



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

## The News & Observer

### Carolina Hurricanes goalie to have surgery, miss rest of season while rehabbing

By: Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Pyotr Kochetkov will have surgery and likely will miss the remainder of the 2025-26 season, coach Rod Brind'Amour said Monday.

Kochetkov took part in Sunday's practice session at the Lenovo Center and was believed to be the probable starter for Monday's game against the New York Rangers. But on Monday, the Hurricanes placed the young goalie on injured reserve, and Brind'Amour made the announcement a few hours before game time.

Brind'Amour said Kochetkov, 26, has been dealing with a lower-body issue all season and made the decision to undergo surgery and then rehab the rest of this season. In an interview on the Canes pregame show, he added Kochetkov had a hip ailment.

Kochetkov's surgery is another blow to the injury-riddled Hurricanes. The Canes' top forward, Seth Jarvis, and best defenseman, Jacob Slavin, remain sidelined, and their status is listed as "week to week." Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere missed Monday's game with a lower-body concern.

Despite the injuries, the Canes went into Monday's game with a 23-11-3 record, leading both the Metropolitan Division and the Eastern Conference.

Without Kochetkov, Brind'Amour said the Canes must rely on Brandon Bussi and veteran Frederik Andersen, who has had his own injury issues. Bussi, slated as Monday's starter, has been one of most remarkable stories of the NHL season, coming to the Canes off waivers from the Florida Panthers before the season and putting together a 12-1-1 record that

included a nine-game win streak that tied Cam Ward's franchise record.

Kochetkov had played in nine games this season, with a 6-2-0 record, 2.33 goals-against average and .899 save percentage. His overall record is 71-38-12 with 11 career shutouts.

"He didn't feel right all year," Brind'Amour said. "He's been playing great. That's the hard part. You can kind of fight through it, but he didn't want to take it that way, so we'll get it fixed and go from there."

Kochetkov did not play in the first 11 games of the season, making his first start Nov. 4 against the Rangers and notching a 26-save shutout.

The Canes were in the position of likely carrying three goalies this season. That's not the case anymore.

"The luxury we had is no longer a luxury," Brind'Amour said.

Brind'Amour called the season "unprecedented" in terms of the injuries. Only one defenseman, Sean Walker, has been available every game.

"We went a couple of years when we didn't have our D get any injuries," he said. "We were pretty lucky then, but now it's been all year. Every team has a certain degree of it ... We've just got to figure it out."

In other personnel moves Monday, the Canes claimed forward Noah Philp on waivers from the Edmonton Oilers while reassigning forward Bradly Nadeau to the Chicago Wolves of the AHL. Philp, 27, has 30 games of NHL experience and is a right-shot center who is effective on draws.

### How a resurgent Jackson Blake helped the Hurricanes to an OT win over the Rangers

By: Chip Alexander

Not long ago, Jackson Blake stood in a corner of the Carolina Hurricanes locker room, glumly taking the blame for making key mistakes in a late collapse and tough loss to the Florida Panthers.

That was just before the Christmas break. Since the break, the second-year forward has been at his pesky best, scoring goals in the past two games.

Blake's second goal was the biggest. It came on the power play with 12.6 seconds remaining Monday as the Canes pulled out a 3-2 victory over the New York Rangers that had Lenovo Center rumbling.

Blake, positioned in front of the net, redirected a Sebastian Aho shot past goalie Igor Shesterkin for the winner against the best road team in the NHL this season.

Just like that, Blake became the game's first star. He beamed as he was interviewed on the bench. He smiled in the locker room this night.

Reminded that it was quite the change from the aftermath from the 5-2 loss to the Panthers, Blake nodded his head.

"I mean, it's probably going to happen again in my career and it's a terrible feeling," Blake said Monday. "For me personally, it's not even a 'me' thing. You feel like you're letting your team down, and that's not what you want to do."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

"But I put it to rest. You never want that to happen but if it does, you've got to flush it because it's a long season."

Blake headed back to Minnesota, was with family for Christmas, and said he returned to Raleigh fully refreshed.

"Having the break was big for me," he said. "I didn't think about that (game) one time."

Once back, Blake scored the Canes' first goal Saturday against the Detroit Red Wings, again on a tip. It jump-started his team, which fell behind 1-0 despite a strong first period but bounced back for a 5-2 win to end a three-game winless streak.

The overtime victory Monday was a joyful end to what had been a sour day for the Hurricanes. Brind'Amour said goalie Pyotr Kochetkov would have surgery for a hip ailment and likely would be lost for the season. That was a collective body blow for a Canes team that has been hit by injury this season.

But the Canes had an answer. Brandon Bussi, the winning goalie against the Wings, was back in net and again made some sparkling stops in matching Shesterkin. Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere was unable to go Monday because of a lower-body issue, but K'Andre Miller, out Saturday, returned to play against his former team.

The Canes again fell behind 1-0 in the first period as defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov scored a power-play goal, but Carolina tied the score on Aho's power-play strike later in the period.

Jonny Brodzinski's tap-in goal in the second, after the puck hit the skate of Canes defenseman Jalen Chatfield, pushed the Rangers back in front again. But the Hurricanes again tied it in the third, as Jordan Martinook went to the front of the net and had the puck go off his skate and past Shesterkin on a Chatfield shot.

"The bounces weren't going our way and then they did, finally," Brind'Amour said.

With both goalies making key stops down the stretch – Shesterkin had 31 saves for the night – the game went to overtime.

When the Rangers' Matthew Robertson was called for tripping Taylor Hall, the Canes had a four-on-three advantage and coach Rod Brind'Amour went with four forwards on the power play: Blake, Aho, Nikolaj Ehlers and Andrei Svechnikov.

"You've got to go for it," Brind'Amour said of the strategy.

Blake, in the wrong spot at the wrong time, was hit and hurt by an Ehlers shot with 43 seconds left in the OT but did not turn for the bench.

"No, I didn't think about hopping over the boards in overtime," Blake said, smiling. "That one definitely stung and (Ehlers) apologized right after the game. It stung, but I had to go right back to the net front."

Brind'Amour grinned when told Blake said there was no way he would leave the ice in OT.

"When you're on the power play you're going to try to stay out, you know," he said. "That's just the nature of it."

And Blake having the Christmas break to re-set and then rebounding?

"Again, you're going to have ups and downs in your career and especially as a young guy it's what you take from it, the good and the bad," Brind'Amour said. "And he's done that. You can see that."

This night, Blake could celebrate the good.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

## The Athletic

### Hurricanes' Pyotr Kochetkov to have surgery, 'probably' out for season

By: Jesse Granger

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Pyotr Kochetkov will undergo surgery and is expected to miss the remainder of the season, coach Rod Brind'Amour announced on Monday.

"It's (the injury) he's been dealing with all year," Brind'Amour said. "He's decided to have surgery, so he's probably going to be out for the year. He didn't feel right all year."

Kochetkov suffered a lower-body injury in early October that forced him out of the lineup for the rest of that month. He made his season debut Nov. 4 at Madison Square Garden, shutting the New York Rangers out in a 3-0 win. In his eight starts, Kochetkov went 6-2-0 with a .899 save and 2.33 goals-against average.

"He's been playing great; that's the hard part," Brind'Amour said. "He was kind of fighting through it, but doesn't want to continue that way, so we'll get it fixed and go from there."

Top League Content

While Kochetkov will be missed, Carolina is better equipped to deal with the absence than most teams. The Hurricanes

had been running a three-goalie rotation of Kochetkov, Frederik Andersen and rookie Brandon Bussi. This means they'll rely on Andersen and Bussi more moving forward, but they're a capable tandem.

Andersen, 36, isn't off to the best start this season. His .869 save percentage and -2.08 goals saved above expected are his lowest marks in five years, but with more than 500 NHL games under his belt, he's a proven commodity.

Bussi, on the other hand, is off to an incredible start to his career. The 27-year-old undrafted rookie became the fastest goalie in NHL history to win 10 starts earlier this month, and has won 12 of his 14 starts.

The Hurricanes claimed Bussi off waivers from the Boston Bruins on Oct. 5. The Sound Beach, N.Y. native put together three impressive seasons in the American Hockey League and is now proving he has what it takes to succeed at the highest level. Bussi ranks 13th in the NHL in save percentage (.912) and 16th in goals saved above expected (13.4). If he maintains this level of play, he could be in line for a true starter's workload moving forward now that Kochetkov is out.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

## NORTH STATE JOURNAL

### Hurricanes rally, beat Rangers on Blake's OT winner | The North State Journal

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — If the universe is truly seeking balance, Monday's Hurricanes-Rangers game provided it.

Each team scored an early power play goal. Carolina forward Jordan Martinook took the blame for New York's go-ahead goal in the second period before scoring the tying goal in the third. And Hurricanes winger Jackson Blake, stung by a Nikolaj Ehlers shot on an overtime power play, got right back to the front of the net 31 seconds later and redirected in the game-winning goal in Carolina's 3-2 win.

"The bounces weren't going our way," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said, "and then they did, finally."

The biggest bounce came in overtime. With Rangers defenseman Matthew Robertson in the box for tripping, Carolina sent four forwards out for a 4-on-3 power play.

Ehlers fired one shot that hit Blake in the gut. The second-year winger, in visible pain, went back to the front of the net and got a piece of a Sebastian Aho shot. The puck fluttered past Igor Shesterkin (31 saves) to give the Hurricanes their second straight win.

"I was playing net front, so it stung, but I just had to go right back to the net front there," Blake said.

Carolina had to force overtime first. Trailing entering the third period for the first time since Dec. 7, the Hurricanes got the equalizer at 9:11 of the final full frame.

After Carolina forward William Carrier won a pair of 50-50 battles in the neutral zone and just inside the Rangers' blue line, defenseman K'Andre Miller got the puck and sent it to the opposite side boards to Jalen Chatfield.

Chatfield shot toward the net, where Shesterkin made the initial stop, but the rebound hit Jordan Martinook and slid in the net to knot the score 2-2.

"You look at all three goals we scored, it's traffic in front of him because he's one of the best in the league," said Martinook, who said he didn't even know the puck had hit him for his sixth goal of the year.

His equalizer came nearly a full period after the Rangers had taken the lead on a fortuitous bounce of their own.

A point shot by Robertson was deflected by Sam Carrick, and the puck went directly to Jonny Brodzinski, who quickly

banged it in for his fourth goal of the year and a 2-1 Rangers lead at 12:59 of the middle frame.

"I felt like that second goal was on me," Martinook said. "I just lose my guy, and he taps it in."

The teams had exchanged power play goals in the first period as the opening 20 minutes ended 1-1.

The Rangers scored first when, with Alexander Nikishin in the box, New York winger Artemi Panarin set up Vladislav Gavrikov for a one-timer that sailed over the shoulder of Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (17 saves) for a 1-0 lead 99 seconds into the game. It was Gavrikov's first career power play point.

Carolina responded with just over four minutes left in the period when Aho's shot through a screen on a 5-on-3 power play got past Shesterkin to knot the game 1-1.

"I'm trying to find a lane," said Aho, whose goal was his 14th of the season. "And obviously their D, they kind of stepped on me, and I can't shoot short side because of that. And then (Andrei Svechnikov), great job being in his eyes. He didn't see much on that shot."

That goal was the template for beating Shesterkin, who made the routine saves — and some spectacular ones — all night but couldn't overcome the traffic the Hurricanes created.

Bussi, meanwhile, was challenged early but faced just five shots after the second period, improving to 13-1-1 on the season and his career.

"Pretty good, I'd say," Aho said of the Cinderella season Bussi is having. "Yeah, he's been great. He keeps giving us a chance to win hockey games, and that's all you can ask from the goalie."

Notes: Shayne Gostisbehere, Seth Jarvis and Jaccob Slavin all missed the game with injuries. ... Pyotr Kochetkov was placed on injured reserve before the game after having hip surgery. He is expected to miss the rest of the season. ... Former Hurricanes draft pick Scott Morrow played his first game in Raleigh since being traded to the Rangers in the offseason. ... Jordan Staal finished with a season-high seven hits, six of which came in the first period. ... Jesperi Kotkaniemi won 11 of 14 faceoffs.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025



## Jackson Blake's overtime goal lifts Hurricanes past Rangers 3-2

By: Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Jackson Blake's power-play goal on a deflection 4:47 into overtime lifted the Carolina Hurricanes to a 3-2 win over the New York Rangers on Monday night.

Sebastian Aho had a goal and an assist and Jordan Martinook provided the tying goal in regulation for the Hurricanes, who've won two straight following a three-game skid. Nikolaj Ehlers had two assists. Rookie goalie Brandon Bussi stopped 17 shots to improve to 13-1-1.

Vladislav Gavrikov and Jonny Brodzinski scored for the Rangers, who've dropped back-to-back games. Igor Shesterkin made 31 saves.

The Rangers were trying to kill off the final 1:59 of overtime following a tripping penalty on Matthew Robertson. New York had won its previous three games that extended beyond regulation, but Blake deposited his fourth goal in a six-game stretch.

Bussi was in the nets unexpectedly because earlier in the day would-be starter Pyotr Kochetkov, who shut out the Rangers last month, was placed on injured reserve. Coach

Rod Brind'Amour said before the game that Kochetkov has opted for what's likely to be season-ending surgery for a lower-body injury.

The teams each scored on power plays in the first period, with Gavrikov converting 1:39 into the game. Aho's tally came late in the period with the Hurricanes on a 5-on-3 advantage.

Brodzinski put the Rangers on top in the second period. Martinook has goals in consecutive games after his tying marker with 10:49 to go in the third period.

The Rangers had only five shots on goal in each of the first and third periods.

It's the first time in three meetings this season that the home team won.

Up Next

Rangers: Wednesday at Washington

Hurricanes: Tuesday at Pittsburgh



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025



## Recap: Blake, Canes Top Rangers In Overtime

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

"It was a good game. I thought everybody played really well tonight..."

RALEIGH, N.C. - Jackson Blake's first career overtime goal was the difference on Monday, as the Carolina Hurricanes took a 3-2 victory over the New York Rangers at Lenovo Center.

A pair of power-play goals highlighted the early action, with Sebastian Aho's long-range snipe at 15:57 of the first period cancelling out Vladislav Gavrikov's second-minute opener for the Rangers. Carolina looked to capitalize on its momentum in the middle frame, but Igor Shesterkin came up with the answers in the New York net, allowing his team to reclaim its lead after a fortuitous bounce found Jonny Brodzinski at the side of the net for a tap-in at the 13-minute mark.

