooter. Top line NHL player on the horizon. Represented Team USA at the WJC, winning gold and contributing 5G-4A in seven games.

No. 3: Michael Misa, F, Saginaw Spirit (OHL)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 184 pounds

Misa continues to lead the OHL scoring race with 39G-44A through 41 games. In his last 10 games, he's averaged nearly 25 minutes per night of ice time and contributed 9G-13A. He's plus-12 in the segment and being deployed in all situations. Misa is an excellent skater. He's a threat off the rush who is equal parts shooter/distributor and has the speed and commitment to track back the entire 200 feet to assist defensively. Misa, like Hagens, has first-line NHL upside and will challenge for the second overall draft slot come June.

No. 4: Porter Martone, F, Brampton Steelheads (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-2 Weight: 208 pounds

His combination of size and skill make him one of the top prospects in this draft and project him as a top-line NHL player in time. Martone uses his size to open up space and win battles along the wall and around the crease. He's equal parts shooter/distributor in the offensive zone. Martone averages around 20:00 minutes of ice time at the junior level. He's used in all situations. At the pro level, the majority of his ice time will come at even strength and the power play. His role was undefined for Team Canada at the WJC, but he should benefit from the experience overall. Martone is one of the top scorers in the OHL with 22G-41A in 35 games.

No. 5: Caleb Desnoyers, F, Moncton Wildcats (QMJHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 178 pounds

Desnoyers is a well-rounded prospect who provides a mix of skill and will. He's creative off the rush and has the ability, and vision, to beat opponents one-on-one or pull up and make plays to his linemates. Desnoyers is deployed in all situations at the junior level, but the majority of his ice time comes at even strength and the power play. In his latest 10-game segment, he contributed 6G-8A and was a plus-7. He produces offence without sacrificing defence. Desnoyers is a top-five scorer in the QMJHL (27G-35A).

No. 6: Anton Frondell, F, Djurgardens (Hockey Allsvenskan Sweden)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 196 pounds

Frondell has arguably the best one-timer from the flank in this draft class. He's aggressive directing pucks on net in the offensive zone and reads how plays are developing to find open ice. He has excellent puck touch overall. His ability to beat goalies from range is elite, but he also has playmaking and finishing skill in tight quarters around the net. Moves well

and is generally aware defensively. Projects as a top-line NHL scoring forward who will contribute at even strength and the power play.

No. 7: Victor Eklund, F, Djurgardens (Hockey Allsvenskan Sweden)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 163 pounds

Eklund is a light, skilled, quick-strike forward who proved at the WJC with Sweden that he's the kind of player who never goes away. He's benefitting from playing on the same team, and at times the same line, as Frondell at Djurgardens. He's averaging around 15 minutes per game of ice time and being deployed at even strength and the power play. He will need more strength for the NHL game but he plays fast, has a fantastic stick and competes every night.

No. 8: Carter Bear, F, Everett Silvertips (WHL)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 179 pounds

I was in Everett recently to scout Bear and came away very impressed with his approach. He's one of the most elite goal scorers in the WHL (second in the league with 32 goals) but he brings much more than just offence. Bear competes in the trenches, works to win pucks back in the hard areas and he's deployed in all situations. He doesn't cut corners. In his last 10-game segment he's contributed 7G-7A, averaged just shy of 19 minutes per game of ice time and was a plus-8.

No. 9: Jackson Smith, D, Tri-City Americans (WHL)

Height: 6-foot-3 Weight: 195 pounds

Smith continues to log a ton of ice time in Tri-City. He averages over 25 minutes per game, but there are nights he sees close to 30 minutes. Smith is deployed in all situations, including matching up against top-six forward groups almost every time his number is called. He's a fantastic skater, especially on straight lines. His combination of size and pace projects well for the NHL game. Although Smith is on pace for around 50 points this season, I view him as a middle/top pairing – two-way D as a pro. He will provide secondary offence while zoning in to shut down top-flight scorers from the opposition.

No. 10: Radim Mrtka, D, Seattle Thunderbirds (WHL)

Height: 6-foot-5 Weight: 207 pounds

Mrtka is a towering right-shot defenceman who started the year in his native Czechia before making the move to the WHL to play in Seattle. He now has 22 WHL games under his belt and he's improving week by week. It's a big adjustment for a defenceman to adjust to the smaller ice surface in North America, compared to Europe. Mrtka has great hockey sense. He reads how plays are developing and works to get in proper position in all three zones. His small-area quickness and agility are a work in progress, but he uses his size and reach effectively to kill plays defensively. He's mostly simple with the puck but Seattle is giving him an opportunity on their power play as a distributor. Mrtka is a name to keep a very close eye on. NHL teams covet defencemen with his stature who shoot right.

No. 11: Jake O'Brien, F, Brantford Bulldogs (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 172 pounds

O'Brien is an interesting prospect for me. He impresses me with his vision and skill offensively. O'Brien is a threat to create offence on a consistent basis at the OHL level. Defensively he appears to understand his responsibilities off the puck and where to position himself when his group doesn't have control of the play in the offensive zone. Like any developing prospect with an offensive element, his execution can range in his zone and it's something I'm monitoring. There's no doubt he has the puck touch and vision that projects him as a potential top-six NHL forward in time. He's used in all situations playing in Brantford for head coach Jay McKee.

No. 12: Brady Martin, F, Soo Greyhounds (OHL)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 178 pounds

Martin leads by example. He's a relentless competitor with the hockey sense and skill to be used in a variety of roles. Martin never goes away. When he doesn't have the puck, he works hard in the trenches to regain possession for his group. When he does have it on his stick he attacks in straight lines and aggressively directs the play towards the net. Martin isn't exceptionally elite in any one category but very strong in all of them. He leads by example and contributes to his team's overall structure and success. Martin averages over 23 minutes per game in the Soo. He's produced 16G-17A so far this year and he's a plus-12 defensively.

