



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 28, 2025

The News & Observer

How Hurricanes defenseman K'Andre Miller fared in first game against former team

By: Chip Alexander

K'Andre Miller of the Carolina Hurricanes was swamped by the media Wednesday morning at Lenovo Center.

Understandable. The defenseman, for the first time in his NHL career, would be trying to beat the New York Rangers, the team that made him a first-round draft pick in 2018.

Miller, traded to Carolina in the offseason, was injured and not in the lineup Nov. 4 when the Canes played the Rangers at Madison Square Garden. The Canes shut out the Rangers that night in what would have been a triumphant return for Miller to an arena that was his home for the first five years of his career.

But the Rangers came to him Wednesday for the Metropolitan Division game as the Hurricanes began a seven-game homestand, and New York skated off with a 4-2 victory.

The Canes (14-7-2) got a power-play goal from defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere in the second period and a third-period score from winger Seth Jarvis, his 12th of the season. But the Rangers, a much better team on the road than at home this season, held on as goalie Igor Shesterkin was ultra sharp most of the night with 36 saves.

Noah Laba and Artemi Panarin each had goals for the Rangers, 10-4-1 away from New York, and Vincent Trocheck had the game-winner against his former team early in the third. Will Cuylle added an empty netter at the end to seal it.

After the morning slake Wednesday, Miller was asked if the game would be an emotional one, "Honestly, a lot," he said. "But I'm just trying to focus on hockey. I think it will be an emotional game, but I'm just looking forward to having a good game."

Miller, who had a team-high 24:08 in ice time, had a shot on his first shift and hit the post in the third with the Canes trailing, 3-1.

"I wanted that one," he said. "The puck's just not going in the net. We're getting our chances, getting shots, creating looks. Obviously they have a pretty good goalie over there who made some pretty good saves."

Miller, 25, was the 22nd overall pick in the 2018 NHL draft and made his NHL debut in the pandemic shortened 2020-21 season. He was in a Rangers uniform for 368 games over five seasons, a fixture on the New York blue line, often going head-to-head with the Hurricanes.

"Those were some of the best years of my life, and really where I got to grow as a human, as a hockey player, a person," Miller said Wednesday.

And then he left for Carolina. On July 1, as NHL free agency began, the Hurricanes announced they had acquired Miller in

a major sign-and-trade deal that sent conditional 2026 first- and second-round picks to New York along with defenseman Scott Morrow.

It was a long-term commitment between the Hurricanes and Miller — eight years, with an average annual payout of \$7.5 million. It sent ripples through the league and was considered a critical pickup for Carolina, which had veteran defensemen Brent Burns and Dmitry Orlov leave in free agency.

"Obviously, I knew what the summer might entail," Miller said Wednesday. "It was not unexpected. It was a little shocking to go through that experience."

Miller soon moved to Raleigh and began workouts with Canes defenseman Jalen Chatfield, preparing for his first season with his new team. An injury kept him out of the preseason games, but he could not have scripted his debut game with the Hurricanes any better.

In the season opener against the New Jersey Devils on Nov. 9, Miller scored twice in a 6-3 victory at the Lenovo Center, the second in quarterbacking the power play. He was named the game's first star, hearing the roars from Canes fans.

"Amazing," he said that night.

But Miller's first season has been disjointed, much like the Canes' season. He missed six straight games in late October and early November — the sixth at the Garden — as the Canes have had to deal with a string of injuries on the back end.

"He's been great. It's been everything we had hoped for," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Wednesday. "You kind of know the player from coaching against him, but you don't know what his impact can be.

"When he's on, he's an elite player. He's been a little nicked up his year, unfortunately, so we've missed him a little bit. But when he's going, feeling good, he's been really effective."

Miller, who has not scored a goal since opening night, has eight assists in his 16 games, averaging 22:51 in ice time. He had two assists in the 4-3 win over Winnipeg on the Canes' recent four-game road trip, his fourth multi-point game of the season.

Miller said he enjoys living in Raleigh, saying it has a "little bit different lifestyle" from the streets of New York. As for playing with the Canes and in Brind'Amour's system...

"It's been great," he said. "I think it fits my game tremendously. It was pretty easy for me to step into this system. I think I've done a good job of embracing a new challenge and new systems, and I feel more comfortable each game and with my confidence in the system."



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The Athletic

One thing each Carolina Hurricanes player is thankful for this season

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH, N.C. — Canadian Thanksgiving happened more than five weeks ago, but its American counterpart is on Thursday. With more than a quarter of the NHL season in the books, here's something each of the Hurricanes can be thankful for — besides Carolina's spot at the top of the Eastern Conference — so far in the 2025-26 campaign.

Sebastian Aho: Home stand

Aho quickly admitted that Carolina's early-season road trip was tougher than usual because it was the longest he had been away from his baby daughter. Now that the Hurricanes are back from a weeklong trip, he'll be able to settle in for more than two weeks and seven games in Raleigh — both at Lenovo Center and at home.

Frederik Andersen: Good health

It hasn't been the start to the season that Andersen would have envisioned. He's 5-5-2 with a sub-.900 save percentage and, according to Hockey-Reference, only three quality starts. Andersen has, however, remained available to the team. He's made double-digit starts in the season's first two months for the first time since 2021-22, his first season in Raleigh. There's time for him to get back to his normal self.

Jackson Blake: Doubters

Blake and Chicago's Frank Nazar faced some blowback after signing big-ticket deals despite having just one NHL season of experience each — 53 games, in Nazar's case. Whether that fueled Blake is for him to say, but his \$45 million contract already looks like a bargain. He's on pace for more than 20 goals and 55 points, and his new eight-year deal doesn't even start until next season.

Brandon Bussi: Maple Leafs

The Hurricanes claiming Bussi was a backup option should Cayden Primeau get claimed on waivers on his way to AHL Chicago. But when Toronto nabbed Primeau and when Pyotr Kochetkov got injured, Bussi suddenly became essential. He's seized his first NHL opportunity, going 5-1-0 with an .897 save percentage. And Carolina even got Primeau back and assigned him to the Wolves.

William Carrier: A perfect fit

Carrier missed nearly half of his first season in Raleigh with an injury and was knocked out of the lineup again early in this campaign before returning. When he's in the lineup, he's a perfect complement to Jordan Staal and Jordan Martinook on Carolina's third line. None of those players will ever be mistaken for point-per-game scorers, but the "Southern Comfort Line" grinds opponents' best players to dust night

after night. Carrier is battering ram of the trio, leading the team in hits per 60 minutes (10.89).

Jalen Chatfield: Teammates

The Hurricanes have a bit more bite this season, but more importantly, Carolina's players are standing up for each other. That's never been more evident than when captain Jordan Staal dropped the gloves — for the first time in 8 1/2 years — to come to Chatfield's defense after a hit by Minnesota's Tyler Pitlick concussed the Hurricanes defenseman. Those moments go a long way in a locker room, especially when it comes from your gentle giant.

Nikolaj Ehlers: Logan Stankoven and Jackson Blake

Ehlers struggled to click with Aho and Seth Jarvis early in the season — enter his current linemates, second-year jitterbugs Blake and Stankoven. The trio has quickly found chemistry, and Ehlers has looked every bit the \$8.5 million player while skating with his two new linemates. After going without a point in his first five games in red and black, Ehlers had 14 points in his next 17.

Shayne Gostisbehere: Even-strength scoring

Despite a reputation as Carolina's most offensive defenseman, Gostisbehere was last among the Hurricanes' top six blueliners in five-on-five scoring last season, finishing with 13 of his 45 points at five-on-five in 70 games. Despite missing nine of the first 22 games this season, he leads Carolina's defense with 14 points, and eight have already come at five-on-five — also the most on the blue line.

Taylor Hall: Points equaling wins

Hall is in a role that most former Hart Trophy winners and No. 1 draft picks don't find themselves in, logging fourth-line minutes. He's still finding ways to make a difference, and in the 10 games in which he recorded a point — he has five goals and 12 points through 22 games, in just over 14 minutes of ice time per night — the Hurricanes are 9-0-1.

Mark Jankowski: Shooting percentage

Jankowski stormed into Raleigh after last season's trade deadline and couldn't miss. He scored on six of his first eight shots on goal with the Hurricanes — including each of his first four — and finished the regular season with eight goals on 21 shots in 13 games with Carolina. He has only one goal in 13 games this season, but perhaps he just needs to fire away more — Jankowski has just seven shots on goal, meaning his career shooting percentage with the Hurricanes is still a gaudy 32.1 percent.

Seth Jarvis: Seven more lives

Perhaps Jarvis' nickname should be "The Cat" because it feels like he has nine lives this season. The fifth-year winger



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is on the cusp of stardom and is making a case for Canada's Olympic team, but he's also had a bit of luck. He left the Oct. 31 game against the Islanders after blocking a shot, and despite a dim prognosis from coach Rod Brind'Amour after the game, he was on the ice two days later against Boston. Then he took a stick to the eye from teammate Andrei Svechnikov on Nov. 14, exiting the game, but again didn't miss any more time.

Pyotr Kochetkov: Cracked door

If Kochetkov can stay out of the trainer's room, the door is open for him to grab the No. 1 job in net. Andersen has gotten off to a mediocre start, and Kochetkov is just seconds shy of having two shutouts in four starts this season. Even after giving up a very late goal in a 3-1 win over Boston, the Russian netminder is 4-0-0 with a .926 save percentage and 1.70 goals-against average.

Jesper Kotkaniemi: New role

Kotkaniemi's days as the Hurricanes' second-line center are over, but he's been effective in his new role. Kotkaniemi is pivoting arguably the league's best fourth line, with Eric Robinson and Hall, and he's also taken on some penalty-killing minutes this season. He's playing just over 10 minutes a night — not what you want out of a player with more than \$20 million coming to him over the next four seasons — but he's still sixth among Carolina forwards in points per 60 at five-on-five.

Charles Alexis Legault: Long career ahead

Legault's scary injury — he suffered sliced tendons in his right hand after inadvertently punching a skate during a Nov. 9 scrum in Toronto — was an unfortunate roadblock in the rookie's career. The 22-year-old had filled in admirably as the Hurricanes suffered injury after injury on defense, only to require surgery that will keep him out of the lineup for three to four months. The good news is that Legault, if he recovers fully, looks like another late-round find for Carolina.

Jordan Martinook: Yin-yang

If Staal is the Hurricanes' yin as its stoic leader, Martinook is the yang. Both have a bottomless work ethic that sets the tone for Carolina's style, but Martinook's never-ending energy — on the ice, in practice and in the locker room — makes him the team's glue guy. His partnership with Staal is a driving force behind the team's success.

K'Andre Miller: The right fit

Miller was practically run out of New York, blamed for the Rangers' issues that went well beyond him. He's already found a comfortable home in Raleigh. He has some of the best underlying numbers in hockey — he's second among defensemen (behind Gostisbehere) in the NHL in Corsi For percentage (63.24 percent) and ranks 32nd in the league in points per 60 in all situations among defensemen — and should only get better as he continues to adapt to his new team.

Alexander Nikishin: Language barrier

Brind'Amour has often said Nikishin's limited grasp of English is his biggest hurdle in filling his immense potential, but it might also be a gift. If Nikishin had read the social-media discourse about him, he'd probably be as frazzled as the Hurricanes' fan base every time his ice time dips a few

minutes, he sits out one game or goes another night without being on the power play. Instead, Nikishin is usually all smiles on the ice and in the locker room.

Joel Nystrom: Injuries

Injuries are a bad thing for any team, but Carolina's have at least been good for Nystrom. Most seventh-round picks don't get a peek at the NHL in their first season, and Nystrom also had just seven AHL games under his belt since coming over from Sweden. The Hurricanes' parade to the infirmary gave Nystrom an opportunity, and he's grabbed it. He looks poised, and the 23-year-old also has all the makings of a great fit for Carolina in the future — and, as it turns out, even the present.

Mike Reilly: Summer decision

Reilly was sidelined for a large chunk of last season after it was discovered he needed a heart procedure, which was done last November. That, and lineup decisions, limited him to 18 games. He signed with the Hurricanes in the offseason to be the team's No. 7 defender and has already played 19 games this season due to Carolina's rash of injuries on the blue line. He's shown he can contribute in all situations, which makes him valuable to the Hurricanes as they get healthy. It should also help him moving forward.

Eric Robinson: Hot hand

Robinson missed six games this season with an injury, but he's been able to convert his chances when in the lineup. After setting career highs in goals (14), assists (18) and points (32) last season, he re-signed with Carolina and has scored five times in 16 games this year. That has him on pace for more than 20 goals, though he's unlikely to continue scoring on a quarter of his shots. Still, he's provided valuable depth scoring as part of the Hurricanes' menacing fourth line.

Jacob Slavin: Olympics

Slavin's return from injury has been shrouded in a bit of mystery. He was wearing a knee sleeve in the offseason and then barely participated in training camp. He was shut down after the second game of the season and hasn't rejoined the team in practice yet. The Olympics, in February, give him a goal to work toward. Slavin did skate ahead of practice on Tuesday, but Carolina — and Team USA — will want him at full strength whenever he does return.

Jordan Staal: Fall feast

Staal is having his most productive scoring start in years, posting seven goals in his first 21 games. Carolina's captain hasn't scored that much in October and November since 2017-18, and the injury to Florida's Aleksander Barkov could open the door for a higher-scoring Staal to finally claim a long-deserved Selke Trophy. The Hurricanes will need to tighten up defensively and on the penalty kill for him to do it, but a 20-goal season would go a long way toward Staal making an even stronger case.

Logan Stankoven: Belief

Stankoven has been doubted plenty in his career — that's how it goes when you're the smallest player on the ice every night. Not only have Brind'Amour and the Hurricanes raved about the 22-year-old's constant motor, but they also showed their belief in him by giving him a shot at center. It wasn't that long ago that Brind'Amour thought Aho might not be big



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enough to play in the middle, so it must be a confidence boost for Stankoven that one of the best centers of a past era thinks he can handle the position — height be damned.

Andrei Svechnikov: Closed eyes

It's been a wild ride for Svechnikov this season. From his season-starting eight-game point drought, which pushed him to the fourth line, to a report that he wouldn't be opposed to a trade, the eight-year pro (can you believe that?) has dealt with plenty through 22 games. He said Tuesday he has a practical way of dealing with the noise: "You just close your eyes and play hockey." Back on the top line, Svechnikov has turned around his season. And while he blocks out anything

around him, he's also always willing to talk about his play — good or bad.

Sean Walker: Tire tread

Walker has handled an average of 23:23 of ice time per game this season as Carolina's workhorse among a bruised and battered blue line. That would be a lot to ask most 31-year-olds to do for the first time, but Walker doesn't have the wear and tear of most defensemen his age. While the Ryan Lindgrens and Ryan Graveses of the world — both younger than Walker — look worn out in the eighth season of their careers, Walker appears to be just getting warmed up in year 8.



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Shesterkin shines in Rangers' 4-2 win over Hurricanes | The North State Journal

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — The Rangers made the most of the Hurricanes' mistakes Wednesday night at Lenovo Center. Igor Shesterkin made sure Carolina couldn't take advantage of his team's errors.

Shesterkin had double-digit saves in all three periods, 36 in all, and the visiting Rangers handed the Hurricanes their second straight loss in a 4-2 decision.

"You can have 10 good shifts, but it's that one that you kind of let up, that's the one that costs you the game," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "So we have to eliminate those."

New York scored late in both the first and second periods to carry momentum into both intermissions, and the Hurricanes weren't able to dig out of the hole.

But it was the goal by former Hurricanes center Vincent Trocheck at the start of the third that proved to be the difference.

Leading 2-1 at the start of the final frame, the Rangers then added an insurance goal 45 seconds into the third after Artemi Panarin created space inside the Carolina blue line and set up Trocheck skating through the slot. He beat the glove of Frederik Andersen (14 saves) to make it 3-1.

"Just kind of took a little breather on the third one," Brind'Amour said. "One-on-three, we just kind of back in, and all sudden, again, you're giving the best players time. And that's not what we do. That ended up in the net, and that's kind of the game, right?"

