



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

The Athletic

NHL trade board 3.0: New top targets as activity picks up and sellers emerge

By: Chris Johnston

After free trial, billed as \$20 once for your first year, then \$72 every year thereafter. Cancel anytime.

Automatic Renewal Terms: Offer for a New York Times All Access subscription; current subscribers not eligible. Subscription excludes print edition. Some games may be available without a subscription. Monthly and annual subscriptions include a 1 week free trial. If you cancel during a free trial period your access will end upon cancellation and you will not be charged. After your free trial you will automatically become a paying subscriber. As a paying subscriber on a monthly subscription, your payment method will automatically be charged in advance the introductory rate of \$2.00 every 4 weeks for the first year, and after the first year the standard rate of \$8.00 every 4 weeks. Cancel before January 14, 2027 to avoid the transition to the standard price that will be charged on that date. As a paying subscriber on an annual subscription, your payment method will automatically be charged in advance the introductory rate of \$20.00 once for the first year, and the standard rate of \$72.00 once yearly thereafter. Cancel before January 14, 2027 to avoid the transition to the standard price that will be charged on that date. Your subscription will continue until you cancel. For subscribers in the U.S., cancellation takes effect at the end of your current billing period. For international subscribers, see our Terms of Sale for further information. Taxes may apply. Offer terms are subject to change.

Pictured are Kiefer Sherwood, Artemi Panarin and Robert Thomas, three of the top names on the third edition of the 2025-26 NHL trade board.

Kiefer Sherwood, Artemi Panarin and Robert Thomas are among the top names on the NHL trade board. Illustration: Demetrius Robinson / The Athletic, with photos by Johnnie Izquierdo, Sarah Stier and Elsa / Getty Images

Analysis

Trade activity is starting to pick up around the NHL.

Since the last version of our Big Board was published in December, we've seen three players moved in separate deals: No. 9 Phillip Danault, No. 10 Mason Marchment and No. 15 Yegor Chinakhov. Two other candidates — No. 27 Alex Wennberg and No. 29 Christian Dvorak — have been dropped from our rankings after ringing in the new year with contract extensions.

Taken in totality, these are clear signs that business is moving in the league despite the congested standings.

Top League Content

The demarcation between buyers and sellers is still fairly murky with another trade freeze on the horizon starting Feb. 4 for the Olympics, although many front offices are in the midst of pro scouting meetings to start preparing for the March 6 trade deadline.

As teams continue to chart their paths forward, we refresh the Big Board, adding 10 new names, including five in the top 11.

As always, players are listed by how closely they demand watching, based on their potential impact and the current amount of buzz around them.

Note: Net Ratings and market values are via Dom Luszczyszyn's model and are projected for the full season based on statistics through Jan. 6. Goals saved above expected (GSAx) are via Evolving-Hockey, also through Jan. 6. Contract info is via PuckPedia.

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Right

Age

30

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$1,500,000

After scoring a career-best 19 goals last season, Sherwood is on pace to surpass 30 in 2025-26 thanks to a torrid start. He's an excellent skater for a big man, which makes him well-suited to disrupt opponents on the forecheck. Sherwood's work ethic is a major asset, too. There has been plenty of interest shown in him since the Canucks formally indicated a willingness to listen on their veterans — enough so that the team can probably get a strong return even if an extension for the pending unrestricted free agent isn't part of the deal. His bargain basement cap hit should help juice the return, too.

Market value

\$4,900,000

Net rating

Vancouver Canucks



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

29

Contract term

2027 UFA

Current cap hit

\$3,600,000

The fit hasn't worked out in Edmonton, where Mangiapane has become a routine scratch amid a wildly unproductive start. His 35-goal season from 2021-22 is a distant memory now, and his defensive impacts are cause for concern. However, he did score 13 even-strength goals in Washington last season and was also deployed as a penalty-killer on the league's fifth-best unit. Mangiapane holds a full no-movement clause, but will be open-minded about helping the Oilers find him a new opportunity.

Market value

\$2,000,000

Net rating

Edmonton Oilers

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Right

Age

29

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$4,550,000

In the wake of the Quinn Hughes trade, the action around Andersson has picked up again. The pending unrestricted free agent represents the biggest chip for Flames management to play in a season in which the team has taken a step back. The right-shot defenseman hasn't fully closed the door on negotiating an extension with Calgary, but his personal timeline doesn't appear to align with a retooling organization that will soon be looking toward the future.

Andersson is effective at winning puck battles and doesn't shy away from engaging physically. He's also averaged more than 23 minutes per night across the past five seasons while playing in all situations. He's the kind of player teams covet for a playoff run.

Market value

\$5,800,000

Net rating

Calgary Flames

Defenseman

Right-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

34

Contract term

2027 UFA

Current cap hit

\$4,900,000

An excellent skater and defensively sound winger, the puck is usually headed in a positive direction when Coleman is on the ice. He's a 20-goal scorer who has been dangerous on the penalty kill over the years and ideally slots in on the third line of a top team — as he did for the Lightning while winning back-to-back Stanley Cups in 2020 and 2021. Coleman is signed through 2026-27, but it's little wonder so many teams are calling the Flames already to inquire about his services. He's the kind of upgrade that can raise the bar for a contender.

Market value

\$5,900,000

Net rating

Calgary Flames

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Right

Age

34

Contract term



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$11,642,857

The Rangers' leading point producer in all seven seasons since arriving on Broadway as a celebrated free agent in 2019, Panarin remains one of the NHL's elite playmakers. However, he's also a serious threat to score as evidenced by recent seasons of 37 and 49 goals. Add it together and you've got the kind of game-breaking offensive performer that rarely becomes available via trade in the NHL. A collision of circumstances could create an environment where it happens here because the Rangers are weighing the merits of a retool and Panarin is a pending unrestricted free agent who is in line for another big payday. The player would have full control over the process, however, due to a no-movement clause in his contract.

Market value

\$11,900,000

Net rating

New York Rangers

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Right

Age

29

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$4,750,000

New Sabres general manager Jarmo Kekäläinen has said he intends to "take charge" of the Tuch situation after replacing Kevyn Adams, with his preference being to get the pending free agent signed to an extension. The price has only gone up since talks went quiet in the fall. If Buffalo can't make headway on that file, Tuch would be a valuable trade piece for an organization that's going to experience some turnover. He's a big, fast power forward with a proven ability to put the puck in the net. It remains to be seen how the team's recent stretch of hot play could impact his availability.

Market value

\$8,000,000

Net rating

Buffalo Sabres

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Center

Shoots

Right

Age

35

Contract term

2028 UFA

Current cap hit

\$8,000,000

This is the last place the future Hockey Hall of Famer expected to find himself within 18 months of signing with the Predators in free agency. However, it's proven to be an imperfect fit on both sides of the equation, with Nashville lacking the kind of playmaking center needed to maximize Stamkos's lethal shot and the team now scuffling toward the bottom of the standings for a second straight season. A potential Stamkos trade carries some complications: The player owns a no-movement clause, and the team would likely have to retain salary to make it work. But the potential for a big payoff is there. Stamkos has rebounded from a slow start and is well on pace to eclipse the 30-goal mark this season.

Market value

\$6,300,000

Net rating

Nashville Predators

Forward

Winger

Center

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Right

Age

36

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$2,750,000

The Jets have eight capable defensemen on the roster and a prospect they like in Elias Salomonsson who may soon be ready for NHL minutes. They're also looking a reboot in the face while scuffling at the bottom of the standings. While Schenn is a sturdy veteran unlikely to recoup the assets



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Winnipeg gave up for him at last year's deadline — they dealt a second- and fourth-round pick to Pittsburgh — he'll carry value as a right-shot defenseman ideally suited for third-pairing duty. He's a veteran of 1,100 NHL games who effectively protects the area around his net and consistently puts his body on the line as a shot blocker. He's also a two-time Stanley Cup champion.

Market value

\$775,000

Net rating

Winnipeg Jets

Defenseman

Right-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Right

Age

33

Contract term

2027 UFA

Current cap hit

\$6,500,000

A prototypical professional with 1,000 NHL games already under his belt, Faulk is playing more than 23 minutes per night in his 15th season. He is a stout five-on-five defender who chips in a bit offensively and generally keeps things steady. He is also a right shot capable of playing both sides of the ice. As an added bonus, his contract was front-loaded, which means he's owed less in actual cash than his actual cap hit now that he's down to the final two seasons on it.

Market value

\$5,400,000

Net rating

St. Louis Blues

Defenseman

Right-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

25

Contract term

2030 UFA

Current cap hit

\$4,820,000

Kotkaniemi has lost his grip on an everyday roster spot with the Hurricanes, which makes him an intriguing trade candidate given the general lack of centers available leaguewide. Regarded as a solid 200-foot player who skates well, there's been a big dip in his ability to drive play this season. His typically inconsistent offensive numbers have trended hard in the wrong direction, as well. Kotkaniemi still has four seasons remaining on his contract beyond this one, albeit at a reasonable cap number, and only has limited control of the situation courtesy of a 10-team no-trade list.

Market value

\$2,200,000

Net rating

Carolina Hurricanes

Forward

Winger

Center

Profile

Position

Center

Shoots

Right

Age

26

Contract term

2031 UFA

Current cap hit

\$8,125,000

Nothing is off the table in St. Louis, including a potential deal involving the team's top-line center. How likely that is depends on how you interpret the fact that his name has started to circulate again in chatter with rival teams. Thomas has experienced a slight dip in production this season, but he is coming off consecutive campaigns where he exceeded 80 points. He possesses strong puck skills and vision, and he can handle the challenge of facing tough competition every night. It would take a serious offer to land Thomas in the prime of his career, but the Blues are open for business.

Market value

\$9,700,000

Net rating

St. Louis Blues

Forward

Center

Profile



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Right

Age

32

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$4,400,000

Big, strong and experienced, Murphy has posted strong defensive results under less-than-favorable conditions with the Blackhawks in recent years. The right shot comes with an expiring contract that should be fairly easy to move, particularly in light of how few options are likely to be available in free agency next summer. This is a time of transition in Chicago so roster flexibility is paramount.

Market value

\$2,000,000

Net rating

Chicago Blackhawks

Defenseman

Right-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

34

Contract term

2027 UFA

Current cap hit

\$6,000,000

The Devils desperately need to clear out some cap space in order to make roster upgrades, and Palat's contract is at the top of the list to go. He remains a reasonably responsible complementary winger, but his rate of production has plummeted. That's a problem for the Devils because of a \$6 million cap hit that runs through the end of next season. However, Palat has already been paid the majority of the money owed on a heavily front-loaded contract and should still have some value for those swimming in cap space because of his extensive big-game experience and low-maintenance approach.

Market value

\$2,000,000

Net rating

New Jersey Devils

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Center

Shoots

Left

Age

32

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$3,750,000

A competitive, heart-on-his-sleeve center who has spent his entire NHL career in Columbus, Jenner is facing an uncertain future while playing on an expiring contract. He's unafraid to go to the hard areas of the ice and can put the puck in the net, which are attractive attributes to peddle if the Blue Jackets become sellers later in the season. The biggest drag on Jenner's career has been an inability to remain healthy, so it's notable that he missed 14 games earlier this season with an upper-body injury

Market value

\$6,100,000

Net rating

Columbus Blue Jackets

Forward

Winger

Center

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

29

Contract term

2031 UFA

Current cap hit

\$5,500,000

A strong skater with a nose for the net, DeBrusk is a difference-maker when on his game. But those stretches have been counter-balanced by quiet periods. DeBrusk



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

scored 28 goals during his first season with the Canucks but hasn't seen the puck find the net at nearly that same rate this year. There's a lot of meat left on the bone with a contract that includes a no-movement clause, which definitely complicates things, but DeBrusk is at an age where missing the playoffs won't sit well. There are competitive teams out there sizing up the potential fit.

Market value

\$6,300,000

Net rating

Vancouver Canucks

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Left

Age

27

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$1,250,000

The Jets have invested nearly a decade in Stanley's development and seen him blossom with a surge in scoring to go with the stout physical play you'd expect from a 6-foot-7 defenseman. Unafraid to drop his gloves to defend teammates, and with a reach that's basically unmatched across the league, Stanley is in position to cash in this summer with a contract that could be worth \$25 million or more. That leaves the Jets with a decision to make: Do they want to be the team offering that deal, or is it time to cash in on their investment by putting him on the trade market?

Market value

\$775,000

Net rating

Winnipeg Jets

Defenseman

Left-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Left

Age

31

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$3,250,000

Traded to the Rangers midway through last season, Soucy is a prime candidate to be dealt again as a pending UFA. He's a prototypical shutdown defender who has previously performed well during playoff runs in Seattle and Vancouver. As a bonus, the left shot is comfortable playing on either side of the ice.

Market value

\$2,000,000

Net rating

New York Rangers

Defenseman

Left-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Goalie

Age

32

Contract term

2027 UFA

Binnington hit early January with some of the worst numbers among starting NHL goalies, including 11.87 goals saved below expected through Tuesday. That's a reflection of how poorly things have gone for the Blues, too. Still, he's earned a reputation as a big-game goalie who rises to the occasion under the most intense pressure, and that's going to have allure for any contenders looking for an upgrade in the crease. Binnington's contract includes a 14-team no-trade clause and runs through the end of next season.

Market value

Not available for goalies

Goalie stats

St. Louis Blues

Goalie

Profile

Position

Center

Shoots

Left

Age

35

Contract term

2029 UFA



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Current cap hit

\$7,000,000

A fierce competitor with a Stanley Cup ring already in his collection, Kadri possesses a rare combination of offensive ability and fearlessness. He never backs down from a challenge and seems to elevate his play when the game's emotions are highest. It's little wonder that the Flames aren't eager to part ways with a center who still has three seasons left on his contract after this one. However, Kadri plays a premium position and still has a lot left to offer, so the biggest question here is how long he can remain patient in a rebuilding program.

Market value

\$8,100,000

Net rating

Calgary Flames

Forward

Center

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Right

Age

32

Contract term

2028 UFA

Current cap hit

\$9,000,000

Another candidate to be shipped out in a cap-clearing move by the Devils after seeing his no-trade clause converted to a 10-team trade list, Hamilton is a mobile right-shot defenseman who is logging more than 21 minutes per night this season. His offensive prowess isn't what it once was, but the puck still tends to be moving in the right direction when he's on the ice. As a bonus, the actual dollars owing on Hamilton's contract are less than the cap hit attached to the deal.

Market value

\$6,500,000

Net rating

New Jersey Devils

Defenseman

Right-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Left

Age

32

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$2,750,000

The veteran profiles as a steady defensive defenseman. Traded midseason to Pittsburgh as a cap casualty in the Tristan Jarry/Stuart Skinner deal, he's a strong candidate to be flipped again by the trade deadline as a pending free agent. What you see is what you get from Kulak, who played a valued support role in Edmonton's long playoff runs over the past four seasons. He's a penalty-killer and has been deployed on both sides of the ice in the past.

Market value

\$2,500,000

Net rating

Pittsburgh Penguins

Defenseman

Left-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Goalie

Age

32

Contract term

2026 UFA

The fact that he cleared waivers on Dec. 16 should not be viewed as a sign that he won't generate trade interest. Brossoit has had stretches of elite play in the NHL and is still making his way back from double hip surgery. Clearing waivers allowed him to be sent back to AHL Rockford, where rival teams will be closely monitoring his progress. They also recently saw him score a goal for the IceHogs! The Blackhawks may have to retain some salary on Brossoit in order to make a deal work.

Market value

Not available for goalies

Chicago Blackhawks

Goalie

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Left



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Age

27

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$3,250,000

No stranger to trade rumors the past couple of seasons, Ferraro is poised to again hear his name circulate around the league's hotstove. The Sharks winning more games in 2025-26, but they are still likely to end up as sellers, and the 27-year-old profiles as one of their more attractive assets to make available. Ferraro is a minute-munching, shot-blocking defenseman who appears capable of producing much better numbers on a more complete team. He's also a decent puck-mover and penalty-killer with a competitive streak to match.

Market value

\$1,700,000

Net rating

San Jose Sharks

Defenseman

Left-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Defenseman

Shoots

Left

Age

34

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$4,000,000

A smooth-skating defenseman with extensive playoff experience, Leddy has been in and out of the Sharks lineup this season. He isn't known for his physicality, but he's capable of contributing on both sides of specialty teams because of his skating ability and smarts. He profiles as a depth option at this stage of his career, but the acquisition cost won't be prohibitive.

Market value

\$775,000

Net rating

San Jose Sharks

Defenseman

Left-shot defenseman

Profile

Position

Center

Shoots

Left

Age

34

Contract term

2028 UFA

Current cap hit

\$6,500,000

Schenn's name was prominent in trade discussions last season, and he's since seen a full no-trade clause get converted to a 15-team no-trade list, giving him less control in the process. Schenn's offensive output is well off its usual levels, but he should still carry value as a reliable center capable of impacting the game at both ends of the ice. He's scored at a 22-goal, 54-point 82-game pace across a 17-year NHL career.

Market value

\$4,100,000

Net rating

St. Louis Blues

Forward

Winger

Center

Profile

Position

Center

Shoots

Left

Age

34

Contract term

2027 UFA

Current cap hit

\$4,500,000

O'Reilly doesn't own a no-movement clause, but the Predators will treat him as though he does. That means they won't be trading their top center anywhere unless he's willing to go. The writing is on the wall in Nashville, though, and the 2019 Conn Smythe Trophy winner will almost certainly have to go elsewhere to play meaningful games again before the end of his contract. O'Reilly is an excellent two-way center who can be counted on to chip in offensively and has the ability to be a true difference-maker for a contender. As an added bonus, he's a beast in the faceoff circle.

Market value



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

\$8,300,000

Net rating

Nashville Predators

Forward

Center

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

25

Contract term

2026 RFA

Current cap hit

\$3,425,000

Maccelli's play has come on after a steady stream of healthy scratches, but he remains a chip the Leafs would consider playing. He has good vision and no shortage of offensive skill, but his game challenges a coach's trust. Maccelli is also undersized, which can be a barrier to winning puck battles, and his commitment on the defensive end remains a work in progress. The acquisition cost won't be huge. The Leafs got him from Utah for a third-round pick last summer.

Market value

\$4,000,000

Net rating

Toronto Maple Leafs

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

34

Contract term

2026 UFA

Current cap hit

\$5,125,000

A perennial 20-plus goal scorer, Kane has been snakebitten since a move to his hometown Canucks. Now he's one of the veteran pending free agents Vancouver is soliciting offers on. A physically intimidating presence who is unafraid to go to

the hard areas of the ice, Kane should draw some interest from playoff-bound teams willing to look past some of the baggage he comes with. He played in the past two Stanley Cup Finals with the Edmonton Oilers before the summer trade to Vancouver.

Market value

\$3,200,000

Net rating

Vancouver Canucks

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

23

Contract term

2026 RFA

Current cap hit

\$1,200,000

A fresh start in Vancouver didn't yield an uptick in results for a player who's been a prolific goal scorer everywhere but the NHL. The Canucks passed him through waivers unclaimed on Dec. 15 after acquiring two young forwards who will slot ahead of him on the organizational depth chart in the Hughes trade. Reichel now finds himself battling for a job and will probably require another fresh start to get back to the NHL.