No. 13: Logan Hensler, D, Wisconsin Badgers (NCAA)

Height: 6-foot-2 Weight: 192 pounds

Hensler is averaging over 16 minutes of ice time at the NCAA level playing for Wisconsin. All of his ice time comes at even strength and the power play. For Team USA at the WJC, he averaged 13:05 of ice time with the majority of it coming at even strength. Hensler is generally reliable in all three zones. His read/react/overall awareness is usually on time. He fronts the shooter in his zone and gets in the lane to block shots on occasion. In the offensive zone, he has great agility and displays the ability to walk the offensive blue line to open up shooting/distributing lanes.

No. 14: Malcolm Spence, F, Erie Otters (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 203 pounds

Spence has the skating ability to push the pace offensively and backtrack to assist defensively on time. He can be deployed in a variety of roles. Spence can be a threat to produce offence at even strength, on the power play and even when killing penalties. When pucks spill into neutral ice, he's quick to pounce on chances and hit the rush with authority.

I have to say there are some nights I feel like he is capable of contributing more over the full 60 minutes. In his last 10-game segment, for example, Spence contributed 2G-5A but was held off the score sheet in five of those games. He averaged over 20 minutes per game of ice time in the segment, which reveals his coaching staff trusts him in all situations. I'm monitoring Spence closely. His best shifts are top-six NHL forward worthy on projection.

No. 15: Justin Carbonneau, F, Blainville-Boisbriand (QMJHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 191 pounds

Carbonneau is on pace to eclipse 80 points this season. He's a very crafty forward who has the skill to make plays in traffic, through skates and over opponents' sticks, on the way to the net. Carbonneau is a bit of a wide-track skater but it doesn't hold him back. He plays the game plenty quick enough and drives play in transition. He averages 21 minutes per game of ice time in Blainville. Almost all of his time on ice comes at even strength and the power play. I appreciate how involved he is. He isn't a perimeter player who waits out offence. He takes charge and competes to make an impact.

No. 16: Cam Reid, D, Kitchener Rangers (OHL)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 193 pounds

I have a lot of time for the way Reid plays the game. He isn't tall, but he's stocky strong and an outstanding skater. Reid projects as a two-way/transitional NHL defenceman. He has the ability to escape pressure with the puck on his stick, lead the rush and make plays offensively. He's also engaged defensively. His combination of skating, hockey sense, and consistent compete stand out. Reid averages over 24 minutes per game in Kitchener. He's used in all situations and has contributed 8G-29A this year. He's a plus-19.

OUTSIDE OF THE LOTTERY

No. 17: Kashawn Aitcheson, D, Barrie Colts (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 196 pounds

Aitcheson is a workhorse in Barrie. He's used in all situations and plays a physical style. He gaps up with authority and never backs down from engaging in the trenches. Aitcheson's puck handling and offence have evolved this year. He's already contributed 13G-18A, with five of his tucks coming on the power play.

No. 18: Braeden Cootes, F, Seattle Thunderbirds (WHL)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 183 pounds

Cootes is an endless competitor who's used in all situations. He contributes offence (20G-24A) without sacrificing defence. Cootes is an infectious, lead by example player who can be slotted up and down the lineup.

No. 19: Ben Kindel, F, Calgary Hitmen (WHL)

Height: 5-foot-10 Weight: 176 pounds

Kindel is an energetic, compact, skilled forward who plays the game with pace and drive offensively. He's involved in traffic, sees the ice, and makes plays. He's been climbing up the WHL scoring race standings. Over his last 10 games, he's produced an incredible 5G-16A. Equally impressive is the fact he's plus-17 in the segment.

No. 20: Jack Nesbitt, F, Windsor Spitfires (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-4 Weight: 185 pounds

Nesbitt is a player who is on the rise. His combination of size and skill is attractive. He has the commitment to be used in all situations and uses his length to his advantage. Nesbitt is deceptive with the puck on his stick and in motion. His posture is a bit hunched over in stride, which makes him look a bit smaller than he actually is. He's equal parts shooter/distributor offensively.

No. 21: Lynden Lakovic, F, Moose Jaw Warriors (WHL)

Height: 6-foot-4 Weight: 190 pounds

Lakovic is an excellent skater. He's fluid in open ice and has the ability to gain the edge off the rush and direct pucks on net. He's dangerous on the power play, working off the flank. Tough to defend below the dots and working off the cycle, Lakovic's defensive detail and physical pushback is a work in progress.

No. 22: Milton Gastrin, F, Modo (Sweden)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 185 pounds

Gastrin is an intriguing prospect. He's the kind of player who can be slotted up and down the lineup. He's used in all situations at the J18 level in Sweden and his offence has recently spiked. In his last 10 games, he's produced 6G-7A. Gastrin's first three steps out of the hole are quick and powerful and can lead to quick strike offence out of small areas.

No. 23: Jack Murtagh, F, USNTDP (U-18)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 200 pounds

Murtagh is a bulldog. He's physically engaged and tough to defend in the hard areas of the ice, along the wall and out front of the net. He wears down opponents and contributes better than secondary offence. The bulk of his ice time comes at even strength and the power play. He's the kind of player who opens up space for his linemates with his speed and determination.

No. 24: Josh Ravensbergen, G, Prince George Cougars (WHL)

Height: 6-foot-5 Weight: 190 pounds

Ravensbergen is likely to be the first goalie off the board at the draft. He's big in the net and gives opponents a different look catching with his right hand. Ravensbergen has great feet and is fluid moving laterally. I'm monitoring his overall crease composure. At times he pushes too aggressively, ending up outside his posts, but it's a simple fix he can address with coaching moving forward. His athleticism is undeniable.

