



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The News & Observer

Hurricanes lay smackdown on nemesis Panthers, hit milestones in a thunderous win

By: Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Nikolaj Ehlers (27) moves the puck in the first period against Dallas on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Nikolaj Ehlers (27) moves the puck in the first period against Dallas on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

RALEIGH

No team has frustrated the Carolina Hurricanes quite like the Florida Panthers the past few years.

Regular season, Stanley Cup playoffs, it didn't matter. The Panthers have been beating up on the Canes, staging comebacks, winning games late and generally having their way.

And winning Stanley Cups. The Panthers have won the past two, topping the Canes in the Eastern Conference final last season on their way to again lifting the Cup.

But not Friday.

The Canes laid a 9-1 beating on the Panthers in a game that felt as much like a hockey exorcism as a 60-minute victory.

By the final minutes, the Panthers looked like beaten fighters waiting for the bell to ring. The Canes, with winger Nikolaj Ehlers getting his sixth career hat trick on a four-point night, ignited for six goals in the final period as the Lenovo Center stayed loud until the end.

"So much was made of the last couple of games (with Florida) and I get it," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "So, yeah, it's nice not to have to talk about that anymore.

"It's been a long time coming against this team. We just never seem to break through with goals. Tonight, we finally did."

Florida Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky (72) defends as Carolina Hurricanes center Logan Stankoven (22) tries to score in the first period of Game 4 during the Eastern Conference final of the NHL Stanley Cup playoffs at Amerant Bank Arena on Monday, May 26, 2025, in Sunrise, Fla.

Florida Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky (72) defends as Carolina Hurricanes center Logan Stankoven (22) tries to score in the first period of Game 4 during the Eastern Conference final of the NHL Stanley Cup playoffs at Amerant Bank Arena on Monday, May 26, 2025, in Sunrise, Fla. Photo by Matias J. Ocner mocner@miamiherald.com

Florida goalie Sergei Bobrovsky has been a wall at times against the Canes, especially in the playoffs. He was sharp early Friday, denying Jordan Staal, Ehlers, Sebastian Aho and Jordan Martinook on breakaways before the third-period

deluge. Bobrovsky had never allowed more than eight goals in a game — before Friday.

By game's end, the Canes' Andrei Svechnikov had earned his 400th career point. Taylor Hall scored twice and Mark Jankowski had a goal and two assists — one of five players in the lineup with two helpers.

The Hurricanes had nine players notch two or more points for the first time since Oct. 19, 1985, when the then-Hartford Whalers had Ron Francis in the lineup.

Granted, the Panthers were missing firebrand forward Brad Marchand, the perpetual protagonist, and defenseman Seth Jones, both out with injuries. They have not had captain Aleksander Barkov and forward Matthew Tkachuk in the lineup, although Tkachuk is said to be close to a return.

Ehlers had the hats flying onto the ice at 13:03 of the third period. His third goal came after a run of power-play scores by Alexander Nikishin, Svechnikov, Ehlers and Hall.

Florida, in contrast, was 0-for-5 on the power play. The Canes' penalty killers got the hard work done and made things easier for goalie Brandon Bussi, who picked up his 17th win of the season in an 15-save game,

Brandon Bussi of the Carolina Hurricanes is seen in the net during the warmups against the Calgary Flames at Lenovo Center on Sunday in Raleigh.

Brandon Bussi of the Carolina Hurricanes is seen in the net during the warmups against the Calgary Flames at Lenovo Center on Sunday in Raleigh. Jaylynn Nash Getty Images

Nikishin, becoming a bigger threat on the back end, bombed in a shot timed at 92.3 mph. Another heavy Nikishin shot, in the second period, resulted in a rebound that Jankowski batted past Bobrovsky for a 2-1 lead.

"The Jankowski goal was big," Brind'Amour said. "We were playing so well and that kind of broke the ice."

Not long after the Jankowski goal came what Brind'Amour called the turning point: a huge hit by Canes defenseman Sean Walker, who hammered forward Jesper Boqvist along the boards. Walker wound up dropping the gloves and going at it with Donovan Sebrango as both incurred 5-minute fighting penalties — Walker's first in the NHL — and Sebrango also received a roughing penalty.

"It was a hard, clean hit," Brind'Amour said. "They come in and do what they're going to do, and we capitalized on that power play. That's kind of where the game might have turned in our favor."

