



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 15, 2025

The News & Observer

Carolina Hurricanes' revolving door on 'D' hasn't slowed them down — yet

By: Justin Pelletier

However well — or poorly — history shines upon the current iteration of the Carolina Hurricanes, the team is already confounding critics and stacking statistical anomalies related to injuries and organizational depth, particularly among its defensemen.

With the season's quarter pole barely a week away, the Hurricanes sit high among a tangle of 12 Eastern Conference teams within six points of the top spot in the standings — second in percentage of points earned in the East and fifth in the NHL.

The Canes added to those numbers Friday, posting a 4-3 overtime win over the Vancouver Canucks at Lenovo Center.

How would Carolina head coach Rod Brind'Amour evaluate his roster as the NHL grinds into its second quarter?

How about an "I," for "Incomplete."

"I can't say that I 100 percent know how it's going to shake out," Brind'Amour said this week. "We haven't had our group yet."

Brind'Amour may be understating things a touch, unless "haven't had our group yet" is code for "our roster has been decimated by injuries."

It's a well established theory that organizational stability breeds success. And in the bigger picture, that certainly has worked for the Hurricanes: Stable ownership, stable coaching staff, seven-year playoff streak.

But stability on the ice this season? These Hurricanes? Um ... no.

Carolina has scattered eight different six-man defensive alignments across 17 games through Friday. Four of the 10 — 10! — skaters to man the Canes' blue line this season are NHL rookies; three defenders have made their NHL debuts so far; and another made his team debut.

More injuries; a sloppy game vs. Vancouver

Friday, the defensive group was spared another injury, but Seth Jarvis, the Canes' second-leading scorer who already had a point in the game, left after two shifts and 2:15 of ice time after Andrei Svechnikov's stick caught him in the face as he was shoved from behind by Marcus Pettersson. Jarvis crumbled to the ice writhing in pain, clutching the right side of his face under his half-shield. Jarvis didn't return to the game, but remained in the building.

"We think (he'll be OK)," Brind'Amour said after Friday's game. "He got it kind of in the eye. I don't know much more, but it sounded positive. I think they'll know more maybe tomorrow, but I don't expect him to be out long, that's for sure."

In the second period, Jesperi Kotkaniemi also exited the game after blocking a shot. He did not return.

"He did something to his ankle, twisted it or something," Brind'Amour said. "Not sure about his availability."

Meanwhile, Sean Walker, one of two Canes defenders to play in all 17 games this season, had a rough outing. His turnover in the first period handed Elias Pettersson a shorthanded goal, and the Canucks scored their go-ahead tally with Walker in the penalty box serving a minor for slashing.

After the Canucks scored on their first shot on goal — a breakaway 5-hole snapper from Max Sasson — Svechnikov went on hat trick watch in a hurry, netting two goals in 54 seconds to put the Canes in front, 2-1.

Walker's giveaway to Pettersson allowed Vancouver to tie it, and the Canucks went in front at 3:13 of the second with Walker in the box.

A Taylor Hall finish on an exquisite pass from Shayne Gostisbehere tied the game at 6:26 of the third period, and Sebastian Aho buried another Gostisbehere helper for the winner with 31 seconds to play in OT.

"You don't always get what you deserve in this game," Brind'Amour said, "but we got what we deserved with the two points."

A little stability on defense

Two Hurricanes defensemen — Walker and rookie Alexander Nikishin — have played in every game this season. So much for Nikishin easing into his first full NHL season.

Walker, meanwhile, has been a breath of fresh air for the Canes, evolving from a spare veteran defender into a stalwart, go-to option in all game situations.

"When you give opportunity, more opportunity or different opportunity, to players, they've got to take advantage of it," Brind'Amour said. "(Walker) has. He's thrust into that because of all the injuries we've had, but he's really ... done really well with it. It's a testament to him and his abilities, and it's a testament to us to go grab a guy like that and recognize he has those abilities, too. Clearly he's doing a great job for us."

And Nikishin? He's averaging more than 20 minutes of ice time per night, has eight points in 16 games and is sixth in the NHL in plus-minus at plus-14.

Ho hum.

But after Walker and Nikishin? Let the game of musical chairs (benches?) begin.

Charting the injuries



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All-World defender Jaccob Slavin made it through most of the first two games of the season before disappearing down the tunnel to the locker room. He has yet to return to the lineup.

Enter veteran Mike Reilly, signed in the offseason to be a depth defender, who made his Canes debut in Game 3. And to his credit, he's only missed one game since, that as a healthy scratch.

A few games later, with the team in the middle of a lengthy road trip, power play quarterback and skilled puck mover Gostisbehere went down. The Canes called up Charles Alexis Legault, gave him all of 10 minutes to warm up, and thrust him out in Game 6 of the season. That's team debut No. 2, and rookie debut No. 1, for those counting at home.

The next game, it was Joel Nystrom's turn to debut, after offseason free agent signee K'Andre Miller was injured. Lineup No. 4; team debut No. 3; rookie debut No. 2.

"(The rookies) have been playing like they've been around for a while," Gostisbehere said. "It's good to see. They've been playing in bigger roles than maybe they normally wouldn't have. It's all about opportunity in this league, and they're showing that they're great players in that sense, and they're having fun doing it, too. They're not letting the moment be too big."

The defensive lineup of Jalen Chatfield, Reilly, Nikishin, Walker, Legault and Nystrom holds the distinction of being the most often-used alignment for the Hurricanes this season at five games.

"I've been around some teams that have (battled this many injuries)," Gostisbehere said, "but I've never seen it be just one position like this. It is unfortunate, but there are some

positives from it. Our organizational depth is pretty deep, and it's shown."

To that end, Dominic Fensore was the fourth rookie and fourth skater to make his Canes' NHL debut this season a short time later. Gostisbehere returned for half a game and then left — injured again, in a different place. Miller returned, but then Chatfield, to that point as reliable as Walker and Nikishin, caught a shoulder to the chin on a hit during a game against the Wild. He's on the injured list going on four games.

And now Legault, a game removed from his first NHL goal and among the pleasant surprises amid the whirlwind roster shuffling, went out for three months after slicing tendons in his wrist on a skate blade during a scrum in a game against Toronto.

As the blue line turns

Friday against Vancouver, the Canes' most recently used defensive group — its eighth of the season, including Gostisbehere, Reilly, Miller, Nikishin, Walker and Nystrom — skated together for a second consecutive game.

"It's that 'next guy up' mentality," Gostisbehere said Tuesday. "These guys are young, they're getting a lot of experience that some guys wouldn't normally get this early in their career, and they're grasping it."

In keeping with the season's theme, this week the Hurricanes called up yet another extra skater, pro journeyman Gavin Bayreuther. The 31-year-old has three goals and three assists in the AHL this season, and spent last season playing professionally in Switzerland.

Bayreuther didn't play Friday, but that's not to say he won't be needed. The way this season has gone, his Hurricanes debut may not be too far away.

As the NHL world turns, a top Hurricanes prospect awaits his turn in the AHL

By: Luke DeCock

Jackson Blake is an NHL regular.

Bradly Nadeau just did a six-game stretch in the NHL, scoring his first goal.

Alexander Nikishin is here for good.

The top prospects Carolina Hurricanes fans heard about — or saw in the preseason — are making their way to the league, sometimes sooner rather than later.

So where's Felix Unger Sorum, the Swedish forward often mentioned in the same breath as the others for the past two years, who made his preseason debut for the Hurricanes two years ago but has yet to appear in the NHL?

Unger Sorum made a splash that training camp, a precocious winger with an ability to think the game far beyond his years. But it's the years that matter. Unger Sorum was barely 18 then, one of the youngest players in his draft class. He's only 20 now, but in his second year playing against adult pros in the AHL.

So the answer to the Unger Sorum question is not complicated. He's in Chicago, playing for the Wolves. Growing. Maturing. Getting stronger. Getting older.

When Blake was the same age, he was a sophomore at North Dakota, still many months away from his NHL audition at the end of the 2023-24 season. Only six players drafted after Unger Sorum, 63rd overall in 2023, have played an NHL game, and none more than 17. Most of his draft class is still in college or junior hockey.

It's easy to forget, the way Unger Sorum plays, how young he still is and how much he still has to learn.

"It's a lot," Unger Sorum said. "Off the ice and on the ice with how the game is played, and it was my first time living alone last year away from my parents. I learned a lot and I feel like it helped me too."

None of that dampens the Hurricanes' excitement over his potential. Because he showed he was smart enough to slot in seamlessly alongside NHL players, they tried moving him to center last year, because they think he has that capability at the NHL level eventually. It was probably too much, too



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soon when combined with the adjustment to North America, although as a learning experience it is paying dividends now. Back on the wing this season, he leads the Wolves with five goals and is tied for the team lead with 11 points going into this weekend's games.

"Every guy has their own climb and their own journey," Wolves coach Cam Abbott said. "Everybody wants to — rush isn't the right word, but you want to see things happen quickly. The worst thing you can do is put guys in spots where they don't have a great chance to succeed, and we've really tried to make sure we don't with Felix. It's obvious that he's got a bright future and a great hockey mind, creatively and all the things he does well on the ice. He just needs to get reps."

And there's no question he can dominate when placed on equal footing with his peers: Playing for Sweden at the World Junior Championships last winter, he was one of the Swedes' top players with 10 points in seven games.

A cerebral playmaker, he already thinks the game at an NHL level, and has the skill to play there. He knows what else needs to happen: More strength to stay on his skates and absorb contact; more experience playing through the center of the rink instead of on the perimeter on the smaller North American ice.

"I'm shooting a little bit more and getting to the inside a little bit, and I feel like it's been paying off," Unger Sorum said. "So I'm going to try and keep going with it. Every game you learn more how to play, how you can play. That's a big part of it. You learn where to be and find spots where you get in new situations and can create more, and I feel like that's where I've learned the most."

There's been a parade from the Wolves to the Hurricanes this season, especially on the blue line — where Joel Nystrom in particular has buoyed a defense riddled by

injuries — but it hasn't been Unger Sorum's turn yet, nor is it likely to be this season.

Nadeau got the first call, and did well in his stint. There are also older players with NHL experience like Ryan Suzuki and Justin Robidas probably ahead of Unger Sorum on the list. For now, anyway.

"He is an extremely smart, highly skilled player who is still very young and getting accustomed to playing in a North American top men's league," Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsky said. "He's producing at a very high rate and has been able to use his abilities in a lot of different game situations. He's still filling out and growing into an NHL player's frame, but he's on track for where we want him to be."

And that track still leads back to center, even if not right away. The Hurricanes still believe he has the physical and mental attributes to play that position, especially as a right shot. That will take time as well, first for him to get to the point where it makes sense for him to take on that responsibility, and then to hone those skills to an NHL level.

He can always go back to wing someday, but he's far more valuable a player to the Hurricanes as a center, the sooner he can become accustomed to that role.

"It's a bigger developmental question," Abbott said. "In time, as opportunities to grow line up, I do think that he naturally finds himself down low at times in the defensive zone inside our system the way we play anyway. There's more layers to continue for him to develop, especially as ultimately we want to see him play the center position at some point. We'll see when that time comes."

It's all about time. Unger Sorum needs time, and the Hurricanes have the luxury of giving it to him.

He's coming, just like the others before him. Just not yet. In time.



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The Athletic

Hurricanes have a different, grittier vibe this season: 'Not gonna stand for that'

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH, N.C. — Frederik Andersen got up from the ice and pushed his glove into the face of Washington Capitals center Nic Dowd, who had just bumped the Carolina Hurricanes goalie behind his net. A scrum ensued, and off to the side, Washington defenseman Martin Fehérváry was using the opportunity to ragdoll Jackson Blake, ripping off the Hurricanes forward's helmet.

Then arrived Logan Stankoven — all 5-foot-8, 165 pounds of him — to stand up for his linemate. According to HockeyFights.com's punch counter, Stankoven landed five of eight blows, twice as many as Fehérváry, who has at least six inches and 50 pounds on the sprightly but feisty Carolina center.

"I've never had a fight in my life," Stankoven said after the game on Nov. 11. "But I think things change over time, and people change. And I think when you see a teammate down like that and they try and push us around, I'm not gonna stand for that."

It was the second fight by the Hurricanes this season, with the other coming five days earlier.

When Jalen Chatfield was checked in the head by Minnesota's Tyler Pitlick on Nov. 6, captain Jordan Staal — who hadn't dropped the gloves in 8 1/2 years — came to his defense.

"I think it's about protecting your teammates and being there for each other," Staal said.

Last season, Carolina's first fight didn't come until the calendar flipped to 2025, and while the Hurricanes won't be confused with the 1970s Broad Street Bullies or even the modern-day Florida Panthers, there's a different, grittier vibe to this year's team.

Yet you can't roam social media without seeing other teams' fans, or even Carolina supporters, claiming the team lacks toughness or is soft — probably the worst thing you can call a player or team.

So what is soft?

"I think if you call the team soft, there's something wrong with maybe the locker room or not sticking up for each other," right wing Seth Jarvis said. "They think they can take advantage of you."

Someone who watches the Hurricanes day after day, year after year, knows that using the "S word" to describe them is misguided — insulting even.

Ask players from around the league which teams they like playing the least, and Carolina is often at the top of the list. The Hurricanes may not ground and pound opponents in a traditional sense, but their relentless energy is anything but soft.

"I think the way we play is aggressive, in-your-face and hard," Jarvis said. "And I think that's where we get teams. I think that's what makes it so hard to play against."

It's what their coach, Rod Brind'Amour, has instilled in them.

"I'd rather have that as your thing that people talk about," he said. "And whether you're fighters or you have tough guys, at the end of the day, I view toughness a little differently."

"Toughness is coming to play every night. Toughness is taking a hit and making a play, really being more consistent every night. That's tough. That's tough to do. So there's different ways to talk about any term on stuff. We don't have those so-called 'tough,' fighter-type players. That's not how we are, but we have a ton of tough players."

Still, there's a reason some have hung that sign on Carolina. Since Brind'Amour took over as coach in 2018-19, the Hurricanes have the fewest fights of any team. Carolina's 57 major penalties (not all are fights, but the majority are) are 13 fewer than 31st-place Pittsburgh and just over a quarter as many as Nashville's league-leading 211.

Stankoven's fight on Tuesday got the Hurricanes out of this year's basement — they're now tied with eight other teams with two majors. Edmonton ranks last — Trent Frederic's scrap Monday against Columbus was the Oilers' first — while the Flames lead the league with eight majors through Wednesday's games.

Fighting, as Brind'Amour said, isn't everything when it comes to toughness.

First off, Carolina has a handicap when it comes to being physical. NHL EDGE data ranks the Hurricanes first in the league in offensive-zone puck possession at 45.4 percent, 1.8 percent better than second-place Nashville. They're also at the top of the league with the least amount of time in the defensive zone, at 36.5 percent. The more you have the puck, the less you're hitting the opposition to get it back.

There is, however, evidence that this year's Hurricanes are more physical. Carolina was 30th in the league in hits last season after being last in 2023-24, according to MoneyPuck.com. So far this year, Carolina ranks 22nd in hits with 313.



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A big part of that increase this season is rookie Alexander Nikishin.

Nicknamed “Boom” during his time dominating the KHL because of his hard slap shot — he has nine shots over 90 mph this season, and his 98.97-mph shot on Oct. 14 against the Sharks is the seventh-hardest shot in the league this year, according to NHL EDGE — and thunderous hits, Nikishin leads Carolina with 44 hits.

That was tied for fifth among NHL defensemen, and his 8.06 hits per 60 minutes ranks 10th among blueliners. He’s on pace for 225 hits this season, which would be tied with Erik Cole in 2010-11 for the third-most by a Hurricanes player in the post-lockout era. Only Tuomo Ruutu, with 309 in 2010-11 and 228 in 2008-09, has totaled more.

Nikishin has also shown little regard for who is on the other end of his hits, such as his crushing blow to Boston’s David Pastrnak this month.

Another one! 😊

This time, Nikishin plasters David Pastrnak.
<https://t.co/ij1sOd8rRi> pic.twitter.com/jFXwMx1MUz

— Walt Ruff (@WaltRuff) November 1, 2025

He’s also displayed a certain stoicism when delivering those hits, willing to stand up for himself and teammates should opponents take issue with any physicality.

“I think there’s a lot more in there, too,” Brind’Amour said of Nikishin’s toughness. “I think he’s trying to figure that out, how that works. I think he’s just scratching the surface.”

While the Hurricanes have not historically piled up big hit numbers in the regular season, that often changes in the playoffs.

Among teams with at least 10 playoff games last year, Carolina ranked third in hits per game at 41.4, according to statistics compiled from MoneyPuck. Only Winnipeg (45.8) and Florida (43.3) averaged more hits per game.

“I feel like it always gets talked about, right? We’re going to playoffs, oh, we’re not physical enough,” forward Jordan Martinook said. “And then playoffs roll around, and we usually out-hit every team in our playoff series. I don’t know. I think maybe it’s because we have never had an enforcer, like a true fighter, on our team before.”

That is true: Carolina hasn’t employed a true full-time heavyweight since Kevin Westgarth in 2013, though the game has changed drastically when it comes to enforcers over the last decade or so.

It’s something, frankly, the Hurricanes don’t think they need.

“I think people get caught up in, there’s these big fights, these big guys that go out there to throw ‘em,” Jarvis said. “Which, I mean, they definitely have a job and there’s a role for that, but it’s not something that we need here or something that we see fits our style.”



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Hurricanes overcome errors, overwhelm Canucks in OT win | The North State Journal

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes suffered multiple self-inflicted wounds — both on the scoreboard and on the injury front — but rallied past the visiting Canucks in a 4-3 overtime win Friday at Lenovo Center.

Carolina outshot Vancouver 38-17 and had 22 of the game's 24 high-danger chances but still trailed entering the third period.

But Taylor Hall — filling in on the top line for an injured Seth Jarvis — scored at 6:26 of the third frame to tie the game, and Sebastian Aho got the winner with 31 seconds left in overtime as Carolina improved to 12-5-0 on the season.

"You don't always get what you deserve in this game," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said, "but we got what we deserved with the two points."

That doesn't mean the Hurricanes didn't make it hard on themselves. Bad turnovers and undisciplined penalties handed the Canucks three goals, negating Carolina's steep territorial advantage throughout the night.

The Hurricanes also had to overcome more injuries, including a scary one to Jarvis, who left the game in the first period after teammate Andrei Svechnikov's stick hit him in the right eye. Jarvis was seen on press row shortly after the injury, and Brind'Amour confirmed that his star winger dodged a potentially severe injury.

"They think so," Brind'Amour said when asked if Jarvis had avoided something catastrophic. "He got it kind of in the eye; don't know much more, but it sounded positive. ... I don't expect him to be out long, that's for sure."

The injury came in the middle of a wild first period during which the Hurricanes carried play but still found themselves tied 2-2 after 20 minutes.

After keeping the puck in the Vancouver end for the game's first 2½ minutes, Carolina allowed the game's first goal after defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere and Canucks forward Mackenzie MacEachern got tangled up in the neutral zone.

Max Sasson jumped on the loose puck and scored on a breakaway for a 1-0 lead at 2:45.

The Hurricanes, however, picked up where they left off.

Jarvis knocked a clearing attempt out of the air near the Canucks blue line to keep the puck in the zone and fed it to Aho. Aho found Svechnikov in the right circle for a one-timer

that got past Kevin Lankinen (34 saves) to tie the game at 4:20 of the first.

On the same sequence Jarvis was injured, he was cross-checked to the ice, giving Carolina a power play, and Svechnikov got his second of the night and sixth of the season on another right circle one-timer, this time from Gostisbehere, for a 2-1 Hurricanes lead at 5:14.

Svechnikov finished the night with three points and has six goals and six assists in his last nine games after going without a point in the first eight games of the season.

"I just changed my stick, to be honest, a couple of weeks ago," he said. "So I think that's why everything's going in right now."

Both goals were scored on a slap shot, a weapon Svechnikov has added since coming into the league.

"There's nobody that works harder at it," Brind'Amour said. "He shoots parks just constantly since we've known him. So it's hard to believe that he could develop that because he does shoot pretty hard since we've known him, but maybe he's adding that to this repertoire here."

But another mistake allowed the Canucks to tie the game.

With Carolina on its second power play, Sean Walker dropped back a pass in the Hurricanes zone that went right to Vancouver center Elias Pettersson, who snapped a shot past Pyotr Kochetkov (14 saves) to knot the game up again at 9:14 of the opening period.

Walker then went to the penalty box early in the second period, and Brock Boeser took advantage of Carolina defenseman K'Andre Miller being without a stick, zipping a seam pass to the right circle that Connor Garland fired into the net at 3:13 of the middle frame for a 3-2 Vancouver lead.

"We were playing a really good game, and we gave up a couple chances — and we gave up a couple chances, not like they had to do much to get them, and that's the tough part," Brind'Amour said.

Carolina's depth, which has kept the team afloat despite several key injuries, proved beneficial again when Hall, elevated to the top line, scored off a Gostisbehere pass to tie the game in the third.

"That's a huge goal to tie it up," Aho said.

Gostisbehere then picked up his third assist of the night on Aho's overtime game winner. Aho won the draw back to Gostisbehere and then got the puck back near the boards.



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He spun away from Pettersson and charged toward the right circle, shooting past Lankinen's blocker for his seventh goal of the season.

"That's definitely not the set play or anything," Aho said. "It's kind of how it worked, and that's 3-on-3 —you've got more time. If that's 5-on-5, the next guy's coming at you. In overtime, you've got more time and space, and I was able to use it."

The goal came after Vancouver possessed the puck for much of the overtime, including keeping Gostisbehere and Walker on the ice for nearly three minutes.

"Just be patient," said Gostisbehere, who was playing his second game since returning from injury. "It wasn't even that bad of a shift, to be honest, tired-wise."

Then Aho's first game-winning goal of the year gave the Hurricanes, adversity and all, a much-deserved win.

"You just have to keep going," Aho said. "There's no other way."

Notes: Jesperi Kotkaniemi left the game in the second period with an ankle injury after blocking a shot. Brind'Amour did not have an update on his availability for Saturday's game against Edmonton. ... Nikolaj Ehlers' assist on Svechnikov's power play goal extended his point streak to six games. ... Aho played an even 24 minutes, the most of any Carolina forward this season. ... The Hurricanes finished with 79.09% of the 5-on-5 shot attempts, according to NaturalStatTrick.com, holding an 87-23 edge. ... Kochetkov improved to 3-0-0 on the season.



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Aho scores in OT to lift Hurricanes to 4-3 win over Canucks

By: AP

RALEIGH, N.C. — RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Sebastian Aho scored 4:29 into overtime to give the Carolina Hurricanes a 4-3 win over the Vancouver Canucks on Friday night.

Andrei Svechnikov had two goals and an assist, and Taylor Hall also scored for the Hurricanes, who have won six of their last eight games. Shayne Gostisbehere had three assists and Pyotr Kochetkov made 14 saves to help Carolina improve to 4-0 in overtime.

Conor Garland, Max Sasson, Elias Pettersson scored for Vancouver, which has lost three straight. Kevin Lankinen stopped 34 shots.

