



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 5, 2025

The Athletic

Hurricanes' K'Andre Miller, still recovering from injury, reflects on Rangers tenure

By: Peter Baugh

NEW YORK — K'Andre Miller took the Madison Square Garden ice as a visitor for the first time at the Carolina Hurricanes' skate Tuesday morning, but he won't play against the New York Rangers while recovering from a lower-body injury.

The 25-year-old said, "It stings a little bit" not to be able to play his former team, but the Hurricanes are taking a longer-term approach with his health.

"I was really hopeful that we would've saw him here tonight," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "(A return) is right there, but we're not putting guys in the lineup unless they feel 100 percent."

Miller, the No. 22 pick in the 2018 NHL Draft, spent five seasons in New York, playing 368 regular-season games and 43 more in the playoffs. He averaged more than 20 minutes of ice time per game every year with New York and had 132 points with the club. Miller, a 6-foot-5 defenseman with mobility, posted a nine-goal, 43-point campaign in 2022-23, but was unable to reach those offensive heights the next two seasons.

With limited cap space, Rangers president and general manager Chris Drury traded Miller on July 1 for a 2026 first-round pick, a 2026 second-round pick and defenseman Scott Morrow. The move gave the Rangers the cap flexibility to sign Vladislav Gavrikov. Miller, meanwhile, signed an eight-year, \$7.5 million average annual value extension with Carolina to complete the sign-and-trade deal.

Miller felt he did a good job during his time with the Rangers, he told reporters Tuesday from his locker in MSG's visiting dressing room. The team reached the Eastern Conference final twice during his tenure, and he frequently had to play difficult defensive minutes, first while paired with Jacob Trouba and then with Will Borgen after New York acquired him last season. Miller played against the second-hardest quality of competition of any Rangers defenseman last

season, according to Hockey Stat Cards. "Had a pretty tough job every night going against other (teams') top lines," he said. "Had a lot of minutes, big responsibility. I think overall I handled it pretty well. It's a tough job playing here. Obviously I wanted to win here and do whatever I could to help the team do well, but just came up short a couple times."

Miller raved about the amenities, travel and food he had with New York — "it's just the little things that you appreciate after the fact," he said — but believes there's more to his game than he showed with the Rangers.

"Confidence-wise and just what I wanted from myself, I wasn't getting all the results I wanted here," he said. "I blame myself for that. I had some struggles throughout my years here. The ups and downs just kind of took a toll, and it was in my head for a lot of the time I was here."

Raleigh, he's found, has presented a nice change. The city has a slower pace than New York, and he likes "having a little bit more time during the day to go on walks, sit outside, enjoy the weather rather than sitting in traffic."

The Hurricanes love what they saw from Miller before his injury. He has two goals and four points in six games this season and has averaged 23:32 of ice time per game.

"He couldn't have played much better at the start," Brind'Amour said. "I was so impressed. ... His skating ability fits perfectly, getting up the ice. He was kind of doing it all for us there until he went out."

"I didn't know he was that good of a skater," Hurricanes forward Sebastian Aho added. "Big body as well. I feel like he fits our system really well."

Miller agrees, saying Carolina's style "fits my game perfectly."

"I think we have a very skilled team, very fast team that likes to skate up the ice and create chances off the rush," he said. "I'm just trying to do whatever I can to play hard defensively and get the puck in those forwards' hands."



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Recap: Kochetkov, Canes Shut Down Rangers In New York

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

NEW YORK - Led by a 25-save shutout from Pyotr Kochetkov in his season debut, the Carolina Hurricanes stayed perfect against Metropolitan Division opponents with a 3-0 victory over the New York Rangers on Tuesday.

A desperate Rangers team seeking its first home win of the season came out firing at Madison Square Garden, heavily outshooting the Canes in the early going. But a sharp-starting Kochetkov held the hosts at bay, and the opportunistic visitors pounced on their first power play, as Nikolaj Ehlers ripped home a laser from the left circle for his first goal as a Hurricane at 13:30.

If the first 20 minutes favored the Rangers (despite the scoreline), the final 40 were all Carolina. Another tally from Sean Walker, who found twine with a long-range wrister at 17:07 of the second stanza, provided some welcome insurance, but it was the Hurricanes' smothering style that stole the show.

Limiting New York to just a single shot in the third period - a dump-in from center that happened to find the crease - Carolina controlled the contest through the latter stages until Seth Jarvis' empty-netter finished the fight.

Stats & Standouts

Goaltender Pyotr Kochetkov's shutout was the 11th of his career, tying Kevin Weekes and Sean Burke for the fourth-most in franchise history.

Kochetkov's performance marks the fourth time in franchise history that a goaltender has recorded a shutout in his first start of a season, joining Petr Mrazek (2020-21) and Sean Burke (1995-96, 1996-97).

Forward Nikolaj Ehlers scored his first goal of the season and led all skaters with six shots on net.

Defenseman Sean Walker factored in on two Carolina goals on Tuesday (1G, 1A), recording his second multi-point performance with the Canes and the 11th of his career.

Forward Jordan Staal skated in his 909th game as a Hurricane, tying his brother, Eric, for the most in team history (since relocation). Among franchise leaders, only Ron Francis (1,186) and Glen Wesley (913) have played more games.

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour on Kochetkov's perfect game, including his 15-save first period...

"That was the difference. Right off the bat, first period, he had a lot of testy ones. It allowed us to just settle in. After that, I thought we played great. I don't know how many shots we gave up, maybe nine the rest of the game, and one in the third - that's really good. But the game goes totally different if they capitalize."

Pyotr Kochetkov following his stellar showing...

"I played two days ago in the AHL, but the NHL is a little bit different... Guys really helped me today. Usually, I was able to see the puck, and if I had a rebound, guys worked at it (to clear it). It's always a team game... I just tried to do my best... It's my job."

Nikolaj Ehlers after his first Hurricanes goal...

"I've been waiting for that one for quite a while now. It definitely feels nice to get it today."

Rod Brind'Amour discussing the result..

"We needed that win for our group. I think we've been playing fine, but we hadn't really had a lot of results lately. So that was a big one."



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Kochetkov makes 25 saves in season debut, Hurricanes shut out Rangers

By: Dan Rosen

NEW YORK -- Pyotr Kochetkov made 25 saves for a shutout in his first start of the season, lifting the Carolina Hurricanes to a 3-0 win against the still-winless-at-home New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday.

The Rangers are 0-5-1 at home, tying a franchise record for the longest winless streak (six games) to start a season. They went 0-5 with one tie in their first six games in 1943-44 and 0-3 with three ties in their first six home games in 1950-51.

"It's frustrating," Rangers center Mika Zibanejad said. "No one wants to win at home more than we do right now."

Kochetkov missed Carolina's first 11 games with a lower-body injury he sustained in the preseason.

He got a conditioning start with the Chicago Wolves of the American Hockey League on Saturday and made 22 saves in a 4-1 win against the Toronto Marlies before being recalled on Sunday.

"I played (three) days ago in the AHL and the NHL is a little bit different," Kochetkov said. "I had a couple easy shots before dangerous moments. It helped me. And the guys really helped me today. Absolutely team win."

Nikolaj Ehlers scored his first goal with the Hurricanes (8-4-0), and Sean Walker had a goal and an assist.

The Hurricanes limited the Rangers to 12 shots on goal in the last 51-plus minutes of the game after giving up 13 in the first 8:40 of the first period. They allowed one shot on goal in the third period.

"Right off the bat, first period (Kochetkov) had a lot of testy ones and it allowed us to just settle in," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "After that I thought we played great. ... But the game goes totally different if they capitalize."

The Rangers (6-6-2) have been shut out in four of their six home games and held to one goal in another.

Igor Shesterkin made 29 saves.

"These guys are human, they care a lot about what's going on," Rangers coach Mike Sullivan said. "Of course we want

to be a team that prides itself on being good at home, being stingy at home, making this a tough place for people to play. I thought when you look at how the game was played in the first two periods there was a lot to like about our game. Some of the quality looks, I'm not sure we could get better looks. 'Bread' (Artemi Panarin) was in alone. J.T. (Miller) had a rebound chance right in the slot. Jonny Brodzinski had a Grade A chance right in the slot. There's three off the top of my head that you don't get many better looks than those. That's just the way it's going for us right now. We've just got to keep fighting."

Ehlers gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 13:30 of the first period.

He scored on the power play with a shot from the top of the left face-off circle through traffic, including a Seth Jarvis screen. Sebastian Aho won the face-off in the left circle back to Walker, who walked it to his right inside the blue line before passing the puck back to Ehlers.

"Been waiting for that one for quite a while now," Ehlers said.

Ehlers signed a six-year, \$51 million contract with the Hurricanes on July 3.

"Now he can relax, hopefully settle in," Brind'Amour said. "He's going to be here for a long time. We need him contributing."

Walker made it 2-0 at 17:07 of the second with another goal off a face-off win with a shot from the perimeter and a netfront screen.

Mark Jankowski won it back to Mike Reilly, who moved the puck across the blue line to Walker for a shot from above the right circle. Jankowski was screening Shesterkin and nearly got his stick on the puck for a tip-in.

Sullivan said the action in front of both nets was the difference in the game.

"I think we could have done a better job offensively in fighting for the blue paint and making the sightlines difficult, getting some sticks on pucks," he said. "When you look at the nature of the goals scored against us; a power-play goal that's a wrist shot from the perimeter and a sifter from the blue line off a face-off with people around the net. ... Your ability to



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win the netfronts at both ends of the rink is an important element of it."

Jarvis scored into the empty net to make it 3-0 at 18:21 of the third period.

The Rangers had a stretch of 21:18 without a shot on goal; the final 8:08 of the second period through the first 13:10 of the third.

They also went 0-for-3 on the power play, falling to a League-worst 11.1 percent (4-for-36) this season.

"I don't know," Zibanejad said. "I don't know, honestly. We keep talking about having good looks. We keep talking about the stuff we do well and try to build on it. I feel like we're at

three or four or maybe five Grade As and we don't score. The puck just has got to go in. Other than that we have to keep going. We have to find a way to put the puck in the net. I don't know. I don't think I've ever been a part of something like this before in terms of getting looks and not scoring. It's frustrating."

NOTES: Kochetkov's shutout was the 11th of his NHL career, all with the Hurricanes, tying Kevin Weekes and Sean Burke for the fourth most in franchise history after Cam Ward (27), Arturs Irbe (20) and Mike Liut (13).

Hurricanes' young defensemen 'learning on the fly'

By: Dan Rosen

NEW YORK -- K'Andre Miller was back on the ice at Madison Square Garden for a morning skate Tuesday, but this will not be the dream return the Carolina Hurricanes defenseman was hoping for when he eyed the schedule.

Miller, who spent the previous five seasons here, will not play against the New York Rangers (7 p.m. ET; HBO MAX, truTV, TNT, MSG, SN1), the sixth straight game he'll miss because of a lower-body injury.

"Obviously, this is one of the games you mark on your calendar from whenever the schedule comes out," Miller said. "So yeah, this one stings a little bit, but I'll take the right approach to my body, my health. I think that's the most important thing and make sure I'm ready for a big push."

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said Miller is close to returning but is not quite 100 percent and won't return until that is the case.

The Rangers traded Miller to the Hurricanes on July 1, and he immediately signed an eight-year, \$60 million contract (\$7.5 million average annual value).

The 25-year-old, who had 132 points (36 goals, 96 points) in 368 games with New York from 2020-25, was off to a strong start to this season with four points (two goals, two assists) in six games before sustaining his injury against the Vegas Golden Knights on Oct. 20.

"He couldn't have played much better at the start," Brind'Amour said. "I was so impressed. It's the range, it's the skating ability. We might be almost burned but we close it off just because we have got two extra feet of reach. And his skating ability fits perfectly, getting up the ice and doing everything. He was kind of doing it all for us there until he went out. That's a big piece we're missing."

Miller actually is one of three big defensemen Carolina is missing; Jaccob Slavin and Shayne Gostisbehere are also out with lower-body injuries. Slavin will miss his 10th straight game, and Gostisbehere his third in a row and sixth in seven.

The Hurricanes have lost three of their past four games and four of six after starting the season with five consecutive wins.

The injuries have forced them to dive deeper into their pool of defensemen than they would ever like to do.

Mike Reilly was Carolina's seventh defenseman at the start of the season, a healthy scratch for the first two games before Slavin got hurt. Rookies Charles Alexis Legault and Joel Nystrom started the season with Chicago of the American Hockey League.

Nystrom will be playing his sixth straight game Tuesday after making his NHL debut on Oct. 23. Legault will also be playing his sixth NHL game; he made his debut Oct. 20.

In addition, Alexander Nikishin is also a rookie. Opening night this season was his NHL regular-season debut after the defenseman played four games in the Stanley Cup Playoffs last season.

"Pretty irreplaceable guy with Jaccob Slavin, 'Key' has been amazing for us and obviously 'Ghost' running our power play and was off to such a hot start," defenseman Sean Walker said. "So definitely missing those guys, but you do what to play the same way and everyone is trying to do that to the best of our abilities. I think we've done a pretty good job."

Brind'Amour agrees. He doesn't think the defense group, especially the rookies, are culprits in why the Hurricanes have struggled recently.

"They've been fine," Brind'Amour said. "They're hanging in there and they're learning on the fly."

Miller will return and replace one of them soon, possibly as soon as Thursday, when the Hurricanes play the Minnesota Wild at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The Hurricanes will surely welcome his return, but it still won't take the sting away from losing out on his first chance to play his former team Tuesday, especially when Slavin and Gostisbehere are also out.

However, there's always Nov. 26, when New York visits Carolina for the first time this season, and then again on



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Dec. 29. The Hurricanes will be back at Madison Square Garden on Feb. 5.

"Since I've been here, I don't remember us going down on 'D' like this really ever," Carolina defenseman Jalen Chatfield

said. "I think maybe once or twice we had a few guys out, but we have three guys missing right now, three key players. It's definitely different, but we've got great players. These guys have all been here in the summer, played great in the preseason, so we're happy to have them."



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AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS



Kochetkov stops 25 shots in season debut in the Hurricanes' 3-0 victory over the Rangers | AP News

By: Allan Kreda

NEW YORK (AP) — Pyotr Kochetkov made 25 saves in his season debut, Nikolaj Ehlers, Sean Walker and Seth Jarvis scored and the Carolina Hurricanes beat the New York Rangers 3-0 on Tuesday night.

Ehlers, who signed with Carolina last summer after 10 seasons with Winnipeg, scored his first goal with the Hurricanes with 6:30 left in the opening period. Walker made it 2-0 with 3:53 to go in the second on a long shot from the right point that eluded goalie Igor Shesterkin.

Seth Jarvis added an empty-netter for his team-leading eighth goal. Mike Reilly had two assists.

Kochetkov missed the start of the season because of a lower-body injury. He won 27 games for Carolina last season. The 26-year-old Russian made a point-blank stop on Rangers captain J.T. Miller just over two minutes into the middle period during a power play. The shutout was the 11th of his career.

The Rangers had a three-game winning streak snapped. They are winless at home with just six goals in six games.

New York is 0-5-1 at Madison Square Garden and 6-1-1 on the road. Five of the goals came in a 6-5 overtime loss to San Jose on Oct. 23. The Rangers have been blanked four times at home.

Ex-Rangers defenseman K'Andre Miller is relishing a fresh start with the Hurricanes | AP News

By: Stephen Whyno

NEW YORK (AP) — K'Andre Miller skated at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday for the first time since being traded from the Rangers to the Carolina Hurricanes and acknowledged it was a little weird to be back.

Once that initial feeling passed, Miller sounded at peace with the move, enjoying a slower, more relaxed life in Raleigh than the fast pace of New York and took a chance to reflect on his first five NHL seasons with the Rangers and how it did not end according to plan.

"Confidence-wise and just what I wanted from myself, I wasn't getting a lot of the results I wanted here," Miller said. "I blame myself for that. I had some struggles throughout my years here. The ups and downs, I think, just kind of took a toll and was in my head for a lot of the time I was here."

Miller was a big change-of-scenery candidate last summer as a 25-year-old restricted free agent defenseman without a contract and with the Rangers coming off underachieving and missing the playoffs. Carolina gave up 2026 first- and

second-round picks and prospect Scott Morrow to get Miller in a sign-and-trade for eight years and \$60 million.

General manager Eric Tulsky figured Miller at 6-foot-5 and 210 pounds in the middle of his prime would be an ideal fit for coach Rod Brind'Amour's system. An injury has interrupted that, but it was obvious from opening night that Miller would do just fine.

"He couldn't have played much better at the start," Brind'Amour said. "It's the range. It's his skating ability. We might be almost burned, but we close it off because we got two extra feet of reach. And then his skating ability fits perfectly getting up the ice and doing everything."

Miller's absence is one of three on the Hurricanes' blue line, which is also missing shutdown defenseman Jaccob Slavin and offensive-minded Shayne Gostisbehere.

Bummed to miss the first game at his old home arena, Miller is excited to resume playing soon with teammates who quickly made Carolina feel like home.