Carolina found life late in the third when Shayne Gostisbehere passed up a shot in the slot and instead dished to Seth Jarvis in the left circle. He rattled the puck around the post over Shesterkin's right shoulder for his team-leading 12th goal of the season to bring the Hurricanes within one at 10:53 of the third.

But Carolina — thanks to a sterling performance by Shesterkin — couldn't get the equalizer, and New York added an empty netter by Will Cuyllé at 18:17 of the third.

"We're getting our looks," said Hurricanes defenseman K'Andre Miller, who was playing his first game against his old team. "It's not going to be as easy as, I guess, a snap of the fingers every night. So I think we're going to have to figure out ways to work for our chances and keep finding ways to put the puck in the back of the net."

That included the power play, where Carolina scored for the third straight game — getting a goal from Gostisbehere, his third of the year, to tie the game in the second period — but has yet to score twice in a game this season.

It had plenty of chances Wednesday but was unable to have a breakthrough night.

"You're going to go through stretches where it doesn't go well," Brind'Amour said, "but when it's going, you need to cash in a little more, and that's probably where we haven't succeeded."

New York opened the scoring in the first when an extended shift in the Carolina end resulted in Noah Laba curling into the right circle and unchecked. His shot, past a screen by the massive Adam Edstrom, found the far-side corner for his fourth goal of the year and a lead for the visitors.

Gostisbehere tied the game on the power play, assisted by Aho and Nikolaj Ehlers, but the Rangers reclaimed the lead by scoring again late in the period.

After Aho was thrown out of the faceoff circle in the Hurricanes zone, Trocheck won the draw against Andrei Svechnikov that led to Panarin's goal that made it 2-1.

"D zone faceoff with a minute to go, we blew the coverage, and you can't do that against that line," Brind'Amour said.

Still, the Hurricanes felt it was a step in the right direction after a stinker in Buffalo on Sunday.

"A couple errors here and there kind of cost us, Aho said. "But the way we played was a step in the right direction."

Notes: Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal missed his second straight game with an illness. ... Aho played his 700th career game. ... Aho had two assists. ... Rangers defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov played a game-high 27:07.



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Panarin and Shesterkin carry Rangers to 4-2 win over Hurricanes

By: WRAL

RALEIGH, N.C. — RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Artemi Panarin had a goal and an assist as the New York Rangers beat the Carolina Hurricanes 4-2 on Wednesday night.

Igor Shesterkin made 36 saves, stopping all 13 shots he faced in the first period. Noah Laba, Vincent Trocheck and Will Cuyllle also scored for the Rangers, who have won two in a row following a four-game skid.

Shayne Gostisbehere had a goal and an assist and Seth Jarvis also scored for the Hurricanes, who were coming off a 2-1-1 trip. Sebastian Aho, skating in his 700th career game, provided two assists and Frederik Andersen stopped 14 shots.

Carolina has lost two in a row for the first time since Oct. 25 and 28.

Panarin put New York ahead for good, making it 2-1 with 1:04 left in the second period. He has 12 points in his last nine games.

The Rangers produced goals on three of their first 14 shots.

Trocheck scored 45 seconds into the third against his former team to push New York ahead 3-1. Jarvis' team-leading 12th goal pulled Carolina to 3-2 with 9:07 remaining. Cuyllle had an empty-net goal with 1:43 to play.

There was 3:07 left in the first period when the Rangers managed their third shot on goal, but Laba made it count for a 1-0 lead.

It took the Hurricanes more than five minutes of the second period to get their first shot, with Gostisbehere converting on a power play to tie it 1-all. He has scored in back-to-back games for the first time since October 2024.

The Hurricanes played for the second consecutive game without captain Jordan Staal, who is out with an illness.

Rangers: Friday at Boston.

Hurricanes: Friday at home vs. Winnipeg.

Hurricanes players team up with Triangle food banks to distribute Thanksgiving meals

By: WRAL Staff

Carolina Hurricanes players Jaccob Slavin, Jordan Martinook and Sebastian Aho volunteered on Tuesday to help distribute pre-packed Thanksgiving meal kits to central North Carolina families in need.

Carolina Hurricanes fill the fridge for needy ahead of Thanksgiving

The Carolina Hurricanes helped distribute Thanksgiving meals to people in need on Tuesday.

Defenseman Jaccob Slavin along with forwards Jordan Martinook and Sebastian Aho scored the assist with meal distribution at Lenovo Center.

Other WRAL Top Stories

"We obviously get to hand out meals for people, which is the number one thing," Martinook said. "We don't want anyone to not have food on Thanksgiving. I think it's important for everyone to have a nice meal."

Tuesday's distribution helps families in need through the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, Helping Hand Mission, Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, Raleigh Rescue Mission, Urban Ministries of Wake County, The Raleigh Dream Center and Table NC.

The Carolina Hurricanes Foundation, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) and US Foods helped provide support for the meal kits.

'Hockey for the Holidays'

WRAL will air two Carolina Hurricanes games in the coming weeks:

Wednesday, Nov. 26 at 7 p.m. on WRAL (5.1) – New York Rangers @ Carolina Hurricanes

Saturday, Dec. 27 at 7 p.m. on WRAL (5.1) – Detroit Red Wings @ Carolina Hurricanes

It marks the third consecutive year, these free, over-the-air broadcasts will deliver the electric atmosphere of Hurricanes hockey directly to homes across the Carolinas.

The cost of a Thanksgiving meal

The cost of turkey, especially the large, frozen ones common in the Thanksgiving spread is rising faster than inflation, bumping the price of the holiday feast overall.

5 On Your Side found the cheapest price for turkey at Walmart or Food Lion, so it pays to shop around.

Even if you have yet to buy the bird, WRAL SmartShopper has found deals available this week where prices are under \$1 per pound.

If you prefer to get your whole meal in one place, Food Lion serves up turkey, potatoes, green beans, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie for just about \$26.



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Preview: November 28 vs. Winnipeg

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Canes and Jets meet for the second consecutive Friday

RALEIGH, N.C - The Carolina Hurricanes continue their season-long seven-game home stand on Friday, hosting the Winnipeg Jets at Lenovo Center.

When: Friday, Nov. 28

Puck Drop: 5:00 p.m. ET

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

Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes App

Canes Record: 14-7-2 (30 Points, 2nd - Metropolitan Division)

Canes Last Game: 4-2 Loss to the New York Rangers on Wednesday, Nov. 26

Jets Record: 12-10-0 (24 Points, 6th - Central Division)

Jets Last Game: 4-3 Loss to the Washington Capitals on Wednesday, Nov. 26

Last Time Out...

A few mistakes cost the Canes on Wednesday, falling to the New York Rangers at home by a score of 4-2.

Shayne Gostisbehere scored for a second consecutive game, and Seth Jarvis scored his team-leading 12th of the season.

Carolina played without captain Jordan Staal, who missed a second contest in a row due to illness.

Igor Shesterkin stopped 36 out of 38 for the Rangers, while Frederik Andersen moved to 0-3-2 in his last five outings.

Powering Up..

For the first time this season, the Hurricanes have tallied power-play goals in three straight games. Operating at a 25% clip (3-for-12) in that span, it's a sign that the much-maligned man-advantage units may be finding their stride, even with some remaining room for improvement.

"It's been good for a while. Again, it doesn't get probably (the credit) it should," said Rod Brind'Amour after Wednesday's loss. "You're all around it, you deserve probably a little more out of it when we're playing well, and then you're going to go through stretches where it doesn't go well. But when it's going, you need to cash in a little more, and that's probably where we haven't succeeded."

One key to the recent success? Shayne Gostisbehere, who has notched Carolina's last two PPGs and co-leads NHL defensemen in power-play scoring since Nov. 21. Now up to 16 points in 14 games, Gostisbehere is one of just four NHL blueliners averaging a point per game (min. 10 GP).

In Net...

Should the Canes elect to continue rotating their netminders, today would be Brandon Bussi's turn, as Pyotr Kochetkov has not been "feeling right" over the last few days, and Frederik Andersen started on Wednesday against New York.

Bussi is 5-1 through his first six NHL starts. He's won his last three outings, coming over the Islanders, Maple Leafs, and the Jets just last week.

Conversely, the Canes could opt to go back to Andersen, who had a day between games.

On The Other Side...

Arriving in Raleigh after three straight losses, the Jets are 3-7-0 in their last 10 games.

Despite their recent struggles, they've received a stellar start to their season from defenseman Josh Morrissey. Logging 24:36 per night, his 23 points only trail Cale Makar (30) for the most by a blueliner in the NHL.

In net, Eric Comrie and Thomas Milic carry the load with Connor Hellebuyck out due to injury. Comrie is 4-3, while Milic's first appearance will be his NHL debut.

Injury Updates...

Forward Jordan Staal missed the team's last two games with an illness. He skated during the team's optional practice on Thursday.

Goaltender Pyotr Kochetkov was scheduled to start on Nov. 21 in Winnipeg, but "didn't feel right" at morning skate. He has not dressed since then and is not expected to take part in tonight's tilt, with Brind'Amour noting on Nov. 25 that



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it's a similar ailment to the one Kochetkov dealt with earlier in the year.

Forward Jesperi Kotkaniemi left the game on Nov. 14 with a lower-body concern. Rod Brind'Amour said on Nov. 15 that the injury is not considered long-term, though Kotkaniemi was placed on IR on Nov. 25. He resumed skating with the team in a no-contact jersey on Nov. 26.

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.

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 BLACK uniforms for the contest. To view the team's full 2025-26 uniform schedule, [click here](#).

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes will practice on Saturday. They'll then host the Calgary Flames for a 5 p.m. Sunday showdown.

Next Game: Sunday, Nov. 30 vs. Calgary | 5:00 p.m. ET | [First Responders Night](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



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AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Panarin and Shesterkin carry Rangers to 4-2 win over Hurricanes | AP News

By: Bob Sutton

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There was 3:07 left in the first period when the Rangers managed their third shot on goal, but Laba made it count for a 1-0 lead.

It took the Hurricanes more than five minutes of the second period to get their first shot, with Gostisbehere converting on a power play to tie it 1-all. He has scored in back-to-back games for the first time since October 2024.

The Hurricanes played for the second consecutive game without captain Jordan Staal, who is out with an illness.

Up next

Rangers: Friday at Boston.

Hurricanes: Friday at home vs. Winnipeg.



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NHL Power Rankings: New 1-32 poll, reasons for hope for all - ESPN

By: ESPN staff

Stop us if you've heard this before, but ESPN's panel of reporters, analysts and broadcasters continues to believe the Colorado Avalanche are the top team in the league in the weekly Power Rankings vote.

Beyond No. 1, there were some major swings this week, with the Tampa Bay Lightning, Minnesota Wild and Los Angeles Kings making a jump, while the Pittsburgh Penguins, Winnipeg Jets and Chicago Blackhawks fell.

But this is a time for thanks and positive vibes. So for each team, we've pulled a reason for hope out of the quarter-season grades story published earlier this week, with insights on the Western teams from Ryan S. Clark, and the East from Kristen Shilton.

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.

Note: Previous ranking for each team refers to the previous edition, published Nov. 21. Points percentages are through Thursday's games.

1. Colorado Avalanche

Previous ranking: 1

Points percentage: 84.8%

Reason for hope: Nathan MacKinnon is in a position to win his second Hart Trophy. Cale Makar could win his third Norris Trophy -- and could challenge MacKinnon for the Hart. They now appear to have the supporting cast capable of providing consistent contributions. The Avs might be the best team in the NHL. And at their current pace, they could threaten, if not surpass, the Bruins' record of 135 regular-season points set in 2022-23.

Next seven days: @ MIN (Nov. 28), vs. MTL (Nov. 29), vs. VAN (Dec. 2), @ NYI (Dec. 4)

2. Dallas Stars

Previous ranking: 4

Points percentage: 70.8%

Reason for hope: Glen Gulutzan's second stint in charge of the Stars could be defined by perspective. There are some questions why the Stars are in the bottom 10 in scoring chances per 60 minutes, shots per 60 and high-danger scoring chances per 60. But there are also those who would argue that maybe it's just a sign of efficiency. The Stars have the NHL's No. 2 power-play unit, and are also 10th in goals per game.

Next seven days: vs. UTA (Nov. 28), vs. OTT (Nov. 30), @ NYR (Dec. 2), @ NJ (Dec. 3)

3. Carolina Hurricanes

Previous ranking: 2

Points percentage: 65.2%

Reason for hope: The Hurricanes thrive in coach Rod Brind'Amour's structure that emphasizes smothering defensive play. Their offense has really excelled this season, though, ranking second overall thanks to a potent Seth Jarvis (who leads the team in goals) a slippery Sebastian Aho (pacing Carolina in points) and the always-steady Jordan Staal. Goaltender Pyotr Kochetkov has been excellent in net amid starter Frederik Andersen's tough start. Overall, the Hurricanes are deep, detailed and disciplined.

Next seven days: vs. WPG (Nov. 28), vs. CGY (Nov. 30), vs. TOR (Dec. 4)

4. Anaheim Ducks

Previous ranking: 3

Points percentage: 63%

Reason for hope: The strongest indication of just how well the Ducks are doing this season is Leo Carlsson's projected scoring pace. A Ducks player has finished with more than 100 points in a season only four times in franchise history. Carlsson is not only on pace to join a list with Paul Kariya and Teemu Selanne, but he's projected to finish with 108 points. That places Carlsson in a position to have one of the best individual seasons in team history, and threaten Selanne's franchise record of 109 points.

Next seven days: vs. LA (Nov. 28), @ CHI (Nov. 30), @ STL (Dec. 1), vs. UTA (Dec. 3)

play

0:53

Leo Carlsson tallies goal vs. Canucks

Leo Carlsson nets goal for Ducks

5. Tampa Bay Lightning

Previous ranking: 13

Points percentage: 65.2%

Reason for hope: Regardless of what a season throws at them, this team adjusts to its circumstances and remains dangerous. Jake Guentzel and Nikita Kucherov pack a one-two punch up front to lead the offense, and Guentzel's performance has been particularly strong this season while the Lightning's depth has been under the microscope. The



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Lightning also have Anthony Cirelli as an archetypal 200-foot center, and Victor Hedman can still go toe-to-toe to be among the league's best defenders. The Lightning are a solid defensive group and dominate on the penalty kill.

Next seven days: @ DET (Nov. 28), @ NYR (Nov. 29), @ NYI (Dec. 2), vs. PIT (Dec. 4)

6. New Jersey Devils

Previous ranking: 5

Points percentage: 67.4%

Reason for hope: New Jersey's star-studded offense has been producing at a solid rate this season; Jack Hughes had 20 points through 17 games, Jesper Bratt had 21 through 21 and Nico Hischier is still capable of being one of the league's premier two-way centers. The Devils' goaltending is another strength because of veteran Jake Allen, who has been excellent handling an increased workload this season. Meanwhile, defenseman Simon Nemec has blossomed after taking a bit longer to hit his stride than some expected after he went No. 2 in the 2022 draft. He has taken on a heavy workload, and that has only amplified how good he can be in the Devils' own end as well as jumping into the rush.

Next seven days: @ BUF (Nov. 28), vs. PHI (Nov. 29), vs. CBJ (Dec. 1), vs. DAL (Dec. 3)

7. Vegas Golden Knights

Previous ranking: 7

Points percentage: 60.9%

Reason for hope: There was a strong belief the Golden Knights were going to score many goals this season -- and they have. Losing their No. 1 defenseman in Alex Pietrangolo as he recovers from a bilateral femur reconstruction raised questions, but they've used the first quarter to establish themselves as one of the more consistent defensive structures in the NHL. The Golden Knights have been a top-three team this season in shots per 60 and limiting high-danger scoring chances per 60.

Next seven days: vs. MTL (Nov. 28), vs. SJ (Nov. 29), vs. CHI (Dec. 2)

8. Minnesota Wild

Previous ranking: 19

Points percentage: 62.5%

Reason for hope: Being able to consistently field the same roster. The Wild had one of the best starts of any team last season, but injuries forced them to fight just to grab a wild-card spot. To be clear, this season has had its challenges. But the Wild have had eight players appear in all 23 games, and 13 of their skaters have played in at least 20. The impact of that has been reflected in their defensive core: Three of the top four defensemen in terms of average ice time have played in every game, and Jonas Brodin has sat out only one.