Hall tied it 3-3 at 6:26 of the third period. Gostisbehere pulled Lankinen out of the crease and then fed Hall for an easy finish.

Garland gave the Canucks a 3-2 lead with a power-play goal at 3:13 of the second period, finishing a crossing pass from Brock Boeser.

The Canucks scored two goals in the first period on just four shots. The Hurricanes played a helping role in both goals.

Sasson skated in alone and beat Kochetkov at 2:45 of the first after Gostisbehere and Mackenzie MacEachern collided at the Carolina blue line.

Pettersson was able to convert a turnover by Sean Walker into a short-handed goal at 9:14 to tie it 2-2.

In between, Svechnikov scored twice 54 seconds apart to give Carolina a 2-1 lead. First, he tied it 1-1 at 4:20 and then put the Hurricanes ahead with a power-play goal at 5:14.

Svechnikov also inadvertently caught teammate Seth Jarvis, the Hurricanes' leading scorer, in the face with his stick in a scrum behind the Vancouver goal. Jarvis fell to the ice and was clearly in pain. He held a towel to his face as he was helped off the ice, about 5 minutes into the game. He did not return.

Canucks: Visit Tampa Bay on Sunday.

Hurricanes: Host Edmonton on Saturday.



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Recap: Aho's OT Dagger Helps Canes Down Canucks

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Svechnikov, Gostisbehere notch three points apiece

RALEIGH, N.C. - Sebastian Aho tallied his 17th career overtime goal 4:29 into the extra frame to lift the Carolina Hurricanes to a 4-3 victory over the Vancouver Canucks at Lenovo Center on Friday.

[GAME SUMMARY](#) | [BOX SCORE](#) | [BUY TICKETS](#)

Aside from Max Sasson capitalizing on a turnover to put Vancouver ahead at 2:45, Carolina enjoyed a mostly bright start to Friday's tilt. Andrei Svechnikov's first of two on the night tied the game 1:35 after Sasson's strike, and his second - a one-timer from the right circle just seconds into a power play - gave the Canes a 2-1 lead just 54 seconds later. But puck management issues bit Carolina once more before the end of the frame, with a giveaway allowing Elias Pettersson to send the teams to break tied at two.

More misfortune ensued to open the second stanza, as an early power play bid gave Vancouver its second lead of the night - one they would carry into the third despite Carolina holding an 18-8 shot advantage in the middle frame alone.

With injuries to its forward corps mounting - Seth Jarvis and Jesperi Kotkaniemi had both left the contest with upper- and lower-body concerns, respectively - the comeback trail seemed an uphill climb for Carolina as the puck dropped for the closing 20 minutes. But 6:26 later, the resilient group delivered the tying tally as Taylor Hall finished off a slick passing play with Svechnikov and Shayne Gostisbehere to ultimately force overtime.

The extra frame opened with nearly four minutes of puck control - but just one shot - for Vancouver. But as play shifted to the Canes' offensive zone in the final minute, a run of faceoff wins allowed Carolina to gain momentum. The last of those victorious draws saw Aho play a give-and-go with Gostisbehere before slipping past Pettersson and wiring home a bar-down beauty to wrap up both points for the hosts.

Making his third start of the season, Pyotr Kochetkov stopped 14 of 17 shots to move to 3-0-0 on the year.

Stats & Standouts

Forward Sebastian Aho posted a goal and an assist for his team-leading fourth multi-point effort of the season. His 17 overtime tallies - already a franchise record - are tied for the

seventh most in NHL history, joining Ilya Kovalchuk and Mark Scheifele.

Forward Andrei Svechnikov recorded his first three-point performance of the season, and his two goals in 54 seconds are the fifth-fastest two tallies scored by a single player in team history (since relocation).

Svechnikov also became the fourth player in team history to record 10 multi-goal periods. The only others to achieve the feat are Eric Staal (25), Sebastian Aho (20) and Jeff Skinner (10).

Forward Nikolaj Ehlers posted an assist to stretch his point streak to six games (3G, 4A).

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere logged three assists for his third multi-point performance of the 2025-26 campaign. Now with 10 points in eight games on the year, Gostisbehere is the fastest defenseman in team history to reach the 10-point plateau, and his 1.38 points-per-game average in 2025-26 leads all NHL blueliners.

They Said It...

Sebastian Aho on his game-winner...

"When you have the puck in that position, you're almost guaranteed to get a scoring chance; it's just whether you put it in or not. Obviously, (overtime is) something I enjoy. The crowd is into it, and you have some more time to make some plays. We've had some success (in overtime) and we'll try and keep it going."

Rod Brind'Amour looking at the bigger picture and how the team didn't let their own mistakes beat them...

"We were playing a really good game, and we gave up a couple of chances. We gave up a couple of chances; it's not like they had to do much to get them. That's the tough part. The rest of the game, it felt like we were in their end, getting lots of opportunities and fighting to kind of get back in it. That's a huge goal (from Taylor Hall) to tie it up. We deserved it. You don't always get what you deserve, but we got what we deserved with the two points."

Andrei Svechnikov after two slap shot goals...

"I always try to work on my slap shot. One-timers all the time from the half wall, on the power play, or whatever. I always try to prove it. I just changed my stick a couple of weeks ago, so I think that's why everything is going in right now. Well, not everything, but still a few goals."



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Shayne Gostisbehere on Svechnikov finding his scoring touch...

"He shoots 1,000 pucks a day. Obviously, he didn't get off to the best start this season, but he's really dramatically turned it around. That's a compliment to him. He doesn't change anything. He comes every day and works hard. He's (the most in-shape) guy on our team for a reason, and it's good to see him getting some results."

Preview: November 15 vs. Edmonton

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Canes aiming to end home stand on a high note

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes will seek a weekend sweep as they close out their home stand against the Edmonton Oilers on Saturday.

When: Saturday, Nov. 15

Puck Drop: 7:00 p.m. ET

Watch: FanDuel Sports Network South, FanDuel Sports Network App | [Learn More](#)

Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes App

Canes Record: 12-5-0 (24 Points, 2nd - Metropolitan Division)

Canes Last Game: 4-3 OT Win over the Vancouver Canucks on Friday, Nov. 14

Oilers Record: 8-7-4 (20 Points, 4th - Pacific Division)

Oilers Last Game: 5-4 Loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday, Nov. 13

Last Time Out...

Sebastian Aho's 17th career overtime goal was the difference as the Canes knocked off the Vancouver Canucks, 4-3, on Friday night.

Andrei Svechnikov and Shayne Gostisbehere recorded three points apiece, and Nikolaj Ehlers extended his point streak to six games with an assist.

Pyotr Kochetkov made 14 saves on 17 shots for his third win in as many starts this season.

Sizzling Svech...

After his three-point performance (2G, 1A) on Friday, Andrei Svechnikov now has points in six of his last nine games, including three multi-point showings.

Logging two goals in 54 seconds last night, Svechnikov posted the fifth-fastest two tallies by a single player in team history (since relocation).

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes are right back in action tomorrow night, hosting the Edmonton Oilers at Lenovo Center to wrap up a three-game homestand.

Next Game: Saturday, Nov. 15 vs. Edmonton | 7:00 p.m. ET | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)

Since recording his first point of the season on Oct. 28, Svechnikov leads the Hurricanes in both points (10) and goals (6), the latter of which ranks sixth among all NHL skaters in that span.

In Net...

With Pyotr Kochetkov and Frederik Andersen getting the nod in Carolina's last two outings, Brandon Bussi would be in line to start tonight, should the rotation continue.

Bussi's last appearance saw him backstop a 5-4 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs last Sunday. The 27-year-old stopped 16 of 20 shots to earn his fourth win in five career starts.

On The Other Side...

In a way, it's been business as usual for the Oilers to start the year. Connor McDavid remains producing well above a point per game (27 points in 19 games, 2nd among all NHL skaters) and Leon Draisaitl is not far behind (20 points in 19 games). The two are also a big part of a power play that's operating at 30.0%, third-best among all teams.

On the other hand, the team is averaging 3.42 goals against per game, and is just one week removed from allowing nine to the Colorado Avalanche. Stuart Skinner has led the workload in the crease, posting an .889 save percentage in 13 games. Calvin Pickard has been the other option, posting an .830 save percentage in six starts.

All of that considered, the Oilers remain right in the middle of the pack in the Pacific, even though their last regulation win came on Oct. 28.

Injury Updates...

Forward Seth Jarvis left Friday's game with an upper-body injury and did not return. Rod Brind'Amour did not have a definitive update after the game, but noted that Jarvis' status "sounded positive" and that he doesn't expect him to be out long.

Forward Jesperi Kotkaniemi also departed last night's win, albeit with a lower-body concern. Brind'Amour said following the win that Kotkaniemi "did something to his ankle," but did not have an update on how severe the injury is.

Defenseman Charles Alexis Legault suffered a cut to his hand via a skate blade on Nov. 9 and underwent surgery to repair lacerated tendons on Nov. 10. He is expected to miss three to four months.



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Defenseman Jalen Chatfield entered concussion protocol on Nov. 6 and was placed on injured reserve on Nov. 8.

Defenseman Jaccob Slavin (lower-body injury) will be "out for a while," as of Oct. 14. He was placed on IR on Oct. 21 and, as of Oct. 27, was "still a ways away" from returning.

What Are We Wearing?

The Canes will wear their RED uniforms for tonight's contest. To view the team's full 2025-26 uniform schedule, [click here](#).

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes are scheduled to practice on Sunday before traveling north ahead of Monday's clash in Boston.

Next Game: Monday, Nov. 17 at Boston | 7:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#)

Next Home Game: Wednesday, Nov. 26 vs. NY Rangers | 7:00 p.m. ET | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



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Aho propels Hurricanes to OT victory against Canucks

By: Kurt Dusterberg

Wins it with 31 seconds left, Svechnikov has 3 points for Carolina; Vancouver loses 3rd in row

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Sebastian Aho scored with 31 seconds left in overtime, giving the Carolina Hurricanes a 4-3 win against the Vancouver Canucks at Lenovo Center on Friday.

Aho scored on a snap shot to the far side from the right face-off circle, where he started the play seven seconds earlier by winning a face-off back to Shayne Gostisbehere, who quickly gave the puck back to him on the right side.

"That's definitely not a set play, but it's kind of how it worked," Aho said. "But that's 3-on-3. In overtime, you've got more time and space, and I was able to use it."

Andrei Svechnikov had two goals and an assist, Gostisbehere had three assists, and Aho added an assist for the Hurricanes (12-5-0), who have won five of their past six. Pyotr Kochetkov made 14 saves.

"We were playing a really good game," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We gave up a couple chances; it's not like they had to do much to get them. That's the tough part. The rest of the game, it felt like we were in their end. You don't always get what you deserve in this game, but we got what we deserved with the two points."

Carolina forward Seth Jarvis left at 5:09 of the first period after being hit in the face by Svechnikov's stick behind the Vancouver net, and Hurricanes forward Jesperi Kotkaniemi left with a twisted ankle after the second period. Brind'Amour said he does not expect Jarvis to be out long but was unsure about Kotkaniemi's availability.

Center Elias Pettersson had a goal and an assist for the Canucks (8-9-2), who are 0-1-2 in their past three. Kevin Lankinen made 34 saves.

"We played against a really good hockey team," Vancouver coach Adam Foote said. "They're fast, they forecheck really hard. We're going to learn a lot from a game like that. It's the closest you'll see to a playoff game that we've had so far."

Max Sasson gave Vancouver a 1-0 lead at 2:45 of the first. After Gostisbehere collided with Canucks forward Mackenzie MacEachern, the puck came loose to Sasson near the blue line, and he moved into the zone before scoring through the five-hole from the top of the slot.

"That's a shot I work on a lot. I like to go five-hole," Sasson said. "I thought when we advanced pucks, we got a lot of odd-man rushes. They're super aggressive."

Carolina tied it 1-1 at 4:20. Jarvis knocked down Tyler Myers' clearing attempt and passed to Aho, who set up Svechnikov for a one-timer in the right circle.

Svechnikov made it a 2-1 lead on the power play at 5:14. Nikolaj Ehlers won a face-off in the left circle back to Gostisbehere, who passed to Svechnikov for a one-timer from the right circle to the short side.

"I always try to work on my slap shot," Svechnikov said. "I changed my stick a couple weeks ago, so that's why [a few goals] are going in."

Pettersson tied the game 2-2 with a short-handed goal at 9:14. Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker lost the puck attempting a backhand pass in his own zone, and Pettersson shot from the top of the slot past Kochetkov's blocker.

"I don't know if their player missed the pass a little bit, but I got a good chance to score on a shot," Pettersson said. "I like our fight, I like our compete. I think overall our game is good, but maybe there are some small details we can work on."

Vancouver then scored on the power play to go ahead 3-2 at 3:13 of the second period when Conor Garland one-timed a cross-ice pass from Brock Boeser.

Taylor Hall, playing on his 34th birthday, tied it 3-3 at 6:26 of the third period when he took a pass across the slot from Gostisbehere and finished into an open net from below the right circle.

Gostisbehere has four assists in two games after missing six with a lower-body injury.

"I've got my feet under me a little bit. I'm feeling good," Gostisbehere said. "Getting touches on the puck helps offensively to get confidence going and your legs going too."

NOTES: Aho scored his 17th career overtime goal to tie Ilya Kovalchuk and Mark Scheifele for seventh in NHL history. ... Ehlers extended his point streak to six games (seven points; three goals, four assists). ... Vancouver defenseman Quinn Hughes, who missed practice on Thursday with an illness, did not play. "It looked like he was going to be OK," Foote said. "He went out and tried it this morning, and when he had his nap and woke up, he didn't feel like it was right where he needed it to be." ... Pettersson has 472 points (189 goals, 283 points) and passed Tony Tanti (470) for sole possession of eighth place in Canucks history.



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Hurricanes' Seth Jarvis takes stick to eye, not expected to be out long

By: Sportsnet Staff

The Carolina Hurricanes can breathe a sigh of relief after one of their top forwards exited Friday's game early.

Seth Jarvis is still undergoing evaluation, but the team doesn't expect him to miss much time after he took a stick to the eye early against the Vancouver Canucks, head coach Rod Brind'Amour told reporters after the game.

Jarvis was ruled out of the contest in the first period after he was high-sticked by teammate Andrei Svechnikov. He appeared to be in immediate pain and exited the ice with the assistance of team training staff.

He finished with just 2:15 of ice time, but managed an assist, a shot on goal and a hit in that time.

The Team Canada hopeful has been on a goal-scoring streak to start the year, with 10 markers and six assists for 16 points in 17 games, including Friday against the Canucks.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Carolina Survives, Defeats Vancouver in Overtime

By: Evan Davis

There's an adage among old school ACC basketball coaches: You have to give the other team credit.

Vancouver deserves a lot of credit tonight because they took advantage of every mistake by Carolina.

However, the Hurricanes maintained their composure and kept to their game. This was despite holding sole possession of the lead for just four minutes of game time.

The Canucks were opportunistic in the first period, with Max Sasson and Elias Pettersson capitalizing on poor positional play and errant passes.

Andrei Svechnikov had another fantastic game, tallying two goals and one assist, including a power play marker in the first.

Svechnikov tied the game off a turnover forced by Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis.

Svechnikov's power play goal is exactly what the Canes have needed on the man advantage. A clean faceoff win leads to a beauty of a one-timer off the smooth pass from Shayne Gostisbehere. The set play worked to perfection, and Carolina made it look easy.

The second period could have deflated the Hurricanes.

Carolina finished with an 18-8 shot advantage and controlled the play. However, the Canes took the only two penalties of the period, and Sean Walker's slashing penalty led to a Conor Garland power play goal to give Vancouver the lead.

At the break, alternate captain Jordan Martinook said that he "liked [their] game," and insisted that if they keep it up, the team will find a way to win.

The third period was typical for a Hurricanes team led by Rod Brind'Amour.

Vancouver had just four shots in the third period. The Canucks went eight minutes between their third and fourth shot, and the Hurricanes held them without a shot for the final five minutes of the game.

The Hurricanes controlled the play throughout the third, and you could feel that the Canes were on the cusp of tying the game. Birthday boy Taylor Hall netted the game-tying goal after some dominant passing and puck possession.

Carolina forced overtime, but Vancouver held the advantage for nearly the entire extra period. Despite possessing the puck for over three straight minutes, the Canucks only managed one shot on Pyotr Kochetkov.

Once the Canes took control, it seemed like a goal was inevitable.

Jackson Blake got the first real opportunity for Carolina with 52 seconds left in overtime. In the next 20 seconds, Gostisbehere and Nikolaj Ehlers got their chances before Aho sniped it blocker side from above the dots to win it for the Canes.

Who else but the Hurricanes' all-time leading overtime goal scorer?

According to MoneyPuck.com, Carolina had a "Deserve to Win" percentage of 89.3 percent. The Hurricanes dominated shots, possession, and the number of quality scoring chances.

It could have easily gone the other way, but this team stuck to their game in the third and made it happen.

Unfortunately, the injury bug continues to bite. Jarvis was struck by an inadvertent high stick and Jesperi Kotkaniemi left the game with an ankle injury.

Stay tuned to Canes Country for tomorrow's game preview, including injury updates.



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The Hockey News

Carolina Hurricanes vs. Edmonton Oilers: Lineups, Game Preview and How to Watch

By: Ryan Henkel

Injuries mount for the Canes as they face a potent Oilers squad featuring McDavid and a returning Hyman. Key matchups loom.

What - Game 18 (12-5-0)

When - 7 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 15

Where - Lenovo Center; Raleigh, NC

How to Watch - FanDuel Sports Network, Sportsnet West

The Carolina Hurricanes will cap off their back-to-back with a matchup against a rested Edmonton Oilers squad.

The Canes are coming off of a 4-3 overtime win over the Vancouver Canucks on Friday, a game which saw the team lose a pair of forwards in Seth Jarvis and Jesperi Kotkaniemi.

Both of their statuses are up in the air for tonight.

Edmonton (8-7-4) enters tonight's game coming off of a 5-4 loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday.

The Oilers have struggled to keep pucks out of their net, but they still boast two of the best players in the world in Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl.

They'll also be getting Zach Hyman back as the power forward is set to make his season debut tonight.

Streaks

Nikolaj Ehlers (3g, 4a) has points in six straight games.

Shayne Gostisbehere (4a) has points in back-to-back games.

Milestone Watch

Jesperi Kotkaniemi is one point shy of 200 career points.

Jordan Martinook is three goals shy of 100 career goals.

Eric Robinson is one game away from 400 career games played.

Sean Walker is one game away from 100 games played as a Hurricane.

Jackson Blake is two games shy of 100 career games played.

Shayne Gostisbehere is three games shy of 700 career games played

Game Notes

Carolina is 33-40-12-3 all-time against the Oilers and last season went 1-1-0.

Sebastian Aho (11g, 26pts in 16gp) and Andrei Svechnikov (7g, 15pts in 12gp) are point-per-game players against Edmonton.

Frederik Andersen has a 18-3-2 record and a 0.925 save percentage for his career against the Oilers.

Taylor Hall was drafted first overall by the Oilers in 2010. He played six seasons with Edmonton, scoring 132 goals and registering 328 points in 381 games.

Jack Roslovic is the lone former Hurricane on Edmonton's roster.

Key Matchups

Projected Starting Goalies

Frederik Andersen: 5-4-0; 0.892 Sv%; 3.00 GAA

Stuart Skinner: 6-4-3; 0.889 Sv%; 2.75 GAA

Leading Scorers

Goals - Seth Jarvis (10) / Leon Draisaitl (12)

Points - Sebastian Aho (18) / Connor McDavid (27)

Power Play

Carolina - 14% (31st)

Edmonton - 30% (3rd)

Penalty Kill

Carolina - 80.7% (13th)

Edmonton - 82% (9th)

Hurricanes Projected Lineup

Andrei Svechnikov - Sebastian Aho - Seth Jarvis*

Nikolaj Ehlers - Logan Stankoven - Jackson Blake

William Carrier - Jordan Staal - Jordan Martinook

Taylor Hall - Jesperi Kotkaniemi* - Eric Robinson

K'Andre Miller - Joel Nystrom

Shayne Gostisbehere - Sean Walker

Alexander Nikishin - Mike Reilly

Frederik Andersen

Pyotr Kochetkov

Injuries and Scratches: Mark Jankowski, Gavin Bayreuther, Brandon Bussi, Jaccob Slavin (LBI), Jalen Chatfield (UBI), Charles Alexis Legault (hand)

*Game-time decisions

Oilers Projected Lineup



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Zach Hyman - Connor McDavid - Andrew Mangiapane

Vasily Pdkolzin - Leon Draisaitl - Jack Roslovic

Mattias Janmark - Adam Henrique - Trent Frederic

Curtis Lazar - Noah Philp - Matt Savoie

Mattias Ekholm - Evan Bouchard

Darnell Nurse - Jake Walman

Brett Kulak - Alec Regula

Stuart Skinner

Calvin Pickard

Injuries and Scratches: Isaac Howard, Troy Stecher, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (undisclosed), Kasperi Kapanen (LBI)

'We Got What We Deserved': Andrei Svechnikov, Shayne Gostisbehere, Sebastian Aho, Rod Brind'Amour On Overtime Win Over Canucks

By: Ryan Henkel

Svechnikov's clutch goals and Aho's overtime winner secured a hard-fought victory, with the team feeling they truly earned their two points.

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Vancouver Canucks 4-3 in overtime Friday night at Lenovo Center.

Andrei Svechnikov scored twice in the win, while Sebastian Aho netted the game winner.

After the game, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour along with Shayne Gostisbehere, Svechnikov and Aho spoke with the media. Here's what they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On if he thinks Seth Jarvis is going to be okay following his early exit: They think so. He got it kind of in the eye. I don't know much more about it, but it sounded positive. I think they'll know more maybe tomorrow. I don't expect him to be out long, that's for sure, right now.

On Jesperi Kotkaniemi's status: He did something to his ankle. I think he might have twisted it or something. So I'm not sure about his availability either.

On starting overtime with a three-minute shift in their own end: That's kind of the strategy. That initial faceoff is very, very important because that's what can happen. They did a great job, that's how you're supposed to do it, but I thought we defended it really well. You just have to keep them to the outside and at that point, you know there's going to be a chance when they get it, you just hope you don't give up too much because that's when you can get the puck back. That's what happened and then from there we did take care of the faceoffs and possession and then your talent takes over. That was just a real skillful play by Seabass.

On the difficulty of games where you give up very little, but still get scored on: It's hard. We were playing a really good game and then we gave up a couple of chances. We gave up the couple of chances. It's not like they had to do much to get them and that's the tough part. The rest of the game, it just felt like we were in their end and getting lots of opportunities and fighting to get back in it and then that was a huge goal to tie it back up. We deserved it. At the end of the day, you don't always get what you deserve in this game, but we got what we deserved with the two points.

On the impact to the game with all the injuries: It affects everything. The whole game. Now we were down to just three lines essentially. That's going to be a big concern just in general if you lose that player [Jarvis]. That's not good. But it affects everything all the way down.

On Shayne Gostisbehere: Two really high-end plays that led to goals and he was all around it too. He had a lot of other opportunities. That's kind of... I don't want to say kind of come to expect here, but that was an elite game by him.