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"We've got a lot of guys who think about the game at a very high level," Miller said. "That's been eye-opening the last couple of weeks, just being around it, being in the locker room really breaking down plays. I think there's a little bit more structure to, I guess, the team's goal in between the whistles and things like that that have made my adjustment really easy."

Miller made the league's All-Rookie team in 2021, then was part of New York reaching the playoffs three years in a row from '22-'24, with a pair of trips to the Eastern Conference final. He averaged more than 21 minutes a game — 23 in the postseason — and believes now he managed that workload well.

"I had a pretty tough job every night going up against the other guys' top lines," Miller said. "Had a lot of minutes, a big

responsibility. I think overall I handled it pretty well. It's a tough job playing here, and obviously I wanted to win here and do whatever I could to help the team do good, but we just came up short when it matters."

Miller is now tasked with trying to help the Hurricanes get over the hump after losing one round short of the Stanley Cup Final two out of the past three springs. There's a long way to go, but veterans such as Sean Walker have been impressed by how seamlessly Miller has adjusted to a new group.

"Just such a good skater, rangy, big, makes good decisions and wants to play fast," Walker said. "What we want to do night in, night out, I think he fits the mold really well."



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Olympic hockey rosters: Who's in and who's out right now? - ESPN

By: Ryan S. Clark

Face it. You've thought about this at home or at work. You've done it when you're with family and friends. You've even thought about it before bed and when you should be watching your favorite team.

Who is going to make the national team for [insert nation] at the Olympics?

Every national team is facing tough personnel decisions. Some more than others. But it all comes with the caveat that so much can change until it's time to submit their final rosters at the end of December.

Until then, here's a projection examining what the teams for Canada, Czechia, Finland, Sweden and the United States might look like ahead of the Winter Olympics men's hockey tournament that begins Feb. 11 in Milan-Cortina.

Jump to a roster:

United States

Canada

Sweden

Finland

Czechia

United States

Note: Players in bold were the first six selected.

Names to watch: G Joey Daccord, F Alex DeBrincat, G Thatcher Demko, D Lane Hutson, F Patrick Kane, F Chris Kreider, F Frank Nazar, F Shane Pinto, F Jason Robertson, F Vincent Trocheck, F Trevor Zegras

From the point: Finding options isn't going to be a problem for Team USA. Within this projected roster, the Americans can field a lineup that possesses balance and versatility in many areas.

Yet it appears that the two players who could impact Team USA's roster selection process might be Patrick Kane and Vincent Trocheck. Kane is currently injured and has been out of the lineup since mid-October. Before the injury, he had five points in as many games, which allowed him to present an early case for making the roster in what's a crowded field at winger.

Trocheck was injured in the second game of the season and began practicing with the New York Rangers on Monday. A

fully healthy Trocheck would give Team USA another two-way center who can be trusted to play in numerous situations -- as well as one more selection discussion for what makes the most sense down the middle.

How does Thatcher Demko factor into the goaltending discussion?

The U.S. is believed to have the strongest set of goalies of any team eligible for the Olympics. But should its group of three include Demko?

The Vancouver Canucks goaltender was a Vezina Trophy finalist in the 2023-24 season before an injury-riddled 2024-25 season saw him struggle to attain consistency. As of Tuesday, Demko's save percentage (.911) and goals-against average (2.57) were significantly better than Jeremy Swayman's marks (.896, 3.14). He is also fourth in goals saved above average, according to Natural Stat Trick.

Canada

Note: Players in bold were the first six selected.

Names to watch: F Connor Bedard, F Sam Bennett, G Mackenzie Blackwood, D Evan Bouchard, F Anthony Cirelli, D Noah Dobson, F Bo Horvat, F Zach Hyman, D Mike Matheson, F John Tavares

From the point: A wealth of options is Canada's greatest strength while simultaneously being its biggest challenge. With this particular projection, there is a two-way element with many of the forwards, while the defensive setup has puck movers partnered with stay-at-home options who have size. There are remaining questions:

What happens if Zach Hyman returns from his wrist injury and provides consistent production?

How does Canada's goalie situation change if Mackenzie Blackwood, who has also been injured to start the season, can find consistency?

Can any of the players who missed the cut in this projection get back on the radar with a strong next month?

Could Canada take Connor Bedard and Macklin Celebrini?

Speed -- and those who know how to use that speed in tight spaces -- played a big role in Canada's success at the 4 Nations Face-Off. Although Canada has numerous players like that in this projection, is it possible it could add more by bringing in Bedard and moving Celebrini into the active lineup?



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Both provide another offensive dimension, and Celebrini has shown he can handle the demands of being a two-way center. Either way, expect both to be heavily in the mix in 2030.

Sweden

Note: Players in bold were the first six selected.

Names to watch: F Mikael Backlund, F Andre Burakovsky, D Philip Broberg, D Simon Edvinsson, G Samuel Ersson, D Oliver Ekman-Larsson, D Adam Larsson, F Victor Olofsson

From the point: Sweden appears to have balance throughout its lineup in this projection, although there could still be certain adjustments. Namely, what makes the most sense for Sweden at left wing?

Lucas Raymond and Jesper Bratt have had starts that justify them being on the top two lines; it's at the bottom two lines where the questions begin. Gabriel Landeskog has three points through his first 13 games though his average ice time is seventh among forwards on the Colorado Avalanche. Before Rickard Rakell broke his hand, he had eight points in nine games; he'll return sometime in December. And of course, there's the discussion about whether Sweden should use Elias Pettersson down the middle or on the wing.

Sweden also could be facing questions related to Linus Ullmark's struggles to start the season, and if the team could be inclined to take a look at Edvinsson after his start.

Are Simon Edvinsson and Victor Olofsson becoming too hard to ignore?

Playing for two of the top teams in the NHL entering November usually attracts attention, which is the case for Edvinsson and Olofsson.

Edvinsson has continued to carve out his place as one of the Red Wings' most important players. He has played a top-pairing role, is second on the team in average ice time and 5-on-5 minutes, and is fourth in short-handed minutes.

Olofsson is operating in a top-nine role for the Avs and has used that opportunity to be fifth on the team in points. He's on pace for a career-high 63 points this season.

Finland

Note: Players in bold were the first six selected.

Names to watch: F Kasperii Kapanen, G Joonas Korpi, F Patrik Laine, F Jani Nyman, F Juuso Parssinen, C Aatu Raty, F Eeli Tolvanen, D Juuso Valimaki

From the point: Finland's potential roster has been -- and will likely continue to be -- impacted by major injuries this season.

Aleksander Barkov, who was one of Finland's "first six," tore an ACL and MCL in training camp, and was the first domino to fall. Finland has seen other players -- such as Kaapo Kakko, Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen and Rasmus Ristolainen -- miss the start of the regular season while recovering from injuries. Kakko played his first game Nov. 1, Luukkonen made his debut Oct. 25, and Ristolainen is expected to be out until December with a triceps injury.

Patrik Laine sustained a core muscle injury in late October, which could see him miss at least three months -- and potentially place his Olympic chances in jeopardy.

What does Finland's plan look like should more injuries arise?

It's possible that Finland could find some relief should Laine be cleared to play at the Olympics. But in the event he's not, Finland could be tempted to turn to some of its younger players in the NHL such as Nyman, Parssinen and Raty at forward. All three entered Nov. 3 with either the same or slightly more points than Jesperi Kotkaniemi in a similar number of games. There's also the possibility that Finland could opt for more experienced forwards such as Kasperii Kapanen or Eeli Tolvanen.

Another option for Finland's defense is Valimaki. He was named to Finland's 4 Nations Face-Off roster but didn't play. He tore an ACL in March and is expected to return sometime around November or December. He could be an option, given there have been only seven Finnish defensemen who have played in the NHL this season entering November.

Czechia

Note: Players in bold were the first six selected.

Names to watch: F Filip Chlapik, F Jakub Lauko, F Adam Klapka, D Jan Kostalek, F Tomas Nosek, F Michael Spacek, F Matej Stransky, F Simon Stransky, G Karel Vejmelka, F Adam Zboril

From the point: Tomas Hertl, Martin Necas, David Pastrnak and Pavel Zacha have had the sort of starts to the season that strengthen the notion Czechia's top-six forward corps could make a significant impact at the Games.

Now it's a matter of determining what Czechia could receive from its supporting cast -- with a number of them playing outside of the NHL.

In the most recent men's IIHF World Championship, Roman Cervenka and Lukas Sedlak finished second and third on the team in points. They've continued to produce in the Czech Extraliga, the nation's top professional league. Jakub Flek has opened the season with 15 goals and 22 points through 21 games.

Which two goalies will join Lukas Dostal on the Czechia roster?

There was a time when Czechia seemed poised to take Dostal, Vejmelka and Dan Vladar as its three goalies. But that appears to have changed -- or at least merited a conversation.

The expectation is that Dostal, who was among the first six players named to Czechia's provisional roster, will be the starter. As for the rest of the field? Jakub Dobes has won his first six games, while his GSAA ranks third in the NHL, per Natural Stat Trick. Vladar entered Tuesday ranked third in goals-against average (2.11) and save percentage (.924) while being 14th in GSAA.

Although Vejmelka has the same number of wins (six) as Dobes, he was 25th in goals-against average, 34th in save percentage and 55th in GSAA.



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Hurricanes 3-0 Rangers (Nov 4, 2025) Game Recap - ESPN

By AP Updated: Nov 4, 2025, 09:49 pm Facebook Facebook
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~2 minutes

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season. The 26-year-old Russian made a point-blank stop on Rangers captain J.T. Miller just over two minutes into the middle period during a power play. The shutout was the 11th of his career.

The Rangers had a three-game winning streak snapped. They are winless at home with just six goals in six games.

New York is 0-5-1 at Madison Square Garden and 6-1-1 on the road. Five of the goals came in a 6-5 overtime loss to San Jose on Oct. 23. The Rangers have been blanked four times at home.

The Hurricanes improved to 8-4-0. Carolina won for the third time in seven games after a 5-0-0 start.

Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal played his 909th game with Carolina, tying brother Eric's mark for the most games played in Hurricanes history.

NHL power ratings: Avalanche return to the top after Week 4 of 2025-26 season

By: Scott Erskine

Weeks of the 2025-26 NHL season are in the books, and the Colorado Avalanche continue to rack up the points. Colorado (7-1-5) is the only team in the league with fewer than two regulation losses, and its lone 60-minute defeat was a 3-2 road setback against the Boston Bruins on Oct. 25.

The Avalanche were one of 11 teams that didn't lose in regulation during Week 4, as they registered a pair of victories and dropped an overtime decision to the Sharks in San Jose. Six clubs won all of their games, with five going 3-0-0 and the Montreal Canadiens posting a pair of OT triumphs.

Meanwhile, the Utah Mammoth and Washington Capitals failed to get in the win column, with the former losing in regulation twice and the latter going 0-2-1. Utah won all seven of its games over the previous two weeks to charge toward the top of the ratings.

Each week during the season, I'll rank the league's top 10 teams based on both the previous week's performances and their overall bodies of work in 2025-26. I'll also give brief synopsis for each club that explains why they're ranked where they are.

Let's dive into the power ratings after Week 4 of the 2025-26 NHL season and highlight a few of the teams' notable accomplishments.

NHL Week 4 power ratings

1. Colorado Avalanche (2-0-1 in Week 4; 7-1-5 overall)

The Avalanche held this spot after Week 1 but dropped one spot each of the next two weeks. They're back on top after having defeated New Jersey 8-4 and Vegas 4-2 prior to their overtime loss at San Jose. Nathan MacKinnon posted a three-point performance against the Devils and notched one point in each of his next two outings, giving him a six-game streak heading into Week 5. The 2024 Hart Trophy winner is tied for second in the NHL with 19 points and has been kept off the scoresheet in only two of his 13 contests. Cale Makar is riding a seven-game point streak and also has recorded one in 11 of 13 games. The two-time Norris Trophy recipient, who amassed seven points last week, is one behind MacKinnon and leads all NHL defensemen. Meanwhile, Martin Necas has registered 17 points and is riding his second three-game goal-scoring streak already this season.

2. Winnipeg Jets (3-0-0; 9-3-0)

The Jets lost two of three games in Week 3 to fall from third place to eighth in these ratings but bounced back with a trio of victories, scoring at least four goals in each triumph. Mark Scheifele continued his torrid pace with three multi-point efforts and enters Week 5 with a league-leading 20 points. The 32-year-old center has recorded two or more points in seven of his 12 games and been kept off the scoresheet just once this campaign. Kyle Connor also has notched a point in 11 of Winnipeg's 12 contests and has scored four goals during his current three-game streak. Josh Morrissey is tied for second among defensemen with 11 points and brings a five-game streak during which he has collected nine into



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Week 5. And center Gabriel Vilardi is riding streaks of five games with a point (nine) and three with a goal (four).

3. Montreal Canadiens (2-0-0; 9-3-0)

Since a 5-2 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs in its season opener, Montreal has either posted a victory or lost by just one goal. The Canadiens have been the kings of overtime thus far this campaign, winning all five of their games that were decided in the extra session. Both of the team's triumphs last week came in OT, including a 4-3 victory at Seattle in which Cole Caufield scored his league-high third overtime winner. The 24-year-old right wing registered a total of three goals and two assists in the wins. Nick Suzuki has notched a point in 11 consecutive games since being kept off the scoresheet in the season opener and leads the Canadiens with 18, including an NHL-best 16 assists, while reigning Calder Trophy-winning defenseman Lane Hutson is in the midst of a six-game point streak.

4. New Jersey Devils (1-3-0; 9-4-0)

The West Coast was not kind to the Devils, who were atop the rankings after Week 3. New Jersey defeated Los Angeles but suffered losses at Colorado, San Jose and Anaheim, allowing a total of 17 goals in those setbacks -- one more than the team surrendered during the eight-game winning streak it posted prior to the road trip. One of the bright spots on the trek was the play of center Dawson Mercer, who registered a pair of two-goal performances while racking up five tallies and an assist in the four contests. Three-time All Star Jack Hughes also had a solid trip, netting two tallies and setting up two others. The 24-year-old center is tied with MacKinnon and Caufield for first in the NHL with 10 goals.

5. Detroit Red Wings (3-1-0; 9-4-0)

The Red Wings had a strong week on the road, beginning with a 5-2 triumph at St. Louis that completed a sweep of their home-and-home series. Detroit then sandwiched shootout victories at Los Angeles and San Jose around a loss in Anaheim, with Lucas Raymond and James van Riemsdyk netting the decisive goals in the bonus format. Alex DeBrincat, who is riding a six-game point streak, recorded three goals and four assists in Week 4 while Raymond collected six points. Meanwhile, captain Dylan Larkin notched five points over the four contests to increase his team-leading total to 18.

6. Vegas Golden Knights (1-1-0; 6-2-3)

The Golden Knights only played twice last week, but one of those outings was a 4-2 setback against Colorado that gave them three losses in their last four contests (1-2-1). Jack Eichel was kept off the scoresheet in each of those defeats but registered three points in Vegas' 6-3 road triumph against the Carolina Hurricanes last Tuesday and is tied for second in the league with 19. Mitch Marner had a solid week, recording a pair of two-point performances, while Pavel Dorofeyev scored twice at Carolina to increase his team-leading total to nine goals.

7. Pittsburgh Penguins (1-2-1; 8-4-2)

The results of Pittsburgh's four-game road trip last week were less than desired, as the team finished with just one victory. The trek ended with a 4-3 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Monday in which the Penguins carried a three-goal lead into the third period. Veteran superstars Evgeni Malkin and Sidney Crosby both landed on the scoresheet in three of the four contests, but Justin Brazeau missed the last two games of the trip with an upper-body injury. The 27-year-old right wing was excelling while playing on a line with Malkin as he collected six points over four contests in Week 3. Right wing Bryan Rust recorded four points last week and has notched at least one in six of his last seven outings.

8. Anaheim Ducks (3-0-0; 7-3-1)

The Ducks make their debut in the top 10 after winning all three of their games in Week 4. Anaheim edged the two-time reigning Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers in a shootout on the road before posting three-goal victories at home against Detroit and New Jersey. Leo Carlsson's impressive season continued as he registered two goals and five assists over the Ducks' three contests. The 20-year-old Swedish center is riding a six-game point streak and has landed on the scoresheet in all but two of his 11 outings in 2025-26. Troy Terry recorded two goals and two assists last week and enjoyed a six-game point streak before having it halted by the Devils on Sunday. Cutter Gauthier has recorded back-to-back two-point efforts and enters Week 5 with a six-game run. After missing four games with an illness, Chris Kreider returned and scored in each of Anaheim's last two contests.

9. Utah Mammoth (0-2-0; 8-4-0)

Things were bound to take a negative turn for the Mammoth after two straight undefeated weeks. The club entered Week 4 with a seven-game winning streak but was defeated 6-3 by the Oilers in Edmonton and dropped a 4-2 decision to the Tampa Bay Lightning at home. Nick Schmaltz extended his point streak to eight games with an assist against Edmonton but had it halted by Tampa Bay as he was kept off the scoresheet for only the second time in 12 contests this season. Fellow center Logan Cooley scored in the loss to the Oilers, giving him nine points during a four-game streak before it ended versus the Lightning.