Market value

\$775,000

Net rating

Vancouver Canucks

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Center

Shoots

Right

Age

31

Contract term

2027 UFA

Current cap hit



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

\$4,000,000

It's not clear where things stand with Hartman after the Wild dealt center Marco Rossi to Vancouver in the Hughes trade. They probably need to be adding more strength down the middle rather than shedding it. However, a slow start to the season put Hartman's name in trade rumors this fall — and he only has partial control of the situation courtesy of a 15-team no-trade list. Hartman is an agitator who often finds himself straddling the line of acceptable on-ice conduct, and he can be trusted defensively. He's mixed in a couple of big offensive seasons for the Wild in recent years, too.

Market value

\$3,900,000

Net rating

Minnesota Wild

Forward

Winger

Center

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Right

Age

35

Contract term

2029 UFA

Current cap hit

\$5,500,000

Similar to Stamkos, the fit in Nashville hasn't been anything close to what Marchessault envisioned when he signed there in July 2024. Still, he scored 21 goals last season — his lowest total in an 82-game campaign since 2015-16 — and seems like a good bet to return to previous scoring levels if placed alongside a center who can get him the puck. The 2023 Conn Smythe Trophy winner boasts a resume that includes 102 career playoff games. What's more, his cap hit should become even more palatable as it ages.

Market value

\$3,100,000

Net rating

Nashville Predators

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Right

Age

33

Contract term

2028 UFA

Current cap hit

\$5,125,000

A surprisingly strong start in Pittsburgh sent this beloved Penguin tumbling down the trade board. But what hasn't changed is the fact that the organization is focused on getting younger and Rust is a prime asset who could be used to help that process along. His speed, forechecking prowess and two-way ability have allowed his game to age gracefully, and the 33-year-old is playing on a cap-friendly contract. He also saw the no-movement clause in his deal disappear last summer, which means that his fate rests entirely in the hands of Penguins management.

Market value

\$8,700,000

Net rating

Pittsburgh Penguins

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Right

Age

22

Contract term

2027 RFA

Current cap hit

\$886,666

An explosive skater who was drafted at No. 30 in 2022, Lambert has yet to find his footing in the NHL. That's a factor of both his slow-moving development and the parent club's depth at forward. While there's no sense the Jets feel they have to move Lambert, they're open to the possibility if the return makes sense. Lambert led the AHL's Manitoba Moose with 55 points as a 19-year-old in 2023-24 but hasn't been able to match that level of production since. He's still very young with room to grow, though.

Market value

Not available

Winnipeg Jets



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Left

Age

23

Contract term

2026 RFA

Current cap hit

\$863,333

The Rangers system is stocked with wingers, and they're gauging the market on those players, including Othmann, the No. 16 pick from the 2021 draft. While certainly not in a position at which they feel they have to move him, they'd be willing to part with him at the right price. His dangerous shot and ability to win back the puck are considered strengths, albeit traits he's yet to show with any consistency in limited looks in the NHL. Othmann didn't make it to the end of training camp with the Rangers before being sent down to AHL Hartford and could benefit from a fresh opportunity elsewhere.

Market value

Not available

New York Rangers

Forward

Winger

Profile

Position

Winger

Shoots

Right

Age

27

Contract term

2031 UFA

Current cap hit

\$8,125,000

Kyrou's name circled through the rumor mill before his no-movement clause officially took effect on July 1, and it resurfaced abruptly in November when he was made a healthy scratch by the scuffling Blues. While his production is a shade off its usual level, Kyrou remains a highly skilled winger who possesses an enviable toolkit — blinding speed, high-end vision and creativity to spare. As much as he doesn't seem inclined to want a change of scenery, this could be a sea-change season in St. Louis if the fortunes of the team don't rebound quickly.

Market value

\$7,700,000

Net rating

St. Louis Blues

Forward

Winger



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026



Preview: January 8 vs. Anaheim

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Canes host second of three straight Western Conference opponents

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes will aim for a third straight win when they host the Anaheim Ducks on Thursday.

When: Thursday, January 8

Puck Drop: 7:00 p.m. ET

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

Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes App

Canes Record: 26-14-3 (55 Points, 1st - Metropolitan Division)

Canes Last Game: 6-3 Win over the Dallas Stars on Tuesday, Jan. 6

Ducks Record: 21-19-3 (45 Points, 6th - Pacific Division)

Ducks Last Game: 5-2 Loss to the Philadelphia Flyers on Tuesday, Jan. 6

Last Time Out...

Carolina breezed past the Dallas Stars 6-3 at Lenovo Center on Tuesday.

K'Andre Miller notched three points - including his second multi-goal game of the season - and Andrei Svechnikov picked up four assists to pace the Canes' offense.

Brandon Bussi made 20 saves to reach his 15th career win faster than any netminder in NHL history (18 GP).

Previous Meetings vs. ANA This Season...

October 16: Led by two goals from Seth Jarvis and the first of Alexander Nikishin's career, the Canes downed the Ducks, 4-1.

Getting Healthy...

After Seth Jarvis returned with a bang on Tuesday, notching two points in a win over the Stars, the Canes could receive even more reinforcements this evening as Jaccob Slavin nears his first game action since Dec. 19.

Missing the last nine outings with an upper-body injury, plus 29 contests earlier in the season with a lower-body

concern, Slavin skated with the team in a regular sweater and worked alongside Jalen Chatfield at Wednesday's practice.

Speaking to the media after yesterday's skate, Rod Brind'Amour left Slavin's return up to him and the Canes' medical team, but highlighted the positive step of the blueliner getting out of the yellow "no-contact" sweater.

Slavin is on the doorstep of a milestone, as his next point will be the 300th of his career.

In Net...

With two days since their last game, the Canes will likely have their choice between Brandon Bussi and Frederik Andersen.

Bussi has started Carolina's last two games, backstopping a pair of wins and totaling 48 saves on 51 shots.

Things have not gone the way of Andersen lately, going 0-7-2 in his last nine appearances. He was strong through the first 40 minutes in both of his last two outings against Florida and Colorado, before things unraveled in the third for the team.

On The Other Side...

Mired in a seven-game winless skid (0-6-1), Anaheim enters tonight's tilt seeking its first victory since Dec. 20.

The Ducks are allowing a league-high average of five goals per game in that span, while scoring at a rate of just 2.43 goals per game - third-lowest among NHL clubs.

Troy Terry has been a bright spot for his club, finding the scoresheet in three straight games and leading the club with seven points in his last five games. Standout rookie Beckett Sennecke has also scored in three of his last four outings.

Injury Updates...

Goaltender Pyotr Kochetkov is set to undergo hip surgery and was declared "probably out for the year" by Rod Brind'Amour on Dec. 29.

Defenseman Jaccob Slavin suffered an upper-body injury on Dec. 19 in Florida. He was labeled as "week-to-week" and placed on injured reserve on Dec. 22.

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

What Are We Wearing?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

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

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes are scheduled to practice on Friday and will return to game action at home on Saturday against the Seattle Kraken.

Next Game: Saturday, Jan. 10 vs. Seattle | 7:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026



NHL Power Rankings: Lightning storm into top two with eight straight wins, pushing toward Avalanche

By: Austin Nivison

Nothing can stop the Lightning -- not even the Avalanche

Is the championship window closing for the Tampa Bay Lightning? The answer to that is a pretty emphatic, "No." Despite some significant injuries, the Lightning are among the league's elite, and they're poised for another run at Lord Stanley.

Prior to the season, if you would have told me that Victor Hedman and Ryan McDonagh had combined to play 36 games at the halfway mark of the season, I would've assumed that Tampa was out of the playoff picture. Instead, only three teams have a better record, and only one has more wins.

That lone team, the Colorado Avalanche, rolled into Benchmark International Arena on Tuesday night and left with a loss. It was only the Avalanche's fourth regulation loss of the season -- and their 11th overall. The Bolts made a statement: Don't start etching Colorado's name on the Cup just yet.

So, how have the Lightning been able to keep rolling? For starters, it helps to have Nikita Kucherov, Jake Guentzel, Brandon Hagel and Brayden Point all playing at a high level. That's a quartet few teams can match. Besides, even if they aren't perfect, Andrei Vasilevski is in net to erase any mistakes.

The defensive performance has been the real marvel as Hedman and McDonagh have been sidelined. J.J. Moser, part of the return from the Utah Mammoth in the Mikhail Sergachev trade, has morphed into a budding star. On top of that, Darren Raddysh is suddenly an offensive wizard, especially on the power play. Jon Cooper deserves all kinds of credit for getting the absolute most out of a decimated blue line.

Tampa had a real case to be No. 1 this week, but even with the win over Colorado, I couldn't do it. The Avalanche have built up too much equity for me to drop them over one head-to-head loss. That being said, here are your updated NHL Power Rankings.

All expected goals and goals saved above average data courtesy of Natural Stat Trick.

Biggest Movers

Up: 8 Penguins

Down: 6 Golden Knights

1

Avalanche The Avalanche are mortal after all. The power of Florida men has proven too strong for the Avs, and

they've now lost two consecutive games in regulation.

-- 31-4-7

2

Lightning So, J.J. Moser is just a star on the blue line now, huh? He's got a 59.8% expected goals share and plus-25 goal differential at five-on-five. Victor Hedman went down, and the Bolts just turned two more defensemen (Moser and Darren Raddysh) into studs. 2 26-13-3

3

Wild Minnesota is giving rookie Danila Yurov a big responsibility, centering Kirill Kaprizov and Mats Zuccarello. He's played fairly well in that role, just keeping his head above water at five-on-five and tallying nine points in his last 13 games. It still feels like the Wild need an upgrade at that spot. 1 25-11-8

4

Hurricanes Nikolaj Ehlers might finally be heating up, for real this time. He's riding a three-game goal streak, and he has five points in that span. As I've said before, Carolina bet that he could be the electric playmaker it needed at forward, and that bet hasn't cashed just yet. 1 26-14-3

5

Stars Let me take this opportunity to rant about Team USA snubbing Jason Robertson again. What more does Bill Guerin need to see? Since the start of the 2021-22 season, just 11 players have outscored Robertson. Two of those players are American, and they're both on the team! 2 26-10-8

6

Red Wings Simon Edvinsson has started to flourish alongside Norris Trophy candidate Moritz Seider. It's a symbiotic relationship in that Seider is helping to develop Edvinsson, and Edvinsson has given Seider perhaps the most stable defensive partner of his career. -- 25-15-4

7

Islanders Ilya Sorokin is starting to build a case for the Vezina Trophy. He's now up to 12.9 goals saved above average, and his .878 high-danger save percentage is the best in the NHL. 3 24-15-4

8

Sabres Buffalo had its magical 10-game winning streak snapped over the weekend, but it made up a ton of ground in the playoff race. Now we'll see if that run, which was fueled



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

by insane goaltending from Alex Lyon and Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, can be replicated. 3 22-15-4

9

Canadiens Nick Suzuki got the nod for Team Canada, and he's more than deserving. Not only is playing at a point-per-game pace (again), but the Habs are crushing opponents in all three zones when he's on the ice. 4 24-13-6

6

10

Oilers In case everyone wasn't already aware, Connor McDavid is a cheat code. McDavid is now riding a 16-game point streak, and he has 17 goals and 22 assists in that span. He is carrying Edmonton toward first place in the Pacific Division. 1 21-16-6

11

Panthers The hits just keep on coming for the Panthers. Shutdown defenseman Seth Jones is now out week-to-week, which only adds to Florida's injury-plagued season. The good news? Matthew Tkachuk will be back soon, and the Cats just handed the Avalanche their third regulation loss of the season. 3 22-17-3

12

Flyers Four teams have allowed fewer goals than the Flyers, and Dan Vladar has a lot to do with that. He's come out of nowhere to save 7.89 goals above average while turning in a .835 high-danger save percentage. Vladar has been a revelation in Philly. 3 22-12-7

13

Golden Knights The Golden Knights got a badly needed win over the Jets on Tuesday, but they've still won just two of their last 10 games. Meanwhile, here come the Oilers making their annual charge up the standings. Objects in your mirror are closer than they appear. 6 18-11-12

14

Senators Ottawa will have to outscore its problems for the time being -- and perhaps all season. Despite allowing five-on-five expected goals at the lowest rate in the NHL, no team has a worse save percentage. Do they have the scoring to win shootouts on a nightly basis? I'm not convinced of that. -- 20-17-5

15

Capitals Here's a little shoutout to Justin Sourdif. He's been thrust into a bigger role, and he's playing well. He's got a 53.6% expected goals share and a plus-12 goal differential at five-on-five. Plus, the rookie has 18 points in 42 games. 1 22-16-6

16

Bruins It seems Morgan Geekie has finally stopped sizzling. He hasn't scored in his last seven games, and it's probably no coincidence that the Bruins have started to slip over that span. Geekie has transformed himself in Boston, but scoring at a 55-goal pace for 82 games was always a stretch. 3 22-19-2

17

Ducks On Dec. 10, the Ducks were 19-10-1 and first in the Pacific Division. Since then, Anaheim has gone 2-9-2 (last in the NHL over that span), and is now clinging to the final playoff spot in the West. The Ducks' leaky defense has finally caught up to them. 5 21-19-3

18

Sharks Macklin Celebrini has a very real case for the Hart Trophy. He has 64 points. No other Shark has more than 29. His five-on-five goal differential (plus-15) is also lightyears ahead of anyone else on the team. Celebrini has reshaped this franchise in less than two seasons. 3 22-18-3

19

Penguins Pittsburgh has followed up a 1-5-4 stretch with a five-game winning streak. It probably doesn't shock you to hear that Sidney Crosby has been a big part of that turnaround with four goals and five assists. 8 20-12-9

20

Maple Leafs Welcome to the 2025-26 season, Auston Matthews. In the process of passing Mats Sundin for the all-time franchise goals record, Matthews has tallied seven goals in his last five games. If Toronto gets more of this from Matthews, it has a shot to surge up the standings. 2 20-15-7

21

Devils After taking a 9-0 beating from the Islanders, it seems like something drastic has to happen for the Devils to save their season. I still think New Jersey has the pieces to be dangerous in April, but it has to get there first. 4 22-19-2

22

Kings Last month, Quinton Byfield went 10 straight games without registering a point. He has just six goals and 18 assists on the season. Byfield can be a great two-way player, but he's too much of a one-way player this year. 4 18-14-10

23

Kraken Seattle is now 32nd in five-on-five expected goals share at 43.6%. The Kraken also sit in third place in the Pacific Division just one point off the lead. What a weird season it's been. 5 20-14-7

24

Rangers Adam Fox has been placed on LTIR. Igor Shesterkin has been placed on IR with the fear that his injury could be really long-term. If that is the case, you can go ahead and stick a fork in the Rangers. You could probably do that already, but especially now. 4 20-18-6

25

Predators The Predators are still in the West playoff race, but GM Barry Trotz needs to take advantage of Ryan O'Reilly's value on the trade market. O'Reilly has one year left on his contract at a reasonable price tag, and there is a major shortage of available centers. 1 19-19-4



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

26

Mammoth Clayton Keller is scoring at his lowest pace since 2020-21, and a lot of that dip can be attributed to a lack of production on the power play. He has one goal with the man advantage, and he's shooting 4.3% in those situations. 1 21-20-3

27

Flames Would Mikael Backlund be available for a trade? He's quietly having a solid season, and he would be a tremendous weapon on the third-line of a Stanley Cup contender. He is the Flames' captain, but GM Brad Treliving might be able to get a haul for the veteran. 4 18-21-4

28

Blue Jackets Dante Fabbro looked like a legit top-four option for the Blue Jackets last season, but that hasn't been the case in 2025-26. He's way underwater at five-on-five, and his offensive production has dropped off a cliff. 2 18-17-7

29

Blackhawks Hey, the Blackhawks have won three in a row! I guess that means they're kinda back in the playoff race based on how messy the wild card races are. 3 18-18-7

30

Blues How many Blues are going to hit 20 goals? One? Two? Robert Thomas is at 10. Justin Faulk has 11, but I doubt he keeps that up as a defenseman. Can Jake Neighbours get there? What about Jordan Kyrou? It's bleak in St. Louis. 1 17-19-8

31

Canucks The Canucks have yet to win in 2026, and I wonder when that first victory of the year will come. They're in the midst of a long and arduous road trip, so it could be a while. 1 16-21-5

32

Jets Winnipeg had a win in its grasp on Tuesday and let it slip away in painful fashion. The Jets have now gone 10 straight games without a win. At least the weather is nice in Winnipeg this time of year. 1 15-21-5



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

The Hockey News

Jacob Slavin Once Again On The Verge Of Returning To Action

By: Ryan Henkel

Star defenseman Jacob Slavin sheds his non-contact jersey, nearing a return after a season plagued by injury and finding strength beyond the rink.

The Carolina Hurricanes are once again approaching full health for their skater lineup and they got another positive sign Wednesday.

Star defenseman Jacob Slavin skated with the team for the first time in a regular jersey since suffering an upper-body injury Dec. 19 in Florida.

"Feeling good," Slavin said. "It's nice to be back out there. Just chugging along, getting ready to play."

It's been a tough year for the veteran blueliner, who's appeared in only five games this season.

He missed the entire preseason due to a lower-body injury and then played just two games before missing another chunk of time after reaggravating it.

Slavin returned for just three games before his newest injury, but he said the injuries haven't affected his mental health at all.

"My identity isn't founded in the game of hockey, so whether I'm playing well, or I'm playing bad, whether I'm in the press box, it doesn't change where my identity lies and that's in who God says I am," Slavin said. "Emotionally and mentally, it's been fine. Just happy to be here and have that joy every day that doesn't come from hockey. It's pretty easy to be mentally good right now."

Slavin could return any day now that he's out of the non-contact jersey, but there's no current timeline so it could be tomorrow or even a week from now.

"I don't know to be honest with you," Brind'Amour said when asked if Slavin could be available versus Anaheim. "It's kind of in his hands and in our medical staff's hands where that all goes. But obviously we're getting closer because he's out of that yellow jersey. Not sure."

5 Takeaways: Hurricanes Dominate Stars In Full 60 Effort

By: Ryan Henkel

Stankoven's revenge, a scorching power play, and a record-setting goalie define Carolina's dominant 60-minute performance against the Stars.

Boy was Tuesday night crazy.

From the Lenovo Center crowd giving it to Mikko Rantanen all night long, to a six-goal outing for the Carolina Hurricanes in a game full of storylines and excitement.

But here are five takeaways from a fun game:

1. Revenge

I'm not sure who felt more satisfied by the end of Tuesday's game: the Lenovo Center crowd or Logan Stankoven.

Stankoven scored for the second game in a row last night, netting the team's third goal of the game and his first ever against his old squad.

And not only did he score against the team that traded him, he danced around the guy who he was traded for to do it.

"It was nice, for sure," Stankoven said. "I think anytime you can pot one against a team that trades you, it's a great feeling. I do have a lot of great friends over there, but once we're on the ice, it's go time. I'm going to compete as hard as I can. That's my mentality."

And not only that, but then the crowd started up a "Logan's Better!" chant as well.

Had to have felt pretty gratifying for the 22 year old.

Raleigh erupted with boos and "Mikko Sucks" chants as Rantanen returned, with fans even shouting "Logan's Better."

thehockeynews.comHurricane Fans Tear Into Mikko Rantanen In His First Game Back In RaleighRaleigh erupted with boos and "Mikko Sucks" chants as Rantanen returned, with fans even shouting "Logan's Better."