No. 25: Cullen Potter, F, Arizona State (NCAA)

Height: 5-foot-10 Weight: 172 pounds

Potter is a slightly undersized forward who is adept at finding open ice and attacking with speed. He has great puck touch and the ability to beat opponents one-on-one. He leans goal scorer more than distributor. When he sees an opportunity to get the play to the net on his own he attacks with enthusiasm.

No. 26: Cole Reschny, F, Victoria Royals (WHL)

Height: 5-foot-10 Weight: 183 pounds

Reschny logs a ton of ice time in the WHL. He's deployed in all situations and can be trusted in a variety of roles. He creates offence with his hard work and determination. Reschny battles in traffic and he's a threat to make plays in open ice. He leans distributor more than pure goal scorer but opponents can't sleep on him taking the play to the net or ripping pucks from the flank.

No. 27: William Moore, F, USNTDP (U-18)

Height: 6-foot-2 Weight: 175 pounds

Moore is on the rise. He went through some ups and downs early in the year, but his recent run of play has put him on the radar as a player who could continue to rise in the rankings down the stretch. He's a big, rangy, skilled forward who has produced 8G-4A in his latest 10-game segment. He's deployed in all situations and working hard off the puck. In time he will add more strength and weight to his frame which should make him even more difficult to play against overall.

No. 28: Cameron Schmidt, Vancouver Giants (WHL)

Height: 5-foot-7 Weight: 161 pounds

Schmidt is a shooter. He has a lethal release that can beat goalies from all angles in the offensive zone. He isn't exceptionally deceptive with his approach. He drives opponents off their blue line off the rush and looks to rip pucks under sticks, through the legs, and around defenders. His size leads to comparisons to Cole Caufield but he isn't quite as dynamic as Caufield was in his draft cycle. Schmidt has to play in the top six forward group for his element to impact the game. All of his ice time comes at even strength and the power play.

No. 29: Ivan Ryabkin, Muskegon Lumberjacks (USHL)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 198 pounds

Ryabkin has suited up for four teams this season. He's played games in the KHL, VHL and MHL in Russia and now calls Muskegon (USHL) home. Ryabkin is a stocky/strong forward who generally leans shooter more than distributor in the offensive zone. He reads how plays are developing and is especially aware of how to identify quiet ice and make himself open in high-danger areas. His fitness and speed are something I'm monitoring down the stretch. His defensive detail also ranges.

No. 30: Blake Fiddler, D, Edmonton Oil Kings (WHL)

Height: 6-foot-4 Weight: 209 pounds

Fiddler is a big, rangy, right-shot defender who is being deployed in all situations at the junior level. He's engaged defensively. Fiddler rotates well on the penalty-kill and gets in the lane to block shots. His small area quickness is on time. He jumps to space and uses his long reach to kill plays and move pucks up ice. On occasion he will lead the offensive rush on his own. I appreciate his straight-line speed in open ice and sneaky ability to make plays that result in scoring chances for his group.

No. 31: Bill Zonnon, F, Rouyn-Noranda Huskies (QMJHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 185 pounds

Zonnon is an intriguing prospect. He's physically involved and trustworthy in all situations. His skating stride is a bit unorthodox, but he arrives everywhere on time. Zonnon is one of the top scorers in the QMJHL this season (23G-39A) and doesn't cut corners in any zone. I feel like Zonnon will provide secondary scoring at the NHL level and coaches will trust him enough defensively to match up against middle six opponents.

No. 32: Henry Brzustewicz, D, London Knights (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 203 pounds

I'm splitting hairs on players in this range but I've settled on Brzustewicz as the last pick in my first-round for these rankings. He's a coveted right-shot defenceman who can be used in all situations, provides better than secondary offence, and matches up against top lines. I appreciate his battle in the defensive zone. Brzustewicz isn't shy about rotating in the lanes to block shots.

No. 33: Nathan Behm, F, Kamloops Blazers (WHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 192 pounds

Behm averages over 20 minutes of ice time in Kamloops. He's deployed at even strength and the power play. He's a strong skater who has the pace, and size, to drive opponents off their blue line. Behm has a great stick. He shoots the puck accurately in motion and finds rebounds and tips around the net.

No. 34: Jakob Ihs-Wozniak, F, Lulea J20 (Sweden)

Height: 6-foot-2 Weight: 184 pounds

lhs-Wozniak can be a bit streaky at times. There are nights he has the puck on his stick consistently and his skill is on full display. He's big, athletic, moves well and produces offence. He has a great stick and the ability to score goals, or distribute effectively, from the flank on the power play. His skating is also sound. I'm monitoring his consistent compete and overall willingness to be involved every shift as the season winds down in Europe.

No. 35: Luca Romano, F, Kitchener Rangers (OHL)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 177 pounds

Every time I watch Romano play something positive happens. He's a darting forward who plays the game fast and can be used in all situations if required. His speed opens up space offensively and creates turnovers defensively. He's another player on the list that seems to score in streaks. I believe he has a "B" game that projects as a checking forward when he isn't scoring, which makes him a valuable pick in this range.

No. 36: Sascha Boumedienne, D, Boston University (NCAA)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 175 pounds

Boumedienne is a player I'm monitoring very closely. He projects as a potential second pairing, two-way defenceman who can match up against top six forwards and chip in some depth offence. In his last 10-game segment he has contributed four assists and averaged 18 minutes per game of ice time, the bulk of which comes at even strength and the penalty kill.