10. Seattle Kraken (1-0-2; 6-2-4)

The Kraken dropped one spot despite earning at least one point in all three games last week. Seattle lost to Montreal and the New York Rangers in overtime before ending Week 4 with a 3-1 triumph over the Chicago Blackhawks. Jaden Schwartz notched an assist in both OT losses while captain Jordan Eberle picked up a goal and an assist against Chicago to tie him for the team lead in points (10). The 35-year-old Eberle has tallied in three of his last five contests. Chandler Stephenson and Matty Beniers also registered a two-point performance last week, while defenseman Brandon



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Montour netted two tallies and set up another against the Canadiens before scoring again versus the Rangers.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Kochetkov shuts down New York, Hurricanes 3, Rangers 0

By: Bob Wage

Pyotr Kochetkov made his season debut a huge success as he earned a 25 save shutout while the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the New York Rangers, 3-0 on Tuesday night at MSG.

Kochetkov had been getting over an injury since the start of the season but he certainly looked healthy enough during this performance.

The Rangers came out hard and controlled play for the beginning of the game. At one point they were outshooting Carolina, 12-5 but "Kooch" was equal to the task.

Later in the period the Hurricanes got some traction and generated some chances of their own.

Nikolaj Ehlers scored his first goal of the season with a blast from the point on a powerplay.

In the second period, Sean Walker scored from long range to make it 2-0 and the Rangers seemed to come undone.

The home team went for a long period of time without even generating a single shot on goal. (21 plus minutes). They finished with one shot on goal in the entire third period as the Canes put on a defensive clinic.

Seth Jarvis closed things out with an empty-netter late in the game.

Sean Walker played 24:16 and Alexander Nikishin had 23:42 of ice time.

The Canes will return home and prepare for a visit from Minnesota on Thursday night.

Hurricanes at Rangers: Preview and game thread

By: Bob Wage

These two teams seem to be on opposite paths as the Rangers have won three straight after a slow start where the Canes have lost three of their last four games. Both teams are tied for third in the Metropolitan with 14 points. Both teams have the worst powerplay units in the league, (Rangers 31st and Canes 32nd).

This would be his first start of the season for Carolina.

In an effort to shake things up a bit and to get a couple of players "going", head coach Rod Brind'Amour has shaken the lines up. I would look for more "shaking" tonight if things start off badly.

Taylor Hall - Sebastian Aho - Andrei Svechnikov

Nikolaj Ehlers - Logan Stankoven - Jackson Blake

Jordan Martinook - Jordan Staal - Seth Jarvis

Jesperi Kotkaniemi - Mark Jankowski - Bradly Nadeau

Alexander Nikishin - Sean Walker

Jalen Chatfield - Joel Nystrom

Mike Reilly - Charles Alexis Legault

Kochetkov - Andersen

There is no update status of Carolina's injured players. They were hoping that K'Andre Miller would be able to return soon, but he did not make the trip.

UPDATE: There is a report that Miller did indeed make the trip. No word on his status.

The Daily Faceoff has these lines for New York.

Artemi Panarin - J.T. Miller - Mika Zibanejad

Alexis Lafreniere - Noah Laba - Will Cuyllle

Conor Sheary - Juuso Parssinen - Taylor Raddysh

Adam Edstrom - Sam Carrick - Jonny Brodzinski

Vladislav Gavrikov - Adam Fox

Carson Soucy - Will Borgen

Urho Vaakanainen - Braden Schneider

Shesterkin - Quick



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TV: This game has a national broadcast and will be on TNT/TruTV/HBO Max

Odds: (Correction) Moneyline — Carolina-118 and Rangers -102

Streaming: (not sure, check your normal streaming options)

Radio: As always, 99.9 The Fan and affiliates



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The Hockey News

Hurricanes Blank Rangers In New York; Kochetkov Records Shutout In First Start Of Season

By: Ryan Henkel

Kochetkov silences MSG in his season debut, stonewalling the Rangers as the Hurricanes secure a dominant road victory.

The Carolina Hurricanes won their fifth game in a row against the New York Rangers dating back to last season, with a 3-0 victory Tuesday night at Madison Square Garden.

It was a good road showing for a team that started slow, but finished with a dominant showing.

Heading into the game, New York was a team desperate for a better showing at home.

In five games at MSG, the Rangers had failed to produce a win, scoring only six total goals on home ice (five of which came in just one outing).

So it made sense that the Blueshirts came out of the gates flying, but unfortunately for them, Pyotr Kochetkov was just as fired up for his first start of the season.

The Russian netminder stymied the initial Ranger wave, facing 15 shots in the first period, and kept his team alive through a bit of a slow start, until they finally got their chance to break through.

On their first power play opportunity of the game, Nikolaj Ehlers finally found his way into the goal column as his shot

from distance went bar and in past a screened Igor Shesterkin.

Although he might have been separated from Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis at 5v5, it was those two who played crucial roles in the Danes' first goal as a Hurricane as Aho won the draw back and Jarvis provided the screen.

Following that goal, the Canes started to find more and more of their footing and their penalty kill and Kochetkov really shined too.

The Hurricanes would cash in again late in the second period following the team's third straight successful PK, as Sean Walker's shot from distance beat Shesterkin through yet another screen, this time provided by Mark Jankowski.

Following that, Carolina proceeded to just absolutely dominate New York, holding the Rangers to just a single shot on goal through the final 28:08 of game time, and even that shot was a neutral zone flip in.

The Hurricanes have been looking for better performances when finishing out games and you're really not going to get a better showing than that to secure the shutout for Kochetkov, the first of the season for the team.

The Canes now return home where they'll face the Minnesota Wild on Thursday.

Carolina Hurricanes @ New York Rangers: Lineups, Game Preview and How to Watch

By: Ryan Henkel

Canes shuffle lines seeking spark against streaking Rangers. Key matchups and lineup changes shape tonight's MSG clash.

What - Game 12 (7-4-0)

When - 7 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 4

Where - Madison Square Garden; New York, New York

How to Watch - TNT, truTV, MAX, SN1, MSG

A goalie returns, line changes and injury updates. (11/3/25)

The Carolina Hurricanes will face the New York Rangers for the first time this season tonight at MSG.

The Canes are coming off of a 2-1 loss to the Boston Bruins and have now lost three of their last four games.

As a response, Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour has shifted his lines around, hoping to find a spark for some of the team's top forwards.

New York on the other hand has won each of their last three games, most recently winning 3-2 in overtime against the Seattle Kraken.

New York has struggled to find consistent scoring this year, but new coach Mike Sullivan has the team playing much better defensively, which is also helped along by two really good netminders.

Streaks



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Jordan Martinook (2g, 1a) has points in three straight games.

Alexander Nikishin (1g, 1a) has points in back-to-back games.

Milestone Watch

Nikolaj Ehlers is one assist away from 300 career assists.

Jesperri Kotkaniemi is three points shy of 200 career points.

Jordan Martinook is three goals shy of 100 career goals.

Game Notes

Carolina is 65-82-7-9 all-time against New York, but went 4-0-0 against the Rangers last season.

Key Matchups

Projected Starting Goalies

Pyotr Kochetkov: First Start

Igor Shesterkin: 4-4-2; 0.913 Sv%; 2.28 GAA

Leading Scorers

Goals - Seth Jarvis (7) / Taylor Raddysh (5)

Points - Seth Jarvis & Sebastian Aho (11) / Adam Fox (11)

Power Play

Carolina - 9.4% (32nd)

New York - 12.1% (31st)

Penalty Kill

Carolina - 82.5% (12th)

New York - 84.8% (9th)

Hurricanes Projected Lineup

Taylor Hall - Sebastian Aho - Andrei Svechnikov

Nikolaj Ehlers - Logan Stankoven - Jackson Blake

Jordan Martinook - Jordan Staal - Seth Jarvis

Jesperri Kotkaniemi - Mark Jankowski - Bradly Nadeau

Alexander Nikishin - Sean Walker

Jalen Chatfield - Joel Nystrom

Mike Reilly - Charles Alexis Legault

Pyotr Kochetkov

Frederik Andersen

Injuries and Scratches: Brandon Bussi, Domenick Fensore, Jaccob Slavin (LBI), K'Andre Miller (LBI), William Carrier (LBI), Eric Robinson (UBI), Shayne Gostisbehere (UBI)

Five key Hurricanes players remain sidelined. Coach

Rangers Projected Lineup

Artemi Panarin - J.T. Miller - Mika Zibanejad

Alexis Lafreniere - Noah Laba - Will Cuyllé

Conor Sheary - Juuso Parssinen - Taylor Raddysh

Adam Edstrom - Sam Carrick - Jonny Brodzinski

Vladislav Gavrikov - Adam Fox

Carson Soucy - Will Borgen

Urho Vaakanainen - Braden Schneider

Igor Shesterkin

Jonathan Quick

Injuries and Scratches: Matt Rempe (UBI), Vincent Trocheck (UBI)

BK'Andre Miller Won't Make Return From Injury Against The Rangers

By: Remy Mastey

K'Andre Miller will not face his former team on Tuesday night when the Carolina Hurricanes play the New York Rangers. Miller was placed on injured reserve on Oct. 31 for a lower-body injury he suffered in a game against the Vegas Golden Knights on Oct. 20.

His move to injured reserve is procedural by the Hurricanes to make room on the roster for Pyotr Kochetkov.

The 25-year-old defenseman has missed the team's last five games, but Rod Brind'Amour does not envision Miller being out for much longer.

"I was kind of hopeful that he'd maybe make the trip and give it a go," Brind'Amour said of Miller's injury status. "I don't think that's going to happen, but I don't anticipate that one being too much longer."

The Hurricanes and Rangers completed a sign-and-trade during the offseason that sent Miller to Carolina, as he signed an eight-year, \$60 million contract.

LINKS

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6777376/2025/11/04/hurricanes-kandre-miller-rangers-injury/>
<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-kochetkov-can-es-shut-down-rangers-in-new-york>



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<https://www.nhl.com/news/carolina-hurricanes-new-york-rangers-game-recap-november-4-2025>

<https://www.nhl.com/news/carolina-hurricanes-young-defenseemen-learning-on-the-fly>

<https://apnews.com/article/hurricanes-rangers-score-6e6effca637bb59bfe37f18bbcbf22>

<https://apnews.com/article/kandre-miller-rangers-hurricanes-c6288f1d95d8118faa2b91945b48a013>

https://www.espn.com/nhl/story/_/id/46847180/nhl-2025-26-olympics-hockey-rosters-projections-top-players-lineup#usa

https://www.espn.com/nhl/recap/_/gameId/401802557

<https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/nhl-power-ratings-avalanche-return-to-the-top-after-week-4-of-2025-26-season/>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2010-11-carolina-hurricanes-game-recaps/52064/kochetkov-shuts-down-new-york-hurricanes-3-rangers-0>

<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/game-day/hurricanes-blank-rangers-in-new-york-kochetkov-records-shutout-in-first-start-of-season>

<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/game-day/carolina-hurricanes-new-york-rangers-lineups-game-preview-and-how-to-watch-1>

<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/k-andre-miller-won-t-make-return-from-injury-against-the-rangers>

SportScan

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

1366858 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' K'Andre Miller, still recovering from injury, reflects on Rangers tenure

Peter Baugh4-5 minutes 04/11/2025

NEW YORK — K'Andre Miller took the Madison Square Garden ice as a visitor for the first time at the Carolina Hurricanes' skate Tuesday morning, but he won't play against the New York Rangers while recovering from a lower-body injury.

The 25-year-old said, "It stings a little bit" not to be able to play his former team, but the Hurricanes are taking a longer-term approach with his health.

"I was really hopeful that we would've saw him here tonight," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "(A return) is right there, but we're not putting guys in the lineup unless they feel 100 percent."

Miller, the No. 22 pick in the 2018 NHL Draft, spent five seasons in New York, playing 368 regular-season games and 43 more in the playoffs. He averaged more than 20 minutes of ice time per game every year with New York and had 132 points with the club. Miller, a 6-foot-5 defenseman with mobility, posted a nine-goal, 43-point campaign in 2022-23, but was unable to reach those offensive heights the next two seasons.

With limited cap space, Rangers president and general manager Chris Drury traded Miller on July 1 for a 2026 first-round pick, a 2026 second-round pick and defenseman Scott Morrow. The move gave the Rangers the cap flexibility to sign Vladislav Gavrikov. Miller, meanwhile, signed an eight-year, \$7.5 million average annual value extension with Carolina to complete the sign-and-trade deal.

Miller felt he did a good job during his time with the Rangers, he told reporters Tuesday from his locker in MSG's visiting dressing room. The team reached the Eastern Conference final twice during his tenure, and

he frequently had to play difficult defensive minutes, first while paired with Jacob Trouba and then with Will Borgen after New York acquired him last season. Miller played against the second-hardest quality of competition of any Rangers defenseman last season, according to Hockey Stat Cards.

"Had a pretty tough job every night going against other (teams') top lines," he said. "Had a lot of minutes, big responsibility. I think overall I handled it pretty well. It's a tough job playing here. Obviously I wanted to win here and do whatever I could to help the team do well, but just came up short a couple times."

Miller raved about the amenities, travel and food he had with New York — "it's just the little things that you appreciate after the fact," he said — but believes there's more to his game than he showed with the Rangers.

"Confidence-wise and just what I wanted from myself, I wasn't getting all the results I wanted here," he said. "I blame myself for that. I had some struggles throughout my years here. The ups and downs just kind of took a toll, and it was in my head for a lot of the time I was here."

Raleigh, he's found, has presented a nice change. The city has a slower pace than New York, and he likes "having a little bit more time during the day to go on walks, sit outside, enjoy the weather rather than sitting in traffic."

The Hurricanes love what they saw from Miller before his injury. He has two goals and four points in six games this season and has averaged 23:32 of ice time per game.

"He couldn't have played much better at the start," Brind'Amour said. "I was so impressed. ... His skating ability fits perfectly, getting up the ice. He was kind of doing it all for us there until he went out."

"I didn't know he was that good of a skater," Hurricanes forward Sebastian Aho added. "Big body as well. I feel like he fits our system really well."

Miller agrees, saying Carolina's style "fits my game perfectly."

"I think we have a very skilled team, very fast team that likes to skate up the ice and create chances off the rush," he said. "I'm just trying to do



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whatever I can to play hard defensively and get the puck in those forwards' hands."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.05.025

1366962 Websites

The Athletic / Five surprising NHL stats. PLUS: Who's the best recent No. 1 pick?

By James Mirtle

Nov. 4, 2025 10:04 am EST

Good morning, hockey folks. That's right, it's me again — we're saving DGB's whimsy for later in the week. Instead, here's some math homework.

5 of the NHL's most surprising stats

I'm not going to lie: This section was going to have more Penguins content as of about 9 p.m. ET last night. Pittsburgh was absolutely thumping the Maple Leafs 3-0 after 40 minutes and on the verge of starting the season 9-3-2, the league's fourth-best record.

Then they blew it, allowing four unanswered goals in a 10-minute stretch in the third — Toronto's first third-period rally that big for a regulation win in nearly 50 years.

So sorry, Sidney, you're off the top of the list.

1. 16 teams in the race

That's the number of clubs in the Eastern Conference either in a playoff spot or within one point of being in. Yes, that means every single team in the conference is in that situation. Yes, that is kind of ridiculous.

McIndoe broke down the parity party in his weekend rankings, but I have a couple more facts to add. This is the first time every team in a conference has been this close to making the playoffs 200-plus games into a season since 1995, a lockout-shortened year that was almost over by that point.

And prior to Monday's games, when the Leafs jumped up to third in the Atlantic, the race for the second wild-card spot in the East looked like this, with six teams tied at a .542 points percentage (89-point pace) and two more at .538 (88-point pace):

Again, ridiculous. If there is such a thing as too much parity, it has arrived.

2. 19 points in 14 games for Evgeni Malkin

Okay, I lied — there's going to be some Penguins content.

Many figured this would be the swan song for Malkin, who at 39 years old had dipped to 16 goals and only 50 points last season. Yet right now he sits tied for second in NHL scoring, part of an unexpected resurgence for Pittsburgh's old guy brigade.

With a point in his next game, Malkin can become the second-fastest player in league history to get to 20 points at age 39 or older. The only one faster was Gordie Howe, who put up 20 points in 12 games way back in 1968-69.

It's good to see — and maybe it extends his career a couple more years, too.

3. Sam Montembeault's .839 save percentage

The Montreal Canadiens netminder had a terrific season a year ago, appearing in 62 games and leading the Habs back to the postseason. He also finished fifth in the entire league in goals saved above expected, was part of Team Canada at the 4 Nations Face-Off and even received a Vezina vote.

This year? He's dead last in save percentage among goalies with more than five starts and second-last in goals saved above expected.

Thankfully for Montreal, rookie Jakub Dobes has stepped up and been outstanding, but it's been a bafflingly poor start for Montembeault. They're going to need him to improve to keep up their hot 9-3-0 start.