2. Power Play Stays Hot

Carolina's power play just can't be stopped it seems.

Tuesday night, the man advantage scored another two goals: Shayne Gostisbehere releasing a laser for his fifth of the season and Seth Jarvis netting his 20th on a lucky bounce.

Since December, the Hurricanes have scored 16 power play goals in 18 games and 59 opportunities.

That's a 27.1% success rate, the seventh best in the NHL over that span.

That stretch also coincides with Jordan Staal getting moved onto the power play as well.

The team had been struggling to win faceoffs early in the year, including on the man advantage, so Brind'Amour figured he'd put his best guy out there and it's seemingly worked.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Staal has a 69% faceoff win percentage on the power play, well above Aho's (57%) and Stankoven's (48%) percentages.

Possession is so crucial to a power play's success, so it makes sense that all of this is connected.

3. Brandon Bussi Sets Yet Another NHL Record

One of the biggest stories of the season that nobody outside of Carolina seems to be talking about is Brandon Bussi.

The 27-year-old rookie had another lights out performance on Tuesday, stopping 19 shots, but it felt like at least 12 of those shots were really good chances.

Bussi has been so good on his reads and using his athleticism to make high-danger saves and he helped the Canes be able to keep their foots on the gas.

"Your goalie being your best player helps," Brind'Amour said.

And with the win last night, Bussi also became the fastest goaltender in NHL history to 15 wins, doing it in just 18 appearances.

Vezina?

4. Blueline Scoring

K'Andre Miller's two-goal outing snapped a 33-game scoreless drought for the defenseman and it was also just the second game he's scored in this year.

"I think I've been trying to round out my game here over the last couple of weeks," Miller said. "I feel like it's starting to come and I'm starting to get a little more comfortable within the systems and with the guys and tendencies and things like that."

However, overall, the Hurricanes have been getting steady production throughout their blueline.

The team is 12th overall in goals by defensemen (Nikishin and Gostisbehere lead the team with five a piece) and they're 6th overall in blueline points with 100. Gostisbehere, again, is at the top with 30 points in 31 games.

Four of the team's defensemen have double-digit points, six have scored and eight have collected points so far this season.

5. Seth Jarvis' Returns

For the first time in eight games, the Canes got their leading scorer back into the lineup and boy what a difference he made.

Jarvis played 18:01 Tuesday night and registered a goal, an assist, six shots on goal, four hits, drew a penalty and was just an absolute force all over the ice.

"He didn't look like he even missed a beat," Brind'Amour said. "Been out for a long time, only had a couple of practices with us, but a special player. When he's out there, you notice him and that's good for us. He does so many things."

But even beyond what he brings on the ice, Jarvis' energy and presence just brings another element to this team that sort of drags everyone into the fight with him.

It's one of those intangibles that is so hard to quantify, but you really notice it when he's not in the lineup.

"We all know how special of a player Jarvy is and what he can bring to a team," Miller said. "Something that you guys maybe don't know or notice all the time is just the energy he brings on the bench. Whether it's in the locker room or just hanging out with the guys. He always a guy that people want to be around and he's kind of the life of the party. It's nice to have him back."

LINKS

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6949917/2026/01/08/nhl-trade-board-panarin-sherwood-thomas/>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/preview-january-8-vs-anaheim>

<https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/nhl-power-rankings-lightning-avalanche/>

<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/jacob-slavin-once-again-on-the-verge-of-returning-to-action>

<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/5-takeaways-hurricanes-dominate-stars-in-full-60-effort>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

SportScan

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

1374788 Websites

The Athletic / Glenn Hall, Blackhawks, Red Wings and Blues legend and Hall of Fame goalie, dies at 94

By Jesse Granger and Jeremy Rutherford

Glenn Hall, the Hall of Fame goaltender who pioneered the butterfly style while playing for the Detroit Red Wings, Chicago Blackhawks and St. Louis Blues, died Wednesday. He was 94 years old.

Appropriately nicknamed "Mr. Goalie," Hall was one of the greatest netminders in NHL history. He backstopped Chicago's 1961 Stanley Cup championship and played 502 consecutive NHL games — a league record that is unlikely to ever be broken — and did it all without a mask.

"Glenn Hall was the very definition of what all hockey goaltenders aspire to be," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said in a statement. "Aptly nicknamed 'Mr. Goalie,' Glenn was sturdy, dependable, and a spectacular talent in net.

"He set the bar for consistency with a goaltending ironman record of 502 consecutive regular-season games played for the Detroit Red Wings and Chicago Blackhawks. That record, set from 1955-56 to 1962-63, still stands, probably always will, and is almost unfathomable — especially when you consider he did it all without a mask."

Hall was born in Humboldt, Saskatchewan in 1931 to parents Henry and Agnes. He played junior hockey for the Humboldt Indians and Windsor Spitfires before signing with the Detroit Red Wings in 1949. After four seasons playing in the minors, Hall played his first full NHL season in 1955-56 and won the Calder Trophy.

He went on to play every game for the next seven seasons for the Red Wings and Blackhawks. He played in 13 All-Star games, led the NHL in shutouts six different times and won the Vezina Trophy — then awarded to the goalie on the team allowing the fewest goals — three times (1963, 1967 and 1969).

He did it with a style of goaltending never seen before at the time, dropping to his knees to cover the bottom of the net while flaring his pads out wide to redirect shots away from the goal. It was later coined the butterfly, and changed the trajectory of goaltending technique in a way that still impacts the way goalies play today.

"The Chicago Blackhawks are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Glenn Hall, one of the greatest and most influential goaltenders in the history of our sport and a cornerstone of our franchise," Blackhawks CEO Danny Wirtz said in a statement. "... Glenn's No. 1 jersey hangs proudly in the United Center rafters, a permanent tribute to this enduring impact on the Blackhawks and the game. On behalf of the Wirtz family and the entire Chicago Blackhawks organization, we extend our deepest condolences to Glenn's family, friends, and the countless teammates and supporters who loved him. We are grateful for his extraordinary

contributions to hockey and to our club, and we will honor his memory today and always."

Glenn Hall was a legend, and I was a big fan of his. He set the standard for every goaltender who followed. His toughness and consistency defined what it meant to play.

Hall dropped to the ice to stymie shooters with minimal upper-body protection and no mask, and still managed to play 906 games (eighth-most in NHL history). His crowning achievement came in 1961, leading the underdog Blackhawks to a Stanley Cup title. He posted a .937 save percentage in 12 playoff games that season, including back-to-back shutouts to eliminate the five-time defending champion Montreal Canadiens in the semi-finals.

After a decade in Chicago, Hall was selected by St. Louis in the 1967 expansion draft. He was purposely left off the Blackhawks' protected list for the expansion draft because he planned to retire. The Blues had to talk him out of retirement when they chose him with their first pick in the draft.

"We talked about a contract," Hall said in 2014. "All of the sudden, they were talking about money, and we didn't make a lot in those days, so I was very interested in coming to St. Louis."

Hall helped the upstart Blues reach the Stanley Cup Final in their first season. Despite being swept by the Canadiens in the final, Hall was named the Conn Smythe winner for his play in net. He played his final four seasons in St. Louis, winning his third and final Vezina trophy in 1969 while playing in tandem with fellow Hall of Famer Jacques Plante.

In 2014, Hall said winning the Conn Smythe with the Blues in 1968 on the losing team in the Stanley Cup Final "ranks high. I was honored more than I should have been, probably."

pic.twitter.com/pFqn068No5

— St. Louis Blues (@StLouisBlues) January 8, 2026

Hall retired in 1971, ending his career with 407 wins, 84 shutouts and a career save percentage of .918. His seven first-team All-Star selections are still the most ever by a goaltender. He was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1975, and then added another Cup to his resume while serving as goaltending consultant for the Calgary Flames in 1988-89.

"He's a legend of the game," former Blues goalie Brian Elliott said of Hall in 2014. "Any time you look back at old records or old footage, he's one of the prominent guys. Playing 502 consecutive games, and probably more than half that without a mask, it's pretty special."

Hall was a pioneer of the position and an iron man. He is survived by his four children Pat, Leslie, Tammy, and Lindsay, nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374789 Websites



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

The Athletic / AHL and players' union reach tentative deal on collective bargaining agreement

By Rob Rossi and James Mirtle

The American Hockey League (AHL) and Professional Hockey Players' Association (PHPA) announced a tentative collective bargaining agreement Wednesday afternoon. The CBA must still be ratified by the PHPA's membership and approved by the AHL's board of governors.

The AHL has been playing without a new CBA this season.

@TheAHL and @thepha have reached a tentative deal on a new collective bargaining agreement. The agreement is subject to ratification by the AHL Board of Governors and by the PHPA's AHL membership. pic.twitter.com/HSGUbQjbp2

— AHL Communications (@AHLPR) January 7, 2026

The Athletic reported in November that there was optimism a deal could be reached between the AHL and PHPA. This new CBA comes on the heels of the ECHL and PHPA ratifying a five-year collective agreement last month after contentious negotiations.

The AHL is North America's No. 2 professional hockey league, the NHL's top minor league. The ECHL is a level below the AHL.

The new AHL agreement will be for five seasons, carrying until 2029-30. Some of the main compensatory changes in the tentative agreement include:

Player contract minimums rising from \$52,725 to \$61,000 by 2030

Playoff pool bonuses rising from \$2.03 million to \$2.21 million

Per diem rate when on the road increases

Introduction of an hourly rate for commercial appearances

Other noteworthy shifts include a league-wide 65-game limit for playing three games in three nights and a mandatory day off with no travel after those games.

The new CBA will also include a new qualifying offer system for under-26-year-old first-year AHL-contracted players. Players will now be eligible to receive a one-year qualifying offer for a second season at 110 percent of their prior salary.

The agreement has new provisions in which clubs can buy out players in the offseason. Players under 26 years old would receive one-third of their remaining salary, and players over that age would receive two-thirds.

And the AHL's veteran rules will be amended so that AHL teams can now dress six veteran players per game (players with more than 260 games of experience), simplifying the previous system where one of the six could not have played more than 320 games.

There are improvements to player benefits, and the Christmas break has been expanded to four days in addition to those changes. The new CBA will also include the creation of a new health and safety committee, a new labor management committee, as well as a new substance abuse and behavioral health program to support players. The AHL will also adopt the NHL/NHLPA performance-enhancing substance program.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374790 Websites

The Athletic / Why the ECHL strike meant so much to players — and why money wasn't the biggest issue

By James Mirtle

When the first all-player strike in one of the NHL's feeder leagues ended last week, there had been more than a week of dark days and 41 games cancelled over the typically action-packed holiday break in hockey's Double AA circuit.

More than 70 percent of ECHL players voted to walk away, just before Christmas, despite being offered a 20 percent pay bump by the league.

In the end, this wasn't a dispute about money. It was about trying to fix some of the difficult working conditions in the league, conditions players believed were too far below those in the NHL and AHL.

The memorandum of agreement for the ECHL's new deal, obtained by The Athletic, highlights just how relatively small the financial stakes were. Starting this week, ECHL players will now make an average of roughly \$24,600 a season, a raise from \$20,300 under the old collective bargaining agreement.

Players are only paid six months of the year, during the regular season, but receive additional weeks' salary if their teams make the playoffs.

While there are some other small new concessions in the CBA that will help players make ends meet (such as getting access to health benefits in the offseason), to hear ECHLers explain their strike vote, the pay bump was never the driving force. Instead, they were trying to end extreme practices by some ECHL teams that included 20-hour road trips by two-seater buses, games being scheduled at midnight, no days off, ill-fitting helmets and being given used equipment to wear.

Some of the ECHL's road trips this season have been particularly grueling, as laid out here previously.

The AHL and ECHL have been playing without new CBAs this season, as frayed negotiations have bled into the campaign.

"Those type of (travel) things are just unprofessional and that's something we really honed in on during these negotiations to correct," said Jimmy Mazza, a six-year ECHL veteran who was part of the Professional Hockey Players' Association negotiating committee. "I believe with this contract, you'll see guys stay longer in this league."

"You can't put a dollar value on the health and safety of a player," added Todd Skirving, a forward with the Kalamazoo Wings. "That was the most important thing. We just felt like there was no movement on that side of things (in negotiations), so as players we needed to stick together and unite and get that before anything else."

The ECHL is a league in an odd and evolving position these days. While it's two rungs below the NHL and far from the limelight, nearly 800 ECHL players have made it to hockey's highest level over the years, including many who are currently playing big roles in the NHL this season.

Bobby McMann, for example, is on the Toronto Maple Leafs' top line with Auston Matthews right now and was in the ECHL as recently as 2021-22. Justin Brazeau, who has 20 points in 27 games for the Pittsburgh Penguins, played two recent seasons in the ECHL after coming out of junior hockey undrafted. And plenty of goalies have spent full seasons in the ECHL early in their careers to get more starts, including big-name veterans such as Jonathan Quick, Jordan Binnington, Logan Thompson and Philipp Grubauer.

Approximately 25 former ECHL players make the NHL every season on average, going back the past 20 years. It's not an insignificant number.

But when those future NHLers played in the ECHL, they were teammates with players making as little as \$13,500 a season, which has long been



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

the rookie minimum. Many ECHL players take on second (and sometimes third) jobs, especially during the offseason, when they can sometimes earn more doing a desk job or running a hockey camp than they do on the ice throughout the hockey season.

In many ways, the ECHL has become a two-tiered league as it has become younger (with an average age of around 23 years old) and more NHL teams have sent prospects there to develop. This season, for example, there are 52 players on NHL contracts who are playing in the ECHL, which is nearly 8 percent of the league. Another roughly 25 percent of players are on AHL contracts, meaning they earn a far better wage given the AHL minimum salary is \$52,725.

ECHL players are provided with a place to live and receive a per diem on the road (which was raised to \$60 a day in the new CBA), but even then it can be hard for players to get by on what they're making. You add in the difficult travel — including playing three games in three nights, with the third game often played on a Sunday afternoon on little rest — and many players don't last long under those conditions.

Part of why the ECHL has become such a young league is players can find better pay and scheduling in European leagues. ECHL rules also limit clubs to playing only four veterans a night.

"It's a massive gap," Mazza said of what the NHL- and AHL-contracted players are making versus the ECHL players. "You have some guys in the league trying to make ends meet. They're coming in around \$550 a week, and it's very difficult for those guys to navigate it. But those guys are helping the development of all those guys above them."

PHPA executive director Brian Ramsay said his membership is encouraged by the fact that more NHL teams are using the ECHL as a true feeder league — the way MLB does with its various levels — including teams like the Penguins' first-place affiliate in Wheeling, W.Va., who are filled with players on AHL deals. It's possible that if this trend continues, it could improve pay and conditions in the ECHL even more in the years to come.

The league will expand to 32 teams by 2027-28 with new teams in Rio Rancho, N.M., and Augusta, Ga., allowing every NHL club an affiliate.

"You're seeing that development model happening, unlike in years past," Ramsay said. "We want to encourage that more."

The good news for the ECHL is attendance has hit record levels in recent years, to the point that they're averaging 5,000 fans a game and more than five million tickets sold annually. A handful of teams are averaging 7,500 fans per game and some, such as the Orlando Solar Bears, play in NBA facilities.

While players on ECHL contracts said they realize the league can't support paying them even AHL-level salaries, they believed fixing the health and safety standards in a league where all 30 teams are affiliated with NHL clubs and are sending players up the hockey food chain over time was a minimum requirement of a new CBA.

As part of the new deal, the ECHL will also now have a health and safety committee modeled after the NHL's, giving players input into next year's schedule in order to help ease any difficult travel conditions. The new CBA also includes a limit of 325 miles between back-to-back games and mandates a set day off every week, similar to what NHL and AHL players receive.

Due to altered qualifying offer rules, ECHL players will also now be able to become free agents after 190 games in the league and will receive compensation for being part of commercial appearances, something that wasn't the case in the past.

That said, many of the gains players made here won't dramatically affect their bottom lines, and the reality is that most players on ECHL deals will still need those second jobs and other sources of income to continue to chase their dream of making it to the next level.

And while they never expected this would all end in a strike vote, players said they felt they were in some ways fighting for the future of the league. They believe it will be a better place to play now that they stood their ground.

"There's a lot of guys that have to (struggle to) make ends meet in this league; it's not like we're making millions down here," Skirving said, noting that at 33 years old, his NHL dream was over and his focus was on helping young players entering the ECHL. "But with the new deal, we felt it puts players in a better position to be able to focus more on hockey, get the proper rest, do the things they need to do to hopefully get that next opportunity. At the end of the day, the American League's not that far away. Sometimes you need a few bounces or a few injuries to get there."

"I wanted to leave the players who came after us in a better position than when I was there," said Mazza, who opted to retire in the offseason, partway through what became year-long CBA negotiations with the league. "And I was receiving texts from ECHL alumni saying they were proud of the guys for sticking up for themselves."

The Athletic LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374791 Websites

The Athletic / Which NHL Eastern Conference trades and signings have aged best and worst?

By Harman Dayal

The offseason is when NHL GMs usually make their biggest, boldest moves. It's a manager's chance to finally weaponize cap flexibility and trade chips, dip into the free-agent market and engage in a flowing trade market to execute their blueprint.

We've reached the halfway point of the 2025-26 season, which is a sensible time to re-evaluate every club's biggest offseason acquisitions (we won't dig into midseason moves or every marginal depth addition). Half a season isn't enough to make a final verdict for trades or signings, especially as players acclimate to new cities, teammates and coaches. Still, it's enough of a sample to reflect on the early return on investment. We'll start with Eastern Conference teams and go through the Western Conference later.

Let's dive in.

Note: All stats from before Tuesday night's NHL action.

Boston Bruins

Notable additions: Tanner Jeannot (\$3.4 million x five years), Viktor Arvidsson (acquired in exchange for a 2027 fifth-round pick), Michael Eyssimont (\$1.45 million x two years), Sean Kuraly (\$1.85 million x two years)

Early return: Boston didn't make any major splashes last summer, opting instead to tinker with its depth forwards.

The Jeannot signing was widely panned as an overpayment. It's still hard to see that contract aging well, but Jeannot's at least made a legitimate early impact. The bruising 28-year-old winger has been a versatile bottom-six contributor — his 15 points in 38 games are already the most he's notched since his rookie campaign, he ranks 15th in the league in hits, and he's been solid in a significant penalty-killing role.

Arvidsson has proven to be a decent buy-low pickup. He's scored 17 points in 30 games, which is commendable considering nearly all of that production has been at even strength. Arvidsson's two-way play-driving numbers are a little bit soft, and it's clear he isn't a proper top-six solution



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

on a playoff-caliber team anymore, but he's a serviceable middle-six stopgap.

I've always liked Eyssimont as a fast, pesky fourth liner. He and Kuraly, who's on his second tour of duty with Boston, have been an effective duo, with the Bruins controlling nearly 55 percent of shots during their shifts together.

Buffalo Sabres

Notable additions: Michael Kesselring and Josh Doan (acquired in exchange for JJ Peterka), Alex Lyon (\$1.5 million x two years), Conor Timmins (acquired in exchange for Connor Clifton and the No. 39 pick in 2025)

Early return: Doan's dream fit in Buffalo has made the controversial Peterka trade age better than many expected.