Entering the third in need of a goal, the Canes turned to a friendly bounce of their own, when a Jalen Chatfield shot found Jordan Martinook's skate and snuck past Shesterkin to knot things up and eventually force overtime.

The Hurricanes fired the only four shots on goal of the extra frame, three of which came on a power play after some slick work by Taylor Hall drew a man advantage that would last for the final 1:59 of the five-minute allotment. Shesterkin stood tall for much of it, but as the clock ticked down to 13 seconds, Blake stood in front of him and deflected an Aho wrist shot down and through the legs of the New York netminder for the deciding tally and a second straight Canes win.

Brandon Bussi continued his sterling start to life in the NHL, moving to 13-1-1 in his career with 17 saves on 19 shots.

### Stats & Standouts

Forward Jackson Blake scored for the second straight game and has now lit the lamp four times in his last six outings. Blake's 12 goals on the year trail only Seth Jarvis (19) and Sebastian Aho (14).

Forward Sebastian Aho posted a goal and an assist to extend his point streak to three games (1G, 3A). Aho's goal marked his 72nd career power-play tally, surpassing Kevin Dineen for the fourth-most in franchise history.

Forward Nikolaj Ehlers picked up a pair of assists, matching Jackson Blake, Logan Stankoven and K'Andre Miller for the fifth-most multi-point performances (5) among Hurricanes this season.

Goaltender Brandon Bussi became the fifth goaltender in NHL history with wins in each of his first eight home appearances from the start of his career.

In addition, Bussi has now gone 12 straight starts without a regulation loss (11-0-1), sitting one shy of matching the franchise record set by Antti Raanta (13 in 2022-23).

The Hurricanes struck twice on the power play for just the third time this season, and the second time in four games. The man advantage now has 11 conversions in its last 12 outings.

Rod Brind'Amour giving his assessment of the win...

"It was a good game. I thought everybody played really well tonight. It was just one of those (games) where the bounces weren't going our way, and then they finally did..."

Sebastian Aho discussing the team's ability to keep battling, even after falling behind twice tonight...

"We've been talking about it, and that's kind of the key to our success in past years, too. Up or down, you just keep being relentless. You can't tell if we're up or down; we just keep coming. We're a deep squad, we roll for four lines, and that's kind of how we want to do it. The last couple of games we've been able to do that, whether we are up or down, we just kind of keep going."

Sebastian Aho following a two-goal night for the power play...

"Obviously, you go through a bit of streaks, but the work never stops... If you score a few, it kind of starts clicking, and then you start feeling yourself a bit. You're not necessarily forcing plays, and you're making the right decisions. That's kind of been the case as of late."

Sebastian Aho after yet another win for Brandon Bussi...

"He's been great. He keeps giving us a chance to win hockey games. That's all you can ask from a goalie. It's been a great ride. I've seen it for a long time, but he's kind of now taking that step. He's been really calm and collected in the big moments."

### What's Next After This Game?

The Canes will fly to Pittsburgh post-game to wrap up their back-to-back on Tuesday against the Penguins.

Next Game: Tuesday, Dec. 30 at Pittsburgh | 7:00 p.m. ET | FDSNSO

Next Home Game: Thursday, Jan. 1 vs. Montreal | 7:00 p.m. ET | FDSNSO | Tickets | Parking



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025



## Blake scores in OT, Hurricanes rally past Rangers

By: Kurt Dusterberg

Forward wins it with 13 seconds left after Martinook ties it in 3rd for Carolina

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Jackson Blake scored a power-play goal with 13 seconds left in overtime, and the Carolina Hurricanes rallied for a 3-2 win against the New York Rangers at Lenovo Center on Monday.

Blake redirected Sebastian Aho's wrist shot five-hole on Igor Shesterkin from the front of the net for his first career overtime goal.

"I had a lot of great chances tonight," Blake said. "I tried not to get frustrated with them because it's a long game and you're going to miss those grade As once in a while, but I got a lucky one on him in overtime. It feels good."

Aho and Jordan Martinook also scored, and Nikolaj Ehlers had two assists for the Hurricanes (24-11-3), who have won two in a row. Brandon Bussi made 17 saves.

"Good game. I thought everybody played really well tonight," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It was one of those (games) where the bounces weren't going our way, and then they did finally."

"Bus' didn't have a lot of work, but there were critical saves right from the first shift of the game. So, I thought he was good. Obviously, [Shesterkin] was lights out."

Vladislav Gavrikov and Jonny Brodzinski scored for the Rangers (19-17-5), who are 1-2-1 in their past four. Shesterkin made 31 saves.

"I thought we competed hard," New York coach Mike Sullivan said. "Five-on-five, we had our moments. We had some offensive zone time. Obviously, the difference in the game (is) we give up a 5-on-3 and a 4-on-3 (goal). You can't put yourself down in those circumstances. That puts us in tough spots."

Gavrikov gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead with a power-play goal at 1:39 of the first period. He collected a pass from Artemi Panarin at the top of the right face-off circle and beat Bussi with a one-timer into the top right corner.

Aho tied it 1-1 during a 5-on-3 power play at 15:57 with a wrist shot from above the left circle through a screen by Andrei Svechnikov.

"I'm trying to find a lane," Aho said. "Their 'D' kind of stepped (up) on me, so I can't shoot short side because of that. Then 'Svechy' (did) a great job being in [Shesterkin's] eyes. He didn't see much on that shot."

Brodzinski put New York up 2-1 at 13:00 of the second period. Matthew Robertson's one-timer from the blue line deflected off the stick of Sam Carrick in the slot directly to Brodzinski, who buried it into an open net behind Bussi.

Martinook tied it 2-2 at 9:11 of the third period. Jalen Chatfield sent a wrist shot to the net from the right boards that deflected off Martinook's left skate at the top of the crease and under Shesterkin.

"You've got to close out games in this League," Rangers forward Vincent Trocheck said. "The goal that goes in is just a battle in front. It goes in off a leg. It's the kind of goal you've got to be willing to score against them. They're definitely willing to score those types of goals against most teams."

NOTES: Before the game, the Hurricanes announced goalie Pyotr Kochetkov would likely be out for the season because of a lingering lower-body injury that will require surgery. ... Bussi improved to 11-0-1 in his past 12 starts and is 13-1-1 overall this season. ... Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere missed the game with an undisclosed injury. ... Aho scored his 72nd power-play goal to pass Kevin Dineen for the fourth-most in Hurricanes/Hartford Whalers history. ... Svechnikov had his five-game point streak end (three goals, six assists). ... Brodzinski has four points (two goals, two assists) in his past four games.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025



**SB NATION**  
**CANES COUNTRY**

## Hurricanes 3, Rangers 2 - OT

By: Bob Wage

It was a busy day for the Carolina Hurricanes.

First off, they claimed center Noah Philp off the waiver wire then they announced that goalie, Pyotr Kochetkov would undergo surgery, which would probably knock him out for the rest of the season.

Next up, they had to take on the New York Rangers who were looking to improve their excellent record on the road.

After a hard fought, tight game throughout, the Canes eventually pulled out the win, 3-2 as Jackson Blake tipped in the game-winner with just 12 seconds left in the extra period.

The game started out with New York getting a couple of odd man rushes that goalie Brandon Bussi was able to stop.

Bussi played another excellent game and it sure appears he is the team's undisputed, number one goalie at this point.

The win moved him to a 13-1-1 record. He has an NHL best 2.08 GAA and a save percentage of .911.

The Rangers took a 1-0 lead during a powerplay opportunity just a minute and change into the game.

The Canes tied it up with a Sebastian Aho powerplay goal later in the period. It was Aho's 14th goal of the season. He leads the team with 35 points in 38 games played.

The Rangers would take the lead once again in the second but Jordan Martinook deflected a shot in front of the net to tie things up in the third.

The Canes drew a penalty in the overtime period and Brind'Amour put four forwards out to get the job done.

It took them until 12 seconds were left, but Blake tipped in an Aho shot for the win.

The win kept the Hurricanes at first place in the East with a 24-11-3 record good for 51 points.

They traveled to Pittsburgh right after the game and will battle the Penguins on Tuesday night.

Brind'Amour has shaken up the lines a lot due to the multiple injuries.

Alexander Nikishin had been paired with Sean Walker the past two games and again had a team high ice time. This game it was 24:17

The coach also moved Logan Stankoven from second line center, to first line winger while Jesperi Kotkaniemi moved to second line center.

Brind'Amour switched Stankovan with Eric Robinson in the third period.

When asked about the change after the game, the coach said "The speed and the size, he's effective."

I asked coach about changing Stankoven to the wing position from center and apparently it is just a temporary change.

"Well, we're missing "Jarvy". Obviously, he's a very talented player. It makes sense to put him in that spot, somewhere. And obviously we are shuffling all the time but I see him as being center here once everyone is healthy."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

## The Hockey News

### 5 Takeaways: Hurricanes Stick With It, Defeat Rangers In Overtime

By: Ryan Henkel

Carolina battled back from a deficit, dominating net-front play and seeing key players step up en route to a thrilling overtime victory.

Two days ago, the Carolina Hurricanes once again proved they could indeed hold a lead and on Monday, the team proved that it can still overcome a deficit too.

The Canes entered the third period down a goal, but managed to tilt the ice, find the equalizer and get the job done in overtime.

Here are five takeaways from the win:

Blake's clutch overtime goal sealed a comeback win. Hear from the Hurricanes stars on their thrilling victory over the Rangers.

thehockeynews.com'You Have To Just Go For It': Jackson Blake, Jordan Martinook, Sebastian Aho, Rod Brind'Amour On OT Win Over RangersBlake's clutch overtime goal sealed a comeback win. Hear from the Hurricanes stars on their thrilling victory over the Rangers.

#### 1. Net-Front Traffic

Carolina knew that they were in for an uphill battle with the New York Rangers coming to town because that meant a date with Igor Shesterkin, who has routinely been one of the league's best netminders.

To counter that, the team knew they needed to get to the front of the net and take away his eyes (easier said than done), but it was clear that the Hurricanes were committed to creating that traffic last night.

All three of the Canes' goals came as a result of traffic in front.

Sebastian Aho's first-period, power play goal was possible due to Andrei Svechnikov's screen in front, Jordan Martinook got a lucky bounce for the third-period equalizer because he took up position in front of the crease and Jackson Blake's game-winning tip was possible due to his net-front presence.

It's one of the best ways to score in this league and that's especially evident when you saw just how many tremendous looks the team had that Shesterkin simply wasn't getting beat on.

"When you're playing Shesterkin, you need to get in front of him," Martinook said. "Look at all three goals we scored, it's traffic in front of him."

#### 2. Eric Robinson's Bump Up

Following Sunday's practice, Rod Brind'Amour said that there was still "more there" for Eric Robinson in terms of opportunity with Carolina based on his recent play and what the team believes he's capable of.

Last night, Robinson was awarded with that increased opportunity, getting a bump up in the third period onto a line with Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov.

"Great player," Aho said. "Works hard, smart and has a lot of speed and obviously he's scored as of late too. Like him a lot."

The trio were dominant for Carolina, outchancing the Rangers 11-4 in the third period and controlling an 80% expected goals for percentage.

While Robinson saw his three-game goal streak and four-game point streak come to an end, it was clear that he didn't look out of place at all filling in on the top line.

"Speed and size," Brind'Amour said when asked what Robinson brings to the top line. "And he's just effective. I don't know how else to say it. Obviously he's kind of been scoring some goals lately too. Just thought maybe they could use a little more of that size to just create a little more energy. That was about it."

#### 3. The Comfort Line

No matter what, the Jordan Staal line just always seems to come through.

Since the return of Jordan Martinook and William Carrier back into the lineup, the trio has been back to their strong play, leading by example and helping to stabilize their team and drag them into fights.

Some nights, it's just about grinding away the opposition's best players and generating zone time, but the three have been providing some consistent offense as of late too.

Monday night, the three did just that, as they earned the eventual equalizer that the Canes needed to defeat the Rangers.

Carrier did the work in the neutral zone to win a puck and then did the same thing to keep the zone off of the wall and then Martinook was in front to get a fortunate bounce.

"They got us the big one to get us into overtime," Brind'Amour said. "Three guys that just do it right."

#### 4. OT PP Deployment

Without top PPQB Shayne Gostisbehere (word is he's dealing with a tweaked groin), the Hurricanes elected to go with a four forward power play deployment for their overtime man advantage.

The Canes went with Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov, Nikolaj Ehlers and Jackson Blake and they were ultimately rewarded for it as the four stayed out on the ice for 1:46 until they eventually got the game winner.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

It could be potentially seen as a risk to not have a defenseman back there, but Brind'Amour's philosophy in going with four forwards was hands down the best one.

"You're not really worried about giving up one," Brind'Amour said. "Like, you have to just go for it. A little new to them, because we hadn't really practiced that, but thankfully we had a couple of timeouts in that segment to kind of restructure it a little bit and then you just let the talent take over and that's basically what happened."

## 5. A Myriad Of Standout Performances

There were a few players who I want to make note of for their performances:

I thought this was one of Mike Reilly's best games. Perhaps a touch shaky early, but I thought the more the game went on, the better he got. I especially liked the way he used his size and physicality to win possession and facilitate clears last night and he wasn't afraid to jump in offensively too.

Brandon Bussi just continues to impress. He's now up to 13 wins in 15 starts and again, he was making those really big, timely saves. I think back to the shorthanded save on Raddysh, the kick out save on Lafreniere, the save on Cuyille and Laba at the start... really there was just a lot to like about his game.

Andrei Svechnikov didn't get on the stat sheet tonight, but I thought he was all over it. His line in general was great, but I definitely noticed him all night long. He had a team high nine shot attempts.

Shoutout to Sebastian Aho in the faceoff dot. The Finnish center was matched up against Vincent Trocheck who's one of the league's best and he still won 58% of draws, including three straight in overtime to facilitate the eventual game winner.

Speaking of faceoff dominance, Jesperi Kotkaniemi went 11-for-14.

Season high in hits last night for Jordan Staal, who was credited with seven.

## 'You Have To Just Go For It': Jackson Blake, Jordan Martinook, Sebastian Aho, Rod Brind'Amour On OT Win Over Rangers

By: Ryan Henkel

Blake's clutch overtime goal sealed a comeback win. Hear from the Hurricanes stars on their thrilling victory over the Rangers.

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the New York Rangers 3-2 in overtime Monday night at Lenovo Center.

Despite trailing 1-0 and 2-1 at different points, the Canes just kept pushing, eventually forcing overtime where Jackson Blake netted the game-winner.