On Andrei Svechnikov's slapshot: There's nobody that works harder at it. He shoots pucks just constantly since we've known him. Hard to believe that he could develop that because he does shoot pretty hard since we've known him, but maybe he is adding that to his repertoire.

Shayne Gostisbehere

On getting his game back up to his level: Got my feet under me a little bit. That first game coming back, that was tough and Washington's a good team. Another tough opponent too. Obviously just feeling good, getting touches on the puck helps offensively to get your confidence going and get your legs going too.

On sticking with the game even after shooting themselves in the foot multiple times: You just try to not let it turn it something more. It felt like one of those games where they obviously don't have their full lineup, their best player, and it's one of those ones where they're trying hard and getting some bounces and they're cashing in on our mistakes too. Just try to not make it feel like a should have, could have, would have thing. Like, we knew we were the better team and we just had to stick with it, not take too many chances and just let the game come to us. It showed. Took a little extra tonight, but we finished it.

On the injuries to the lineup: It's unfortunate. Just happy Jarv's okay. It's part of the game. I've seen it a couple of times in my career, not this many guys, but it just shows the depth of our organization with all these guys that have been coming up and grasping that opportunity.

On overcoming the injuries: Obviously Roddy is doing a good job of getting the right mix when we down a forward, same with Gleason when we're down Ds. Like I said, a lot of guys have played with each other and we play an easy game in the sense that every guy knows what the other guy is going to do with the puck, so it makes it a little easier.



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On the three-minute shift to start overtime: It's just about being patient. It wasn't even that bad of a shift, to be honest, tired-wise. It obviously sucked and is annoying that they keep taking it back, but it's part of the game. We would have done the same thing probably. I think for us, just being patient, not getting too eager to make a play, just let the game come to us and it kind of happened. The guy fumbled the puck and I finally got it. Then obviously the rest is history for us.

On if it's hard to not be aggressive in that situation: You're reading off your other guys too. I know if my other guy's not being too aggressive, I'm not gonna be. It's a calculated risk and calculated opportunity too. If you do it, you better do it and not mess up because it's going to feel pretty crappy if they score because you took a chance.

On Andrei Svechnikov developing his one-timer: He shoots 1,000 pucks a day. It's kind of nice. Obviously he didn't get off to the best start to the season, but he's really, dramatically turned it around and a compliment to him. He doesn't chance anything. He comes in, works hard and is the best guy in shape on our team for a reason. It's good to see him getting results.

Andrei Svechnikov

On developing his one-timer: I always try to work on my slapshot, one-tee all the time from the half-wall, on the power play, whatever. I always try to improve it, but I kind of just changed my stick to be honest a couple of weeks ago. I think that's why everything's going in right now. Not everything, but still, a few goals.

On Shayne Gostisbehere's passing ability: One of the best visions probably in this league. Great vision, sees the ice. Like, no one sees it like that. Great playmaker.

On the injuries: We lost Jarvy there and KK. It's always hard, but still, we try to stick with the plan and focus on our game and focus on the next shift.

On constantly having new linemates in a game: I mean, it's kind of harder for those guys because they have to go on the

third line, fourth line, first line jumping all over the place. But for us, you just keep playing and it doesn't matter.

On waiting to get his chance in overtime while Carolina was hemmed in for nearly three minutes: I was waiting, but the guys did a great job. I think they weren't even tired. They kept playing and obviously I was waiting there for a couple of minutes and was getting excited.

Sebastian Aho

On overtime: It's fun. Basically, when you have puck possession, you almost are guaranteed to get a scoring chance whether you put it in or not. Obviously it's something that I enjoy. Crowd is into it and you have more time to make some plays. We've had some success. Just try to keep it going.

On staying patient during the long, opening overtime shift: You're just... that's what I mean. They're going to get at least a chance and they ended up getting one or two there, Kooch makes a good save and then it goes the other way. I thought especially Ghost and Walks, they did a good job just sticking with it.

On dominating the game to overcome the early mistakes: It was a pretty good game and obviously we got the result. I thought we did a lot of good things there. On their goals, I thought they made a couple of nice plays too. It's the NHL, they have some high-end players and they can make you pay. Right back at it tomorrow.

On if he expected to have as much space as he did on his goal: No. That's definitely not the set play or anything. It's kind of how it worked. That's 3-on-3. You have more time than 5-on-5 when the next guy's coming at you. In overtime, you have more time and space and I was able to use.

On the injuries piling up: You definitely don't want to see your brothers injured or miss any time, but it's part of the game. I think we've done a really good job, especially on the backend. Guys are hanging in there and playing a lot of minutes in maybe different roles than they were used to. It's nice to see. But you just have to keep going. There's no other way.

LINKS

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SportScan

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

1368138 Carolina Hurricanes

As the NHL world turns, a top Hurricanes prospect awaits his turn in the AHL

Rosemont, Ill.

6-8 minutes 14/11/2025

Jackson Blake is an NHL regular.

Brady Nadeau just did a six-game stretch in the NHL, scoring his first goal.

Alexander Nikishin is here for good.

The top prospects Carolina Hurricanes fans heard about — or saw in the preseason — are making their way to the league, sometimes sooner rather than later.

So where's Felix Unger Sorum, the Swedish forward often mentioned in the same breath as the others for the past two years, who made his preseason debut for the Hurricanes two years ago but has yet to appear in the NHL?

Unger Sorum made a splash that training camp, a precocious winger with an ability to think the game far beyond his years. But it's the years that matter. Unger Sorum was barely 18 then, one of the youngest players in his draft class. He's only 20 now, but in his second year playing against adult pros in the AHL.

So the answer to the Unger Sorum question is not complicated. He's in Chicago, playing for the Wolves. Growing. Maturing. Getting stronger. Getting older.

When Blake was the same age, he was a sophomore at North Dakota, still many months away from his NHL audition at the end of the 2023-24 season. Only six players drafted after Unger Sorum, 63rd overall in 2023, have played an NHL game, and none more than 17. Most of his draft class is still in college or junior hockey.

It's easy to forget, the way Unger Sorum plays, how young he still is and how much he still has to learn.

"It's a lot," Unger Sorum said. "Off the ice and on the ice with how the game is played, and it was my first time living alone last year away from my parents. I learned a lot and I feel like it helped me too."

None of that dampens the Hurricanes' excitement over his potential. Because he showed he was smart enough to slot in seamlessly alongside NHL players, they tried moving him to center last year, because they think he has that capability at the NHL level eventually. It was probably too much, too soon when combined with the adjustment to North America, although as a learning experience it is paying dividends now. Back on the wing this season, he leads the Wolves with five goals and is tied for the team lead with 11 points going into this weekend's games.

"Every guy has their own climb and their own journey," Wolves coach Cam Abbott said. "Everybody wants to — rush isn't the right word, but you want to see things happen quickly. The worst thing you can do is put guys in spots where they don't have a great chance to succeed, and we've really tried to make sure we don't with Felix. It's obvious that he's got a bright future and a great hockey mind, creatively and all the things he does well on the ice. He just needs to get reps."

And there's no question he can dominate when placed on equal footing with his peers: Playing for Sweden at the World Junior Championships last winter, he was one of the Swedes' top players with 10 points in seven games.

A cerebral playmaker, he already thinks the game at an NHL level, and has the skill to play there. He knows what else needs to happen: More strength to stay on his skates and absorb contact; more experience playing through the center of the rink instead of on the perimeter on the smaller North American ice.

"I'm shooting a little bit more and getting to the inside a little bit, and I feel like it's been paying off," Unger Sorum said. "So I'm going to try and keep going with it. Every game you learn more how to play, how you can play. That's a big part of it. You learn where to be and find spots where you get in new situations and can create more, and I feel like that's where I've learned the most."

There's been a parade from the Wolves to the Hurricanes this season, especially on the blue line — where Joel Nystrom in particular has buoyed a defense riddled by injuries — but it hasn't been Unger Sorum's turn yet, nor is it likely to be this season.

Nadeau got the first call, and did well in his stint. There are also older players with NHL experience like Ryan Suzuki and Justin Robidas probably ahead of Unger Sorum on the list. For now, anyway.

"He is an extremely smart, highly skilled player who is still very young and getting accustomed to playing in a North American top men's league," Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsy said. "He's producing at a very high rate and has been able to use his abilities in a lot of different game situations. He's still filling out and growing into an NHL player's frame, but he's on track for where we want him to be."

And that track still leads back to center, even if not right away. The Hurricanes still believe he has the physical and mental attributes to play that position, especially as a right shot. That will take time as well, first for him to get to the point where it makes sense for him to take on that responsibility, and then to hone those skills to an NHL level.

He can always go back to wing someday, but he's far more valuable a player to the Hurricanes as a center, the sooner he can become accustomed to that role.

"It's a bigger developmental question," Abbott said. "In time, as opportunities to grow line up, I do think that he naturally finds himself down low at times in the defensive zone inside our system the way we play anyway. There's more layers to continue for him to develop, especially as ultimately we want to see him play the center position at some point. We'll see when that time comes."



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It's all about time. Unger Sorum needs time, and the Hurricanes have the luxury of giving it to him.

He's coming, just like the others before him. Just not yet. In time.

News Observer LOADED: 11.15.2025

1368139 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes overcome errors, overwhelm Canucks in OT win

Cory Lavalette

6-7 minutes 15/11/2025

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes suffered multiple self-inflicted wounds — both on the scoreboard and on the injury front — but rallied past the visiting Canucks in a 4-3 overtime win Friday at Lenovo Center.

Carolina outshot Vancouver 38-17 and had 22 of the game's 24 high-danger chances but still trailed entering the third period.

But Taylor Hall — filling in on the top line for an injured Seth Jarvis — scored at 6:26 of the third frame to tie the game, and Sebastian Aho got the winner with 31 seconds left in overtime as Carolina improved to 12-5-0 on the season.

"You don't always get what you deserve in this game," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said, "but we got what we deserved with the two points."

That doesn't mean the Hurricanes didn't make it hard on themselves. Bad turnovers and undisciplined penalties handed the Canucks three goals, negating Carolina's steep territorial advantage throughout the night.

The Hurricanes also had to overcome more injuries, including a scary one to Jarvis, who left the game in the first period after teammate Andrei Svechnikov's stick hit him in the right eye. Jarvis was seen on press row shortly after the injury, and Brind'Amour confirmed that his star winger dodged a potentially severe injury.

"They think so," Brind'Amour said when asked if Jarvis had avoided something catastrophic. "He got it kind of in the eye; don't know much more, but it sounded positive. ... I don't expect him to be out long, that's for sure."

The injury came in the middle of a wild first period during which the Hurricanes carried play but still found themselves tied 2-2 after 20 minutes.

After keeping the puck in the Vancouver end for the game's first 2½ minutes, Carolina allowed the game's first goal after defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere and Canucks forward Mackenzie MacEachern got tangled up in the neutral zone.

Max Sasson jumped on the loose puck and scored on a breakaway for a 1-0 lead at 2:45.

The Hurricanes, however, picked up where they left off.

Jarvis knocked a clearing attempt out of the air near the Canucks blue line to keep the puck in the zone and fed it to Aho. Aho found Svechnikov in the right circle for a one-timer that got past Kevin Lankinen (34 saves) to tie the game at 4:20 of the first.

On the same sequence Jarvis was injured, he was cross-checked to the ice, giving Carolina a power play, and Svechnikov got his second of the

night and sixth of the season on another right circle one-timer, this time from Gostisbehere, for a 2-1 Hurricanes lead at 5:14.

Svechnikov finished the night with three points and has six goals and six assists in his last nine games after going without a point in the first eight games of the season.

"I just changed my stick, to be honest, a couple of weeks ago," he said. "So I think that's why everything's going in right now."

Both goals were scored on a slap shot, a weapon Svechnikov has added since coming into the league.

"There's nobody that works harder at it," Brind'Amour said. "He shoots parks just constantly since we've known him. So it's hard to believe that he could develop that because he does shoot pretty hard since we've known him, but maybe he's adding that to this repertoire here."

But another mistake allowed the Canucks to tie the game.

With Carolina on its second power play, Sean Walker dropped back a pass in the Hurricanes zone that went right to Vancouver center Elias Pettersson, who snapped a shot past Pyotr Kochetkov (14 saves) to knot the game up again at 9:14 of the opening period.

Walker then went to the penalty box early in the second period, and Brock Boeser took advantage of Carolina defenseman K'Andre Miller being without a stick, zipping a seam pass to the right circle that Connor Garland fired into the net at 3:13 of the middle frame for a 3-2 Vancouver lead.

"We were playing a really good game, and we gave up a couple chances — and we gave up a couple chances, not like they had to do much to get them, and that's the tough part," Brind'Amour said.

Carolina's depth, which has kept the team afloat despite several key injuries, proved beneficial again when Hall, elevated to the top line, scored off a Gostisbehere pass to tie the game in the third.

"That's a huge goal to tie it up," Aho said.

Gostisbehere then picked up his third assist of the night on Aho's overtime game winner. Aho won the draw back to Gostisbehere and then got the puck back near the boards. He spun away from Pettersson and charged toward the right circle, shooting past Lankinen's blocker for his seventh goal of the season.

"That's definitely not the set play or anything," Aho said. "It's kind of how it worked, and that's 3-on-3 — you've got more time. If that's 5-on-5, the next guy's coming at you. In overtime, you've got more time and space, and I was able to use it."

The goal came after Vancouver possessed the puck for much of the overtime, including keeping Gostisbehere and Walker on the ice for nearly three minutes.

"Just be patient," said Gostisbehere, who was playing his second game since returning from injury. "It wasn't even that bad of a shift, to be honest, tired-wise."

Then Aho's first game-winning goal of the year gave the Hurricanes, adversity and all, a much-deserved win.

"You just have to keep going," Aho said. "There's no other way."

Notes: Jesperi Kotkaniemi left the game in the second period with an ankle injury after blocking a shot. Brind'Amour did not have an update on his availability for Saturday's game against Edmonton. ... Nikolaj Ehlers' assist on Svechnikov's power play goal extended his point streak to six games. ... Aho played an even 24 minutes, the most of any Carolina forward this season. ... The Hurricanes finished with 79.09% of the 5-on-5 shot attempts, according to NaturalStatTrick.com, holding an 87-23 edge. ... Kochetkov improved to 3-0-0 on the season.



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North State Journal LOADED: 11.15.2025

1368140 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes have a different, grittier vibe this season: 'Not gonna stand for that'

Cory Lavalette

7-9 minutes 14/11/2025

RALEIGH, N.C. — Frederik Andersen got up from the ice and pushed his glove into the face of Washington Capitals center Nic Dowd, who had just bumped the Carolina Hurricanes goalie behind his net. A scrum ensued, and off to the side, Washington defenseman Martin Fehérváry was using the opportunity to ragdoll Jackson Blake, ripping off the Hurricanes forward's helmet.

Then arrived Logan Stankoven — all 5-foot-8, 165 pounds of him — to stand up for his linemate. According to HockeyFights.com's punch counter, Stankoven landed five of eight blows, twice as many as Fehérváry, who has at least six inches and 50 pounds on the sprightly but feisty Carolina center.

"I've never had a fight in my life," Stankoven said after the game on Nov. 11. "But I think things change over time, and people change. And I think when you see a teammate down like that and they try and push us around, I'm not gonna stand for that."

It was the second fight by the Hurricanes this season, with the other coming five days earlier.

When Jalen Chatfield was checked in the head by Minnesota's Tyler Pitlick on Nov. 6, captain Jordan Staal — who hadn't dropped the gloves in 8 1/2 years — came to his defense.

"I think it's about protecting your teammates and being there for each other," Staal said.

Last season, Carolina's first fight didn't come until the calendar flipped to 2025, and while the Hurricanes won't be confused with the 1970s Broad Street Bullies or even the modern-day Florida Panthers, there's a different, grittier vibe to this year's team.

Yet you can't roam social media without seeing other teams' fans, or even Carolina supporters, claiming the team lacks toughness or is soft — probably the worst thing you can call a player or team.

So what is soft?

"I think if you call the team soft, there's something wrong with maybe the locker room or not sticking up for each other," right wing Seth Jarvis said. "They think they can take advantage of you."

Someone who watches the Hurricanes day after day, year after year, knows that using the "S word" to describe them is misguided — insulting even.

Ask players from around the league which teams they like playing the least, and Carolina is often at the top of the list. The Hurricanes may not ground and pound opponents in a traditional sense, but their relentless energy is anything but soft.

"I think the way we play is aggressive, in-your-face and hard," Jarvis said. "And I think that's where we get teams. I think that's what makes it so hard to play against."

It's what their coach, Rod Brind'Amour, has instilled in them.

"I'd rather have that as your thing that people talk about," he said. "And whether you're fighters or you have tough guys, at the end of the day, I view toughness a little differently.

"Toughness is coming to play every night. Toughness is taking a hit and making a play, really being more consistent every night. That's tough. That's tough to do. So there's different ways to talk about any term on stuff. We don't have those so-called 'tough,' fighter-type players. That's not how we are, but we have a ton of tough players."

Still, there's a reason some have hung that sign on Carolina. Since Brind'Amour took over as coach in 2018-19, the Hurricanes have the fewest fights of any team. Carolina's 57 major penalties (not all are fights, but the majority are) are 13 fewer than 31st-place Pittsburgh and just over a quarter as many as Nashville's league-leading 211.

Stankoven's fight on Tuesday got the Hurricanes out of this year's basement — they're now tied with eight other teams with two majors. Edmonton ranks last — Trent Frederic's scrap Monday against Columbus was the Oilers' first — while the Flames lead the league with eight majors through Wednesday's games.

Fighting, as Brind'Amour said, isn't everything when it comes to toughness.

First off, Carolina has a handicap when it comes to being physical. NHL EDGE data ranks the Hurricanes first in the league in offensive-zone puck possession at 45.4 percent, 1.8 percent better than second-place Nashville. They're also at the top of the league with the least amount of time in the defensive zone, at 36.5 percent. The more you have the puck, the less you're hitting the opposition to get it back.

There is, however, evidence that this year's Hurricanes are more physical. Carolina was 30th in the league in hits last season after being last in 2023-24, according to MoneyPuck.com. So far this year, Carolina ranks 22nd in hits with 313.

A big part of that increase this season is rookie Alexander Nikishin.

Nicknamed "Boom" during his time dominating the KHL because of his hard slap shot — he has nine shots over 90 mph this season, and his 98.97-mph shot on Oct. 14 against the Sharks is the seventh-hardest shot in the league this year, according to NHL EDGE — and thunderous hits, Nikishin leads Carolina with 44 hits.

That was tied for fifth among NHL defensemen, and his 8.06 hits per 60 minutes ranks 10th among blueliners. He's on pace for 225 hits this season, which would be tied with Erik Cole in 2010-11 for the third-most by a Hurricanes player in the post-lockout era. Only Tuomo Ruutu, with 309 in 2010-11 and 228 in 2008-09, has totaled more.

Nikishin has also shown little regard for who is on the other end of his hits, such as his crushing blow to Boston's David Pastmak this month.

He's also displayed a certain stoicism when delivering those hits, willing to stand up for himself and teammates should opponents take issue with any physicality.

"I think there's a lot more in there, too," Brind'Amour said of Nikishin's toughness. "I think he's trying to figure that out, how that works. I think he's just scratching the surface."

While the Hurricanes have not historically piled up big hit numbers in the regular season, that often changes in the playoffs.

Among teams with at least 10 playoff games last year, Carolina ranked third in hits per game at 41.4, according to statistics compiled from MoneyPuck. Only Winnipeg (45.8) and Florida (43.3) averaged more hits per game.

"I feel like it always gets talked about, right? We're going to playoffs, oh, we're not physical enough," forward Jordan Martinook said. "And then playoffs roll around, and we usually out-hit every team in our playoff



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series. I don't know. I think maybe it's because we have never had an enforcer, like a true fighter, on our team before."

That is true: Carolina hasn't employed a true full-time heavyweight since Kevin Westgarth in 2013, though the game has changed drastically when it comes to enforcers over the last decade or so.

It's something, frankly, the Hurricanes don't think they need.

"I think people get caught up in, there's these big fights, these big guys that go out there to throw 'em," Jarvis said. "Which, I mean, they definitely have a job and there's a role for that, but it's not something that we need here or something that we see fits our style."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.15.2025

1368236 Websites

The Athletic / YouTube TV, Disney reach deal to restore access to ESPN networks after two-week standoff

By Andrew Marchand

Nov. 14, 2025

YouTube TV and Disney have reached a deal that will restore ESPN, ABC and other channels to the platform's 10 million subscribers after nearly a two-week hiatus, the companies announced Friday night.

The deal will give YouTube TV subscribers access to ESPN's new direct-to-consumer "Unlimited" service at no additional cost, as part of YouTube TV's base plan. That is most notable for WWE fans, as WWE's major events — including Wrestlemania — are now part of ESPN's Unlimited offering. The Unlimited service will also be accessible directly on the YouTube TV platform.

YouTube TV subscribers pay a little more than \$80 per month for the base plan. The rollout will be completed by the end of 2026.

All of Disney's channels will remain on YouTube TV's service, led by ABC and all of ESPN's networks.

In a statement, YouTube TV said, "We're happy to share that we've reached an agreement with Disney that preserves the value of our service for our subscribers and future flexibility in our offers. Subscribers should see channels including ABC, ESPN and FX returning to their service over the course of the day, as well as any recordings that were previously in their Library. We apologize for the disruption and appreciate our subscribers' patience as we negotiated on their behalf."

Disney Entertainment co-chairmen Alan Bergman and Dana Walden and ESPN chairman Jimmy Pitaro said, "This new agreement reflects our continued commitment to delivering exceptional entertainment and evolving with how audiences choose to watch. It recognizes the tremendous value of Disney's programming and provides YouTube TV subscribers with more flexibility and choice. We are pleased that our networks have been restored in time for fans to enjoy the many great programming options this weekend, including college football."

Since Oct. 30th, encompassing two weekends and Monday nights, YouTube TV subscribers have gone without ESPN's expansive college football slate of games and "Monday Night Football," which featured a stellar matchup of the Philadelphia Eagles at the Green Bay Packers this week.

Disney's quarterly earnings call with Wall Street analysts Thursday morning served as a pseudo — but not absolute — deadline to force some movement in the negotiations. The Athletic reported Wednesday

that there was potential renewed momentum, though the two sides were still haggling over how to treat Disney's lesser-watched networks, like Freeform and National Geographic. As part of the agreement, all of Disney's channels will continue to be part of YouTube TV's service.

On Wednesday night, major progress was made, putting the deal in the red zone, but was not completed in time for Disney CEO Bob Iger to make an announcement during his call with analysts.

YouTube TV is on the rise as the cable-like platform with the third-most subscribers. Its 10 million subscribers are just below Spectrum and Comcast, which are in the 12 million range, with industry expectations that YouTube TV has the potential to eclipse the cable giants over the remainder of the decade. YouTube TV started in 2018 as a \$35-per-month offering and has built its subscriber base, in large part, around live-sports viewing, making ESPN and its networks an essential partner.