Brind'Amour moved Ehlers, called "Fly" by his teammates, to Staal's line opposite Martinook, and the new combination clicked nicely.



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Carolina Hurricanes center Logan Stankoven (22) congratulates Carolina Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (32) after defeating the Dallas Stars on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes center Logan Stankoven (22) congratulates Carolina Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (32) after defeating the Dallas Stars on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett
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"It was great," Ehlers said of playing on the line. "The way that they battle and play the game, win pucks back, I knew I would be able to get more space out there, which is something I've been looking for."

Ehlers' first goal, which gave the Canes a 1-0 lead in the opening period, came after Staal won a puck battle along the boards. Staal found Ehlers open in the slot for the shot with a no-look pass — "An incredible play," Ehlers said.

After Ehlers' third goal, after all the hats were cleared off the ice, Svechnikov perched one of the caps on Ehlers' helmet. Both got a laugh out of it.

"It was a lot of fun," Ehlers said.

Against the Florida Panthers. For a change.



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The Athletic

NHL weekend rankings: Rangers continue the statement fun with a sternly worded letter

By: Sean McIndoe

Many times, an NHL season comes to be defined by the dominance of a select group. Sometimes, it's the Year of the Goaltenders. Others, it might be the snipers who take over. In the first half, this looked like it would be a changing-of-the-guard season. But now, a new contender emerges.

Hockey fans, welcome to the Year of the PR Department Statement.

It started last week, when the Ottawa Senators declared war on the trolls and sick people. This week, it was the New York Rangers, doing what they do best: Writing open letters to their fans about how bad they are.

Bonus five: Most interesting passages from the Rangers' letter

5. "Chris Drury, President and General Manager" – Maybe the most meaningful portion of the letter came at the very end, in the signature: This next phase is indeed going to be Chris Drury's project. That's not a surprise, since all evidence had suggested Drury has the backing of ownership. But for any Rangers fans hoping that a front office shakeup would be part of any teardown, this letter would appear to nip that in the bud.

4. "We will target players that bring tenacity, skill, speed and a winning pedigree" – So... good players? You've just described good players. I don't think there are too many teams out there whose current game plan involves actively targeting weak, slow losers. OK, maybe the Canucks, but nobody else.

3. "... because that is what our fans deserve" – Rangers fans, did you know that you're the best? You guys rule. That seems to be the main message from this three-paragraph letter, which takes multiple opportunities to blow smoke up the behind of the fan base. Sorry, of "the loyal and passionate fan base." Thank you for all that you do. Please keep throwing money at us while we lose on purpose for a few years.

2. "That may mean saying goodbye to players that have brought us and our fans great moments over the years" – Artemi Panarin, pack your stuff. And to be clear, that's a good thing, because Panarin has the potential to be the gold standard in an otherwise weak deadline market. He has no-move protection, but if the Rangers aren't going to offer him a new deal, you'd assume he'd rather go somewhere to showcase his talents in the playoffs before hitting the UFA market this summer. This will be a fun one to watch.

1. "LGR" – The last line of the letter, weirdly tacked on with no punctuation like a stray cut-and-paste. You could assume this is shorthand for "Let's Go Rangers." I'm actually going to hope it stands for "Let's get rebuilding," since this is very clearly what this franchise desperately needs.

Not ranked: "This will not be a rebuild." – Ah! Well. Nevertheless.

Extra not ranked: Applesauce?

Be sure to check out Peter's piece on the letter and what it will mean. Meanwhile, the Rangers have yet to appear in our bottom five this year. Is this the week? Let's get to the rankings and find out...

Road to the Cup

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

Man, this "Heated Rivalry" show is really going crazy. Now they're even bringing in viewers who don't even like hockey.

5. Vegas Golden Knights (24-11-12, +19 true goals differential*) – I thought our Pacific timeout might last a bit longer, but the Knights apparently took it personally. They've won seven straight and just traded for Rasmus Andersson, and while none of those have come against contenders, the streak has given the Knights a nice cushion on top of the division. That means Vegas is in. And it means for the first time in six weeks, we don't have room for the Central's big three. So who gets the boot?

NHLTop NHL Stories

4. Dallas Stars (27-13-9, +24) – Sorry, Minnesota. The Wild haven't won a game in regulation since Jan. 2, and while 2-3-2 isn't exactly a free-fall, it's been a while since they've looked like the wagon they were in the immediate aftermath of the Quinn Hughes trade. Dallas hasn't been any better lately, and is sporting an identical record, but they'll keep their spot for another week.