No. 37: Adam Benak, F, Youngstown Phantoms (USHL)

Height: 5-foot-7 Weight: 160 pounds

Benak is easily defined. He's an undersized skill forward who's hard to defend in small areas and plays quick. His open ice pace isn't elite for his stature, he relies heavily on his first three steps out of the gate to gain separation on opponents. I appreciate Benak's compete. He continues to empty the tank every time his number is called. The discussion will come down to his size for the NHL game, but there is no denying he has the skill. Benak has produced 10G-25A so far this season. His defensive detail ranges.

No. 38: Charlie Trethewey, D, USNTP (U-18)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 200 pounds

Trethewey's game has been trending positively in his recent 10-game segment. The two-way defenceman has averaged 19 minutes of ice time per game and he's deployed in all situations. Trethewey has 2G-4A in the segment. Most impressive is his plus-6 rating. Trethewey is plenty strong and has a deceptive shot that can beat goalies from range. His detail has ranged at times this year, especially his routes to kill plays defensively, but he gets credit for his game ramping up recently.

No. 39: Eric Nilson, F, Djurgardens J20 (Sweden)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 156 pounds

Nilson is rising for me. He's a very skilled right-shot forward who's difficult to defend in small areas. Nilson leverages pretty well for his current weight and uses his excellent skating and edges to escape pressure to make plays. Nilson is deployed in all situations at the J20 level in Sweden, but he isn't likely to kill penalties in North America. He has top six NHL skill on projection but will obviously have to add considerably more strength.

No. 40: Ethan Czata, F, Niagara Ice Dogs (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 175 pounds

Czata might be a forward who is better suited to play wing than the middle at the pro level. He has good size, speed, and skill but his defensive detail can range. He's having a solid year in Niagara, contributing 18G-26A so far. Czata makes plays in a hurry. Pucks are on and off his stick before defenders have a chance to create turnovers.

No. 41: Eddie Genborg, F, Linkoping HC (Sweden)

Height: 6-foot-1 Weight: 179 pounds

Genborg is splitting time between the J20 and SHL in Sweden. He's a lean, long, skilled forward who can create offence off the rush or drive to the net off the puck hunting tips. His ability to make puck plays in traffic is attractive. Genborg has the hockey sense and detail to be used in all situations. At the pro level (SHL) he only averages around eight minutes per game of ice time, but his ice time spikes to over 20 minutes when playing at the junior level.

No. 42: Jack Ivankovic, G, Brampton Steelheads (OHL)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 178 pounds

Ivankovic was part of the goaltending tandem for Team Canada at the world juniors and will benefit from the experience. Ivankovic is currently undersized by NHL standards but could have some more growth on the horizon. His family has height in its genes but it hasn't arrived until later in their development as youths. Ivankovic is very athletic. He has great feet and the ability to make himself as big as possible fronting shooters around his net. He could be the second goalie off the board this June but there will be competition for bragging rights.

No. 43: Alexei Medvedev, G, London Knights (OHL)

Height: 6-foot-2 Weight: 178 pounds

It won't surprise me if Medvedev ends up being selected ahead of Ivankovic, and possibly challenges Ravensbergen for the top goalie slot in this draft class. He has great size, fronts shooters very well, and almost never ends up outside his posts when moving laterally. In my opinion, Medvedev's crease composure, overall, is the best in the draft class. He allows the puck to come to him and manages how to make saves and track rebounds on time.

No. 44: Cole McKinney, F, USNTDP (U-18)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 200 pounds

McKinney projects as a two-way forward who has the skill to contribute secondary, and at times better than secondary, offence. He has good size and strength and an extra gear in transition at times. McKinney can be deployed in all situations and he averages over 18 minutes of ice time with Team USA. He brings good value in this area of the draft.

No. 45: Peyton Kettles, D, Swift Current Broncos (WHL)

Height: 6-foot-5 Weight: 190 pounds

Kettles projects as a mostly simple two-way/shutdown defenceman at the NHL level. He's a solid skater on straight lines and has reliable puck skill. He outlets responsibly and will join the rush on occasion as an extra layer, but generally makes sure he is taking care of keeping the puck out of his net as his top priority.

No. 46: Will Horcoff, University of Michigan (NCAA)

Height: 6-foot-4 Weight: 190 pounds

Horcoff made the move to the NCAA mid-season after starting the year with the USNTDP in Plymouth. He's off to a nice start at the college level. Horcoff has produced 2G-3A in his first five college games. He's averaging just shy of 15 minutes per game time and has a role at even strength and the power play. Horcoff is a big body who extends plays below the goal line and sets screens around the crease. His open ice pace is average-plus and he's adjusting defensively at the college level. He's a power style forward who shields pucks and opponents.

No. 47: Kristian Epperson, F, Saginaw Spirit (OHL)

Height: 5-foot-11 Weight: 183 pounds

Epperson was passed over at last year's draft in Vegas, but he's making the most of his draft plus one year playing in Saginaw. Epperson's offensive production has gone to an entirely new level. He's contributed 18G-36A and finds himself skating in the top six forward group and the top power play unit for the Spirit. He's detailed defensively (plus-35) and displaying the ability to beat opponents one-on-one off the rush.

No. 48: Ben Kevan, F, Des Moines Buccaneers (USHL)

Height: 6-foot Weight: 182 pounds

Kevan's offensive upside makes him an attractive target in this range of the draft. He has a great release and the ability to shoot the puck accurately in motion. He's dangerous working off the half wall on his forehand and making plays off the flank on the power play. His defensive

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 31, 2025

1337992 Minnesota Wild

Wild's Marc-Andre Fleury gets hometown hero treatment — and a shutout — in Montreal

Sarah McLellan

Fleury, who grew up an hour outside town, made 19 saves and waited out a lengthy standing ovation late in the game.

MONTREAL – Marc-Andre Fleury kept preparing for a puck, raising his glove and lifting his stick, but it was all in vain.