In a sign that the negotiations were becoming even more serious, sources briefed on the talks said that Sundar Pichai, Google's CEO, and Disney CEO Bob Iger had become more involved in recent days. Disney's negotiation team has been led by its Entertainment co-chairs Dana Walden and Alan Bergman, along with ESPN chair Jimmy Pitaro.

YouTube TV's global head of media and sports, Justin Connolly, had been forced to recuse himself from the negotiations. Connolly switched sides earlier this year, leaving Disney for YouTube TV, which resulted in lawsuits. Connolly, who was making \$6 million a year, was finally allowed to break his Disney deal to join YouTube TV, but he was forced to sit out the talks. Connolly's team was handling the talks and was said to be locked in with Walden, Bergman and Pitaro's group Wednesday night as the two sides closed in on the agreement.

This past Sunday, YouTube TV sent out emails to customers, informing them they could click a button on their account page to redeem a \$20 credit for being without ESPN and the Disney channels for more than a week.

On Monday, FCC chairman Brendan Carr, on his X account, wrote, "Google and Disney need to get a deal done and end this blackout. People should have the right to watch the programming they paid for — including football. Get it done!"

Now, the two sides have.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.15.2025

1368237 Websites

The Athletic / How sports betting is affecting NFL, NBA, MLB and NHL players

By Sam Jane

Nov. 14, 2025

No American sports league has been fully insulated from gambling scandals since the Supreme Court overturned a federal ban on sports betting in 2018. The NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL have all confronted policy violations resulting in punishments ranging from fines and suspensions to league bans and even federal indictments.

To better understand how betting has affected players, The Athletic compiled responses from its anonymous player surveys this year.

Here are the key takeaways.



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What type of harassing messages have players received since sports betting was legalized?

MLB: 78 percent of the 133 players The Athletic anonymously surveyed said legalized sports betting has changed how fans treat them or their teammates. Pitchers Liam Hendricks and Lance McCullers Jr. said they and their families were targeted with death threats.

"I've received (something) as simple as a Venmo request with a threat on it that says, 'You owe me \$9,000 because you blew the game – I need you to send me that money or I'm going to find your family,'" one veteran pitcher said. "That's too far. We've communicated as players to MLB security that we need to get a handle on this before it gets out of control. I don't want to say this, but something bad is going to happen and it's going to be like, 'We told you so.'"

"It's insane," said one National League position player. "Nowadays it's 'f— you, f— your family.' S—, it's a bad day, I'm sorry. It's not like I called you and said, 'Bet on me today.' You're making the fans expect us to go 4-for-4 every day."

NBA: Multiple NBA stars have been outspoken about fans' messages that "crossed the line." New York Knicks point guard Jalen Brunson recently said he's been sent "some pretty messed up sh—. The worst things you're thinking of, it's worse than that."

In The Athletic's Anonymous NBA Player Poll this year, roughly one-third of the league — 150 of the 158 players polled — shared their opinions about sports gambling with our writers.

"I get 10 messages, DMs (direct messages) a game, (saying), 'F— you, I'm gonna f— your family up,'" one player said.

"I personally hate gambling. Hate everyone talking about parlays this, parlays that. I hate getting DMs in my Instagram talking about, 'You f— up my parlay.' I hate people sending me threats because I messed up their parlay," another said.

"Terrible. Hate them. Every game, no matter if it's a good game or bad game, you've got motherf— sending death threats, saying racist s—. Every game. I guarantee you, if I check right now, I'll probably have something from this game. Every game. Everywhere. DMs, Twitter. People be tripping, bro," a player said. "I hope it doesn't happen, but it's going to come to a point where players are going to be targeted because people have lost so much money on them. That's what I think. But hopefully I'm wrong."

NHL: While nearly 67 percent of 157 player respondents said they had not received more harassing messages since sports betting was legalized, several described getting toxic messages. One player said he gets at least one or two every day.

"Honestly, I'd say 75 percent of them are them being mad about something. 'How did you let in that late goal? I had the under. Thanks a lot. You f—ing suck.' Things like that constantly," one goaltender said. "I feel like, as a goalie, we're a little bit more exposed to it, too."

"Together with a couple death threats and a few other things," another player added.

Some fans take it a step further. Venmo and Cash App requests to players are common in the NHL, as fans often ask players to send them money.

NFL: Though players weren't formally polled on this question, several have recently spoken about fans directing angry messages at them. New York Giants kicker Graham Gano said he's received death threats from fans over poor performances. Arizona Cardinals running back Emari Demercado tweeted "[fans] don't treat us like humans, we're just pawns in the games they watch." And Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson said last season, "You gotta understand, we're human too."

Are players concerned about prop bets affecting the integrity of their sports?

NBA: The NBA has been notably affected by the rise in prop bets. Several NBA figures — including Portland coach Chauncey Billups, Heat guard Terry Rozier and the former player and coach Damon Jones — were arrested in a federal investigation for alleged activities like tipping non-public information to bettors and participating in an illegal gambling ring. Former Toronto Raptors forward Jontay Porter was banned for life after admitting he bet on NBA games, revealed his own injury status and manipulated his performance for prop-bet gains.

Almost 50 percent of players said the NBA's partnerships with gambling companies is bad for the league, according to the anonymous survey. The NBA has tried to take measures to prevent manipulation: it reached an agreement with its betting partners to not offer any "under" prop bets on players who are on either a two-way or 10-day contract.

"NBA players compete at the highest level with the utmost integrity and are concerned that prop bets have become an increasingly alarming source of player harassment, both online and in person," a spokesperson for the NBA players' union said in August. "If tighter regulations can help minimize that abuse, then we support taking a closer look at them."

Several players said the NBA was engaging in a clear conflict of interest. How can the league constantly promote gambling, then not expect players to engage in the activity, one player asked.

"I feel like anytime you click on TV or NBA TV, you always see something about spreads or gambling. As you know, some players have had problems with it. I feel like it's kind of antagonizing players to think about it, and also, I think it's a conflict of interest for the NBA, too. So, I think it's bad," another said.

NFL: This week, the NFL sent out a memo to all 32 teams detailing restrictions on bets tied to player injuries, officiating, single-player plays — such as a kicker missing a field goal — and pre-determined outcomes. The prohibitions outlined in the memo are not new and were essentially a reminder to teams in wake of recent gambling scandals, a league source confirmed to The Athletic.

Since the league suspended 10 players for violating gambling policies in 2023, it has not had any public betting scandals. And while the NFL says it is working to limit and, where possible, prohibit prop bets, there are hundreds of available micro-bets that fans can wager on across most major sportsbooks.

MLB: Tony Clark, the MLB union leader, has publicly called for the elimination of prop bets. Top agent Scott Boras echoed that statement. Cleveland Guardians pitchers Emmanuel Clase and Luis Ortiz were indicted for allegedly participating in a scheme that arranged specific pitch outcomes in exchange for bets.

Tucupita Marcano, an infielder for San Diego and Pittsburgh from 2021 to 2023, was banned for life last June for betting on baseball, and four other pro players were suspended for a year. One 11-year veteran said it's naive to think that players can't be tempted.

"The fact that it's so easy to do and you can just go on your phone and just look up prop bets, everybody is gambling," he said. "Every man that I know."

Does your league educate you enough about its gambling policies?

NFL: An overwhelming 83 percent of respondents approved of the NFL's education on its gambling policies. Although a few players noted there is still the occasional confusion, the NFL is generally effective in its education efforts.

"Yes. We hit on it a lot. At the end of the day, stay away from gambling. If you do that, you're going to be fine. Gamble amongst each other, fine, but don't put yourself in harm's way," one player said.



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MLB: Commissioner Rob Manfred defended the league's partnerships with gambling companies and MLB's player education efforts during the World Series. He said the leagues "worked really hard" to provide players with resources.

But some executives think MLB could be doing more.

"I just want rules and regulations that protect our players, our umpires, our coaches and front office," said Texas Rangers president of baseball operations Chris Young, who was once a high-ranking official in the commissioner's office. "We've got such a great game, and you'd hate to have anything that can come in and soil it the way sort of this gambling thing has."

"The threats that players are facing, and clearly some of the inducements that players are facing, are real and need to be dealt with," Red Sox chief baseball officer Craig Breslow said.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.15.2025

1368238 Websites

The Athletic / NHL Power Rankings: Chaos in the middle, plus new-guy check-ins for every team

Sean Gentile and Dom Luszczyzyn

Nov. 14, 2025

No NHL team has yet played 20 games, but we're getting close enough — that means "the new guys" aren't quite so new.

That also makes it a good time for a set of progress reports. Which fresh faces are impacting The Rankings, for better or worse? We included rookies who made their NHL debuts late last season, but plenty of vets are in the mix, too.

Also, a word about our silly little list: In five-ish years of doing this, we can't remember the middle of the rankings being this much of a mosh pit. You could draw names out of a hat for the seventh through 27th spots and get away with it. Is that what we did? Of course not. At the end of the day, integrity is all we have.

1. Colorado Avalanche, 12-1-5

Last week: 1

Sean: 1

Dom: 1

Last season, the Avalanche had a major second-pair problem; with Josh Manson and Sam Girard on the ice, Colorado was outscored 26-16. Enter a very old, very large solution: Playing primarily alongside Manson, 41-year-old Brent Burns is handling business to the tune of a 57 percent goal share and a 63 percent expected goal share. Those aren't particularly great numbers for the Avs, but they're more than good enough.

2. Dallas Stars, 11-4-3

Last week: 9

Sean: 2

Dom: 2

There wasn't much changeover on this roster. Give bottom-six center Justin Hryckowian some credit, though; opponents are scoring just 1.55

goals per 60 with him on the ice, among the Stars' best. Does he move the needle much offensively? Nope — but he's gotten an opportunity, and he's doing something with it.

3. New Jersey Devils, 12-4-1

Last week: 3

Sean: 3

Dom: 3

His hockey-card numbers don't jump off the page (three goals, five assists in 17 games), but Arseny Gritsyuk — a 24-year-old winger playing his first non-KHL season — has been solid. The Devils control the run of play with him on the ice at five-on-five, and on Wednesday, he parlayed that into some time on a line with Jack Hughes and Dawson Mercer. That's the sort of quality depth every good team needs.

4. Carolina Hurricanes, 11-5-0

Last week: 4

Sean: 4

Dom: 4

With Jacob Slavin out since the second game of the season, K'Andre Miller has had to take on a much bigger load. He's used to tough matchups from his time in New York, and while it's probably not the ideal spot for him, Miller has handled them well with a 55 percent expected goals share. Also a nice surprise: his work on the power play. With Shayne Gostisbehere on the shelf, Miller took over on the top unit and cooked. In 11:55 with Sebastian Aho on the power play, the duo scored 15.1 goals per 60.

5. Anaheim Ducks, 11-5-1

Last week: 2

Sean: 5

Dom: 5

Turns out Chris Kreider still has the juice — especially on the power play. After scoring just six power-play goals last year in 65 games, Kreider already has five in 13 games for the Ducks this season. Anaheim's power play has jumped from 32nd to 11th this year, and Kreider is a big reason why.

6. Utah Mammoth, 10-7-0

Last week: 8

Sean: 6

Dom: 6

Utah has found the Goldilocks zone with Nate Schmidt. Matchup minutes in Vancouver and to start in Winnipeg? Too hard. Sheltered minutes in Florida and to finish in Winnipeg? Too easy. Second pair in Utah? Just right.

Schmidt is translating last year's great work on Florida's third pair into a bigger role, and that's making a mammoth difference for Utah. With 61 percent of the expected goals, Schmidt has been one of the best under-the-radar offseason adds.

7. Los Angeles Kings, 9-5-4

Last week: 19

Sean: 7

Dom: 8



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No team was better equipped to absorb the “congrats on losing the Stanley Cup Final” jokes that come attached to Corey Perry: “Does that mean we get past the Oilers in the first round? Great.”

A few months later, Perry, at 40, has seven goals for the Kings, and he's gotten there in minimal minutes; his goal rate (2.35 goals per 60) is fifth in the league. He's also leading Los Angeles in average Game Score. Not bad for an old guy.

8. Ottawa Senators, 9-5-4

Last week: 23

Sean: 8

Dom: 11

We're not going to bang the table for every undersized, offensively gifted third-pair defenseman to play huge minutes. We've been hurt before. But Jordan Spence is producing at a 70-point pace, more per 60 than all but four defensemen in the league. It's probably time for Ottawa to keep him in the lineup.

9. Vegas Golden Knights, 7-4-5

Last week: 7

Sean: 12

Dom: 7

Among forwards, Mitch Marner is top-15 in Defensive Rating. League-wide, he's 11th in assists (15) with a 57 percent expected goal share at five-on-five. Vegas, entering Thursday's game, was winning his minutes 14-5. In other words, he's been as advertised. Come May, they'll hope that's no longer the case.

10. Tampa Bay Lightning, 8-6-2

Last week: 11

Sean: 9

Dom: 10

Every year, the Lightning graduate some guy you've never heard of who somehow makes a difference. This year, that's Dominic James, who has four points in nine games and a 65 percent xG rate. You take that every day of the week from a fourth-liner.

11. Winnipeg Jets, 10-7-0

Last week: 5

Sean: 11

Dom: 9

At the start of the season, one of the Jets' big questions was whether Jonathan Toews 2.0 would play as a second-line center. He started Thursday with five five-on-five points and a goal share (actual and expected) below 40 percent — which, if you're being charitable, is fourth-line stuff. Is that rust or age? Winnipeg had better hope it's the former.

12. Montreal Canadiens, 10-5-2

Last week: 6

Sean: 10

Dom: 12

Remember when the Canadiens decisively won the Zack Bolduc-for-Logan Mailloux swap after Bolduc scored three goals in his first three games? Well, that's technically still true — Mailloux has been that bad — but Bolduc has seriously cooled off since. He is pointless in his last seven and has just two in his last 13 games.

13. Florida Panthers, 9-7-1

Last week: 16

Sean: 13

Dom: 14

Folks, Jeff Petry is no Nate Schmidt. In easy minutes last year, the Panthers had a 58.1 percent xG with Schmidt on the ice, first among defensemen. With Petry in his place, that has dropped to 50.5 percent, ahead of only Uvis Balinskis, Petry's most frequent partner. For the rest of the league, it's nice to see the Panthers not get superstar results from a misfit toy — for once.

14. New York Rangers, 9-7-2

Last week: 22

Sean: 14

Dom: 13

The big selling point for Vladislav Gavrikov was his defensive game and, boy, has it been as good as advertised. He takes on tough minutes with Adam Fox, and that pair has given up very little so far, with just 2.22 xGA/60 and 1.42 GA/60.

15. Detroit Red Wings, 10-7-0

Last week: 13

Sean: 15

Dom: 15

Maybe John Gibson needs some time to fully adjust to playing behind a half-decent defensive team; he started Thursday's rematch against the Ducks with an .882 save percentage and just-barely-above-zero GSAX. Is he still a likely upgrade on what the Red Wings would've offered otherwise? Sure. (He left Detroit's win against his former team with an upper-body injury, though. Worth watching.)

16. Pittsburgh Penguins, 9-5-3

Last week: 12

Sean: 16

Dom: 17

A bunch of new guys have fueled Pittsburgh's hot start — Anthony Mantha and the injured Justin Brazeau have given them goals and decent play-driving in the middle six, and Parker Wotherspoon is handling top-pair minutes. There are also some holdovers of note.

The biggest addition, though, is head coach Dan Muse. It's been a few days, but this quote from Erik Karlsson — clearly not concerned about getting taken off Mike Sullivan's Christmas card list — is worth re-upping: “The roles are starting to slot in. You know what's expected of you. You do the things you're good at, and not the things that someone tells you to do that you can't do.”

17. Philadelphia Flyers, 8-5-3

Last week: 17

Sean: 17

Dom: 20

Trevor Zegras has been a point-per-game producer with the best play-driving numbers on the team, and he's ingratiated himself with his teammates and coach. Sounds like a reasonable time to start talking about an extension, as Kevin Kurz wrote this week. Those guys aren't getting any cheaper.



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18. Edmonton Oilers, 8-7-4

Last week: 14

Sean: 22

Dom: 16

It was a bit of a surprise that it took so long for Jack Roslovic to find a home after he scored 22 goals last season. He's a perfectly cromulent player and he's fit like a glove so far with the Oilers, scoring 12 points in 17 games. Roslovic is prone to hot-and-cold stretches, so don't expect him to finish with 60 points, but that's a nice start. The Oilers desperately needed that kind of scoring depth.

19. Seattle Kraken, 8-4-5

Last week: 21

Sean: 21

Dom: 18

The Kraken deserve credit for pushing themselves into the wild-card discussion, but they're going to have to start scoring some goals — they're 31st in the league at 1.86 per 60 at five-on-five. Part of that is due to Mason Marchment's lack of production; one goal in 15 games while getting top-six minutes isn't going to cut it.

20. Boston Bruins, 11-8-0

Last week: 18

Sean: 20

Dom: 19

We all laughed when the Bruins gave Tanner Jeannot a bajillion dollars this summer, but to his credit, he's had a nice start. Eight points in 19 games is nothing to scoff at, and Jeannot has actually put up some decent possession numbers. Good for him!

21. Columbus Blue Jackets, 9-7-1

Last week: 24

Sean: 18

Dom: 21

In 11 games this season, Miles Wood has four goals, a 30-goal pace. At the moment, no other Miles Wood stats matter. That's a great first month for a salary dump.

22. New York Islanders, 9-6-2

Last week: 25

Sean: 19

Dom: 22

When the Islanders signed Jonathan Drouin, it was fair to wonder what he'd look like riding shotgun with someone other than Nathan MacKinnon. He's acquitted himself nicely, putting up 13 points in 16 games and playing well enough at five-on-five for the Islanders to win his minutes 9-5. Now, is he shooting the puck more frequently? At 4.43 shots per 60 ... nope! Still, he's added real value to the Isles' top six.

Also, this fella has been pretty good. Watch out for him!

23. Chicago Blackhawks, 8-5-4

Last week: 20

Sean: 23

Dom: 24

Do you want to watch André Burakovsky help deteriorate Connor Bedard's defensive numbers further, or do you want to see them sock a few dingers!?

Should you care that they allow 3.7 xGA/60 when they're on the ice together? Maybe. But right now they're scoring 4.25 goals per 60 together, so who cares? Ride the wave!

24. Washington Capitals, 8-8-1

Last week: 15

Sean: 24

Dom: 23

It's been a frustrating stretch for the Capitals — since Oct. 25, they're 29th in the league with a shooting percentage of 9.11. Ryan Leonard continues to acquit himself well, though; Washington is winning his minutes, he's producing nearly two points per 60 and he put seven shots on net against the Panthers on Thursday, partially on a line with Dylan Strome.

25. San Jose Sharks, 8-7-3

Last week: 27

Sean: 25

Dom: 25

The Oilers got some good minutes from John Klingberg last season, but those haven't carried over to his new team. He's got the worst expected goal share on the Sharks by a large margin (33 percent), and that's not solely because of brutal defensive impacts.

26. Minnesota Wild, 7-7-4

Last week: 29

Sean: 26

Dom: 27

Zeev Buium is a work in progress defensively, but oh baby, can he run a power play — Minnesota is scoring 13.8 goals per 60 there with him versus 4.6 with Jared Spurgeon in that spot. He's got seven power-play points himself, tying him with Cale Makar, Miro Heiskanen, Moritz Seider, Matthew Schaefer and Quinn Hughes for most in the league among defensemen.

27. St. Louis Blues, 6-8-3

Last week: 30

Sean: 27

Dom: 26

The good news: Pius Suter leads the Blues in points.

The bad news: Pius Suter leads the Blues in points.

28. Vancouver Canucks, 8-9-1

Last week: 26

Sean: 28

Dom: 29

It's tough to think of a player whose stock has fallen further than Lukas Reichel's over the last five years. He was drafted 17th in 2020 and made an impressive first impression in Chicago with 15 points in 23 games to close the 2022-23 season. Since then, though, he's struggled massively at both ends of the ice — enough for the Blackhawks to ship him off to the Canucks last month at the first signs of a hot start.



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Sometimes a change of scenery is all that's needed, but that might not be the case here. Reichel has just one point in 10 games with the Canucks, and the same two-way issues that were present in Chicago remain. Reichel has a lot of work to do to prove he's an everyday NHLer.

29. Toronto Maple Leafs, 8-8-2

Last week: 10

Sean: 29

Dom: 28

Matias Maccelli had a rough start to his Toronto tenure with a weak audition on the top line, but he's quietly upped his game since. Going into Thursday's game, Maccelli was among the team leaders in xG (52 percent) and goals percentage (59 percent) while scoring 2.56 points per 60. That level of efficiency is in line with the level he showcased during his breakthrough 2023-24 season. That's one consolation to what's been an extremely uninspiring start to the season for the Leafs.

30. Buffalo Sabres, 5-8-4

Last week: 28

Sean: 31

Dom: 30

No Sabres defenseman has limited scoring chances better than Michael Kesselring so far. It's too bad none of Buffalo's goalies can make a save while he's on the ice, sporting an .870 save percentage in his minutes. Not great!

31. Nashville Predators, 5-9-4

Last week: 31

Sean: 32

Dom: 31

The Predators have been, and will likely continue to be, a real mess, but Matthew Wood gives them a nice, positive focal point. The 2023 first-rounder — a big, skilled winger — had a hat trick at Madison Square Garden this week, pushing himself up to 10 points in 11 games. His underlyings aren't spectacular, but ... he plays for the Predators. What can you do?

32. Calgary Flames, 5-12-2

Last week: 32

Sean: 31

Dom: 32

The NHL is a big-boy league, which is what makes Matthew Schaefer's electric start so special. It's rare, the exception to the rule. It's a lot more common for a rookie defenseman to need training wheels, learning the ropes in a sheltered role. That's Zayne Parekh so far. He may have only one point in 11 games, but he's playing his easy minutes to a draw. Baby steps.

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The Athletic / NHL putrid power rankings: Will these 3 disappointing teams figure it out?

By James Mirtle

Nov. 14, 2025

Good morning, hockey folks. Here's hoping you're having as good a start to your fall as Nathan MacKinnon, who is on a blistering 150-point pace while leading the NHL in goals (14), assists (19) and points (33). His Avalanche improved to 12-1-5 last night.

Let's get to it.

Will these 3 disappointing teams figure it out?

With the NHL's schedule ultra-condensed due to the 2026 Olympics, we're zipping through the hockey calendar. Some teams will hit 20 games this weekend, so we can probably stop saying "it's early" every few sentences.

U.S. Thanksgiving is less than two weeks away, and that's often a big demarcation line for teams to either bank a decent lead toward a playoff spot or fritter away enough points that the postseason looks unlikely.

With that in mind, I gathered a few of our beat writers to chat about the three teams off to the most disappointing starts. Just how much trouble are they in? Are they contemplating firings or big trades? Is it salvageable?

Here's my power ranking of putrid so far, leaving off teams such as Calgary and Nashville, which many expected to struggle this year:

St. Louis Blues (6-8-3, 29th place)

Vancouver Canucks (8-9-1, 28th place)

Toronto Maple Leafs (8-8-2, 26th place)

Question 1: What's been the biggest problem(s)?