3. Carolina Hurricanes (30-15-4, +25) – We all love the Panthers, right? Sure we do. Let's watch some Panthers highlights, from this randomly selected game in Carolina on Friday.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning (30-13-4, +46) – They finally lost, which was nice for the rest of the league. Despite that, the weekend saw a new Stanley Cup favorite on our projection page. The model has actually been ahead of the curve on the Lightning all year, a development I asked Dom about in the newsletter a month ago.



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1. Colorado Avalanche (33-5-8, +78) – They're spiraling, which is to say they've lost back-to-back games for the second time since October. At their current pace, they'll be in danger of surrendering the Central lead by (runs numbers) 2032. So we can go ahead and call tonight's game against the Washington Capitals a must-win.

In other news, this was cool.

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

Not ranked: Boston Bruins – Yeah, I have no idea.

I'm not sure I ever did. Or at least, none of the ideas I had about this team are turning out to be right. I had them penciled in to be a bad team that wouldn't be quite bad enough to land the top pick. They even cracked the bottom five for a week back in October, right around the time they were 4-7-0. When a team that finished last in their division a year ago and sold heavy at the deadline starts slow, it's not hard to figure out what's going on. They're bad.

Of course, they followed that 4-7-0 start with a seven-game win streak. Then they managed to pack both a four-game win streak and later a six-game losing streak into December. And now they're unbeatable again, winning six straight to move back into a wild-card spot. They're only four points out of having home ice in the first round.

Oh, and that six-game streak has included two shutout wins, a game where they scored ten goals, and a combined score of 27-7 that's pushed them into the conference's top four in goals differential. If they're going to keep the streak going, they'll have their work cut out for them, as this week's schedule brings the Stars, Knights and Habs, but at this point who's going to bet against them? None of this makes much sense, so let's enjoy it while it lasts.

It was an interesting week in Boston, with a number retirement and a minor trade. It might get even more interesting; as Harman notes, the Bruins are one of several teams with some tough decisions to make as the deadline approaches. Don Sweeney already got to enjoy one deadline as a seller in a buyer's market, and he knows what kind of windfall those deals can bring. Then again, if his team is in the playoff mix, doesn't he owe them a chance to see it out, if not reinforcements?

I'm not sure, because I clearly don't understand this team. I'm not convinced Sweeney does either, if we could get him to be totally honest, but that's fine. The Bruins have been trying to tell us who they are all year long, even if the messaging has been mixed. They've got a few more weeks to nail it down once and for all before Sweeney has to make his call.

The bottom five

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

The Senators lost again and the frustration over the goaltending is rising, to the point where "you've got to make more than 10 saves to win a game" might become the season slogan. But this was pretty sweet:

5. New York Rangers (21-22-6, -20) – When someone tells you who they are, believe them. And when a last-place team tells you that they're throwing in the towel on the season, put

them in your bottom five already. The Rangers are our 15th different team to show up in this ranking, breaking the record previously established in 2018-19.

4. Winnipeg Jets (19-22-6, -4) – This was awesome.

3. Chicago Blackhawks (19-22-7, -20) – With a murderer's row of Carolina, Tampa, Florida and Minnesota up next, tonight's game against the Jets could be a crucial one in terms of lottery odds.

2. Calgary Flames (21-23-4, -17) – I think they did fine on the Andersson trade, getting two high picks, a useful player in Zach Whitecloud and a prospect. That's not bad for a guy in the last year of his deal who wasn't coming back. Now we see how much further the teardown goes.

1. Vancouver Canucks (16-27-5, -53) – Is this good? I don't think it's good.

Meanwhile, Drance just keeps lobbing truth bombs.

Not ranked: Philadelphia Flyers – OK, let's huddle up and regroup here.

The Flyers have been a tough team to figure out pretty much all season long. Just about all of us figured they were a rebuilding team that would be a playoff long shot even if everything broke just right. But after finding their footing relatively early in the season, they've been a surprise contender ever since, holding down a playoff spot for most of the season. After beating the Ducks two weeks ago, they were sitting at 22-12-7, good enough for second in the Metro and third in the East by points percentage.