4. 3.64 goals per game for Anaheim

The Ducks were the third-lowest-scoring team in the NHL a year ago and missed the playoffs by a wide margin. When they brought in Joel Quenneville — one of the most decorated coaches in league history — most expected a bump in the standings, but more so from improved defensive play than an offensive explosion.

Instead, Anaheim is tied for third in the entire league in goals per game thanks to a continued breakout from Leo Carlsson (on pace for 119 points) and newfound offensive depth via the additions of Mikael Granlund, Chris Kreider and youngster Beckett Sennecke.

It also doesn't hurt that goaltender Lukas Dostal leads the entire NHL in goals saved above expected.

As one of the younger teams in the league figuring things out, they're fun to watch right now.

5. Carolina/Toronto power plays at 9.4 and 12.1 percent

The Carolina Hurricanes and Maple Leafs are, unsurprisingly, two of the top offensive teams in the league, piling up more than 3.6 goals per game so far this season. But they simply cannot score on the power play.

The Canes have only three PP goals in 11 games so far; Toronto isn't much better with four in 13. Both teams have okay underlying numbers on the man advantage, but that doesn't mean they're not concerned.

The Leafs put rookie Easton Cowan up on PP1 in their last game. Carolina, meanwhile, has three players with almost zero offensive production on its top unit right now: Sean Walker (one point), Andrei Svechnikov (three) and Nikolaj Ehlers (four).

MirTrivia, November edition 🗨️

Connor McDavid became the fourth-fastest player to 1,100 points in NHL history last night in a 3-2 Edmonton Oilers loss in St. Louis, hitting the milestone in his 726th career game. (Both his points were assists in the game, as he oddly remains with just three goals through 14 games.)

Two of the names who did it faster than McDavid are easy, but you're really on the ball if you can get all three. Hint: No. 3 was a winger who played with just one team in the '70s and '80s.

Coast to Coast

💙 Connor Ingram has had a tough road, including two breaks spent in the NHL/NHLPA's player assistance program. Daniel Nugent-Bowman has a good read on Ingram's mindset as he attempts to battle his way back from the AHL to the NHL with the Oilers.

🏈 The Dallas Stars are headed to AT&T Stadium, the home of the NFL's Cowboys, next season as part of the Stadium Series. Can they set an attendance record?

🇨🇦 How are World Junior rosters shaping up for Canada and the USA with less than two months until the tournament begins in Minneapolis–Saint Paul?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 5, 2025

🔪 On the latest episode of "The Athletic Hockey Show," Mark Lazerus and Jesse Granger break down the top storylines from the first month of the NHL season, including new blood rising in Utah, Anaheim, Chicago and Montreal.

Who's the best No. 1 pick to build around?

We're taking your questions here for future mailbags and newsletters, and already there have been some great ones filtering in. Here's one from Philippe C. that I thought we could tackle here:

"Which of the last three first overall picks would you build your team around? Do you think Gavin McKenna can be a better player than any of the three?"

My first instinct was it had to be Macklin Celebrini (No. 1 in 2024) in San Jose. The 19-year-old has been on fire early this season, with his seven goals and 18 points through 13 games the equivalent of a 44-goal, 114-point season. He's currently tied for sixth in NHL scoring.

That's miles ahead of 2023 first overall pick Connor Bedard's 67-point second season last year in Chicago, so that's a fairly easy call at the moment.

Islanders defenseman Matthew Schaefer (2025's top pick) is a tougher one given he's only played 12 NHL games (and plays a different position), but he's been absolutely fantastic in the early going. And McKenna's even harder given he's only just started his NCAA career at Penn State.

I put this question out to two of our experts for their takes: prospect writer Scott Wheeler and number-cruncher Dom Luszczyszyn.

Scott's ranking: Celebrini, Bedard, Schaefer, McKenna

Dom's ranking: Celebrini, Schaefer, Bedard, McKenna

"The only ranking there I'd feel good about is Celebrini's," Wheeler says. "Could see the other three in any order."

"Agree with Scott," Luszczyszyn adds. "Celebrini at 1 is the only clear-cut pick."

So some good news for the Sharks as they try and make a move up the standings: Celebrini looks like the best of the "next" ones.

We'll see how this shifts in the years to come, though, as it's clear all four young Canadians are going to have a massive impact in the NHL and internationally.

Your MirTrivia Answer ...

It took Wayne Gretzky just 464 games to get 1,100 points. Mario Lemieux wasn't that far behind at 550 games. But No. 3 is Mike Bossy, who made it there in 725 games, just one ahead of McDavid – in a much higher-scoring era.

But McDavid hit the 1,100 point mark 124 games faster than the next fastest active player: Sidney Crosby in 850 games.

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The Athletic / Early concerning NHL trends: Contenders' offensive woes, goaltending gaffes and the Wild

By Shayna Goldman

Nov. 4, 2025 6:00 am EST

Sometimes players and teams need a few games to shake off the rust and round back into form.

Take the Tampa Bay Lightning, who went 1-4-2 over the first two weeks of the season. It's easy to get dramatic about how old and slow the defense looked against the rush, or the fact the star power wasn't enough to outpace those problems. But over the last five games, Tampa Bay has shut down expected contenders like the Vegas Golden Knights and Dallas Stars and won 4-2 against the fast-paced Utah Mammoth.

While the Lightning look to be mostly back on track, not every player or team has been so lucky.

Early red flags, at the individual and team level, can develop into concerning trends. While it's too soon to be mathematically eliminated from the playoff picture in the first week of November, those concerning trends can spiral into long-term problems that eventually crush a team's postseason hopes.

So let's spot some of those developing trends that playoff hopefuls need to stop from becoming season-long woes.

The Lightning's power play

It's not all sunny in Tampa Bay just yet. One key element of the Lightning's attack is still lagging: the power play.

The Lightning generally have a dynamic power play; they ranked first in 2023-24 and were fifth last season. This year, they're converting at a 14.6 percent rate and scoring just 5.24 goals per 60 (27th in the league). And it's not just poor shooting luck holding them back, which has been the issue for a team like the Carolina Hurricanes, who are dead last in scoring (and shooting percentage) with the man advantage, but top 10 in scoring chance creation. The Lightning, on the other hand, are 24th with an xG rate of 8.58 per 60.

The key may be figuring out who fits best as the fifth member of that top unit. Oliver Bjorkstrand's right-handed shot has been deployed as a one-timer threat from the left circle. Anthony Cirelli's got some reps in the bumper, and now the team is rolling with Brandon Hagel in that position.

It's challenging to compare how PP1 has performed head-to-head with each of these players, given each player's limited ice time. Hagel and Cirelli have each played on PP1 for less than 10 minutes, which makes the results look very extreme compared to Bjorkstrand's 27-plus minutes. But there has been some promise with one of the former two in the bumper and Nikita Kucherov and Jake Guentzel on the flanks, similar to last year, in Hagel's time on the top unit.

The Stars' five-on-five offense

With one of the deepest forward groups in the league, the Stars should be one of the best scoring threats. But that hasn't been the case through the first 12 games of the season. Dallas sits 31st, ahead of only the Minnesota Wild, with 1.80 five-on-five goals per 60. While the team is expected to score more based on its shot quality, that still underwhelms with 2.25 xG per 60, which ranks 29th. That low-volume offense has been even more exposed over the last couple of weeks due to some early defensive lapses.

Injuries are likely the driving force behind those scoring woes, with Roope Hintz, Matt Duchene and Jamie Benn all sidelined. Without them, Mikko Rantanen, Wyatt Johnston and Jason Robertson (who are all producing at a high rate) don't have enough support.

In the meantime, the power play is making up for those gaps. It gave the Stars the edge in their most recent wins (against Carolina, the Nashville Predators and the Washington Capitals) and helped them rally for a point against the Florida Panthers last Saturday.



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But over-relying on the power play isn't the most sustainable strategy — and the Stars learned that last spring, when they were eliminated after scoring just 1.65 five-on-five goals per 60 in the playoffs. Dallas has to hope that won't become a theme again this year as the group gets closer to full strength.

The Maple Leafs' special teams

The Toronto Maple Leafs don't look like a contender at five-on-five through the first few weeks of action. Their special-teams play isn't doing them any favors, either.

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Maple Leafs after 10: Is Craig Berube the right man behind the bench?

The Leafs have struggled to control play since Craig Berube took over behind the bench. It's time to start asking tough questions.

Over the last two years, Toronto has ranked in the top seven in both expected and actual goals on the advantage. This year, ahead of Monday's matchup against Pittsburgh, the team's scoring chance creation is down to 9.37 xG per 60 (18th in the league), and the scoring has been even more sparse (4.21 goals per 60, 29th in the league). And the team has already given up two short-handed goals in 12 games, after allowing seven in 82 last season.

A lot of that falls on the shoulders of the Leafs' stars. Auston Matthews, William Nylander, John Tavares and Matthew Knies play about 70 percent of the team's power-play time. But in their minutes together, Toronto is only up 3-1 in goals. That finally led to some personnel tweaks, with Easton Cowan getting the boost to PP1 in place of Knies on Monday night.

What's concerning is that these special teams woes extend to both ends of the ice. The penalty kill, under new direction this year with Derek Lalonde taking over for Lane Lambert, is bleeding chances against — 11.3 xG against per 60, to be exact, which is sixth-worst in the league. Anthony Stolarz and the Leafs' goaltenders are doing the most to cover for that, allowing only 5.4 goals against per 60, but that likely isn't sustainable in the long term.

Svechnikov's start

Andrei Svechnikov got some leeway over the last couple of seasons, despite dips in his play-driving and scoring, considering how daunting the recovery can be from a major knee injury. Last spring, he finally seemed to turn the corner back with his playoff performance. He was an offensive standout with eight goals in 15 games.

But that hasn't carried into this season, with eight scoreless games to open the year. Svechnikov may be finding his rhythm lately, with two goals and three points in his last three games, but there are still some concerns below the surface.

That is what separates him from someone like Nikolaj Ehlers, who also got off to a slow start on the scoresheet. The Canes have been a stronger team on both ends in his minutes.

To Svechnikov's credit, he hasn't had the same offensive support as Ehlers. But he hasn't taken on terribly tough minutes, either, or given the coaches reason to move him up in the lineup. Carolina is struggling defensively with the winger on the ice, and the offense isn't strong enough to outpace that; the Canes are actually scoring much less with Svechnikov on relative to the rest of the team.

The Blues and Senators' goaltending

In all situations, the St. Louis Blues have allowed a league-high 14.3 goals above expected. The problem is that it isn't just one goaltender struggling in St. Louis. Jordan Binnington and Joel Hofer have gotten off to disastrous starts, which has sunk the Blues to second-last in the Western Conference.

The team in front of the blue paint has been far from perfect in St. Louis. Despite generating a high rate of quality looks, the Blues have struggled to convert on their chances to give their goaltenders more goal support. The defense hasn't been that dismal, though. The penalty kill is limiting dangerous chances, and the team's five-on-five xG against is pretty middle-of-the-road.

The goaltending is The Problem in St. Louis, with Binnington and Hofer both allowing six-plus goals above expected and earning sub-0.890 save percentages.

The only team that comes close in terms of poor goaltending is the Ottawa Senators, who have allowed a combined 12.4 goals above expected in 13 games. Most of that has come with Linus Ullmark between the pipes; he has earned a GSAX of minus-9.4 through 11 games. While he hasn't responded well enough to his workload to open the year, the Senators are also leaving him far too exposed to screens (and screening him while defending), exacerbating the issue.

The Minnesota Wild

Is a 5-2 win over the Vancouver Canucks enough to turn the Wild around? Minnesota has to hope it's more than just a morale-booster, considering how much has gone wrong over the last few weeks.

One win really doesn't move the needle for a team that has started 4-6-3 and sits 30th in the league — not when numerous weaknesses have contributed to a such a dismal start.

After three wins in 12 games, it's time for GM Bill Guerin to seriously look at who actually wants to be here.

The Wild have been the worst-scoring team at five-on-five with 1.78 goals per 60 in their first 13 games. Some of that falls on rising stars like Matt Boldy. After starting strong with nine points in his first five games, he has only tallied another four points over his last eight outings. Kirill Kaprizov is producing, but his puck management has come under fire. Still, it's reasonable to argue the risk versus reward is worth it for someone of his caliber, compared to a Zeev Buium whose usage has been limited.

As much as Minnesota's power play has made up for five-on-five scoring gaps, it hasn't been enough to make up for defensive lapses. The Wild, who are generally known for being a stout team, have slipped to the bottom third in shots against and expected goals. And the goaltending has only hovered around average relative to their workloads. The penalty kill has been even leakier, with the highest rate of expected and actual goals against.

Those uncharacteristically rough defensive metrics (and a lack of even-strength scoring) have contributed to a significant amount of time spent playing from behind. All of that has subsequently seen the Wild's playoff odds sink from 58 percent in the preseason to 35 percent.

Data collected before Monday's matchups, 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.

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The Athletic / Josh Harding opens up on MS, his Wild comeback attempts and life after the NHL

By Michael Russo



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Nov. 4, 2025 Updated 7:14 am EST

EDINA, Minn. — When Josh Harding's name comes up, whether it's from a Minnesota Wild fan or anyone who's paid attention to the NHL over the past two decades, the question that's inevitably asked is, "How's he doing?"

The good news is Harding looks great and, more importantly, feels great, and that's something Wild fans in particular have a chance to see for themselves if they attend Tuesday's game against the Nashville Predators, when Harding and fellow goaltending alums Niklas Backstrom and Devan Dubnyk return as part of the franchise's season-long 25th anniversary celebration.

"It almost feels like a different life, to tell you the truth, of what I was dealing with to where I am now," says Harding, whose Wild career ended prematurely at the age of 30, sitting at a local coffee shop and thinking back on it.

There was a time when Harding was a hotshot goalie prospect and the organization's future between the pipes.

In 2002, the Wild's third-ever draft, Harding was selected in the second round. The next year, he was named the WHL's Goalie of the Year and Player of the Year. During the NHL's 2004-05 lockout, he burst onto the AHL scene with a rookie year that featured a 2.01 goals-against average and .930 save percentage. The southpaw was athletic, acrobatic and would often draw oohs and ahhs by gloving down blistering shots.

In the fall of 2012, though, Harding's life was turned upside down when he went for an MRI exam for his neck. Initial pain in that vicinity had turned into dizziness, seeing black spots and numbness in his right leg.

It was Sept. 27, and the Wild's team doctor at the time, Dan Peterson, discovered abnormalities and summoned Harding back for an MRI of his brain. When Peterson discovered lesions, Harding was informed that same evening that the medical staff thought he had multiple sclerosis, an incurable autoimmune disease in which the body randomly attacks and eats away the protective lining of nerves and causes them to scar.

He absorbed the information like he was being told he had a sprained knee. He just wanted to know how to attack the disease so he could continue playing hockey.

"I just signed a new three-year deal," Harding, now 41, recalls. "I was excited. I knew that I was going to be loyal here. The Minnesota Wild gave me the chance, and forever I'll be grateful for that. And I knew I wasn't going anywhere. And all of a sudden, you find out this life-changing news. I was probably a little bit hardheaded about thinking that I could be the one to beat this and keep going. 'It's no big deal,' I thought. But that, I think, was just my competitive nature coming out."

Harding pauses to gather his thoughts about the grueling final three years of his career that ultimately landed him in a Charlotte hospital bed, gaunt, dehydrated and potentially close to losing his life.

"Looking back at it, it probably would've been a lot smarter to just hang it up (in 2012) and then really focus on my health for my family," says Harding, the father of 18-year-old stepson Talan, 12-year-old daughter Paisley and 9-year-old son Jayden. "But when you're in the grind of it and you've worked hard to get where you're at, sometimes you're a little bit near-sighted on what your top priorities are."

"It was a big challenge, and nobody on the outside other than my wife truly understood what I had to do to navigate a disease that there was no playbook. I had to try to figure out all this stuff on my own, and I was a test dummy for it. It just seemed like taking a new medication here and there, everything kind of works against each other and then now you have to take another one, another one."

"It got to the point where everything just became too much, where at the end of my career, I wasn't even myself because I was so worried about how I was being viewed. I was overthinking what I was going to say to people because I felt like I was sticking out like a sore thumb. It was a very, very tough time. Like I said, I should have just retired in 2012. The writing was on the wall, and I think I was too blind to see it. You keep getting put in the hospital. You keep getting loaded up with IVs after games, losing major weight. There was a lot behind the scenes that I wouldn't wish upon anybody."

The diagnosis came during the 2012 lockout. Harding kept it a secret for two months as he and his now-wife, then-fiancee, Sara, tried to first gather a treatment plan.

Harding then notified teammates one by one and the organization.

When the lockout ended in January 2013, Harding's first start was a 24-save shutout over Dallas. But after just three more appearances, the reality of his medical situation became apparent. He had to take 2 ½ months off, playing just one more regular-season game in relief of Backstrom, then starting all five playoff games after being thrust into action unexpectedly when Backstrom hurt his knee during pregame warmups minutes before Game 1 of the first round against the Chicago Blackhawks.