After the game, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour along with Blake, Jordan Martinook and Sebastian Aho spoke with the media. Here's what they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On Jackson Blake providing net-front traffic even after taking a shot to the midsection: You're on the power play, so you're going to try and stay out. That's just the nature of it. He was again, good. Obviously big on that goal. I thought everybody played really well tonight. It was just one of those games where the bounces weren't going our way and then they did, finally. They got theirs on a bounce... it was funny, it was the whole game, we give up the chances, a couple of breakaways. The first shift of the game was a bad bounce. Bus didn't have a lot of work, but those were critical saves in the first shift of the game, first couple of shifts. I thought he was good. Obviously their goalie was lights out.

On Blake bouncing back from his tough outing before the break: Again, you're going to have ups and downs as a player in your career, but especially a young guy, so it's about what you take from it. The good and the bad and he's done that, you can see.

On the Jordan Staal line: They had the one bad bounce for the second goal against. Bounces off three people and goes in the net and so you're just like, 'Okay.' Then they get us the big one to get us into overtime. Three guys that just do it right.

On Eric Robinson getting the bump up to the top line in the third period: Speed and size. And he's just effective. I don't know how else to say it. Obviously he's kind of been scoring some goals lately too. Just thought maybe they could use a little more of that size to just create a little more energy. That was about it.

On Sebastian Aho shooting more tonight: On the power play, for sure. I thought he had a tough matchup with Trocheck too on the faceoffs, but I thought he did a really nice job. It's a very, very crucial part of the game if you're always starting without the puck. It felt like he was winning some faceoffs. That kind of evened that out and then a shot-first mentality paid off.

On Logan Stankoven moving back to winger: Well we're missing Jarvy. He's obviously a very, very talented player, Stanker, and so it makes sense to put him in that spot somewhere. We were obviously shuffling lines, all the time you end up doing that, but I see him as ending up being a center here when everyone gets healthy.

On going with a four-forward power play in OT: Well you're missing Ghost, so you put those guys out there, I feel our best offensive guys, and you're not really worried about giving up one. Like, you have to just go for it. A little new to them, because we hadn't really practiced that, but thankfully we had a couple of timeouts in that segment to kind of restructure it a little bit and then you just let the talent take over and that's basically what happened.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

On none of the power play units tonight really having had any time together: Maybe that's the key, right?

Jackson Blake

On if the key to the game was just staying patient against a good goaltender: Yeah. I remember last game, I think I had like seven shots maybe? Just a lot of grade-As and he's just so good. So it was just about sticking with it. I had some great chances tonight. I try not to get frustrated with them because it's a long game and you're always going to miss some grade-As every once in a while. But I got a lucky one on him in overtime and it feels good.

On if he thought about heading off after taking a shot to the midsection right before his eventual winner: No, I didn't think about hopping back over the boards in overtime there. That one definitely stung a little bit. Fly apologized right after the game and I said, 'No worries. Not your fault. I pretty much got in your way of your shot.' Yeah, I mean, I was playing net front, so it stung, but I just had to go right back to the net front there."

On how fast does the pain face once the adrenaline kicks in: The first five seconds when the puck went out and they were coming back, I was kind of hustling, trying my best to get to the blueline and stay onside. Right when I got back in front of the net there, you don't even feel it, especially when you score. You don't really feel it anymore.

On Brandon Bussi making big saves for the team: That's just who Bus is. He's done that all year for us. So many big saves too. Like breakaways, 2-on-1s and all these saves. I honestly don't know how he does it. Confidence is big to have in your goalie, all of our goalies, but especially when he's in the net, we have a lot of confidence right now.

On Jordan Staal's line getting the team back into the game: That's what they do. That's why Roddy loves them so much. They're always clawing and doing it right and playing the way that we want to play. That's just a prime example of getting rewarded for going to the right spot. I don't even know if he knew he scored, but just being in the right area, that's what happens and that's what they do best. I would not want to play against that line, that's for sure.

Jordan Martinook

On his line: I felt like in the second, we couldn't really get anything going. Didn't really get much of a forecheck and then in the third, it was just a weird period. It felt like we didn't even really get out there that much and then Will did a great job of getting on the wall there, keeping it in and then obviously when you're playing Shesterkin, you need to get in front of him. Look at all three goals we scored, it's traffic in front of him. He's one of the best in the league. Obviously on Fishy's goal, Svech is there and then on mine, I was just getting in front of him and hoping it finds a way in and then Blaker, a big goal at the end there.

On if he knows which part of him his goal went in off of: I didn't even know. They just came and said, 'Atta, boy!' I didn't even know it hit me. I'll take it.

On the team: Obviously I felt like that second goal was one me. I just lose my guy and he taps it in. That's something that I need to be better at and then just as a group, I felt like we, even at the start of the third, we were trying to get pucks to the net, but we weren't getting a ton of action and then probably about the 12 minute mark, it flipped and we were getting a lot of action, had a couple of good shifts down there. Then when we tied it up, I felt like it was a good period by both teams. Good game, glad we came out with two points.

Sebastian Aho

On the power play starting to connect more often: Obviously it's kind of day-by-day. You go through streaks, but obviously the work never stops. You try to score basically on every power play and obviously there's killers that try to not let us score, but obviously it helps when you score a few and it kind of starts clicking and you start feeling yourself a little bit. You're not forcing the plays and you're making the right decisions and that kind of has been the case as of late. We just have to keep going with this momentum.

On if he saw Shesterkin leaning the opposite way on his goal: No, not really. I'm just trying to find a lane and their D kind of stepped on me, so I couldn't shoot shortside because of that. Svechy did a great job of taking away his eyes. He didn't see much on that shot, but I don't really watch the goalie. I'm trying to more so look for the open lane.

On Jackson Blake's net-front presence: That's the guy who a lot of time scores the goals on the power play. He did a great job of being at the net and that got us the gam-winner, him tipping it in. Good job by him.

On Brandon Bussi: Pretty good, I'd say. He's been great. Obviously keeps giving us a chance to win hockey games and that's all you can ask for from a goalie. Goalies are like that. It's been a great ride, but obviously it's not just. I see it's going to be a long time in this league. He's taking that next step and he's been really calm and collected in the big moments. Good for him.

On the team battling back after trailing heading into the third: We've been talking about it. It's kind of been our key for success in past years too. To kind of, up or down, keep working and keep being relentless. You can't really tell if we're up or down, we just keep coming and obviously we're a deep squad, we roll four lines and it's kind of how we want to do it. The last couple of games we've been able to do that. Up or down, we just keep going.

On Eric Robinson getting the bump up to his line: Great player. Works hard, smart and has a lot of speed and obviously he's scored as of late too. Like him a lot.

## Hurricanes Claim Young Centerman Off Of Waivers From Edmonton

By: Ryan Henkel

Carolina snatches center Noah Philp. Can his faceoff prowess and grit be a fit for the Hurricanes' depth needs?



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

The Carolina Hurricanes have claimed 27-year-old center Noah Philp off of waivers from the Edmonton Oilers.

Philp, 27, has played in 15 games so far this season with the Oilers, but most notably is a right-handed center with size.

"I can't tell you too much on him, but we've been looking for that for a while," Brind'Amour said on acquiring a righty.

The 6-foot-3, 200-pound forward has registered two goals and three points in that span and also has won 57% of the faceoffs he's taken and has put up 24 hits.

Over his professional career, Philp has appeared in 30 NHL games (2g, 5pts) and 130 AHL games (38g, 72pts).

Philp could be a decent depth bet for the Canes, as the team has been searching long and hard for a right-handed faceoff man.

There is no current timeline for getting Philip to Raleigh, as he'll need to acquire a U.S. work visa prior to suiting up for the team.

## LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article314040683.html>  
<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article314030465.html>  
<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6927863/2025/12/29/pyotr-kochetkov-can-es-injury-season-ending-surgery/>  
<https://nsionline.com/article/2025/12/hurricanes-rally-beat-rangers-on-blakes-ot-winner/>  
<https://www.wralsportsfan.com/jackson-blake-s-overtime-goal-lifts-hurricanes-past-rangers-3-2/22293146/>  
<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-blake-can-es-top-rangers-in-overtime>  
<https://www.nhl.com/news/new-york-rangers-carolina-hurricanes-game-recap-december-29-2025>  
<https://www.canescountry.com/2010-11-carolina-hurricanes-game-recaps/52587/hurricanes-3-rangers-2-ot>  
<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/game-day/5-takeaways-hurricanes-stick-with-it-defeat-rangers-in-overtime>  
<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/game-day/you-have-to-just-go-for-it-jackson-blake-jordan-martinook-sebastian-aho-on-overtime-win-over-rangers>  
<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/hurricanes-claim-young-centerman-off-of-waivers-from-edmonton>

# SportScan

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

1373407 Carolina Hurricanes

How a resurgent Jackson Blake helped the Hurricanes to an OT win over the Rangers

Chip Alexander6-7 minutes 30/12/2025

Not long ago, Jackson Blake stood in a corner of the Carolina Hurricanes locker room, glumly taking the blame for making key mistakes in a late collapse and tough loss to the Florida Panthers.

That was just before the Christmas break. Since the break, the second-year forward has been at his pesky best, scoring goals in the past two games.

Blake's second goal was the biggest. It came on the power play with 12.6 seconds remaining Monday as the Canes pulled out a 3-2 victory over the New York Rangers that had Lenovo Center rumbling.

Blake, positioned in front of the net, redirected a Sebastian Aho shot past goalie Igor Shesterkin for the winner against the best road team in the NHL this season.

Just like that, Blake became the game's first star. He beamed as he was interviewed on the bench. He smiled in the locker room this night.

Reminded that it was quite the change from the aftermath from the 5-2 loss to the Panthers, Blake nodded his head.

"I mean, it's probably going to happen again in my career and it's a terrible feeling," Blake said Monday. "For me personally, it's not even a 'me' thing. You feel like you're letting your team down, and that's not what you want to do.

"But I put it to rest. You never want that to happen but if it does, you've got to flush it because it's a long season."

Blake headed back to Minnesota, was with family for Christmas, and said he returned to Raleigh fully refreshed.

"Having the break was big for me," he said. "I didn't think about that (game) one time."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

Once back, Blake scored the Canes' first goal Saturday against the Detroit Red Wings, again on a tip. It jump-started his team, which fell behind 1-0 despite a strong first period but bounced back for a 5-2 win to end a three-game winless streak.

The overtime victory Monday was a joyful end to what had been a sour day for the Hurricanes. Brind'Amour said goalie Pyotr Kochetkov would have surgery for a hip ailment and likely would be lost for the season. That was a collective body blow for a Canes team that has been hit by injury this season.

But the Canes had an answer. Brandon Bussi, the winning goalie against the Wings, was back in net and again made some sparkling stops in matching Shesterkin. Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere was unable to go Monday because of a lower-body issue, but K'Andre Miller, out Saturday, returned to play against his former team.

The Canes again fell behind 1-0 in the first period as defenseman Vladislav Kavrikov scored a power-play goal, but Carolina tied the score on Aho's power-play strike later in the period.

Jonny Brodzinski's tap-in goal in the second, after the puck hit the skate of Canes defenseman Jalen Chatfield, pushed the Rangers back in front again. But the Hurricanes again tied it, as Jordan Martinook went to the front of the net and got the puck past Shesterkin at 9:11 of the third.

"The bounces weren't going our way and then they did, finally," Brind'Amour said.

With both goalies making key stops down the stretch – Shesterkin had 31 saves for the night – the game went to overtime.

When the Rangers' Matthew Roberson was called for tripping Taylor Hall, the Canes had a four-on-three advantage and coach Rod Brind'Amour went with four forwards on the power play: Blake, Aho, Nikolaj Ehlers and Andrei Svechnikov.

"You've got to go for it," Brind'Amour said of the strategy.

Blake, in the wrong spot at the wrong time, was hit and hurt by an Ehlers shot but did not turn for the bench.

"No, I didn't think about hopping over the boards in overtime," Blake said, smiling. "That one definitely stung and (Ehlers) apologized right after the game. It stung, but I had to go right back to the net front."

Brind'Amour grinned when told Blake said there was no way he would leave the ice in OT.

"When you're on the power play you're going to try to stay out, you know," he said. "That's just the nature of it."

And Blake having the Christmas break to re-set and then rebounding?

"Again, you're going to have ups and downs in your career and especially as a young guy it's what you take from it, the good and the bad," Brind'Amour said. "And he's done that. You can see that."

This night, Blake could celebrate the good.

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

In more than 40 years at The N&O, Chip Alexander has covered the N.C. State, UNC, Duke and East Carolina beats, and now is in his 15th season on the Carolina Hurricanes beat. Alexander, who has won numerous writing awards at the state and national level, covered the Hurricanes' move to North Carolina in 1997 and was a part of The N&O's coverage of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup run.

News Observer LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373408 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes goalie to have surgery, miss rest of season while rehabbing

Chip Alexander 4-5 minutes 29/12/2025

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Pyotr Kochetkov will have surgery and likely will miss the remainder of the 2025-26 season, coach Rod Brind'Amour said Monday.

Kochetkov took part in Sunday's practice session at the Lenovo Center and was believed to be the probable starter for Monday's game against the New York Rangers. But on Monday, the Hurricanes placed the young goalie on injured reserve, and Brind'Amour made the announcement a few hours before game time.

Brind'Amour said Kochetkov, 26, has been dealing with a lower-body issue all season and made the decision to undergo surgery and then rehab the rest of this season. In an interview on the Canes pregame show, he added Kochetkov had a hip ailment.

Kochetkov's surgery is another blow to the injury-riddled Hurricanes. The Canes' top forward, Seth Jarvis, and best defenseman, Jaccob Slavin, remain sidelined, and their status is listed as "week to week." Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere missed Monday's game with a lower-body concern.

Despite the injuries, the Canes went into Monday's game with a 23-11-3 record, leading both the Metropolitan Division and the Eastern Conference.

Without Kochetkov, Brind'Amour said the Canes must rely on Brandon Bussi and veteran Frederik Andersen, who has had his own injury issues. Bussi, slated as Monday's starter, has been one of most remarkable stories of the NHL season, coming to the Canes off waivers from the Florida Panthers before the season and putting together a 12-1-1 record that included a nine-game win streak that tied Cam Ward's franchise record.

Kochetkov had played in nine games this season, with a 6-2-0 record, 2.33 goals-against average and .899 save percentage. His overall record is 71-38-12 with 11 career shutouts.

"He didn't feel right all year," Brind'Amour said. "He's been playing great. That's the hard part. You can kind of fight through it, but he didn't want to take it that way, so we'll get it fixed and go from there."