That was fun. Except since that Ducks win, they've lost six straight, the last five in regulation. Worse, those five regulation losses have seen them give up 29 goals, so they're getting their doors kicked in. In a parity-soaked Eastern Conference where everyone seems to be collecting points at all times, this streak has been disastrous for the Flyers' playoff hopes, dropping them outside the top eight.

Oh, also everyone is hurt, the goaltending is a problem again and Matvei Michkov is bad now. So ... good times. I'm starting to think Rick Tocchet might not win the Jack Adams after all.

If all of that feels like an overreaction to six bad games, well, it probably is. The losing streak has come against a Leafs team finding its game, the unbeatable Lightning, the only-slightly-less unbeatable Sabres, and then Friday to the surging Penguins. And then on Saturday, they lost to the Rangers, who were presumably inspired by the power of friendship open letters to the fan base. The point is that every team goes through a tough few weeks during a long season. The Flyers are no different, so maybe we should all take a deep breath here.

Except ... well, the whole "rebuilding long shot" thing may have been accurate, and if so the margin for error in Philadelphia was always going to be razor-thin. Even when they were authoring that first-half surprise story, our model never loved their playoff odds — they'd been climbing steadily through November and December, but had peaked at just under 40 percent around the start of this losing streak. Saturday's embarrassment against the Rangers dropped them all the way down to 10 percent. In other words, these



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last two weeks really have undone just about all the progress of the previous two months.

And this week, they head out on the road to play Vegas, Utah and, gulp, Colorado. Good luck with that trip.

I'll admit, I'm tempted to write the Flyers off, if only because my brain can't handle this many teams competing for wild-

card spots and needs to thin out the field. But I also have to humbly accept that I've been wrong about this team for most of the first half. So I'm opening the floor to you, Flyers fans. If you think this team still has a shot to make the playoffs, head down to the comments and let me know. I'm not seeing it, but I'm willing to be convinced.

NHL report cards: Grading every team at the halfway mark of the season

By: Scott Powers, James Mirtle, Aaron Portzline, Max Bultman, Arpon Basu, Michael Russo, Jonas Siegel, Jeremy Rutherford, Allan Mitchell, Kevin Kurz, Josh Yohe, Shayna Goldman, Fluto Shinzawa, Eric Stephens, Matthew Fairburn, Mark Lazerus, Jesse Granger, Harman Dayal, Sean Gentile, Peter Baugh, Joe Rexrode, Thomas Drance, Julian McKenzie, Cory Lavoie

The NHL season has passed its midway point, with all 32 teams playing between 46 and 49 games. By now, we generally know what each team is and isn't and whether the rest of the season should be focused on title contention, short-term progress or the long-term future.

What better time to break out our red pens and hand out some grades? That's exactly what The Athletic did this week when it asked its NHL staff to assign a grade to every team with expectations in mind. You'll definitely want to show some of these to your parents (or general managers). Others ... maybe not.

Stats collected before Friday's NHL action.

Anaheim Ducks: C+

The Ducks were the embodiment of exciting, high-event hockey in the early weeks, but that concoction for winning games aged quickly. Opponents adapted and slowed down their rush game, forcing them to adjust, and the offense has been harder to come by. More alarming is their inability to consistently defend well and their continued tendency to allow golden scoring chances. The youngsters are still growing, but a recent nine-game losing streak showed they're not ready to lead, and the contributions from complementary veterans have been waning. — Eric Stephens

Boston Bruins: B+

The Bruins are fading, but they're still in the playoff hunt. It's a good spot to occupy considering how poorly they played last season. Jeremy Swayman is back, the team plays with spirit, and a handful of players are performing above expectations. — Fluto Shinzawa

Buffalo Sabres: B

The Sabres got off to a slow start because of injuries and inconsistent play. But a 10-game winning streak that coincided with Jarmo Kekäläinen's taking over as general manager has Buffalo right back in the wild-card mix. This is a deeper and more defensively sound Sabres team than we've seen in years past. — Matthew Fairburn

Calgary Flames: D

The Flames weren't a favorite to make the playoffs despite nearly accomplishing the feat last season. Especially with their offense trailing behind the rest of the league. And if they weren't on trend to do so, they needed to sell hope with their future. Fans weren't given that hope after some confusing comments about a retool and rebuild earlier this year. Their youth needs more time and opportunity. But they're in the hunt for a top pick in the draft, which is sorely needed for the franchise to take that next step in its evolution. — Julian McKenzie