The next season was a storybook start for Harding.

In 29 games, he was 18-7-3 with a 1.65 goals-against average and .933 save percentage. He was considered a Vezina Trophy front-runner.

"I felt like my game was improving and I was more dialed in on the ice than ever," Harding says. "I was on this medication where I was getting injected every 28 days. Everything was going fine and I was thinking, 'I finally kind of have this.' But then all of a sudden, all these symptoms would be coming on during games."

With every injection, Harding had to get an MRI taken of his brain and a blood test to monitor for signs of progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, a brain infection that is often fatal. The odds of him getting the infection kept increasing. It led to intense stress. So that December, Harding and his MS doctors decided he needed to abruptly get off the drug.

"And that was when everything kind of went haywire. They had to flush everything out of you, and now you don't have any medication in you," Harding says.

He played New Year's Eve 2013 — a 2-1 loss to the St. Louis Blues — and would never play another NHL game.

Shortly after, as he was going medication-free while trying to get the previous drug out of his system, Harding had an MS flare-up. Trying to walk down his driveway, Harding lost his balance. His left leg went to the inside of his right, and he fell hard onto the concrete. He managed to get up and went into the house, and his horrified wife, Sara, yelled, "What the hell did you do to your elbow?"

Harding was leaking blood and his right elbow was the size of a baseball. He didn't know because he couldn't feel a thing on the right side of his body.

"I just kept hitting roadblocks," Harding says.

Nevertheless, Harding planned to make a comeback in the winter of the 2014-15 season. On Nov. 30, debuting for AHL Iowa in San Antonio, Harding made 50 saves in a 4-3 overtime loss. During the game, he took a shot off the mask.

"I just saw black dots," Harding says. "I had to kind of regain my focus just to try to figure out where the puck was."

A week later, Harding played two periods in Charlotte. He struggled to get off the ice and was rushed to the hospital.



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As Harding tells the story, he begins twirling his wedding band on his left hand over and over.

His voice shakes. Tears start to flow.

"To have your wife see you on FaceTime and immediately buy a one-way ticket to Charlotte was horrible," Harding says as he struggles for words. "It was so bad getting put on six, seven, eight bags of IV because you're bare-boned and dehydrated.

"That was the moment where it's like, 'This isn't worth it anymore.' I probably should have realized that before it got to that point. But when hockey is your life and what you've always wanted to be and you're finally there, it'll take a lot to get you out of that. But the writing was on the wall before that. It wasn't the first time I was put in the hospital. When she walked in my room and I looked at her and saw how she looked at me — and she knows me better than anybody on this planet — that was the ending point.

"There are so many things that so many people do not realize that I went through, and the one person that did get to see it all is my wife, and that's probably why I do get a little emotional talking about it, because I put her through hell for a while. I should have retired way before."

Harding did quietly retire after that 2014-15 season, with 60 NHL victories under his belt. He owns the Wild's third-best all-time goals-against average of 2.45 and is tied for the second-best save percentage of .918.

"It kind of goes through my mind pretty regularly what would have happened with my career if I was healthy," Harding says. "Where would I be right now? And one of the things that bothers me the most, I guess, is I would've loved for all my kids to see me play, to go through that style of life and see Dad do what I feel like I was pretty good at. Paisley was a baby in the (2013) playoffs. Jay wasn't born. So that one always sticks to me. I really wish that things were different, but again, you can't change. Everything happens for a reason.

"And I feel like it's made me a way better dad. I feel like I can share some challenges that I went through with people around me and remind them to never give up."

Today, Harding is an assistant coach for the Edina High boys hockey team.

At a time when Harding needed it, Curt Giles, the legendary Edina hockey coach and former North Stars defenseman, gave him a new purpose in life.

During one of his comeback attempts, Harding remembers skating on his own at Braemar Arena, pushing Paisley around the ice in her car seat.

"I was giving her rides and putting her up on my shoulders, and Curt came to the bench and we chatted and he told me, 'If anything ever happens with this hockey thing and you have to call it quits, we'd love to have you here,'" Harding says. "So I owe a lot to Curt, with bringing me in, because I knew that focusing on my health was No. 1 after I retired.

"But I do love the game of hockey. So when I did retire, I took him up on that offer of coaching with them, and it's something that I didn't know how much I'd actually love."

In 2015, Harding began working with the goalies. He now coaches the forwards as an assistant coach for the perennial contender. In his time there, Edina has won Class AA state championships in 2019 and 2024 and was the runner-up in 2023.

"Going all the way back to my freshman year, I really didn't know a whole lot about high school hockey, and I just went into tryouts and he was one of the first persons that would come up to me during those training practices and boost my confidence a little bit," says Mason West, the Blackhawks first-round pick who this Friday will quarterback Edina High School in the Class 6A state quarterfinal against Eden Prairie at Osseo High. "He was just super nice and welcoming, especially when I made

the team my freshman year. And then, obviously, I think he didn't want to put too much on my plate. I think he just tried to ease me in.

"I think he does a good job of creating really special relationships where, I mean, I'll always be able to talk to him whether it's I'm playing football or when I'm playing hockey after that ... but also in the outside world."

West, 18, says Harding finds the perfect balance of holding players accountable when they need to play better but boosting their confidence when they're playing well.

Like many of his teammates, though, West didn't remember much about Harding's career with the Wild.

But West has looked him up, seen his stats and watched highlights — and read up on how his career ended.

"It's just another reason to look up to him because there've been a couple times during the season where he's had to deal with that, and as players and a team, we were there for him, but he never complains," West says. "We just see that hunger in him when he's coaching. You can see that he loves hockey and that he takes his job seriously coaching every day in practice. He's just trying to help us chase our highest goal."

"I love these kids," Harding says. "I will do anything for them to try to give them every possible opportunity to reach the highest in hockey. I also take a lot of pride in helping these kids off the ice and become men.

"At first, this kept me in the game. I'm used to being in a locker room, I'm used to being part of a team. And since Curt has brought me on, it's kind of patched up that hole that I was missing. With the illness I have, I also feel I can help give these kids life lessons. When they think it's the end of the world that they're not scoring goals or something's wrong in their life, I can give them a little bit of a reminder that it's not the end of the world here."

Harding recently found himself a day job, too.

John Celenza and Tucker Wright, the CEO and president of Cizzle Brands, are hockey guys from Canada and have hydration drinks called Cwench, as well as supplements, snacks and pastas. The company has deals with USA Hockey and Minnesota Hockey and is growing rapidly with products in fitness centers like Lifetime. Harding is serving as a regional sales manager.

Other than that, Harding is enjoying life as a husband and dad. Talan's a freshman at University of St. Thomas. Paisley is his dancer. This past Saturday, Harding was juggling Jayden's basketball practice in the morning and flag football game in the afternoon.

Harding's a Wild diehard and brings his kids to games every season.

"We bleed Minnesota Wild," Harding says.

Harding has been on the Grand Casino Arena ice to celebrate two Edina state championships since his playing days, but he's really looking forward to taking his family to Tuesday's game. Sara will get to see her husband's highlights again, and when he takes part in the ceremonial puck drop with Backstrom and Dubnyk, his children will get to hear how much Wild fans loved and respected him.

"I feel like the ending of my career overshadowed my actual career and who I was," Harding says. "I hope fans will always remember the fact that I tried to go down fighting for them. I tried to go down fighting for this organization. I always wanted to bring a championship here. I hope that fans know that while the ending was a challenge, I did try to give back to the community and make sure that I impacted the State of Hockey in a positive way.

"I just hope that fans can recall the good times and not just the sick ones."

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ESPN / NHL Awards WATCH: Who's leading for Hart, Norris, Calder? – ESPN

19–24 minutes

Greg Wyshynski Nov 4, 2025, 12:00 PM

It's said that an NHL team doesn't win the Stanley Cup in the first month of the season. But can a player win an NHL award in that span?

There's plenty of runway left for dramatic shifts in statistics and the standings. But this is the time of year when narratives are planted in the minds of awards voters. An 18-year-old rookie sensation who reenergizes a franchise in his first dozen games isn't all that far off from a film playing to standing ovations at Cannes, months before becoming an Oscar nominee.

First impressions matter, and the inaugural NHL Awards Watch of the 2025-26 season is a good indication of how impressed the voters currently are with the early field of contenders.

We've polled a wide selection of Professional Hockey Writers Association voters anonymously to get a sense of where the wind is blowing for the current leaders. We've made sure it's a cross section from the entire league, trying to gain as many perspectives as possible.

Keep in mind that the PHWA votes for the Hart, Norris, Calder, Selke and Lady Byng finalists, broadcasters vote for the Jack Adams and general managers handle the Vezina.

All stats are from Hockey-Reference.com, Natural Stat Trick and Evolving Hockey.

Jump ahead:

Ross | Richard | Hart

Norris | Selke | Vezina

Calder | Byng | Adams

Art Ross Trophy (points leader)

Maurice 'Rocket' Richard Trophy

Hart Trophy (MVP)

Leader: Jack Eichel, C, Vegas Golden Knights

Finalists: Cale Makar, D, Colorado Avalanche; Mark Scheifele, C, Winnipeg Jets

Eichel was the player of the month for October in the NHL. He has been the most valuable player so far this season in the minds of our voters.

The Golden Knights star earned 42% of the first-place votes after dominating the first 11 games of the season. Eichel had 19 points (8 goals, 11 assists) overall in that span. He had six multipoint games, including two four-point games. Entering Monday night, Eichel was five points ahead of Mitch Marner among Vegas scorers. His reputation as a "200-foot player" has also been slowly coagulating, as Eichel finished fifth for the Selke Trophy last season. The Golden Knights average 2.02 goals against per 60 minutes with Eichel on the ice.

Eichel has received significant Hart Trophy support just twice in his career, finishing eighth in 2019-20 with the Buffalo Sabres and fifth last season for Vegas. He earned two first-place votes in 2024-25. That number will grow significantly if his success, and that of his team, continues unabated this season.

But it's early.

"It's a wide-open race after 10 games," one voter concluded. "Lots of guys having incredible impacts on the scoreboard and tilting the ice in favor of their respective teams."

Makar received the second-most first-place votes (19%), which is surprising on a couple of levels. For example: He's a defenseman and this is the Hart Trophy. The last defenseman to win league MVP was Chris Pronger of the St. Louis Blues back in 2000. That's also the last time a defenseman was even a finalist for the Hart.

Makar's candidacy is also surprising because Nathan MacKinnon, at last check, is still a member of the Colorado Avalanche. Through 13 games, MacKinnon led the Avs in goals (10) and points (19). Makar had 4 goals and 14 assists for 18 points in that span. MacKinnon earned 10% of the first-place votes from our panel.

MacKinnon has been as relevant to the Hart Trophy voting as defensemen have been alien to it, winning league MVP in 2023-24 and finishing in the top four in the voting five total times since 2017-18.

"His 5-on-5 numbers so far are absurd," a MacKinnon voter quipped.

But overall, it's Makar that has the louder early MVP buzz. Keep in mind that there might be room for two Avs in the MVP race: MacKinnon was fourth for the Hart last season, but Makar finished two spots behind him at sixth.

"As great as MacKinnon is, Makar is that team's engine," one voter opined.

Scheifele's explosive first 12 games earned him the third-most first-place votes (15% overall) from our panel. The Winnipeg star had nine goals and 11 assists, and registered points in 11 of his 12 appearances. Entering Monday night, his 20 points led all scorers, powering the Jets up the standings in the Central Division.

Apparently, Scheifele really wants to make an early-season impression on Team Canada management after his 4 Nations Face-Off snub. The Jets are certainly benefiting from it.

"It'll be difficult for him to maintain this ranking, but he's the best performer on a fantastic team," a Scheifele voter declared.

Other players who received first-place MVP votes from our panel: Leon Draisaitl (Edmonton Oilers), Jack Hughes (New Jersey Devils) and Dylan Larkin (Detroit Red Wings). Draisaitl, who won his lone MVP award in 2019-20, was second for the Hart last season behind Connor Hellebuyck.

Among the players that made voters' ballots but didn't get a first-place vote: Macklin Celebrini (San Jose Sharks) and Sidney Crosby (Pittsburgh Penguins).

Norris Trophy (top defenseman)

Leader: Cale Makar, Colorado Avalanche

Finalists: Mike Matheson, Montreal Canadiens; Josh Morrissey, Winnipeg Jets

In the Norris Trophy race, Cale Makar is like Usain Bolt ... with a rocket strapped to his back.

"It's not particularly close," one voter argued.

Makar earned all but one first-place vote from our panelists. Heading into Monday night, his 18 points are seven better than any other defenseman. He has skated to a plus-12 and is averaging 25:27 per game. He's second in the NHL in goals above replacement (6.4), per Evolving Hockey.

Makar is seeking his second straight Norris Trophy win -- and third overall -- having earned 92% of the first-place votes last season. He has been a finalist for the Norris for five straight seasons.



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"Makar's simply on another planet. That \$20 million cap hit in two years is somehow going to be a bargain," another voter predicted.

The defenseman that prevented a unanimous decision for Makar? Canadiens veteran Matheson, who earned one first-place vote. The 31-year-old has seven points in his first 12 games for the surging Habs, playing with Noah Dobson on the team's top pairing. Matheson is one of Montreal's primary penalty killers as well.

Of the players mentioned most prominently down the ballot, Morrissey earned the most support. The Jets defenseman had 11 points (1 goal, 10 assists) in his first 12 games, skating to a plus-12 while playing 24:35 per game on average. Morrissey was fourth in the Norris Trophy voting last season.

Among the other defensemen earning support from our voters: Gustav Forsling (Florida Panthers), Adam Fox (New York Rangers), Jake Sanderson (Ottawa Senators), Shea Theodore (Vegas Golden Knights) and Zach Werenski (Columbus Blue Jackets).

"Other guys will be in the conversation all season," one voter said.

Calder Trophy (top rookie)

Leader: Matthew Schaefer, D, New York Islanders

Finalists: Ivan Demidov, RW, Montreal Canadiens; Emmitt Finn timer, LW, Detroit Red Wings

As one voter put it: "Is this a real question? It's Matthew Schaefer."

The Calder is a unique award. There are factors that go beyond stats and narrative -- and Schaefer more than fulfills both of those criteria, by the way -- like expectations. What's to be expected from an 18-year-old defending against NHL players a few months after an injury-limited, 17-game season in the Ontario Hockey League? What's to be expected from a player selected first overall in the NHL draft, setting the bar considerably higher for Schaefer than for prospects selected later in the draw?

Schaefer is surpassing those expectations so far but also has something else going for him: That transformative alchemy that an outstanding rookie can provide to a franchise marinating in ennui. From the moment Schaefer was drafted, it was clear that his charisma and enthusiasm were infectious. After a dozen games, the Islanders have a different energy, and it's difficult not to trace that directly to the joy of Schaefer.

"Is there a more fun player in the league to watch right now than this kid?" one voter asked.

He's not just a great story. Statistically, he's been the league's best rookie so far: 10 points in 12 games (5 goals and 5 assists), tied for the lead among Calder-eligible players entering Monday night's action. He has earned five points at even strength and five on the power play while skating 21:56 per game on average, easily the most ice time logged among rookies.

"Position matters. So does ice time. And Schaefer is logging more than two minutes per game more than any other rookie," one voter explained.

And he's already making history, too. On Sunday, Schaefer became the youngest defenseman in NHL history with a multigoal game, moving in front of Hall of Famer Bobby Orr (18 years, 248 days on Nov. 23, 1966).

As good as Schaefer's been, he earned only 81% of the first-place votes. The other first-place votes were garnered by Canadiens dynamo Ivan Demidov. The 19-year-old winger was tied with Schaefer atop the rookie scoring list after the weekend, with 3 goals and 7 assists in 12 games. That's while averaging 13:59 in ice time, fourth among rookie forwards.

"Demidov is a very close second," one Schaefer voter admitted.

Others acknowledged Demidov's brilliance so far but saw the Calder picture differently.

"Ivan Demidov has been spectacular, but at this point, this race is not particularly close," one voter declared.

"Schaefer has been otherworldly, but Demidov will have his moment to push," another voter predicted.

It's clearly a two-player race at this point. The only other player prominently mentioned by our panel was Emmitt Finn timer, one of the biggest surprises of the season so far for the Red Wings.

As much as Schaefer was on everyone's radar to start the season, Finn timer was off it: a seventh-round pick in 2023 who spent more time in the WHL than the AHL over the past two seasons. But after posting 84 points in 55 games for Kamloops in 2024-25, the 20-year-old earned a shot to establish himself in the Detroit lineup. He found a home playing with Dylan Larkin and Lucas Raymond, and has 4 goals and 4 assists through 13 games this season.

Other rookies getting some support so far include Minnesota Wild defenseman Zeev Buium, St. Louis Blues forward Jimmy Snuggerud and Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Alexander Nikishin.

But right now, it's Schaefer vs. Demidov.

Vezina Trophy (top goaltender)

Note: The NHL's general managers vote for this award.