The Wild were blocking shots left and right, sweeping pressure away before it reached their crease. When the Canadiens finally had an opening, their wind-up crashed wide into the boards or they pulled themselves off-side.

So, Fleury folded himself back under the crossbar over and over again, looking very much like the kid on the playground waiting to get picked. Nobody would play ball, forcing the guest of honor to arrive late to his own celebration.

"That's the most tired I've felt without having a shot," Fleury said. "Just like the stress, the emotions, anticipation, it takes energy out of you."

But in time, Fleury earned the salute the crowd of split loyalty gave him.

In what was likely the Quebec native's last game at Bell Centre during the goaltender's farewell season, Fleury shut out Montreal 4-0 in front of family and friends for an emotional sendoff that culminated with a handshake line from the Canadiens and curtain call as the game's first star while a bouquet of flowers hit the ice.

"I was just hoping to not let in six," Fleury said. "Little stressed, but so many people watching I wanted to put on a good show so they could remember me playing well.

"I'm happy it went well."

Fleury's 19 saves during his 572nd win included goals from rookie Liam Ohgren, Marco Rossi, Devin Shore and Frederick Gaudreau — the Wild showing no lack of focus after a 3-1 win at Toronto the previous night ahead of Fleury's homecoming, which his wife, Veronique, their three children, Estelle, Scarlett and James, his mom, France, and sister Marylene attended.

"Guys would have blocked shots with their face if they had to honestly," Gaudreau said. "That's how everybody felt about this game."

The Wild defended meticulously from the start, with Fleury not facing his first shot until six minutes elapsed, the save appropriately getting announced with a loud thud when Montreal's Lane Hutson sent the puck into Fleury's pad.

When they had the puck, the Wild got up ice with speed and support and their cohesiveness was rewarded 3:41 into the second period when a determined Ohgren scooped up his own rebound and wired the puck over goalie Jakub Dobes after Dobes had lost his stick during Ohgren's earlier chance.

This was Ohgren's first goal of the season in his seventh game with the Wild since the team promoted him from the minors after Marcus Johansson suffered a concussion vs. Edmonton.

"I'm happy with my game," Ohgren said, "and just have to continue."

Aside from giving Fleury a mostly quiet night — he had a mere eight stops after two periods — the stingy defending by the Wild also led to offense: After Jon Merrill was stung by a Josh Anderson shot, one of 19 blocks the Wild made, Marcus Foligno set up a wide-open Rossi for a blocker-side look at 5:47 of the second.

Then after his most Fleury-like save, Fleury stretching out windmill style in the third to deny Anderson after poke-checking him a period earlier, Shore won a 50-50 puck before draining his first goal with the Wild at 5:56.

Later during the Canadiens' first and only power play, Fleury backed up the stop with a series of pad saves for his busiest sequence. The Wild also went 0-for-1 on the power play.

Gaudreau added an empty-netter with 1:27 to go, as the Wild tied for the fourth-fewest games to 20 road victories in NHL history. They're 20-5-3, with two games left on this trip, and are on a three-game win streak.

Dobes, who was on a career-opening six-game point streak (5-0-1), had 23 saves in his first regulation loss.

But this matchup was more about longevity and legacy.

Fleury, who will retire after the season, is now just one appearance away from tying Roberto Luongo for second all-time in games (1,043), and after three more starts he'll match Luongo for second in that category, too, at 1,014, looming milestones that'll join the others: The 40-year-old is already the second-winningest goaltender in NHL history with the second-most time on ice and most shootout victories (66) during a Hall of Fame career that also includes three Stanley Cups with Pittsburgh and a Vezina Trophy with Vegas as the league's top goalie after getting drafted first overall in 2003.

"As usual, I think the bigger the stage, the more emotional the stage, it seems like the better he gets," coach John Hynes said.

Fleury's first shutout of the season and 76th overall moved him into a tie for 10th with Ed Belfour and Tony Esposito; Luongo is ninth with 77. He became the first to post a shutout as a teenager and at 40 years or older and now has a shutout in all 21 of his seasons, a league record.

"This couldn't have been a better au revoir to Montreal," Foligno said.

Despite the dud from the Canadiens in front of 21,105, the fans were still cheering, giving Fleury a standing ovation and chanting his name late in the third period.

"Couple blurry eyes," said Fleury, who improved to 11-5-1 on the season. "Geez, getting soft getting older. An honor.

"It was an honor to be part of it."

Players from both teams also acknowledged Fleury, tapping their sticks, and the ensuing puck drop was delayed.

"We had chills," Foligno said.

Gaudreau, who's also from Quebec, watched from the bench.

"It took me a lot not to cry," he said. "I love this guy. He's been so much for me since he arrived. You just realize the legend that he is and his last game at home in front of all the people he loves and all the people that love him and all the fans that love him.

After the "Fleury" chants paused and as time was running out, Montreal pulled Dobes and Fleury thought about attempting an empty-netter.

As accomplished as he is, he still hasn't scored a goal.

"But I was more focused on keeping it zero," he said.

"You had 20-some guys stressed out because we have a shutout on the line, and we're like, 'This is great,' " Foligno said. "But we can't let this go to waste here."

They didn't and after the final horn sounded, the "Fleury" chants resumed.

He finished 28-13-8 in his career vs. the Canadiens and 13-6-5 in Montreal.

"I don't know what it's like to be in that guy's shoes," Foligno said. "I wish sometimes I was, but I don't know. It's insane. You get a whole city, Quebec, country behind you, it's amazing. You see people that aren't even supposed to be cheering for you applauding you.

“I think if you can do that at the end of your career, that says something about who you are as a player and as a person.”

What the Twins and Wolves have to hope for is ownership that is rich enough to fund a winner, and humble enough to let the experts run the show.

John Gilbert covered hockey for three decades, hitting pros, preps and colleges, sometimes all at once.