Next seven days: vs. COL (Nov. 28), vs. BUF (Nov. 29), @ EDM (Dec. 2), @ CGY (Dec. 4)

9. Los Angeles Kings

Previous ranking: 11

Points percentage: 60.9%

Reason for hope: Playoff teams are going to be judged on what allowed them to win and/or be eliminated. Giving up 20 goals over the final four games of their first-round series against the Oilers -- after having a 2-0 series lead -- created quite a few questions about the Kings entering the offseason. Among the items that came into question was their defensive structure. They'll probably need to wait until the playoffs to definitively answer any of the questions after four straight first-round exits. But the way they've started the season -- allowing the fifth-fewest goals per game -- has at least suggested that they're adept at playing close games.

Next seven days: @ ANA (Nov. 28), vs. VAN (Nov. 29), vs. WSH (Dec. 2), vs. CHI (Dec. 4)

10. New York Islanders

Previous ranking: 12

Points percentage: 58.3%

Reason for hope: Matthew Schaefer. The rookie defenseman has been better than advertised after New York selected him No. 1 in the 2025 draft. Schaefer is electric at both ends of the ice and takes on important minutes (over 22 per game) that shows how much confidence coach Patrick Roy already has in the Calder Trophy favorite. And he's not the only exciting rookie that has Islanders fans buzzing. Maxim Shabanov delivered a breakout three-point performance to cap off a recent 6-1-0 trip, illustrating why New York coveted the former KHL player (and why he's likely to earn a promotion from the fourth line).

Next seven days: vs. PHI (Nov. 28), vs. WSH (Nov. 30), vs. TB (Dec. 2), vs. COL (Dec. 4)

play

0:56

Matthew Schaefer makes NHL history with OT winner for Islanders

Matthew Schaefer becomes the youngest player in NHL history to score an overtime goal in the regular season.

11. Seattle Kraken

Previous ranking: 16

Points percentage: 60.9%

Reason for hope: Natural Stat Trick's metrics show that the Kraken were leading the NHL in team save percentage in 5-on-5 play earlier this week, and were tied for fourth in team save percentage in all situations. Joey Daccord, Philipp Grubauer and Matt Murray have provided continuity in net, which has complemented the Kraken's defensive structure. In Lane Lambert's first season as coach, the Kraken have been among the stronger teams in the NHL at limiting high-danger scoring chances per 60 and scoring chances per 60 in 5-on-5 play.

Next seven days: vs. EDM (Nov. 29), @ EDM (Dec. 4)

12. Washington Capitals

Previous ranking: 20

Points percentage: 58.3%



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Reason for hope: Washington has Alex Ovechkin still playing premier hockey into his 40s. That simply can't be taken for granted. The Capitals' captain tied for the team lead with 20 points in his first 20 games, and also added another hat trick earlier this month. He's not the only veteran contributing for Washington -- Tom Wilson, John Carlson and Jakob Chychrun have all been difference-makers in D.C. Goaltender Logan Thompson also has been outstanding, ranking among the league's top starters in save percentage and goals-against average.

Next seven days: vs. TOR (Nov. 28), @ NYI (Nov. 30), @ LA (Dec. 2), @ SJ (Dec. 3)

13. Utah Mammoth

Previous ranking: 17

Points percentage: 56.3%

Reason for hope: There has been enough of a sample size that proves the Mammoth could have something good with their current roster. They opened the regular season winning eight of 10 games, including a seven-game winning streak. One reason they were in the top five in goals allowed per game in that span is their top-five status in shots allowed per game. They were also in the top five in shots per game and goals scored per game.

Next seven days: @ DAL (Nov. 28), @ STL (Nov. 29), @ SJ (Dec. 1), @ ANA (Dec. 3)

14. Detroit Red Wings

Previous ranking: 10

Points percentage: 56.3%

Reason for hope: Detroit is having its best start in a decade, and it's not for one reason in particular. This is a group effort delivering on GM Steve Yzerman's vision for the Red Wings as a high-skilled, defensively responsible team. Coach Todd McLellan is maximizing Detroit's potential in his first full season. The defensive buy-in isn't only reflected in stats -- such as how the Red Wings average among the fewest shots against per game this season -- but in how skaters such as Dylan Larkin are thriving. The Red Wings' captain leads the team in goals and points and has provided invaluable leadership to equally impressive rookie forwards Emmitt Finnin and Nate Danielson.

Next seven days: vs. TB (Nov. 28), @ BOS (Nov. 29), vs. BOS (Dec. 2), @ CBJ (Dec. 4)

15. Pittsburgh Penguins

Previous ranking: 8

Points percentage: 61.4%

Reason for hope: This is a different Penguins team under first-year coach Dan Muse, who is pushing all the right buttons. Muse's system brings out the best in Pittsburgh's skaters by giving them freedom to operate, and that has paid off in the Penguins' growing confidence. Pittsburgh is giving up the second-fewest goals this season, ranks in the top 10 offensively and has the league's best power play. The Penguins' goaltending has benefited from the emergence of Arturs Silovs and an improved Tristan Jarry. Basically, it has been all systems go for Pittsburgh.

Next seven days: @ CBJ (Nov. 28), vs. TOR (Nov. 29), @ PHI (Dec. 1), @ TB (Dec. 4)

16. Ottawa Senators

Previous ranking: 18

Points percentage: 60.9%

Reason for hope: Ottawa got off to a shaky start before recommitting to coach Travis Green's defensive structure. That shift has been a game-changer, as the Senators staked their claim among the Atlantic's top three clubs. The Senators are allowing the third-fewest shots per game this season, and their goals-against average has trended downward since adapting that new mindset in late October. Ottawa hasn't had trouble scoring with Drake Batherson (who leads the Sens with 19 points in 17 games), Tim Stutzle and Shane Pinto all contributing regularly. Jake Sanderson continues to be a revelation at both ends for Ottawa, and that has been especially impactful after captain Brady Tkachuk was sidelined by an early-season injury.

Next seven days: @ STL (Nov. 28), @ DAL (Nov. 30), @ MTL (Dec. 2), vs. NYR (Dec. 4)

play

0:16

Pinto's lone goal in the shootout wins it for Senators

Pinto's lone goal in the shootout wins it for Senators

17. Montreal Canadiens

Previous ranking: 15

Points percentage: 61.4%

Reason for hope: Montreal didn't think rookie goalie Jakub Dobes would be the backbone to their early-season success, but the rising star became exactly that by outperforming starter Sam Montembeault as one of the league's breakout netminders. Dobes has been aided by the Canadiens' more consistent defensive effort. The Habs didn't pay enough attention on that end of the ice last season, and it hurt them. Now, the Canadiens have been stronger through the neutral zone and played with tighter gaps to limit rush chances. The Canadiens' top skaters have also delivered, with Cole Caufield already notching 13 goals and Nick Suzuki compiling 22 points in his first 20 games.

Next seven days: @ VGK (Nov. 28), @ COL (Nov. 29), vs. OTT (Dec. 2), vs. WPG (Dec. 3)

18. Winnipeg Jets

Previous ranking: 6

Points percentage: 54.6%

Reason for hope: The Jets can score goals, sometimes in bulk. They can get those goals from different line combinations and defense pairings in ways that many other teams can't. That nicely complements the contributions of Kyle Connor, Josh Morrissey and Mark Scheifele, who are each averaging more than a point per game. It's a key reason behind their top-12 status in goals per game and top-10 power play. Knowing they can generate goals at a high rate could prove useful upon the news that three-time Vezina winner Connor Hellebuyck could sit out up to six weeks.



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Next seven days: @ CAR (Nov. 28), @ NSH (Nov. 29), @ BUF (Dec. 1), @ MTL (Dec. 3)

19. Florida Panthers

Previous ranking: 21

Points percentage: 54.4%

Reason for hope: Florida has proved depth and resiliency can be a weapon. Or at least a helpful tool. The Panthers are adaptive in the face of injury woes, and that next-man-up mentality could see them through as it has in the past. Florida is getting some of Brad Marchand's best hockey in years as the team's goals and points leader, complementing strong starts from Sam Reinhart and Anton Lundell. The Panthers can seemingly weather a storm better than most thanks to ... well, you know, being back-to-back Stanley Cup champions and all, and the confidence that comes with it.

Next seven days: vs. CGY (Nov. 28), vs. TOR (Dec. 2), vs. NSH (Dec. 4)

20. Chicago Blackhawks

Previous ranking: 9

Points percentage: 54.4%

Reason for hope: The questions about Connor Bedard have been replaced with another set of questions: Will he make Canada's Olympic team while also possibly winning a scoring title? Bedard is on pace for 116 points, and if that holds, it'll be the highest-scoring season of any Blackhawks player not named Denis Savard. Plus, any of the concerns about their veterans' struggles from last season have been erased this season. Though Bedard is generating a lot of attention, the goaltending could signify just how much has changed with the Blackhawks from last season. They finished with a team save percentage of .894 in 2024-25, but have begun this season with a .911 mark through 22 games, tied for fourth in the NHL. Spencer Knight is presenting his case for why he could be under Olympic consideration for Team USA.

Next seven days: vs. NSH (Nov. 28), vs. ANA (Nov. 30), @ VGK (Dec. 2), @ LA (Dec. 4)

21. Philadelphia Flyers

Previous ranking: 22

Points percentage: 61.4%

Reason for hope: Rick Tocchet's group is finding ways to win hockey games with solid defensive play -- they've hovered near the top 10 in goals against per game. That has rubbed off on the Flyers' penalty kill, too, which is near the top of the league. Goaltender Dan Vladar has been a surprisingly reliable starter, going from a tandem option with Samuel Ersson to the backbone of Philadelphia's defense. Another pillar is defenseman Travis Sanheim, who has been in superb command of the Flyers' blue line. And up front, Trevor Zegras -- acquired in the offseason to bolster Philadelphia's center depth -- is averaging over a point per game to lead the Flyers' offense along with Travis Konecny.

Next seven days: @ NYI (Nov. 28), @ NJ (Nov. 29), vs. PIT (Dec. 1), vs. BUF (Dec. 3)

play

0:44

Flyers score 3 goals in 26 seconds to go up 4-1

Matvei Michkov scores and Tyson Foerster nets a pair in a 26-second span to give the Flyers a 4-1 lead.

22. Boston Bruins

Previous ranking: 14

Points percentage: 56%

Reason for hope: Full credit to first-year coach Marco Sturm for implementing a defense-first structure that Boston has embraced enough to mitigate some of the sting from top center Elias Lindholm sitting out most of this season because of a lower-body injury. Defenseman Nikita Zadorov has been particularly strong, bringing a bruising presence to the Bruins' blue line. Boston has also benefited from Jeremy Swayman's return to form this season, and the team is top-10 on both the power play and penalty kill. The Bruins weren't expected to be a powerhouse up front, but David Pastrnak has been his usual dynamic self and Morgan Geekie is a budding offensive star.

Next seven days: vs. NYR (Nov. 28), vs. DET (Nov. 29), @ DET (Dec. 2), vs. STL (Dec. 4)

23. San Jose Sharks

Previous ranking: 26

Points percentage: 52.1%

Reason for hope: Their current projection has them on pace to finish with more than 80 points for the first time since the 2018-19 season, which was also their last playoff appearance. They've seen progress from their young core of Yaroslav Askarov, William Eklund and Will Smith, while their veterans continue to help in ways that can and can't be measured. Then there's an entirely different conversation that can be had about Macklin Celebrini. Celebrini, who is among the league leaders in points, could be playing his way on to Canada's Olympic team. He's currently on pace for 121 points, and if that holds, he'd surpass Joe Thornton (his landlord) for the most in a single season (114) in franchise history.

Next seven days: vs. VAN (Nov. 28), @ VGK (Nov. 29), vs. UTA (Dec. 1), vs. WSH (Dec. 3)

24. Columbus Blue Jackets

Previous ranking: 23

Points percentage: 54.2%

Reason for hope: Columbus can always count on Zach Werenski to deliver, and the Blue Jackets' best player has been exactly that to start the season. Werenski is tied for the second-most points on the team -- having notched his 400th career point earlier this month -- and plays nearly 27 minutes per game. Up front, it's Kirill Marchenko, Dmitri Voronkov and Adam Fantilli showcasing how promising Columbus' present and future are on offense, as those young skaters continue to grow and mature. The Blue Jackets have had notable scoring success at 5-on-5 as well thanks to one of the league's best attacks on the rush.

Next seven days: vs. PIT (Nov. 28), @ NJ (Dec. 1), vs. DET (Dec. 4)



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25. Edmonton Oilers

Previous ranking: 25

Points percentage: 50%

Reason for hope: Leon Draisaitl and Connor McDavid are both averaging more than a point per game, while others such as Evan Bouchard, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Jack Roslovic have also made offensive contributions for the Oilers. The two-time defending Western Conference champions have done this before. They've had slow starts -- some even slower than what they've encountered this season -- and have still reached the Stanley Cup Final.

Next seven days: @ SEA (Nov. 29), vs. MIN (Dec. 2), vs. SEA (Dec. 4)

play

0:38

Jack Roslovic scores goal vs. Stars

Jack Roslovic scores goal vs. Stars

26. New York Rangers

Previous ranking: 24

Points percentage: 52%

Reason for hope: New York is a superior defensive team under first-year coach Mike Sullivan, and that has kept them afloat. The Rangers are one of the NHL's stingiest teams -- averaging 2.65 goals against -- and that's a credit to many of New York's skaters playing some of the best defense of their careers. And of course the offseason addition of Vladislav Gavrikov changed the narrative there, too; the big-bodied defender has been a strong partner for Adam Fox, anchoring the Rangers' blue line. Igor Shesterkin and Jonathan Quick have been a terrific goaltending tandem for the Blueshirts as well.

Next seven days: @ BOS (Nov. 28), vs. TB (Nov. 29), vs. DAL (Dec. 2), @ OTT (Dec. 4)

27. Buffalo Sabres

Previous ranking: 29

Points percentage: 47.8%

Reason for hope: Buffalo found a potential hidden gem in goaltender Colten Ellis. The Sabres claimed Ellis off waivers from St. Louis in October, and he has stepped in recently to help stabilize Buffalo in net. Ellis was 3-1-0 in his first four games, with a .914 save percentage, earning a longer look in the starter's role and providing a bright spot amid an otherwise difficult season. Josh Doan is another new face that has fit in well, playing over 15 minutes per game and notching 12 points in his first 20 games.

Next seven days: vs. NJ (Nov. 28), @ MIN (Nov. 29), vs. WPG (Dec. 1), @ PHI (Dec. 3)

28. Toronto Maple Leafs

Previous ranking: 27

Points percentage: 50%

Reason for hope: Toronto could not have anticipated John Tavares turning back the clock. That's the case, though, and

a good thing, too, because Tavares -- along with William Nylander -- has been powering the Leafs' success up front. Tavares' 12 goals in his first 21 games ranked in the top 10 in the NHL, and Nylander had 27 points in his first 19 games. Nick Robertson is also a surprise standout with a regular top-six role. Toronto has managed to rank top-five in goals scored and second in 5-on-5 goals. The Leafs recently welcomed Joseph Woll back after he dealt with a personal issue to start the season, and the netminder has barely missed a beat, stepping in as Toronto's No. 1 goalie.

Next seven days: @ WSH (Nov. 28), @ PIT (Nov. 29), @ FLA (Dec. 2), @ CAR (Dec. 4)

29. St. Louis Blues

Previous ranking: 30

Points percentage: 43.8%

Reason for hope: They're among the best teams in the NHL at limiting scoring chances. They are among the top 10 in scoring chances allowed and high-danger scoring chances allowed per 60.

Next seven days: vs. OTT (Nov. 28), vs. UTA (Nov. 29), vs. ANA (Dec. 1), @ BOS (Dec. 4)

30. Vancouver Canucks

Previous ranking: 28

Points percentage: 45.8%

Reason for hope: Winning four of their first six games. That window provided a glimpse into how a healthy version of the Canucks could function. A fully healthy Thatcher Demko looked like the version of himself who was a Vezina Trophy finalist in 2023-24. Filip Chytil scored three goals during that stretch and was starting to answer questions about whether he could find consistency as a top-six center. There was also the continued emergence of Kiefer Sherwood, who went from 19 goals in his first season with the Canucks to scoring four times in those first six games and nine goals for the month.