Kochetkov did not play in the first 11 games of the season, making his first start Nov. 4 against the Rangers and notching a 26-save shutout.

The Canes were in the position of likely carrying three goalies this season. That's not the case anymore.

"The luxury we had is no longer a luxury," Brind'Amour said.

Brind'Amour called the season "unprecedented" in terms of the injuries. Only one defenseman, Sean Walker, has been available every game.

"We went a couple of years when we didn't have our D get any injuries," he said. "We were pretty lucky then, but now it's been all year. Every team has a certain degree of it ... We've just got to figure it out."

This story was originally

Published December 29, 2025 at 5:39 PM.

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

In more than 40 years at The N&O, Chip Alexander has covered the N.C. State, UNC, Duke and East Carolina beats, and now is in his 15th season on the Carolina Hurricanes beat. Alexander, who has won numerous writing awards at the state and national level, covered the



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

Hurricanes' move to North Carolina in 1997 and was a part of The N&O's coverage of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup run.

News Observer LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373409 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes rally, beat Rangers on Blake's OT winner

Cory Lavalette5-6 minutes 30/12/2025

RALEIGH — If the universe is truly seeking balance, Monday's Hurricanes-Rangers game provided it.

Each team scored an early power play goal. Carolina forward Jordan Martinook took the blame for New York's go-ahead goal in the second period before scoring the tying goal in the third. And Hurricanes winger Jackson Blake, stung by a Nikolaj Ehlers shot on an overtime power play, got right back to the front of the net 31 seconds later and redirected in the game-winning goal in Carolina's 3-2 win.

"The bounces weren't going our way," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said, "and then they did, finally."

The biggest bounce came in overtime. With Rangers defenseman Matthew Robertson in the box for tripping, Carolina sent four forwards out for a 4-on-3 power play.

Ehlers fired one shot that hit Blake in the gut. The second-year winger, in visible pain, went back to the front of the net and got a piece of a Sebastian Aho shot. The puck fluttered past Igor Shesterkin (31 saves) to give the Hurricanes their second straight win.

"I was playing net front, so it stung, but I just had to go right back to the net front there," Blake said.

Carolina had to force overtime first. Trailing entering the third period for the first time since Dec. 7, the Hurricanes got the equalizer at 9:11 of the final full frame.

After Carolina forward William Carrier won a pair of 50-50 battles in the neutral zone and just inside the Rangers' blue line, defenseman K'Andre Miller got the puck and sent it to the opposite side boards to Jalen Chatfield.

Chatfield shot toward the net, where Shesterkin made the initial stop, but the rebound hit Jordan Martinook and slid in the net to knot the score 2-2.

"You look at all three goals we scored, it's traffic in front of him because he's one of the best in the league," said Martinook, who said he didn't even know the puck had hit him for his sixth goal of the year.

His equalizer came nearly a full period after the Rangers had taken the lead on a fortuitous bounce of their own.

A point shot by Robertson was deflected by Sam Carrick, and the puck went directly to Jonny Brodzinski, who quickly banged it in for his fourth goal of the year and a 2-1 Rangers lead at 12:59 of the middle frame.

"I felt like that second goal was on me," Martinook said. "I just lose my guy, and he taps it in."

The teams had exchanged power play goals in the first period as the opening 20 minutes ended 1-1.

The Rangers scored first when, with Alexander Nikishin in the box, New York winger Artemi Panarin set up Vladislav Gavrikov for a one-timer that sailed over the shoulder of Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (17 saves)

for a 1-0 lead 99 seconds into the game. It was Gavrikov's first career power play point.

Carolina responded with just over four minutes left in the period when Aho's shot through a screen on a 5-on-3 power play got past Shesterkin to knot the game 1-1.

"I'm trying to find a lane," said Aho, whose goal was his 14th of the season. "And obviously their D, they kind of stepped on me, and I can't shoot short side because of that. And then (Andrei Svechnikov), great job being in his eyes. He didn't see much on that shot."

That goal was the template for beating Shesterkin, who made the routine saves — and some spectacular ones — all night but couldn't overcome the traffic the Hurricanes created.

Bussi, meanwhile, was challenged early but faced just five shots after the second period, improving to 13-1-1 on the season and his career.

"Pretty good, I'd say," Aho said of the Cinderella season Bussi is having. "Yeah, he's been great. He keeps giving us a chance to win hockey games, and that's all you can ask from the goalie."

Notes: Shayne Gostisbehere, Seth Jarvis and Jacob Slavin all missed the game with injuries. ... Pyotr Kochetkov was placed on injured reserve before the game after having hip surgery. He is expected to miss the rest of the season. ... Former Hurricanes draft pick Scott Morrow played his first game in Raleigh since being traded to the Rangers in the offseason. ... Jordan Staal finished with a season-high seven hits, six of which came in the first period. ... Jesperi Kotkanieni won 11 of 14 faceoffs.

The North State Journal LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373410 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes goalie Kochetkov to have surgery, likely out for season

Cory Lavalette4-5 minutes 29/12/2025

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes' injury bug has taken another bite.

Goaltender Pyotr Kochetkov, who has been in and out of the lineup all season with a lingering lower-body injury, will have surgery and likely miss the rest of the season, coach Rod Brind'Amour said before Monday's game against the New York Rangers.

"It's what he's been dealing with all year," Brind'Amour said. "He's decided to have surgery. So he's going to be out for, probably for the year."

Kochetkov is 6-2-0 with a 2.33 goals-against average, .899 save percentage and shutout in nine appearances this season. The 26-year-old Russian has the rest of this season and one more year remaining on a four-year, \$8 million contract he signed in November 2022.

"He didn't feel right all year, he's been dealing with it," Brind'Amour said of Kochetkov. "He's been playing great, so that's the hard part because he's been kind of fighting through it. But he just doesn't want to continue that way. So we'll get it fixed and go from there."

The loss solidifies Brandon Bussi, who 2½ months ago had never played an NHL game, as the team's No. 1 goalie. Bussi, 27, has been one of the surprises of the season, going 12-1-1 in his first 14 starts and catapulting past Kochetkov and Frederik Andersen as the Hurricanes' top option in net.

Andersen, meanwhile, has stumbled to a 5-8-2 record with an .869 save percentage, and he is winless in his last seven starts. The 36-year-old,



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

who has 313 career regular season wins, has never finished a season with a losing record and will now join Bussi as the team's tandem in net.

"We're going to need him," Brind'Amour said of Andersen. "The luxury we had is no longer a luxury anymore, where we had three guys to rely on. Now it's, 'Nope.' It's pretty clear we've got these two guys, and they've got to figure it out.

"That's it's been kind of our motto here all year: No matter who's going in, you've to figure it out."

The Hurricanes have battled injuries all season. Defenseman Jaccob Slavin has played in just five games, finally returning from a lower-body injury and playing three games only to suffer an upper-body injury on Dec. 19. Top goal scorer Seth Jarvis, like Slavin, is week to week with an injury suffered in the same game. Only one defenseman, Sean Walker, has played in all of Carolina's games, and just seven Hurricanes players in all have suited up in all 37.

"This is kind of unprecedented," Brind'Amour said. "We went a couple years ago when we didn't have our D get any injuries, so we were pretty lucky, and now it's been all year. Every team has certain degree of it. ... But you've got to figure it out."

The Hurricanes will have to overcome the Kochetkov injury for the balance of the season, but the team has still managed to climb to the top of the Eastern Conference and Metropolitan Division, boasting a 23-11-3 record that is fourth best in the NHL.

"It's testament to the guys that are playing every night," Brind'Amour said. "They're battling through their stuff and just figuring it out, right? I think the guys we are throwing in there, that we've talked about, really, they're playing in situations that we would never thought they'd be playing in, but we don't have a choice. And they're done a great job, so that's going to have to continue."

Notes: The Hurricanes claimed center Noah Philp off waivers from the Oilers. ... Carolina recalled defenseman Gavin Bayreuther before the game, and Brind'Amour said the team had a couple of defensemen questionable for the game against the Rangers.

The North State Journal LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373411 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' Pyotr Kochetkov to have surgery, 'probably' out for season

Jesse Granger 2-3 minutes 30/12/2025

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Pyotr Kochetkov will undergo surgery and is expected to miss the remainder of the season, coach Rod Brind'Amour announced on Monday.

"It's (the injury) he's been dealing with all year," Brind'Amour said. "He's decided to have surgery, so he's probably going to be out for the year. He didn't feel right all year."

Kochetkov suffered a lower-body injury in early October that forced him out of the lineup for the rest of that month. He made his season debut Nov. 4 at Madison Square Garden, shutting the New York Rangers out in a 3-0 win. In his eight starts, Kochetkov went 6-2-0 with a .899 save and 2.33 goals-against average.

"He's been playing great; that's the hard part," Brind'Amour said. "He was kind of fighting through it, but doesn't want to continue that way, so we'll get it fixed and go from there."

While Kochetkov will be missed, Carolina is better equipped to deal with the absence than most teams. The Hurricanes had been running a three-goalie rotation of Kochetkov, Frederik Andersen and rookie Brandon Bussi. This means they'll rely on Andersen and Bussi more moving forward, but they're a capable tandem.

Andersen, 36, isn't off to the best start this season. His .869 save percentage and -2.08 goals saved above expected are his lowest marks in five years, but with more than 500 NHL games under his belt, he's a proven commodity.

Bussi, on the other hand, is off to an incredible start to his career. The 27-year-old undrafted rookie became the fastest goalie in NHL history to win 10 starts earlier this month, and has won 12 of his 14 starts.

The Hurricanes claimed Bussi off waivers from the Boston Bruins on Oct. 5. The Sound Beach, N.Y. native put together three impressive seasons in the American Hockey League and is now proving he has what it takes to succeed at the highest level. Bussi ranks 13th in the NHL in save percentage (.912) and 16th in goals saved above expected (13.4). If he maintains this level of play, he could be in line for a true starter's workload moving forward now that Kochetkov is out.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373529 Websites

The Athletic / World Juniors Day 4: McKenna, Hagens break out, Jiricek front-runner for top D

By Scott Wheeler and Corey Pronman

Day 4 at the World Juniors was a big one, with arguably the tournament's top six teams all in action across four games, including two really good ones.

Here are The Athletic's daily takeaways and standouts from prospects writers Corey Pronman and Scott Wheeler.

Sweden defeated Germany 8-1. Anton Frondell (CHI) scored twice and had a game-high nine shots on goal. Viggo Bjorck (2026) also scored twice. Leo Sahlin Wallenius (SJS) had two assists and was named Sweden's player of the game.

Czechia defeated Finland 2-1 in overtime in one of the best and most consequential early games of the tournament. Adam Jiricek (STL) scored the winner and played nearly 26 minutes. Emil Hemming (DAL) scored Finland's lone goal.

USA beat Slovakia 6-5 in a thrilling back-and-forth game. Top Slovak draft eligible Tomas Chrenko (2026) had two goals and an assist. James Hagens (BOS) led the way for the Americans with two big goals.

Canada routed Denmark 9-1.

Bjorck and Chrenko draft stocks rising

There was a lot of talk coming into this tournament about the larger-than-usual number of top draft-eligibles who were playing this year. I think Bjorck, Sweden's second-line center, and Slovakia's Chrenko have been the most impressive of the bunch through their team's first three games.

Bjorck is Sweden's youngest player and has been one of their best. He has three goals and has averaged 18:17 per game. He was named Sweden's player of the game against Switzerland and could have been named again on Monday. He's also playing center as a 17-year-old and is 39-25 in the faceoff circle (61 percent). Bjorck has looked crafty with the puck, has flashed a ton of vision despite not yet having an assist to show for it, and has run the flank/half-wall on one of the power-play units



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

really well. He has also looked strong on pucks in battles and just seems to consistently affect play.

Sweden has him listed at 5-foot-10 (NHL Central Scouting has him at 5-9) and 176 pounds, and that's always a talking point when you're a center, but scouts are talking about it less and less with him. Early on this season, there was chatter about him going in the late first/early second, but those I've talked to recently have all been high on him. He's got skill, craft and competitiveness, and he's a top 10-15 prospect in this draft for me.

Chrenko is now up to five goals and six points in three games. He's very skilled and has an NHL shot that he has placed under the bar a few times now. He's a 5-foot-10 winger who has been productive in Slovakia's pro league this year and should be picked in the top two rounds, but might be a first-round evaluation for me. — Wheeler

Jiricek making early claim for top D

The internet was abuzz with Jiricek's highlight reel overtime winner. While it was a great high-skill play to secure a big win for the Czechs over Finland, Jiricek has been a nightly standout so far. He's been a hard, pain-in-the-ass competitor for opponents who has broken up a ton of plays while making plenty of his own offensively. The towering right shot looks like a future top-four NHL D for the Blues and is the early leader for the best defenseman in this tournament. — Pronman

ADAM JIRICEK GOES BETWEEN HIS LEGS FOR THE OVERTIME WINNER 🤪🏒

CZECHIA WINS A THRILLER IN STYLE cz #WorldJuniors  
pic.twitter.com/s7mH67VwQR

— TSN (@TSN\_Sports) December 29, 2025

Hagens, fourth line come up big for USA

Team USA's biggest contributions came from opposite ends of their lineup on Monday. Fourth-liners Brendan McMorrow (LAK) and AJ Spellacy (CHI) made plays on their first two goals of the game when they trailed early, including a big one on the penalty kill off a block from the gutsy McMorrow and a vintage drive from the powerful Spellacy. Their fourth-line linemate for the game, Will Zellers, had a goal and an assist, which gives him a team-leading four goals and six points through three games. He has been excellent after being a late invite to camp. I love his grittiness around the net.

But it was Hagens, USA's first-line center and the 2025 No. 7 pick by the Bruins, who scored two huge ones, tying the game at 4-4 in the final minute of the second period and then coming right back out to make it 5-4 in the first minute of the third period. USA's blue line looked like it badly missed No. 1 D Cole Hutson, and that puts more pressure on Hagens, who hadn't taken over yet, to carry the team until Hutson returns. Hagens seems to have a knack for rising to the occasion. He scored in the gold medal game and led Team USA's forwards in ice time at last year's World Juniors and still holds the all-time single-tournament scoring records at both U18 and U17 worlds. — Wheeler

McKenna's hat trick paces Canada

McKenna now leads the World Juniors in scoring with seven points following a great performance against Denmark. He had a hat trick, including an elite skill play on the third goal. He's been one of the best forwards to date in the tournament and a go-to player for Canada on the power play.