Carolina Hurricanes: B+

The Hurricanes have settled in atop the Metropolitan Division, but injuries and inconsistency have made for some ups and downs through the first half of the season. The good news is Carolina believes it has found a hidden gem in goaltender Brandon Bussi, who is off to a 16-3-1 start to his NHL career. The Hurricanes are also getting healthy. Seth Jarvis is back from a rib injury, and Jacob Slavin — who played in only five games this season before getting injured — has returned. Slavin should help shore up a surprisingly mediocre penalty kill, and Carolina's power play is showing signs of life. — Cory Lavoie

Connor Bedard is a major reason the Blackhawks have been better than expected this season. Patrick McDermott / Getty Images

Chicago Blackhawks: B

The Blackhawks have been much better than anyone could have anticipated coming into the season. Connor Bedard is a major reason for that, but it goes beyond him. Even when he was out for a month recently, the Blackhawks remained afloat. Players such as Spencer Knight and Tyler Bertuzzi have consistently performed well, and the team's young players are coming along. Jeff Blashill deserves some of that credit, too. The Blackhawks have been much more structured and competitive under him. Odds are still likely against their making the playoffs this season, but they're in the mix. — Scott Powers

Colorado Avalanche: A+

The Avalanche are on pace to tie the 2022-23 Bruins for the best regular-season record in NHL history. Their plus-79 goal differential is nearly double the next-best team (Tampa Bay at plus-44). Colorado has the favorite to win the Art Ross (Nathan MacKinnon with 81 points), the Rocket Richard (MacKinnon again with 36 goals), the Hart (MacKinnon again) and the Norris (Cale Makar). It would be tough to grade that as anything but exemplary. — Jesse Granger

Columbus Blue Jackets: D



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Well, the first team to fire its coach can't get a good grade, right? Dean Evason was replaced by Rick Bowness on Monday, with the Blue Jackets stuck in second-last place in the East. They've scored fewer goals and allowed more goals than a year ago, and they've coughed up way too many late leads. The Blue Jackets have a .521 points percentage, but that's not what they were expecting after nearly making the playoffs one season ago. — Aaron Portzline

Dallas Stars: B+

The Stars were the only team within spitting distance of the Avalanche, but a six-game losing streak pretty much ended that chase. Their underlying numbers are fair to middling, and they're being propped up to an extent by a brilliant power play. Still, they're third in the league, and their three biggest stars — Jason Robertson, Mikko Rantanen and Wyatt Johnston — are having huge seasons, and Jake Oettinger has been trending in the right direction since the start of December. Now it's just cruising to the finish line and preparing for a titanic first-round matchup with the Wild. — Mark Lazerus

Detroit Red Wings: B+

The Red Wings have clearly exceeded preseason expectations, battling for the top spot in the Atlantic so far. They're getting good depth contributions from players such as Andrew Copp and James van Riemsdyk, a Norris-level season from Moritz Seider, and strong goaltending as of late, too. But they still have a lot to prove, particularly as the games get harder. — Max Bultman

Edmonton Oilers: B+

The Oilers have a championship ceiling, led by Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and Evan Bouchard. The floor (third and fourth lines, goaltending before two trades brought in Tristan Jarry and Connor Ingram) is expansion level at five-on-five. Edmonton is in a good spot, and some of the recent auditions in those depth positions appear to be gaining traction. It's been a weird first half. — Allan Mitchell

Florida Panthers: B

No Aleksander Barkov and no Matthew Tkachuk could have been a lot uglier than this. The Panthers struggled mightily to start the year (7-7-1) but have been better as of late, and their 93-point pace is going to put them right in wild-card territory, which is all they need to accomplish to do damage in the postseason. They've played more hockey than anyone in the league the past few years, so we're not going to fret that they aren't in more solid playoff positioning than this at the half, especially with all the injury absences. — James Mirtle

Los Angeles Kings: D

The Kings brought in Ken Holland as GM to change up the dynamic after four straight first-round losses to Edmonton. Holland kept Jim Hiller as coach after a 105-point season despite his backfiring coaching maneuvers last spring. This season has shown the Kings brought in inadequate replacements to key departures, and the few successful additions have been offset by returnees not measuring up to what they did last season. Only goalie Darcy Kuemper and defenseman Brandt Clarke have excelled. The Kings, in a weak Pacific Division, have traded wins and losses

throughout. They are the definition of average and underwhelming. — Eric Stephens