Next seven days: @ SJ (Nov. 28), @ LA (Nov. 29), @ COL (Dec. 2)

31. Calgary Flames

Previous ranking: 32

Points percentage: 38%

Reason for hope: Being in contention for the worst record in the NHL usually comes with a porous defensive structure. Unless it's the Flames, apparently. Their defense would be the hallmark of a team that's trying to make a push for a playoff spot. They're in the top four in scoring chances allowed per 60 and high-danger scoring chances allowed per 60. The Flames are also 13th in shots allowed per 60.

Next seven days: @ FLA (Nov. 28), @ CAR (Nov. 30), @ NSH (Dec. 2), vs. MIN (Dec. 4)

32. Nashville Predators

Previous ranking: 31

Points percentage: 39.1%



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Reason for hope: Well, they have an above-league-average penalty kill. So there's that at least. Filip Forsberg is continuing to build on his legacy as the best forward in franchise history. He's projected to reach the 30-goal mark for the fourth time in the past five seasons and the fifth time in his career. Plus, Matthew Wood is presenting a strong

case to make the All-Rookie Team and potentially be a Calder Trophy finalist.

Next seven days: @ CHI (Nov. 28), vs. WPG (Nov. 29), vs. CGY (Dec. 2), @ FLA (Dec. 4)



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NHL power ratings: Avalanche continue to dominate after Week 7 of 2025-26 season

By: Scott Erskine

In late October, the Colorado Avalanche endured a four-game stretch during which they failed to record a victory. In that span, they lost twice in overtime, once in a shootout and suffered their lone regulation defeat of the 2025-26 NHL season to date - a 3-2 setback against the Boston Bruins on Oct. 25 in Beantown.

That period seems as if it was a lifetime ago, as Colorado has gone 12-0-1 since. The Avalanche (17-1-5) won all four of their contests last week and enter Week 8, which will run from Friday to Monday, with a 10-game winning streak.

The Tampa Bay Lightning and Minnesota Wild also went undefeated in a Week 7 that spanned 10 days, with the former going 5-0-0 and the latter 4-0-0. The Washington Capitals had an impressive week of their own, winning five of their six games.

Conversely, Week 7 was unkind to a number of teams, including the Chicago Blackhawks. After going 4-0-1 over the previous two weeks, the Blackhawks recorded just one victory while suffering three regulation losses and falling once in overtime during Week 7. Thanks to the rough patch, Chicago dropped out of this week's top 10 ratings.

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

Let's dive into the power ratings after Week 7 of the 2025-26 NHL season and highlight a few of the teams' notable accomplishments.

NHL Week 7 power ratings

1. Colorado Avalanche (4-0-0 in Week 7; 17-1-5 overall)

Not only did the Avalanche continue to show that they have the most potent offense in the NHL last week, they demonstrated their ability to keep their opponents at bay. Colorado scored six times in two of its four victories, increasing its league-leading total to 94 goals. The team also finished the week with three consecutive shutouts, with Mackenzie Blackwood sandwiching 35 and 26-save performances against the Nashville Predators and San Jose Sharks, respectively, around Scott Wedgewood's 22-save effort against the Blackhawks. Wedgewood also registered his first career assist in the Avalanche's 6-3 win against the New York Rangers. Nathan MacKinnon was kept off the scoresheet for just the fourth time this season in Colorado's 1-0 triumph over Chicago but finished the week with four goals and two assists. The 2024 Hart Trophy winner leads

the league with 18 goals and 39 points while Cale Makar, who netted three tallies and set up two others, tops all NHL defensemen in goals (nine), assists (21) and points (30).

2. Dallas Stars (3-1-1; 15-5-4)

Dallas began Week 7 with a 3-2 setback against the New York Islanders that ended its five-game winning streak but earned points in each of its next four contests, going 3-0-1. Jason Robertson had a huge week, tallying in each of the Stars' first four outings of the week to extend his goal-scoring streak to seven games, which tied him with Bill Goldsworthy (1970-71), Neal Broten (1981-82) and Dave Gagner (1992-93) for the second-longest run in franchise history behind Brian Bellows' 10-gamer in 1989-90. The 26-year-old Robertson was kept off the scoresheet in Dallas' 3-2 triumph over the Seattle Kraken on Wednesday, halting both the goal-scoring streak and the eight-game point run during which he collected 11 tallies and seven assists. Tyler Seguin collected seven assists last week, while captain Jamie Benn returned to the lineup and recorded a goal and three assists in five games after missing the Stars' first 19 contests due to a collapsed lung.

3. Tampa Bay Lightning (5-0-0; 14-7-2)

Don't look now, but the Lightning have soared to the top of the Atlantic Division thanks to their perfect week. In fact, after winning just one of its first seven games this season (1-4-2), Tampa Bay has been one of the best teams in the league, going 13-3-0. Three-time Art Ross Trophy winner Nikita Kucherov continued his offensive wizardry, registering three goals and eight assists over the Lightning's five contests as he extended his point streak to seven games. Jake Guentzel began Week 7 with his eighth career hat trick in a 5-1 triumph over the New Jersey Devils and finished the week with seven points, Brandon Hagel recorded five goals and four assists over the team's last three contests and Anthony Cirelli netted two tallies and set up three others in the same span. Meanwhile, defenseman Darren Raddysh had a strong week offensively, collecting a goal and five assists after notching only four points over his first 12 games this season.

4. Minnesota Wild (4-0-0; 13-7-4)

The Wild sandwiched triumphs in a shootout and overtime around a pair of shutout victories last week to extend their winning streak to six games and their points run to nine contests (8-0-1). Defenseman Brock Faber landed on the scoresheet in all four of Minnesota's games, scoring three goals and setting up three others, while Matt Boldy registered four tallies and three assists in Week 7. The 24-year-old Boldy has notched at least one point in seven of his last eight outings and is tied for the team lead with Kirill



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Kaprizov, who recorded three goals and two assists last week to increase his point total to 28. Filip Gustavsson turned aside all 19 shots he faced in a 5-0 win against the Pittsburgh Penguins for his second shutout of the season and Jesper Wallstedt followed with his league-leading third blanking as he made 32 saves in a 3-0 triumph over the Winnipeg Jets.

5. Carolina Hurricanes (2-2-1; 14-7-2)

The Hurricanes began Week 7 with two wins and a shootout loss to extend their points streak to five games but ended it with back-to-back regulation defeats, which prevented them from rising in these power ratings. Sebastian Aho had the best week for Carolina offensively, recording a goal and four assists to increase his season total to a team-high 23 points. The 28-year-old Finnish center celebrated his 700th NHL game on Wednesday with a pair of assists in the Hurricanes' 4-2 loss to the Rangers. Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere also was productive, scoring two goals and setting up two others.

6. New Jersey Devils (2-3-0; 15-7-1)

New Jersey fell three spots in the ratings due to a rough start to Week 7. After ending the previous week with a shootout victory against the Washington Capitals in their first game without Jack Hughes (finger surgery), the Devils felt the star forward's absence as they scored a total of four goals while suffering three consecutive losses to finish their five-game road trip at 2-3-0. The club managed to right the ship as it concluded the week with home triumphs over the Detroit Red Wings and St. Louis Blues. The first overall pick in the 2017 NHL Draft, Nico Hischier has been doing his best to fill Hughes' skates as he racked up five goals and four assists over New Jersey's past five games. The 28-year-old Swiss center enters Week 8 with a streak of three straight multi-point performances, while Timo Meier has scored a goal in three consecutive contests.

7. Washington Capitals (5-1-0; 13-9-2)

The Capitals entered Week 7 having lost eight of their previous 10 games (2-6-2). They turned things around in a big way, scoring 29 goals while winning five of their six contests. Superstar Alex Ovechkin netted six of the tallies and added a pair of assists, while defenseman John Carlson also racked up eight points (two goals, six assists). The NHL's all-time goals leader, Ovechkin registered his 33rd career hat trick in Washington's 8-4 triumph over the Montreal Canadiens on Nov. 20, tying Brett Hull for fourth place in league history behind Wayne Gretzky (50), Mario

Lemieux (40) and Mike Bossy (39). Blue-liner Jakob Chychrun had a tremendous week offensively, collecting five goals and four assists. The 27-year-old enters Week 8 with a four-game goal-scoring streak and a run of nine straight contests with at least one point.

8. Ottawa Senators (3-1-0; 12-7-4)

Ottawa played only four games over the 10-day span of Week 7 - all on the road - but won three of them. Each of the four contests were decided by one goal, with the Senators posting 3-2 regulation victories against the Anaheim Ducks and San Jose while defeating the Vegas Golden Knights 4-3 in a shootout. Ottawa trailed both the Ducks and Sharks 2-1 before scoring the equalizer late in the second period and the winning goal in the latter half of the third. Drake Batherson was the hero in Anaheim, tallying with 1:58 remaining in regulation, while Tim Stutzle netted the decisive tally in San Jose with 6:38 left. The 23-year-old Stutzle leads the Senators with 11 goals and 23 points.

9. Anaheim Ducks (3-2-0; 14-8-1)

The Ducks return to the top 10 after going 0-3-0 in Week 6 and dropping out of the ratings. Anaheim played five one-goal games last week and won three, defeating Vegas and the Utah Mammoth in overtime and the Boston Bruins in regulation. Cutter Gauthier, Troy Terry and 19-year-old right wing Beckett Sennecke each recorded at least one point in all five of the Ducks' contests, while Leo Carlsson landed on the scoresheet in each of the team's last four outings. Gauthier enters Week 8 with a five-game assist streak and Terry is in the midst of a four-game run.

10. Vegas Golden Knights (2-1-2; 10-5-8)

The Golden Knights began last week with a pair of victories and ended it with three straight defeats, although one took place in overtime and another came in a shootout. Jack Eichel scored three goals and set up four others over his last four games to increase his team-leading total to 31 points and tie him for fifth in the NHL. Meanwhile, 22-year-old right wing Braeden Bowman landed on the scoresheet in all five of Vegas' contests, recording three goals and three assists to become the first undrafted rookie to post a five-game point streak since Taro Hirose accomplished the feat in 2018-19 while with the Red Wings. Captain Mark Stone returned to the lineup on Wednesday and tallied in the Golden Knights' 4-3 shootout loss to Ottawa. The 33-year-old right wing, who had missed 16 contests with an upper-body injury, has registered a total of 14 points this season and at least one in each of his seven games.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Rangers down Hurricanes, 4-2.

By: Al Hood

The Rangers converted on their chances, the Hurricanes did not, and one of the oddest teams in the NHL this season picked up another road win on Wednesday Night as the New York Rangers defeated the Carolina Hurricanes 4-2 in a pre-Thanksgiving matchup in Raleigh.

Igor Shesterkin made 36 stops, several of the high-danger variety as the Canes once again could not cash in on good opportunities. Frederik Andersen stopped 15 on 18 shots, a couple as a result of some rough turnovers by Carolina.

The Canes got out to a rested start in the first with an up and down series that tested both starting goalies Frederik Andersen and Igor Shesterkin. The opening two minutes saw breakaways going on both ends, and the best way to describe it was by Cory Lavoie—"Hair on fire." The constant back and forth eventually led to a Power Play for the Canes as Artemi Panarin tripped up Sebastian Aho. The group came up empty, as the best chance was a Jackson Blake shot at the end.

The lacking Power Play seemed to bolster the Rangers, as the ice tilted their way toward the end of the first. Sure enough with only their third shot on goal, the Rangers took the lead thanks to a mix up that left Noah Laba all alone in front of Andersen who was screened by Adam Edstrom. Laba popped the puck over Andersen's shoulder, and New York had a 1-0 lead. Not too long after, Aho was called for a penalty and the Canes had to survive the last two minutes of the first without two of their best penalty killers in Jordan Staal and Aho, but they did the job well enough to where the best chance was actually a 2-on-2 chance shot by Seth Jarvis. The Canes went into the first intermission down 1-0, and outchanced 17-12 despite having a 13-4 lead in shots. It would be the only penalty the Canes would take on the night.

The Canes started the second period on time, and after a short push by the Rangers Carolina found themselves on another Power Play. This time they were able to convert, before PA Voice Wade Minter was able to get the full read out. A faceoff win resulted with the puck on the stick of Shayne Gostisbehere, and he ripped a shot past Shesterkin to knot the game at one. It was Gostisbehere's third goal on the year.

The Canes would get two more Power Play opportunities in the period, and arguably should have had a short 5-on-3 as well as another one when a Ranger kicked a missing stick away from Andrei Svechnikov as the play was going toward the other end. The first unit continued to perform well, generating chances during the Power Plays but when the second unit stepped out on the ice, more time was spent on the other end. The failure to convert more—though coach Rod Brind'Amour after the game called the Power Play successful—would prove costly for Carolina.

Andersen didn't see a lot of chances in the second but made some great stops until a minute left in the period. A face off in the zone created a set play that resulted in Artemi Panarin open in front of the net, and Gostisbehere was a hair late in getting to him. Panarin blasted a shot by Andersen and the Rangers went into the Second Intermission up 2-1. Shots were 24-13 for The Canes.

The third opened with a quick goal by former Cane Vincent Trocheck. The Hurricanes were in the midst of a change, and it looked like there was some miscommunication, allowing Trocheck to basically walk right up to Andersen and blast it right by him.

The Rangers tightened the screws for the first half of the third and the Canes were unable to generate anything. The action slogged along, until the first line was able to get a good push into the o-zone. Gostisbehere had some nifty stick work in the offensive zone, drawing Rangers to him, and he was able to whip a pass over to an open Seth Jarvis. Jarvis' shot went roof on Shesterkin to bring the Canes back to within one with a little under ten minutes left. It would be Gostisbehere's second point on the night.

The Canes had a few chances as the period wore on but were unable to get anything else past Shesterkin. Will Cuyllé added an empty netter with about 1:40 left, and while the Canes got one more chance on the Power Play with 1:07 left, they were unable to get even.

The Hurricanes will take Thanksgiving off and be back in action on Friday at 5 PM against Seth Jarvis' home squad the Winnipeg Jets.



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The Hockey News

A Perfect Storm: Hurricanes Rookie Defenseman Joel Nystrom Making Most Of Opportunity

By: Ryan Henkel

A rare seventh-round pick defies the odds, showcasing an already high-level hockey sense. Discover how Joel Nystrom's rapid development landed him a spot in the Hurricanes lineup.

Out of the 29 players selected 219th overall in NHL history, only five have made it to the NHL and out of the 29 seventh-round picks the Carolina Hurricanes have made over the years, again, only five have made it to the league in some capacity.

Rookie defenseman Joel Nystrom, who was drafted 219th overall in the 2021 draft — Carolina's final of 13 picks that year — is one of those five in each category.

And on top of it being a rarity for a seventh-round pick to make it to the NHL, Nystrom's case is one that's even stranger, as the 23-year-old blueliner only had seven games of North American experience under his belt before he got the callup to the NHL.

Obviously a plethora of injuries opened up a spot, but what made Nystrom not only capable of such a jump, but more deserving than some of the other guys of getting a shot?

Developing In Sweden

The first thing that jumps off the page for Nystrom is his hockey sense.

The rookie blueliner has a really good feel for the game and he's seemingly picked up the Hurricanes' system almost immediately.

His positioning, his reads and his ability to make "the right" play in all three zones is what the Hurricanes were betting on when they took the late flier on him and it's a big reason he's in the NHL today.

"We talk about trying to find and identify areas that are going to be the reason that a player can make it and with Joel, he slipped in the draft, but he was playing against men and you were able to see the hockey sense," said Hurricanes associate general manager Darren Yorke. "Maybe there were questions about the size or the skating, but at that point in the draft, there are always going to be areas that players need more development on. But we saw somebody that had really high-end hockey sense and that was something that we wanted to bet on. Fast forward almost four years now and we're seeing that hockey sense shine in the NHL and he's been a big part of the team's success lately when other guys have been hurt. He's been able to step up."