The biggest tests for him are up ahead with a round-robin finale against Finland and the medal round around the corner, but he's delivered as needed for Canada. Whether he can elevate at even strength in the hard games will be what evaluators will be monitoring. — Pronman

GAVIN MCKENNA, BEHAVE 🤪

THAT'S THE HAT-TRICK, AND IT'S 7-1 CANADA ca #WorldJuniors  
pic.twitter.com/xwtP3Ko0P9

— TSN (@TSN\_Sports) December 30, 2025

Day 5 schedule

Here's the schedule for Dec. 30:

Switzerland vs. Germany in St. Paul at 1 p.m. CT

Latvia vs. Denmark in Minneapolis at 3:30 p.m. CT

The Athletic LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373530 Websites

The Athletic / Is Sweden's Ivar Stenberg a contender to go No. 1 in 2026 NHL Draft? He has a case

By Scott Wheeler

Dec. 29, 2025 3:50 pm EST

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Frölunda general manager Fredrik Sjöström can only call what Ivar Stenberg has done in the SHL with his team this year "hugely impressive."

"Obviously, we were well aware of his talents before the season started, but it's one thing to think it and one thing to actually do it, and I don't know if I should say it's been above expectations, but you just never really know until you see it," Sjöstrom told The Athletic. "It has been fun to watch."

The numbers speak for themselves. When he departed Gothenburg for Minnesota to play for Sweden at the World Juniors, the 18-year-old winger was his team's leading scorer with 24 points (six goals, 18 assists) in 25 games and a plus-13 rating.

In the same number of games, that's nine points clear of the nearest U19 skater in the league, Anton Frondell, who was just taken third in the 2025 NHL Draft. If Stenberg's near-point-per-game production holds, it'll go down in history as one of the — if not the — best age-adjusted seasons ever at Sweden's top professional level, placing him in a pantheon with just one name: Markus Naslund. He's producing at a higher clip than Peter Forsberg and the Sedins did in their post-draft seasons. In a more recent context, he's already just one point shy of passing the 25 points that 2023 No. 2 pick Leo Carlsson (who, like Stenberg, was a late birthday) registered in his draft year, and he has played 19 fewer games to date.

From a purely statistical standpoint, if Frondell and Carlsson both went top three, Stenberg belongs right at the top of the draft.

But if it's going to be No. 1, his play for Sweden in the Twin Cities could make the difference. Entering the World Juniors, NHL scouts remained unconvinced by both Stenberg and Canada's Gavin McKenna, the preseason front-runner, as the top player in the class.

Stenberg opened his tournament with an assist on Sweden's first goal and the late Boxing Day game-winner in a 3-2 win over Slovakia, and added a third point on an empty-net assist against Switzerland. On Monday, Stenberg didn't register a point against Germany, but he drew two penalties, both of which led to Sweden goals by the other power-play unit, and hit a crossbar. Across three games, he has also missed three backdoor tap-ins (two against Switzerland and one against Germany), banging his stick at the bench in frustration after the third because he knows he still has more to give — and that three points in three games isn't up to his standard.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

"In Frölunda, I really like the way I've played. But in the national team, I can be better. I don't think I've created as much as I can. It's tough to go down tempo, but it'll get better the longer the tournament goes. It'll come. I know it," he said.

Sweden's head coach, Magnus Havelid, knows it's coming as well.

"It will get better and better. He's getting used to this kind of hockey again as well," Havelid said on Sunday. "It's different than the SHL and with the smaller surface and the chemistry in the unit. I'm sure he will be better. He's working hard. It's only a matter of time."

Some of the names that have been thrown around with Stenberg's can make your head spin.

He likes to compare himself to Tim Stützle, whose combination of playmaking, shooting and skating he thinks mirrors his own.

In Sweden, Sjöstrom says Nicklas Backstrom's name has been thrown out there a lot because they have the "same type of smartness." But Sjöstrom thinks Backstrom was more of a pass-first guy and that Ivar "also has a lethal shot and can be a big-time goal scorer as well."

Frölunda's head coach, Robert Ohlsson, uses Henrik Zetterberg and Mats Naslund.

Naslund for the way he reads the game.

"The way he sees the ice, his vision on the ice, and his decision-making from that is what stands out most about him. He's real top quality the way he sees the ice," Ohlsson said on a recent phone call. "I'm up to 20 years now, and I haven't had many or any players in my coaching career who can really read and see the ice like that kid."

And Zetterberg for that sense and the balance he has on his skates for a 5-foot-11, 183-pound player.

"Even if he's a little bit smaller, he's always in good balance in battles because he can anticipate where everybody is at and is going, even when it's really, really tight in the corners and stuff like that. He's always ready to find those small things," Ohlsson said. "Zetterberg had that balance on the ice, and he was really good on seeing the ice, and I think Ivar has that as well."

Coming into this year, Ohlsson didn't want to set his expectations too high for Stenberg. But when he first saw him play last year for Frölunda's under-20 junior team, he remembers thinking, "Oh, this is something extra. This is something that doesn't come around every day."

"I could tell right away when you were watching the games he played and some of the decisions and the plays he made. But I didn't know he was going to be this good in the men's. You never know with the young players, but Ivar can really play with the men's team," Ohlsson said, chuckling as if he was understating it. "I can say that!"

Stenberg's standout trait is how he controls the pace of the game when he has the puck. Sjöstrom talks about him almost as a puppeteer who pulls the strings of his opponents with his hockey sense.

"He's not the fastest guy — and he's not slow — or the strongest guy, but he plays in his own rhythm, and I think it's pretty impressive as a young kid like that playing men's hockey in a very good league in Europe," Sjöstrom said. "He just seems to have so much time. (He's) never in a hurry making plays, and I think that's his biggest attribute as a player on the ice."

He's got that same aura about him off the ice, according to both Sjöstrom and Ohlsson, too.

"He's a pretty cool guy," Sjöstrom said. "He never seems like he gets nervous, and he keeps everything on an even keel. It's impressive. I mean, look how much it has been for him off the ice already for him this season. It has just been nonstop journalists and TV. He seems to take it

in stride and doesn't get flustered, and doesn't let it get to his head either. He's really well-liked by all of the older guys on the team, and he doesn't come across as cocky or anything like that."

That calmness about him shouldn't be construed as a lack of competitiveness, though, either, they both insist.

"He's an easygoing guy, a happy guy, and socially real good. People like to hang with him, and he can hang with everybody. He smiles in his eyes and not only with his face, too, which I think is a good quality. (But) he's also really ambitious and driven," Ohlsson said.

Ohlsson only has one gripe.

"If he wants to be a really, really, top, top player in the NHL, I just tell him he has to shoot more," he said, laughing. "Hopefully, the smaller rink will add that scoring mentality a little bit. I've noticed in the last couple of weeks in the SHL here, he has started to shoot more shots, so I think he's aware of it, and he's working on it. And I think when he comes to the smaller rink, he will pretty fast adapt to that as well."

On and off the ice, Stenberg never looks like he's under the pressure that he is.

The draft?

"I have no expectations," he told The Athletic before the season started. "I can't think about it. What happens happens. I'm looking forward to making good things happen for myself."

Part of that comes from following the example his older brother, Blues forward Otto, and dad, David, a former professional player in Sweden, always set for him. Part of it comes from wanting to set the same example for his younger brother Knut, a 16-year-old defenseman for Frölunda's under-18 team.

He's happy to say he idolizes his big brother. They've always done everything together. They grew up playing on a backyard rink at their house, and his competitiveness comes from their many "big battles." They spend their summers golfing, skating, training and hanging out together. And they both took the same path from their hometown of Stenungsund on Sweden's west coast to Gothenburg with Frölunda.

He's also happy to say he wants to be better than his brother, too.

"I would say I'm a little bit more skilled, and he's more heavy and has a better shot. I'm more offensive," he said. "I think I have an OK shot and really good skating and hockey IQ. I can see plays and make plays."

Ivar now lives alone in an apartment in Gothenburg, about 40 minutes south of his family.

He started to realize how good he was the first time he was invited to the national team and he got onto the ice and still felt like he was one of the best players. He was a pretty good soccer player growing up but dealt with some knee problems and made the full-time switch to hockey (don't worry, "that was a long time ago and they're good now," he says of his knees).

With Frölunda, he has worked hard on his board play over the last couple of years, turning his ability on stick lifts, steals and puck protection along the wall into real features of his game.

"He's impressive," Havelid said, using the same word Sjöstrom did. "He can just play the game. He competes hard, he's got a good shot, he takes responsibility for what he does out there as well, and he sees the plays and doesn't play with pressure on him."

The Athletic LOADED: 12.30.2025



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

The Athletic / With Olympics roster deadline looming, Team Canada coach Jon Cooper is planning ahead

By Pierre LeBrun

TAMPA, Fla. — Jon Cooper said Sunday they're pretty much there on Team Canada's Olympic roster.

And I mean, they pretty much have to be with Wednesday's Olympic roster deadline upon us.

"I'd say we're crossing our T's and dotting our I's at this point," Team Canada's head coach said with his trademark smile Sunday afternoon before his Tampa Bay Lightning took on the visiting Montreal Canadiens.

These last few days have seen Cooper and Team Canada GM Doug Armstrong in constant communication as they finalize the 25-player roster for Milan ahead of Wednesday's deadline. These have been the most painstaking conversations. That final forward debate. The eighth defenseman.

"Ultimately, I'm the coach and he's the manager," Cooper said. "You get down to the last player or two, somebody has to make the final decision. And you can sit here and say somebody has 49 percent of the vote and somebody's got 51 percent (laughs). Usually it's the manager that has 51."

All kidding aside, everyone involved with Team Canada has been transparent in sharing that Cooper has lots of say in the roster process. He did for 4 Nations last year and has once again been very involved in the decision-making process for the Olympic team. Armstrong has said all along that he wants it that way because he wants his head coach to be comfortable with the players he has, and how and why they were chosen in specific roles. Team Canada's GM didn't see the logic in forcing players on the two-time Stanley Cup-winning coach.

There's no question in my mind Cooper has had more sway in things than any previous head coach for the Canadian Olympic team when NHL players have been involved.

"I think that's what has been great about it, because Army has given me a lot of autonomy and say in the entire process," Cooper said. "And so I really appreciate that. And it helps you in the trenches, too, because you're not looking at a whole slew of players that you're not sure you want in the first place. That's not what's happening with Army and I and the rest of the managers."

And so here they are, the final few days before Wednesday's deadline for roster submission. The pressure is real. A hockey-crazed nation awaits the final, sure-to-be-controversial choices.

"To be honest, we went through this a year ago," Cooper said of the 4 Nations roster selection process. "It's just that I was doing it with Sweeney (Don Sweeney, who was 4 Nations GM) more than I was with Army. But I've been through this. I think what makes it harder probably for me is that this time, I've coached a lot of the players, and where I hadn't in the last tournament. So for me, there's probably a little sentiment in there.

"But we primarily have the same group that's picking the 4 Nations that's picking this one. I have the utmost trust in everybody that's involved. It's just hard because there's a lot of guys that are going to be left off that have some pretty impressive resumes."

The philosophy from the beginning of this process has been that the 4 Nations players had a leg up. There's trust that's been established in how they performed at best-on-best and in winning a championship. Having said that, there will be some new faces. And furthermore, Cooper went out of his way to mention that Team Canada isn't building a roster solely to try to beat Team USA. That would be a mistake.

"I would not sit here and say by any means are we resting on the fact that we won a one-goal game in overtime that's a big save away from going the other way," Cooper said. "We're well aware of the task ahead of us. The rush to say it's going to be a Canada-U.S. final, I think that's a huge miscalculation."

Yes, Canada and the United States enter Milan as co-favorites, but Sweden and Finland are right there. Czechia can upset anyone.

"People forget, we're like a Mitch Marner overtime goal from losing to the Swedes in Game 1 at 4 Nations," Cooper said. "And the Finnish game, Sid (Crosby) has to score like a magical empty-netter just to seal that one. So, those countries have learned, too."

Team Canada management will start calling players who made the Olympic roster on Wednesday morning. The more delicate conversations will obviously be telling some of the bubble guys that just missed out. That will be crushing news to get.

But within those difficult conversations, Team Canada management will have an important message: Stay ready. Any one of them might get the call over the next 4-5 weeks due to injury.

These final conversations between Armstrong and Cooper haven't just been about the 25-man roster, but also the contingency plan for the reserve list, depending on which player gets injured and what role needs to be filled.

"We may not even play the U.S. in this tournament," Cooper said. "We still have to get through a whole bunch of countries to get to that gold medal game. So we're building a team to make sure we can get to that gold medal game and hopefully will win gold."

The Athletic LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373532 Websites

The Athletic / NHL weekend rankings: The good, the bad and the teams I can't figure out

By Sean McIndoe

With three nights off last week, we didn't have as many games as usual this week. That means that our rankings won't move all that much from last time. And more importantly, it means fewer opportunities to learn anything new.

That's bad news for me because there are a handful of teams where I need all the information I can get because I just can't figure them out.

I'm not clueless about absolutely everyone. I know the Colorado Avalanche are good, and the Chicago Blackhawks are bad, and that all of this is futile because the Buffalo Sabres will never lose again. But for more than a few teams, I can cram everything I think I know into my hockey fan brain and all that comes out is a shrug emoji.

I've narrowed the list down to five. Help me, readers, because I can't figure these teams out.

Bonus five: Teams I just don't understand (and why)

5. Los Angeles Kings – They took a step back during the offseason, they've already made a seller-style trade in sending Phillip Danault to Montreal, and it feels like every time you check the standings they're riding a three-game losing streak. But they're also always holding down a playoff spot, so ... they're good? Or maybe good enough? Or maybe just headed to yet another first-round exit, although maybe against someone other than the Oilers this time. I'm pretty sure it's that last one, but it



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

would be nice if they could just pick a lane and stay in it for more than a week or two at a time.

4. Detroit Red Wings – This might just be stubbornness on my part. The Wings have been hanging around the top of the Atlantic for most of the season, and at some point we'll have to accept that they're a solid 100-point team, and in that division, that should be more than enough to be in the running. It's what they've been pretty much since the day Todd McLellan took over. Then you notice the negative goals differential and you start to wonder. Or do you?

3. Boston Bruins – I honestly think part of what makes the Bruins so hard to read is their dedication to not soiling their record with loser points. As fans, we've been trained to basically ignore that column, meaning it feels like the Bruins have played way more games than anyone else. They have more regulation losses than any team in the conference, but have also cracked the 20-win mark that teams like the Edmonton Oilers and Vegas Golden Knights haven't hit yet. Are they making the playoffs? No. But they're going to win more games than some playoff teams, and that's weird. (In fact, it's almost as if the whole rationale for the loser point is a big lie.)