Minnesota Wild: A

After the Wild won three of their first 12 games this season, nobody in their right mind would have predicted they'd have the third-most points in the NHL (and cutthroat Central Division) at this juncture or be the team to execute a Quinn Hughes blockbuster. But here they are, on the verge of true contender status if they can add a top-six center by the deadline. They've got a great blue line, great goaltending tandem and star power with Hughes, Kirill Kaprizov and Matt Boldy. — Michael Russo

Montreal Canadiens: A

The Canadiens are in the thick of a race to win the Atlantic Division more than halfway through the season. They are unlikely to reach the finish line in first, but the fact that they are there as the NHL's youngest team is a very good sign. Not only that, but it is their youngest talents who have been driving the bus, players such as Juraj Slafkovský, Ivan Demidov and Lane Hutson, who are still far from hitting their ceiling, and they are doing it despite missing several key players to injury. General manager Kent Hughes said recently his team is ahead of schedule, and this grade reflects that. — Arpon Basu

Nashville Predators: C

This is essentially averaging the "F" for the first quarter of the season and the "A" for the second quarter, which has pulled the Predators into playoff contention — amid tremendous outside negativity, it should be noted. Predators fans are largely enamored of a true rebuild. But Roman Josi, Filip Forsberg and Steven Stamkos have no use for that. They're fighting, and coach Andrew Brunette is leading. — Joe Rexrode

New Jersey Devils: D

The Devils' fall has been startling after their strong start to the season. Injuries haven't helped, but the fact that the team's playoff odds have dropped so significantly speaks poorly of everyone involved. It's been an eventful season off the ice, too, with the Quinn Hughes pursuit coming to a head (and Vancouver ultimately trading him elsewhere) and the Dougie Hamilton healthy scratch. — Peter Baugh

New York Islanders: B+

The Islanders' season hasn't been perfect — the defense has been shaky, the penalty kill relies heavily on goaltending, and their scoring rate is bottom-10. But this retooling team is still exceeding expectations. The vibes are different since a change in management, and the on-ice product is trending up, too. Matthew Schaefer has been phenomenal, Ilya Sorokin is Vezina worthy, Mathew Barzal and Bo Horvat are leading the way up front, and there have been highlights in the supporting cast. The team plays with a lot more pace this year and has a stronger long-term outlook. — Shayna Goldman

New York Rangers: F

The Rangers are the only team in the Eastern Conference under .500. They are coming off a 10-2 loss to Boston, a blown two-goal lead to Seattle and an 8-4 loss to the Senators. It's only January, and Chris Drury already sent out



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a letter to fans that they'll be sellers. Perhaps this shouldn't be a total surprise given the team's aging core, but it's hard to be charitable with the midseason grade. — Peter Baugh

Ottawa Senators: D+

It's a harsh grade for a team that's done so many things right. Its underlying metrics at five-on-five are among the league's best. The Senators' best offensive players, including Tim Stützle, have done their part. Jake Sanderson continues to emerge as one of the best two-way defenders. But goaltending has them in the Eastern Conference's basement. And with their chances of making the playoffs plummeting in recent weeks, they risk slipping in their growth trajectory with this core. — Julian McKenzie

Dan Vladar has been outstanding in net for the Flyers. Kyle Ross / Imagn Images

Philadelphia Flyers: B+

The Flyers' being in a playoff position for much of the season can only be considered a win for a team many figured would once again be near the league basement. Their offseason additions have fueled their success, as Dan Vladar has been outstanding in net, Trevor Zegras has paced the offense and Christian Dvorak has given them solid play down the middle. But they lose points for their still abysmal power play, and because young winger Matvei Michkov, who is still so vital to the rebuild, seems to have regressed. — Kevin Kurz

Pittsburgh Penguins: A-

The Penguins are in a fight for a playoff spot, which surely exceeds any reasonable expectations one might have had for them. I can't give them an A because of the way they blew leads in December. It was historic, really, to blow three-goal leads twice in a 24-hour span during the same week in which they blew a lead while on the power play with 0.1 seconds remaining in regulation. It still makes you shake your head. However, it's been a magnificent season for the Penguins. Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin are still going strong, and young Ben Kindel could be a foundational player for them. — Josh Yohe