Seeing that potential is one thing, but it's another to develop that alongside all of the other skills a player needs such as skating, puck handling, etc., and you could really see the

progression from Nystrom in how he was playing in Sweden and how he was handling big minutes in key roles.

"Going back the last couple of years, he was used in priority minutes in high-stress situations playing in the SHL in a top-four role," Yorke said. "How he was defending in Sweden, we thought that it was best for him to get over to North America and get closer to the NHL. The way he was able to kill plays in all three zones is exactly how we want to play and it would only be enhanced playing in a system where everyone else is doing the exact same thing that he does and it comes natural to him."

Both Yorke and Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour also really credited development coach Kevin McCarthy for his work with Nystrom.

"I didn't see him play, but I heard a lot about him," Brind'Amour said. "Our scouts and particularly Kevin McCarthy really watched him and was raving about this kid."

"When Kevin stepped away from coaching, we were lucky enough to bring him back into the organization and get him to work with our players and he spent a lot of time watching Joel and meeting with him and sort of going through his game on the defensive side and enhancing his reads to how it could be in North America," Yorke said.

Nystrom said he would talk with the the organization weekly, going over his games and working on both things to improve as well things he was doing well, and it's clear that that work paid off.

"The hockey sense was always there," Yorke said. "That was really the concurrent thing. But the skating has gotten better as it does with most players when you get a little bit stronger, the body control and body positioning on retrievals has improved to allow him to handle the bigger, faster players in the NHL and that's all really only enhanced his game now that he can go back for the puck, make those reads with his vision and transition the puck into the offensive zone."

Nystrom's case is one where it's clear that no matter where you are drafted or what your path may be, if you can play, you can play.

"I just tried to keep working," Nystrom said. "Tried to do my best back in Sweden and I feel like my game has developed pretty good."

The Big Leagues

Nystrom's NHL debut wasn't necessarily one for the memory book.

After K'Andre Miller was ruled out last minute with the team on the road, the Swedish blueliner had to scramble to make it to Denver.



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He ended up arriving just 15 minutes before puck drop, missing the entirety of warmups, but Nystrom did manage to still get his rookie laps in right before team took the ice for the start of the game.

Things moved pretty quickly afterwards, as the rookie was thrown right into the fire, staring down a team with players like Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar.

"It was stressful, but I was very happy to get the call," Nystrom said. "Just tried to do my best out there. It was a tough game to play, but it was real fun."

Nystrom finished that game having been outchanced 5-21 and seeing three goals against, but with the amount of injuries that the Hurricanes were dealing with at that time, he wasn't really put in a position to succeed.

"He hung in there," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour recalled on the debut. "Again, you're asking a lot. We had three rookies in there and against that team, any team in the NHL, but when you're playing against the top players in the league and the world, it makes it look the way it did the other night. But I thought he hung in there."

It might not have been a game to write home about, but his foot was now in the door.

However, not even he could escape the Hurricanes' cursed blueline as just two games later, he himself was seated right in the trainer's room getting stitched up after a shot from the blueline wound up catching him right in his face.

But the defenseman wasted no time in getting back out onto the ice to help his shorthanded team, something that stuck with his teammates and coach.

"Especially with it being how bad it was — filleted the whole chin, lip — that would have been a east one to say, 'I'm good,' especially with the way things had been going," Brind'Amour said. "But he knew we were down all these guys and he was like, 'No, I need to get out there.' I think that says a lot about the kid. And you talk about endearing yourself to the group, that's one thing, for sure."

"Tough kid, obviously," said captain Jordan Staal. "Those aren't pretty, but he was good. Playing great for us and battling through a lot. We appreciate what he's done."

Nystrom was lucky to escape that injury scare with only a scar to show for it, and after that torrid start, he hasn't missed a second of action and his performances have significantly improved game after game.

"It's a bit different, of course, from Sweden," Nystrom said. "Here it's a smaller rink, so you have to adjust your game a little, but I feel the guys have helped me very well and I'm thankful for that."

Watching him every game, you could tell that he was rapidly picking up the system and that really led to the coaching staff rewarding him in kind.

The Swede currently has some of the best possession numbers on the team, controlling 57% of both 5v5 scoring chances and high-danger chances, and he's been on the ice

for 11 goals for and just seven against in nearly 250 minutes of even-strength ice time.

"Nysy's really been a cornerstone," said defenseman Sean Walker. "He's playing tons of minutes against top guys every night and he's doing a great job with it."

It isn't like Nystrom has been getting sheltered deployments either. The state of the blueline, with all the injuries, meant the rookie was forced into a top-four and a significant penalty-killing role most nights throughout the early parts of the season and he was dominating those minutes.

"He's been one of our best players some nights," said Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsky.

Nystrom has played north of 18 minutes a night seven times this year and north of 20 minutes twice.

The rookie has been calm and cool in those deployments and he's even started to find a bit of offense too.

The defenseman has three points so far on the season and he hasn't been afraid to shoot the puck, with 65 shot attempts already.

"He's taken advantage of the opportunity," Brind'Amour said. "With all the injuries we've had on the backend, he's gotten an opportunity to play and he's done really well. He's a smart player. Picking up the system, being in the right places. He knows how to play. We always talk about defense and how it's hard when you first come to a new team with all the systems, but some guys pick it up right away and he's one of those guys. He always seems to be in the right place. Obviously he's not a big guy and he's still got a lot of room to grow as a player, both physically and mentally to better understand the game, but he's really done all we can ask."

Nystrom's game has perfectly fit the way the team wants to play, and that's also a testament to the team's draft strategy in finding players that can fit the team's style.

Carolina is a team that emphasizes killing plays at the blueline, holding strong gaps and being able to transition pucks through all three zones and Nystrom has shown a strong grasp of all the above.

It's been a perfect storm so far for the young blueliner and he's making the most of the golden opportunity.

"These young guys who've come up have really picked up the slack," said defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere. "The transition for them has really been seamless. They've been playing like they've been around a while. It's good to see. They're playing in bigger roles than maybe they'd normally have, but it's all about opportunity in this league."

"As he develops, we're just going to get to see what he's doing well more consistently," Yorke said. "We're 16 games into his NHL career, 23 games into his North American professional career and obviously there's been a lot of success in a very short period of time and Joel deserves all the credit in the world for playing as well as he is. We're just looking forward to continuing to watch him grow and have more success as a Carolina Hurricane."



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Hurricanes Goalie Brandon Bussi Unveils New Mask

By: Ryan Henkel

Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi debuts a custom mask, a vibrant tribute to autism awareness and personal family connection, featuring unique artistry.

Carolina Hurricanes goaltender Brandon Bussi is no longer rocking the all-white mask, instead donning a custom Carolina Hurricanes themed one, with quite a few personal touches added in.

The 27-year-old goaltender took to the ice for Tuesday's practice in the new mask and let The Hockey News snap a few pictures of it following.

Injuries, new mask, rumors and scratches. Carolina Hurricanes Update 11/25/25

The helmet, which is designed by prolific helmet designer and Swedish artist David Gunnarsson, is primarily an homage to autism, as Bussi's younger brother Dylan is autistic.

The top of the helmet is a jigsaw puzzle design with rainbow colored butterflies scattered around, all symbols very much connected with autism awareness.

The backplate also has the initials of Bussi's brother.

Brandon Bussi's new helmet

The helmet further features both of the Canes' current logos with the primary swirl and hurricane warning flags on either side and Struttin' Stormy makes an appearance on the top as well.

His number 32 is on the chin and the backplate has a bus emoji for his nickname "Bus."

While Bussi said he liked how the all-white looked and felt it was kind of his thing, he's happy to have a custom mask, especially one as personal to him as this one is.

It also shows that he's more than likely here for the long haul this season.

"This powerful and meaningful new design for Brandon Bussi and the Carolina Hurricanes brings together storm energy, mascot fun — and a deeper message," wrote Gunnarsson in a Facebook post. "The entire mask is built as a puzzle theme, symbolizing complexity, connection, and finding your place piece by piece. Scattered across the design are vibrant butterflies, included as a heartfelt tribute to autism awareness — a symbol of growth, understanding, and support. At center stage, Stormy jumps to life in classic Canes style, while the lower half erupts with red-and-black hurricane force pushing through the puzzle edges. It's playful, emotional, and fierce all at once — Carolina storytelling at its best. Thank you Brandon for the paint ride."

LINKS

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

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The Athletic / 2026 NHL Draft: CHL USA Prospects Challenge standouts and disappointments

By Scott Wheeler

Over two days in Calgary and Lethbridge, many of the top prospects eligible for the 2026 NHL Draft competed this week in the second annual CHL USA Prospects Challenge.

I was at the Scotiabank Saddledome and VisitLethbridge.com Arena for the pair of games between Team CHL and the U.S. NTDP. So were a league's worth of scouts. Here are my standouts and disappointments, plus some other takeaways.

Big names disappoint

A year ago at this event, Matthew Schaefer cemented himself as the No. 1 prospect in the 2025 draft class and looked head and shoulders above his peers. This week, that player wasn't here. If scouts who've been critical of Gavin McKenna's play were looking for one of the bigger names in the CHL to impress them, that didn't happen this week.

Ethan Belchetz, who has impressed a lot of folks over the course of this season, wasn't at his best and was moved off the top line after two periods in Game 1. And I don't think Ryan Roobroek is even in the "big names" conversation anymore. He hasn't had a good year in Niagara, frequently leaving scouts wanting him to be more involved, and he was barely noticeable over the two games, and didn't play much. I wonder if he's a little banged up, but it's also become par for the course with him.

Three of the big names on Team CHL's defense didn't help their stock, either. Chase Reid and Daxon Rudolph each made a couple of plays but also coughed up a lot of pucks and had some tough moments in their own zone (which is a little uncharacteristic of Rudolph, who typically has more polish than the rawer Reid). Xavier Villeneuve had his moments — including a big one to make it 4-3 on the power play late in Game 2 — but was also scrambly and careless at times over the course of the two games. I did appreciate that he didn't seem to back down from the fight, though.

I did think the top pair of Carson Carels and Ryan Lin was solid. Carels played his usual firm, hard game. I thought Lin had the strongest series of their big five defensively, though I would have liked to see him make more plays. He's a smart, competitive, effective player, and was the only CHL D who consistently executed his first pass on the breakout.

There are plenty of scouts who've been critical of McKenna's play this year, but for all of the chatter about his spot at No. 1, there weren't any challengers in Calgary and Lethbridge this week. I don't think North Dakota right-shot D Keaton Verhoeff and Muskegon center Tynan Lawrence are first-overall calibre, either, though it was positive to see Lawrence return from injury on Wednesday and have a two-point night. Swedish winger Ivar Stenberg remains closest to McKenna for me, but

it's going to be hard for an organization to step to the stage and call a winger's name over McKenna's, with his mainstream fame in the hockey world.

A week to build on for the NTDP

These U18s had won just a handful of games all season coming into this week. Sammy Nelson, who's in the 2027 class, is viewed as the best NHL prospect. The age group and the program have taken their lumps from scouts and the media. But they picked up their first win of this event in Game 1 and played Team CHL tight in Game 2. They can build on this and use it as a template for how they need to play.

They've also been waiting for a player to really step up and become The Guy for them offensively, and Wyatt Cullen has looked like that player through his first seven games of the year with the U18s since returning from injury. He left Game 2 with an injury with five minutes left in the second period, but before that, he looked like their best NHL prospect for 2026 through almost five periods. Victor Plante and Michael Berchild were both noticeable on the puck, with Plante scoring the overtime winner to decide the series, but they're undersized wingers. Cullen, a Minnesota commit, is one of the youngest players in the draft. He has had a huge growth spurt since arriving at the program and was very noticeable on the puck, cutting laterally and finding inside ice. He looks like a second-rounder for me, and scouts will be watching him closely in the second half, presuming he can stay healthy.

I did think NTDP defenseman Luke Schairer, who has a bullishness to his game but has had some tough outings this season and hasn't produced, had a positive two games as well. He has some tools, and while his game is very instinctual, he's a pro prospect.

Giorgos Pantelas struggles

Pantelas, who has had a good year and emerged as a potential late-first candidate for some, didn't look like a first-rounder this week. He really struggled in both games, both moving pucks out of the defensive zone, defending and moving pucks at the offensive zone blue line. He really struggled to make simple passes under pressure and bobbed a lot of pucks.

The bright spots for Team CHL

I thought captain Caleb Malhotra was Canada's best player (particularly in the second game, where he was excellent) and that Remparts forward Maddox Dagenais was their most consistent.

Malhotra played with poise, held onto pucks and found his way out of trouble when many of his teammates didn't on this stage, which I think is usually telling at these events. His line with Adam Novotny and Mathis Preston, which was put together for the third period of Game 1, was the only one that created good looks for long stretches of both games; Preston's maneuverability on the puck and Novotny's strength and competitiveness were both largely positive. Malhotra also made some skill plays. Belchetz is still the top forward prospect from this CHL group for the draft despite his quiet two games, but Malhotra looked like the No. 2.



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And Dagenais was engaged, went to the net, won board battles and had positive shifts, which NHL scouts know he has in him and wanted to see out of him this week, while also protecting pucks well and showing some skill.

Wanted more from Nikita Klepov and J.P. Hurlbert

Klepov and Hurlbert are among the CHL's leading scorers this season, and while both had the puck their fair share, I didn't love them this week.

Hurlbert, who has played both center and wing in Kamloops but much more of the latter over the last two years, played in the middle in both games and on the top power play for Team CHL. While he picked up a couple of points, I thought he was a bit of a non-factor in Game 2 and didn't like his shift length and decision-making in Game 1.

Klepov was better in Game 2 (he also took a penalty right after I'd complimented a couple of his shifts in my notes) and felt the puck more, but I didn't like him in the opener. Hurlbert has some big believers and is still trending way up and will be a high pick. Klepov has to establish himself as a first-rounder as a sub-6-foot winger, and I could see him finishing as a late-first/early-second type even with the impressive production.

Reported from Calgary and Lethbridge, Alberta

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2025

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The Athletic / One reason to be thankful for all 32 NHL teams this Thanksgiving

By Sean McIndoe

Nov. 27, 2025 6:00 am EST

It's Thanksgiving, at least among one of the lesser hockey countries. So today, I'm going to list a reason I'm thankful for each NHL team.

That's it. No gimmicks or clever twists. I promise I'm not even going to do the "Thanks for reminding us it could always be worse" backhanded compliment thing to anyone. Just one sincere, if slightly bizarre, reason to say a quick thanks to every team.

Anaheim Ducks

Thank you for being good this year by scoring a bunch of goals. That's a nice change from how every other team tries to be good, which is to say clamping down on defense, forcing low-event hockey, having an "identity" that is exactly the same as every other team's identity and transparently playing for overtime every single night. I'm sure all of this is making Joel Quenneville furious, and like all coaches, he'll figure out a way to strangle the entertainment value out of this team eventually. But for now, watching a team that's apparently too young to realize NHL hockey is supposed to be dull has been a real treat.

Boston Bruins

Thank you for giving the hockey world Willie O'Ree. I'm still mad it took the Hockey Hall of Fame so long to induct him, and that when they finally did, he had to share the builder spotlight with Gary Bettman. But we're staying positive in this piece, so let's just say that the man is a treasure.

Buffalo Sabres

Thank you for sacrificing your best shot at the Stanley Cup to get rid of one of the worst rules in NHL history. The skate-in-the-crease rule of the 1990s was awful, and we all knew it at the time. But this being the NHL,

they refused to do anything about it until they had no choice — and the Sabres made sure that happened. It cost them their only trip to the final in the last 50 years, but it was worth it for the greater good. Don't worry, Sabres fans, I'm sure the hockey gods will reward you. (Checks last few decades of NHL history.) Uh, eventually.

Calgary Flames

Thank you for starting the trend of teams making weird lip sync videos in the 1980s. They've long been a staple of our Grab Bag YouTube breakdown section, and rightly so, because all of them were fantastic. Well, they were terrible. But that's what made them fantastic. And while the Capitals did a lot of the heavy lifting, the Flames were the ones who started it all.