- Jeremy Rutherford on the Blues: "No. 1, they can't keep the puck out of the net. No. 2, they're getting very little offensive production from their top six. The Blues have the second-worst goals-against average (3.76) and worst save percentage (.869) in the league. In 17 games, they've given up five-plus goals seven times. You can put a lot of the blame on the goaltenders — both have struggled mightily — but there's more to it than that.

As for the lack of production, this says it all: Jake Neighbours leads in goals (six), and he's played just eight games. Pius Suter, a depth center and penalty-kill specialist, leads in points (10). Fourth-liner Oskar Sundqvist leads in assists (seven), and he's played nine games."

- Thomas Drance on the Canucks: "Their penalty kill has been atrocious, the D-zone coverage has been beyond spotty and they've struggled mightily to control play. Ultimately, though, we'd have to spotlight the injuries. The Canucks have used an astounding 28 skaters through 18 games. At center, Teddy Blueger and Filip Chytil have combined for seven games played at a position they were too shallow at to withstand such absences.

- Jonas Siegel on the Leafs, who lost to the Kings in OT last night: "The Leafs have been one of the worst defensive teams in the league. They've surrendered far too many odd-man rushes and other juicy scoring opportunities, leaving their goalies — mostly Anthony Stolarz — hanging out to dry. That's another big issue: The goaltending, under tremendous strain, hasn't been elite like it was last season. Stolarz has struggled in year two as a Leaf, and Joseph Woll has yet to play."

Question 2: Is the coach/GM on the hot seat? Could a key player get traded?

- Rutherford, Blues: "There definitely could be trades coming. The Blues' core has been under fire the past few seasons, but a near-upset of the Winnipeg Jets in last year's playoffs masked many of the issues. Now that they've come back to earth, some fans seem to be in favor of dealing



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Jordan Kyrou, Pavel Buchnevich and perhaps even Robert Thomas. Kyrou was recently a healthy scratch, and Buchnevich has zero even-strength points in his last 12 games. But all three have full no-trade clauses."

- Drance, Canucks: "GM Patrik Allvin and president of hockey operations Jim Rutherford are now in their fifth season and have one playoff berth to show for it. A season where they severely underachieve could harm their job security, especially if a disappointing season further clouds captain Quinn Hughes' future."

- Siegel, Leafs: "If their current level of play keeps up a little longer, head coach Craig Berube's job could be in jeopardy. He's only in his second season in Toronto, but expectations are so high – Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment president Keith Pelley recently told The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun that it was "go time" (whatever that means) – that if they continue to scuffle along, a change could be in order."

Question 3: Do they play their way out of this and make the playoffs?

- Rutherford, Blues: "Last February, the Blues were on the outside looking in. But they went 19-4-3 in their last 26 games, helping them grab the No. 2 wild card in the West. It's only November and they're only a few points back, but there are a lot of teams ahead of them this time. I find it hard to believe they could orchestrate another comeback like that."

- Drance, Canucks: "If they can fix their PK, get key bodies back and continue on an upward trajectory at five-on-five, there's a path to getting back into the mix. It won't be easy. Given Hughes' ability, we can't write them off just yet, but their pathway to competing for a playoff spot is getting narrower by the day."

- Siegel, Leafs: "It's the likelier scenario given some of the talent at the top of the roster. John Tavares is having one of the best seasons of his career at 35, William Nylander might lead the league in scoring and Matthew Knies is stepping into stardom. And the Leafs have made the playoffs nine seasons in a row. To do it again, their defensive play will have to tighten considerably, their goaltending will have to improve and they'll have to find a way to keep hold of the puck more often."

Connor Bedard (Chicago), Leo Carlsson (Anaheim) and Macklin Celebrini (San Jose) are all tied for third in NHL scoring with 26 points.

When was the last time three players aged 20 and under have been top five in league scoring this far into a season?

Cool Your Jets

What is going on in Winnipeg?

One team I didn't include in the disappointing list above was the Winnipeg Jets because, well, they've been winning a decent number of games (10-7-0 after a rough 5-3 loss in Seattle last night).

So what's the problem?

Well, Winnipeg's underlying numbers are absolutely horrible. In terms of possession at even strength, they were 30th entering the Kraken game. In expected goals, the Jets were last at 42.8 percent.

That is not often a recipe for success in this league, even if you have Connor Hellebuyck playing out of his mind in net. In fact, it's more likely to be the profile of a lottery team. (It's where San Jose and Chicago were last year, percentage-wise.)

So, I asked our Jets beat writer, the lovely Murat Ates, if last year's Presidents' Trophy winners are in for some pain. He pointed to a run of injuries (Adam Lowry, Dylan Samberg and Cole Perfetti), as well as the loss of Nikolaj Ehlers as an unrestricted free agent, as part of the problem.

But the Jets also now have "a roster that's among the oldest and slowest in the NHL," Ates said. "That's put Winnipeg in its own zone more often,

kept it there longer, and stopped the Jets from chaining together cycling shifts in the offensive zone. Good health will help (all three injured players have just come back), but Winnipeg's lack of pace is an element to keep an eye on."

In other words, the Jets may be a team that slides back in a tough Central Division, especially with Utah knocking on the door. For more from Murat, here's one of his latest pieces on the Jets' odd start.

The closest time was actually fairly recent, in 2016-17, when Connor McDavid, Auston Matthews and William Nylander were all top-five on Oct. 29 of that season. But that was only eight games into the season. (A young Wayne Gretzky, Laurie Boschman and Mike Gartner made it to Oct. 24 atop the league in 1980, too, but that was only seven games in.)

The most 20-and-under players who have finished in the top five in scoring in the same season is just one, something that has happened 12 times. So, if Bedard and Celebrini are both there in April, it'll make NHL history. (Carlsson turns 21 next month.)

Thanks to the fine folks at the NHL's stats department for those nuggets.

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The Athletic / Remembering 5 of the NHL's most important 'changing of the guard' seasons

By Sean McIndoe

Nov. 14, 2025 6:20 am EST

Part of what's made the first month of this NHL season so much fun has been the youth movement, with young stars like Macklin Celebrini, Connor Bedard and Leo Carlsson all putting up gaudy offensive numbers that place them near the top of the scoring race.

It's only been a month, so we don't want to get too far out over our skis here. It sure seems like we're witnessing a shift in the league, though, with a new generation of forwards staking their claim to superstar status. That doesn't mean the old guard is disappearing — as just one example, that grizzled old Nathan MacKinnon guy still seems to be doing OK. Yet the next generation appears to have emphatically arrived, and that makes for an exciting time to be a hockey fan.

While we wait to see whether this is a more temporary blip or a seismic shift, I figured it could be a good time to look back at other seasons in NHL history that saw the next generation kick down the door to the league's top tier. Here are five times we saw what seemed to be a changing of the guard among the sport's elite players, and whether it stuck.

1979-80: The Gretzky era begins

If you factor in teams and not just players, this may have been the biggest changing-of-the-guard season in NHL history, or maybe a close second to the 1967 expansion. We saw four new teams join the league, the opposition WHA shut down entirely and a four-Stanley Cup dynasty in Montreal giving way to another in New York.

We're just focused on the players today, but even then, 1979-80 has to get a mention. The 1970s had been the era of Bobby Orr, Guy Lafleur, Phil Esposito, Bobby Clarke and Ken Dryden, but by the start of the 1979-80 season, Orr and Dryden had just retired, Esposito was almost done and Clarke and Lafleur were winding down. In their place, we had



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Marcel Dionne winning his first scoring title while Mike Bossy, Denis Potvin and Bryan Trottier were capturing their first Cup.

What else, what else ... oh right, this skinny kid on the new Edmonton Oilers team showed up.

The dawn of the Wayne Gretzky era changed everything in the NHL, although it didn't quite happen overnight. After making his pro debut with a 110-point season in the WHA, however, Gretzky's 137 points in his first NHL season set the stage for him to start shattering records while becoming the most recognizable hockey player in the world. (A title you could argue he still holds today, over 25 years since his last game.)

Did it last? I'd say so. That Gretzky kid turned out OK. If that wasn't enough, this season also saw the Calder Cup go to a Boston Bruins teenager named Ray Bourque, who dominated for the next two decades and change. The following offseason, the Stastny brothers would arrive, becoming the first stars from behind the Iron Curtain.

We're skipping ahead a decade and a half here, largely because Gretzky dominated the league for so long. Along the way, Mario Lemieux arrived in 1984, and he and Gretzky formed a two-headed monster nobody else could touch. Even other legends, like Steve Yzerman, Ron Francis and Dale Hawerchuk, could barely get a sniff of the Hart Trophy or Art Ross, as Gretzky and Lemieux passed it back and forth with an occasional cameo from third wheel Mark Messier.

None of that is a complaint, by the way — the years from 1980 through the early 90s are arguably the single greatest stretch we've ever seen as far as true pantheon guys all being in their prime at the same time. The torch wasn't being passed, but it was burning as brightly as it ever had.

By the mid-90s, however, Gretzky was finally slowing down, as age and a bad back did what a generation of defenders never could. Lemieux was still completely unstoppable when he played, but his own health problems were keeping him out of lineups more frequently, including for the entire 1994-95 season. Messier was still very good, but he was well into his 30s and his MVP days were behind him. That finally opened the door for other stars.

The shift started in 1993-94, when 24-year-old Sergei Fedorov became the first center to earn first-team All-Star honors outside the big three since 1980, and only the second Hart Trophy winner. (Brett Hull had won in 1991.) Then in 1994-95, Eric Lindros won both the Hart and the Ted Lindsay at the age of 22, in just his third NHL season. Meanwhile, the prospect he was once traded for, Peter Forsberg, won the Calder in a near-unanimous vote. Fellow rookie Paul Kariya was a year away from a 108-point sophomore campaign, Teemu Selanne was in year three, Pavel Bure had hit the 60-goal mark and Lemieux's absence in Pittsburgh meant Jaromir Jagr could emerge from his shadow.

For the first time in a decade, you started to see the phrase "young guns" show up in NHL coverage.

Meanwhile, another shift was happening in goal. Patrick Roy's time was running out in Montreal, and 1980s stalwarts like Grant Fuhr, Tom Barrasso and Ron Hextall were moving into their veteran phases. That opened the door for a gangly weirdo named Dominik Hasek to go from backup to Vezina winner in 1995, while 21-year-old Jim Carey won it the next year in his first full season and Martin Brodeur started to build his resume after a 1994 Calder win.

Did it last? Hit-and-miss, as you'd expect with that many names. Hasek, Brodeur and Jagr became legends who dominated for the next decade and beyond, and Forsberg emerged as the league's best two-way player. Lindros, Bure and Kariya all ran into injury trouble, however, and Carey was out of the league completely within a few years, ending one of the weirder career arcs in modern memory.

2005-06: Crosby and Ovechkin

We don't need a ton of detail here, as I'm guessing this may be the first season you thought of when you saw the premise here. Alex Ovechkin and Sidney Crosby were the consensus top picks in 2004 and 2005, respectively, and thanks to the lockout, they ended up debuting together in 2005-06. What followed were arguably the two greatest rookie campaigns ever recorded by someone who isn't named Teemu, with both players topping 100 points and Ovechkin also hitting 52 goals.

The Calder race went to Ovechkin in convincing fashion, but it was clear that both players had the potential to be all-timers. Meanwhile, the double-cohort rookie class also featured names like 20-goal blueliner Dion Phaneuf and 23-year-old Vezina finalist Henrik Lundqvist, while 21-year-old sophomore Eric Staal had 100 points and led the Carolina Hurricanes to a Stanley Cup.

Did it last? Yep. Phaneuf and Staal never quite reached those peaks again, but both have long careers. Lundqvist built a Hall-of-Fame resume. Crosby and Ovechkin came to define the era, with Ovechkin breaking Gretzky's untouchable goals record while Crosby earned a place in the all-time Mount Rushmore conversation.

2016-17: The dawn of the Three M's

(Yes, I know nobody has ever called them that, leave me alone.)

In 2016, Connor McDavid became the most heavily hyped draft pick since at least Crosby (and maybe even Lemieux). He lived up to the hype as a rookie, but an injury limited him to half a season. No such luck for opposing goaltenders the following year, as a healthy McDavid shredded the league, winning his first scoring title and Hart Trophy.

While that was going on, Auston Matthews was debuting with his four-goal opening night, going on to win the Calder over Patrik Laine. It's hard to remember now, but this was all happening as another No. 1 pick, Nathan MacKinnon, was spinning his wheels as a 50-point player. That would end the following year, when MacKinnon blew up for 97 points and was Hart runner-up.

That's three top picks, three centers, and three players who'd define the next decade or so. Though we didn't quite realize it at the time, a couple of guys named Leon Draisaitl and Nikita Kucherov were about to break out, too.

Did it last? Apart from Laine, absolutely.

2019-20: The dawn of the young blue-line stud

For just about as long as anyone could remember, the elite tier of NHL defensemen had been the domain of the veteran.

It hadn't always been that way — in fact, between Harry Howel in 1967 and Ray Bourque in 1991, not a single defenseman in his age-30 or older season had won the James Norris Memorial Trophy. Once Bourque broke the seal, though, the veterans grabbed the trophy and barely let go for three decades. The era of Bourque, Chris Chelios, Paul Coffey and Al MacInnis gave way to Nicklas Lidstrom, Zdeno Chara, Scott Stevens and Chris Pronger.

Younger stars like Erik Karlsson, Dion Phaneuf and P.K. Subban would occasionally break through, but for the most part, they were the exception. If you wanted to contend for the Norris, you had to at least be able to grow a grizzled playoff beard like Brent Burns or Shea Weber. In 2019, the award went to 35-year-old Mark Giordano.

Then came 2019-20, and everything changed, with the arrival of arguably the single greatest blue-line rookie class of all time. This was the year of Cale Makar and Quinn Hughes going toe-to-toe for the Calder Trophy all season long, a battle Makar eventually won. Meanwhile, Adam Fox was the only other rookie to get a first-place vote, finishing in fourth place and falling just short of making it an all-blueliner group of finalists. As it was, it marked the first time two defensemen had topped Calder balloting since Orr's rookie campaign in 1966-67.



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Makar, Hughes and Fox would go on to win four of the next five Norris Trophies, and counting. Fox was actually the first to do it, narrowly beating out Makar in 2021. Makar would go on to win 2022 and 2025, while Hughes got the nod in 2023. It took a 101-point season from Karlsson, now representing the over-30 crowd, to get the old guys back in the running.

Did it last? It's early, but it sure seems to be. Makar and Hughes are generally viewed as the two top defensemen in the world, and Fox isn't far behind. Meanwhile, Mortiz Seider and Lane Hutson have won Calder's, while young blueliners like Miro Heiskanen and Rasmus Dahlin established themselves as stars. Now, we're all living in Matthew Schaefer's world.

Go back even a decade and tell a hockey fan that most of the league's top defensemen would be in their mid-20s, and they wouldn't have believed you. Things can change quickly, though, and sometimes it only takes one year for it to happen. Maybe we're seeing that with the young forwards this year, or maybe it ends up being a temporary trend.

That's half the fun of this sort of season — you never quite know what will stick.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.15.2025

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The Athletic / Hockey Canada summit addresses discrimination within the sport: 'There's still racism'

By Julian McKenzie

Nov. 14, 2025

TORONTO — Three separate incidents of racism involving hockey-playing youngsters by their teammates were shared in a conference room Thursday at a downtown Toronto hotel. Hockey Canada personnel and provincial member representatives were there to listen as part of the third annual Beyond the Boards Summit.

Jahmiah Ferdinand-Hodkin is the founder of Sport Dispute Management, a third-party group used by Hockey Canada to address reports of maltreatment. She reads every complaint that comes through. Of the 5,608 complaints the SDM has received in the past three years, 1,641 (29 percent) featured allegations of discrimination and 511 (31 percent) of those complaints were race-based.

The theme of the day emerged in those three stories, delivered in the form of written parental complaints read aloud by Ferdinand-Hodkin. One player was called the N-word. Another, a "Black monkey." A third told his parents about the name-calling he endured only after another visible minority player joined the team. He didn't want his new teammate to suffer the same fate.

The parents didn't necessarily want punishment, in the eyes of Ferdinand-Hodkin, but sought education and reconciliation.

"We expect better from a sport that so many families, including ours, devote their time, energy and hearts to," Ferdinand-Hodkin said, reading off another complaint from a parent. "Hockey is supposed to be a place of teamwork, belonging and mutual respect, not a place where a child can be targeted by way of racial slurs and then see that behaviour ignored.

"Education, awareness and swift action are the only ways to rebuild trust in the system and to make every child feel safe."

The Beyond the Boards Summit was first launched in 2023 as Canada's hockey culture faced intense criticism following sexual assault allegations toward five members of the 2018 Canadian World Junior team, forcing leadership changes and leading to departing sponsors. Those five players were eventually acquitted this past July.

Hockey Canada's previous two Beyond the Boards summits focused on toxic masculinity and the outcomes of unhealthy hockey culture. Discrimination in hockey, including racism and its permeation through hockey's economic and cultural barriers, was this year's theme.

"What's discouraging is that there's still issues, and that there's still racism, there's still discrimination," Hockey Canada board of directors chair Jonathan Goldbloom said. "And that there are real barriers of people feeling at home, at the hockey rink, and in the arena."

Many of this year's experts and panellists pushed for increased work in off-ice human development with players, as well as changes in approach for addressing these issues, to reduce stories of racial discrimination in youth hockey.

"I think bringing good people in, people who understand people and want to develop the human spirit more so than the skill development," former NHL player and head coach Ted Nolan said.

"It's that human development that's going to bring kids back."

Nolan, a speaker at this year's event, recounted his early days facing racist taunts while spending a year in Kenora, Ontario, playing hockey as a teenager before eventually emerging as a head coach for the Buffalo Sabres, New York Islanders and Team Latvia internationally.

Ferdinand-Hodkin was part of a session that discussed the metrics of racial discrimination that hockey players face, while the rest of the day featured panels and breakout groups addressing how Hockey Canada provincial member groups should address these instances going forward.

Another panel featured Hockey 4 Youth founder Moezine Hasham; Hockey Diversity Alliance director of operations Ed Aliu, brother of Akim Aliu; Black hockey historian Bob Dawson; and Karl Subban, father of P.K., Malcolm and Jordan Subban. Each member discussed how racism remains in hockey. Hasham, an Ismaili Muslim, specifically mentioned an instance where he walked into an arena and was referred to as a "cab driver."

Moderator Moji Akande, Black hockey historian Bob Dawson, Hockey Diversity Alliance director of operations Ed Aliu, Hockey 4 Youth founder Moezine Hasham and Karl Subban at this year's Hockey Canada Beyond the Boards Summit. (Julian McKenzie / For The Athletic)

Meanwhile, the elder Subban implored Hockey Canada to be "the leader of change" when it comes to making the sport more accessible and inclusive for people of colour.

"If you look at the face of hockey, it doesn't look the same (as) when P.K. was 5, 6, 7 or 8," Subban said. "It's very, very diverse today. And people are different. And with differences, you're going to have challenges. And so that's why I continue to promote the training and development around belonging, around inclusivity, around giving people a voice."

Despite racism persisting, Hockey Canada said there's been growth among minority groups in youth hockey. According to the federation, over 600,000 children registered for the 2024-25 season, a fourth straight year of growth. That includes a 3.7 percent increase in Black, Indigenous, and people of colour groups.

"We have to continue with the programs that introduce young kids to the game," Hockey Canada president and CEO Katherine Henderson said. "And we've got to make sure that we intentionally go out to those (BIPOC) communities to make sure that we are bringing those kids into the game."



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However, more work is needed to retain those youth while ensuring they aren't victims of racial abuse. Aliu told The Athletic after his panel that he'd like to see a "more proactive approach" to tackling racism.

"What I think is lacking is a pathway and clear outcomes that we want to accomplish," Aliu said. "It is moving in the right direction, but it's still missing connecting those dots. Whereas people can report stuff, but then there's still no power to take meaningful action, to be preventative, rather than (be) reactive to the problem."

"I think educating young people to (know) with whatever's happening inside your dressing room, we're going to keep this place a positive, healthy space for you," Hasham said. "And externally, when you leave the arena, we need you to understand that if our room is homogeneous and looks the same, it's not like that out in society. So, we're not going to use tropes and terminology. (If) you see (someone) that looks different than you, you're not going to use that language."

The work now falls on Hockey Canada's provincial and territorial club members to implement what they heard this week. But for Beyond the Boards, it might mean a potential format change for future events. Henderson said a "pause" will be needed to consider what's been learned over the last three years. But the next step is evaluating the future of the symposium, and possibly considering either regional symposiums or a more "action-oriented" event.

"I'd love to hear what the people who are participating in this think and see if they continue to see it as a hugely valuable thing, or if they'd like to see some evolution in the format," Henderson said.

Until then, work continues to make more racialized communities feel more welcome in hockey.

"Obviously, the game is very expensive," Aliu said. "I don't know if it's on Hockey Canada to necessarily bring down the cost of the sport, but creating pathways and environments for new folks in the country to come and experience the game at all levels is probably one of the biggest things that organizations can do right now."

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The Athletic / NHL rumblings: Carlsson gives Sweden reason to believe, plus latest on Kempe, Stamkos, Coleman, more

Staff Report

Nov. 14, 2025

Leo Carlsson's offensive explosion this season has been a delight to watch.

Especially if you're the head coach of Sweden's national team.

"I mean, we're enjoying everything we're seeing about Leo," Sam Hallam told The Athletic this week from his home in Växjö, Sweden. "I also think we picked him as an 18-year-old for the World Championship three years ago. The feeling after that tournament was, 'This kid is something different.' Now he's starting to show what we've been seeing from the beginning."

"Of course, it's huge for us. In an Olympic tournament, to have players that build from a season the way he's started this year, it's huge."

Carlsson, who turns 21 next month, appeared in just one game at the best-on-best 4 Nations Face-Off in February but put up four goals and 10

points in 10 games at the World Championship in May. As for the 2023 World Championship that Hallam is referring to, Carlsson had three goals and five points in eight games.

Adrian Kempe, who played with Carlsson at 4 Nations, came away impressed. "He's a big body, still developing, still maturing, all that kind of stuff," he said. "But you can see all the highlights this year and how he's producing — you can see how good of a player he's going to be. He's a big part of the future for Swedish hockey."

And a big part of the Olympics in Milan.

Veteran Gabriel Landeskog will be part of the mix for Sweden there, too — one of six players already named to the team in June, along with Adrian Kempe, William Nylander, Rasmus Dahlin, Victor Hedman and Lucas Raymond.

It was somewhat surprising that Landeskog was named so early, not because his stature or talent didn't warrant it, but because he had just come back from a three-year injury absence.

But those five playoff games for the Colorado Avalanche were enough for Hallam.

"As soon as we saw him coming back, we waited until the season ended, but in talking to Gabe, he felt good," Hallam said. "When we talked in June, he said, 'I'm practicing to be better, not just to be healthy.' And now he's played pretty much every game and I think he's picking up both his feel for the game, his instincts and his speed, pretty much every week. The way he plays the game, everybody wants that kind of player on their team."