2. Utah Mammoth – We all figured that once the Coyotes got out from under the Arizona cloud of uncertainty, they'd blossom into ... something. This was supposed to be the year it happened. And it kind of did, early on, and we all wrote about how the Mammoth had finally arrived. But they came out of the break sitting at fake .500 and tied for the league lead in regulation losses. That might still be good enough for a playoff spot in a top-heavy West, but is this team any good? And if not, is there a valid path to get there any time soon, now that all the obvious excuses are gone?

1. Philadelphia Flyers – At some point, I'm going to have admit that this team is good. Not "better than expected," or even "good enough to sneak into the playoffs," but just plain good. Today is not that day because I can't shake the feeling that any team where Christian Dvorak is the third-leading scorer and Dan Vladar is a stud in goal just might be fake. But we're almost halfway through the season and they've been humming along around .625 pretty much all year long. I already feel like I'm locked in on the Flyers as my "team that makes the playoffs and I don't accept it until the very last night of the season."

On to this week's rankings...

Road to the Cup

The five teams with the best chances of winning the Stanley Cup.

Put the kid on the team, guys.

5. Tampa Bay Lightning (22-13-3, +25 true goals differential\*) – Four straight wins, including one over the Hurricanes and another nasty one against the Panthers, was enough to get them back into top spot in the Atlantic for a few hours before Detroit took it back.

4. Minnesota Wild (23-10-6, +17) – They took care of business in Winnipeg, if only barely. That was game one of a two-week road trip while the World Juniors gets center stage in Minnesota.

3. Carolina Hurricanes (23-11-3, +16) – Here's a stat that surprised me: There are only three NHL defensemen scoring at better than a point-per-game pace this season. Cale Makar is one, obviously. So is Zach Werenski, leading the way in Columbus. But the third is Shayne Gostisbehere, a guy we don't talk about a ton; he nudged his average over the 1.00 mark with his three-point performance in Saturday's win over Detroit.

2. Dallas Stars (25-7-7, +34) – It still sounds like Jason Robertson has a tough road to make Team USA, despite his production. As a Canadian, I support this completely.

1. Colorado Avalanche (28-2-7, +66) – We all know they're good, but the "parity" chart in this article is just ridiculous.

\*Goals differential without counting shootout decisions like the NHL does for some reason.

Not ranked: Montreal Canadiens – They've been good, and reasonably consistent about it, just about all year long. There was that five-game losing streak back in November, but they managed to find their footing again afterwards, and in a division that's been in flux to an almost embarrassing degree, the Habs along with the Wings have been just about the only constants.

They took a big swing in the summer on Noah Dobson, and so far that's worked out well. They were buyers again before the holiday freeze, bringing back Phillip Danault. And if they decide to load up even more on the way to the trade deadline, they have the assets to do it.

The question I keep coming back to: What's the ceiling here?

They feel like a solid bet for the playoffs (although the projections aren't as sure, having them close to a coin flip). But if and when they get there, is there reason to believe their spring will look much different than last year's, when they were a bump in the road for a Capitals team that couldn't get any further?

I think there is, even as it's clear that this team's window for legitimate contention isn't quite all the way open yet. Their best players are young and improving, surrounded by an older supporting cast that should largely stay in place for two more seasons. You never know with young players — Ivan Demidov was supposed to have 50 goals by now, but he's more of an enforcer these days — and even the best young teams will have their ups and downs. You'd like to see the goaltending bail them out a little more often, although maybe Jacob Fowler is the answer there. This team still banks an awful lot of its points in overtime, and they're basically just a break-even team in terms of goals differential.

So: Would you pick them over a team like Tampa in round one? Florida? Detroit?

And maybe more importantly: Do they need a playoff win for the season to be a success, or are they already on track for the sort of progress that lets you feel good about where they're headed, even if it's another quick spring?

We can leave those questions to the fans for now. In the meantime, they come out of the break with a tough week that features road games against a mix of potential contenders, starting with last night's almost-comeback in a shootout loss to the Lightning. They've got the Panthers tomorrow, then the Hurricanes on New Year's Day. After a stop in St. Louis, they finish the trip with a tough one in Dallas. If the ceiling is already higher than it looks, we might find out over the next few weeks.

From there, we'll have to wait for the trade deadline and the inevitable Sidney Crosby trade. That one might move the needle, just a bit.

The bottom five

The five teams headed towards dead last and the best lottery odds for the top pick in this year's draft.

If you missed it, be sure to check out our staff predictions for the World Juniors and Scott's viewing guide. Lots of pressure on the former presumptive top pick Gavin McKenna, for sure.

5. Nashville Predators (16-17-4, -21) – Saturday's loss to the Blues snapped Nashville's win streak at three, and moved the Blues back ahead of them in the standings. But the Preds have been humming along at "reasonably decent" for a few weeks now, and just miss escaping the bottom five.

4. St. Louis Blues (15-16-8, -33) – Now we see if they can turn that into their first win streak since the opening week of December. They'll have to



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

earn it, as they've got the red-hot Sabres and the first-place Avalanche up next.

3. Calgary Flames (16-18-4, -14) – Both Pierre and CJ have Rasmus Andersson staying in the Pacific. The bigger question is whether an extension will be part of any deal, and how that would affect the return the Flames can get on their top trade asset.

2. Vancouver Canucks (15-19-3, -25) – Hey, look who's on the board...

Meanwhile, Drance had a good piece on what exactly this retool (that might not be a rebuild) is going to mean for this team.

1. Chicago Blackhawks (14-18-6, -17) – Beating Dallas, even in a shootout, was impressive. It was also apparently exhausting, at least based on that first period against the Penguins last night.

Not ranked: Winnipeg Jets – I didn't include them in the teams that confuse me because they've transcended that. And I didn't really consider putting them in the bottom five even though the standings say they should be there, because I really can't believe that they're this bad.

But also, they might just be this bad.

Saturday's collapse against the Wild will go in the books as the Jets' fifth straight loss. It's also their eighth loss in nine, tenth in twelve, and fourteenth in their last seventeen. Whichever arbitrary endpoint you want to choose, there's no way to make this look good. Oh, and now Josh Morrissey is hurt.

And again, these are the defending Presidents' Trophy champs, who employ the reigning MVP. I'm not sure anyone was expecting a repeat of last year's 116-point season, but falling all the way out of the playoff picture felt unlikely. Now that result is starting to feel like a sure thing.

We're not quite there yet, and our projections still have the Jets in the 40 percent range to make the playoffs. Moneypuck is more bullish, dropping them under 30 percent, just slightly ahead of the Flames. And I get the feeling that some Jets fans are already prepared to throw in the towel, jump into a seller's market and regroup with an eye to the future.

Murat has made the case that they should wait on that, and I think he's right. But we're talking about waiting another week or two because there's barely any more room to work with here. That makes this week feel crucial, as the schedule serves up some winnable games. They get the Oilers at home tonight, before heading out east for a three-game trip that will bring them a tough matchup with the Wings before easier matchups with the Leafs and Senators.

Bank six or seven points in that stretch, and you've got the start of a comeback climb. But with the halfway mark almost here and anything above a wild-card already basically impossible, there's no time left to figure this out. It has to happen now, or it's not happening at all.

And maybe that's ultimately what some Jets fans would want, given how tilted this year's trade market could be. We're not quite there yet, just like the Jets aren't quite in the bottom five yet. But we're getting awfully close, right?

The Athletic LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373533 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Pickard anchors Oilers in well-earned win: 'Calvin was our best player'

Mark Spector

The goaltending cloud that the Edmonton Oilers have been living under all season has never really been Calvin Pickard's fault.

It has, however, increasingly become his problem.

Connor Ingram has arrived on the scene and is slowly playing his way into the picture as a tandem mate to Tristan Jarry.

So, if Jarry has one of the chairs and Ingram is comfy up in the other, where does that leave Pickard?

Playing like his hair's on fire, that's where, stealing a game in Winnipeg by a 3-1 score — a rare moment in recent Oilers history where the other team leaves the building knowing it got goalied.

"Calvin was our best player," said his head coach, Kris Knoblauch. "Unfortunately for Picks, we've played some of our worst hockey when he's been in there, and that's been reflective in his stats. It hasn't looked that good, but we just haven't been that good in front of him."

Pickard ate Sunday dinner with family in the town that sent him and his older brother, Chet, on long Western Hockey League careers as goalies. The next night, he ate the Jets' lunch.

"Steak, ham, perogies, rice, Caesar salad," he said. "It was a Pickard special."

And so was his performance in front of family and friends. The Jets wired a season-high 42 shots at Pickard, who was beaten only on one bouncy, sloppy puck that Adam Lowry fished through his pads from the top of the crease.

He's a pro's pro, a backup's backup. A survivor who's been in pro hockey since 2011 and, after all he's been through with the Oilers, still finds himself fighting to stay on the roster once Jarry gets healthy.

"There's some time between starts here," he admitted. "But I'm confident. I'm in my third year here, I'm confident behind the group and just trying to do my job."

Winnipeg really poured it on in the third period, with 16 shots on goal. Leon Draisaitl had a key shot block in the dying moments, and Zach Hyman's defensive play stripped a puck from the dangerous Kyle Connor, just as he was readying to rifle one at the Oilers' goal.

It was a night where the Jets didn't get what they deserved, but the Oilers earned what they got. A playoff-type effort in December, if you will.

"This team's been through a lot, a lot of playoff games and sacrifice," Pickard said. "You see Leon make a big block. You see all these guys make big plays. Hyman had a great stick lift right before we iced the game (with Hyman's empty netter). A lot of good experienced players that make big plays at the right time."

Over in Winnipeg's room, they're tired of leaving the rink with the proverbial ham sandwich.

The Jets have one win in their last 10 games, and are winless in six. They have one line that scores — the Mark Scheifele, Connor, Gabe Vilardi unit — and Pickard shut them down.

Everyone else is shooting blanks, and the Jets sit in 30th place in the NHL standings.

"We need points. We need the points," repeated a frustrated head coach, Scott Arniel. "We have to find a way to score more goals than the opposition, and we have to get points."

"I can't criticize the effort. I can't criticize the battle," he said. "The opportunities, the game plan that we threw at them against their elite players. All of those things I asked them to do, they did it. At the end of the day, we're not getting points, and that's the most important thing."

On this night, fourth-liner Max Jones opened the scoring, while Jack Roslovic's power-play goal came with the second unit on the ice for Edmonton.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

Draisaitl didn't have a point, while McDavid's lone assist came on Hyman's empty-netter. It pushed his points streak to 13 games (13-20-33).

"We've been winning so many games on the sticks of Connor and Leon," Knoblach said. "Tonight ... we got depth scoring, a power-play goal (from) our second unit, and a Max Jones goal. It's nice to see the other guys contribute.

"We should be able to win once in a while without (McDavid and Draisaitl) having to be A-plus."

**OIL SPILLS** — Fun fact: Max Jones' father, Brad, played parts of four seasons for the original Jets, between 1987-90 ... Edmonton has a power-play goal in eight straight games. They're operating at 44.8 per cent over that span.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373534 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames' renewed swagger fuels overtime win over Bruins

Eric Francis

CALGARY – The swagger from late last season is back.

So is their world-class goaltending.

The combination saw the Calgary Flames eke out a 2-1 overtime win over Boston Monday, and has positioned the team that many left for dead just three points out of a playoff spot.

With half a season to go.

Despite having the league's worst power play and no one anywhere close to being a point-per-game player, the Flames are now winners of four straight at home and eight of their last 11 outings.

The Mission McKenna talk that began with the team's 5-13-3 start has turned into another race for the mushy middle this franchise has lived in for decades.

As disappointing as that is to Team Tank around town, it's far from a criticism, as this team deserves credit for crawling out of the epic hole they started in.

"That's what we have in this room," said Dustin Wolf, who was once again one of the game's stars, stopping 24 shots.

"I mean, you look at last year and how everybody put us in the gutter, and we found a way to claw and just about get in, fell short. And I think guys really want to figure out a way to get in. It doesn't matter how. And we're trying to put some good games together here at home, and we're doing a good job doing that so far."

And they've done it the same way they did it last year – with an unshakable work ethic and self-belief.

"I think it's that confidence just going into a game," said Blake Coleman, whose second goal in as many games tied the game midway through the night.

"I think early in the year, you're not getting any bounces. Things aren't going your way, and you kind of go into a game and when things do unravel, you're kind of like, 'here we go again.' As much as you say the right things or try to do the right things, that's just the way the world works.

"And now we're finding ways to win. We've been really good at home (11-5-2). So it's just that quiet confidence that we come into a game expecting to win, and when we don't get a bounce, we're unfazed by it. We keep chugging."

On Monday, that bad bounce came in the form of Andrew Peeke's rebound that somehow snuck through Wolf's pads late in the first.

A challenge for goaltender interference was denied, prompting the team's penalty kill to come up big.

From there, it was a slog for both teams, setting the stage for an overtime win that came despite the Flames recording just one shot on goal in the third.

A Jonathan Aspirot high stick at the end of the third gave the Flames' troubled power play its fifth chance of the night, somehow finished off by Zary, who had previously been left off the first two units all night long.

"We've watched it a few times and I don't know," said Zary, when asked if he deserved credit for the goal, as his mighty whack at a rebound may also have been put in by Hampus Lindholm.

"It kind of bounced around. I think it just goes off my foot, and then it kind of bounced around some more and goes in the back of the net. We got the win, is all that really matters."

Making all of it possible was Wolf, who stopped Pavel Zacha on an overtime breakaway that also included a stellar rebound stop on Nikita Zadorov.

"Saw the first one, got snowed on the second one, so it just thankfully hit me and we got another bounce," said Wolf.

Yes, the team that spoke endlessly about their lack of puck luck is finally getting some.

Four Oilers blasts off the iron two nights earlier told much the same story.

"You know, it wasn't the prettiest," said Flames coach Ryan Huska after the low event affair.

"It was one of those games where you have to find a way to win, and we did that. Earlier in the season, we weren't winning games like that, so I think finding a way to stick with it and getting two points was a really big thing for us. Penalty kill was good, and the struggles that our power play has had... at the end of the day, it scored the goal. So that's an important thing."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373535 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / What Linus Ullmark's leave of absence means for Senators

Alex Adams

On Sunday, the Senators announced that their starting goaltender had been granted a leave of absence from the team for personal reasons.