Are we absolutely sure we don't want to bring these back? I'm guessing Nazem Kadri plays a mean air trombone.

Carolina Hurricanes

Thank you for the Mikko Rantanen trades. They didn't work out the way you hoped, because if they had, he'd still be there. And we won't know for a while whether they were actually the right moves at all, or whether future Hurricanes fans might wish you'd stood pat. But in a league where we rarely see midseason trades of any consequence anymore, one team made two in the same season involving the same guy. If you're a fan who loves to chew on this stuff, you have to respect that, whether the moves ultimately work or not.

Chicago Blackhawks

Thank you for giving us the goal horn, a now-league-wide tradition that is very cool (and was even cooler when it was unique to just a few buildings, but that's me being a grumpy old man).

Colorado Avalanche

Thank you for bringing back the Nordiques uniforms. It's possible you overdid it by deciding to wear them (checks notes) 37 times this year. But those uniforms were top shelf back in the day, and look even better now, and it's important for younger fans to know that. Our so-called experts ranked them too low.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Thank you for Boomer, the uh, oddly shaped mascot you had for about three minutes. Real ones remember.

Dallas Stars

Thank you for Patrik Stefan's missed open net. Nearly two decades later, it remains as one of the great sports bloopers of modern times, the sort of play that will get a laugh out of anyone, whether they understand hockey or not. (OK, anyone other than Ray Ferraro, who was madder about this than I've ever been about anything in my life.)

But it's also one of the great what-ifs in NHL history, a play that inadvertently changed the outcome of the 2007 draft lottery. I get into the details here, but imagine taking Patrick Kane away from the rebuilding Blackhawks and putting him on the Oilers instead. It changes just about everything about the cap era. Given the oft-forgotten detail that the Stars still won the Stefan game, that infamous flub ended up being a low-cost way to twist the knife on multiple fan bases.

Detroit Red Wings

Thank you for the octopus thing. It's just cool, and always has been. (As long as you're not stuck next to the guy who has one crammed into his pants until just the right moment.)

Edmonton Oilers

Thank you for starting the tradition of the first Cup handoff being a thing. The Oilers are typically credited with being the first team to put much



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thought into who got the first skate with the Cup after the captain, dating to their 1987 win, when they made sure Steve Smith got his moment after his notorious own goal eliminated them the year prior. It didn't fully catch on right away, and even as late as 1993, the handoffs were still pretty chaotic. But it's now one of hockey's greatest traditions, one I enjoy maybe a little bit too much, and the Oilers were a big part of it.

Florida Panthers

Thank you for the Matthew Tkachuk trade, and the lesson it should have taught every other GM. Fans forget this now, but when Tkachuk first went on the market, nobody thought the Panthers were front-runners, or even a realistic destination. But then Bill Zito elbowed his way to the front of the crowd and slapped an offer down on the table that sure seemed like an overpay. It wasn't, and we know that now. But Zito saw a player he wanted, he knew he had to be aggressive to get him, and he made it happen. No hemming and hawing, no floating "but only if the price is right" to friendly media. Just a guy ditching the excuses and making the trade that turned his contenders into champions.

(Have any other GMs learned this lesson? No, they're still all timid wimps, which is why the Panthers win every year. But it was worth a try.)

Los Angeles Kings

Thank you for trading for Wayne Gretzky, which led to American sports fans learning hockey exists, which led to a completely different economic landscape for the league for decades to come. And far more importantly than any of that, it also led to the NHL getting a piece of this commercial:

It also led to Gretzky hosting SNL, which did not go as well, because that man cannot read a line longer than two characters, but that's OK. Wayne Gretzky knows two things and only two things: hockey and how to absolutely wreck people on the sprint track. Acting is not on that list, and to this day it's a small miracle that somebody actually figured out a way to get him to look cool on camera.

Minnesota Wild

Thank you for that time you traded a third-round pick for a backup goalie in the middle of a season, and that guy randomly turned into a Vezina candidate for the next few years. The Devan Dubnyk trade was a game-changer in Minnesota, at least for a few seasons. But more importantly, at least for our purposes today, it was the ultimate "you never know" move, offering hope to any team that needs help somewhere — especially in net — that even the cheapest move might just solve the problem. Never underestimate the importance of a little hope, and of reminders that sometimes miracles can happen.

Montreal Canadiens

Thank you for the Saku Koivu ovation. Still one of the era's great moments.

Nashville Predators

Thank you for the Shea Weber-for-P.K. Subban trade, which will turn 10 years old next year and remains one of the most fascinating deals in NHL history, from the most fascinating hour in NHL history. It was a genuine jaw-dropper, featuring two legitimate superstars who were at least close to their prime. At the moment, everyone had an opinion about who won and who lost. A decade later, we're still not sure. Did both teams win? Is that even allowed? It's tough to say, but it's fun to argue, and we only get to do that because two teams had the guts to make a deal they knew would be a lightning rod.

New Jersey Devils

Thank you to your fans for delivering this absolutely brutal response to Gary Bettman on a live Fox broadcast in 1995. It's the genesis for the Bettman booing tradition, absolutely fascinating television and a cathartic moment for every smallish-market fan who had to watch their beloved team get betrayed by the suits.

New York Islanders

Thank you for Matthew Schaefer. Please protect him at all costs. I'm sorry I even had the thought that you should take James Hagens because he was the local kid. I'm very dumb and you should never give my opinion any weight whatsoever.

New York Rangers

Thank you for letting Phil Esposito be the GM for a while in the 1980s. Was he the most qualified candidate, purely in terms of front office experience? No. But did he somehow have a sixth sense for hockey transactions that allowed him to succeed in spite of that? Also no. But it was fun to watch him go to work over the 34 months that he held the job. His NHL Trade Tracker page is a thing of beauty — apart from the post-deadline period where teams can't trade, he never went more than two months without making a significant trade involving players. He even traded for a coach, something nobody was sure was even possible until "Trader Phil" made it happen.

Ottawa Senators

Thank you for Gladiator Guy. Yes, I know it was embarrassing when it happened. But enough time has passed that we can all admit this was awesome. This guy brought so much joy to hockey fans around the world.

Gladiator guy read his lines off of his shield walked so future Golden Knights guys could fight airplanes at center ice run.

Philadelphia Flyers

Thank you for the Legion of Doom. That line ruled. But more importantly, that line nickname was fantastic. Sure, it was stolen from pro wrestling, but that's fine. In an era where nobody can come up with a line nickname that does anything other than make an acronym from a letter from each player's name, we need the Flyers to show us the way.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Thank you for the pregame ceremony before Mario Lemieux's comeback game, and the brilliant idea of actually lowering his number from the rafters. Having a player with a retired number return to the lineup was close to unprecedented in sports, and we'd all have understood if you just left it up there as a cool reminder of how great Lemieux's first chapter had been. But somebody had a flair for the dramatic, and it made a great night even greater.

San Jose Sharks

Thank you for introducing teal to pro sports uniforms. Yes kids, believe it or not, there was a time when sports fans didn't think teal would work on a uniform. We'd only really seen it with the Miami Dolphins, and they balanced it with a lot of traditional orange. When the Sharks came along and debuted their teal jerseys, it was a controversial choice. But it was the right one, and now every league has at least a team or two ripping off that Sharks aesthetic.

Seattle Kraken

Thank you for finally bringing the "Cool S" to the world of pro sports logos. I've long been a proponent of what I call the pencil case test — the idea that a good sports logo should be simple enough that a motivated kid could successfully draw it on their pencil case. Well, nothing has ever been drawn on more pencil cases than the "Cool S."

St. Louis Blues

Thank you for Ron Caron. I miss the old professor, whether it was him wildly gesticulating in the press box or pulling off franchise-altering blockbuster trades back when GMs had the guts to actually do that.

Tampa Bay Lightning



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Thank you for basically your entire 1990s history, from the Duke of Manchester to playing in the baseball stadium to the mob rumors. It might only be fun in hindsight because we know what the franchise eventually developed into, but here we are. The No. 1 goal for any team is to win, but the secondary goal should be to be interesting, and the Lightning may have had one of the most interesting decades in sports history.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Thank you for the greatest fan-made hype video of all time, even if the only surviving version on YouTube looks like it was rendered on a potato.

Utah Mammoth

Thank you for putting a merciful end to the Coyotes saga. It had to happen. That's not even a knock at Arizona fans, who'll no doubt get a fresh crack at the NHL in a few years, once some sort of acceptable arena situation is worked out. The league let the situation drag on about a decade too long, and by the end, it felt like we were doomed to have it never end. And then, just when almost all hope had been lost, Utah stepped up and saved us all.

Vancouver Canucks

Thank you for drafting Pavel Bure with the 113th pick in the 1989 draft, for two reasons. First, and most obviously, Bure rocked. But maybe more importantly, if the rumors are true that Detroit had decided on picking Bure with the 116th pick, the Canucks saved the rest of the league from a decade-long Red Wings dynasty.

Vegas Golden Knights

Thank you for hosting the 2024 draft at Sphere, still one of the coolest hockey events in recent memory. We weren't sure it would work, but it somehow overdelivered. It also cost a fortune, and this being the NHL, ended up leading to a new way of doing things that nobody likes. But someday, we'll be back. And when we are, that "trade alert" siren had better be even louder than last time.

Washington Capitals

Thank you for Al Iafate's jean shorts.

Winnipeg Jets

Thank you for perfecting the White Out. No, you might not have invented it or even brought it to the NHL. But it's yours now, because nobody's ever done it better. And none of the half-hearted rip-offs from other teams over the years have ever come close to matching it.

OK, now it's over to you. In the spirit of the season, let's use the comment section to offer up your (no doubt 100 percent genuine and sincere) thanks to any of those rival teams out there who've found a way to make your hockey fan life a little brighter.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2025

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL Power Rankings: Naming a turkey for each of the 32 teams

Ryan Dixon

For many American households, there's no doubt that turkey is the star of the show when it comes to a Thanksgiving feast. But while the bird often takes top billing on dining room tables, the "turkey" label carries a negative connotation in other parts of life — including sports.

The arrival of a big holiday in the U.S. brings a one-day hockey hiatus, as fans shift their focus to food and football on Thursday. On Friday, though, 30 of the 32 NHL teams will be back in action, and for some players, it's the next opportunity to shake out the turkey legs and get going.

From rookie Matthew Schaefer's stunning play to breakouts for Macklin Celebrini and Connor Bedard to Jason Robertson's unreal November (22 points in 13 games), the league has seen more than its share of incredible performances.

At the other end of the spectrum, not every player is having the year they hoped when the puck dropped in October.

With that in mind, as Americans gobble one of their most celebrated meals, let's use this week's edition of the Power Rankings to identify one turkey on all 32 NHL teams.

1. Colorado Avalanche (17-1-5) He's heated up recently, but second-line centre Brock Nelson had just five points after 16 games. That's about the best we can do on a team where it feels like every player is flying.

2. Dallas Stars (15-5-4) Maybe it was partially due to the lower-body injury that ultimately pushed him out of the lineup halfway through November, but defenceman Thomas Harley just did not look like himself through six weeks.

3. Tampa Bay Lightning (14-7-2) The Bolts acquired Oliver Bjorkstrand from Seattle at last season's deadline in part because they'd have him under contract for this year, too. So far, a guy they surely hoped would score 15 to 20 goals is stuck on two.

4. Carolina Hurricanes (15-7-1) Andrei Svechnikov just has not become the sniper the Canes had hoped. He's got 12 points on the season and his name is starting to pop up in trade rumours.

5. New Jersey Devils (15-7-1) Of the 37 goalies who've played at least 10 games this season, only seven have a worse goals-saved-above-expected-per-60 mark on Money puck than Jacob Markstrom.

6. Minnesota Wild (13-7-4) Nobody was projecting a return to 30-goal form for Vladimir Tarasenko when the Wild inked him to a one-year deal in the summer, but two goals in 18 games is a disappointment. Tarasenko has been sidelined with a lower-body issue since mid-November and the Wild just keep winning without him.

7. Anaheim Ducks (14-8-1) It's crazy how far Pavel Mintyukov's stock has fallen in a couple years, following a 28-point debut in 63 games as a 20-year-old rookie blue-liner. He's stuck on three assists this season and it feels like we're moving toward fresh-start territory for the 10th-overall pick from 2022.

8. Ottawa Senators (12-7-4) Linus Ullmark had an .863 save percentage through 12 games, but he's really gotten it back on the rails with a .914 in his past six. His form must stay there for the Senators to thrive.

9. Philadelphia Flyers (12-7-3) Five goals in his past nine games have changed the complexion of Matvei Michkov's sophomore season a bit, but the youngster was still — however gently — called out by his captain a couple weeks ago.

10. Los Angeles Kings (11-6-6) Phillip Danault is a defensive security blanket, first and foremost, but a stat line of 0-4-4 through 23 games is still jarring to see for a player who's firmly established as a 45-point guy.

11. Washington Capitals (13-9-2) Connor McMichael cooled off down the stretch last season and he'll be in tough to repeat last season's 26-goal showing with just three in 24 games this fall.

12. Montreal Canadiens (12-7-3) Sam Montembeault entered the season with a medium hold on one of Canada's three Olympic goalie spots. Today, he's lost his grip on the starter's role in Montreal.



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13. Pittsburgh Penguins (11-6-5) Erik Karlsson is a plus-player for just the second time in seven seasons; Evgeni Malkin is on pace for 89 points, which would be the second-best total ever for a player in their age-39 season or older and Sidney Crosby could well score 40 goals at 38 years old. Friends, there's not a turkey to be found in Steeltown.

(By the way, always and forever, stick tap to Gordie Howe, who put up 103 points at 40 years old in 1968-69).

14. Vegas Golden Knights (10-5-8) Stop scrambling for the underlying numbers and just admit that four goals and 22 points in 23 games is a little underwhelming for Mitch Marner.

15. Winnipeg Jets (12-10-0) Zero goals in 17 games was not what the Jets had in mind when they inked Gustav Nyquist in the summer to help provide offence deeper down the lineup.

16. New York Islanders (13-9-2) Captain Anders Lee has scored at least 28 goals in three of the past four seasons, including 29 last season. With four in 24 games, he'll have to pick it up to get up there this time around.

17. Detroit Red Wings (13-10-1) Andrew Copp has but one goal this season and his minus-11 mark is second-worst on the club, ahead of only rookie D-man Axel Sandin-Pellikka.

18. Seattle Kraken (11-6-6) Mason Marchment seemed like a nice pickup for Seattle when Dallas had to dump salary, but so far the big guy has found the net just twice in 22 games.

19. Florida Panthers (12-10-1) Carter Verhaeghe has gone from 42 goals in 2022-23 to 34 in 2023-24 to 20 last season. Right now, he's on pace for 14.

20. Boston Bruins (14-11-0) Joonas Korpisalo has not been good as Jeremy Swayman's backup. Among goalies with at least nine games played, Korpisalo's goals save above expected per 60 minutes is second-worst only to Sam Montembeault.

21. Utah Mammoth (12-9-3) Barrett Hayton scored Wednesday night, but he's producing at just an 18-point clip this season. Sidenote: How boom or bust was the top 10 of the 2018 draft? Booms: Rasmus Dahlin (1st overall), Brady Tkachuk (4th), Quinn Hughes (7th) Evan Bouchard (10th). Busts: Jesperi Kotkaniemi (3rd), Barrett Hayton (5th), Filip Zadina (6th), Adam Boqvist (8th), Vitali Kravtsov (9th). The only TBD might be Andrei Svechnikov at No. 2, and we cited him as a turkey today.

22. San Jose Sharks (11-10-3) The Sharks took a flyer on John Klingberg, hoping he could rebuild a bit of his old value as a right-shooting puck-mover. The veteran D-man, though, has been a healthy scratch this month in San Jose.

23. New York Rangers (12-11-2) It's Year 6 and Alexis Lafreniere is on pace for 16 goals and 43 points.

24. Columbus Blue Jackets (11-9-4) Sean Monahan had 57 points in 54 games last year during Year 1 in Columbus. He's managed to stay healthy this time out, but has only two goals and 10 points in 24 outings.