The 23-year-old sophomore has flat-out been one of Buffalo's best forwards. He's on pace to score 25 goals and 55 points, and he's very impactful beyond just his production. Doan uses his smarts, high energy and heavy frame to dominate puck battles, control the boards and break up plays in all three zones. He's one of the team's best two-way wingers, as the Sabres have owned 59 percent of expected goals during Doan's five-on-five shifts.

Kesselring, on the other hand, has been tricky to evaluate. He's a talented, slick-skating 6-foot-5 defender with substantial second-pair upside, but he's been limited to just 16 games because of injuries. Kesselring's impact has been muted when he has been healthy — he's yet to register a point and has averaged just 15:14 per game — but it's going to require a much larger sample size to judge him.

Lyon's cheap signing from a dry goalie market last summer has been a lifesaver. The 33-year-old journeyman has become the club's de facto starter, notching a .906 save percentage in 21 games.

Timmins has long been an analytical darling in a sheltered third-pair capacity. He was thrust into a bigger role than expected because of Kesselring's injury, averaging over 19 minutes per game this season. Timmins started strong but eventually looked overmatched with this increased defensive workload, with the club surrendering 3.48 goals against per 60 and controlling only 44 percent of shot attempts during his five-on-five shifts this season. I would love to see what he can do in a more prescribed bottom-pair role once Kesselring returns, but we'll have to wait for that, as Timmins recently broke his leg.

Carolina Hurricanes

Notable additions: Nikolaj Ehlers (\$8.5 million x six years), K'Andre Miller (acquired in exchange for a conditional 2026 first-round pick, a 2026 second-round pick and Scott Morrow)

Early return: It took the Hurricanes some time to find Ehlers' ideal lineup fit. He began the season on a line with Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis, but that combination didn't really click, with their marquee signing registering just four points in his first 11 games. Since then, though, Ehlers has settled in and found his groove.

The dynamic, speedy Danish winger has scored 27 points in his last 31 games. He initially built chemistry with Logan Stankoven and Jackson Blake, but with Jarvis' injury, he's been bumped back up to the top line with Aho and Andrei Svechnikov, with this new-look trio clicking impressively.

Ehlers' game-breaking puck-carrying ability has added an exciting new dimension to Carolina's rush attack. He's been a consistently dangerous play-driver (Carolina's controlled 60 percent of scoring chances during his five-on-five shifts) and I'd argue his point production has actually undersold his impact on Carolina's offense. Ehlers has collected a point on just 52 percent of the five-on-five goals he's been on the ice for — he's been snakebitten and has deserved to pick up a few more assists.

I'm also still a fan of Carolina's expensive bet on Miller. Yes, he's made occasional mistakes and has been narrowly outscored during his five-on-five minutes despite his strong underlying metrics, but context is important. Miller was supposed to lead Carolina's second pair, but Jaccob Slavin's injuries (he's only played five games this season) have forced him to take on a larger top-pair role. That's meant eating a career-high 22:35 per game and handling some of the toughest matchups of all NHL defensemen.

Miller has held his own in this daunting role, and I'd expect his performance to level up once Slavin's return allows him to settle into the second-pair slot he was actually acquired to fill.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Notable additions: Charlie Coyle and Miles Wood (acquired in exchange for Gavin Brindley, a 2027 second-round pick and a 2025 third-round pick), Isac Lundestrom

Early return: Coyle has turned back the clock and emerged as the Blue Jackets' best two-way forward this season.

The 33-year-old shutdown center has been tasked with exceptionally tough matchups (one of the top 20 NHL forwards in terms of quality of competition) and the sixth-most defensive zone starts among all NHL forwards. Coyle has crushed that daunting assignment, helping the Blue Jackets control 56 percent of expected goals and outscore opponents 26-17 during those minutes. He's driving elite defensive results and leads all Blue Jackets forwards with 21 five-on-five points.

Wood, who was also part of the trade from Colorado, has been a solid bottom-six piece as well. He's chipped in with eight goals in 32 games and has played his usual speedy, rambunctious style.

Overall, this trade with the Avs has panned out way better than expected.

Detroit Red Wings

Notable additions: John Gibson (acquired in exchange for a 2027 second-round pick, 2026 fourth-round pick and Petr Mrázek), Mason Appleton (\$2.9 million x two years), James van Riemsdyk (\$1 million x one year), Jacob Bernard-Docker (\$875,000 x one year)

Early return: It's incredible how quickly the narrative around a player can change. On Nov. 28, Gibson's results were brutal across the board — he had won just four of his 12 starts, was sporting an ugly .865 save percentage, and his goals saved above expected rating ranked bottom-five among all NHL goalies. He was viewed as one of the league's most disappointing acquisitions.

Since then, Gibson has flipped the script and bounced back as one of the sport's hottest goalies. The 32-year-old veteran is 10-2-0 with a sparkling .926 save percentage (tied for third-best in the league) since Dec 1. Gibson's performance through the first several weeks was so underwhelming that his full-season numbers (.896 save percentage) are pretty average despite his recent hot streak. But the critical point is that he's clearly turned a corner.

Appleton has come as advertised as a hard-working, defensively reliable third-liner with limited offensive upside (11 points in 34 games). van Riemsdyk has been a bargain \$1 million pick-up for the bottom six — he's fourth on the Red Wings with 11 goals in 35 games.

Florida Panthers

Notable additions: Jeff Petry (\$775,000 x one year, plus \$250,000 in performance bonuses), Daniil Tarasov (acquired in exchange for a 2025 fifth-round pick)

Early return: The Panthers struck gold two summers in a row by buying low on out-of-favor veteran UFA defensemen with Oliver Ekman-Larsson in 2023-24 and Nate Schmidt last season. They were clearly hoping to hit



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

another home run with Petry, but he hasn't come close to being an OEL or Schmidt-level difference-maker.

Even if Petry maxes out his performance bonuses, he's only going to cost \$1.025 million against the cap, so you'd hardly consider this signing a mistake. However, Petry hasn't had the dramatic bounce-back many other defenders have experienced in Florida's system. Petry has scored just eight points in 39 games, averaging only 14:37 per game, and his underlying metrics are around break-even across the board in this sheltered role. He's a serviceable bottom-pair option but doesn't look capable of stepping into a bigger role, which means the Panthers could be in the market for another defenseman ahead of the trade deadline, especially with Seth Jones and Dmitry Kulikov's injuries.

Tarasov, on the other hand, has been an excellent under-the-radar pickup. The 26-year-old Russian netminder has posted a sturdy .904 save percentage in 14 games, including last Sunday, when he stopped 27 of 28 shots to lead the Panthers to a critical victory against the league-best Colorado Avalanche. Tarasov represents a significant upgrade over Vitek Vanecek, whom the Panthers let walk in free agency last summer.

Montreal Canadiens

Notable additions: Noah Dobson (acquired in exchange for the No. 16 and 17 picks in 2025 and Emil Heineman), Zachary Bolduc (acquired in exchange for Logan Mailloux)

Early return: GM Kent Hughes must be pleased with both of the splashy acquisitions he made.

Dobson has lived up to the billing as a marquee, top-pair-caliber right-shot defenseman. He's scored the sixth-most five-on-five points of all NHL defensemen and is on pace to eclipse the 50-point mark despite not receiving first-unit power-play time. Dobson has also been tasked with some of the most challenging defensive matchups in the league — he ranks top-five among all NHL defensemen in quality of competition. The Habs are about break-even at controlling shots and goals in those minutes, so you wouldn't say he's dominating those matchups per se, but he's effectively held his own in very difficult usage.

Dobson's evolution into a complete, well-rounded two-way defenseman in Montreal is notable, given that his defensive play was at times heavily criticized in New York.

Bolduc's offensive production has slowed down after a hot start. He's on pace for similar numbers to last year, when he flirted with 20 goals and was in the mid-30s point range. Would Montreal have liked to see Bolduc take another step and break out closer to the 25-goal range? Absolutely. However, he's already established his floor as a credible middle-six winger, and as a 22-year-old sophomore, there's still plenty of development runway left. I'm a big believer in Bolduc's tools and potential, and most importantly, the Habs aren't missing much with Mailloux, who has had a ton of growing pains in St. Louis.

New Jersey Devils

Notable additions: Connor Brown (\$3 million x four years), Evgenii Dadonov (\$1 million x one year)

Early return: Brown has been a strong fit for the Devils, contributing nine goals and 17 points in 35 games. He's lived up to his end of the bargain as a speedy, buzzsaw third-liner who can play reliably at both ends of the rink and chip in with secondary offense.

Overall, though, New Jersey didn't land enough difference-makers to fortify the club's supporting cast. Dadonov has played just five games due to injury, and the club's limited cap flexibility appears to have constrained its ability to take bigger swings. That's left the Devils in a similar spot to last year: they lack secondary scoring (New Jersey ranks 28th in goals scored per game) and are particularly vulnerable whenever Jack Hughes gets injured.

New York Islanders

Notable additions: Emil Heineman (acquired as part of the Noah Dobson trade), Jonathan Drouin (\$4 million x two years), David Rittich (\$1 million x one year), Maxim Shabanov (\$975,000 x one year)

Early return: Matthew Schaefer's immediate stardom, a healthy Mathew Barzal, Vezina-caliber play from Ilya Sorokin and Bo Horvat's career-best goal-scoring pace have been the main catalysts for New York's surprise ascent as a playoff contender. However, a couple of GM Mathieu Darche's offseason additions have also given the club a critical boost.

Heineman, who was an afterthought for many in the Dobson trade, has broken out as a complementary top-six contributor. The 24-year-old winger is second on the Isles with 13 goals and has been consistently noticeable with his speed, work rate and forechecking. He will be a fan favorite for a long time.

In an even bigger surprise, Rittich has been arguably the most valuable backup in the NHL. Rittich has pitched a stellar 11-5-2 record and .907 save percentage in 18 games behind a leaky Islanders defense. He's saved 17.9 goals above expected, which ranks top-10 among all netminders. Sorokin's mid-December injury could have derailed New York's playoff chances, but Rittich's excellent play has kept the club alive.

Beyond Heineman and Rittich, contributions from the newcomers have been more muted.

Drouin has mustered just three goals in 36 games. He's producing 0.53 points per game, which seems respectable on the surface, but it's a tad underwhelming when you consider he's been stapled to one of Barzal or Horvat in the top six for the whole season. The good news is the Islanders didn't commit excessively high AAV or term to his contract, but they'll surely want more impactful play from him in the second half.

Shabanov, one of the top scorers in the KHL last season, was a no-brainer, low-risk acquisition. He's chipped in with some handy bottom-six offense (14 points in 29 games), but his defensive metrics look rough, with New York controlling just 43 percent of expected goals during his five-on-five shifts.

New York Rangers

Notable additions: Vladislav Gavrikov (\$7 million x seven years), Taylor Raddysch (\$1.5 million x two years)

Early return: Gavrikov has been everything the Rangers could have asked for as a top-pair shutdown beast. He's averaged nearly 24 minutes per night, has been a perfect partner for Adam Fox (the two have controlled 60 percent of scoring chances in their minutes together) and has fit seamlessly despite moving to a worse team and a less-established defensive environment than L.A. That last part is especially crucial because some high-profile free-agent defensemen, such as Brady Skjei, have struggled when moving to a less insulated environment.

The hulking Russian defender's underlying metrics dipped significantly last month when Fox was injured (Rangers were outshot, outchanced and outscored 13-7 during his five-on-five shifts), but he deserves a lot of slack because of the outrageous workload he was handling (averaging 25:11 in those 14 games) and because his fill-in partner, Braden Schneider, isn't a true top-four defender.

Unfortunately, the Rangers' limited cap flexibility left them without an avenue to meaningfully boost their offense last summer. New York is clearly paying the price, ranking second-last in goals scored per game. The big swing GM Chris Drury made for J.T. Miller midway through last season isn't working, as the latter has produced just 22 points in 35 games.

Ottawa Senators



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Notable additions: Jordan Spence (acquired in exchange for a 2025 third-round pick and a 2026 sixth-round pick), Lars Eller (\$1.25 million x one year)

Early return: Spence was one of my favorite under-the-radar acquisitions of the offseason. He's delivered on that promise — the Senators have throttled opponents with a 62 percent share of scoring chances and a plus-nine goal differential during Spence's five-on-five shifts. Spence's mobility and play-driving are a critical development on the right side because Nick Jensen, the club's second-pair RD last year, has seen his performance and ice time fall off a cliff.

I'm not convinced the Senators would trust Spence as a full-time second-pair option; he's still mostly deployed against the other team's bottom-six forwards despite an uptick in his ice time. He's an excellent depth piece, though, and worth more than the meager draft capital the Senators surrendered to acquire him.

Eller, meanwhile, has been a serviceable bottom-six center when healthy. He's limited offensively (six points in 28 games), but he's won over 60 percent of his faceoffs and has been trustworthy defensively.

Philadelphia Flyers

Notable additions: Trevor Zegras (acquired in exchange for a 2025 second-round pick, 2026 fourth-round pick and Ryan Poehling), Dan Vladar (\$3.35 million x two years), Christian Dvorak (\$5.4 million x one year)

Early return: GM Danny Briere's phenomenal offseason work is a huge reason why the Flyers are currently in a playoff spot.

Zegras, acquired for pennies on the dollar, leads the Flyers in scoring and is on pace for 80 points. Philadelphia first tried the 24-year-old at center but eventually moved him to the wing, presumably because of his struggles in the faceoff circle (just 39 percent of draws won) and because the wing is a less demanding defensive position.

During his last couple of years in Anaheim, Zegras' offensive creativity was stifled by former Ducks head coach Greg Cronin (it's no wonder nearly every young Ducks player has broken out this season after the coaching change). The fresh start in Philly has reinvigorated Zegras, who has been a consistent game-breaker with his slick playmaking. This is flat-out one of the best trades of the summer, especially considering how cheap the acquisition cost was.

Vladar has also been one of the Flyers' most important players. The 28-year-old Czech netminder was widely viewed as an average NHL backup before this year, but has broken out as Philadelphia's clear No. 1 starter this season. Vladar owns a .910 save percentage in 24 games and ranks 14th among all goaltenders in goals saved above expected. Rick Tocchet's teams have always been defensively tight and prioritized limiting opponents' east-west passing movement, so the improved defensive environment unquestionably helps, but Vladar is still one of the league's top surprises.

Dvorak has been a terrific pickup down the middle as well. He's delivered strong two-way results and ranks third on the team with 25 points in 39 games. There is some risk associated with the five-year, \$25.75 million extension he signed earlier this week, but even going back to his days in Arizona, he has always played his best hockey under Tocchet.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Notable additions: Justin Brazeau (\$1.55 million x two years), Anthony Mantha (\$2.5 million x one year), Parker Wotherspoon (\$1 million x two years), Artūrs Šilovs (acquired in exchange for a 2027 fourth-round pick and Chase Stillman)

Early return: The Penguins have arguably yielded more bang-for-buck value from their bargain, no-name offseason acquisitions than any other team in the Eastern Conference.

Mantha, coming off a torn ACL that restricted him to just 13 games last season, has exceeded all expectations as a full-time top-six winger. The speedy 6-foot-5 forward is on pace for 28 goals and 58 points. Impressively, his production hasn't slowed down one bit since he lost his center, Evgeni Malkin, who was off to a terrific start himself. Mantha has scored 13 points in 15 games since Malkin's injury.

Brazeau's offensive breakout has been an even bigger surprise. Mantha was once a high-pedigree young player and has flashed top-six potential at stages in his career, but Brazeau, an undrafted 27-year-old, had only scored 29 points in 95 career NHL games before this season. Brazeau, also playing on the second line with Mantha, has potted 12 goals and 20 points in 27 games. The giant, net-front scoring winger is riding an inflated 25 percent shooting clip, so we should expect his production to slow off in the second half, but he's exceeded all expectations overall. The Penguins must be thankful to have him locked up for another year at a bargain \$1.5 million AAV.

Before this season, Wotherspoon was a steady, well-respected No. 7 defenseman. I don't think anybody expected that he'd be a capable full-time top-four option, and yet that's exactly what he's become for the Penguins. Wotherspoon's breakout as a sturdy stay-at-home top-four presence has helped unlock the best version of Erik Karlsson the Penguins have ever had. Wotherspoon has averaged 20:39 per game and held up well from a two-way perspective, with Pittsburgh controlling 53.5 percent of scoring chances during his five-on-five shifts.

On top of these three impressive moves, the Penguins were also the only team that weaponized its excess cap space to acquire draft capital, as Kyle Dubas shrewdly picked up a pair of second-round picks to take on Matt Dumba and Connor Clifton's contracts.

Šilovs was also a worthwhile gamble. He's come back down to Earth since a hot October, and his .886 save percentage in 19 games isn't anything to write home about, but he's shown intriguing potential and you have to be careful not to overly scrutinize his numbers because the Penguins' defensive environment has been sloppy at times.

Add the organization's decision to sell high on Tristan Jarry midseason, and Dubas has been on a heater of excellent moves over the last several months.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Notable additions: Pontus Holmberg (\$1.55 million x two years)

Early return: Holmberg has become one of the Lightning's most unsung heroes.

Jon Cooper has used Holmberg on a checking line with Yannick Gourde, feeding them the most five-on-five defensive zone starts of all Lightning forwards and handing them tougher than league-average matchups. This usage alone speaks volumes about Cooper's trust in Holmberg because it's rare to see bottom-six lines deployed in such high-leverage spots.

Holmberg's line forechecks hard, holds onto pucks and wins battles along the boards, and is extremely dependable at both ends of the rink. Tampa Bay has owned 57 percent of expected goals and surrendered just 1.55 goals against per 60 (the second-best rate among the team's forwards) with Holmberg on the ice at five-on-five. Holmberg has also chipped in with 12 five-on-five points in 34 games, which is the sixth-best mark among Lightning forwards.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Notable additions: Nicolas Roy (acquired in exchange for Mitch Marner's rights), Matias Maccelli (acquired for a 2027 third-round pick), Dakota Joshua (acquired in exchange for a 2028 fourth-round pick)

Early return: The Leafs committed a combined \$9.675 million of cap space to a trio of forwards in Roy, Maccelli and Joshua. It's impossible to replace a superstar of Mitch Marner's caliber, but the hope was that



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Toronto could at least beef up its top-nine depth and ice a more balanced forward group.

That experiment has been a mixed bag, with the Leafs still desperately missing Marner's game-breaking skill set.

Roy has been the most impactful of the club's three new forwards. He's heating up offensively after a slow start (11 points in his last 18 games) and his defensive reliability on top of that makes him a bona fide third-line center.

Maccelli has produced at a respectable clip (15 points in 30 games), but he hasn't bounced back to being the 55-to-60-point pace winger he was during his first two NHL seasons. That's disappointing because he represented the Leafs' best chance at icing a Marner-lite type of playmaker in the top six this season. He's performed better as of late with seven points in his last 10 games, so perhaps that's something to build on.

Joshua's impact has been closer to a fourth-line level. He's offered heavy, physical play, but he had only mustered 10 points in 36 games before going down with a kidney injury. He's signed through 2027-28 at a \$3.25 million cap hit that looks increasingly overpriced for his marginal impact.

Troy Stecher has been a terrific waiver pick-up, but overall GM Brad Treliving has whiffed on quite a few moves over the last several months, especially with how poorly last year's Brandon Carlo trade is panning out.