"It's a heavy game he plays. And also the leadership he brings and the character he brings to the room. We wanted to send a message right away that he was one of our leaders."

Landeskog scored his first goal of the season this past week (he had scored twice before, but both were called back for being offside). The sense within the Avs is that the captain has been really good defensively this season while the offensive side and pace of play are coming along slowly but surely. He's ramping up the way one would imagine after missing all that time.

He will be a core leadership voice on a Swedish team that has a legitimate shot at gold.

It's easy to forget that Sweden was one point away from the championship game at 4 Nations, the only of the four entries not to lose in regulation (1-0-2), tying eventual champion Canada with five points in the standings but losing the tiebreaker on the head-to-head result with the Swedes falling 4-3 in overtime to Team Canada.

"We were disappointed with the end result, but on the other side of it, we didn't lose a single game in regulation," Kempe said Thursday. "It obviously sucks when you don't do that (lose in regulation) and you don't move forward to the final game, but it is what it is. Overall, we were pretty happy. We played some good games. We played a real good game against Canada. We beat USA last game. It was good to get the players together for a tournament like that, especially before the Olympics."

And how is that team's play factoring into the Olympic roster-selection process?

"I think we weigh both (the 4 Nations and the World Championship), but of course, the 4 Nations has a heavy weight to it since it's the teams you're going to have to play against if you're going to win the Olympics and on the same rink size," said Hallam. (In Sweden, the coach selects the team, not a general manager.) "So that's pretty much where we start (with the 4 Nations roster) with our team. And then things happen — injuries. But we also had some players that played at the worlds for us who had some really good games and have improved themselves, so that weighs in as well."



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Don't expect big changes, though.

"It could be two to three changes," Hallam said. "It could be four to six changes. I think we need to give the players opportunity to play for it and that we don't lock in too early. It's a short tournament. Form and being in the zone is one thing. So we need to be ready to have some spots open and not judge too quickly here. But we're following all the games closely. We have a couple of meetings a week with our staff."

Kempe is arguably the most talented player left in an otherwise-depleted unrestricted-free-agent pool for July 1.

The mutual goal is to further deplete that pool by agreeing to an extension.

"My feeling on a negotiation is either you got a deal done or you're negotiating," Kings GM Ken Holland told The Athletic after the GMs meeting in Toronto on Tuesday.

Between the GMs meeting and the Kings playing in Toronto on Thursday, Holland was in Kempe's agent's orbit, as J.P. Barry of CAA Sports is based in Toronto. According to league sources, they did meet Thursday afternoon.

By all accounts, it's been a slow grind in talks, but they've kept at it, also speaking last week. All of which is to say, at least this hasn't been a highly contentious negotiation where one side takes its ball and goes home. It's an open dialogue.

"Certainly we want to keep him," Holland said. "I certainly believe he wants to be a King. I don't think it's been acrimonious or there's been any ill-will."

The Martin Necas extension in Colorado at \$11.5 million annually for eight years is a fresh, important comparable, though Kempe is notably two years older at 30.

Neither side will say it, but my sense is that the range being discussed for Kempe is \$9.5 million to \$11.5 million per year on a long-term deal — and one can guess which side is closer to which number. I think it's going to have to be double digits.

Kempe doesn't want to leave, though, and with Anze Kopitar retiring at the end of the season, the Kings can't afford to lose Kempe, too.

As for Kempe, he's pretty Zen about it all.

"It's not weighing on me," he said Thursday. "My focus right now is just playing. Like I said before, I'm not trying to think about it too much. I'm just focused on the game and let them (his agent and Kings management) do the job. My intention is to stay. I love it (in L.A.)."

With the Calgary Flames last in the West, their trade-deadline approach has more clarity than most teams — even this early.

But it's not like the Flames have a fire sale coming. They dealt most of their pending UFAs two years ago. Their only one now is Rasmus Andersson, and all signs point to him eventually getting dealt ahead of March 6.

But if the Flames make other moves, they'll involve players under contract, and that's not as obvious a proposition.

There's been a lot of speculation around Nazem Kadri's future, but my TSN colleague Darren Dreger poured some cold water on that file, at least for now, when he reported on Insider Trading last week that Flames ownership doesn't want Kadri dealt.

That could change if Kadri wants out, which he hasn't shown any indication of. But it also begs the question, who else could be in play?

Interestingly, for all the speculation around Andersson and Kadri, my understanding is that the player who's received the most attention from other teams is Blake Coleman. Teams are planting a seed, letting Flames

GM Craig Conroy know that if he entertains moving Coleman, get in touch.

Let me be clear: In no way is Calgary shopping Coleman. But Conroy can't control teams reaching out.

The interest makes sense. Coleman, 33, is signed for this season and next at a \$4.9 million cap hit, and he's a playoff-type player who won two Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning. He would also be a big leadership loss for the Flames, so it's no guarantee it happens.

But given where the Flames' season seems to be heading, Conroy probably has no choice but to listen.

As of now, my understanding is that Coleman's focus is on trying to turn around Calgary's season and being part of the solution. The idea of a trade has not been on his radar. He has a modified no-trade with only a small number of teams he can be dealt to, so if things get to that stage closer to March 6, he will have a say in things.

Would Nashville move Stamkos, Marchessault?

The short answer: yes, if the Nashville Predators aren't in playoff contention later in the season, they would consider moving Steven Stamkos and Jonathan Marchessault. But it's up to the players whether anything happens.

There's been some chatter of late regarding Stamkos, but the reality is that it's still very premature. My understanding is Nashville hasn't gotten a call from another team on him yet and that the Predators and Stamkos haven't talked about anything either. Stamkos, 35, has a full no-move and would not waive it for just any team.

Having said that, as we get closer to the deadline, if the Predators aren't in a playoff spot, I do believe they might take calls on Stamkos.

When I interviewed Stamkos last month, he talked about how Nashville has really grown on him and his family. But obviously, the on-ice part still hasn't seemed like a good fit. So I do believe there's a world where Stamkos, who has two and a half years left on his deal at an \$8 million cap hit, might be open to a change later this season.

It's probably more likely that he stays put, but it's worth keeping an eye on.

Marchessault, 34, is a cheaper cap hit at \$5.5 million, but his deal runs an extra year, through 2028-29. He also has total control, with a full no-move clause. So nothing happens unless he and agent Pat Brisson say it happens.

But I will say this: My understanding is that a few teams have already poked around on it, checking in with Preds GM Barry Trotz and perhaps planting a seed for later on. At \$5.5 million, does a team see decent value for a guy who had 42 goals two years ago in Vegas — but was down to 21 goals last season in Nashville?

And given how thin the July UFA class looks, does Marchessault for three more years after this season appeal to a team?

On a deeper roster, surrounded by more offensive playmakers, I think both Marchessault and Stamkos still have something to give.

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The Athletic / Why these 5 underrated NHL sophomore players are breaking out



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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By Harman Dayal

Nov. 14, 2025

The NHL's next wave of young stars is off to an electric start.

Connor Bedard and Macklin Celebrini's breakouts have garnered most of the attention, along with the Matthew Schaefer/Ivan Demidov-led Calder race, but there's a deeper crop of players under the age of 24 who are taking big steps, including Leo Carlsson, Cutter Gauthier, Will Smith and Matthew Knies, among others.

In late October, I wrote a story highlighting some under-the-radar rookies who have quietly made a prominent impact. Now, let's shift our focus to underrated sophomore players who deserve some flowers too. We'll be focusing on less-heralded players who are exceeding expectations rather than household names such as Celebrini, Lane Hutson, Gauthier, Smith and Matvei Michkov.

Without further ado, let's dive into the second-year impact players.

Jackson Blake, RW, Carolina Hurricanes

Age: 22

Draft status: No. 109 pick in 2021

Stats: 16 GP, 4 goals-8 assists-12 points, 15:55 average time on ice

Blake has been a massive part of the Hurricanes' elite, new-look second line, which also features Nikolaj Ehlers and Logan Stankoven's move from wing to center (more on that later). Coming off a solid 17-goal rookie campaign last year, Blake's production has popped in this bigger top-six role, scoring 12 points through 16 games. Carolina has controlled more than 59 percent of scoring chances and is outscoring opponents 11-5 during Blake's five-on-five shifts.

The 22-year-old winger is undersized at 5-foot-11 but is an incredibly shifty and creative attacker. He's very elusive on his edges as a skater, and pairs that with lightning-quick hands. He can execute jaw-dropping dangles to beat defenders one-on-one and carries pucks into dangerous scoring areas on the inside. Here's an example of him fighting through traffic on a zone entry to manufacture a prime scoring chance and draw a penalty.

Blake, Ehlers and Stankoven have been a deadly trio attacking off the rush. All three of them are quick-skating, above-average puck transporters. They've read off each other and adapted incredibly well. Below, you'll see an example where Blake and Stankoven execute a neat give-and-go on an entry to produce a Grade-A chance.

In this next clip, Blake makes an explosive cut into the middle on a rush to generate an inner-slot opportunity. Ehlers pounces on the rebound for a goal.

Blake always has his head up as a puck carrier, even when he's moving at top speeds, scanning for passing lanes. He manipulates defenders with his head fakes and deceptive cuts as a skater. Occasionally, he can turn pucks over trying to force plays, but he's generally managed risk-to-reward well on zone entries. That, coupled with Ehlers' arrival, has given the Hurricanes a new, dynamic gear attacking off the rush.

Blake is a very slick finesse player, but he's also an underrated puck thief. He breaks up more plays than you might expect from a small winger by getting underneath the stick of bigger opponents. Here's a play where he strips Ryan Leonard of the puck on the forecheck.

Lastly, here's a sequence where he sneakily pickpockets Bobby McMann to extend his line's attacking zone time.

Frank Nazar, C, Chicago Blackhawks

Age: 21

Draft status: No. 13 pick in 2022

Stats: 15 GP, 5G-6A-11, 18:46 average time on ice

The difference between Nazar's impact at the start of last season compared to the end was night and day. He went from looking lost at the start of his rookie campaign to a player on the cusp of a monster breakout by the final weeks of the 2024-25 regular season. Nazar dominated for Team USA at the IIHF World Championships last summer and has picked up exactly where he left off, scoring 11 points in 15 games to begin 2025-26 before going down with an injury.

Nazar is a deadly rush attacker. He puts defenders on their heels with his blazing-fast speed, ranking in the 86th percentile of NHL players for speed bursts greater than 20 miles per hour. He also has a quick, heavy release on his shot that can fool goaltenders.

When his line is attacking off the cycle, Nazar shows an underrated IQ for getting open as a shooter in high-danger areas. Watch how he sneaks behind Evan Bouchard to get open for a Grade-A chance in this clip, for example.

Nazar has already generated 16 shots on goal from "high-danger" areas according to NHL Edge, which ranks in the 87th percentile of forwards. The Blackhawks have leaned on him in a huge role: centering the second line, playing on the top power-play unit and averaging more than two minutes per game on the penalty kill.

One area that Nazar will need to improve with experience is his puck management. He's had some dangerous turnovers in recent games against the Canucks and Kraken, including one that led to a two-on-one goal for Jordan Eberle. I'm not worried about that, though; Nazar has only played 71 career games. Some highs and lows are to be expected, and he'll surely tighten up some of those turnovers with more reps.

Josh Doan, RW, Buffalo Sabres

Age: 23

Draft status: No. 37 pick in 2021

Stats: 16 GP, 4G-5A-9, 15:31 average time on ice

The Sabres were widely panned for their modest return in the offseason JJ Peterka trade, which netted them Michael Kesselring and Doan from Utah. It turns out a lot of those people were underestimating Doan, who has emerged as one of the best storylines in upstate New York so far.

Doan is a very fascinating player to scout. There's very little flash to his game: he's an average skater, isn't the most creative or skilled player, and doesn't do much flashy puck-handling. If you're an out-of-market viewer who only watches the Sabres on occasion, it'd be easy to miss Doan's impact and think he's a run-of-the-mill forward because he doesn't make a lot of eye-catching plays.

The more you watch Doan play, though, you appreciate his value as a smart, hard-working, heavy winger who consistently tilts the ice in his team's favor. The Sabres have outshot and outchanced opponents by a wide margin in Doan's shifts, controlling 61 percent of expected goals, which is the best mark among Buffalo's top nine.

Doan is a beast along the boards, using his strength, relentless energy and expert stickwork to dominate opponents in puck battles.

Watch how many subtle plays he makes to keep the puck alive in the offensive zone in the clip below. Doan starts by checking a Blues forward on a clearance attempt. He pokes the puck forward on the second effort. Philip Broberg gets to the loose puck and tries to clear it off the boards, but Doan swats it out of the air and then wards off two Blues players to cleanly win possession back for his line.

Doan is an excellent puck retriever in all three zones. He constantly breaks plays up in the neutral zone, whether it's ferocious backchecks or standing up to an opposing puck carrier flying up the ice with speed. In this next clip, Kesselring gets caught on a bad pinch, and the Hurricanes



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have a potential odd-man rush brewing. Doan hustles back and breaks the pass up to negate the danger.

Offensively, Doan has become the Sabres' primary net-front option on the first-unit power play. Most of his goals have come right around the blue paint. Down low, his dogged ability to keep plays alive helps extend his line's offensive zone possessions. Watch how he's first to the puck and wins battles off an initial point shot, leading to an assist.

Doan is more of a supporting offensive piece than a primary creator, but his sharp, accurate passing to connect plays in all three zones also contributes to his strong two-way impact. He's got all the makings of a high-energy, battle-winning top-six forward who can complement dynamic, skilled linemates.

Logan Stankoven, C, Carolina Hurricanes

Age: 22

Draft status: No. 47 pick in 2021

Stats: 16 GP, 5G-4A-9, 15:16 average time on ice

Is the Hurricanes' long search for a second-line center finally over?

Stankoven, who had played exclusively on the wing in the NHL before this season despite being a natural center, has successfully transitioned to playing down the middle. He's not just holding his own — he's legitimately thriving, with Carolina controlling more than 62 percent of scoring chances and outscoring opponents 14-6 during his five-on-five shifts this season.

This isn't to say it's been a perfect transition. He's won less than 43 percent of his face-offs. He's had occasional hiccups managing the puck in Carolina's end, though the team is so structured that it hasn't cost them defensively.

It's also important to note that Rod Brind'Amour is keeping this line's usage somewhat sheltered. Stankoven has had only 10 defensive-zone starts at five-on-five this year (second-lowest on the team). For context, Jordan Staal's checking line has had 49 defensive zone starts. Stankoven hasn't faced very tough matchups, either, as he ranks 10th among forwards in terms of quality of competition, according to HockeyStatCards.

That shouldn't diminish what Stankoven has accomplished at center, though. Stankoven has scored all nine of his points at even strength. He's producing 2.34 points per 60 at five-on-five, which ranks just outside the top 50 among all NHL forwards this season.

Stankoven is quick, makes intelligent passes and has a decent shot. One of his most admirable qualities, though, is his dogged puck pursuit. He buzzes all over the ice with a ferocious, non-stop motor, constantly winning battles because of his relentless pressure. Watch this forecheck below, where he bumps 6-foot-4 defender Mattias Samuelsson off the puck, leading to a chance for Blake.

As a playmaker, Stankoven isn't flashy, but he consistently hits dangerous seams with nifty passes. Here's a rush where he slips a pass to Blake for a glorious chance.

In the next clip, he makes a sweet dish on the power play to set up Blake's shot off the post.

Emil Heineman, LW, New York Islanders

Age: 23

Draft status: No. 43 pick in 2020

Stats: 16 GP, 6G-4A-10, 14:24 average time on ice

Acquired as part of the Noah Dobson trade, Emil Heineman is proving he's far more valuable than many fans initially realized.

Heineman was far more impactful than his modest rookie point totals last year (10 goals, eight assists in 62 games) suggested. I argued last summer he was one of the league's most underrated bottom-six players, and that he reminded me a bit of early-career Artturi Lehkonen.

This year, Heineman has been an excellent fit on the Islanders' top line as a complementary winger. He's scored six goals and four assists in 16 games, which is terrific production considering all but one of his points have been registered at even strength. The Isles are decisively winning Heineman's shifts, controlling 55 percent of shots and outscoring opponents 11-7 with him on the ice at five-on-five.

Bo Horvat is obviously the clear play-driver of that top line. The Isles' top-line center is off to a scorching start with 12 goals in 16 games, which, of course, has benefited Heineman. However, Heineman deserves flowers for his contributions as well.

Heineman is an Energizer Bunny with elite speed and a non-stop motor. He's been a disruptive physical force, ranking top-10 among all NHL players for hits this season. He gives opponents fits on the forecheck, is reliable defensively and has an underrated shot offensively. In the clip below, watch how he breaks a play up in the neutral zone, which sparks a two-on-one counterattack that Horvat scores on.

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ESPN / NHL Power Rankings: 1-32 poll, one fantasy add for each team — ESPN

Sean Allen, Victoria Matiash

Nov 14, 2025

Another week of the 2025-26 NHL season, another Power Rankings top spot for the Colorado Avalanche according to ESPN's panel of voters.

But beyond sorting out which are the best (and worst) teams in the league, let's help out all of the fantasy hockey managers out there. This week, in addition to our 1-32 ranking, we've enlisted ESPN fantasy analysts Victoria Matiash (Western Conference) and Sean Allen (Eastern) to identify one player from each team that managers should consider adding to their roster.

Don't worry if you haven't signed up yet; it's not too late to play ESPN Fantasy Hockey. Sign up and play for free today.

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

1. Colorado Avalanche

Previous ranking: 1

Points percentage: 80.6%

At minimum, Victor Olofsson serves as a viable streaming option if selected to jostle in for Valeri Nichushkin (injured) on an Avalanche scoring line, in addition to his spot on Colorado's top power play. As it stands, while inconsistent, the 30-year-old is producing enough with the extra skater to make up for his fantasy-related shortcomings otherwise.

Next seven days: vs. NYI (Nov. 16), vs. NYR (Nov. 20)

2. New Jersey Devils

Previous ranking: 4



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Points percentage: 73.5%

Dawson Mercer has gone from third-line depth to top-six mainstay. He is pushing for the team lead in goals and delivering more across-the-board stats than most mid-tier forwards. Mercer grades as a top-50 fantasy skater this season.

Next seven days: @ WSH (Nov. 15), @ TB (Nov. 18), @ FLA (Nov. 20)

3. Anaheim Ducks

Previous ranking: 8

Points percentage: 67.6%

The Ducks are having fun. None more so than Beckett Sennecke, competing on a scoring line with Cutter Gauthier and Mason McTavish. Best suited to deep-league managers with a bit of patience, the 19-year-old tends to score sporadically. But it all works out in the long run.

Next seven days: @ MIN (Nov. 15), vs. UTA (Nov. 17), vs. BOS (Nov. 19), vs. OTT (Nov. 20)

4. Carolina Hurricanes

Previous ranking: 7

Points percentage: 68.8%

Many managers bailed on Nikolaj Ehlers early. Don't be one of them. After a slow start, he has posted points in five straight games. He didn't score a goal in October, but he's producing now and remains available in far too many leagues.

Next seven days: vs. VAN (Nov. 14), vs. EDM (Nov. 15), @ BOS (Nov. 17), @ MIN (Nov. 19)

5. Dallas Stars

Previous ranking: 11

Points percentage: 69.4%

This unproductive start is out of character for Tyler Seguin. It was only last season the experienced center scored 21 points in an injury-shortened 20-game campaign. At least keep Seguin on your fantasy radar in anticipation of more productive days ahead.

Next seven days: vs. PHI (Nov. 15), vs. NYI (Nov. 18), @ VAN (Nov. 20)

6. Montreal Canadiens

Previous ranking: 2

Points percentage: 64.7%

Rookie goaltender Jakub Dobes is still on the waiver wire in a third of leagues, which seems like a mistake. He has been a force in limited starts and is clearly separating from Sam Montembeault in fantasy value. Even if playing time isn't steady yet, stash him now before it is.

Next seven days: vs. BOS (Nov. 15), @ CBJ (Nov. 17), vs. WSH (Nov. 20)

7. Winnipeg Jets

Previous ranking: 3

Points percentage: 58.8%

Recovered from his ankle injury, Cole Perfetti is finally settling in on the second scoring line and No. 1 power play in Winnipeg. The perceived lineup replacement for a departed Nikolaj Ehlers will have his name on the scoresheet soon enough.

Next seven days: @ CGY (Nov. 15), vs. CBJ (Nov. 18)

8. Boston Bruins

Previous ranking: 20

Points percentage: 57.9%

Morgan Geekie deserves the spotlight, but a recovering Elias Lindholm has been just as impactful when healthy. Still week-to-week, he should soon rejoin Geekie and David Pastrnak at even strength and on the power play. Lindholm's early-season production hinted at a bounce-back season.

Next seven days: @ MTL (Nov. 15), vs. CAR (Nov. 17), @ ANA (Nov. 19)

9. Pittsburgh Penguins

Previous ranking: 10

Points percentage: 61.8%

Anthony Mantha's resurgence predates the team's rash of injuries. He has scored eight goals and looks like the early-career version who flirted with 30. Injuries have shuffled roles, but Mantha's form should keep him fantasy relevant even when the lineup stabilizes.

Next seven days: vs. NSH (Nov. 14), vs. NSH (Nov. 16)

10. Vegas Golden Knights

Previous ranking: 5

Points percentage: 59.4%

Riding shotgun to Jack Eichel and Mitch Marner, winger Ivan Barbashev is putting up even-strength points with aplomb. And unlike his prodigious linemates, Barbashev is largely available in ESPN fantasy competition. Grab him before competing managers become the wiser.

Next seven days: @ STL (Nov. 15), @ MIN (Nov. 16), vs. NYR (Nov. 18), @ UTA (Nov. 20)

11. Los Angeles Kings

Previous ranking: 16

Points percentage: 61.1%

Turning back the clock in southern California, Corey Perry is clearly in a scoring mood. While the 40-year-old is unlikely to maintain a point-per-game pace all season, he certainly deserves a spot on your deeper fantasy roster at the moment.

Next seven days: @ OTT (Nov. 15), @ WSH (Nov. 17), @ SJ (Nov. 20)

12. Tampa Bay Lightning

Previous ranking: 17

Points percentage: 56.3%

Trade target alert: Brayden Point. His scoring has been oddly cold, but the long-term numbers say it's just variance. He ranks 19th among skaters in total fantasy production over the past seven seasons and 11th over the past three -- this ideal trade window won't last.

Next seven days: @ FLA (Nov. 15), vs. VAN (Nov. 16), vs. NJ (Nov. 18), vs. EDM (Nov. 20)

13. Utah Mammoth

Previous ranking: 6

Points percentage: 58.8%

Slump over! After a dry start to November, JJ Peterka is back to producing with his new squad in Utah. The second-line winger remains available in around third of ESPN fantasy leagues.

Next seven days: vs. NYI (Nov. 14), @ ANA (Nov. 17), @ SJ (Nov. 18), vs. VGK (Nov. 20)



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14. Chicago Blackhawks

Previous ranking: 21

Points percentage: 58.8%

Playing with Connor Bedard provides its perks. Just ask forward Andre Burakovsky, who has 14 points in 15 games, including five with the extra skater. Yet, he somehow remains available in nearly three-quarters of ESPN fantasy leagues.