25. Chicago Blackhawks (10-8-5) Spencer Knight has been terrific as the starter; Arvid Soderblom has an .881 SP in seven games as the backup.

26. Edmonton Oilers (10-10-5) There's a lot not to like on the leaky Oilers, but veterans Brett Kulak, Jake Walman and Darnell Nurse have some of the worst underlying numbers on the defence corps.

27. Toronto Maple Leafs (10-10-3) 3-3-6 and dash-13 for Max Domi is a tough line to look at right now.

28. Buffalo Sabres (9-10-4) Maybe he never lived up to his first-round billing, but Peyton Krebs was a plus player on average-to-bad Buffalo teams the past couple years and potted 10 goals last season. This year he's minus-10 with a big, fat goose egg in the goal column through 23 games.

29. Calgary Flames (8-14-3) Three goals and minus-10 in 21 outings for Yegor Sharangovich, whose 31-goal season in Calgary two years ago feels further and further away.

30. Vancouver Canucks (10-12-2) So far, a change of scenery has not helped Lukas Reichel. The 17th-overall pick from 2020 has zero goals in 13 games with Vancouver since coming over from Chicago in a trade and has been a recent scratch by coach Adam Foote.

31. St. Louis Blues (7-10-7) Jordan Binnington may still be a lock for an Olympic spot with Canada, but his surface and under-the-hood numbers are both a mess this year.

32. Nashville Predators (7-12-4) Seven points for Steven Stamkos in 23 games? Let's get this guy on a new team and hope he soars.

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Sportsnet.ca / 'All about winning': Hughes not ready to surrender season amid Canucks' trade noise

Iain MacIntyre

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Vancouver Canucks captain Quinn Hughes confirmed Thursday that he was completely unaware what team president Jim Rutherford had for breakfast.

But as for hockey matters and the “transition” of the National Hockey League team that Rutherford and general manager Patrik Allvin are trying to undertake, Hughes, the captain, said he speaks regularly with Rutherford and has an excellent relationship with the Canucks' hockey-operations boss.

“Me and Jim have a really good relationship, and I have a ton of respect for Jim,” Hughes said after the Canucks practised here Thursday. “He’s a Hall-of-Fame GM, and absolutely, yeah, I talk to him.

“I don’t know about always being on the same boat or anything like that, but I know that I have tremendous respect for Jim and have no problem talking to Jim and vice versa. He has been a resource for me, and it’s been a good relationship for me. So he knows how I feel (and) I know how he feels.”

That said, Hughes was unaware until the story broke publicly this week — then was confirmed by Rutherford — that the Canucks had notified other NHL teams that Vancouver players eligible for unrestricted free agency next summer are available now in trade.

It beamed a spotlight on buzzsaw winger Kiefer Sherwood, who is easily the best and most marketable Canuck on an expiring contract. The 30-year-old also happens to be the team’s top-goal scorer this season with 12 in 24 games.

Sherwood thoughtfully and professionally answered Sportsnet’s questions about the uncomfortable situation on Wednesday morning, then played another strong game as his struggling team beat the Anaheim Ducks 5-4 that night.

“You know, I love it here and I love this group here, and I just want to continue to take it day by day,” Sherwood told us. “I guess it’s just part of the gig. You’ve got to be professional and you have a job to go play. You try to have a good mindset through it all.”

Sportsnet insider Elliotte Friedman first reported the story Monday night. In an interview with PostMedia on Tuesday, Rutherford reiterated the Canucks’ need to get younger and clarified that he is soliciting interest on



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their UFA-eligible players — Sherwood, Evander Kane, Teddy Blueger and Derek Forbort — and that “this isn’t about just looking at trading everybody.”

“I mean, I think this is all about winning games,” Hughes said Thursday, referring to the Canucks’ 10-12-2 record and position near the bottom of the standings. “If we were winning games, Jim wouldn’t have said that. I don’t exactly know what he said because I’m not on Twitter or anything, but I heard the gist of it, and I think, like I said, if we were winning games, there would be no conversation about this.”

After Vancouver opened the season with the singular goal of returning to the Stanley Cup playoffs, injuries quickly reached a critical mass, defensive play eroded and the team started losing. The win against the Pacific Division-leading Ducks was just the Canucks’ second in eight games, but still left them five points adrift of a playoff spot at U.S. Thanksgiving.

The Canucks flew to San Jose after Thursday’s practice and play a mid-day game there Friday against the Sharks, another rebuilding team that has become competitive after being deliberately poor for years.

Hughes, of course, is eligible for free agency after next season, and the best player in Canucks history is expected to decide this summer whether to sign an extension or seek a trade to the New Jersey Devils to play with younger brothers Jack and Luke.

Within this subplot to the Canucks season, every move management makes will be viewed by many through the lens of how Quinn Hughes feels about it.

“It’s not like Jim’s telling me what he had for breakfast,” Hughes said. “But, I mean, we talk and we have a good relationship. I know our coaches are coaching hard and working hard, and we work extremely hard (as players). We’ve just got to keep going like that.”

“Obviously. . . it’s all about winning, so I was glad we won last night. You want to be competitive and you never want to lose on your home ice like we did a few nights ago (5-2 against the Calgary Flames on Sunday). That’s a bad feeling. But as far as whatever happens next, all I can control is my game and attitude and trying to be a good leader. And I feel like, as far as my game, it’s as good as it has been. So that’s all I can do right now.”

Anyone who thinks Hughes is texting grievances to Rutherford — or has agent Pat Brisson making managerial demands — probably underestimates the superstar’s steady professionalism.

“I mean, I have my moments where I’m not a pro,” Hughes smiled. “Like, you can ask the guys around here; I have my moments. But as far as that, like, the main thing is your game. And last night, I felt like I created eight or nine or 10 scoring chances. That’s all you can do. And defend hard. Everything else is just people talking.”

“We had a good win last night, and all we can do is try to grab as many points as we can on this road trip.”

Hughes said he doesn’t believe spurring trade talks this far ahead of the March 6 trade deadline disrupts the team because players, especially the UFAs, have “been around” and understand the NHL is a business.

He also doesn’t view it as surrendering on the season.

“We should believe (in ourselves),” Hughes said. “I mean, we should be approaching every game like it is our last. Or how we approach the first game of the year, with that kind of excitement. We should be approaching tomorrow’s game like that, as well. I don’t know why anything would change. I think that’s just being a professional.”

• Coach Adam Foote made one change for Thursday’s practice, inserting Lukas Reichel in the middle of the fourth line while centre Aatu Raty skated as an extra. With one assist in 13 games since his trade from the Chicago Blackhawks, Reichel was healthy-scratched the last three

games. Foote said Raty could use “a little bit of a break.” Centre Max Sasso was promoted from the fourth line to replace Raty between Sherwood and Drew O’Connor, while Reichel practised with wingers Linus Karlsson and Arshdeep Bains.

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Sportsnet.ca / ‘I need more out of myself’: Leafs’ Dakota Joshua responds to healthy scratch

Luke Fox

WASHINGTON, D.C. — There is no more sugarcoating it.

The glass-half-full news here is that — on the heels of the power forward’s first and long-anticipated healthy scratch — no one is pretending otherwise.

Head coach Craig Berube waited 22 games before benching the bottom-six checker whom GM Brad Treliving scooped up this summer from the Canucks.

At first blush, the acquisition felt like a low-cost, low-risk flyer.

An 18-goal, 32-point, hard-checking, defensively responsible forechecker? A fan favourite of any Vancouverite who tuned in for the 2024 playoffs? For the low, low price of a 2028 fourth-rounder?

Bring him on.

Six weeks into the player’s proposed redemption campaign, however, the Maple Leafs’ plans of constructing an every-night shutdown line around Joshua and centre Nicolas Roy still look shaky at best.

Joshua had mustered just two goals and three assists to go with his minus-8 rating and had gone eight games without a point. He failed to so much as register a shot in five of those and had slipped to the fourth line.

Though far from detrimental, Joshua’s shifts have been too quiet. Inconsequential. His physical presence has either been overhyped or is about to show up late to the party.

Hardly a great return on a \$3.25-million-a-year investment who is under contract through 2027-28.

So, on Wednesday in Columbus, Berube scratched another one of Treliving’s depth gambles. (Matias Maccelli was the first to get the treatment, and he responded instantly.)

Berube’s message?

“We need more out of you. And I agree with him. And I have no arguments with that. I need more out of myself, and so does the team,” Joshua told Sportsnet Thursday, following a Thanksgiving Day practice in the U.S. capital. “Got to be better.”

“Everybody’s smart in here and gets the sense of how you’re playing. So, I totally understand it hasn’t gone well for me this year. But there’s a lot of hockey left to turn it around, and that’s what I plan on doing.”

Joshua’s individual story this season is not unlike his team’s: More was expected in terms of secondary offence, toughness, and speed.

Joshua was ushered in as a DNA changer. He was supposed to represent a more steeled Leafs identity.



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The hope from the coaching staff — which will tweak a winning lineup and throw Joshua back into action Friday against the Washington Capitals — is that he takes this wakeup call to heart.

"I just felt like he needed to get a reset, and sometimes that puts a little more fire in 'em, too," Berube said.

These decisions aren't made lightly.

Typically, veterans and new faces get extra leeway before being banished to the press box.

Healthy scratches this early into a long tenure can embarrass not only a player but the executive who brought him in.

But with the Leafs stuck on the sad side of the wild-card line, Berube needs the six-foot-three, 218-pound Joshua to find his identity.

"He's a big guy that has to be a physical, hard player to play against. And he's going to make and score his goals around the net, right? So, I think just a little more puck touches in the offensive zone from the forecheck, and then getting to the net front and winning those battles there and tipping pucks," Berube explained.

"He's got good hand-eye, and he has the capability of putting the puck in the net. That's where I see that his game can improve. But it's about getting there. So, from our zone out, anticipating and being direct. Not only him, but his linemates putting him in a good spot to get on the forecheck or whatever."

Be a nuisance to the opposition.

"Make it hard," Berube challenged. "They don't want to box him out. He's a big guy. So, I think he can just be more engaged that way."

A self-confessed slow starter, Joshua agrees there is another level he can reach.

"Just chipping in to control the game more with my linemates," he said. "Being more connected out there and taking it upon myself to be a guy who drives the play down low and just makes it tougher on the other team."

OK, so who's coming out?

Great question.

William Nylander, who has missed three games this season to injury, missed Thursday's practice in the name of "maintenance."

Wednesday's overtime hero was walking around the rink and appeared in good spirits, interacting with teammates before meeting his old pal Rasmus Sandin for dinner in D.C.

Berube assures Nylander will be good to go.

So, who does Joshua replace?

At practice, Domi and Maccelli (also scratched Wednesday) took turns skating in Nylander's spot beside John Tavares on the second line and on Toronto's new-look five-forward power-play.

Both shifty playmakers have struggled lately.

But Domi has never been healthy-scratched as a Maple Leaf, despite his team-worst minus-13 ranking.

"I don't know if it's the defensive side of things. I think positionally he's been solid," Berube said of Domi. "I know his plus/minus doesn't say that, but I wouldn't say positionally that causes a lot of (goals against) for me."

"It's just getting engaged more in the game. Like, he's got to get dirty down low in the offensive zone, win battles, and get more engaged that way. And get to the inside of the ice more. That's what I see. And when he's skating and moving, he's an effective player."

"But it's too inconsistent."

One-Timers: Defenceman Brandon Carlo was a full participant in practice for the first time since getting injured Nov. 13.... The stitches you noticed on Berube's forehead are due to a minor, routine procedure the coach underwent this week to get something removed from under the skin. Nothing serious. "Just so you know, I did it without any freezing or anything," Berube boasts.... The slow-starting Capitals have won five of their past six games.... Berube on Dakota Mermis's first-period roughing penalty on Zach Aston-Resse, which he disputed in real time: "I thought it was a terrible call. First of all, I know you can't rip a guy's helmet off. But that wasn't intentional. They're going at it, and (Mermis) got punched twice in the head already. I get it. You want to even it up. That's fine. But then he's pulling the guy down, and his helmet comes off. I mean, it's an accidental play. Just, it was a tough call."

Maple Leafs practice lines Thursday in D.C.

Knies – Matthews – Robertson

Domi/Maccelli – Tavares – Cowan

Joshua – Roy – McMan

Lorentz – Laughton – Järnkrok

Rielly – Ekman-Larsson

Benoit – McCabe

Mermis – Stecher

Myers – Carlo

Woll

Hildeby

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Sportsnet.ca / 'Feel pretty freakin' good right now': Senators captain Tkachuk stoked for return

Alex Adams

OTTAWA — The Ottawa Senators fanbase must be breathing a sigh of relief with the news that Brady Tkachuk will return to the lineup on Friday against St. Louis.

"I'm not going to lie to you, not a fan of watching (hockey) up there (in the press box)," Tkachuk told the media, via video call, about his emotions during his hiatus due to injury.

And there was no mistaking the fact that Tkachuk was excited to be coming back.

"I feel pretty freakin' good right now," he said.

When Tkachuk went down with a thumb injury in the third game of the season against the Nashville Predators on Oct. 13, panic set in, and to some extent rightfully so. Tkachuk is a monster presence who was always going to be irreplaceable.

It was the ultimate test for the Senators. They passed.

"Everybody elevated their standard," said Tkachuk.

With Tkachuk out, the Senators thrived, with a 11-5-4 record. The Senators will now have the ultimate wingman rejoin their lineup while they're on a roll.



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"Made the recovery a little bit better," said Tkachuk. "It made my life a lot easier, seeing all the wins."

With the Senators' emotional leader and face of the franchise coming back, we are about to find out how good this Ottawa Senators team can be.

They could be great, considering how well they played without him for the last six weeks.

But be mindful of expectations in Game 1.

"Not expecting perfection right away," said Tkachuk.

Nevertheless, Tkachuk is a unicorn of a hockey player with size, skill and physicality, paired with an infectious personality. He announced his return earlier this week on his new podcast with brother Matthew, star of the Florida Panthers. As far as anyone knows, it marked the first time an NHLer has announced his return on a podcast.

"It's never something I expected myself to be doing, but since we've started, it feels like I was meant to be," said Tkachuk about his podcast.

One of a kind.

You might be thinking to yourself, of course Tkachuk will make the Senators better, but in what ways?

Here's how he will augment the team.

Star couple reunites

Tim Stutzle has been an absolute force this season since Tkachuk went down, with 11 goals, 21 points in 20 games sans his captain. Nevertheless, you have to think Stutzle will be better with his partner in scoring crime on his left flank. No shade on David Perron or Nick Cousins, who have been plugging the hole, but they are not in the stratosphere with Tkachuk.

In their careers together, Tkachuk has set Stutzle up 29 times (22 primary assists) while Stutzle has set up Tkachuk 57 times (30 primary assists).

Stutzle's dynamism as a skater can be hard to match, especially for a bigger guy like Tkachuk; but Tkachuk's injury forced him to work with the Senators' skating coach a couple times a week on power skating, including bag skating.

"The No. 1 thing that I feel most confident about right now is my skating," said Tkachuk.

His brother Matthew commented on their podcast that he's never seen him so fast. That might let him keep up with Stutzle even more often than in the past.

Since the 2022-23 season, Tkachuk and Stutzle have played the majority of their ice time at five-on-five together. During that time, with the pair on the ice, the Senators have outscored opponents 100-93 at five-on-five; when they are not on the ice, the team has been outscored 312-245. Even this season, the Senators have a goal differential of plus-8 with Stutzle on the ice and a minus-5 with him off.

The point is that the Senators' top line goes from good to elite with Tkachuk back with Stutzle. Ottawa's offence is 11th in goals per game, and there's every reason to expect that to improve with the captain back in the lineup.

Power-play boost

Speaking of offence, despite a hot start to the power play this season, the Senators have just 4-for-37 in their last 13 games. Tkachuk is a menace in front of the net while also utilizing his elite shot when needed. He has 120 power-play points over his career and averaging 24 per season over the last three seasons. Ottawa's struggling power play will substantially improve with Tkachuk in the lineup.