Leader: Logan Thompson, Washington Capitals

Finalists: Jakub Dobes, Montreal Canadiens; Connor Hellebuyck, Winnipeg Jets

There were certainly some skeptics of Thompson before the season. After being acquired from the Golden Knights in the 2024 offseason, he had an astonishing 2024-25 campaign for the Capitals: 31-6-6 with a .910 save percentage and a 2.49 goals-against average in 43 appearances. But that wasn't enough to impress the league's general managers, who placed him fourth in last season's Vezina vote.

His record isn't quite as sterling so far this season, but his stats are even better. Through eight games, he's 5-3-0 with a .935 save percentage and a 1.51 goals-against average, leading the NHL in both categories heading into Monday's action.

"He has quietly been spectacular for the Capitals," one voter noted.

Thompson is playing with some additional pressure on him, too: trying to make the cut for the Canadian Olympic team ahead of the 2026 men's tournament in Italy.

"At this point, if he doesn't make Canada's Olympic team, it is for something other than his play," one Canadian-born voter surmised. "He is the best Canadian goaltender, and it's not particularly close."

Thompson earned 33% of the first-place votes. Hellebuyck and Dobes each earned around 24% of the first-place votes to round out the top three.

Dobes is having a 2024-25 Thompson-esque start for the Habs based on wins and losses, going 6-0-0 in six appearances. His numbers are stellar (.930 save percentage, 1.97 goals-against average) and significantly better than his crease-mate Sam Montembeault (.839 save percentage).

"We can't ignore the start by Jakub Dobes in Montreal," one voter argued.

With the Canadiens sprinting out of the gate, Dobes is getting a lot of Vezina love -- oddly, he didn't get any traction on the Calder ballots. Maybe there's a learning curve here about Dobes still being a rookie despite playing 16 games last season?

Hellebuyck is trying to win his third straight Vezina Trophy. The last goalie to go back-to-back-to-back was the legendary Dominik Hasek of the Buffalo Sabres (1996-99). Hellebuyck won last season's Vezina in a total



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roul, getting 31 out of 32 first-place votes. (The only other goalie to earn one: Andrei Vasilevskiy.) He's crushing it again so far for the Jets: 6-3-0 with a .921 save percentage and a 2.34 goals-against average in nine games.

"It's early and some goalies are off to a great start, but so is Hellebuyck," a voter concluded. "Until proven otherwise, he is still the best in the league."

Another goalie who received multiple first-place votes was Thatcher Demko of the Vancouver Canucks, who is healthy and playing well, with a .918 save percentage and a 2.41 goals-against average. Demko is on a mission to play himself into the Team USA goalie battery for the 2026 Olympics.

"Demko has been back to his form. He should be in the conversation for the U.S.," one voter opined.

Other goalies who received first-place votes were Spencer Knight of the Chicago Blackhawks and Lukas Dostal of the Anaheim Ducks, the latter of whom entered Monday as the NHL's leader in goals saved above expected (11.1), per Money Puck.

Selke Trophy (best defensive forward)

Leader: Nick Suzuki, C, Montreal Canadiens

Finalists: Anthony Cirelli, C, Tampa Bay Lightning; Nico Hischier, C, New Jersey Devils; Jordan Staal, C, Carolina Hurricanes

It has become somewhat of an informal tradition in the NHL Awards Watch to have roughly the population of Saskatoon nominated for the Selke in the first month of voting. OK, we're being slightly hyperbolic, but no less than 10 different players received at least one first-place vote each.

If there's one award that doesn't benefit from a small sample, it's the Selke.

"It's too early to make any real sense of the numbers defensively," one voter concluded.

Throwing the race into more chaos was the preseason injury to Florida Panthers star Aleksander Barkov, who has won the Selke in back-to-back seasons and three times overall. Without that default choice, the field is wide open.

There is, however, a clear leader. Suzuki was 13th for the Selke in each of the past two seasons but earned 24% of the first-place votes here. He's off to an outstanding offensive start for Montreal, with 18 points in his first 12 games, but his defensive metrics are exemplary. The Canadiens are averaging just 1.03 goals against per 60 minutes with Suzuki on the ice.

"He does a lot for the Habs and deserves Selke love," one voter argued.

We listed three finalists behind Suzuki because they all earned the same number of first-place votes, around 14% each.

Cirelli was a Selke finalist for the first time last season. Given the weird history of this award -- which honors defense but frequently for only offense-generating players -- it should come as no surprise that Cirelli's support materialized during his best offensive season (59 points in 80 games). He's ahead of that pace so far, with 11 points in 12 games, and once again is getting Selke attention.

It seems like Cirelli has been on deck for the Selke for a few seasons. Ditto Hischier, the Devils' outstanding two-way center. He was second for the Selke in 2022-23 and then finished fourth for the award last season. Hischier is winning over 52% of his faceoffs and getting the big defensive assignments for the Devils.

Finally -- and once again -- it's Staal. The 20-year NHL veteran has been a Selke finalist twice but has never broken through to win the award,

despite being lauded as one of the league's best shutdown centers on the Carolina checking line.

"He still faces top opposition, wins draws, kills penalties and as of Sunday had been on the ice for one 5-on-5 goal against," one voter proclaimed.

Pittsburgh Penguins star Sidney Crosby earned around 10% of the first-place votes. The highest he has placed for the Selke was fourth overall in 2018-19, but the Penguins' stunning start has given his defensive game renewed focus.

Other players who received at least one first-place vote: Winnipeg Jets winger Kyle Connor, Colorado Avalanche forward Artturi Lehkonen, Vegas Golden Knights winger Mitch Marner, Vancouver Canucks center Elias Pettersson and Florida Panthers center Sam Reinhart, who finished second for the Selke last season.

"His defensive numbers are still amazing without Sasha Barkov, and he's on a 40-goal pace," the Reinhart voter noted. "But then again, so is Anthony Cirelli."

Lady Byng Trophy (gentlemanly play)

This is the part where I mention that the Lady Byng Trophy for gentlemanly play should be voted on by the league's on-ice officials or by the NHL Players' Association instead of the PHWA.

Traditionally, this award goes to a player with a top-20 point total and the lowest penalty minutes among those players.

Entering Monday, one particular player had 19 points and zero penalty minutes in 11 games. He was third for the Byng last season. Will this finally be the season he becomes "Gentleman" Jack Eichel?

Jack Adams Award (best coach)

Note: The NHL Broadcasters' Association votes on this award.

Leader: Dan Muse, Pittsburgh Penguins

Finalists: Joel Quenneville, Anaheim Ducks; Andre Tourigny, Utah Mammoth

Who would have predicted that one month into the season, the Penguins team coached by a former New York Rangers assistant would have a better record than the Rangers team coached by Mike Sullivan?

Dan Muse, a longtime assistant under head coach Peter Laviolette, was hired as Sullivan's successor in June. Expectations for the Penguins entering the season were extremely tempered. Discussion centered around the potential departures of Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. The idea that Pittsburgh could return to playoff contention with this roster and a novice head coach seemed outlandish at best ... and then the Penguins got off to an 8-3-2 start, with balanced scoring and a defensive turnaround under Muse.

"Why is Pittsburgh even remotely relevant? What is this Muse wizardry?" one voter asked.

"Tough not to go with Muse considering Pittsburgh's hot start, which probably won't last, but if he even keeps the Penguins remotely competitive this season, he'll be a lock to win this," another voter said.

Muse earned an impressive 76% of the first-place votes.

The second choice for the panel was Quenneville. The 67-year-old coach took over the Ducks this season after he was reinstated by the NHL in July 2024. Quenneville and two other former Chicago Blackhawks executives were banned from the league in October 2021 for their mishandling of a sexual assault allegation by a former player in 2010.

Under Quenneville, the Ducks' play at even strength has improved greatly in both offensive output and puck possession. Anaheim was first



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in the Pacific at 7-3-1 after 11 games. He earned 10% of the first-place votes.

After Quenneville, Tourigny earned the most support as coach of one of the season's early surprises in the Utah Mammoth. He's a great story, having coached through the chaos in the Coyotes' final three seasons in Arizona before porting over with the players to form a new team in Utah. The Mammoth have been solid offensively and defensively this season, contending in the Central.

"Tourigny is right behind Muse for me," one voter revealed.

Other coaches receiving first-place votes were Montreal's Martin St. Louis and Detroit's Todd McLellan.

It's anyone's guess whether these players and coaches will still be in the awards conversation by season's end. Join us next month in this space to see how solidified these first impressions have become with the voters.

ESPN LOADED: 11.05.2025

1366966 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers Takeaways: Frustration building after another blown multi-goal lead

Mark Spector

4–5 minutes

Here's the thing about blowing as many leads as the Edmonton Oilers have. A record-setting amount of them, as it turns out.

The bright side is, the Calgary Flames aren't blowing a ton of leads these days. Same goes for St. Louis and San Jose, if you get what we mean.

But as the Oilers set a team record with yet another multi-goal lead blown — this time a pair of two-goal leads in a 4-3 shootout loss at Dallas — you do begin to wonder what all that experience from all of those hard-fought playoff games over the past five years is really worth.

"We're in a good spot there (up 3-1 in the third period), and we let them come at us a little bit too much," said longest-serving Oiler Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. "Just decisions that end up biting us. We know we're capable of closing games out like this, but we've got to start showing it."

Just one night after the Oilers had coughed up a 2-0 lead only to lose 3-2 in regulation at St. Louis, Connor McDavid restored Edmonton's two-goal lead when he finished a lovely three-way passing play at 7:51 of the third period. Twelve minutes to protect a two-goal lead — that simply has to be doable for a team that's played more playoff games in the past five years than any other Western Conference team.

"Decision making is one thing," said Nugent-Hopkins. "Reading the situation and sometimes taking the cautionary route, but at the same time, we want to still play. Push them back and (not let Dallas) play with the puck too much. Then they start feeling good, they start to feel comfortable and that's when things happen.

"(There are) too many of these right now. It's something that we need to fix."

This is the first time in history that the Oilers have lost four games when leading by multiple goals within the first 15 games of a season. The loss to the Stars marked the sixth time the Oilers have given up a lead of two goals or more already this season.

They outshot Dallas 12-5 in the third period — in the second game of a back-to-back on the road — yet still, the Oilers were outscored 2-1 in the final frame.

"Yeah, it's difficult to handle that," head coach Kris Knoblauch said. "In the third period, we gave up three (scoring) chances. You would think that would be on the goalie, that you give up two goals on three chances, but that's not what I'm saying.

"It's just the type of chances where we lose focus, lose responsibilities, and let them into a position to make a good play."

Leon Draisaitl's line was on the ice for the 3-2 goal, and McDavid's line was on the ice for the 3-3 goal. In St. Louis, it was No. 1 defenceman Evan Bouchard who snoozed on the game-winner by the Blues.

As the old line goes, your best players have to be your best players if you're going to win games.

"It's one thing if the opposition is making good plays and beating your coverage," Knoblauch lamented. "But we're just making mistakes where we're giving them opportunities.

"We've got to make big plays at critical times, not make the mistakes at critical times. Whether that's been taking a penalty when we've had leads, or just puck turnovers, there are lots of areas in the game that we need to work on and get better at. It's just not just one thing."

Power On

One area of the Oilers' game that is impeccable these days is the power play.

It entered the game ranked No. 1 in the NHL at 35.1 per cent, and proceeded to go one-for-three against the Stars. Draisaitl scored an incredible goal, one-timing a puck from somewhere south of his office with both feet behind the goal line when he blasted a puck past Casey DeSmith in the Dallas goal.

"The power play has been a bright spot," Knoblauch said. "Not only tonight, but all season."

The Oilers have scored a power play in four straight games (5-for-10) and eight of their last nine games (11-for-23). They now have PPGs in five straight road games.

OIL SPILLS — Draisaitl's 10th goal of the season moved him into a tie for the league lead. His six power-play goals lead the league. Since the start of the 2018-19 season, Draisaitl leads the NHL with 146 PPGs, 43 ahead of the next closest player (Steven Stamkos) ... Edmonton will enjoy an off day in Dallas on Wednesday, flying home Thursday. Next up is Colorado at Rogers Place on Hockey Night in Canada.

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1366967 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' talent saves them a point in 'outlier' game versus Flyers

Eric Engels

6–7 minutes

MONTREAL — It's the 36th minute of a game the Montreal Canadiens are playing poorly in when Lane Hutson makes a deft play to beat his man and hold the offensive blue line.



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Hutson then passes the puck to Juraj Slafkovsky, who one-touches it to Ivan Demidov, and that's when Demidov does what no one in the building expects him to do. Least of all Dan Vladar, the Philadelphia Flyers goaltender, who's already bought the deceptive Russian's disinformation in this game.

Demidov sells pass to Nick Suzuki, delays, then roofs the puck for the goal that gives the Canadiens their first lead of the night.

They were down 3-0 to the Flyers before eight minutes had been played Tuesday and, as their coach, Martin St. Louis, ended up saying after the game was lost 5-4 in a shootout, they went from bad to worse.

"I didn't like being down 3-0," he said, "but I was more disappointed with how we responded to being down 3-0 while we were still in the first.

"Our details weren't there at all."

But the talent of the Canadiens popped regardless.

It's the luxury they've been waiting to possess for years, and now it's here. The Canadiens finally have threats all over the ice. Threats that enable them to turn a horrible performance into a precious point in the standings.

Samuel Montembeault helped.

He made 31 straight saves — many of them otherworldly — after allowing three goals on the first six shots of the game. He bought the Canadiens the opportunity to rely on their talent.

The fans at Bell Centre jeered Montembeault in the first period, but were chanting his name with less than 12 minutes remaining in the third period, after he made a big stop on Travis Konecny.

Montembeault made another one on him in overtime and was only beat in the shootout by the NHL's best specialist, Trevor Zegras, who also displayed his talent to set up two of the three goals the Flyers scored at the start of the game.

For as ugly as it was for the Canadiens through those first 20 minutes, belief reigned in their room.

"Three goals is a lot in this league, but we feel confident with what we can do at our best," said Hutson.

Why?

Well, Hutson started talking about how the Canadiens generate a lot of opportunity when they play within their structure.

But he concluded: "Sometimes our skill takes over, too, and we have some skilled guys that could make them pay for their mistakes."

St. Louis said the Canadiens never played within their structure in this game. He called this game — their 13th of the season — "an outlier."

But the coach acknowledged that being able to look down his bench and see multiple players who could still turn the outcome in his favour was reassuring.

St. Louis couldn't have had that feeling through the first three years of this rebuild. It's been a slow burn to this point.

But it's been a steady one, and the benefits — and bonus points — are now being reaped.

They don't come without Montembeault stepping up after another tough start.

They don't come without a few big penalty kills.

But they definitely don't come without elite talent rising the way it did on Tuesday.

It started with a great shift for former third-overall pick Kirby Dach, who got the Canadiens on the board in the fourth minute of the second period.

Demidov's first deception followed, when he faked a point pass to Hutson and slid a seam pass to Nick Suzuki for a power-play goal that extended Suzuki's NHL-leading point streak to 12 games and kept his power-play unit scorching hot.

Hutson embarrassed two Flyers on his way to setting up Dach's second goal, which tied the game 3-3 with 6:32 to go in the second period.

And then Demidov's laser upstairs a little over two minutes later was the seventh goal Montreal's power play scored in 13 attempts it's had since Demidov was promoted to the top unit.

"That power-play unit is clicking pretty well right now," said Dach. "They seem to make every pass, every play. It's pretty fun to watch."

Unless you're trying to defend it.

Defending the Canadiens, in general, doesn't seem fun at all. Even when they're off their game, which hasn't been often at all.

It's why Montreal's record is 9-3-1.

Goaltending has been strong, and excellent when Jakub Dobes has been in the net. Defensively, the Canadiens have been relatively solid, with Tuesday's game bumping them to 16th in goals against per game. And offensively, they've produced 3.69 goals per game, which is second only to the Winnipeg Jets.

Suzuki is tied for third in the league in points with 19. Cole Caufield is among four players to have recorded 10 goals. Slafkovsky has scored six.

And then there's Hutson, who has a point per game.

Demidov has 12 points in 13 games, which is more than any other rookie. And he's a class apart in how he plays.

"Just the way he creates time and space for not only himself, but his linemates, how quick he is off his edges and understands where he wants guys to be, I think he dictates the game that way," said Dach. "It's not like he's the most vocal, or telling guys where to be, but with his play you kind of understand where you need to be to get pucks and he'll put 'em on your tape and you just go right and shoot them.

"Laner's the same thing. Those two guys just seem to kind of make plays and wow you every time you're on the ice, and we're definitely lucky to have both of them."

Without them, you can only fantasize about erasing a three-goal deficit in a game you're playing terribly.

But the Canadiens have the talent to bolster belief now, and that's the main thing — outside the point in the standings — they're taking from Tuesday's game.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.05.2025

1366968 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Real Kypreos's NHL Buzz: Shanahan wants back in with a team

Nick Kypreos

7-9 minutes

Though Brendan Shanahan's run with the Toronto Maple Leafs is over, make no mistake: he sees some unfinished business in a hockey operations role for an NHL franchise.