Star Tribune LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337993 Minnesota Wild

‘Flower’ in full bloom as Wild blank Canadiens

Jess Myers

Sorel-Tracy, a shipbuilding town of about 35,000 on the St. Lawrence River, an hour or so north of Montreal, was about 100 residents lighter on Thursday night. A literal busload of folks from Marc-Andre Fleury’s hometown made the trek to the big city to see their puck-stopping hero go to work in his home province for what was almost certainly the last time.

The Minnesota Wild goalie known as “Flower” was greeted at the Bell Center with cheers and dozens of signs, in French and English, welcoming him back to Quebec for one more go. And by way of saying ‘merci’ for their support, the 40-year-old gave the locals quite a show, stopping 19 shots for his first shutout of the season in the Wild’s 4-0 win over the Canadiens in Montreal.

Minnesota got goals from Liam Ohgren, Marco Rossi, Devin Shore and finished it with Freddie Gaudreau hitting an empty net as the Wild swept their season series with the Canadiens, not allowing a goal in the process.

“It was nice to see the team battle so hard in front of ‘Flower.’ He came up with some big saves,” Wild coach John Hynes said to the reporters in Montreal. “As usual, the bigger the stage, the more emotional the stage, it seems like the better he gets.”

Fleury settled into things during a scoreless first period in which the Wild allowed only three shots to get through the veteran. In the opposite crease, Montreal rookie Jakub Dobes — the physically imposing former Ohio State standout — turned aside eight Minnesota shots, as the Wild had the period’s only power play.

The crisp pace of the middle period suited the visitors just fine, as Ohgren opened the scoring with his first of the season after a feed from Gaudreau, another French Canadian playing close to home. It was the ninth consecutive road game in which the Wild have scored first.

Barely two minutes later, Wild defenseman Jon Merrill fell to the ice after blocking a shot, and in the chaos that ensued, Rossi got behind the Canadiens’ defense undetected by everyone except Marcus Foligno, whose set-up pass sent Rossi in alone on the Montreal net. There, Rossi found a tiny gap between Dobes’ blocker and his right leg pad.

Fleury, who was making his 48th career start versus Montreal, gave the fans a show as well, sprawling out to thwart one home team rush to the net, and thanking his goalposts after another Canadiens’ scoring opportunity struck iron.

Early in the third, in a play that perfectly encapsulates the Wild’s play on the road, Fleury made another acrobatic pad save, keying a rush the other way, which ended when Shore poked the puck away from a Canadiens’ defender, then ripped a shot past Dobes for a three-goal lead. It was Shore’s first goal in a Wild uniform.

From there, it was all about Fleury, who appeared to be fighting back tears during a pause late in the game which featured a tribute to his career on the video board and a lengthy standing ovation from the fans in attendance. As the final seconds ticked away and his 76th career shutout became official, the crowd stood and chanted Fleury’s name one last time.

“I know the end of the game meant a lot to him and he said in the locker room after the game that he appreciated how the guys played,” Hynes said. “He really appreciates all the fans’ support.”

Every Canadiens player lined up at center ice following the final horn and shook Fleury’s hand before he left the ice. In a TV interview after the game, Fleury admitted fighting some strong emotions during the in-game tribute, and joked that it might have been strategic on the part of the folks in Montreal, to try and rattle him before the contest had been decided.

“I had some watery eyes at some points. I tried to shake it off and when the puck dropped, be ready for it,” Fleury said in a postgame interview on FanDuel Sports Network North. “Obviously, a lot of emotion. It was a big day for me having so much family and friends at the game, and the fans in Montreal and all around Quebec that made it to the game.”

He came back out one more time after Fleury was named first star of the night, waving a thank you to the fans, and giving his stick to a child in the front row. Per the NHL, Fleury is the first player in league history to record a shutout as a teenager and past age 40.

Dobes finished with 23 saves for Montreal, suffering his first NHL loss after starting his career 5-0-1. For the Wild, it was their ninth consecutive win versus Montreal.

Minnesota improved to a NHL-best 20-5-3 on the road with the victory. The 20 road wins in 28 games is a new franchise best. The previous record came in 2016-17, when the Wild got their 20th road win in their 33rd road game.

The Wild complete their tour of eastern Canada on Saturday with a 6 p.m. CT start versus the Senators in Ottawa. The Senators won their first of two meetings this season by a 3-1 score on Dec. 29 in St. Paul.

Pioneer Press LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337994 Minnesota Wild

Goalie mask designed by Dakota artist and worn by Wild’s Marc-André Fleury acquired by MN Historical Society

Molly Guthrey

Hockey and art, heritage and politics have come together in the form of one goalie’s mask now on display at the Minnesota History Center.

Cole Redhorse Taylor stands near a glass case housing a hockey mask adorned with his design.

The mask, featuring a design by Mdewakanton Dakota artist Cole Redhorse Taylor and worn by Minnesota Wild goaltender Marc-André Fleury on Native American Heritage Night in 2023, is under glass as part of a new display in the ongoing “Our Home: Native Minnesota” exhibit.

On Tuesday, Redhorse Taylor stood next to the display, wearing a special Wild hockey jersey issued to celebrate Native American History Month, and reflecting on this helmet-shaped collaboration.

“People have said to me, ‘This is a moment in Minnesota history,’” Redhorse Taylor says. “From what I understand, that’s why the Historical Society wanted it — because it was such a moment in history.”

Here’s the story behind that moment.

An artist’s start

Going on a field trip to the Minnesota History Center is a rite of passage for kids in Minnesota. Redhorse Taylor, 30, was one of those kids. As Mdewakanton Dakota and a member of the Prairie Island Indian Community, though, he didn’t always see himself reflected in what he saw at the museum as a child.