Washington Capitals

Notable additions: Justin Sourdif (acquired in exchange for a 2026 second-round pick and a 2027 sixth-round pick)

Early return: The Capitals are one of the best pro-scouting teams in the NHL — just look at how well the Logan Thompson, Jakob Chychrun and Pierre-Luc Dubois trades have aged — and Sourdif's immediate impact is just the latest example.

The 23-year-old rookie was billed as a winger for most of his career, but has been a shockingly impressive middle-six center fill-in with Dubois' injury. Sourdif's pace, energy and defensive play have been top-notch, with the Capitals controlling 54 percent of scoring chances and outscoring teams 27-15 during his five-on-five shifts. His offense is also rapidly heating up as he scored a hat trick earlier this week and has notched 11 points in his last 10 games.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374792 Websites

The Athletic / The NHL teams riding 11 statistical droughts that feel impossible but apparently aren't

By Sean McIndoe

One of my favorite streaks in all of sports was in serious danger this weekend, but just barely survived: The Chicago Bears have still never had a 4,000-yard passer.

(Yes, I know you think you clicked on an NHL article. Don't worry, you did. We're just going to use the NFL as a jumping-off point. Give me a few paragraphs and we'll get to the hockey, I promise.)

The thing about passing for 4,000 yards in an NFL season is that while it's certainly not easy, it's also not especially rare. Six players did it this year. Same with the year before. Ten did it the year before that, which

was one off the record for the most in a single season. All told, it's a mark that's been reached 238 times in league history.

Just never by a Chicago Bear. And that's weird, because the Bears are one of the league's oldest teams. But for a variety of reasons, ranging from injury to identity to (most often) ineptitude, they never seem to have a quarterback who can get to 4,000 yards. Even when they shuffled their way to a Super Bowl in 1985, they didn't come close. This year, recent No. 1 pick Caleb Williams went into the season's final game needing 270 yards to finally end the drought; he wound up with 212, good enough to break the franchise single-season record, but not to get to 4,000.

I love "never" stats like that — the ones that feel like they shouldn't be possible over a long enough timeline, but somehow are. So today, let's look back at 11 common stats and milestones that specific NHL teams have never hit, or in a few cases, at least have an impossible-seeming drought hanging over them.

The Devils have never had a 100-point or 50-goal season

We might as well start here, since it's pretty much the closest equivalent to the Bears passing yards stat. Despite their franchise history dating back to the mid-70s (via Kansas City and Colorado), which includes essentially all of the highest-scoring era in league history, the New Jersey Devils have never had a player hit either of the game's most basic offensive milestones.

The team record for goals in a season is Brian Gionta's 48 from 2005-06, which broke the mark held by Pat Verbeek and his 46 goals in 1987-88. They've had 11 seasons of 40 or more goals, most recently Jack Hughes getting 43 in 2022-23. That was the same season that Hughes set the franchise record with 99 points, one of just five times the Devils have ever had somebody get to the 90s.

Since the franchise entered the league in 1974-75, there have been 192 individual seasons in which a player has scored 50 goals, and 299 in which a player has hit the 100-point mark. Just not any Devils (or Rockies or Scouts).

And sure, you could point to teams such as the Columbus Blue Jackets and Nashville Predators that have also never hit either mark. But those teams have two fewer decades of history to draw on, and they arrived after the Dead Puck era was already in full swing. And neither of those teams has managed to win three Stanley Cups. Apparently, defense really does win championships.

Odds it ends soon: You'd figure Hughes would have a shot if he could stay healthy all year. But nobody on the team is on pace to even come close this season.

The Kings have never won 50 games in a season

This mark used to be hard to get to, back in the days before shootouts and loser points. These days, it's relatively common — five teams hit the 50-win mark last year, down from seven in each of the two seasons before that and nine in 2021-22.

In all, it's been done by 111 teams since the 1970-71 Bruins became the first. That list includes the 2016-17 Blue Jackets, the 2021-22 Minnesota Wild and even the 2009-10 Arizona Coyotes. The Vegas Golden Knights have hit the mark three times in less than a decade of existence. The Buffalo Sabres did it in back-to-back years, in 2005-06 and 2006-07. The Toronto Maple Leafs have done it in three of the last four.

But despite winning two Stanley Cups, the Kings have never hit the mark in their nearly six decades. Not even during the Wayne Gretzky era, when they peaked with 46. The team record is 48 wins, set in 2015-16 and equaled last year. Yes, last season — the one that earned Rob Blake a pink slip — was tied for the most successful in franchise history, in terms of regular-season wins.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Odds it ends soon: They'd need a monster second half to get close this year, and they don't exactly seem to be trending up. But in a league where ties are a thing of the past, you'd think this one would have to fall eventually.

The Maple Leafs have never had a Norris winner

The Norris dates back to 1953, and as you'd expect for an award that old, the Original Six is well-represented on the winner list. The Boston Bruins and Detroit Red Wings have had three different winners each, the Chicago Blackhawks and New York Rangers have had four and the Montreal Canadiens have had six. The Leafs? Nada.

They've had a few finalists — 11 in all, including two in the same season back in 1962-63 when Carl Brewer finished second and Tim Horton was third. Allan Stanley and Borje Salming came close, too. But no Leaf has ever won the award.

Odds it ends soon: Given that the current blue line is an underachieving Morgan Rielly and then a bunch of lumbering senior citizens, we can probably lock this one in for a few more years at least.

The Wild have never had a Hall of Famer

Not one, in their 25 years and counting as an NHL franchise that has employed 334 different players.

I don't mean that they've never developed one, or that nobody who was primarily remembered as a Wild star has gone into the Hall. I mean that nobody in the Hockey Hall of Fame has ever played a single game for the Minnesota Wild. You could watch every moment of every game played by every player in the Hall, and you'd never see one take a single shift in a Wild jersey.

There's a great page on the Hockey Hall of Fame site that lists every team that any HHOFer has ever played for. Open up the "M" list, and you'll find clubs such as the Markham Waxers, the Melville Millionaires and the Muskegon Lumberjacks. But while you can find the Minnesota Fighting Saints, North Stars and Whitecaps, there's no mention of the Wild.

The Panthers squeezed a few end-of-career seasons out of guys such as Dino Ciccarelli and Igor Larionov. The Predators had appearances by Paul Kariya and Peter Forsberg. The Blue Jackets got a few years from Sergei Fedorov. Even the lowly Atlanta Thrashers had that weird week of Chris Chelios. But not the Wild.

Odds it ends soon: Pretty much 100 percent, because Marc-Andre Fleury will get in soon, assuming he can stop teasing comebacks and stay retired for three years. Brent Burns probably joins him. So enjoy this one while you can.

The Flames have never had a top-three draft pick

In their 45 years and counting since moving from Atlanta, Calgary has never picked higher than fourth in the draft. And in fact, taking Sam Bennett with the No. 4 pick in 2014 is the only time they've even picked in the top five. They've had the sixth pick five times, including the Matthew Tkachuk pick in 2016 that turned out great. Thanks to a combination of lottery luck and a reluctance to ever truly bottom out, that's as low as the Flames draft history can go.

Calgary isn't the only team that can point to some draft weirdness. Red Wings fans will gladly tell you about their recent lottery luck, although they've at least picked first overall three times in franchise history. The Vancouver Canucks have never had the first pick, but have picked second four times (and they did briefly own the top pick in 1999 as part of Brian Burke's draft-floor maneuvering to land the Sedins). The Wild have never picked higher than third. You get the idea.

But nobody can compare with the Flames. You know those painfully awkward draft day photos of the top three prospects, wearing their new

sweaters and holding up their fingers to signal which pick they were? You've never seen a Flames logo in one of those.

Odds it ends soon: With a little lottery luck, this could be the year.

The Stars have never won a Hart Trophy (or even come close)

You can take this one back to the Minnesota North Stars days, which means all the way back to 1967. Expansion cousins like the Penguins, Flyers, Kings and Blues have all taken home the coveted trophy since then. But not the Stars.

On its own, a team not having won the Hart isn't especially shocking — for example, the Flames haven't won one either. But they've at least come close, with Jarome Iginla narrowly missing out in 2002, the first of four times in six seasons that a Flame was a finalist. What makes the Stars' drought more impressive is that they've never even come close. The only player in franchise history to even be a finalist was Jamie Benn back in 2016, and he got eight first-place votes that year, just slightly behind Patrick Kane's 121.

Odds it ends soon: The Stars are stacked these days, but that might work against them, since they don't have that one forward who stands head and shoulders above his teammates. Maybe Mikko Rantanen gets there someday, but for now, this one feels like it could last a while.

The Senators have never won a Game 7

Oh, they've played in them. Six times, to be exact, spread across 17 playoff appearances in their 33-year history. They've just never won any of them.

And despite what you might assume, we can't really blame the one-sided Battle of Ontario for this one. The Sens have lost a pair of Game 7 showdowns to the Leafs in 2002 and 2004. But the rest have been spread around, starting with the team's first playoff heartbreak, an opening-round overtime loss to the Sabres in their postseason debut in 1997. They also lost to the Rangers in the first round in 2012. And then there were a pair of devastating near-misses in the conference final: to the 2003 Devils (i.e. the Jeff Friesen game) and the 2017 Penguins (i.e., the Chris Kunitz game).

Odds it ends soon: Reasonable. They've got to get to the playoffs first, obviously, and that's no sure thing this year. But in this mess of an Eastern Conference, we'll probably be flipping coins all spring, so the Senators have as good a chance as anyone at getting a winner-take-all win.

Let's end this off with a few more that don't quite fit into the category of "never," but have stretched on for way longer than you'd think.

The Oilers haven't finished first in their division in 39 years

I have to double-check this one each time I see it. Yes, this goes all the way back to 1987, which was the peak of the Wayne Gretzky dynasty. Yes, it includes the entire Connor McDavid era. If you're keeping track, the Oilers have won two Stanley Cups and been to the Final on three other occasions over this span. But after finishing first in the Smythe Division for six straight seasons from 1981-82 until 1986-87, the Oilers apparently figured that was enough. It hasn't happened since.

Over that time, the Oilers have finished second 11 times, in all of the Smythe, the Northwest, the Pacific and even the Scotia NHL® North Division during that one year that literally nobody called it that. But never first. It's the longest active drought in the league, one year ahead of the New York Islanders.

Odds it ends soon: You'd have to say pretty high, since the Pacific stinks this year. The Oilers are neck-and-neck with the Knights for top spot, so this one could fall.

The Red Wings haven't won a Vezina in 71 years



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

That would be 1955, when Terry Sawchuk won his third as a Wing. Before that, they also got wins from Normie Smith and Johnny Mowers. But ever since, they've been shut out, no pun intended.

In fairness, the Vezina is a little weird — it went from the award for best goalie at its inception in 1926 to 1946, to being a stat-based award that was basically the equivalent of today's Jennings from 1947 to 1981, and then back to being the best goalie award from 1982 until now. If you'd rather sub in the first-team All-Star honors as a proxy for "best goalie," then the Wings have won more recently — but that was Roger Crozier in 1965, so we're still back in the Original Six days.

In fact, they've only had one finalist in the modern era: Chris Osgood in 1996, when he finished second to Jim Carey. That was the year before the Wings won the first of four modern Cups, and also the last year they were in the conversation for the league's best goaltending. How do you win that many Cups without elite goaltending? I'm not sure, but I'm guessing that having Nicklas Lidstrom helps a bit.

Odds it ends soon: It won't happen this year, but maybe Sebastian Cossa will save us someday.

The Canadiens haven't had a 40-goal scorer in 32 years

The last two Habs to score 40 goals in a season were Vincent Damphousse in 1993-94 and Brian Bellows in 1992-93. And if you want to rephrase it as scoring more than 40 goals in a season, you have to go all the way back to Stéphane Richer in 1989-90.

Since that season, 262 players have topped 40 goals. None of them have been Habs. The closest anyone has come in recent years is Max Pacioretty's 39 goals in 2013-14.

Odds it ends soon: Cole Caufield has 20 goals through 42 games, putting him just behind a 40-goal pace. You have to figure he hits the mark eventually, and Nick Suzuki, Juraj Slafkovský and Ivan Demidov could all be candidates down the road.

The Rangers haven't had a player lead the league in goals or points in 84 years

That takes us back to 1941-42, when Lynn Patrick's 32 goals and Bryan Hextall's 56 points both led the league. Since then, the Rangers haven't topped the NHL in either category. That's despite having four players, three of them forwards, win the Hart Trophy over that time. Their nearest miss came in 2005-06, when Jaromir Jagr finished second in both categories.

By the way, the Art Ross trophy didn't exist until 1947, meaning no Ranger has ever won it. They're somehow not even the only Original Six team that's true for — while Auston Matthews has won several goal-scoring titles, no Maple Leafs have led the league in points since Gordie Drillon in 1937-38.

Odds it ends soon: (checks current stats) (checks prospect pipeline) We might be able to get this one to the century mark.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374793 Websites

The Athletic / NHL rumblings: Will Olympic trade freeze create a mini deadline? Plus, Landeskog timeline, more

By Pierre LeBrun

The impact of the Olympics on the NHL this season isn't only being felt in the condensed schedule but also in the cadence of trade planning.

There's a trade freeze coming during the Olympic break, going into effect at 3 p.m. ET on Feb. 4, right through 11:59 pm ET on Feb. 22.

What remains to be seen is how that Feb. 4 mini-deadline ahead of the actual March 6 trade deadline will affect things.

I'm hearing from an increasing number of buyers and contenders that they're learning toward waiting until after the Olympic trade freeze to make their most impactful moves. The reason is two-fold: 1) They might be targeting a player who's going to play in the Olympics and want to make sure he's not injured in Milan; and 2) Those same playoff contenders also have players headed to Milan and want to make sure if they suffer an injury there, they have time to pivot on their deadline needs post-Olympics.

There are 12 days after the Olympics to work with ahead of the actual trade deadline.

So that's fine if you're a team that can afford to wait that long to make your No. 1 add. But some teams can't afford that. Whether it's because of injuries or being in need of a season-saving move, we're also going to see deals between now and Feb. 4 because some teams that haven't given up on the year have to plug holes as soon as possible and can't afford to wait until after the Olympics. It might be too late by March 6 to save their season.

That could be a team like the Toronto Maple Leafs trying to add on defense, for example. The Leafs have renewed calls around the league looking to bolster their blue line, TSN colleague Darren Dreger reported on our "Insider Trading" segment Tuesday evening. Losing Chris Tanev again has intensified those efforts.

So while I think the bigger moves overall may wait until after the Olympics, some teams will be forced to act in the next few weeks with smaller transactions.

Landeskog not ruled out for Olympics

Sweden's Olympic team is holding its breath on the status of captain Gabriel Landeskog, who was injured Sunday night.

The good news is that it wasn't his knee, which required multiple surgeries and kept him out for three years. It's an upper-body injury instead after crashing into the net in Florida.

The bad news is that it will still keep him out for a number of weeks. The Colorado Avalanche say the Olympics have not been ruled out, but time is needed to see how the healing process goes. There is no official, firm timeline. There will be an assessment made after a few weeks before more is known about Landeskog's timeline for recovery.

"We are monitoring the situation closely and hoping Gabe's recovery goes as planned," Sweden head coach Sam Hallam told The Athletic via text message Tuesday.

Landeskog, who did get the chance to play in the Olympics in 2014, and Victor Hedman are the faces of leadership for Sweden. The fact that both aren't 100 percent sure for Milan is a tough situation.

After undergoing elbow surgery on Dec. 15, the Lightning say Hedman is expected back in early February, just before players are set to go to Milan. The hope is that Hedman will come back in time to play a game or two before the Olympic break. But nothing is for sure at this point.

Here's hoping Sweden gets both Landeskog and Hedman healthy for Milan. Both those guys have waited a long time for this Olympic opportunity.

Landeskog has played in each of the Avalanche's 41 games this season, scoring seven goals and 22 points.

Ekman-Larsson on the 'highs and lows'



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

I asked Oliver Ekman-Larsson on Tuesday to bring himself back to the summer day in 2023 when the Vancouver Canucks bought him out of his contract. And to imagine what his reaction would have been in that low moment if someone had told him he'd be Olympic-bound less than three years later.

"Oooh, putting me on the spot here," Ekman-Larsson, 34, responded. "Throughout your career, you go through tough times, and it's like life — you go through tough times in life, too. But I think that's kind of the moments that define you. You realize how many good people you have around you. That's why I'm standing here today, because I have that support around me. My family and everybody.

"There's highs and lows. That's life. That's why you keep fighting and you keep trying to get better every single day, and that's the mindset I've had throughout the years."

Ekman-Larsson said he remembers watching with his grandparents on TV when Sweden won Olympic gold in Torino 20 years ago.

"I was on the floor crying, I think," he smiled.

He won silver with Sweden in 2014. Now he's got a chance at turning that into gold next month.

It's wild to think that Florida got him on a one-year, \$2.25 million deal on July 1, 2023, after his buyout from Vancouver. That one year in Florida, winning a Cup, reset his career.

"That helped me a lot to get my confidence back," Ekman-Larsson said. "I'm very thankful for that and the guys that I played with there. It got me back to feeling good and feeling part of something. So that's something that I'm going to bring with me the rest of my life.

"You've got to be a little bit lucky in life, too. I did that (going to Florida) at the right time. It's funny how it works."

Lundell's Finland role

No one has been more impacted by the loss of Aleksander Barkov this season than Anton Lundell.

He's playing a bigger role than ever in Florida and is easily on pace to eclipse his career highs in goals, points and time on ice. His days of being a third-liner are over. And the Panthers have this guy for \$5 million per year through 2029-30.

Next month in Milan, Finland is going to count on him big time, too, with no Barkov in the lineup. So that massive injury, which is especially brutal for Suomi, is being felt twice by the 24-year-old Panthers center.

I have a feeling Lundell is going to have some Olympic moments next month we'll be writing about, though.

"I'm super excited," Lundell told me Tuesday, his face lighting up when asked about going to Milan. "To play in a tournament like that is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It's something I've been working for my whole life. It's always felt so far away, and now I'm on the team.

"The team is great. Very similar team to 4 Nations last year. In terms of experience and learning, I'm sure (playing in 4 Nations) will help us as a team going to the Olympics now. Best-on-best is something you dream of as a fan, as a player."

About the Atlantic ...

We all know that the cream of the crop this year sits atop the Central Division, with the Colorado Avalanche, Dallas Stars and Minnesota Wild all bona fide Cup contenders, distancing themselves from the pack.

But there is something to be said for what's happening in the Atlantic Division so far this season, at least in terms of the parity of it. All eight teams are still in it.

Rebuilding programs such as the Detroit Red Wings and Montreal Canadiens have shot up the ranks this season. The forever-door-mat Buffalo Sabres just had a 10-game win streak. And the Tampa Bay Lightning have found their Cup-contending groove despite a massive list of injuries, getting their eighth straight win on Tuesday — and over the Avalanche no less.

"Tampa has done a miraculous job with their injuries," Florida head coach Paul Maurice said Tuesday.

Oh, yeah, and don't forget the two-time-defending champion Panthers, who have been better over the past month after struggling through key injuries over the opening two months. They're getting their mojo going again.

"I think the Atlantic Division is better than people think it is," Maurice said. "There's no bottom end to our side. There just isn't."

The way he sees it, the Atlantic Division race will be a "scratch and claw" to the end of the year.