"We'll always be there for him. And whatever he's going through, he knows that we're always there, and he's such a big part of our team on the ice and off the ice," captain Brady Tkachuk said on Monday.

It's still very fresh, and the Senators organization would comment further, but naturally, empathy was the mood from Ullmark's teammates at practice on Monday.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

"We're all humans. It sucks to see one of your good friends being away from the game," said veteran defenceman Thomas Chabot.

While the timeline may be unclear, Ullmark's absence will present a challenge for the Senators. And it's a complex one, because the ugly truth is the Senators had a big problem in net even before Ullmark's leave of absence.

Until Ullmark returns, the Senators' crease will be manned by 23-year-old Leevi Merilainen, who has played 24 career NHL games. In a surprising move, the Senators recalled career AHLer Hunter Shepard over prospect Mads Sogaard to back up Merilainen.

The situation exposes the organization's lack of depth between the pipes. Sogaard has 29 career games in the NHL. Shepard has just five, although he is a two-time Calder Cup champion with a .905 save percentage on a struggling Belleville Senators team this season.

"I thought, Shepard is having a good year, so we (decided to) bring him up now. That can change (as) Sogaard got a shoutout last night (in Belleville)," said Senators coach Travis Green.

The Senators need to hope that somebody can go on one of those nerveless streaks that inexperienced netminders sometimes enjoy. In Ottawa, you're always an Andrew "Hamburglar" Hammond run away from turning your season around. Eleven years on, they might need that again.

If Ullmark is gone for more than a few games, there will be pressure on general manager Steve Staios to add an experienced netminder.

Is Marc-Andre Fleury still retired? (Checks notes. Still retired ... for now.)

If the Senators try to add, they will find a very thin market, with almost every team in the NHL still credibly fighting for a playoff spot. It's a seller's market.

It means Ottawa might have to take a chance — perhaps on Laurent Brossoit, who's returning after a year away due to injury but was effective last time he played, or Devon Levi, a former highly touted prospect who has struggled in Buffalo's goalie carousel.

Slim pickings.

It's not as though the Senators were spoiled for choice even before Ullmark's leave. Statistically, Ullmark has been the worst goaltender in the league this season, according to MoneyPuck.com, with minus-11.5 goals saved above expected, including a terrible performance on Saturday that sunk the Senators against the rival Maple Leafs.

The team is last in the league in team save percentage — a statistic that looks even worse when you consider that the Senators are fourth in expected goals allowed, according to Natural Stat Trick. The Senators haven't been leaving their goalies out to dry. Quite the opposite.

The last time a team made the playoffs with a league-worst save percentage was the 2018-19 San Jose Sharks.

It would be an impressive feat for the Senators to replicate.

Regardless, the team might even benefit from a shake-up between the pipes.

Remember that meteoric Stanley Cup rise of career AHLer Jordan Binnington in 2019? Hockey Canada does.

It seems unlikely the Senators will thrive while relying on two netminders in Merilainen and Shepard who have fewer than 30 games combined of NHL experience. But goaltending is voodoo.

Ottawa cannot afford to waste a season of contention with Tkachuk, Tim Stutzle and Jake Sanderson in their primes due to a malaise in net.

Last season, the Senators were in a similar predicament with Ullmark and Anton Forsberg hurt in January. There's a sturdy argument to be

made that without Merilainen last season, who went 6-2-1 with a .933 save percentage and three shutouts in nine games in January 2025, the Senators wouldn't have made the playoffs.

The Senators may be hoping to "leevitate" again with help from their inexperienced backup.

The captain said he believes in Merilainen.

"He doesn't say much, but he's a stone-cold killer," said Tkachuk.

"Nothing's too high, nothing's too low. It feels like, after some of the wins that he has, it's almost like he doesn't care. But, obviously, he does care."

Maybe consistent playing time will translate into results for Merilainen, who believes it breeds better performance.

"Oh, that makes a huge difference, for sure," Merilainen told Sportsnet.ca about how playing consistently impacts his confidence and level of play.

Could a consistent run of play change Merilainen's fortunes? Maybe.

This season, Merilainen has struggled as a rarely used second fiddle, posting a dreary .874 save percentage and minus-5.9 goals saved above expected while losing all four of his road starts. Becoming the full-time backup has been a new role for him, with the main adjustment being the lack of playing time. Earlier this season, it led to Merilainen getting sent down to Belleville to get starts while Ullmark drove the bus in Ottawa.

Paradoxically, both Ullmark and Merilainen have said the Senators' ability to suppress shots makes it more difficult for their netminders to get in the zone. The Senators rank fourth in fewest shots allowed, at 25.19 per game.

"Guys are so smart now that they don't take the easy shots or give you too many easy saves. Like, they're always looking for a shot, or at least have a screen," said Merilainen.

"I feel like there's no easy saves anymore, and that makes it a lot harder for us to, first of all, stay ready and stay connected to the game, not standing around for 10-15 minutes doing nothing, and then, all of a sudden, a quick seam play or behind the net to the middle. It's really hard, but yeah, you gotta find a way to stay ready for those."

Could allowing more shots be the Senators' way of securing more saves? Probably not, but an intriguing subplot for a team and city that has far too often become a goalie wasteland since the Craig Anderson era.

Ullmark's unavailability due to personal reasons is an unfortunate development for him, and the Senators will hope he can return and find his usual form sooner than later. But a disruption at this position will force the team to see who else it can count on, or if it has to spring into action to improve organizational depth between the pipes.

Whether it's a trade, internal improvement or the eventual return of Ullmark with a restoration of Vezina-calibre play, the Senators need saves. Without Ullmark, the pathway there just got significantly more complicated.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373536 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why it's falling apart between Oilers and Andrew Mangiapane

Mark Spector

The bread is stale.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

For a team that's made some very strong pick-ups along the way, nabbing Vasily Podkolzin, Jack Roslovic, Connor Ingram, Spencer Stastney or Alex Regula off waivers or in surprise deals, July 1 has been the Oilers' kryptonite.

A year ago, prized free-agent signings Jeff Skinner and Viktor Arvidsson were both healthy scratches in some of the most important games of Edmonton's Stanley Cup run. This season, the eight-year deal handed to Trent Frederic is thus far not handsome, while UFA signing Mangiapane has descended to the fourth line for Monday night's game in Winnipeg.

On Monday, Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reported, with Mangiapane's ice time plummeting, that the Oilers and Mangiapane are exploring a path to moving him to another organization, where there may be more opportunity or a larger role. He was made a healthy scratch for Monday night's game against the Winnipeg Jets.

The two-year contract Mangiapane signed with Edmonton carries an average annual value (AAV) of \$3.6 million, and has a full no-trade clause (NTC) that turns into a partial NTC (five teams) on June 16.

"I think there is an understanding there that if the Oilers could find something for Mangiapane with another team, where he might have a bigger role, he would be willing to waive (his NTC)," Friedman said on this week's 32 Thoughts podcast. "If another situation can be found, I think Mangiapane would be willing to look at it."

So, let's dig on Mangiapane's time in Edmonton, a 39-game sample where he has produced five goals, 11 points, and a team-worst minus-16. But before we give you our take, let's look at what the coaching staff — namely head coach Kris Knoblauch's usage of the player — is telling us.

Ice time and line placement never lie: coaches play players who will help them win. By the midpoint of a season players tend to settle into the spots they've earned, and while both Mangiapane and Frederic have seen time in the top six, the fact they are third- and fourth-liners tells us where the coaching staff has settled on them.

Here was the expected Oilers lineup Monday night in Winnipeg before Max Jones replaced Mangiapane on the fourth line.

Nugent-Hopkins—McDavid—Hyman

Podkolzin—Draisaitl—Savoie

Frederic—Roslovic—Janmark/Jones

Mangiapane—Henrique—Lazar

Ekholm—Bouchard

Nurse—Stastney

Stillman—Emberson

Pickard

Mangiapane's average ice time this season is 13:31 — ninth among Oiler forwards. Since Dec. 1, however, he ranks 10th at 11:35 per game, and Mangiapane has only 11 minutes of ice time three times in his last 10 games.

Do you see the trend here?

Signed as a middle-six forward, it was expected that Mangiapane would find a place next to one of Edmonton's two elite centres as a productive top-six winger. Or, at worst, he would rediscover his annoying, irascible game and help chip in from the third line — perhaps opposite Frederic.

Edmonton banked on Mangiapane returning to the 45-point player he had been in his final three seasons as a Calgary Flame. Instead, it appears the real player is the 28-point winger who flamed out in Washington last season. Moving that player, at \$3.6 million, will not be easy.

Now there's a roster squeeze in Edmonton as players return from injury, with depth winger Kasperii Kapanen nearing a return. Down in AHL, Ike Howard and Quinn Hutson are both emerging as players who could help in Edmonton this season — and that changes the landscape somewhat as well.

So, how do you move Mangiapane, with one more year at \$3.6 million left on his deal? If you're lucky, you can do what the Los Angeles Kings did when they traded Phil Danault for a second-round pick, or the way Seattle traded Mason Marchment to Columbus for two picks. (Note: This scenario is highly unlikely.)

This trade more likely becomes a scenario where GM Stan Bowman identifies an overpaid, underperforming player elsewhere whose skills he could use. Like, a bigger, more physical depth winger making similar money. Or an experienced depth defenceman who is making too much on a team that might need help up front.

Bowman would likely settle for gaining a little bit of cap space this season in any move, or at least removing Mangiapane's cap hit from next season's cap.

But there is no fooling someone into taking the player, thinking they're getting the guy who scored 35 goals for Calgary four seasons ago. He isn't that guy anymore, who incites the opposition and plays with that edgy passion.

Mangiapane is on a two-year run of ineffective play, and his decline is well known across the National Hockey League.

If only it had been that well known in the Oilers' front office last summer.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373537 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Bold hockey predictions for 2026: Maple Leafs opt for nuclear option

Ryan Dixon

The tricky thing with bold predictions is remembering to rein yourself in when imagination takes over the brain the way Connor McDavid takes over a game. Then again, what's too pie-in-the-sky when you consider Quinn Hughes didn't even make it to Christmas as a member of the Vancouver Canucks this season?

For all the talk of a locked trade market earlier this year, we've already witnessed a whopper — Hughes to the Minnesota Wild for four pieces — that represents as big a swap as we've seen in years.

And that's saying something considering Mikko Rantanen was traded not once, but twice just last season. (Seriously, who had that among their 2025 bold predictions bullets?)

Player movement will certainly be a big part of our bold hockey predictions for 2026, alongside Olympic performances, individual excellence and, of course, some crystal-balling for the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

So, with 2026 now just days away, here are some stabs at what we'll see in the hockey world next year.

- One year after Team USA's Cole Hutson — who, thankfully, appears to be OK after absorbing a shot to the back of his head versus Switzerland — became the first defenceman to lead the World Junior Championship in scoring last January, Canada's Zayne Parekh will become the second in 2026.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

- The Canucks and Devils will hook up for a non-Hughes trade in January when Kiefer Sherwood is sent east to Jersey.
- Marie-Philip Poulin will score two goals in her final Olympic gold medal game.
- Sweden will win men's hockey gold on the 20th anniversary of its 2006 Olympic triumph. Czechia will pull off a shocking upset in the playoff round and the backlash in Canada for not dressing Connor Bedard and America for passing on Jason Robertson will be severe.
- The Buffalo Sabres will re-sign Alex Tuch to an eight-year deal and trade defenceman Owen Power before the March 6 trade deadline.
- The Los Angeles Kings will trade for Jordan Kyrou
- Nathan MacKinnon will become the first 70-goal scorer since Teemu Selanne and Alex Mogilny in 1992-93.
- The Calgary Flames will make the playoffs.
- The Dallas Stars and Colorado Avalanche will play a seven-game second-round series that features a total of six-plus overtime periods.
- Marc-Andre Fleury will appear in a 2026 Stanley Cup Playoff game.
- The Florida Panthers and Tampa Bay Lightning will meet in an Eastern Conference Final for the ages.
- The Seattle Kraken will win the NHL Draft Lottery and select Gavin McKenna first overall. The Pittsburgh Penguins will then sprint on stage to take defenceman Keaton Verhoeff No. 2, while the Vancouver Canucks begin their next great Swedish love affair with Ivar Stenberg at No. 3.
- The Boston Bruins will expedite their organizational re-tool by drafting eighth and 12th overall, thanks to pocketing Toronto's 2026 first at the 2025 deadline.
- The Carolina Hurricanes will ink UFA Artemi Panarin to a six-year, \$66-million pact on July 2.
- The Minnesota Wild will hire Pete DeBoer to be their new coach in the summer.
- Alex Ovechkin will sign a two-year extension with the Capitals.
- After missing the playoffs by two points, the Leafs will have a cards-on-the-table talk with captain Auston Matthews that results in him being dealt to the Sharks for a package built around Michael Misa.
- After missing the playoffs by three points, the Jets will double down on their aging core by re-acquiring Sean Monahan from the retooling Columbus Blue Jackets.
- Quinn Hughes will sign an eight-year extension with the Wild late in the summer before the new CBA term limits take effect. In the joyful aftermath, Minnesota fans will immediately start speculating about Jack Hughes becoming the team's No. 1 centre as a free agent in 2030.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373538 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Slafkovsky emerging as a threat that can't be ignored

Eric Engels

TAMPA — Jon Cooper can't avoid the question.

Every time the Montreal Canadiens play his Tampa Bay Lightning, he knows it's coming about Nick Suzuki. The Tampa coach, who will also head up Team Canada at the upcoming Olympics, has been consistently effusive in his praise of the Canadiens' captain whenever he's been asked about him over the last couple of years, and he'd have likely delivered another great clip had he been asked once more about Suzuki following Sunday's game.

But Cooper was anything but surprised to be fielding a question about another Canadiens player whose name starts with "S" after his Lightning stole away the Atlantic Division lead in a shootout at Benchmark International Arena.

Even with the Canadian Olympic roster less than 72 hours from being revealed and Suzuki still battling for a spot to play for Cooper in Milan, the coach had the best vantage point to form an opinion on Juraj Slafkovsky — Sunday's most dominant player.

"I saw it up close," said Cooper, "he can really shoot it."

It was after setting up a goal for Ivan Demidov that Slafkovsky answered one from the Lightning with the laser from the middle of the slot Cooper was referring to.

Cooper also watched the six-foot-three, 225-pound winger score the game-tying goal with less than four seconds to go to cap a period he completely took over, and he was marked by it.