San Jose Sharks: A+

If this seems generous, let's remember the Sharks had an NHL-low 52 points last season and now sit in a wild-card position in the Western Conference. Expectations should be factored into this, and San Jose's was about increasing its win total and moving into an upward trajectory as a franchise. Instead, Macklin Celebrini has dragged the Sharks into a playoff push. The 19-year-old Hart Trophy candidate has been so good that he's keeping up folks watching late at night on the East Coast. Full of flaws and fun, the Sharks are bringing big crowds back to SAP Center. — Eric Stephens

Seattle Kraken: B

The Kraken's goaltending has largely carried them — Philipp Grubauer, Joey Daccord and Matt Murray have been sensational — and permitted them to defy gravity despite some five-on-five struggles. Still, despite a fragile-seeming profile, the Kraken are sticking around in the Western Conference playoff race and have become a legitimately formidable defensive side in Lane Lambert's first season. It might not be meaningful or sustainable progress just yet, but the Kraken have exceeded expectations and put themselves

in a position to compete for a playoff spot down the stretch. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues: F

It's hard to fathom the Blues were viewed as a potential playoff team before the season. They are tied for last in the league in goal differential (minus-44) and averaging the fewest goals per game in the league (2.49), with a 33-year-old defenseman who had four goals last season, Justin Faulk, tied for the team lead (11). They were also allowing the fourth-most goals in the league (3.38) with the No. 24 power play (17.1 percent) and the No. 25 penalty kill (77 percent). It's an all-around, epic disaster. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning: A-

The Lightning have been streaky at times, with some ups and downs. Brayden Point is the latest to join a long list of injuries to key players. Despite all that, Tampa Bay still looks like one of the strongest contenders in the Eastern Conference. It's a credit to the team's elite core, Jon Cooper's coaching and the overall development system. A lot of the supporting cast have stepped up, such as J.J. Moser and Darren Raddysh on the back end, and so have some AHL call-ups from Syracuse. So when this team finally gets healthy, it should make for a much deeper lineup. — Shayna Goldman

Toronto Maple Leafs: C

The last three weeks don't erase the first three months when the Leafs were an underperforming team that couldn't find answers to major problems, even firing assistant coach Marc Savard along the way. They've turned things around in a big way recently. Auston Matthews is looking like a superstar again, the power play is no longer a back hole and the team is playing a connected brand of hockey at both ends. Long a formality with this team, the playoffs are still a question mark, though, thanks to that troubling start. — Jonas Siegel

Utah Mammoth: C+

Boasting an impressive collection of young talent and robust analytics last season, the Mammoth were a popular pick to break out in 2025-26. Unfortunately, it hasn't come together yet — Utah is on pace for 89 points, which would tie last year's total. Utah's young players haven't taken the leap to superstar status yet, the power play is ranked 31st, and secondary scoring remains underwhelming. The good news is Utah still sits in the first wild-card spot because of how poor the West is, and the team has maintained a respectable record lately despite Logan Cooley's injury. — Harman Dayal

Vancouver Canucks: F

The Canucks lost their ninth consecutive game Thursday night in Columbus. One more loss would match Vancouver's longest winless streak since 1997-98, and the franchise record (13 games, 1973-74) is very much in sight. The Canucks have played uninspired hockey, traded their franchise player, have been beset by injuries and rank 32nd in the NHL by points percentage — where they're likely to stay over the balance of the season. — Thomas Drance

Vegas Golden Knights: B-

By every statistical measure, the Golden Knights have been middling this season. They're seventh in goals per game and



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20th in goals against. Their recent five-game win streak was desperately needed after they had lost eight of their previous nine games. The only reason Vegas' grade gets bumped from a C to a B-minus is because it still somehow remains atop the Pacific Division. — Jesse Granger

Washington Capitals: B-

The Capitals haven't been great — there have been too many rough patches and too much reliance on Logan Thompson to say that — but they've been good enough, especially with Pierre-Luc Dubois injured for nearly the whole season. Besides, expecting a full-on replay of last season would've been unreasonable. — Sean Gentille

NHL Power Rankings: Congrats to our fake All-Stars

By: Dom Luszczyszyn, Sean Gentille

We know exactly what all of you are thinking: "I'm really excited about the Olympics, but boy, do I wish the NHL was holding an All-Star Game instead."