“There was nothing like this,” he says of the “Native Minnesota” exhibit. But …

“There was one small exhibit which I thought was actually really cool,” he says. “It was an exhibit where there was an oral history of a Dakota girl

and her family, a video of her talking about her family history in relation to how the state formed."

While he was always drawn to history, art was another matter.

"I was taught artistic skills when I was younger, I was taught how to bead, but I didn't really think of myself as an artist," he says. "What we know as Native art, Indigenous art, Dakota art, I didn't know that was considered art — I thought it was a craft."

When he began taking art classes in his senior year of high school, though, his future was revealed to him.

"I thought, 'Oh, this is what I want to do,'" he recalls.

After initially planning to major in American Indian Studies and minoring in art at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, Redhorse Taylor transferred to the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, where he majored in fine arts studio with an emphasis on drawing and painting.

His art studies took him full circle when he was invited to be part of the Native American Artist-in-Residence Program through the Historical Society.

"I decided to research Dakota pucker toe moccasins, which in our language we call 'Hanyuski,'" he says.

In a way, it was a lost art.

"I wanted to work to revitalize them in our communities," he says. "I learned how to make them, how to construct them and do the pattern for them, because they're all done by hand."

As part of his residency, the artist taught others how to make them, too.

"One of the things I'll never forget about doing that residency, and why I felt like the people benefited from it, was when an elder said, 'I haven't seen this type of moccasin since I was a little girl,'" he says.

A new opportunity

A goalie's hockey mask adorned with a design of floral and fauna by Cole Redhorse Taylor.

So how did the helmet opportunity arise?

"My tribe sponsors the Minnesota Wild through our own enterprises. We have a really good relationship with them," Redhorse Taylor says. "And one of the things they've been doing in recent years, which I never saw as a kid, was they have Native American Heritage Night … and so, because of that, they approached my tribe and they wanted to reach out to an artist, they did a call for art, they wanted to have the artist design a helmet for the hockey mask for the goalie, Marc-André Fleury.

"This event and this cause was really important to him because his wife (Véronique Larosee Fleury) is Indigenous, their children are Indigenous, from Canada," he says. "So this was really important for him and for me, to see it done. So I put my name in the hat for consideration, and I was chosen."

The artist, who credits the marketing department of Treasure Island Resort & Casino for serving as the go-between for this creative venture, met with the Wild ahead of the collaboration.

"They gave me some of the parameters I had to work around, like what color palette to use, but otherwise gave me free range," Redhorse Taylor says. "I knew I wanted to use Dakota floral designs, which is inspired by our material culture, by our beadwork and quillwork, which is inspired by the floral and fauna of our homelands."

The words used were important, too.

"On the brow of the helmet, I wanted to have the Dakota language featured on that element," he says. "And so on the element you see, 'Mni Sóta Makoce,' which means, 'The land of the cloudy waters' or 'The land of the misty waters' — there are many translations of that, but that's where Minnesota gets its name from, the Dakota language. So I wanted to make sure that was highlighted."

Under glass, the helmet looks like it was handpainted, but that is not how this creative process worked.

"I didn't paint the helmet, I designed it," he explains. "The team at the Wild sent me a template and I went from there, I have software that I use to design things digitally. I sent it off and they said, 'This is great.'"

Redhorse Taylor's design was then reproduced on the helmet.

"I thought it would be digitally printed on the helmet, but they actually had somebody reproduce my designs with an air spray or spray paint that's specifically for those helmets," he says. "I give this company credit for reproducing my design so well. The way it looks is exactly like the mockup I made."

November 2023

It was Friday, Nov. 24, 2023 — the day after Thanksgiving. At the Xcel Energy Center in downtown St. Paul, the Wild were celebrating Native American Heritage Night as they prepared to face off with the Colorado Avalanche.

At that time, new directives from the National Hockey League prohibited players from wearing specialty jerseys, masks, stickers, decals or tape for theme nights — a response to backlash against players who declined to wear Pride jerseys. Minnesota jerseys created for Heritage Night and auctioned off for charity were not worn on the ice that night.

But the mask?

Fleury, who was not scheduled to play that night, still took to the ice: He wore the mask during warmups.

Marc-André Fleury wearing a goalie mask adorned with floral and fauna art.

Minnesota Wild goaltender Marc-André Fleury wears a mask, created by Mdewakanton Dakota artist Cole Redhorse Taylor, during warmups before a NHL hockey game against the Colorado Avalanche in St. Paul on Nov. 24, 2023. The mask is currently on display as of January 2025, part of the "Our Home: Native Minnesota" exhibit at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. (Bruce Kluckhohn / Minnesota Wild)

In a subsequent silent auction, the mask was purchased by the Minnesota Historical Society for $35,100, with the money benefitting the American Indian Family Center and the Minnesota Wild Foundation.

Later, Fleury explained his decision to defy the NHL.

"It was to honor Native Americans in all of Minnesota, Prairie Island, there, trying to help them," Fleury told the Pioneer Press. "To wear the mask for 15 minutes, and they raise a good chunk of money to help the family center on the reservation, to me I just thought was the right thing to do, and it was an honor for me to represent them."

It was quite a night for the artist, who attended the game.

"I didn't have any contact with him, so I didn't know what he was going to do," Redhorse Taylor says. "So when he showed up on the ice during the practice round and he was wearing the helmet, I was like, 'Oh, my God!' I was just so excited. I was on a suite level and I almost fell over the balcony, I was jumping up and down. I knew it was bigger than everything, it was bigger than me, it was bigger than all that.

"Everyone was sending me videos of it and pictures of it and it was just everywhere, it was everywhere, it just made a huge splash that he stuck it to the man and said, 'I'm going to wear this,'" he says. "And he didn't have to do that. But I'm forever grateful to him that he did."