Next seven days: vs. TOR (Nov. 15), vs. CGY (Nov. 18), vs. SEA (Nov. 20)

15. Ottawa Senators

Previous ranking: 22

Points percentage: 61.1%

Shane Pinto hasn't cooled off -- he has just shifted from goals to assists. His line with Michael Amadio and Claude Giroux is driving play, outscoring opponents 9-3 so far. Pinto remains a steady fantasy contributor, even if the production looks a little different.

Next seven days: vs. LA (Nov. 15), @ ANA (Nov. 20)

16. Philadelphia Flyers

Previous ranking: 15

Points percentage: 59.4%

Dan Vladar has earned matchup-stream consideration after winning six of nine starts. The pace might slow, but he has been steady behind a more competitive Flyers squad. He's not a set-and-forget starter, but he's a worthwhile spot play in daily formats.

Next seven days: @ STL (Nov. 14), @ DAL (Nov. 15), vs. STL (Nov. 20)

17. Seattle Kraken

Previous ranking: 14

Points percentage: 61.8%

In one of this season's feel-good stories, Matt Murray is proving he can still perform, with three solid-to-great starts for the Kraken. The veteran could be a viable streaming option if he is able to muscle appearances away from Philipp Grubauer, even once starter Joey Daccord is healed up.

Next seven days: vs. SJ (Nov. 15), @ DET (Nov. 18), @ CHI (Nov. 20)

18. Detroit Red Wings

Previous ranking: 9

Points percentage: 58.8%

Simon Edvinsson is a quietly useful depth defenseman. His mix of blocks, hits and modest offense keeps him fantasy relevant, and his pairing with Moritz Seider owns the NHL's best shot-attempts percentage. He's a sleeper pick for deeper formats.

Next seven days: vs. BUF (Nov. 15), @ NYR (Nov. 16), vs. SEA (Nov. 18), vs. NYI (Nov. 20)

19. Washington Capitals

Previous ranking: 13

Points percentage: 50%

This is when Ovechkin heats up; he had seven goals in five games around this time last season. If history repeats, his slow start makes him a trade target. He's 40, but the motor still revs.

Next seven days: vs. NJ (Nov. 15), vs. LA (Nov. 17), vs. EDM (Nov. 19), @ MTL (Nov. 20)

20. Edmonton Oilers

Previous ranking: 18

Points percentage: 52.6%

Forward Zach Hyman is back this week. Scoop him up before he starts scoring as a member of the Oilers' top six and No. 1 power play. The 33-year-old winger won't be available in more than half of ESPN leagues for long.

Next seven days: @ CAR (Nov. 15), @ BUF (Nov. 17), @ WSH (Nov. 19), @ TB (Nov. 20)

21. New York Rangers

Previous ranking: 26

Points percentage: 55.6%

Gabe Perreault debuted Monday on a scoring line and tallied an assist. After 10 points in nine AHL games, he could be the offensive spark New York needs. In deeper formats, he's a solid speculative add while the Rangers search for secondary -- or maybe just primary -- scoring.

Next seven days: @ CBJ (Nov. 15), vs. DET (Nov. 16), @ VGK (Nov. 18), @ COL (Nov. 20)

22. New York Islanders

Previous ranking: 23

Points percentage: 58.8%

Mathew Barzal, Kyle Palmieri and Emil Heineman are all viable adds from an offense that has been quietly consistent. Barzal is available in fewer than half of leagues, Palmieri in just more than and Heineman almost everywhere -- all three offer scoring depth if you need it.

Next seven days: @ UTA (Nov. 14), @ COL (Nov. 16), @ DAL (Nov. 18), @ DET (Nov. 20)

23. San Jose Sharks

Previous ranking: 30

Points percentage: 52.8%

While we all "ooh" and "ahhh" (justly so) over what Macklin Celebrini is accomplishing in his second NHL season, know that a healthy-again William Eklund is also pitching in at a valuable pace. And, unlike with Celebrini, you might be able to snag Eklund off the waiver wire in your league.

Next seven days: @ SEA (Nov. 15), vs. UTA (Nov. 18), vs. LA (Nov. 20)

24. Florida Panthers

Previous ranking: 24

Points percentage: 55.9%

The Stanley Cup-winning line is back together, and that's great news for Eetu Luostarinen. He's widely available, produces when flanking Brad Marchand and Anton Lundell, and adds extra value in hits.

Next seven days: vs. TB (Nov. 15), vs. VAN (Nov. 17), vs. NJ (Nov. 20)

25. Toronto Maple Leafs

Previous ranking: 12

Points percentage: 50%



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Oliver Ekman-Larsson is getting an extended look on the top power play. With the first unit still underperforming, he's worth streaming in hopes that opportunity converts to points. Ride the role while it lasts.

Next seven days: @ CHI (Nov. 15), vs. STL (Nov. 18), vs. CBJ (Nov. 20)

26. Columbus Blue Jackets

Previous ranking: 19

Points percentage: 55.9%

Adam Fantilli is an ideal trade target. His slow start hid his upside, but he's heating up after moving alongside Kirill Marchenko. While the line with Sean Monahan had strong numbers and might tempt another shuffle, Fantilli is currently the top dog and trending up.

Next seven days: vs. NYR (Nov. 15), vs. MTL (Nov. 17), @ WPG (Nov. 18), @ TOR (Nov. 20)

27. Minnesota Wild

Previous ranking: 29

Points percentage: 50%

Back on Minnesota's top line and power play after missing the start of 2025-26, Mats Zuccarello is already back to the business of regularly registering points. While the diminutive veteran isn't all that flashy in the shallow-league fantasy sphere, he gets the job done in deeper leagues. Skating alongside Kirill Kaprizov helps.

Next seven days: vs. ANA (Nov. 15), vs. VGK (Nov. 16), vs. CAR (Nov. 19)

28. Vancouver Canucks

Previous ranking: 27

Points percentage: 47.2%

All Kiefer Sherwood does is score goals, ranking among the league leaders thus far. The Canucks' secret net-finding playmaker is also the league leader in hits, making the left wing a must-start in leagues that reward both categories.

Next seven days: @ CAR (Nov. 14), @ TB (Nov. 16), @ FLA (Nov. 17), vs. DAL (Nov. 20)

29. St. Louis Blues

Previous ranking: 31

Points percentage: 44.1%

The Blues don't have to win another game for Justin Faulk to remain useful in fantasy competition that rewards production and defensive play; the veteran defender ranks second in St. Louis in points and blocked shots. That might partly explain why the Blues are ranked where they are.

Next seven days: vs. PHI (Nov. 14), vs. VGK (Nov. 15), @ TOR (Nov. 18), @ PHI (Nov. 20)

30. Buffalo Sabres

Previous ranking: 25

Points percentage: 41.2%

Don't overlook Mattias Samuelsson's value. He has only six points, but his blocked shots and peripheral stats make him worth rostering. That kind of depth allows you to explore D-for-D trades knowing you have reliable replacement value sitting on your bench.

Next seven days: @ DET (Nov. 15), vs. EDM (Nov. 17), vs. CGY (Nov. 19)

31. Nashville Predators

Previous ranking: 28

Points percentage: 38.9%

Even before earning his first NHL hat trick, forward Matthew Wood was on a roll with three goals and three assists in six games. Considering how the season is unfolding (again) in Tennessee, it's only a matter of time before the rookie earns more quality minutes. Add him before the next multigoal contest.

Next seven days: vs. PIT (Nov. 14), vs. PIT (Nov. 16)

32. Calgary Flames

Previous ranking: 32

Points percentage: 31.6%

It was only a few days ago that Jonathan Huberdeau was enjoying a six-game point streak prior to his current three-game pointless one. On the bright side, he's still steadily shooting on net. If another productive run is just around the corner, the top-line winger might be worth a gamble in extra-deep fantasy leagues.

Next seven days: vs. WPG (Nov. 15), @ CHI (Nov. 18), @ BUF (Nov. 19)

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Sportsnet.ca / Q and A: Canucks' Jim Rutherford on rebuilds, injuries and overall outlook

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — The start of this season for the Vancouver Canucks has felt like most of last season, minus the ninth-grade drama in the dressing room.

The Canucks are again hollowed out by injuries.

As the team limps towards the quarter mark of their National Hockey League schedule with a daunting three-game road trip that starts Friday (Sportsnet, 7 p.m. ET / 4 p.m. PT) against the Carolina Hurricanes, the Canucks' injured list is back up to seven players with goalie Thatcher Demko's latest breakdown. Under head coach Adam Foote and general manager Patrik Allvin, the team has been just trying to survive.

Foote has rightly praised his players' resilience. But that's not the R-word that has inflamed the market.

We thought it would be a good time to sit down with Canucks president Jim Rutherford and ask about rebuilds, injuries and what the heck happened to that help at centre.

Spoiler alert: Rutherford believes he has the authority to conduct a rebuild, but has no plans for one. And that's whether Quinn Hughes stays or not.

"A rebuild is not something that we're going to look at doing," Rutherford told Sportsnet. "Like I said, we're in transition. But we're not trading all these players for draft picks that may or may not end up playing someday."

Starting where the Canucks have started, with injuries, here is the transcript of our interview, edited slightly for brevity and clarity.



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Sportsnet: After all the injuries your team endured last season, we thought the law of averages were with you this year. But you've had as many as nine players out already. And now Demko is injured again, out week to week. Do you feel like you can't catch a break?

Rutherford: With a compressed schedule, yeah, we expected (injuries), but we didn't expect it to this extent. A lot of teams have injuries. Maybe not as many as we do, but you deal with it.

Sportsnet: The injury crisis accelerated when centres Filip Chytil and Teddy Blueger went down the same game in Washington on Oct. 19. How big a blow was it to lose Chytil to another concussion just six games in?

Rutherford: Well, when we made the trade (with the New York Rangers last season), we were well aware of the risk. But he was really the only centre available to get back when we were trading such a good centre in J.T. Miller. We were aware of that (injury) history and we were hoping for the best. But we openly admitted that we needed to strengthen our centre-ice position in the off season, and even to today, Patrik continues trying to do that.

Sportsnet: Yes, you said after last season that the Canucks needed to acquire a second-line centre and it would be "expensive" to make that trade but "very expensive" not to do it. Did you think in April you'd still be waiting for that trade in November?

Rutherford: No, I did not. But it's not from Patrik's lack of trying. He's calling teams all the time. If it ever gets to a conversation about potentially adding somebody, the price is just too high.

Sportsnet: How high? Like Tom Willander and young Elias Pettersson too high?

Rutherford: Yeah, like that. One of the things I've been open about is, you know, we're kind of caught in between here right now. I believe our organization has done a good job in building up the pipeline of younger players. Do we want to give those up now or do we want to keep building? (Until) we traded J.T. . . we were on the right track to continuing to build towards being a contender on a more regular basis. And then when J.T. got traded, we were set back. Regardless of what deal we made, you're not going to replace him. And so then we became a team in transition again. And we're still a team in transition. If you look at our lineup now, we've got sometimes six, seven first-year players in our lineup, and that's hard. But the positive side of that is these guys are developing. So there's somewhat of a silver lining in a disappointing first quarter of the season.

Sportsnet: What do you do to the roster in the short term?

Rutherford: We could make changes, pay heavy prices (in trades) and still not be a playoff team. Or we could stay the course, get back healthy and still have a chance to make the playoffs. But we could also miss the playoffs doing that, right? We're in a very good draft year, and we've got to keep that in mind. Right now, as we speak, I would say we would stay the course with developing our young players and getting our injured players back in the lineup. And continue to look for that centre. We still really don't know what we've got because we haven't had a full lineup.

Sportsnet: So you're not considering as trade chips guys like Willander and Pettersson, Jonathan Lekkerimaki and Braeden Cootes?

Rutherford: That is not in the plan. People use different words as to how a team goes forward. Some people use 'rebuild.' Some use the word 'transition.' You can spin it whatever way you like. 'Retool.' But the fact of the matter is, we're at a point where our amateur scouts and development staff under Patrik have done a good job in building up a good group of young players, and it would take something extreme for us to start cutting into that. Now, I'm not saying we wouldn't trade one of these players. But if we did, it would be for somebody that's 25 years or younger. Even our core, older guys are still in their 20s; we're still a

relatively young team. It's not like we're an aging team that's got nowhere to go.

Sportsnet: Quinn Hughes' future will be a subplot all season. Will his decision next summer, whether to re-sign with the Canucks or ask out to play with his brothers, determine which direction the team-building takes?

Rutherford: No, I don't think so. I think as long as we stay the course and keep getting younger players that we feel will play (in the NHL) and contribute to a team that can become a consistent playoff team and a contender, then that's what we would do.

Sportsnet: Quinn told us before the season that he "could handle the noise" surrounding his situation. But he looks sometimes like he has the weight of the universe on him. How do you think he is handling this?

Rutherford: First of all, he carries that weight on his shoulders in good times, too, because he's a true pro and leader and he wants to succeed. He wants the team to succeed, but even more so now. From what I know — anytime I'm around him — it doesn't seem to bother him. I believe he's giving the best he's got . . . to help the team win. I've not seen a change in him that way.

Sportsnet: Your team is 8-9-1. How do you think it has handled the adversity of the first quarter?

Rutherford: I think our coaches and our players have handled it pretty well. We have showed in games how we're capable of playing. It's the consistency (that's lacking). We've probably won games people thought we were going to lose and lost the games they thought we were going to win. It could be because of some inexperience or so many changes in our lineup, but we've played some games very well for 40 minutes and couldn't get over the hump for the other 20 minutes, which has really cost us.

Sportsnet: You're only three points out of a playoff spot, but we know how difficult it is to catch up after November. Your injury crisis is ongoing and you're on a tough trip. Do you feel this next stretch of games is critical for staying in the playoff race?

Rutherford: They're all critical, but you don't want to fall too far behind. St. Louis did it (coming from last place to win the Stanley Cup in 2019). One year in Pittsburgh, in 2016, we were in a bad spot and made a bunch of changes and went on to win the Stanley Cup. So I don't think you have to panic if you're not where you should be by the end of November. You're not automatically out of it. But everything's critical at this point. It's getting the injured guys back, it's still trying to strengthen our centre ice. That's what I talk to Patrik about: just continue to work on things.

Rutherford: Well, we've had two key guys out in (Derek) Forbort and Blueger. So that starts it. But our penalty kill wasn't good at the start of last year, either, and it got to a point where we were really good. It has to get better. Whether we change how we kill or we get different people on the PK, it has to change if we're going to win.

Sportsnet: Another guy who was out first on every PK last season, centre Pius Suter, left in free agency for just a two-year contract in St. Louis at \$4.125 million per. Do you regret not keeping him?

Rutherford: I was going to mention him earlier. He was a guy that we thought we were still in on when he went to St. Louis. And I know he wanted to come back here. There seemed to be some miscommunication on term (based on) what it eventually ended up. We would have considered bringing him back (for longer than two years), but it didn't work out.

Sportsnet: How is Adam Foote working out as a rookie head coach?

Rutherford: I think he's done a really good job. I'm really impressed by him, his communication, his preparation. It started in the off-season when he got the job, when he communicated a lot with the players and especially the core group. The preparation in practices is one of the



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things I'm sure you've seen. And some of the finer points that we didn't do in the past . . . he had a game plan for three on three, he's worked on when the goalies are pulled. Especially with him working with a lot of new, younger guys and things like that, I like the job that he's done.

Sportsnet: So what's the best-case scenario from here?

Rutherford: The best-case scenario is we get our players back, we (stick with) the priority we've had for six months to get another centre, and then see where we're at. Take a run at making the playoffs. And if you get in the playoffs, you just never know.

Sportsnet: And if that doesn't work?

Rutherford: Then the downside of it is stay the course, stick with what I just said, and we miss the playoffs. So we win the (draft) lottery and get a top-five pick and keep building a team that is relatively young, where most of our players are in their 20s. Just keep adding good players.

Sportsnet: But not a full rebuild?

Rutherford: Rebuilds can work. But you have to understand rebuilds take a long time. There has to be a lot of patience, and for the teams that take the biggest jump and ultimately rebuild and win a Cup, they usually have a first-overall pick. And you still have to get lucky on that. I'm not naming teams, but some have tried a rebuild and had a ton of draft picks that didn't turn out. So a rebuild is not something that we're going to look at doing. Like I said, we're in transition. But we're not trading all these players for draft picks that may or may not end up playing someday.

Sportsnet: Even if you wanted to do a rebuild, would your owner allow it?

Rutherford: To this point, I've had total freedom to do what I want. Francesco (Aquilini) has been very supportive from Day 1, from the time he met me and hired me. He hasn't interfered. He has left it in my hands.

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Sportsnet.ca / Friday Four: Is there room for Tom Wilson on Team Canada?

Michael Amato

The Friday Four is a collection of thoughts and information on some intriguing player storylines from around the NHL. On deck this week is:

Doug Armstrong has a problem on his hands, but it's a good one.

Time is ticking for the Team Canada general manager to finalize his roster for next February's Olympics, and things have become more complicated since the 4 Nations Face-Off. Several players who were left off last year's squad are making compelling cases to be included this time around. Whichever way Armstrong decides to go to shape his team, it's inevitably going to leave a handful of players disappointed.

One of those names could be Tom Wilson. The Washington Capitals forward is playing some of the best hockey of his career, averaging a point per game after posting a career-best 33 goals and 65 points a year ago. Add in the fact that Wilson has a Stanley Cup to his name, plenty of big-game experience and brings a rough-and-tumble style of play that's a pain for opposing teams to deal with, and he does have a good resume for inclusion.

That said, even with Canada being able to bring 14 forwards to the Olympics compared to 13 at the 4 Nations, Wilson would still be hard-pressed to make the team. That's mainly because a few other players

who have taken a massive step this season are likely ahead of him in line and it's hard to see a bunch of forwards being removed that were part of the championship team at the 4 Nations.

Out of that group, McDavid, MacKinnon, Crosby, Jarvis, Point, Marner and Reinhart should be locks. Cirelli and Hagel are likely penciled in as well, considering how much coach Jon Cooper trusts them with the Tampa Bay Lightning and he surely has a fair bit of say into the roster construction. Maybe after last year's tournament, where he had a tough time handling the speed at times, you could've made a case that Marchand was on the bubble, but an incredible Cup run and hot start to 2025-26 secure his spot.

That leaves Bennett, Konecny and Stone. I think the only reason Stone wouldn't be included is because of injury. He's hurt now and has had trouble staying healthy in recent years, so there's a possibility a spot opens up if he can't play. Bennett is off to a really slow start, but he's a big-game performer who was great at the 4 Nations. I think that pedigree probably gets him in. Then there's Konecny, who has really picked it up lately but was scratched for Canada's most important games at the 4 Nations and went pointless at the tournament. He seems like the most likely candidate to be left off. So, even with the extra forward Canada can take to the Olympics, realistically it feels like there may be only two or three spots available.

There could be some others in the mix by the time rosters have to be submitted, but these are the guys that figure to get the closest look. One thing working against Wilson is all these players can play centre. That means more roster flexibility and help in the face-off circle if required. Celebrini and Bedard have exploded offensively this year but are both inexperienced. I think at least one makes it, I'd bet Celebrini, but it wouldn't shock me if both were taken. I think with the complete game Suzuki plays, he'll be there and then Scheifele probably has the next-best case. The Winnipeg Jets forward was excellent last season and has picked up right where he left off.

One thing that is working for Wilson is his style of play. None of the new hopefuls can play with his physicality, and we saw how big a part of the game that was at the 4 Nations, especially when dealing with the Tkachuks and the rest of the American team. The issue is fighting is prohibited at the Olympics and results in an ejection, so I don't think we'll see as many shenanigans as we did at the 4 Nations. Plus, Bennett could fill that physical role if needed and he is coming off a Conn Smythe Trophy and has proved to be excellent in high-pressure games. It's hard to see them choosing Wilson over Bennett to fill that need.

It's not impossible for Wilson to work his way onto the Olympic squad, as there's a lot of time between now and Olympic puck drop. Injuries can play a big factor and we saw players at the 4 Nations make an impact that we didn't even expect to be on the team. But right now, the path for Wilson and a bunch of other Canadian forwards appears to be filled with obstacles. It's not that they aren't deserving, there's just only so many spots available.

Leo Carlsson didn't want to let Celebrini and Bedard have all the fun this season. All three, who aren't yet old enough to drink in the cities they play in, have taken the NHL by storm. Celebrini and Bedard aren't that surprising, based on what they've shown in their brief careers, but I'm not sure many expected Carlsson to be this good this quickly.

The 20-year-old recently had an 11-game point streak, averaging nearly two points per game over that stretch. Carlsson is already more than halfway to his career high of 45 points, something he is poised to obliterate this season. Most importantly, though, he has the Anaheim Ducks sitting in first place in the Pacific Division after the team has missed the playoffs for seven straight seasons.

Carlsson has taken a different path than Bedard and Celebrini to his breakout campaign. The Ducks chose a more cautious approach of acclimating Carlsson to the NHL, while Bedard and Celebrini hit the



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ground running and were NHL regulars immediately. Anaheim instead opted for load management in Carlsson's rookie season, choosing to manage his workload in the first half of the 2023-24 campaign. That sometimes meant not playing both games in back-to-back situations and having a limited number of games per week. Carlsson ended up playing just 55 games that year as an 18-year-old, something that was more comparable to what he had been playing in Sweden.

Most people feel it's best for a young player like Carlsson to be playing regularly, whether that's in the NHL or another development league. We've seen instances this year where the likes of Easton Cowan, Michael Misa and Zayne Parekh were scratched for a game here and there, leaving fans perplexed. But that doesn't mean it's a bad thing. The rigors of a full 82-game NHL schedule aren't easy to manage. Taking a game off every so often for recovery and to watch from the press box isn't the end of the world at the start of what fans hope is a long career for all these players.

Every player is different and that's why each team shouldn't have a one-size-fits-all plan for every prospect. The Ducks thought outside the box where Carlsson is concerned, and it's paying big dividends. Trust the process.

The Boston Bruins were counted out this season long before the puck dropped on opening night. After Boston failed to make the playoffs last season for the first time since 2016 and traded away captain Brad Marchand, expectations were down for a team with a new head coach that was planning to give a bunch of opportunities to young and unproven players.

Fast forward to today, though, and the Bruins are right in the mix in the Eastern Conference thanks to a mark of 11-8-0. That's in large part thanks to Charlie McAvoy, who is having an usually hot start to the campaign offensively. McAvoy hasn't scored yet, but he already has 14 assists in 18 games. The 27-year-old has always been known as a reliable blue-liner who can play in any situation and handle tough matchups, though he's never been a huge point producer.

McAvoy's career high in points is 56, and he's topped the 50-point mark only twice in his career. This year, he's on his way to clear 60 in a season where the Bruins badly need it. They've lost a bunch of offence with Marchand gone, and Viktor Arvidsson and Elias Lindholm have had underwhelming starts. Without McAvoy's offensive output, there's a good chance the Bruins would be jockeying for position near the East basement rather than holding down a top-three spot in the Atlantic.