Second- and fourth-line slotting bump

An underrated aspect of Tkachuk's insertion back into the lineup is the domino effect through the rest of the lines. In hockey, the credo of "next man up" is a familiar one, and when players take on larger roles due to injury, they are also most often under-qualified for their new roles. For example, Perron has been on the top line and Lars Eller has been playing on the second line with Ridly Greig out.

Both the second and fourth lines have struggled, getting outscored all season. As the second-line centre, Dylan Cozens is a minus-11 and Eller is a minus-4. With the captain back, Perron will likely revert to a more suitable second-line role and that could be said for Eller naturally slotting back as the fourth-line centre. Depth matters to survive injuries; it also matters when you are healthy, of course.

We don't expect changes to the best third line in hockey — Michael Amadio-Shane Pinto-Claude Giroux — but both the second and fourth will be bolstered with Tkachuk back.

Presence

Tkachuk's most valuable trait is the most unquantifiable: leadership.

Tkachuk brings a quality of infectious enthusiasm for the game. His presence will be felt not just on the scoresheet but among teammates and the entire organization. He even shouted out the Senators' head athletic therapist, Dom Nicoletta, with a "Wingman of the week" award on his podcast because of his work treating and rehabbing Tkachuk through his thumb injury.

"I (also) got to give a little shout to the equipment guys, even though they provided very little over these six weeks," Tkachuk said, joking.

Assessing how good this team can be

The Senators have been really good this season; now we will finally be able to assess how good they can be. The Senators can't exhale too much with their captain back and need to avoid taking their skates off the pedal.

"The biggest one for me is the maturity and finding ways to win," said Tkachuk, referring to his team's play without him in the lineup.

"There's been games where it hasn't been the prettiest, but you find a way to get a point or squeak out winning a big two points."

It should get a lot prettier with the captain.

Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman has reported that he expects the Senators to be aggressive this season on the trade market; the brass knows their window to compete is now, into the next two or three years.

Tkachuk undoubtedly makes the Senators better and we are about to find out what the true ceiling for this Senators team is, as they strive to be a true Cup contender.

Adams' Apples

Captain Podcaster: The hockey player/podcaster Tkachuk said the opportunity to start the Wingmen podcast with brother Matthew came to his attention after the 4 Nations tournament. He alluded to the fact that there had been no active NHL players who have a podcast until now.

"If there (was) a podcast (when) we were kids coming up, playing youth hockey. ... I'd be tuning in every time," said Tkachuk.

Surgery affecting home life: Not being able to use your thumb can impact a hockey player's personal as well as professional life, something we tend to forget.

"I was useless the first couple of weeks," he joked. "I felt really bad for (wife) Emma. I couldn't really help out with (baby son) Ryder and definitely couldn't do stuff around the house."



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"Some new skills that I had to learn with my left hand," said Tkachuk.

"Brushing the teeth and stuff like that, where the first couple days probably felt like I didn't even brush them because I did such a bad job."

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TSN.CA / Leafs are thankful to have confidence-inspiring Woll in net

Mark Masters

The Maple Leafs held a practice at Capital One Arena in Washington on Thursday.

Growing up in a St. Louis suburb, Joseph Woll usually spent Thanksgiving with his dad's extended family.

"I'll miss my family for sure today," the Leafs goalie told TSN after Thursday's practice. "I haven't been home for, obviously, some years for Thanksgiving. I kind of celebrate Canadian Thanksgiving a bit now when I'm in Toronto. I didn't even realize that today was Thanksgiving until a day or two ago, because you're in Canada, right, and you don't really think about it."

Whether he marks Thanksgiving in October up north or in November down south, Woll is feeling grateful. What's he thankful for this year?

"I'd say I'm thankful for my family for starters," Woll said. "Two, thankful to be here, to have this job, to be with these guys. I think I've really grown to have a lot of gratitude for it. And, yeah, I'm just really thankful to be here, to be in my life and be a part of it with these guys."

The 27-year-old missed most of training camp and the start of the regular season this year for personal reasons. Since returning to the Leafs lineup on Nov. 15, Woll is 2-2-1 with a .921 save percentage. He played his best game of the year on Wednesday in Columbus where he turned aside 35 of 36 shots in an overtime win.

The Leafs are certainly grateful to have Woll in net right now. John Tavares passed him the team's player-of-the-game belt after Wednesday's badly-needed victory, which helped Toronto climb out of last place in the Eastern Conference.

"It was a better game on our part, but there were a few things in the third, a couple of breakdowns we had that led to some good opportunities for them, and he just made a couple of massive saves," Tavares said. "All game long he was real steady and composed and played solid. It's not always perfect, and it's just staying with it and finding a way through it and responding in some big situations, and he led the way."

The Leafs had dropped seven of eight games (1-5-2) heading into Columbus. Berube is hoping Wednesday's win will allow his team to build some confidence. Woll is certainly doing his part to help the underachieving group reclaim its swagger.

"It definitely does give the team confidence, for sure, knowing that he's back there doing his job," said Berube. "[Going] above and beyond, making the saves and giving us an opportunity to win a game. Kind of like just rubs [off on the team] and gives you more confidence to do things up the ice."

In Toronto's previous game on Saturday, Woll had been pulled in the second period after allowing four goals on 25 shots. Berube made the move to spark the team's struggling skaters and preserve his goalie's

energy level. With Anthony Stolarz out for the foreseeable future with an upper-body injury, the Leafs will be leaning on Woll.

Woll understood the move by Berube, but made a point of telling the coach he didn't like it. Woll wanted to remain in the fight with his teammates and try to help them rally.

Did getting pulled for just the second time in his NHL career create more motivation for Woll?

"Maybe a bit, yeah," he acknowledged. "Maybe a bit of extra fire coming in. But I try to keep it relatively the same going into each game regardless of if I get pulled the night before or get a shutout the night before."

Teammates appreciate the calmness and competitiveness Woll is providing.

"He's always extremely poised and confident in the net no matter what's going on or what happens," said centre Auston Matthews. "He's very focused and I think you can see that just in his demeanour and the way he asserts himself out there."

"He's been a brick wall," said winger William Nylander. "He's been unbelievable."

Woll is so locked in on the Leafs that he didn't even see Thanksgiving coming. He had planned to go shopping with teammate Matthew Knies on Thursday only to realize the store was closed.

On Friday, he'll look to close the door on the Washington Capitals. Woll is 4-0-0 in his career against Alex Ovechkin and company with three of the wins coming at Capital One Arena.

After sitting as a healthy scratch for the first time this season on Wednesday, Dakota Joshua will draw back into the Leafs lineup on Friday against the Capitals.

"Obviously it's tough," Joshua said. "You never want to be scratched, but I also take it with a grain of salt. You got to reset and come back and just be better."

What is Joshua focusing on now?

"Just being, I guess, more of a force out there, driving the play, and just making more of an overall noticeable impact," he said. "It's not so much that it's been bad, but it hasn't been much of anything, and I think that's been the problem. So, yeah, just got to find a way to make an impact."

Joshua has produced just two goals and three assists in 22 games. He's gone eight straight games without a point.

Berube wants the 6-foot-3, 218-pound winger to get back to his identity.

"He's a big guy that has to be a physical, hard player to play against," the coach noted. "He's going to make and score his goals around the net, right? So I think just a little more puck touches in the offensive zone from the forecheck and then, you know, getting to the net front and winning those battles there and tipping pucks."

Joshua does lead the team in hits (69), but has not made many momentum-changing plays.

"From our zone out, it is about anticipating and being direct — not only him, but his linemates — and putting him in a good spot on the forecheck," Berube said. "If a puck enters the zone under control, get to the net and do your work there. Disrupt the other team that way, and make it hard. They don't want to box him out. He is a big guy. He can be more engaged that way."

Joshua admits it's been tough adjusting to a new team after being traded from the Vancouver Canucks in the summer.



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"You want to come in and perform," the 29-year-old said. "So, you know, by my standards to come up short so far, you know, it's not good, but there's a lot of hockey left and my plan is to fix it."

The Leafs are hoping Joshua can get back to the level that allowed him to produce 18 goals during the 2023-24 season.

"I just felt like he needed to get a reset," Berube said. "Sometimes that puts a little more fire in him too."

Joshua skated on the third line at practice beside Nicolas Roy and Bobby McMann.

Nylander missed Thursday's practice for maintenance, but seemed to be in good spirits when spotted around the dressing room area after the workout. Berube expects Nylander, who scored the overtime winner on Wednesday, to play in Washington.

It looks like Max Domi may be a healthy scratch for the first time with the Leafs. Domi skated as a placeholder in Nylander's spot on the second line at practice beside Tavares and Easton Cowan. He also took reps in Nylander's usual spot on the power play.

Domi played on the top line on Wednesday with Matthews and Knies. His giveaway led to Columbus' only goal of the game.

Domi's minus-13 mark is the worst on the team. Joshua is second-worst at minus-eight.

"I think, positionally, he's been solid," Berube said of Domi. "I know his plus/minus doesn't say that, but I wouldn't say positioning causes a lot of that. For me, it's just getting engaged more in the game. Like, he's got to get dirty down low in the offensive zone, win battles, and get more engaged that way, and get to the inside of the ice more. That's what I see. When he's skating and moving, he's an effective player, but it's too inconsistent."

Domi has generated just three goals and three assists in 23 games. He's played mostly out of position at centre this season as the Leafs dealt with injuries to multiple middle men in Matthews, Roy and Scott Laughton.

With Matthews, Roy and Knies all returning from injury absences on Wednesday, the battle for playing time up front is suddenly stiff. The Leafs placed Sammy Blais on waivers and he was reclaimed by the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday.

Matias Maccelli was a healthy scratch on Wednesday and split reps with Domi at Thursday's practice, which suggests he will likely sit out again in Washington.

Berube prefers not to confirm lineup changes prior to game day.

Matthews, who missed the previous five games with a lower-body injury, landed three shots on net and drew a penalty while playing 24 minutes and 35 seconds in Columbus.

"I felt good," the Leafs captain said after his first game since Nov. 11. "Just tried to get my legs under me in the first half of the game. As the game went on, I felt more and more comfortable, and I thought our line had some good shifts in the O-zone and created some good opportunities. Just build from there and just try and get better and better each night."

"Matty had a good game," Berube said. "I thought he was competitive, and worked extremely hard, won a lot of battles. I thought he was good."

With Matthews back, the Leafs debuted a new five-forward look on the power play. Matthews moved from his usual spot on the flank to the top of the zone.

"It's about him getting the puck more on his stick," Berube explained. "He's got good quickness up there, and I like the way it looked today in practice, but that's practice. We've got to try to get something going here on the PP because we need our power play to help us score goals."

The Leafs power play took off last season after Mitch Marner moved to the quarterback spot, which is usually filled by a defenceman. It wasn't a foreign idea to the winger, who actually took shifts as a defenceman in 5-on-5 situations under former Leafs coach Sheldon Keefe.

The Leafs converted on 24.8 per cent of their power plays last season, which tied for eighth overall. Toronto is clicking at 15 per cent this season, which is 28th overall.

Matthews, like Marner, has been nominated for the Selke Trophy, but the pair are much different offensive players. Marner is a gifted playmaker while Matthews is one of the game's greatest goal scorers.

So, why are the Leafs moving Matthews away from the net?

"There's going to be different looks for him up top," Berube said. "I found that when he's on the flank, they take him away a lot, so he's not getting the shots. He's not getting the volume. We're not getting a puck in his hands enough and hopefully up top he gets the puck more."

"His ability to adapt to different roles or situations is as good as any player in the league," Tavares noted.

Going to a five-forward look can be risky, though. Toronto gave up a 3-on-1 chance to the Jackets during a third period power play and got bailed out by Woll.

"I think when you have five forwards, the ears perk up a little bit more for the killers," Matthews said. "So just being there and supporting each other when there's breakdowns and they're coming the other way [is key]. I think the more repetitions we get, the more comfortable we'll feel, and just try to work our way through that process, and just keep creating those chances. We had a few good looks, but I think it can definitely run a little bit smoother. I think the more repetitions we get the better we'll be."

The Leafs did not work on the power play at Tuesday's practice.

Big winger Tom Wilson leads the Capitals in goals (12), points (24) and hits (66). How rare is he in today's game?

"I don't know if there's many guys built like that," said Tavares. "A lot of speed, size, obviously physically extremely strong, and then his ability to score, play make, play in all situations. Yeah, it's a unique type of player."

"Why is it rare? It's hard to say. You know, I think we got one of our own that's pretty unique in Kniesy and what he can do from his physical attributes, obviously his skills and things he can do with the puck the way he impacts the game."

Knies was fifth on the Leafs in points last season and third in hits.

Berube thinks Wilson is "definitely" a good role model for Knies, who is still just 23. But the coach also highlighted a difference between the pair.

"Wilson came in the league as more of a, I wouldn't say an enforcer, but that was a big part of him, his identity, right, coming out of junior hockey," Berube said. "You know, Knies, he comes out of college hockey. It's a different mindset, right. But, yes, for sure, he could be that type of player to a certain extent, in my opinion."

Cowan delivered a beautiful one-timer goal late in the third period to help the Leafs force overtime in Columbus.



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"He's just got ice water in his veins," said Berube. "He doesn't feel the pressure. He just plays, and he knows his capabilities and what he can do."

Teammates were quick to highlight the degree of difficulty on Cowan's second career NHL goal.

"Shooting it from that side of the ice as a lefty is a hard shot," Nylander noted. "He put it perfectly. It was incredible."

"I didn't see it go in," said Tavares, who won a puck battle to set up the goal. "I honestly thought it was out of play for a second. And then, you know, you saw the reaction from him and it was unbelievable. Saw it on the bench, just how he was able to pick the corner like that, it was a hell of a shot."

Cowan started the season as a healthy scratch and played two games in the American Hockey League earlier this month, but now appears to have a stranglehold on not just a roster spot, but a place in the top six.

"His game has really started to kind of grow and come on," Tavares said. "You can see him, I think, getting more comfortable with the speed and the pace ... and even just getting stronger on the puck as well."

Cowan is currently occupying a spot on the top power play unit and received an early overtime shift on Wednesday. The pressure never seems to get to him.

"It's just a mindset, you know, staying positive," he explained. "Just enjoy the moment. Obviously late in the game you want to be out there and you want to help the team win, so definitely nice to score that goal. But just looking to keep building and keep getting better and keep winning hockey games."

Cowan will experience another first on Friday night as he faces Ovechkin.

"It's going to be cool," he said. "You know, another player like [Sidney] Crosby. Obviously a legend in the game, and it'll be definitely special, but just going to treat it like another game and try to get the win."

Ovechkin has scored seven goals in the last seven games, which is a big reason why the Capitals are on a 5-1-1 run.

Berube let the referees hear it after Dakota Mermis was assessed a roughing penalty in the first period on Wednesday night. The Leafs defenceman got into a skirmish with Jackets forward Zach Aston-Reese, whose helmet came off during their net-front battle.

One day later, Berube was still fuming.

"I thought it was a terrible call," Berube said. "First of all, I know you can't rip a guy's helmet off, but that wasn't intentional. They're going at it, and he got punched twice in the head already. And I get it, you want to even it up, that's fine, but then he's pulling the guy down, and his helmet comes off. It's like an accidental play. It was a tough call, I thought."

Mermis got the only penalty on the play.

Berube also expressed displeasure with Oliver Ekman-Larsson receiving an extra two minutes as part of a scrum earlier in the first period.

The Leafs killed off both questionable calls and used that as a rallying point.

"Just being resilient there and the PK getting three kills was huge," Nylander said.

Defenceman Brandon Carlo participated in his first full practice since sustaining a lower-body injury on Nov. 13. He will miss a sixth straight game on Friday.

Lines at Thursday's practice:

Knies - Matthews - Robertson

Domi/Macelli - Tavares - Cowan

Joshua - Roy - McMann

Lorentz - Laughton - Jarnkrok

Rielly - Ekman-Larsson

Benoit - McCabe

Mermis - Stecher

Myers, Carlo

Woll

Hildeby

Power play units at Thursday's practice:

QB: Matthews

Flanks: Domi/Macelli, Cowan

Middle: Tavares

Net front: Knies

QB: Ekman-Larsson

Flanks: Rielly, Roberson

Middle: McMann

Net front: Roy

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