It was only later that Redhorse Taylor learned it was the Minnesota Historical Society that placed the winning bid for the historic helmet in the silent auction.

'I was really happy," he says. "I knew, because of my relationship with the History Center, I knew it would live forever here and that people would have access to it."

Fleury is pleased, too.

"I am very honored that the Minnesota History Center has my mask on display as part of this wonderful exhibit," said Fleury in a statement provided through the Wild on Wednesday. "It is incredibly special for me and my family. We appreciate the time and effort everyone has put into this, and hope visitors enjoy it!"

A curator with the Historical Society explained why the helmet was important to Minnesota.

“This mask is at the intersection of contemporary Native arts, sports memorabilia, and current discourses on the tension between sports and politics,” said Angelica Maier, curator of 3-D objects, in a statement. “Bringing the mask into the MNHS collections will further our ongoing effort to bring forward, tell, and preserve Minnesota’s stories.”

The Pioneer Press has learned that neither the Wild nor Fleury were fined over the helmet.

‘Living and thriving’

In addition to the helmet, the public can view other works by Redhorse Taylor that the Historical Society acquired, including a pair of Dakota Hanyuski (Dakota pucker toe moccasins) of smoked leather and glass beads, as well as Ledger art, drawings of Dakota people wearing COVID-era masks while surrounded with plants used for medicinal purposes, such as sage and cedar plants. There is also a glass photograph of Taylor by Shane Balkowitsch.

Along with the helmet, the works illustrate that Native art is not relegated to history.

“One of the things that our Native communities combat is the misconception that we no longer exist — because people have in their minds things that are very stereotypical, from Westerns and other things,” says Rita Walaszek Arndt, a member of the White Earth Ojibwe who is the program and outreach manager of the Native American Initiatives Department at the Minnesota Historical Society. “But we are living and thriving today.”

The work of Redhorse Taylor, Walaszek Arndt says, is an example to “showcase that, but also to identify some of the things from our histories that continue to show up in our contemporary life today.”

More info can be found at mnhs.org/historycenter/activities/museum/our-home.

Pioneer Press LOADED: 01.31.2025

1337995 Minnesota Wild

Wild’s Marc-Andre Fleury delivers vintage performance on special night: 3 takeaways vs. Canadiens

Joe Smith

MONTREAL — This was always going to be Marc-Andre Fleury’s big night.

With the future Hall of Famer playing in his final game at the Bell Centre, he acknowledged it was going to be very “special,” emotional. And it very much was, from the ovation the crowd gave him when the giant video screen focused on him during “O Canada,” to the way they chanted his name, “FLEURY!” during a lengthy TV timeout in the third.

The chants even continued after the ensuing faceoff.

And Fleury delivered on the hype with a vintage performance, racking up his 76th career shutout in a 4-0 Minnesota Wild victory. There were a few of his greatest hits, from his poke check and sprawling stop on Josh Anderson to a windmill stop on the Montreal Canadiens forward in the third.

He grew up just an hour from the Bell Centre, pretending to be idol Patrick Roy making Game 7 saves in his neighborhood outdoor rink. Fleury always considered it an honor to play on this ice, and the whole city returned the favor Thursday. The entire Canadiens team shook his hand after the game, and then he got one last rousing ovation as the game’s No, 1 star. Flowers, fittingly, were tossed on the ice.

Johnny on the spot

Of all the heroes in Wednesday’s 3-1 victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs, from Filip Gustavsson to the entire fourth line, it was defenseman Jon Merrill who received the “HARD” chain for player of the game. It was a fitting choice by captain Jared Spurgeon, as Merrill had several gutsy plays down the stretch, including a block of Auston Matthews and clear in the final minutes. Thursday, Merrill followed it up with another strong game against Montreal. On Marco Rossi’s goal in the second period, the whole play — the rush — was started after a block by Merrill in front of the net. Merrill is playing some of his best hockey at the right time, as when Jonas Brodin returns from long-term injured reserve, there will have to be some decisions made on the blue line in terms of who comes out of the lineup.

Textbook play right here 🙌 pic.twitter.com/u8tewXi1Fg

— Minnesota Wild (@mnwild) January 31, 2025

Liam Ohgren showing signs

Liam Ohgren scored his first goal of the season, putting the Wild on the board in the second period. On the play, the Wild rookie collected his own loose puck in front and sent a wrist shot through Jakub Dobes. That whole line with Yakov Trenin, Freddy Gaudreau and Ohgren played well. But Ohgren’s getting some production is an encouraging sign. His first game after his latest call-up was a little tough, but he said he’s continued to feel more comfortable. In a two-assist game in Colorado, Ohgren said he’s realizing he’s got the time and space to make plays. General manager and president of hockey operations Bill Guerin said the other day that he’d like to see Ohgren “play a little more free” as he “tends to be a little robotic at times.” “I think there’s another level he can get to,” Guerin said. But the Wild have been happy with how Ohgren has played in his own end. Ohgren said spending most of this season in AHL Iowa might have been “the best thing for me,” as he got to work on his 200-foot game. They focused on board battles and positioning in the defensive zone.

Öhgy wasn't stopping 🚨🚨🚨 pic.twitter.com/CjFNR5huzb

— Minnesota Wild (@mnwild) January 31, 2025

Shoresy Part 2

The fourth line had another really impressive game, led by Devin Shore. Shore, who assisted on the Wild’s first goal Wednesday, gave Minnesota another insurance goal in the third period Thursday. It was his first in 30 games with the Wild. Shore, 30, on his sixth NHL team, was brought in this summer to give the organization the kind of organizational depth in case of injuries. He’s definitely stepped up as of late, forming good chemistry with Jakub Lauko and Marat Khusnutdinov.