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In a recent Toronto Sun article, deputy commissioner Bill Daly all but admitted that Shanahan's new job with the NHL in the hockey operations department was likely to be a pit stop on the way to something else.

"We are excited to have him back," Daly told Postmedia. "We understand that this may not be where he stays long-term, but Shanny's overall level of hockey knowledge and experience is hard to duplicate, and will clearly add value."

There is plenty of speculation as to which team might consider bringing Shanahan in. Although the Maple Leafs won't be replacing him with another president any time soon, there is word other teams wouldn't mind having an eye in the sky in the same, or a similar, position.

The Maple Leafs might not have had a deep playoff run under Shanahan, but his 10-year run with the team did include nine consecutive playoff appearances, so he will remain an attractive candidate to hire.

The most obvious team that may be interested in him is the Buffalo Sabres, an organization in dire need of some credibility and leadership — and owner Terry Pegula knows it. It sounds like Shanahan would consider taking a job there, but it would have to come with the same autonomy he enjoyed with the Maple Leafs. However, after losing their first three games, Buffalo has gone 5-1-3 since and so some immediate pressure has been relieved, for now.

If not Buffalo, what about Chicago? While the Blackhawks are also off to a decent start, many believe GM Kyle Davidson could use some support from above and so Shanahan's name has surfaced there as well.

The Nashville Predators are another team to keep an eye on. While GM Barry Trotz's job as GM seems on solid ground, another poor stretch through American Thanksgiving would lead to more speculation that the team could use another voice and vision up top.

Shanahan has made plenty of money in his time as both a player and executive, so some may wonder why he'd want to get back in with an NHL franchise. The fact is that he's a competitive person and wants to prove he can help lead a team to the Stanley Cup again.

- Barring a miraculous run by the Sabres, this likely will be head coach Lindy Ruff's final year coaching, which coincides with the end of his contract. If Ruff doesn't outright retire, we could see him finding another role within the organization.
- While we know Flames centre Nazem Kadri isn't going anywhere before his 1,000th career game — which he'll play on Wednesday night — a league executive did tell me that hasn't stopped GM Craig Conroy from telling teams he's open for business.

If Conroy gets an offer he can't refuse, he could very well move Kadri before the trade deadline in March. Kadri has been linked to multiple teams, but we have to specifically mention the Carolina Hurricanes, who have been in a relentless pursuit for a top player since falling short on Mikko Rantanen and Mitch Marner last season. For now, the Hurricanes seem an unlikely destination for Kadri, as they are on his 13-team no-trade list.

Vancouver and Montreal are also interested in landing a top-two centre, and a potential trade to either of those destinations appears easier than a move to Carolina, since the two Canadian teams are not on Kadri's no-trade list.

- Could the Canucks and Canadiens be focusing on the Bruins' Pavel Zacha? There is a tremendous shortage of top-six centres available this season and next. He's off to a good start, which has caught the eye of many, including Vancouver and Montreal. With one more year after this remaining on Zacha's deal, the Bruins have time to watch him closely before committing on re-signing him or trading him for assets.
- Macklin Celebrini is getting serious consideration to be included on Team Canada's Olympic team, which will be a 25-man roster (compared to 23 for the 4 Nations). Having such a highly skilled player who is

mature far beyond his years is very attractive for GM Doug Armstrong and Co.

For now, Celebrini has a significant leg up on Connor Bedard for a spot. Despite a good start to his season, Bedard is not on the Olympic team's radar for now. Unless he goes lights-out for an extended stretch, there is just no space for him.

- The Pittsburgh Penguins' first month has changed how they expected to approach the rest of this season. Evgeni Malkin has been going. Sidney Crosby leads the team in goals. Anthony Mantha, Justin Brazeau, Erik Karlsson, Tristan Jarry, you name it, everyone has been contributing to the Penguins' 8-4-2 record, which has them sitting fourth in the Eastern Conference. So what do they do from here?

There is some mystery whether this team will be sold or not, and that factor also leaves GM Kyle Dubas in a bit of limbo, not knowing who is potential new boss could be or what their vision is. But if the Penguins keep going as they have, it's going to take Malkin, Bryan Rust and Rickard Rakell out of the trade-rumour talk. Instead, they'll be wondering if they can make the playoffs. Because if the Penguins keep going strong into the new year and then are close to the playoff race leading up to the trade deadline, are you going to tell Crosby — who's missed the playoffs the last three years — you're selling? Not likely.

- Artemi Panarin has a similarly sticky situation. His future could depend on the team's status in the playoff race.

The pending UFA has made it clear to the Rangers that he is not interested in a pay cut from his current \$11.642 million, and that has shut down any chance of negotiations. The Rangers don't want him at that same rate again.

If it gets as far as a trade being on the table, Panarin has been linked to both Carolina and Minnesota.

However, I don't get the sense he wants to leave New York at all for now, so he holds all the cards with a no-movement clause. If the Rangers don't eventually hit his price tag, he might be content to play out the remainder of his contract and test the market in free agency.

- As we get into the second month of the season, teams are starting to figure out what they need. But while the Maple Leafs would ideally like to add a scoring winger, their hands are tied by the fact they don't have as many assets to trade that can match other teams. Many teams will come calling for Easton Cowan, which is a non-starter for now. Ben Danford is another prospect of theirs who could be more attainable, but there are mixed feelings around the league whether he's going to be a bottom-pair NHL defenceman, or someone who can get himself into a top-four role one day.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.05.2025

1366969 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Scout's Analysis: Analyzing NHL prospects around the 10-game mark

Jason Bukala

11–14 minutes

Every fall there are NHL prospects who were chosen in the two most recent drafts, are 19 years old or younger, and have at least one more year of major junior eligibility (CHL) who are given a nine-game opportunity to prove themselves at the NHL level before their pro team



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faces its first threshold on whether or not to send that player back to junior.

Currently, none of these players are eligible to be sent to the AHL to develop (outside of a short conditioning stint), though when the new CBA kicks in this summer, each NHL team will be allowed to send one of these junior-eligible prospects to the AHL instead of the CHL.

When these types of prospects play their 10th NHL game, it officially burns the first year of their three-year entry-level contract. The NHL team can send them back to junior later on anyway, but when that player returns next training camp, they will be entering the second year of their ELC. Some of these rookies have already played 10 or more games, while others have experienced a healthy scratch or two and haven't played that many yet.

However, I don't believe the 10-game audition for prospects concerns NHL teams now as much as it did in the past.

If a prospect looks comfortable in the NHL, teams aren't worried about burning a year off their ELC. The more important contractual threshold comes later. Once a player has been "rostered" for 40 games — whether he plays in all of those games or not — he gets rewarded for time served and becomes one year closer to being eligible for arbitration and unrestricted free agency. Players become UFA-eligible after being credited for seven NHL seasons, so teams are much more concerned with a high-end prospect getting one year closer to that status than to just burning off a year of their ELC.

With all of this in mind, here's an update on some of the top prospects playing in the NHL who would have to be returned to their junior clubs this season if their team let them go, and what their projected status is moving forward:

Despite the fact he turned 18 on Sept. 5, the first-overall pick from the most recent draft in Los Angeles has by far been the Islanders' top defenceman, and arguably their best player overall.

Schaefer has played 12 games, produced five goals and five assists, and averaged 22 minutes per game while being deployed in all situations. His name is already coming up in Team Canada discussions for the Olympics this February. Schaefer is a Calder Trophy candidate for top rookie in the league and is a star in the making. His OHL career with the Erie Otters is in the rearview mirror. There's zero chance he'll be returned to junior hockey.

Sennecke has played in all 11 games for the Ducks this season. The third-overall pick from the 2024 draft is plenty strong for the NHL game (listed at six-foot-three, 206 pounds) and contributing offensively in Anaheim (four goals, three assists).

I worked with Ducks head coach Joel Quenneville during my time with the Florida Panthers. He's the right coach at the right time for the evolving Ducks team. Sennecke won't be given anything for free, he will have to improve some of his off-puck habits and make sure he is tracking up and down the ice on time, but Quenneville will reward him for hard work.

Sennecke is averaging over 17 minutes per game, with all of his shifts coming at even strength and on the power play. He's earned the right to call Orange County home and is well on his way to a productive rookie season in Anaheim.

I don't believe the next set of prospects are likely to return to major junior this season, but I do see the possibility that some of them end up on Team Canada's WJC roster this Christmas. Unlike Schaefer and Sennecke, these players have less of a role with their respective NHL teams and could benefit from the high leverage games and increased roles at the world junior tournament.

However, I'd expect all of them to return to the NHL after the event, unless their play drops off considerably before then.

Note: Releasing prospects to the world juniors takes them off their NHL team rosters, so the 40-game clock pauses while they are away from the club and resumes upon their return from the tournament.

Kindel has been a nice story to start the season and fits well into the strategy the Penguins are attempting to employ for the future. The team is off to a fantastic start, 8-4-2 through its first 14 games, but is likely playing with house money to start the year. The Pens are in the midst of a retool/rebuild that will take time, and Kindel is a key piece of the equation.

Kindel has dressed for 12 games this season and averaged 14 minutes of ice time. Like Sennecke, all of his shifts have come at even strength and on the power play. Early on, he's proving he can be a threat offensively by potting five goals and is coming off a game that saw him play a season-high 22:23 versus the Toronto Maple Leafs.

I'm monitoring Kindel's role, but I believe he has earned the right to develop in Pittsburgh this season and will benefit from learning how to be a good pro by watching how Sidney Crosby practices and prepares for games.

Having said that, I'm positive Team Canada's WJC team will be circling around Kindel, hoping he is released for the tournament. The experience definitely wouldn't hurt his development, but the decision to have him around the leadership group in Pittsburgh instead makes it a tough call at this stage.

Catton was selected eighth overall by the Kraken in 2024 and has nothing left to prove at the junior level. He's an elite offensive talent who produced 92 goals and 133 assists over the last two regular seasons playing for the Spokane Chiefs in the WHL, and contributed 11 goals and 31 assists in 20 playoff games last spring.

Catton has skated on the top line with the Kraken for stretches this season, but was recently demoted in the lineup and clocked in for only 7:07 in Seattle's game versus the Chicago Blackhawks. He has three assists in seven games.

Depending on how Catton's role evolves with the Kraken in his next 10-game segment, I could see him ending up on Team Canada's roster for the WJC and returning to the Kraken after the tournament. He's too good for the WHL, but is still evolving at the NHL level and needs time. But being around the pro game is where he belongs.

The Flames have a plan for Parekh and it doesn't include a return to junior hockey with Saginaw in the OHL.

The Flames drafted Parekh one slot behind Catton (ninth overall) at the 2024 draft. He's an offensive dynamo who put up Bobby Orr-like numbers in the OHL. Parekh scored 97 goals and 172 assists over the last three seasons with the Spirit. He has nothing to prove at the junior level, but he's also struggled at times to handle the weight and detail of the NHL game on the defensive side of the ledger.

Parekh has been in and out of the Flames lineup, and averaged 15:35 in ice time when he does play. Through 10 games, he has posted one assist while being deployed at even strength and on the power play.

It would be interesting if Parekh were loaned to Team Canada for the WJC because he wasn't part of the team last December and it left a bad taste in his mouth at the time. Calgary would have to be comfortable with whatever Canada's management group had planned for Parekh if they were to release him, otherwise they might decide to hold him back and keep developing him under their watch.

I would like to see Parekh competing at the world juniors in high-leverage scenarios, but there's a lot to unpack with his scenario.

The Sharks are a team on the rise and flush with exciting, dynamic, young prospects on their NHL roster. In an interesting twist of fate and timing, the Sharks have two budding stars who both have CHL eligibility



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remaining on their development clock in Dickinson and forward Michael Misa.

Dickinson was drafted 11th overall by the Sharks in 2024. The six-foot-three, 205-pound, left-shot defenceman has already benefited from a ton of high-leverage experience playing for the London Knights in the OHL. The Knights are serial winners at the junior level and coming off a Memorial Cup championship in June. Dickinson was deployed for over 30 minutes per game a lot of nights playing in London and used in all situations. He produced 29 goals and 62 assists and finished a ridiculous plus-64 in the regular season last year and followed it up with nine goals and 22 assists and a plus-22 in the playoffs.

The Sharks have recently been dressing 11 forwards and seven defenders for their games. Dickinson is slowly being integrated, has played 10 games, and has been getting between 11 and 17 minutes per game in ice time. He hasn't looked out of place overall, but needs time to continue to work on the consistent details that come with being an NHL defenceman with offensive upside.

Dickinson scored his first NHL goal in his last game versus the Detroit Red Wings. Like Parekh, he has nothing left to prove at the junior level, but because the Sharks are deploying seven defencemen, he could be a candidate for Team Canada's WJC team as well.

Michael Misa, F, San Jose Sharks

The Sharks drafted Misa second overall in June. He's a highly decorated junior player who led the CHL in scoring last season (62 goals, 72 assists). Misa was granted "exceptional status" by the OHL in 2022, so he's already played three years in the OHL.

Misa has nothing to prove at the junior level either, but he's having a more difficult time finding a consistent role in the Sharks lineup. He's dressed for seven of their 13 games this season and contributed one goal and two assists while averaging under 12 minutes of ice time per game. Misa does see time on the power play when he's in the lineup, but with the Sharks electing to dress seven defencemen instead of 12 forwards, he has found himself in either a depth role at even strength or a healthy scratch.

I could see Misa landing on Team Canada's roster. He will benefit from the experience and should add the offensive punch the team was missing last Christmas at the tournament in Ottawa.

MAY RETURN TO MAJOR JUNIOR

The last of these types of prospects on my radar is one who I can see being returned to junior hockey following a potential role at the world juniors:

The Penguins selected Brunicke in the second round (44th overall) in 2024. The six-foot-three, 203-pound, right-shot defenceman has appeared in nine of Pittsburgh's 14 games this season, but his average ice time has been declining and reached a season-low 12:39 Monday in Toronto.

Brunicke is a solid prospect and projects as a two-way defender who will chip in with secondary offence on occasion. After a very strong training camp and generally reliable start to the season, he has struggled recently and posted a minus-6 in his past three games. Brunicke appears to need more time to develop and adjust to the speed and skill of the NHL. I see him as an invite to Canada's junior training camp, but wouldn't be surprised if he was returned to the WHL's Kamloops Blazers in the coming days.

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1366970 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'Four great years': Flyers' Vladar reflects fondly on time with Flames

Eric Francis

5-6 minutes

PHILADELPHIA — Dan Vladar wanted to remain a Calgary Flame and had every intention of doing so.

Until reality set in.

After the NHL's pause for the 4 Nations Face-Off, he started to realize that if he was ever going to get a shot at being a starting netminder in the NHL, it wasn't going to be in Calgary.

"After the break, when I didn't really get anything, I knew," said the 28-year-old netminder from his New Jersey home.

"I was really focused on staying, and felt it was a great spot because of my teammates and buddies and Barbs (goalie coach Jason LaBarbera), who did an unbelievable job getting me to this moment.

"I think I made it really clear I really wanted to stay, but as the year went on, I just didn't feel like it was the right thing for me."

Vladar opened last season shielding Dustin Wolf from the toughest of starts, splitting the crease as part of what started as an open competition.

It allowed Wolf to continue building enough confidence to the point that by late February, the 50-50 split between the two turned into a string in which Wolf started 20 of 27 games, carrying the club to their unlikely chase for a playoff spot.

The organization had all but officially anointed the then 23-year-old Wolf as the team's franchise goalie.

"I know who my partner is here," said Vladar at his final media availability in Calgary.

"Wolfie, I think he is going to be a legend one day."

Forever thankful to the organization for acquiring him from Boston and developing him into the player he is today, he insists there are no hard feelings.

"That's the hockey world, that's the way it works out," said Vladar.

"I'm not mad or anything. I had four great years, and I still have buddies there for the rest of my life. I wish the city and the whole organization nothing but success.

"I miss my buddies, Barbs, and the culture there. The people in Calgary are close to the team, and they really love hockey there. I'll always miss that because there's nothing bigger than hockey in Calgary."

At age 27, he felt he owed it to himself to find a place where he'd have a better opportunity to challenge for a starter's job somewhere.

He just didn't know where.

When free agency opened July 1, his answer came quickly.

"I think there were seven or eight teams interested, but once Philly came it was really easy for me," said Vladar.

"I did some research, and as soon as I heard they had interest, I knew I would love to come here."

Inking a two-year deal for \$3.35 AAV, he immediately became the Flyers' highest-paid goalie, ahead of 26-year-old Samuel Ersson, who is in the last year of a contract paying him \$1.45 million.



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There were no promises that the starter's job would be an open audition, but he knew he'd get a fair shake.

"I didn't talk to the team, but I just kind of knew the opportunity was going to be bigger than it was in Calgary," said Vladar, who has opened his time with the Flyers in spectacular fashion, sitting amongst league leaders with a 2.11 GAA and .924 save percentage.

"I wouldn't say I'm playing the best hockey of my life, but obviously I feel good. We are playing really well as a team, and the coaches are doing a really good job, which sets a really good mood in the locker room.