But as far as the Red Wings and Habs, in particular, announcing themselves as ready to contend for the division title, the two Florida teams aren't ready to enter the final lap of their glory years, either.

"I don't feel that Florida or Tampa has jumped the shark here," Maurice said with his knowing smile. "I just think there's other good teams. They did — they were open about it: 'We're going to rebuild.' While it was painful years, and then it stops being bad and you're a really good team.

"There's just a whole bunch of really good teams."

Maurice also made a point of singling out Colorado from the West. The Panthers have played them twice this season.

"They beat us in Colorado, 6-2. It could have been 12-2, and I don't think they got it out of second gear," Maurice said. "That, to me, is the team that we've seen is head and shoulders above us. But we've got 41 games to get better."

What he forgot to mention, I'm sure on purpose, was that the defending champs just beat those Avs 2-1 on Sunday.

And Matthew Tkachuk is on the mend. Here come the Panthers.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374794 Websites

ESPN / Top prospects, biggest surprises from the 2026 World Juniors - ESPN

Rachel Kryshak

Rachel Kryshak is a professional data consultant specializing in data communication and modelling. She's worked in the NHL and consulted for professional teams across North American and Europe. She hosts the Staff & Graph Podcast and discusses sports from a data-driven perspective.

The IIHF World Junior Championships wrapped up on Monday, and for the first time in a very long time, neither Canada nor the United States played for gold.

Perhaps the most important takeaway is that the field at the junior levels is more competitive than ever before. The number of teams capable of winning a medal has expanded.

We can quibble about what Canada's team would have looked like with all NHL players available -- Macklin Celebrini, Beckett Sennecke, Sam



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Dickinson, Berkly Catton, Matthew Schaefer among them -- but Canada should always be deep enough to withstand that. The talent is there, but perhaps nations with an embarrassment of riches get a little too cute with their approach, which impacts their ability to compete against teams who "gear up" to play them.

Regardless, the fact that Czechia, Sweden and Finland are right there with Canada and the United States speaks to the growth of hockey, something that can only be seen as positive for the sport.

So many players stood out for different reasons at this tournament, which can be a springboard or a detriment to their value, regardless of the sample size. Undrafted players who looked better than many drafted players, drafted players who failed to meet expectations, and teams who over- or underperformed were aplenty in the 2026 edition of the Holiday Classic.

This is the first time many fans have seen the likes of Ivar Stenberg and Viggo Björck play, and some haven't seen Gavin McKenna play since the tournament last year. There are plenty of storylines to cover coming out of the tournament, not the least of which is the new champion.

Sweden finally strikes gold

Sweden has been one of the best teams at the tournament since its inception. Arguably the best group stage team never seemed to be able to win in the most important games.

That was not the case this year, as Sweden was the best team from start to finish.

The Swedes went through the group round like a hot knife through butter on brilliant performances from Anton Frondell (Chicago Blackhawks), the deepest defensive core the tournament has seen in some time, and their draft-eligible players. For his part, Frondell looked like a man among boys for much of the tournament. Supported by Ivar Stenberg (2026 draft-eligible) and Viggo Björck (2026), the trio formed Sweden's top three players at the tournament, taking turns exerting their dominance on the competition.

Jack Berglund (Philadelphia Flyers) led with his brute physical strength, bullying his way through opponents to create opportunities, and played critical defensive minutes for Sweden. Whether it was the veterans or the young guns, Sweden got contributions at the right times from their top forwards.

Sweden's team was built from the blue line, and while the forwards will get many of the accolades, Sweden's D corps was the difference maker. Leo Sahlin Wallenius (San Jose Sharks) quietly shut down every top player he went against. Alfons Freij (Winnipeg Jets) ran an excellent power play, and sound defensive play in transition combined with excellent goaltending made Sweden incredibly difficult to score on.

Sweden conceded 2.23 goals per game, more than half a goal per game fewer than the second-best defensive team in the tournament. Love Harenstam (St. Louis Blues) ensured that Sweden was the only team to finish with a team save percentage above .900, and was named the tournament's top goaltender. Sweden's ability to stay disciplined, defend in transition and limit high-danger chances allowed their forwards to create chances, on which they were skilled enough to capitalize many times over.

Czechia medals for the fourth straight year

From top to bottom, Czechia was the most impressive team at the tournament. Their discipline and ability to consistently forecheck the will to win out of their opponents is a testament to their willingness to do what it takes to win, and the federation's coaching staff. Junior hockey is a game of mistakes, and Czechia forced more mistakes than any other team.

Their relentless play without the puck caused turnovers, led to quick-strike offense and stifled their opponents from creating chances off the rush. They were disciplined in their system and were able to mitigate many of their own mistakes because of solid positioning and not overcommitting.

Czechia was fun to watch, from the skill of Vojtech Cihar (Los Angeles Kings), Adam Benak (Minnesota Wild) and Vaclav Nestrail (Blackhawks) to the effective annoyance brought by Tomas Poletin (New York Islanders) and Petr Sikora (Washington Capitals).

Tomas Galvas was nothing short of exceptional for Czechia, and it remains ridiculous that he went undrafted largely it seems because he measures 5-10. No team thought that a player of his skating ability and impact was worth a late-round selection. While 19-year-olds are traditionally the best players in the tournament, Galvas stood out among his peers, many of whom were drafted. It is not a stretch to say that without Galvas, Czechia likely finds themselves in the bronze medal game or worse.

It is rare that a smaller defenseman can make an impact the NHL level, but Galvas certainly demonstrated that he is capable of outperforming his peers, and is more likely to make the NHL than many of the players who have been drafted. If his rights were owned by a team, he'd be discussed as one of the best value draft selections of the last few years. Every team has the potential to right this wrong at the upcoming NHL draft, where Galvas will surely draw interest.

McKenna, Stenberg and other draft-eligible notables

Quite a few draft-eligible players made their mark on the tournament. Before delving into specifics, it's important to assert that making sweeping judgements on a player's value based on play at a singular tournament is irresponsible and entirely unhelpful. There are many instances where players have struggled in this tournament, seen their stock fall and gone on to have successful NHL careers. There are also cases where players were brilliant in the World Juniors and never made the same impact in the NHL. A player's performance over a two-week tournament will not make or break their NHL career and should not be the determining factor in their value.

Five draft-eligible players expected to be selected in the first round generated significant chatter over the course of the tournament: Gavin McKenna (Canada), Ivar Stenberg (Sweden), Viggo Björck (Sweden), Oliver Suvanto (Finland) and Chase Reid (United State).

McKenna, who entered the tournament as the favorite to go first overall, was part of one of the best lines throughout the group stage. He has game-breaking ability, but like many players his age, there were questions about the consistency of his effort. He was not the electrifying gamebreaker many had hoped he would be in the semifinal, but he was the primary reason Canada's power play was so dangerous throughout the tournament.

McKenna's talent is undeniable, his ability to create and facilitate electric offense is special. He did nothing to cement his status as the first overall selection, but claims that he is a bust or unworthy of a lottery selection are grossly misguided. For all the chatter of a disappointing performance, McKenna finished second in tournament scoring with 14 points, including a four-point performance in the bronze medal game.

Stenberg and Björck were highly impactful for Sweden, with both named as top players for Sweden in the tournament.

Björck's four missed breakaways in overtime in the semifinal were a hot-button topic. One can look at them in two ways: He has the speed, skill and hockey sense to put himself in positions to consistently create those opportunities ... or, he is inefficient with his opportunities and lacks killer instinct. Making sweeping assessments on a player's "killer instinct" over the course of one overtime, let alone one tournament, is short-sighted. Björck demonstrated the ability to drive play and create opportunities



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

against players older than him, and he more than held his own physically. What he lacks in height he makes up for in maturity, compete and smarts. No one should be surprised if Björck ascends in the draft rankings, and being selected in the top 10 is a very realistic possibility.

Stenberg did nothing to harm his draft stock as one of Sweden's best players. Viewed as McKenna's top competition for the first overall pick, Stenberg was excellent throughout the tournament, stepping up in key moments. He drove play, used his body to protect pucks and outmuscle opponents, and created opportunities all over the ice. He got better as the tournament went on, and put opponents in blenders with his elusiveness without overcomplicating plays. He created passing lanes and took shooting opportunities when they presented themselves. Stenberg was an impactful difference maker for Sweden, and left many believing in his potential to be a star in the NHL.

Oliver Suvanto was named one of Finland's best players at the tournament and rightfully so. Suvanto quickly worked his way into a top-line role for Finland, and the big center put himself firmly in the conversation to be a top-15 pick. Off the puck, Suvanto was disruptive in the middle of the ice, forced turnovers on the forecheck and created quick-strike opportunities. He showcased a quality blend of two-way play, offensive prowess and physical capability. Suvanto's ability to impact the game with and without the puck shows a maturity that some of his peers lack and impressed onlookers.

Chase Reid entered as a player with top-5 potential who was going to play behind some more experienced players on the American blue line. His play forced the coaching staff to increase his role, and when Cole Hutson went down with injury, Reid stepped up. He ran the power play with ease, facilitating offense and making plays that few others in the tournament could pull off, especially as an underage player. He jumped into the play, sent defenders the wrong way and created high-danger opportunities for his teammates. He handled the pressure of an elevated role very well, and showed he could be impactful in key situations, something that will only drive home the value many believe he already held in the upcoming draft.

Canada, USA must evaluate their grassroots approaches

In every tournament, there are disappointments -- teams and players who ought to have performed better than they did. It is even more pronounced at the junior level where players who cannot even enjoy a beer in the host country receive exponentially more attention than usual. How they perform and manage their emotions in critical moments is analyzed for months following the tournament, and speaks to some underlying concerns about how youth hockey is managed in North America compared to Europe.

The United States failing to make the semifinal on home soil can be seen as bitterly disappointing. Canada coming unglued in the semifinal -- knowing the United States was out -- is equally disappointing. Both teams lacked the requisite discipline without the puck to defend, and thus struggled to control games.

Will Zellers (Boston Bruins) was excellent for the United States but was inexplicably left out of the overtime rotation in the quarterfinal. He and James Hagens (Bruins) were two of the best Americans in the tournament, making Zellers' deployment questionable at best. The reality for the Americans is that their most talented players were unable to come up in key moments, and they were made to pay for their defensive miscues. Ultimately, giving up five power-play goals in 15 attempts, along with a team save percentage of .861, was going to be difficult to overcome.

Canada, the tournament favorites, were excellent when leading. Tied or trailing, Canada got away from their defensive structure, took unnecessary risks, and ultimately was unable to adequately control play; simply, they lacked the patience to trust that their skill would overcome the deficit.

Canada was the more skilled team in every game they played. Whether players lacked maturity or the system did not fit the personnel, Canada was unable to stick to their game plan and capitalize on opportunities in tight games. Turnovers in dangerous areas of the ice and the inability to get the puck out of their own end in critical situations led to goals against, and put Canada in uncomfortable situations. Playing 12 forwards and eight defensemen left no margin for injury and Canada was not the same after Brady Martin was injured in the semifinal, causing every line to be cycled into a blender. Between that, ridiculous unsportsmanlike penalties, ill-timed offensive zone penalties and a general inability to keep their heads, Canada faltered at the most critical time.

A bigger question about hockey in both countries looms large. It is impossible to escape the feeling that part of the reason two of the top producers of talent in hockey history are falling back to the pack at the junior level is related to how the sport is managed at the grassroots level.

Hockey has never been more inaccessible in North America, with astronomical costs for equipment and ice time. That is before we arrive at the cost to play in a premier program and the number of players who lose out on valuable development opportunities, not for lack of ability, but because the cost associated with the programming is unaffordable for many families. Talented athletes are choosing other sports, not necessarily because of interest but because hockey is wholly unaffordable for the majority of middle-class families. Playing elite hockey means thousands of dollars on equipment, ice time, private ice sessions, off-ice trainers, travelling to tournaments, and the cost to be part of the program.

The professionalization of the sport at the youth level has led to an increase in for-profit entities and a decrease in accessible community-based programs. Instead of playing or running programs to develop as a person, learn the importance of being a good teammate and having fun, parents are trying to gain the attention of scouts prior to their child's age of 10. If Canada and the United States want to continue to stay atop the mountain, their pool of athletes needs to grow, not shrink. Currently, the talent pool is shrinking because the approach at the youth level has become more about profiting off desperate parents than coaching kids because you want to have a positive impact.

In Europe, children are encouraged to compete in multiple sports and become well-rounded, before specializing in their teenage years. In North America, children are told they must dedicate themselves to one sport and train year-round to avoid "falling behind." Studies show that the best athletes do not specialize until much later in life, which leads to better performance and less burnout. Both North American federations would do well to evaluate the state of grassroots hockey in their countries and make every effort to place emphasis on community development in place of for-profit programming.

ESPN LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374795 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Real Kyper's NHL Buzz: What some teams are weighing ahead of trade deadline

Nick Kypreos

The incredibly tight standings halfway through the NHL season has left several teams in a difficult situation trying to figure out what their strategy will be when approaching the trade market. Whether it's parity or mediocrity, the close balance has weaved a daunting web of challenges the NHL hasn't seen since the salary cap was first introduced in 2005.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Usually teams have separated by now and it's become clear who at least some of the sellers will be. Instead, as this season has progressed, it's become increasingly more difficult for GMs and their front offices to determine if they should buy or sell ahead of the March 6 deadline.

As I work away on my trade board next week, this conundrum has formed a complex landscape.

First and foremost is how challenging it still is to manage the salary cap around the league. We know the Colorado Avalanche — with just four regulation losses in 42 games — are going to buy and will be trying to acquire depth at centre. But they have cap space issues and today are projected to have \$3.122 million in deadline day space.

Gone are the days when a small handful of teams would dominate the standings and be able to pluck off needed pieces from those buried at the bottom. There is a wider dispersion of talent in the NHL today, and many teams find themselves in the mushy middle, jostling for a few playoff spots. Those teams that previously may have been sellers are now within striking distance of a playoff berth and face a dilemma of whether to bolster their roster to take a run, or wait to fight another day and potentially sell off a player or two.

Real Kyper and Bourne

Real Kyper and Bourne

Nick Kypreos and Justin Bourne talk all things hockey with some of the biggest names in the game. Watch live every weekday on Sportsnet and Sportsnet+ — or listen live on Sportsnet 590 The FAN — from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. ET.

Full episode

And while the sellers have yet to be defined, a lot of potential buyers are in a dangerous position, too. Because there are so many teams that could still end up in or out of the playoffs, a team doesn't want to trade for someone like, say, Nazem Kadri, and then miss out on the playoffs anyway. There isn't much of a trade market yet and it's hard to create one when teams are scared of making a costly trade and finishing short anyway. This is why there's such a glut right now.

Six teams on the outside of the wild card in the Western Conference are within five points of making it. Every non-playoff team in the East is within six points of a wild-card spot.

So even though we're halfway through this season, it's maybe still a tad early for many of these teams to make decisions that will impact not only their current season, but could set the foundation for many years to come.

One good stretch could wildly change your outlook. Just ask the Buffalo Sabres.

Navigating this landscape requires careful consideration, insight and sometimes a bit of luck. Every move has significant implications, which makes it all the more crucial for teams to read the signs carefully throughout the chaos.

Eventually, the floodgates should open and we will continue to share with you what we're hearing around the NHL.

With that, here is some of the latest trade information and buzz around the league...

From first place a year ago to last place this season, Kevin Cheveldayoff and the Winnipeg Jets are spinning their wheels and it doesn't appear there's much they can do about their slide outside of firing their head coach. It's a big question if you could convince an experienced coach like Peter Laviolette or Pete DeBoer to go there, and there may not be the next young up-and-coming coach (like a Spencer Carbery) available right now, but it's hard to imagine they're not contemplating a change behind the bench first.

On the transaction front, I don't see the Jets doing much of anything and Cheveldayoff isn't one to make hasty decisions. But this is an older, slower team that has to be thinking about moving on from some of its more senior players. In theory, one guy that could make sense to move on from is captain Adam Lowry, but they just re-signed him and he has a no-movement clause. These types of players who would bring impactful returns, like Lowry or Neal Pionk or Josh Morrissey (for a major shakeup) are just not going to be on the table. Expect minor moves, such as dealing pending UFA Luke Schenn by the deadline, but not major ones.

If Winnipeg fans are left with anything this season, it's to hope for a Sabres-type of winning streak that lifts them back into the race.

Kyle Dubas is caught in a difficult spot with the Penguins in a wild-card position and with new ownership in place. First thing's first: Sidney Crosby is not going anywhere, and Erik Karlsson's contract (\$10 million AAV) in all probability will handcuff the GM.

There are teams that would dearly love to land Evgeni Malkin, though he's in full control of the situation with a no-movement clause in the final season of his contract. There's talk of Minnesota GM Bill Guerin laying low in the weeds looking to make another significant trade, and wondering if Russian Kirill Kaprizov can help convince Malkin to join the Wild for a playoff run. If Malkin allows it, expect him to move before the trade deadline.

After that, it'll be very hard for Dubas to move Bryan Rust or Rickard Rakell (who has partial trade protection) because the team is still in the race — every time they look ready to launch into a rebuild, the team pulls its way back in. Both Rakell and Rust have two years left on their contracts and if you remove them from the roster, Crosby won't be too pleased. Is new ownership's first impression going to be dismantling Crosby's nucleus? Unlikely.

As we know, the Leafs are really limited with the assets they have to pull off a big trade. Last year, Easton Cowan was pushed as a trade chip in an effort to try and obtain Brayden Schenn, but Cowan's going to be hard to put into play again this season. However, depending on what the return is, we can't rule out the possibility.

One idea floating around the league is a bigger swing involving Dallas — specifically Jason Robertson. Contract talks there haven't been smooth, where Robertson is believed to be looking for north of \$12 million a year, more than what Mikko Rantanen got. That's not an easy number for the Stars. Toronto could pay it, but the question is the cost of acquisition. Cowan, Ben Danford, plus more — likely an off-season conversation rather than a deadline one — but it's the kind of move that would actually change the Leafs' makeup. Whether they have the stomach for it is another matter.

Finally on the Leafs, there are teams out there that need a goalie and not a lot is available at the position. So, if Anthony Stolarz can come back and be healthy for a stretch, he's a trade chip they could use.

NY Rangers

They're just three points out of a playoff spot, but losing Igor Shesterkin to the IR is a scary development since he's the only reason why you might think the Rangers can win on any given night.

If the Rangers slide out much more and end up selling, Artemi Panarin is the player to watch. He has a no-movement clause and could quietly stay until it expires, but it would be in his interest to take a page out of Brad Marchand's book and waive it to join a Stanley Cup contender. By lifting his no-trade clause from Boston last season, and going on to win the Cup with Florida, Marchand put over \$20 million in his pocket by raising his value. Panarin has to do the same thing if he sees himself as a \$9-10 million player. He will not get that from the Rangers.

Meantime, Vincent Trocheck is another player on the back-nine of his career who would be an impactful addition to a playoff roster. At 32, he



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

could still bring valued assets back to the Rangers in a trade. He's not "cheap" with a \$5.625 million cap hit, but probably still has another two or three good years left in him. The Rangers would be wise to turn over some of the older players on their roster and Trocheck should be a trade option now, before his value begins to decline in the coming seasons.