The Bruins are one of the few teams without a captain, and after the Marchand trade, they perhaps lost a little bit of their identity. There are only a few candidates to assume the role in Boston, with McAvoy and David Pastrnak right at the top of list. McAvoy is probably the more vocal of the two, and this summer he wasn't shy in coming out and saying the Bruins were a playoff team every day of the week, in his mind. That caught some off guard, but so far, McAvoy has backed up his words and that is just the kind of statement both on and off the ice that should be considered captain material.

When the Minnesota Wild re-signed Marcus Johansson last June, it didn't attract much attention. Johansson inked a modest one-year, \$800,000 deal with the Wild and expectations were low on the veteran making a significant impact during the 2025-26 campaign. For one, Johansson was turning 35 before the year began and was coming off back-to-back seasons where he failed to score 35 points.

However, Johansson is off to a torrid start and is proving to be one of the best value deals this season. The Wild forward has 15 points in 18 games and just concluded a nine-game point streak. Johansson is holding down a spot in the top six, getting a chance to play with Joel Eriksson Ek and Matt Boldy, which is a great position to be in. He has the best of both worlds, in the sense that Boldy is someone who is an elite offensive player and Eriksson Ek is very responsible at both ends of the

ice, making it the perfect deployment for a crafty veteran like Johansson to thrive.

It never hurts for a young player like Boldy to play with an experienced skater like Johansson, someone who just celebrated his 1,000th game in the National Hockey League. Boldy is highly skilled, but Johansson's calming presence can really be good to lean on during challenging times. That's something Boldy recently went through, when he tallied just one goal over a 10-game stretch before breaking out of it with four goals in his past four.

Johansson's surprise uptick in offence to start the season has been desperately needed by the Wild. The team started off slow and endured a stretch of only one win in nine games, which pushed them down the standings. They've recently righted the ship, though, thanks in part to the consistent offence from Johansson for a team that was desperate for a spark. Still, Minnesota is on the outside looking in when it comes to the playoff picture and things could be a lot worse without the unexpected contributions from Johansson.

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Sportsnet.ca / Long-term injuries to Newhook, Guhle an added layer of adversity for Canadiens

Eric Engels

BROSSARD, Que. — The news was grim when what was feared on Thursday was confirmed on Friday.

Alex Newhook, who left the 17th Montreal Canadiens game of the season unable to put any pressure on his right leg following a feet-first collision with the boards, had surgery to repair a fractured ankle Friday. The 24-year-old forward, who shot out to the best start of his NHL career with six goals and six assists through the first 16 games, isn't likely to return until the final stretch of the regular season.

A fourth-month recovery timeline brings Newhook to Mar. 14.

On top of that, Kaiden Guhle, who was initially supposed to miss four-to-six weeks with a groin injury suffered Oct. 16, will now miss eight-to-10 more following surgery to repair a partially torn adductor muscle.

Touching base with sources close to the Canadiens, both the team and Guhle were hoping rest and a slow ramp-up towards resuming play would solve his situation. The objective was to avoid surgery, but that objective became unachievable when Guhle's recovery stalled after resuming skating several days ago.

Now he and Newhook are sidelined for much longer than the Canadiens hoped they'd be.

The team could use both players right now — during its first slump of the season, after being outscored 12-1 over its last two games by the Los Angeles Kings and Dallas Stars, ahead of a meeting with the red-hot Boston Bruins that threatens to extend their skid to five losses in six games.

"I feel we're better equipped to deal with it this time around," said coach Martin St. Louis before the news on Newhook and Guhle dropped Friday.

He didn't reveal exactly how the Canadiens would.

Neither did practice, which featured just four players — Ivan Demidov, Zachary Bolduc, Lane Hutson and Oliver Kapanen, who skated roughly



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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90 minutes after Jake Evans and Brendan Gallagher took to the ice for a quick session.

There are no indications yet as to how those players will line up Saturday.

"Every scenario you can make a case for," St. Louis said. "At the end of the day, we're going to look at it, try to make the best decision we can, and start like that. Doesn't mean it's going to stay."

And there's no telling how it'll work.

Replacing Newhook long-term will prove complicated.

In the interim, Jared Davidson, who's started off his AHL season with nine goals and 11 points through 13 games with the Laval Rocket, has been called up to Montreal and is scheduled to make his NHL debut versus the Bruins Saturday.

We'd be surprised to see him take the spot Newhook was occupying with Demidov and Kapanen, though.

Newhook was the safety valve of that line as a veteran presence between two rookies. But with him out, those two rookies are likely to skate on separate lines moving forward.

Demidov finished Thursday's loss to the Stars next to Kirby Dach and Bolduc, and that's a line that could remain intact and receive even more offensive deployment than Dach, Bolduc and Gallagher were receiving (they had started just 24 per cent of their shifts in the defensive zone together).

Joe Veleno, who has excellent defensive metrics and underwhelming offensive ones—despite having offensive skill, he's yet to record a point through the 13 games he's played—could serve as the safety valve for Kapanen and Davidson.

And that would leave St. Louis with two other lines he already has proof he can depend on.

Even if Nick Suzuki, Cole Caufield and Juraj Slafkovsky have been held in check in three of the last four games, they've been among the most successful lines over the past two seasons at five-on-five. And reuniting Gallagher with Evans and Josh Anderson would give him a line that can do precisely what it did for a couple of games this season.

It's what the line of Gallagher, Christian Dvorak and Anderson did last season.

"I feel it was a momentum line," said St. Louis on Friday. "It could possess pucks in the o-zone, it could defend. It was a veteran line... I think that's important—to have lines that have that identity, that are going to trust the forecheck and bring some heaviness to it and battle, and that's what we had."

It's what the Canadiens need. Especially now, while under pressure to immediately correct course following two bad games.

A mindset shift is in order, too, with the Canadiens lacking execution and becoming distracted enough by that lack of execution to compound errors like they did against the Stars and Kings.

"When you're going through a hard stretch, everything is overthought," said Jayden Struble, who's been fallible of late in Guhle's spot next to Hutson (the pair is a combined minus-11 over its last two games).

"If you're not executing, you're overthinking about that because things haven't been going our way," Struble continued. "It's a good league, you're playing good teams, star players, and if you're not on, you're gonna... You saw it, we just lost 7-0."

"We just have to take a breath and not grip our sticks too tight. We're in a good spot. Nothing has changed in that way. We're a good team. I think

we have all the confidence that we need. But when we get on the ice, it's just think about the next play."

There's no time to think about when Newhook or Guhle will next play, even if everyone on the team feels for both players.

It's hard not to feel for them.

For Guhle, this is yet another bout of long-term rehab in a career that's been full of it thus far. He played just 44 games his first season and, after playing just 70 in Season 2, he missed 27 last season.

The Edmonton native put on some weight over the summer and hoped to avoid a similar outcome in his first of six seasons over which he's being paid an annual average salary of \$5.55 million.

But Guhle suffered a minor groin injury in training camp, returned for five games of the regular season, and is now sidelined by what proved to be an adductor injury that was serious enough to require surgery.

Newhook, who's been relatively healthy since jumping into the NHL and winning the Stanley Cup with the Colorado Avalanche in 2022, is in the third year of a contract paying him \$2.9 million per on average. He suffered a high-ankle sprain that kept him out of 27 games two seasons ago, had an up-and-down 82 games last season, and was making an excellent case to be considered a core member of the Canadiens with his hot start to this season.

But seeing the Newfoundland native's leg bend the wrong way was an awful sight on Thursday, and Friday's press release indicating his long-term absence was nearly as gruesome.

"It's not easy for a player who had such a good start to the season," said St. Louis.

He surely knows losing both Newhook and Guhle long-term will prove particularly challenging for the Canadiens.

In the meantime, it's an added layer of adversity for a team that was already facing some.

The Canadiens will have to process Friday's grim news and immediately park it Saturday if they hope to get back to the win column and extend their record to 11-5-2.

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Eric Engels

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' confidence hurting after humbling loss to Stars

Eric Engels

MONTREAL — This one hurt, and not just for Alex Newhook, who went crashing into the boards in the second period and came up unable to put any weight on his right leg.

It could be broken. We can't say for sure.

But it's a certainty the Canadiens are nursing some bruised egos and dented confidence after a humbling 7-0 loss to the Dallas Stars Thursday.

"I feel it in the room," said Canadiens captain Nick Suzuki. "Guys are kind of gripping their sticks a little too tight and not playing like we were before, and it's costing us games right now."

That's four of the last five the Canadiens have lost, and a second in a row in lopsided fashion.

After the Los Angeles Kings came to the Bell Centre and beat them 5-1, Thursday's game started to go sideways on the shift before Newhook was tripped by Ilya Lyubushkin.

It was a downward spiral after that, which was unpredictable following a strong start that saw the Canadiens produce 14 shots and 21 attempts in the first period.

"It was a strange game tonight," said Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis.

It likely would've been a good one for his team had they capitalized on at least one of several high-quality scoring chances they generated before falling down 2-0 in the fourth minute of the second period. They were coming in waves in the first, and they started the second the same way.

Then one breakdown cost the Canadiens a goal — and a little bit more of the confidence that propelled them to a 9-3-0 start before this recent 1-3-1 skid.

Lyubushkin went to the penalty box for tripping Newhook, and the Canadiens went to a power play seeking — and failing to find — their first goal in nine attempts.

They missed on their 10th after the Stars made it 3-0, and right before they scored Goals 4 and 5 on their way to seven.

This is the same power play that looked unstoppable just four games ago, as it scored its sixth and seventh goals in Attempts 12 and 13 since adding Ivan Demidov to the top unit.

At the other end of the ice, Jakub Dobes, who started the season 6-0-0 with a .930 save percentage, allowed five goals on 13 shots before giving up his net to Sam Montembeault, who allowed the first shot he faced before allowing one on the final five the Stars took.

It was hard to view any of the goals the Stars scored as bad ones to give up, but it's hard to imagine the Canadiens' goaltenders feeling good about how many they're giving up right now.

"We have all the confidence in the world in them and their process," said Suzuki. "Doby's been really good to start and had a couple tough screens and good plays by them. Monty's been one of the top goalies in the league (in years prior). It's been a tough start for him, but not really that worried. Those guys will battle their way out of it."

The Canadiens will have to fight, too, and likely without Newhook for some time, which undoubtedly hurts.

"I feel bad for him," said Suzuki. "He was off to the best start of his career."

Newhook had six goals, six assists and was plus-7 in 16 games before getting injured in this one. He was helping the Canadiens at both ends of

the rink, proving vital to their special teams, and serving as a key cog in creating the momentum they thrived on from shift to shift.

Now St. Louis' ability to roll four lines is affected, and he'll have to rely more on his top line of Suzuki, Cole Caufield and Juraj Slafkovsky.

It's been blanked in three of the last four games and is searching for the same execution that's become elusive for most of the team as of late.

"Our team's being tested," said Mike Matheson. "It happens every year, but for sure it's not easy when it happens. It's up to each individual to respond."

How?

"Hard work," said Matheson. "I think that's the only way you can get out of anything. I don't think we need to be hitting the panic button by any means. We need to respond for sure. But every year, every team goes through tough times. To say that this will be the only one that we go through is probably a little ignorant. That's not to say you should accept it and kind of wait to get through it. The only way you'll get through it is to work hard and change it."

We'll see if practice Friday eases some of the pain.

It'll have to before Saturday's game against a Boston Bruins team that's won seven of its last eight games.

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Sportsnet.ca / Despite comeback attempt, Oilers falter defensively in loss to Blue Jackets

Mark Spector

The comeback was fun. But the game that put the Edmonton Oilers in a 5-2 hole is the one they've been trying to eradicate all season long.

"We were a little soft in front of the net," said Oilers head coach Kris Knoblauch after a 5-4 loss in Columbus. "Whether they were deflecting pucks, or getting inside of us. ... There were multiple goals (against) like that."

The Oilers have lost the net front at both ends of the rink on far too many nights this season. Like losing the line of scrimmage in football, you won't win many games when the other team dominates the low slot at both ends.

This game had more of that, with multiple Columbus goals coming on tips, close-in rebounds, or shots from inside eight feet.

"We're giving up too many looks from the slot," said defenceman Darnell Nurse, "and making Picks (Calvin Pickard) make too many big saves."

Offensively, with Zach Hyman having missed the entire season thus far, the Oilers have not scored enough dirty goals from those hard-to-go places that are uncomfortable to inhabit. They've been a perimeter team on offence, and in their own end, soft play in front of their goalie has become the norm.

On Thursday, a big, hard player like Columbus' Mathieu Olivier simply camped out in front of Pickard, scoring twice from in close. The Columbus bruiser had a three-point night, and perhaps due to the beating he laid on Trent Frederic three nights before in Edmonton, the Oilers were only willing to stick check Olivier. No one was putting a shoulder into the Jackets' beefy winger.



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"(The Oilers must) make it harder for them to get inside position on us," Knoblauch said. "Too often they were left alone in front of the net with just (Pickard) by himself."

Pickard's numbers this year are gruesome: a 4.17 goals-against average and an .830 saves percentage. Forget about replacing Stuart Skinner, as many fans are calling for. Pickard's game has a long ways to travel before he is that viable backup that won crucial playoff games last spring.

The Blue Jackets hit six goal posts on the night, and we'll let you decide if that was just good luck for the Oilers goalie, or if that's all the Columbus snipers had to shoot at with Pickard in perfect position. In the end they scored five times on 25 shots, a recipe for a road loss if ever there was one.

The Olivier line, with Charlie Coyle and Cole Sillinger, had three goals and seven points between them. Not bad for a third line.

"They have a lot of guys that can produce points and score when you give them time and space, and we gave too much of it," Nurse said

Give the Oilers some credit, however. Their defensive game was poor, but they did have the backbone to turn the game around and push Columbus right to the final buzzer.

Trailing 2-0, then 5-2, the Oilers peppered the Blue Jackets' net right to the final buzzer on a Thursday night thriller at Nationwide Arena in Columbus. On the second night of a back to back, the Oilers got stronger as the game wore on.

Early on they didn't have the look of a team that had this kind of comeback in them, with just six shots on goal at the midway point of the game. At one point they trailed the Jackets by 18 in the shot attempts category, but by game's end they led that stat 61-52.

OIL SPILLS — Hyman, who hasn't played since leaving Game 4 of the Western Conference Final last spring with a dislocated wrist, is finally ready to make a return. "We anticipate he'll be ready to play on Saturday (at Carolina)," Knoblauch said ... Oilers are 40-20-8 all-time versus the Blue Jackets, but in Columbus they're now 14-14-3 — and Edmonton hasn't won at Nationwide Arena since 2019 ... Draisaitl's two goals tonight leaves him 24 points of 1,000 in his career ... With career assists No. 740 and 741, McDavid moved past Norm Ullman and into 51st place on the NHL's all-time list. Next up, Denis Potvin (742) ... Edmonton is on a run of 12 road games in their next 18 games. They've now dropped eight of their last 10 on the road.

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TSN.CA / 'Pumped' Woll ready to return as Leafs look to snap skid in Chicago

Mark Masters

The Maple Leafs held a practice at the Ford Performance on Friday before travelling to Chicago.

Joseph Woll is back with the Leafs and all signs point to the 27-year-old making his season debut on Saturday night in Chicago.

"It's been a bit of a weird start to the season, like we've talked about before," said Woll, who missed the start of the year for personal reasons. "I'm just pumped to get going."

Woll just wrapped up an American Hockey League conditioning stint, which saw him get into two games with the Toronto Marlies.

"It's like riding a bike," he said with a grin. "It was good to just get back out."

Woll logged 36 minutes in a game last Saturday in Lehigh Valley before going the distance in Grand Rapids on Wednesday. He allowed six goals on 52 shots (.885 save percentage) in the pair of appearances. Despite the numbers, Woll felt good between the pipes.

"A couple of big things are just kind of my pace that I move at, making sure I'm moving quickly and have my feet under me and that type of thing, and just kind of the reads of the game," Woll said. "I feel like those are both where they need to be."

The Leafs certainly liked what they saw in Friday's practice.

"Today he was unreal," raved winger William Nylander. "It'll be nice to have him back."

"He seems normal to me and ready to go," said coach Craig Berube. "It means a lot to the team. I mean, obviously him leaving at that point [in training camp] was a surprise and, you know, obviously catches everybody off guard, but he was a big part of our team last year."

Berube is reluctant to confirm his starting goalie ahead of game day and only said he was considering giving Woll the nod against the upstart Blackhawks, who have recorded a point in four straight (3-0-1).

The trip to Chicago is always a special one for Woll, who is from nearby St. Louis and usually has family in attendance. It almost feels like a home game.

"Yeah, it'll be nice to be close to home," he said. "It's getting to the Midwest and breathing the same air in a way."

Woll stopped 25 of 27 shots to pick up a win at the United Center in February, which is his only previous game in Chicago.

Woll, who led the Leafs with 41 starts last season, hasn't played in the NHL since taking the loss in Game 7 of the second-round series against the Florida Panthers on May 18.

Woll's return comes at an important time for the Leafs, who have dropped four straight (0-3-1) and are currently without No. 1 goalie Anthony Stolarz, who sustained an upper-body injury on Tuesday in Boston. Stolarz did not take part in Friday's practice and is listed as day-to-day.

Dennis Hildeby started on Thursday and stopped 33 of 37 shots in an overtime loss to the Los Angeles Kings. The 24-year-old prospect has appeared in four straight games, including twice in relief for Stolarz.

—
The Leafs placed centre Auston Matthews (lower body) on injured reserve on Friday, which means he will miss at least seven days.

"There's hope, and I stress that it's hope at this point, that it may only be eight or nine days from the time of the injury," said TSN Hockey Insider Chris Johnston. "Meaning next Thursday's game against the Columbus Blue Jackets could, and I'll stress could, be the time when Auston Matthews gets back."

Matthews sustained the injury during Tuesday's game in Boston. The Leafs captain was rocked by Nikita Zadorov before getting up and skating over to hit the 6-foot-7, 255-pound Bruins defenceman later in the shift. Johnston reports that Matthews got hurt in the process of hitting Zadorov.

The current issue is not connected to the injury that plagued Matthews throughout last season.

—



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Leafs recalled winger Easton Cowan from the American Hockey League on Friday.

"I've liked Cowboy this year," said Berube, referring to Cowan by his nickname. "I think he's given us some really good games up here."

Cowan has one goal and three assists in 10 games with the Leafs. He picked up one assist in two games with the Marlies.

Berube noted that Cowan's demotion was simply for "roster reasons." The 20-year-old rookie does not require waivers to be sent to the AHL unlike the team's other forwards.

"I thought he looked really good out there today," Berube said.

Cowan skated on a line with Nicolas Roy and Sammy Blais, who appeared to be a placeholder for Matthew Knies, who missed practice for maintenance.

Cowan also took reps with the top power-play unit. He got a look on that unit in his last NHL game on Nov. 3.

Monday was a travel day to Boston and Wednesday was a scheduled day off for the players, so Friday marked the first full practice for the team since the start of their four-game winless run.

"I thought the guys worked," said Berube of the 30-minute session. "They had pretty good energy out there, which is good. Things aren't good right now and a lot of times you can come in today with practice and, you know, everybody's hanging their heads and kind of going through the motions. I didn't see that today, which is good. We had energy. Guys worked hard. They did what we asked them to do."

Despite allowing four goals against the Kings, the Leafs felt they took a step forward on Thursday in terms of how they defended.

"Other than giving up more shots than we'd like to, I think it was harder to get to our net, harder to get cleaner looks," said centre John Tavares.

The Leafs struggled to break out against the Kings and were repeatedly hemmed in their own end. The Kings directed 87 shot attempts at the Leafs net with 37 hitting the target. Toronto mustered just 15 shots on net, the lowest total of the Berube era, on 33 attempts.

"I think second and third, we're defending too much," Tavares acknowledged. "We're on our heels."

Part of the focus at Toronto's practice on Friday was on breaking the puck out of the defensive end.

"We just all got to come back and be together," said Nylander. "Tape-to-tape passes, hold-ups [on] the forecheckers coming in, give the D some more time and make the game easy on each other."

"There's been periods of time where we've done it okay," said defenceman Morgan Rielly. "With the D, I think it starts with communication. We have a plan. We have systems in place. Depending on where the puck is, we have plans to fall back on. It's about executing, really. I think that's what it comes down to. You can be in the right spots. You can communicate. You can do everything right, but if you don't execute, it's going to lead to some breakdowns."

Berube feels a lack of confidence is causing some of those breakdowns.

"Confidence is a funny thing," Berube said. "You want to get your confidence back, you go and work and get it back. That's how you get your confidence back. Yeah, we're in adversity right now. Well, what are we going to do? We're going to go through that adversity, go through that wall, find a way to get through it, climb over the wall, whatever it is. You know, you've got to push your way through it as a team and every individual."

Rielly noted it's important to embrace the situation and view it as an opportunity to respond.

"It's not exactly the position you want to be in right now, but this is the challenge and it's fun," the longest-serving Leaf said.

Fun?

Rielly admits that's not the right word. But he stands by the sentiment.

"When you say you want to be an athlete and you want to go through ups and downs, this is the challenge," he said. "You're in the fight, and these games are important. It's a challenge right now. It's a grind. But, as an athlete, you've got to kind of appreciate that and be grateful that you're in a position where we believe in ourselves, and we're going to go out and work, and no one's going to do it for you. You've got to go out and do it. So that's how we're looking at it."

Nylander leads the Leafs in scoring (25 points in 15 games) and has hit the scoresheet in his last 12 games. But he's minus-two during the last four games and got an earful from Berube at the bench after being on the ice for the Kings' second goal in the second period.

"That shift in particular ended up being a long one," said Nylander, who had been on the ice for more than 90 seconds and struggled to cover anyone in the lead up to the goal. "It was the second period and, you know, couldn't get a change."

Nylander finished the game without a shot on net. It's only the third time he's been held without a shot this season.

With Matthews, the team's captain, sidelined, the Leafs had the chance to identify a new player to wear a letter on Thursday. It was Nylander, who wore an 'A', which was also the case when Rielly, an alternate captain, missed a game earlier in the year.

How can Nylander help lead the Leafs out of their current funk?

"I just try to talk and be positive," he said. "I think that's important in this kind of time. I mean, we will turn it around. We just got to have each other's backs."

Before the season, Berube urged Nylander to be more of a leader and the coach has seen growth in that area off the ice. However, there's still room for growth on the ice.

"A little bit more consistency," Berube said when asked what he's looking for from Nylander. "There's a lot of good, but then it's got a little bit inconsistent. So consistency and just staying with it and working."

Nylander is averaging 21:49 of ice time during the four game losing streak. Before this skid, he averaged 19:23 per game.

Defenceman Brandon Carlo missed Friday's practice with the team calling it a maintenance day.

Centre Scott Laughton, who has been out since taking a big hit from Zadorov last Saturday, participated in practice while wearing a red no-contact sweater.

Defenceman Chris Tanev is "trending in the right direction" in his recovery from an upper-body injury, Berube said.

"But it's going to be a bit," the coach added. "I don't know how long yet for him."

Saturday will mark two weeks since Tanev was stretchered off the ice in Philadelphia.

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