"Obviously, new team, new challenges, but from Day 1, everybody has been nothing but great to me. It's been a blast for me so far."

So good has Vladar's start been, he's forced himself into the middle of the Olympic conversation in Czechia, where a talented crew that includes Vitek Vaneczek, Karel Vejmelka, Lukas Dostal, Jakub Dobes and Petr Mrazek will also be fighting for a spot.

"It would be a dream come true for me," said Vladar, one of 50 players who attended his country's summer hockey gathering after the worlds.

"But at the same time, I know the competition is pretty good."

Competition is something Vladar is comfortable with, dating back to last season's open battle between him and Wolf.

"That was a big thing for me heading into this season, that I had been in a similar situation last year, so I already knew what it was like," he said.

"I was one year older and one year wiser going into the year.

"It's a long year, and Sam has been good to me, and I appreciate how the guys and the organization are treating me."

Vladar had hoped to get the start against Calgary Sunday in Philadelphia, but with the team playing back-to-back on the weekend, the priority was to have him start against the Leafs.

His fingers are crossed he'll be tapped to start on New Year's Eve when his Flyers visit Calgary.

"I got to spend four years there, so I have a lot of cool and funny memories with the guys," said the affable netminder, citing a list of eight Flames players he still keeps in touch with.

"It was hard for me to leave, but I think every single guy texted me when I signed on July 1, and they wished me luck, and that meant a lot to me.

"I miss it there, but life had to move on."

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1366971 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / New Maple Leafs off to slow starts: 'It's not easy'

Luke Fox

6-7 minutes

TORONTO — Matias Maccelli sat in the Toronto Maple Leafs dressing room the morning before Opening Night, his name scribbled atop the whiteboard lineup to the right of captain Auston Matthews and stud power forward Matthew Knies.

The 1RW spot formerly occupied by you-know-who.

What would the shifty playmaker have thought if someone had informed Maccelli he'd kick off 2025-26 as a top-line Leaf on the day he got traded out of Utah?

"Sounds pretty good to me, right?" Maccelli replied that crisp October morning, flashing a smile as wide as a cross-crease feed. "Obviously, it's a great opportunity for me to play with both those guys.

"I feel like there's pressure always. Like, doesn't matter where you're at. But, I mean, obviously here, you play next to Auston and Knies, you're gonna get a little more attention. So, you gotta try to block that out and go out there and play your game."

The magic, tragic Blue Jays did a fine job sucking early-season attention away from their hockey-playing neighbours a few blocks east.

But the case of Maccelli — one of GM Brad Treliving's many off-season hope plays, and one who's guilty of too many hope plays — is as good a place as any to check in with how the new Leafs are turning over through 13 games.

Prior to puck drop, the low-risk flyer who fell out of favour with the staff in Salt Lake City admitted to nerves but said he was determined to win his battles, check hard, and help summon scoring chances.

Before Leafs Nation could blink, Maccelli had slipped off the top line. In under four weeks, he was back where things ended with his former club: banished to the press box.

Treliving was never naïve enough to imagine he could replace all-situations Mitch Marner straight-up. The bet was that Toronto could limit the loss by committee, by existing players grabbing larger roles, and a trio of fresh faces up front — Maccelli, centre Nicolas Roy and power wing Dakota Joshua — chipping in with support scoring, special-teams shifts, and smart defensive play.

Through 38 man-games, the three new Maple Leafs have combined for 13 points and a minus-7. (Marner has 14 points and is a plus-8 with Vegas through 11 games, but we recognize Treliving did not choose his own adventure here.)

Perhaps we should remind ourselves that all three of Treliving's new acquisitions' former clubs are striding toward contention and were OK with cutting these players loose to do so.

Maccelli is averaging his lowest ice time (13:40) as a pro, Roy (13:51) his lowest in five seasons, and Joshua (12:07) his lowest in three.

All of them soak up at least \$3 million on the cap sheet. None have played atrociously by any means. But ALSO: None have overdelivered or demanded a significant usage boost based on merit, which is what Treliving was banking on here.

"The D-zone is probably the biggest part. But I think we've made some big improvement," said Roy, known for his responsibility and consistency up the middle.

"I try to help the team as much as I can in different situations: face-offs (53.2 per cent), play on the PK, or try to be hard to play against on the forecheck and without the puck. I think my game is in a pretty good spot. Obviously, could be a better start to the season here. So, just gonna try to keep improving."

Roy, like the others, has conceded an adjustment period to coach Craig Berube's coverage plan.

"Always takes a little bit of time to know exactly where to go. Not overthink it," Roy said. "Because you want to act fast, and you don't want to be in your mind thinking about the system and everything."

To be fair, change is hard.

Acclimatization and chemistry take time, and this traumatized city can be impatient.

"You know, I think it's different for everyone. Obviously, it's not easy, right?" defends Max Domi, who has changed NHL sweaters six times.



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"You're coming in, new coach, new system, new teammates, new linemates, new city. So, there's a lot that goes into it. But it's also part of being a pro in the NHL, right? So, I think what makes those transitions easier is just the guys that have already been here, and then the locker room that you have. And I think we've got a great group of guys that have been here for a while that make it easy on those guys. So, just got to keep chipping away. We'll be fine."

Maybe.

But fine should not be the benchmark for a team with nine consecutive playoff appearances and coming off a regular-season divisional crown.

Based on Tuesday's line rushes, Maccelli will return to Toronto's lineup for Wednesday's revenge match against the franchise that cut him loose. Fittingly, he'll slot in alongside Roy and Joshua.

Call it the Prove-It Line.

Gradually improving, Joshua will be quick to tell you that he — like the entire Maple Leafs — has another level to reach.

He'll also point out to the sluggish Octobers the Edmonton Oilers overcame in 2023 and 2024 before eventually running the table and repping their conference in the Stanley Cup Final. And Berube's 2018-19 St. Louis Blues, who were fumbling around in last place as late as January before gelling into a hard-working, sum-is-greater-than-the-parts championship wagon come June.

So, when would be a fair time to start judging whether the new Leafs have fit in well enough?

"Probably around that American Thanksgiving mark, I don't want to say is panic time. But it is a bigger picture, really, to go off of things," Joshua said. "And I know everybody's still trying to catch their footing early on, and I just think that's the way the league goes. It's tight every night."

Until we see more traction, more energy from the Leafs' role players, though, things will feel a little extra tight in Toronto.

As Maccelli put it at the outset, they're gonna get a little more attention.

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1366972 Websites

TSN.CA / Berube shuffles Leafs lineup again as frustration builds over inconsistent start

Mark Masters

12–16 minutes

The Maple Leafs held a practice at Ford Performance Centre on Tuesday.

The Leafs have won four of five games, but Craig Berube readily admits he's feeling frustrated with the team's uneven performance.

"Yeah, I guess frustration is a good word," the coach said following practice on Tuesday.

"We still aren't where we need to be. We all know that. But we're working on it and just continue to work on it."

Toronto rallied from three goals down in the third period to beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 4-3 on Monday night. After the game, though, Berube was at a loss to explain how his group played in the second period. Despite trailing 2-0, the Leafs did not mount a push and watched

as the Penguins outshot them 17-3 in the middle stanza while adding to their lead.

William Nylander described the performance as "unacceptable."

The Leafs are 7-5-1 so far this season. Toronto's .577 points percentage ranked 15th in the league entering Tuesday's games.

"We've been inconsistent, which is not what we want," said defenceman Morgan Rielly. "We want to clean that up. We want to be more consistent. We want to have an identity that we play to every night, and we're looking to build that. I think there's been times where we've been able to find it. I thought we were pretty good [on Saturday] in Philly. I thought we were good in third last night. But it's about being more consistent and executing more often."

Berube feels the issue is all mental. How do you solve that?

"Well, you just keep battling, keep working at it, show video, talk to players, talk to the team, work on it in practice," the coach said. "It's mental when you can do it half the time, and then the other half you don't do it. It's just a mindset, you know. We need to do it for 60 minutes."

The next chance arrives on Wednesday night when the Leafs host the Utah Mammoth. Toronto will be looking to win three straight games for the first time this season.

One positive Berube highlighted is who led Monday's comeback.

"There was no quit, which is great to see," Berube said. "And it was great to see the big guys take it and go get it done."

The coach moved Nylander to the top line with Auston Matthews and Matthew Knies in the third period and watched that trio take over the game. Matthews scored Toronto's opening goal on a breakaway while Nylander quickly added two of his own.

Nylander, who leads the team with 18 points, was returning from a two-game injury absence.

"He's a gamer," said winger Bobby McMann. "He knows how to play in those big moments."

"He didn't look like he's had really any time off," Matthews said. "He's moving his feet, he's making plays."

Matthews, who leads the Leafs with seven goals, had the crowd buzzing with a dominant penalty-kill shift late in the third period.

"He's blocking shots," said goalie Anthony Stolarz. "He's snapping draws back, just getting his stick in lanes and disrupting plays ... For him just to be out there and making plays and leading by example is just huge for us."

Matthews addressed his teammates in the dressing room after the final buzzer.

"That third period, that's who we are," the second-year captain said. "We're a f—king tenacious team, who work. All five guys [on the ice]. All four lines. Everybody. So, great win. Let's keep it going here at home."

A few moments later, rookie Easton Cowan handed Matthews the team's player-of-the-game belt.

"I thought him and Willy went out in the third and just took control of the game," Berube said. "That's great leadership [from] those two guys, which is good to see. But we need more of it."

Matthews, Nylander and Knies remained together on the top line at practice.

John Tavares skated between McMann and Nick Robertson. That line generated the game-winning goal, which came off the stick of McMann, who snapped an eight-game point drought.



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Robertson made the goal happen by beating his man out of the corner and getting a shot off from the slot area. The 5-foot-9 winger is making the most of his recent run in Toronto's top-six group.

"He works," said Matthews. "He just works ... He's a smaller guy, but he's not afraid to go to the dirty areas and battle and compete."

Robertson produced just one assist in his first seven games and was made a healthy scratch on Oct. 24 in Buffalo. Since then he has three goals and three assists in five games.

What is Nylander noticing?

"His compete level, his skating, you know, just playing real good hockey."

Matias Maccelli was a healthy scratch on Monday for the first time with the Leafs.

"It's not ideal," the 5-foot-11 winger said. "You want to be out there with the guys and try to help the team win."

Maccelli is struggling to find a fit with his new team despite generating some offence of late. He has a point in three of his last four games.

"He's done some good things, obviously, but I think there's just little things in his game that he can be better at that I discussed with him yesterday, and I'll just keep that between us," Berube said. "But there's just some things that we want more out of him, and he's capable of giving more."

Maccelli was willing to reveal what Berube is looking for.

"Just making more harder plays and being a little stingier on the forecheck and stuff like that, and getting to the dirty areas, and getting to the net," he said.

The Leafs acquired Maccelli from the Mammoth in exchange for a 2027 conditional third round draft pick in the summer. Maccelli, who generated 40 assists during the 2023-24 season, was tabbed to help fill the playmaking void left behind by the departure of Mitch Marner. He started the season on the top line beside Matthews and also got an extended look beside Tavares on the second line.

"I'm feeling better and better every game," the 25-year-old stressed. "Just getting more comfortable getting to know the guys pretty well by now, so it's getting better and better. I think I'm really close to finding it."

Maccelli was a frequent healthy scratch down the stretch last season in Utah so Wednesday's reunion with his old team will feature a little extra emotion.

"There's always motivation for every game but, I mean, I feel like since it's [the] first game playing against them there's maybe a little extra for this one," he said.

Maccelli isn't the only fresh body coming into the lineup. Scott Laughton and Steven Lorentz are both poised to return from injury.

Laughton has not played since blocking a shot off his foot in the penultimate pre-season game.

"He's going to be a nice boost for us and brings a tremendous amount of energy and personality to our room," said Tavares.

Tavares appreciates how Laughton always "lays it all on the line."

Laughton skated on the fourth line with Lorentz, who has not played since suffering an upper-body injury last week in Columbus.

"They play with energy, and they play a straightforward, simple game," Berube said. "They do a lot of the dirty work for us out there, but the energy is good with those guys. They bring a lot of energy to our team, which is good and important ... When it's not going right, these guys can go change the momentum of a game."

Max Domi was the other member of the fourth line at practice.

Calle Jarnkrok, Sammy Blais and Cowan project to be healthy scratches on Wednesday. All three guys scored during last week's road trip.

Berube acknowledged it's "tricky" trying to keep so many NHL-calibre forwards in the mix.

"Nobody wants to sit out," the coach said. "They all want to play all the time, but reality is that's not going to happen. But, in saying that, everybody's still important. They're all still important. And they got to understand that, that there's going to be games where certain guys maybe don't play and there's different reasons, but we still need everybody. That's the message."

Cowan got a look on the top power-play unit on Monday, but it did not go well as the Leafs failed to generate any pressure on their one chance against the Penguins.

Matthew Knies rejoined the first unit at practice, but the tinkering continued as Oliver Ekman-Larsson replaced Rielly as the quarterback.

Rielly has yet to generate a point on the power play this season while Ekman-Larsson has two assists.

"O's got a great read for the game," said Tavares. "Handles the puck so, so well, very deceptive. And, you know, that sifter of his is as good as anyone's in the league. His ability to deliver pucks through lanes and the timing of it all is really, really good. We'll try to maximize that."

"It's just a different look," Berube said. "He's ran power plays in the past [with] different teams. We're just trying to get something that works here ... We did it last year, too, for a bit, trying to get it to work, and eventually we did. We're going to keep banging away at it to get it to work."

The Leafs power play struggled to start last year before Marner took over as the quarterback of a five-forward unit.

Toronto is clicking at just 12.1 per cent this season, which is 31st overall entering Tuesday's slate of games.

"At times I thought we've executed well and the puck just hasn't gone in, which is really all that matters," said Rielly.

"I actually think we've been doing some good things," Tavares insisted. "Our puck speed's been a little better. We've been generating more shots, more opportunities, and, you know, when you're not finishing those chances you can confuse yourself a little bit. There's no doubt we can still be a lot better."

Tavares scored his 500th career goal during a lopsided road loss in Columbus last week, which muted the moment.

Before Wednesday's game, the 35-year-old centre will be honoured for the accomplishment in a pre-game ceremony in front of friends, family and his hometown fans.

"It'll be special," the Oakville, Ont. native said. "Even though it came in the fashion that it did, you know, you appreciate each and every goal that went in and how difficult it can be."

Tavares is the 49th player in NHL history to enter the 500-goal club and only the second to do it with the Leafs, joining Mats Sundin.

"Grateful for my teammates, all the support through my years here in Toronto, and obviously in New York as well," Tavares said. "It'll be nice to take a few moments and to share it with everyone. And, yeah, definitely don't take it for granted and just want to keep it going."

Rielly marked a milestone on Monday. He picked up his 521st point as a Leaf and in the process passed Tomas Kaberle for second spot on the franchise defenceman scoring list (14th overall).

"It's just something that happens over time if you stick around long enough," Rielly said.



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Matthews brought up Rielly's climb up the franchise points list during his post-game pep talk in the dressing room and the longest-serving Leaf quickly declined to say a few words even as teammates called for a speech.

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"Extremely selfless and so team-oriented," Tavares said. "He's a tremendous person and obviously a great hockey player."

After making a couple big shot blocks in the final moments of Monday's game, defenceman Brandon Carlo missed practice for maintenance. Berube expects Carlo to play on Wednesday.

Stolarz also got Tuesday's practice off for maintenance after facing a season high 37 shots. He is expected to make his 11th start of the season on Wednesday.

Philippe Myers accidentally hit Sidney Crosby with a high cross-check midway through the third period on Monday. The 6-foot-5 defenceman quickly put his hand behind Crosby to make sure the Penguins captain didn't fall to the ice.

"I didn't realize it was him when he was coming to the net, and then when I saw it was him, when I got him in the chin, I was like, 'Oh f—k,'" Myers told TSN. "I didn't really mean to get him on the chin, but obviously you just got to get the guys out from in front of the net for Stollie there."

Like so many Canadian hockey players, Myers idolized Crosby as a kid. What's it like playing him?

"It's unbelievable," the 28-year-old from New Brunswick said. "He was one of my favourite players growing up, for sure. He's a special player. Obviously, at his age, he's still dominating the League and, you know, one of the best of all time, for sure. It's an honour to be on the ice with him."

But that did not stop Myers from doing his job.

"That being said, you just gotta play that guy hard and be physical on him," Myers said with a smile.

Lines at Tuesday's practice:

Knies - Matthews - Nylander

Robertson - Tavares - McMann

Joshua - Roy - Maccelli

Domi - Laughton - Lorentz

Cowan, Blais, Jarnkrok

Mermis - Rielly

Benoit - McCabe

Ekman-Larsson - Myers

Primeau

Woll

Power play units at Tuesday's practice:

QB: Ekman-Larsson

Flanks: Matthews, Nylander

Middle: Tavares

Net front: Knies

QB: Rielly

Flanks: Maccelli, Domi

Middle: Robertson

Net front: Roy