Three weeks ago GM Barry Trotz had everybody available with the exception of Roman Josi and I don't think anyone has been pulled back even as the Predators have moved to within three points of a playoff spot. Management realizes they can't win with this group.

Jonathan Marchessault is the player to watch here and probably more of a target for other teams than Steven Stamkos, whose \$8 million AAV will hurt his chances of being moved. It's just too much for a team to take on and I'm not sure anyone would entertain the idea of acquiring Stamkos unless his cap hit was reduced to \$4-5 million. Even Marchessault might not be the easiest to move given he has three years left on his contract and has full no-movement protection, but his \$5.5 million cap hit is at least manageable.

And finally, for as much speculation as there's been about him, I'm not hearing Juuse Saros' name out there at all, but it's not impossible he could still end up in a bombshell move.

The player being sought out the most from Calgary is Blake Coleman, who has only partial trade protection and makes \$4.9 million against the cap this year and next. He's a versatile player who can be used in any role and he's a two-time Cup winner leading Calgary in goals. If it improves the package enough, the Flames might even entertain the idea of retaining some of that salary.

Kadri is tougher. Teams are wary of his age and the remaining term on his deal. The offers haven't been inspiring, and that decision may drag right up until the trade deadline.

I still think Vegas is circling on Rasmus Andersson and could be interested in moving on that before the Olympics.

Buffalo Sabres

We previously had Buffalo pegged to be a seller and pending UFA Alex Tuch to be on the way out, but their recent run and incredible climb back up the standings has changed the equation. Now new GM Jarmo Kekalainen is aggressively shopping around as a buyer.

The Sabres have some good young prospects, depth in the system, and could be a sleeper team to not only buy on the trade market, but also meet Tuch's salary demands of around \$10 million. Could they actually move draft and prospect capital to bolster their lineup? The next few weeks will have a lot of influence on Kekalainen's direction and how hard he goes after a scoring winger.

We waited on the Blues to make a splash last season, but they turned it around and got back into the playoffs so the sell-off never happened. This time, Doug Armstrong's last trade deadline as a GM, could be different.

Jordan Kyrou has a no-trade clause, but there's a sense he may be softening on waiving it to go to a contending club. He wants to have a chance to win and it's about time to wonder if a fresh start may be best for all sides. Whether it's Kyrou or Schenn or any other Blue, Armstrong is ready to move off some of his core players in the right deals.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374796 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why first NHL teams to go into sell mode will win trade deadline

Justin Bourne

A glance at the NHL standings reveals two things: There are a lot of teams that are either:

A) Fooling themselves, or

B) Not fooling themselves but trying to fool their fans.

I say "fooling themselves" because what do GMs of just about every NHL team tell us their goals are? It's to win the Stanley Cup, isn't it? And yet there has to be a dozen teams that are pointing to the standings and saying "We couldn't possibly trade players for future assets, we're within five points of the playoffs!" while having no viable shot at the Stanley Cup. And I mean none, nada, no shot whatsoever.

Of course, they'd like fans to keep buying tickets and going to the games, believing the team is still in the hunt. And if you're those front offices, you're justifying that to yourself by saying "Let's just hang on a month more, and we can make these same trades closer to the trade deadline." They want to have their cake and eat it, too.

That will be possible for those holding high-end assets (Calgary?), but there aren't many of those teams or players. Mostly, it's teams saying "I hope we can turn our third-liner on an expiring contract into a top pick."

Looking at the standings, I'm not sure they're all considering the pretty simple laws of supply and demand, or what the trade market is going to look like after the Olympic break. Because I hate to break all their hearts, but go have a look at the standings, and ask yourself "How many of these teams are good enough to be legitimate buyers?" There aren't many.

Even if you can squint and get yourself as high as a dozen, that still leaves 20 teams that may want to sell, and if they've each got three contracts they'd like to flip for assets, suddenly there's 60 guys available for the 12 teams to pick from.

Even if it's a much smaller number, the math isn't in the sellers' favour. Good luck getting a half-decent return on anyone in a flooded market.

As of today, Pittsburgh is in the second wild-card spot with 49 points. Each of the seven teams below them is above a .500 points percentage and within four points of catching the Penguins (only Columbus is farther back at a whopping six points out). Several of those teams know they're not good enough to win the Cup this year, so the idea of becoming a buyer and spending assets to get better would border on intentional mismanagement.

If they do buy, it will be a token fringe piece to take to their players and fans, silly half-measures more for symbolism than tangible gain while they head like lambs to the slaughter in the playoffs. That's the type of directionless move that mires teams in the middle for years, but it's the easier choice that wins some short-term pats on the back.

I know front offices have other considerations (namely keeping the fans happy), I'm just not convinced those fans are so gullible. They can handle some bitter medicine if it helps the team get better.

If there's going to be 20 teams that may sell at once, the market will reward the first teams with the honesty (and cajones!) to come out and say "We're continuing to build towards our ultimate goal" which would be admitting "this year ain't it." And it's OK when this year ain't it. Fans today are smart. At that point, you're talking about sincere management, which looks like an honest effort to win a Cup and not just spin for ticket sales.

The great irony in this is the best thing for ticket sales is winning — legitimately contending for a Stanley Cup — so in a way standing up and selling today as a mid-table team would be like nutritious food: maybe not as satisfying in the moment but the best thing for the long-term health of your franchise. You beat the rush and you find the best fits for your



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

players when the buyers have little leverage while few other teams are selling.

The other side of this is that if you're a team in the cluster-muck of the mushy middle right now and you sincerely believe your team is better than the results to date (maybe Ottawa or Florida), the earlier you can make a trade to improve, the more you'll be able to reap those rewards, climb the standings and improve your chances of giving your fans a season to remember.

You can sell two things: hope and winning. Moving early helps both teams establish one of the two.

If you want to get better, waiting until the trade deadline in March, just five weeks before the end of the regular season, is a feeble push. It takes a second for players to get their feet under them with a new team, so by the time you're really seeing gains, you've run out of racetrack.

You can see this dance happening around the league right now, where teams don't want to sell while "still in it." So, a quick reminder of how it can look.

In 2017 the St. Louis Blues were in a tight Central Division race, but GM Doug Armstrong chose to make the hard decision and traded pending UFA Kevin Shattenkirk to Washington rather than lose him for nothing in the off-season. They got back Zach Sanford, Brad Malone, and a 2017 first-round pick. In 2018 they were just two points out of a wild card spot, but rather than lose Paul Stastny as a UFA Armstrong traded him to Winnipeg. In return, he got back a first-round draft pick, a fourth, and a prospect. In 2019, without Shattenkirk or Stastny, the Blues won the Stanley Cup.

Armstrong recognized what he thought they were — not ready to win the Cup in a market where you can't let legitimate assets leave for nothing — and he did the hard things. Nine years after the Shattenkirk trade and eight after the Stastny swap he's still the GM, they've got a Cup, and they've got all their first-round picks to go with seven selections in this upcoming draft. He's managed their assets well, thanks to having the fortitude to make hard decisions, and they've reached the playoffs five of the seven years since making those moves.

Perhaps he'll be one of this season's early movers and recognize what the Blues really are this year. Maybe the Rangers make that call, or New Jersey, Boston, Toronto, or even Pittsburgh, who are actually in a playoff spot (they won't sell because of Sid, but they should). The Sabres aren't Cup contenders either, but can't deny their fans the chance at just getting in. All of San Jose, Anaheim, Los Angeles are fringe teams that could step back for a year and try to load up, given they've got no shot against the best in the West. Is Utah sincere about their Cup hopes this season? What about Seattle?

Boy, everyone is "in it," but who's really in it?

Let's bring it back to NHL front offices today, and this year's mucky, murky, mid-as-hell standings, and note that they should be asking themselves: Are we likely to be selling in a month? And if so, could we benefit from doing so now, before everyone else is trying to do the same thing? At the same time, the GMs of the real contenders should be making the push to do something now and pull away from the pack.

We're officially in trade season, and the bizarre NHL standings should lead to some assertive action from GMs around the league. If you don't move now, there's almost no point in moving two months hence.

Let's see who's making nutritious, long-term decisions for their franchises, and who can't let go of the holiday sugar.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374797 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Elias Pettersson overcoming life, injury hurdles to find elite form again

Iain MacIntyre

DETROIT — With 505 games in the National Hockey League, Elias Pettersson has experienced a good deal as a player. But like most 27-year-old players, he hasn't yet accumulated much life experience outside of hockey.

Until five weeks ago, for example, the Vancouver Canucks centre had not known the heart-crushing loss of someone close to him. Then Pettersson and his new wife, Katelyn, lost their unborn baby, who was due in July. On Dec. 4, she shared news of her miscarriage on social media.

The next night, Pettersson was injured in a 4-1 loss against the Utah Mammoth. Pettersson missed the next eight games due to the undisclosed upper-body injury, but was dealing with more than that privately.

"Yeah, it's been hard, honestly," he said Wednesday after practising in Detroit for Thursday's game against the Red Wings. "As a married guy now, I couldn't be happier with Katelyn. Obviously, it's very emotional. It's not what you expect to happen; you don't think it's going to happen to you. It's tough, but that's life."

Six games into his return, and still trying to locate that elite form that had him in the top-10 in NHL scoring two calendar years ago, Pettersson became emotional when asked about the couple's loss.

He and Katelyn were married in June.

"I'm not going to sit here and make everyone feel bad for me; we're not the only ones this has happened to," he said. "But it is tough."

"When Katelyn posted about it, just the amount of people who reached out and shared their own stories, that helped us a lot."

A social-media influencer who seems as comfortable in the spotlight as her husband is wary of it at times, Katelyn Pettersson also posted a clip of the couple taking a twirl on the ice at Rockefeller Center during the Canucks' pre-Christmas trip to New York.

The problem, at least optically, was that Pettersson was still injured. He joined the Canucks on the five-game trip. But while his status was considered day-to-day throughout the excursion, he did not play again until after Christmas.

The brief video got the Canucks' attention.

"Him and I had a talk about it after the fact," head coach Adam Foote said Wednesday. "I was just giving him advice, like, 'Hey, when you're injured, maybe stay away from the social media part.' I think young guys, we have to teach them that. . . just to keep the noise away."

After Pettersson had a miserable season last year under previous coach Rick Tocchet, who along with general manager Patrik Allvin was critical of the player's preparation, Foote made it a priority when he became coach in May to reach out to Pettersson and start building a relationship.

The two have had a lot of conversations since then, including one soon after the miscarriage.

"He's shared it, we've discussed it, and we support him on that," Foote explained. "It's not easy. When you're married or you have a family, you're married to the game first unless someone's sick or ill or you lose a baby or (become) a father. Then it becomes. . . we're all human. That would jolt any man, I think. And that kind of affects guys, for sure."

"As you get older, probably more things happen. Everyone deals with it in their own way, however long that takes. Him and I had a discussion



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

about it. It would jolt him, for sure. (But) every year, there's things that go on behind the scenes that not everyone knows, that are real. It's part of life."

And life can be complicated.

After struggling initially upon his return from injury, Pettersson has been better over the last four games. Including a night of analytics dominance in a 3-2 overtime loss to the Boston Bruins last Saturday, Pettersson has made the Canucks the stronger team when he's on the ice.

Despite losing all four games, the Canucks have outshot opponents 36-18 with Pettersson playing at five-on-five. Naturalstatrck.com has high-danger scoring chances 19-5 for Vancouver during Pettersson's time on ice.

Before he was injured, Pettersson had his best month since signing a team-record \$92.8-million contract nearly two years ago — an agreement that reflected the expectations the Canucks had for their franchise centre.

Pettersson had 14 points in 12 games in November, was leading all NHL forwards in blocked shots and was digging in physically and competing in his nightly matchups against the opposition's top centre.

He has scored in the last two games, but with 11 goals and 15 assists in 34 games overall, Pettersson is generating points at roughly the same rate he did during his dismal 45-point season a year ago — 0.76 points per game instead of 0.70. But the centre's underlying defensive numbers are solid.

"I think I was doing okay," Pettersson said. "But injuries happen. Now that I'm back, I'm just trying to work my hardest out there and play the right way.

"It's going to be a nagging injury for a while, probably the rest of the season. But I can play with it. In some situations, there's some pain but I can push through it."

Foote believes the four-day NHL holiday break, when players were mainly off the ice, set back Pettersson and his skating. The coach said he is starting to see more energy from his top forward.

While Pettersson was injured, the organization underwent a seismic shift on Dec. 12 when the trade of defenceman Quinn Hughes forced management to further pivot towards a rebuild. It also left Pettersson and goalie Thatcher Demko as the last players remaining from the glittering, early-20s core that Allvin and Canucks president Jim Rutherford inherited four years ago.

Centres J.T. Miller and Bo Horvat were traded in previous seasons.

The Canucks also looked before and after last year's trade deadline at the market for Pettersson. Although the Swede's no-movement clause activated on July 1, Rutherford would be prudent to plumb the market again before the March 6 deadline this season.

"I think it naturally puts more on to me," Pettersson said of the exit of core players. "And Demko and Brock (Boeser) and Fil (Hronek). But it is what it is. We can't look in the past. We can only work ahead and (see) where we can do better, and take this group to the next level."

Of the Canucks rapid course change, he said: "I mean, I'm not going to lie, it's hard. Obviously, I want to battle and I want to play in the playoffs. But we need to see what's best for our future and build long-term."

Foote still believes Pettersson can be an elite centre. But he must embrace that challenge and want that responsibility.

"If you're lucky enough to become a part of a core with any group, whether it's hockey or any sport, yeah, you should feel that responsibility," Foote said. "You should want to feel it. That's what comes with it, right?"

"Does he feel the heat? Well, he should feel it and should enjoy it. It's part of what comes with being the core guy."

ICE CHIPS — After the Canucks had a ragged start to Tuesday's 5-3 loss in Buffalo and didn't generate much pushback until they were down 4-0 in the third period, Wednesday's practice consisted largely of battle drills before Foote gathered his players for a brief talk and then ordered them straight off the ice to get ready for the Red Wings. . . Filip Chytil was a partial participant in a non-contact jersey, but Teddy Blueger, who wore the red jersey in Buffalo, was not part of the group on Wednesday.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374798 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs mid-season report: Best surprises, biggest disappointments

Luke Fox

The Atlantic Division's defending regular-season champs pass the 41-game mark in a place no one imagined they'd be: three teams removed from a wild-card berth.

No question, the Toronto Maple Leafs were poised to take a step back when they let difference-maker Mitch Marner walk and replaced him with depth forwards.

But who saw such disturbing defensive play, such a long parade of injuries, or such a disastrous power play digging the Leafs into a (possibly unrecoverable) hole before Christmas?

The optimistic view after a 19-win first half in Leafland goes like this: Auston Matthews, the 108-year-old franchise's most prolific goal scorer at just age 28, has burst out of the holiday break ablaze and is playing his best hockey in 18 months. The division is middling and for the taking. And William Nylander should be healthy soon, right?

The pessimist can point to the club's inability to stay healthy, string together W's, hold leads, or bank points during a home-heavy, travel-light first half.

The second half brings all the cross-continental flights, tougher opponents, and the most debatable trade deadline strategy in the Matthews-Nylander era.

Yep, Brad Treliving's bunch is in for one doozy of a back half — and that's because of how poorly it performed in the first half.

Key stats

Record: 20-15-7 (6th in division, 17th in NHL)

Goals per game: 3.36 (5th in NHL)

Goals against per game: 3.29 (24th in NHL)

Power play: 16.4 per cent (25th in NHL)

Penalty kill: 84.1 per cent (3rd in NHL)

Not since — who? Gustav Forsling? — has a waiver pickup made the resounding impact Stecher has on his fourth Canadian team.

Fighting for his career and undersized, undrafted underdogs everywhere, the right-shot defenceman went from an Edmonton afterthought to a Berube essential.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

For nearly minimum wage, Stecher has averaged 20:30 over 23 nights, mostly in a shutdown role, while contributing two goals, eight points, 22 blocks, and a new subset of Leafs Nation (Troy's Boys for life!).

If Stecher has any competition amongst the fan base for new favourite, it's third-string goalie Hildeby.

The whispering giant was intended to groom his game in the minors but has already made 15 NHL appearances, papering over indefinite absences by, first, Joseph Woll and now Anthony Stolarz.

Despite often popping in for mid-game relief, "Beasty" has posted a sparkling .914 save percentage. He's performed well enough to demand starts outside of back-to-back situations and give management reason to ponder a position-of-strength trade when/if all three netminders are healthy at the same time.

Biggest disappointment: Team defence

Lots to choose from here, as a putrid power play and constant health issues also rate high on the disappointment scale.

But watching the NHL's eighth-best defence (according to goals allowed) tumble to 27th by Game 41, despite decent goaltending support and all top eight blue-liners returning to the roster, has ultimately been the Leafs' first-half undoing.

Reasons for the falloff are plentiful.

Chris Tanev's three injuries, the latest (groin) likely sending him to the surgeon, have been costly. Fellow top-four defencemen Brandon Carlo and now Jake McCabe have also been sidelined for a spell.

No question, one-time Selke finalist Marner's departure hurt in this regard. And giving pucks away at a league-high rate of 16.5 times per 60 minutes ain't helping matters.

For concerning stretches, the Leafs have been porous off the rush, struggled to exit their zone, and failed to lock down leads.

Among the 20 times they scored the first goal, they've only won 10 of those games.

McCabe (plus-26), Stecher (plus-11), and Italy-bound Oliver Ekman-Larsson (25 points with minimal power-play shifts) have thrived. But third-pairing guys Simon Benoit and Philippe Myers have taken a step back.

Most concerning: Morgan Rielly — loaded with a \$7.5 million AAV and full no-move clause — may be en route to a 50-point showing but is also a team-worst dash-13.

Once again, Rielly is running through an assortment of partners and is ending up with a hung head at the end of the opposition's highlight clips.

"He's played some real good hockey for us this year," Berube defends. "I'm not worried about it. I think he'll get back to the level he was at."

The entire defence needs to find that level, fast. Then maintain it.

Big question for the second half

Can they make the playoffs?

Only the most masochistic Maple Leafs fan would dare surf on over to MoneyPuck.com/Predictions.htm, the NHL's landing page for playoff prognostications, these days.

Money Puck's model places Toronto's odds of extending its post-season streak to a league-best 10 years at 21.3 per cent, the third-lowest odds of all 16 Eastern Conference teams.

Despite gathering points in seven straight, the Leafs are on pace for just 89 points, while the wild-card cutoff mark projects to 94 points.

Treliving states he's not ready to wave the white flag. And giving up on a campaign in which Matthews and Nylander are in their prime — and the

GM and head coach could lose their jobs if they don't reach Game 83 — feels like a last resort.

Hopping on a heater prior to the Olympic break is imperative here.

Otherwise, the new "big question" becomes "How much can we get for Bobby McMann and Scott Laughton and does anyone else on the roster look appealing to a contender?"

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374799 Website

Sportsnet.ca / Norris Trophy WATCH: Can Quinn Hughes catch Cale Makar?

Kristina Rutherford

Cale Makar would be posing for photos with the James Norris Memorial Trophy for the third time in his career if we were handing out the NHL hardware tomorrow, but this is just the halfway point of the season, so let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Makar is the clear favourite to be recognized as the league's top defenceman at this point, but there are plenty of other contenders who shouldn't be overlooked, and players who can certainly turn themselves into bigger contenders after solid starts.