We're talking about a coach who's overseen the development of some of the greatest talent in hockey over a generation, so that's something.

"How old was (Slafkovsky) when he first played, 18? And how old is he now, 21? I feel like he's been around forever and he's just 21 years old," said Cooper. "What he does have is the physical attributes to be a dominant power forward. But he's also got a skillset..."

Without it, the Canadiens wouldn't have gotten a point, let alone had a chance at two on Sunday.

Without Slafkovsky, who was drafted first overall in 2022 to become the exact player he is right now, the Canadiens wouldn't be challenging the Lightning and Detroit Red Wings for first in the Atlantic. Without him, who knows how they'd have guaranteed themselves a winning record through a December that saw them play 13 games through the first 23 days.

It is Slafkovsky's progression that has been most noteworthy of late.

Beforehand, Suzuki was on an island as the only true play driver for the Canadiens up front commanding special attention from the opposition. But Slafkovsky's emergence in the role is now impossible to ignore.

"I think the game has slowed down for him, and that happens gradually, but sometimes it jumps a big, big, big step," said Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis. "I find the game has really slowed down for him; his reads are so much clearer, he's using his body, using his shot more, and it's a major evolution for him. It's fun to see him play like that."

It's what the Canadiens need to see from Slafkovsky right now, with Suzuki and his linemates struggling a bit of late.

Sunday's game was one of only eight in which the captain didn't register a point since the start of the season. It came on the heels of some relatively ineffective performances — at least at five-on-five — from Suzuki's line, with Cole Caufield and Zach Bolduc, which was disassembled after two rough periods in Tampa.

What they haven't been managing well is exactly what Slafkovsky, Oliver Kapanen and Ivan Demidov have managed particularly well.

"I feel there's going to be less and less room out there as the season progresses," said St. Louis. "The standings are so tight and you're playing these games that are like playoff games. I think (the Suzuki line) has got to do a better job of playing in tight space and winning battles,



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

because once they get the stuff in space, they're elite at it. But it's to create more instances. And it's not just one guy; I think they can do a better job as a line of keeping pucks alive and probably winning some of these battles to extend the O-zone possession and now they get those pucks in space. I just feel they lack instances of that, and I feel they're getting frustrated a bit. I lived it, it's not fun, but the answers are everywhere, and we'll find them."

Demidov and Kapanen are buying them a bit of time, with Slafkovsky doing the heavy lifting to elevate the trio.

As Cooper said, "That kid line they have going there is pretty special, and you could tell he's the leader of that group there."

It's what Slafkovsky is determined to be in just his fourth season in the NHL.

It's what he said he wants to be in his second Olympics with Slovakia.

In Slafkovsky's first Games, in Beijing, he scored seven goals in seven contests as a 17-year-old.

"I was just a little kid when I went there the first time, and honestly, three out of the goals that went in there were just lucky shots," the Kosice native said.

Now Slafkovsky is a man.

Check that ...

Now Slafkovsky is the Man.

"I'm a more complete player," he said.

"I feel like I just demand the puck more from the other guys, and I feel more comfortable with my touches and ability to create something and shoot and get goals," Slafkovsky added. "I just want to drive and play with the puck more, and that game kind of suits me."

Everyone's taking notice.

Four of Slafkovsky's 13 goals and four of his 15 assists on the season have been notched over his last four games, but his play for the better part of two months has popped to anyone watching.

If Slafkovsky keeps this up as Suzuki and Caufield rediscover their best selves, it'll bode extremely well for the Canadiens.

It's already made a big difference for them.

"There's a reason Montreal's knocking at the division lead," said Cooper. "This isn't a fluke. It's a team that's tasted the playoffs, and they've got young legs and skilled players."

Slafkovsky, Demidov, Kapanen, Suzuki and Caufield are just some of them.

Jacob Fowler's young legs have produced a 3-1-2 record through his first six games as a goaltender.

In front of him, fellow 21-year-old Lane Hutson notched his 31st assist of the season while 25-year-old Noah Dobson had a goal and an assist to bring his point total to 25 in his first 38 games with the Canadiens.

A lot of the big pieces are in place, but Slafkovsky is proving to be a huge one.

"I think first off, he's a specimen, right? He's massive, so strong on the puck, and then when you combine that with good vision and just the skillset to make plays, he's tough to handle, I'm sure, for defencemen," said Dobson. "Played against him a little; he's no fun down low when he's holding on to pucks, and those guys really work well off one another with Demi and Kappy, so he's playing great hockey."

It didn't cost Cooper's team an extra point, but he knew it earned the Canadiens one on this night.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373539 Websites

TSN.CA / Twins great Morneau provides 'good advice' and fires up Team Canada

Mark Masters

Team Canada skated at 3M Arena in Minneapolis on Monday.

Former Minnesota Twins great Justin Morneau attended Team Canada's morning skate and gave the players a pep talk afterwards.

"I told the guys in the room, I used to set my alarm and we used to get together when the tournaments were overseas and watch them at 3 a.m. on the West Coast," the native of New Westminster, B.C. said. "It's something that's somewhat surreal. I've got to do a lot of really cool things in the course of my life, but being around this team and being around something that means so much to Canadians, it's pretty special."

The 2006 American League MVP, who lives in Minneapolis with his family that includes five kids aged six to 15, delivered a simple message to the players.

"Everyone plays on their first line wherever they come from so just sort of understanding that playing for the country, playing for each other, no matter who gets the success, as long as the success is there, that's all that really matters," Morneau said.

"He gave us a good speech," said left winger Gavin McKenna. "Just telling us to do it for the country and not the name on the back of the jersey. Obviously, that's some good advice."

Morneau, who works as an analyst on Twins broadcasts during the baseball season, noted this is probably a familiar message, but sometimes it resonates more when it comes from a new voice or unfamiliar source.

Players enjoyed hearing that Morneau once had a promising hockey career. He was the third goalie on the Portland Winterhawks when they won the 1998 Memorial Cup.

"Kind of a cool little fact about him there," said defenceman Keaton Verhoeff. "So just kind of having him around today was pretty awesome. He gave us a little bit of words of wisdom and told us some stories."

Morneau wore 33 in honour of his favourite player Patrick Roy and Team Canada presented him with a personalized No. 33 Team Canada sweater on Monday.

Morneau attended the Boxing Day game against Czechia, but will not be in attendance on Monday when Canada takes on Denmark.

---

Canada's captain is ready to move on after a controversial start to the tournament.

"I'm perfectly good now," right winger Porter Martone said. "I've moved on from it. I've addressed everything and it's time to move on now."

Martone received a formal warning from the IIHF disciplinary panel for crossing the red line and bumping into a Czech player during warm-ups on Boxing Day. He was called for unsportsmanlike conduct for tapping Adam Novotny on the back side as he skated by the Czech bench after scoring the empty-net goal that night. Martone apologized for both infractions and took responsibility for Canada leaving the ice without shaking hands with the Czechs after the game.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

Martone insists that wearing the 'C' does not bring any extra pressure.

"I've been a leader on different occasions, and that's kind of the way I was raised from my parents and the core values I have," the Philadelphia Flyers prospect said. "I wouldn't say it's a pressure. It's a privilege. I get to be captain of Team Canada and I'm excited to continue to lead these guys and hopefully lead us to a gold medal."

On the ice, Martone is focused on rounding his game into form. The empty-net goal against Czechia is his only point so far.

"Definitely I think I have another gear in my game," the Michigan State freshman said. "I feel like I can bring more [to] the table to help this team win."

Martone and linemates Tij Iginla and Michael Misa held a meeting to discuss the state of their game. On Sunday, Misa admitted he needed to shoot more after landing just three shots in two outings.

"We expect more from ourselves," Martone said. "It's not like we're not getting chances. It's not like we're not playing well, but we still think we have another gear to help this team in different ways."

Martone has yet to establish the power-forward game, which allowed him to make a smooth transition to the NCAA this season.

"Be just a more dominant presence," Martone said of the next level for him. "I think I can make some more plays, work with my linemates a bit more. I think that comes with just keeping it simpler sometimes. You try and make fancy plays with all the skill we have on our line. We talked about it as a line and about really supporting each other with some give and gos. I know we're ready and I know I can make a bigger difference through the rest of this tournament."

---

Give-and-go plays have not been an issue for Canada's second line as McKenna, a freshman at Penn State, and Michigan Wolverines centre Michael Hage have hit it off.

"I just kind of have a good feeling of what he's trying to do with the puck and how he's trying to create space for himself and then just where open ice is," Hage said. "I feel like he does a good job getting open for me as well, so it just kind of goes back and forth in that sense."

Hage and McKenna are tied for the team scoring lead with four points each.

The pair are building chemistry off the ice by playing the NHL video game.

"He's a pretty energetic guy," McKenna said. "He's fun to be around. Yeah, we've been playing some NHL back at the hotel. We're 1-1 against each other and had some good battles."

The last video game battle went to triple overtime with Hage coming out on top.

"I'm the best on the team," Hage declared deadpan. "Not very many guys give me a challenge, I mean [Liam] Greentree is pretty good. Gavin's pretty good. Iggy doesn't really stand a chance. So, yeah, just trying to continue to get better in that aspect of my life."

---

The only issue for Hage so far at the World Juniors is at the dot. He won just 36 per cent of his draws against Latvia after winning just 16 per cent against Czechia.

Hage spent extra time working on faceoffs with Hockey Canada consultant Mike Eagles at the end of Canada's skate on Monday morning.

"Not going to give away all his tips, but he's smart," said Hage.

"I think he might have a good night tonight on it," said coach Dale Hunter.

---

Verhoeff is poised to make his World Junior debut after sitting out the first two games as a healthy scratch.

"To get into a game is pretty special," the 17-year-old from Fort Saskatchewan, Alta. said. "It's something I've been looking forward to for a while."

Did Verhoeff wonder if this chance would come?

"You're always kind of wondering," the University of North Dakota freshman said. "You never know for sure. It's obviously a short competition, so things can change. I was just kind of skating and working out and making sure I'm ready if my name did get called, and to have it called today is pretty special."

Asked what he wanted to see from Verhoeff, Hunter said he was looking for sound defensive play.

"He's an offensive 'D', but you gotta be smart when you play and [play] within the structure of the game," Hunter said.

---

Verhoeff last played in the final pre-tournament game on Dec. 23 when Canada beat Denmark 13-2.

Hunter quickly noted that the Danes are playing a tighter style since the actual tournament began.

"There's no longer those blowout games," Verhoeff stressed. "Every team is going to be able to compete, and every team is going to go out there and give their best effort, especially against Canada. So, having that kind of target on our back is something that we enjoy. We're looking forward to being able to prove the rest of the country right. Not so much prove them wrong, just prove them right that Canada is the country to beat."

---

Before the morning skate started, Hunter took some time to show Canada's defencemen how they can create scoring chances by shooting wide and taking advantage of the lively end boards inside 3M Arena.

"When the teams eye up to block, they're good blockers," Hunter said. "Last game they blocked a lot of shots, so you gotta bypass them and see where the puck bounces off the boards and try to get it out in the slot. There's a nice area there that you can [hit and] get out to the slot."

---

Canada did not run lines at the morning skate and Hunter declined to reveal his lineup.

Carter George was the first goalie off the ice and is projected to start against Denmark.

Power play units at Canada's morning skate:

PP1

MacKenzie, McKenna, Reschny, Hage, Martin

PP2

Parekh, Martone, Luchanko, Misa, Iginla

TSN.CA LOADED: 12.30.2025

1373540 Websites

TSN.CA / Yost: Oilers surging on back of lethal power-play



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 30, 2025

Travis Yost

After a painfully slow start to the season, the Edmonton Oilers are heating up, with wins in eight of their last 12 games. And while the goaltending situation remains the 800-pound gorilla in the room, there are encouraging signs surrounding the team. Chief among them? The return of the league's deadliest power-play.

One of the curious parts of Edmonton's trying start to this season was a power-play that looked something closer to league average than the unit we have grown accustomed to: a lethal attacking unit that seemingly converts on every man-advantage opportunity. For the Oilers, it's equal parts top-end skill and chemistry, or familiarity, playing with one another – Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl, and Evan Bouchard serve as a three-headed monster that no penalty-kill has been able to reliably figure out.

Right now, the Oilers power-play is scoring at an otherworldly rate – their 14.2 goals per-60 minutes is comfortably the highest number in the league (Dallas is ranked second at 11.6 per-60, for baseline purposes) and, if sustained through the full season, would be the most productive power-play we have seen in the post-2007 statistical modern era. Since Bouchard has come into his own as a power-play quarterback, this group has dominated the league, but right now it's outperforming its own freakish standards:

Oilers' power-play (TSN)

It goes without saying the Oilers have a massive advantage over their peers when they operate a power-play that produces goals at nearly twice the rate of the league average; doubly so in the post-COVID era of the NHL, where power-plays have become meaningful differentiators separating playoff contenders and pretenders. This is a scoring league right now and teams that can generate offence like this are positioned well to qualify for the postseason and beyond.

I've argued for some time now that video coaches around the league should be studying the Oilers' power-play for tips and tricks. It's easy to point to the Goliath duo of McDavid and Draisaitl and assume their success is entirely personnel-based, but it's not: Edmonton's power-play is fantastic in transition and gaining the offensive zone, and it's even better at sustaining the offensive zone once they gain it. This allows for multi-shot shifts and a higher frequency of chances generated from between the circles where goaltending save percentages typically plummet. McDavid and Draisaitl (and Bouchard) are certainly key to making this work, but skaters like Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Zach Hyman also play meaningful contributory roles. Their power-play's shot profile (via HockeyViz) is a nightmarish visualization if you're a fan of a Western Conference foe:

Oilers' power-play shot generation (TSN)

Draisaitl's 11 goals lead the power-play in scoring and, correspondingly, he's drawn many of the accolades, but the Oilers have 26 goals from other skaters outside of him.

Think about it from this perspective: Edmonton's power-play without Draisaitl would still be top-ten in league scoring, ahead of the Florida Panthers and Vancouver Canucks (25 goals apiece). And it's nearly double that of the Toronto Maple Leafs, who have potted just 14 power-play goals over the duration of the season.

The Oilers organization and fan base know their path to the Stanley Cup is heavily tied to shoring up the goaltending position and, as a team, cutting down on that goals against number. But make no mistake, this team is still more than capable of outscoring teams – even great teams – on a nightly basis. If Jarry turns out to be a sizable upgrade on the departed Stuart Skinner, there's no reason this team cannot make a bid at a Western Conference threepeat.

TSN.CA LOADED: 12.30.2025