The Olympics are less than a month away, a condensed NHL schedule follows, and most of all, let's not forget how quickly things can change in the NHL. See: Quinn Hughes.

When this season started, the majority of Sportsnet's 19 NHL insiders believed it would be the (now former) Canucks captain and star on Vancouver's blueline who'd be taking home the Norris Trophy, and for the second time in his career. But Hughes was dealt to Minnesota, and after defensive struggles in Vancouver in the first half, he'll have to rewrite the script in 2026 to work his way back up in the best defenceman conversation.

In addition to Makar and Hughes, we're putting the spotlight on a handful of other players who deserve early shine, with seven blueliners in all who've caught our eye as potential Norris Trophy contenders to this point.

Cale Makar, Colorado Avalanche

The star on Colorado's blueline is the front-runner for good reason. The 27-year-old from Calgary paces all defencemen with 48 points in 42 games, and Makar averages more than 25 minutes per 60, and a lot of tough ones at that. Playing for the best team in the NHL, his 36 assists rank seventh league-wide, and three of his 12 goals are game winners. Makar will lead Team Canada's blueline in Italy next month at the Winter Games and while there were a lot of tough decisions to make about who'd wear the Maple Leaf, Makar certainly wasn't among them. He's on pace for a third straight 90-point season. Have mercy.

Quinn Hughes, Minnesota Wild

The narrative around the previously lifelong Canucks blueliner has changed since he was traded to Minnesota, and that's a good thing given his injury-plagued 2024-25 campaign and struggles defensively earlier this season. Hughes, who won the Norris in 2024, remains an offensive juggernaut. He scored in his debut with the Wild, he immediately improved the team's breakouts and took control on the power play, and he's operating at a point-per-game clip since the trade, now cooking at plus-six on a great team after opening the season at minus-10 on the second-last team in the West. They say the best defence is great



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

offence, and Hughes spends 46.6 per cent of his time in the opposition's zone, which ranks in the 97th percentile in the NHL. He also clocks an average of more than 27 minutes per game, more than anyone in the league.

With 45 points in 38 games — and 16 goals, leading all defenders — Werenski is on pace to surpass the 80-point mark for his second straight season. He averages more than 26 minutes per game for Columbus, and the fact he's a plus-five on the worst team in the Eastern Conference shouldn't go unnoticed. The Blue Jackets are a collective minus-13. Werenski spends 43.1 per cent of his time in the offensive zone, ranking in the 74th percentile league-wide, also impressive for a team in the East's basement. He'll join Hughes on Team USA at the 2026 Olympics. Werenski, 28, was a finalist for the Norris last season.

Moritz Seider, Detroit Red Wings

The 24-year-old is on pace to improve on the career-best 50 points he posted in his rookie season to win the Calder Trophy, with 31 through 44 games. Seider is plus-11 on one of the top teams in the East. No player in Detroit gets more ice time than the nearly 25 minutes a game the German averages. Seider captained his national team at world championships last year, and he'll again be a leader for Germany at the Milano Cortina Olympics. He's in the second of his seven-year deal in Detroit, which is good news for fans of the second-best team in the Atlantic.

Lane Hutson, Montreal Canadiens

Last season's Calder Trophy winner is picking up where he left off after leading all rookies in scoring in his first year in the NHL. The 21-year-old Hutson is on a point-per-game pace through 42 games in his sophomore year, good for third overall among defenders and second overall on the Canadiens, behind only captain Nick Suzuki. Lane is quick and shifty, he plays much bigger than his five-foot-nine stature, and he steals a lot of pucks and makes things happen. Across the NHL, Hutson ranks in the 95th percentile in both maximum skating speed (22.97 m.p.h.) and offensive zone time (46 per cent).

J.J. Moser, Tampa Bay Lightning

Moser isn't earning our attention for his offensive prowess, with 14 points through 40 games. But nobody in his position across the league boasts a better plus/minus than Moser, at plus-32. In December, he signed an eight-year deal with the Bolts, who rewarded his steady, dependable presence on the back end, which includes physicality that not only keeps dangerous opponents to the outside, but also creates turnovers. With Victor Hedman sidelined by an elbow injury and Ryan McDonagh missing more than a month of action, Moser has stepped up admirably. The 25-year-old will represent the Swiss team at the upcoming Olympics.

Jakob Chychrun, Washington Capitals

The Caps blueliner with the high hockey IQ and booming shot leads all defencemen with four game winners among his 15 goals. Chychrun also tops everyone in his position in expected goals per 60 minutes (0.73). The 27-year-old plays an attacking style, and his 143 shots this season rank in the league's 99th percentile.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374800 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'It's a war': Inspired Maple Leafs take intensity to Panthers

Luke Fox

TORONTO — Ever loved a tune so much you play it back-to-back, repeating the first note the moment the last sounds?

That was Toronto Maple Leafs late Tuesday night, blasting their 2026 win anthem, Dexys Midnight Runners' "Come On Eileen," throughout the home dressing room twice before opening the doors to reporters.

Or: Once for every time they've beat their nemesis, the Florida Panthers, by a resounding 4-1 score this season.

"All the wins right now just mean a lot. You see how tight the standings are," said Matthew Knies, who has built a long history with these Cats over his short career. "Every two points is a battle. It's a war.

"The energy in this room, I think, is really good. I like how we're preparing for games. I like how we're preparing for games."

How the 2026 Maple Leafs readied for this grudge match — a team test interwoven with individual narratives — was to stress the importance of initiating aggression and winning tussles along the boards and at the net-front.

Strike early.

Exit quick and clean.

Don't back down.

"You play Florida, I mean, you got to match the physicality. You got to match how they're coming at you all night, right?" said coach Craig Berube, after guiding his guys to a seven-game point streak. "They're going to put it in. They're going to come at you. That's the way they play. And I thought we did a real good job for two periods of exposing that at times and creating some odd-man rushes, breakaways a couple times."

These wholly engaged Leafs, who hung blow for blow with the champs in a rare regular-season 52-hitter, are barely recognizable from the ones that fumbled and squandered their way to the Christmas break.

And there was plenty of inspiration to draw upon, as the Panthers' first return to Toronto since Game 7 was preceded by a celebration for Auston Matthews and included a pitstop at the nearby Hockey Hall of Fame to drop off another gaudy championship ring and another headline-snatching morning skate chat from five-time eliminator Brad Marchand.

"I was a diehard Leafs fan, so didn't like him too much," rookie Easton Cowan said. "But cool playing against him tonight."

Quadruply cool when contributions arise from all four lines.

"It always means a lot playing Florida," Berube said. "Everybody had a part in it tonight, which is good."

Scott Laughton and Steven Lorentz, who tied Matthews with a game-high four shots, were stellar on a 3-for-3 penalty kill.

"I'd be lying if I said I didn't have games like this circled," Lorentz, an ex-Panther, admitted.

Shifty puck transporter Cowan, who opened the scoring, and Nick Robertson continue to thrive on an accidental third line centred by the steadily improving Nicolas Roy.

Second-liner Knies chipped in a pair of points, including the game-winning goal, in one of his better efforts of the season.

First-liner (for now) Max Domi picked a fight with Aaron Ekblad, upping the hate. And Matthews, the man of the moment, stayed hot by potting his sixth goal over his past three games.

"Forecheck was really good tonight. Goaltending was great," Matthews said. "I mean, those are the kind of efforts that we need nights like this, against tough opponents like this."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Sure, the Maple Leafs find themselves in a desperate position entering the second half of the season. Turns out, urgency looks good on them.

"It was a full team effort. Great game by us. I thought we matched their intensity from the start. And I think everyone contributed," Knies said. "Top to bottom, I think it was an unbelievable effort out of us."

A certified banger.

Now, press rewind and play that song again.

Fox's Fast Five

- Mats Sundin flew across the Atlantic to pass the Maple Leafs goal-scoring torch to Matthews in-person.

"I was hoping I would hold my record a little bit longer," the former captain said. "He's way too good of a goal scorer."

Sundin joined Scotiabank Arena in a pre-game standing ovation for his successor, then watched Matthews snipe goal No. 422 and snap his own record on a beautiful feed from Matthew Knies.

"It's important when there's history being made and records being broken," Sundin said. "Being a Maple Leaf, it's so special for me, and I think I can relate to where Auston Matthews is in his career at this point.

"It's kind of anxiety trying to get it over with, because he's got more important things to think about, winning hockey games for the Leafs. I wanted to be here for that."

- Considering Joseph Woll had given up eight goals in one-and-a-half games' worth of work, a case could've been made to grant backup Dennis Hildeby the start Tuesday.

While not overly taxed, Woll responded superbly, stopping 31 of 32 shots and stacking his seventh win over his past 10 starts.

- At morning skate, Marchand confirmed the worst-kept secret of free agency 2025.

"It was between Florida and Toronto of where I was going to go," the two-time Cup champ told reporters.

Marchand, a noted troll, said he was serious last spring when he praised the Leafs for learning how to compete "the right way" and that he really didn't believe GM Bill Zito would be able to re-sign him after taking care of Sam Bennett and Aaron Ekblad.

Unprompted, Marchand added: "It's unfortunate the fans ran Marner out of town. That's a huge impact for their group. He's a point-a-game player. That hurts."

- Sundin caught up with the injured William Nylander (fully sleeved) in the press box during the first intermission.

"Well, I played with and against his dad, and I've watched Willy since he was a kid, growing up and being an outstanding talent," Sundin said with a grin.

"We all handle the pressure of being in Toronto in different ways. Willy is handling it his way. Obviously, a very skilled player, and really hoping that he's going to keep evolving and developing as a player here with the Leafs."

- Florida star Matthew Tkachuk is traveling with the team for the first time this season. He helped donate a '25 championship ring to the Hall of Fame and has finally ditched the no-contact sweater.

"Just means you've got to keep your head up," Marchand quipped. "He's going to be looking for a hit in practice. It's been a little while for him. I think he's itching. It's fun having him out there. He's so energetic and mouthy."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374801 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets mid-season report: Nowhere to go but up

Ryan Dixon

A team that finished atop the NHL standings last year just put together the worst quarter of a campaign imaginable. With 41 games to go for the Winnipeg Jets, there's nowhere to go but up. Sadly, there's also less hope by the night that the team is capable of moving in that direction.

The Jets were finishing up a respectable first quarter of the season when they won their 19th game of the year on Nov. 18 to give themselves a 12-7-0 record. Maybe Winnipeg was never going to repeat the heights of last season — the club won its first-ever Presidents' Trophy on the strength of 116 points — but the Jets were well positioned to track down one of the eight playoff spots in the Western Conference.

Then the big prairie sky collapsed.

A team that lost 26 times all season in 2024-25 dropped 19 of 22 games while posting a 3-14-5 record in the second quarter of this campaign. The result is a squad that begins the second half of the year staring up at every other club in the league thanks to its NHL-worst .427 points percentage.

"Didn't necessarily see it coming," said Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff on Monday, 24 hours before his club blew a third-period lead versus Vegas and lost for the 10th straight game. "But if you look at all the different things, it's a tough league to win in and certainly the situation that we're in, be it one-goal games, be it not maybe playing to the defensive structure that has become our signature for the last couple of years, all of a sudden you find yourself in this predicament."

Listen, nobody gets to where the Jets are without some bad luck, especially a squad that was so consistently good a relatively short time ago.

Connor Hellebuyck — the reigning league MVP and winner of the Vezina Trophy in 2024 and 2025 — had knee surgery on Nov. 22 and returned (ahead of schedule) on Dec. 13. The Jets won 5-1 in his return and have not registered a victory since.

The one-goal games Cheveldayoff referenced have certainly gone against the Jets; eight of the 10 losses Winnipeg has endured on its current slide have been by a single goal, with four of those defeats — including Tuesday night against Vegas — coming in extra time.

Still, the thought that this club — which played with such pristine structure last year under coach Scott Arniel — could go from the penthouse to the cellar is stunning.

That's why, on the same day Cheveldayoff was holding a press conference about the club's bleak results at the halfway point, Arniel was answering queries after practice about keeping his position behind the bench.

"I'm not thinking about that," he said. "I've just got to do my job."

When you're in as bad a spot as Winnipeg is right now, it's fair to question everything.

Key Stats

Record: 15-21-5 (8th in the division, 32nd in the NHL)

Goals per game: 2.85 (23rd in the NHL)

Goals against per game: 3.15 (19th in the NHL)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

Power play: 18.8 per cent (19th in the NHL)

Penalty kill: 77.4 per cent (25th in the NHL)

Best surprise

It's slim pickings here, so let's go with the fact Gabe Vilardi has not missed a game this season. The 26-year-old has been plagued by injuries for what feels like his entire NHL career, which now features two-plus seasons in Manitoba. Not only is Vilardi healthy, but he's also producing at a career-best clip that could result in a 75-point season. Put that output in a six-foot-three frame and you can see why Winnipeg locked this player up on a six-year contract last June.

Biggest disappointment

You could certainly take this in any number of directions, but it has to be the complete and utter lack of scoring support for the first line of Mark Scheifele between Vilardi and Kyle Connor. The top trip has tallied 57 goals this year; everyone else on the roster has combined for 60.

The likes of Nino Niederreiter (six goals), Vlad Namestnikov (six goals) and certainly UFA signing Gustav Nyquist (zero goals in 31 games) have not produced the way the club banked on. And while it was obviously optimistic to think Jonathan Toews could step into a second-line role at age 37 after two years away from NHL hockey, his three tallies represent a big disappointment. (For what it's worth, Toews does have four points in his past six outings).

Cole Perfetti — who did find the net versus Vegas on Tuesday — has just nine points in 27 games following a promising 50-point campaign in his second full NHL season last year.

To say the scoring falls off a cliff after the top line is an understatement.

Big question for the second half: Gavin McKenna or Ivar Stenberg?

Joking, not joking.

Winnipeg is locked into its core. There's not going to be any fire sale from a last-place team. By the same token, the Jets have been buyers for several years now and Cheveldayoff acknowledged they're "paying a little bit of a price for that right now" in terms of the futures they've sacrificed in the name of unsuccessfully chasing a title.

The GM certainly didn't sound like a guy who was ready to push more chips in to save a sinking ship. Even if Winnipeg makes hay the rest of January — when it plays eight of its next 10 games at home — how realistic is making the playoffs for this club? And, if there, what are you doing against Colorado in Round 1?

As noted, Winnipeg's best players are signed to long-term deals. In 2025 alone, defenceman Neal Pionk, two-thirds of the top line (Vilardi and Connor) and captain Adam Lowry inked big pacts to remain with the team. And, to be clear, having so many good players under contract at team-friendly cap hits is still a good thing for this franchise.

Especially if it can inject a big dose of talent before next fall.

There's not a lot Winnipeg can do to steer into the skid because it doesn't really have any pending UFAs who would command much in return on the trade market. Still, there's nothing wrong with trying to collect a third- or fourth-round pick here and there while staying near the bottom of the standings and praying for lottery luck.

Nobody planned on a gap year in Winnipeg. But could you imagine running this team back next October with the updated plan for secondary scoring being the likes of a McKenna or Stenberg, two extremely touted offensive prospects for the 2026 NHL Draft who could be ready for the world's best league — at least in a support role — by next fall?

Maybe it's a pipedream, but Jets fans need some kind of hope glom onto right now.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026

1374802 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Red-hot McDavid pots hat trick as Oilers crush Predators

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — A step forward was exactly what was required by an Edmonton Oilers team that's been backing up of late. Wins, they're good at any time of year, and Edmonton had come out of the Christmas break at 1-3.

But the fact that the Oilers looked the best they've been in the new year with both Trent Frederic and Andrew Mangiapane listed as healthy scratches, cheering their team on from the dressing room in street clothes, well, that said something else altogether.

"Yeah, things haven't worked out. Not that it's over," Oilers head coach Kris Knoblauch said after Tuesday's morning skate, leaving any possible door open for those two players to become part of the process again. "They haven't played as we've expected. There's more for them to give us."

Frederic signed an eight-year deal this summer, and has responded with three points in 41 games. Mangiapane inked a two-year free agent deal on July 1, and has underperformed mightily.

The fact that both were deemed healthy scratches on the same night — both have taken turns in the press box this season — was a stark reminder of just how poorly GM Stan Bowman's two major free-agent signings have gone so far.

And what's worse?

The Oilers got depth goals from Kasperii Kapanen and Curtis Lazar in their 6-2 win over Nashville on Tuesday, a rare night this season when the depth scoring has delivered. Alongside a hat trick from Connor McDavid, it was all too much for a Predators team at the end of a six-game road trip.

"Overall, it was a pretty solid 60. Every line was going, every D pair and (Connor Ingram) in goal made some huge saves to keep us in it and keep us going," said Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, who notched his 500th career assist on McDavid's hat-trick goal.

"(That just means) I've had a lot of really good players to pass the puck to. I've obviously been here a long time (993 games) and played on some great teams with some great players.

"It just kind of shows the calibre of players I've played with."

None better than McDavid, who is on a legendary tear — a 16-game points streak in which he's scored 17 goals and 39 points.

McDavid scored on the power play, on a penalty shot and at even strength.

"Right now he's attacking. Every chance he has, he's taking it to the net," said Nugent-Hopkins. "Whether he is shooting it or beating guys and taking it there ... it feels like there is always another level that somehow he gets to.

"We're trying to keep up, (Zach Hyman) and myself. It's not always easy."

McDavid is simply unstoppable with the Winter Olympics on the horizon, and certainly there isn't an NHL coach who knows how to blunt his attack.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 8, 2026

"I wish we knew," said Preds coach Andrew Brunette. "I think every team in the league is probably thinking the same thing. The penalty-shot goal was a little bit self-inflicted, but he's an extremely dangerous player, as we all know. If I knew how to stop him, I'd stop him."

Lazar played like a guy who will stay in the lineup — particularly with centre Adam Henrique leaving the game injured after just two shifts — banging home a rebound to make it 3-0.

"I told (McDavid) after I scored that goal that I'm going for the Molson Cup this month, don't take it personally," Lazar joked.

And Kapanen was excellent in his return from injury, an important depth player during the Oilers' run to the Stanley Cup Final last season. He will get the time to find his game, you can be sure of that.

"At times, you could notice that I haven't played in two and a half months," said Kapanen, who had a goal and an assist. "But all in all, I thought it was not a bad effort."

It's only one game, and lineup spots are sure to open up again for Frederic and Mangiapane. But it's hard to say that either veteran was missed on Tuesday, as the Oilers jumped all over Nashville in the second period and won going away.

As the game wore on, the line of Ike Howard, Jack Roslovic and Matt Savoie — who replaced Henrique at centre — found its footing. It's unlikely that Howard is coming out of the lineup, either.

"We've got a lot of guys who can play in the bottom six, and right now we're just wanting more from those (two) guys. It's a little bit of a reset for those two," Knoblauch said.

OIL SPILLS: This was the 20th consecutive game for Edmonton where the team that scored first won the game. The Oilers are 18-1-3 when scoring first. ... McDavid's penalty-shot goal was the first at Rogers Place for an Oiler since Leon Draisaitl in 2018. ... Draisaitl scored the fifth Oilers goal, just his second even-strength goal since Dec. 1. He's at 60 points, after a three-point night (1-2-3). ... Edmonton is 15-2-2 in its last 19 versus Nashville.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 01.08.2026