Fret not. We have you covered with this week's edition of the Power Rankings, where we pick this year's All-Star class. The rules follow the NHL's from the last game: 44 players with eight goalies to create four teams of 11. Simple enough, until we had to make sure there was at least one guy from every team, which created some difficult choices. Auston Matthews? Kyle Connor? Wyatt Johnston? Who needs those guys when you can have whoever the best player from Calgary is this season!

Thank goodness for actual best-on-best hockey coming in less than a month. For today, we mourn what could've been with our fake All-Star Game. Here's who we're sending.

1. Colorado Avalanche, 33-4-8

Last week: 1

Sean: 1

Dom: 1

All-Stars: Nathan MacKinnon, Martin Nečas, Cale Makar

Have Connor McDavid's 20-game point streak and Macklin Celebrini's teenage mega-leap caused MacKinnon to lose ground in the Hart Trophy race? Sure, but he's still just one point behind the former and 10 ahead of the latter.

Nečas, meanwhile, is tied with MacKinnon and Mark Scheifele for the most even-strength points in the league since Dec. 1, with 20, and Cale Makar remains Cale Makar; his Net Rating of plus-17 is best among defensemen. A shocker, no doubt.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning, 29-13-3

Last week: 2

Sean: 2

Dom: 2

All-Stars: Nikita Kucherov, Andrei Vasilevskiy

Winnipeg Jets: F

After winning the Presidents' Trophy last year, the Jets have plummeted all the way to 31st in the standings. Most people expected Winnipeg to take a step back this season because of Nikolaj Ehlers' departure and some of the club's early injuries, but nobody envisioned a fall this dramatic. The Jets are old, slow, lack secondary scoring and blow leads as if it's nothing. Winnipeg has had a couple of decisive wins lately, and the West is mediocre enough that it isn't completely out of the playoff race, but it's going to be a major uphill battle. — Harman Dayal

With the way the Lightning have played lately, they could've sent a number of guys. Darren Raddysh is one of the highest scoring players in the league over the last month. But a slow start for many means it's just Kucherov and Vasilevskiy — the ol' reliables for Tampa Bay. Those two remain the reason the Lightning are the class of the East, with Kucherov scoring 67 points in 41 games (fourth) and Vasilevskiy earning a .915 save percentage (fourth among starters).

3. Carolina Hurricanes, 28-15-4

Last week: 5

Sean: 5

Dom: 3

All-Star: Sebastian Aho

Andrei Svechnikov's slow start and Seth Jarvis' since-healed injury mean that Aho is the only Hurricane to deserve real consideration. That feels weird for a division leader, but whatever. Aho is basically a point-per-game player, and his rate stats (1.1 goals per 60, 1.29) are almost identical to last season's. That kind of consistency counts for plenty.

4. Buffalo Sabres, 26-16-4

Last week: 10

Sean: 3

Dom: 6

All-Star: Tage Thompson

It was really nice of Thompson to put a stamp on his fake All-Star nod with a vintage Tage performance, scoring three goals and two assists in a one-man victory over Montreal on Thursday. He's starting to look like the dominant presence he showed to be in 2022-23 and is on pace for 45 goals and 87 points. That would be his third 40-goal season.

5. Dallas Stars, 27-12-9

Last week: 3

Sean: 6

Dom: 4

All-Stars: Jason Robertson, Mikko Rantanen



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On the NHL's website, you can filter stats by a player's nationality. If that functionality magically disappears at the start of February, don't be surprised. Yes, indeed, Robertson still leads Americans in points (56) and is tied for first place in goals (26).

Rantanen is a no-brainer as well. He's now leading the league in power-play points (non-Edmonton Oilers division).

6. Vegas Golden Knights, 23-11-12

Last week: 11

Sean: 4

Dom: 7

All-Star: Jack Eichel

With the second-highest average Game Score in the league, Mark Stone, in some ways, might be having the best season of any of our omissions. Alas, he's missed 16 games. Eichel, meanwhile, is coming off consecutive three-assist nights and scored a game-winner on Thursday that made Mitch Marner very happy. That should count for two!

Vegas, by the way, has won six straight. This is after losing five straight and nine of 10.

7. Minnesota Wild, 26-13-9

Last week: 4

Sean: 7

Dom: 5

All-Stars: Kirill Kaprizov, Matt Boldy, Quinn Hughes

Was three All-Stars too much from Minnesota? It felt like it after a demoralizing loss to the Jets on Thursday, but it's really tough to leave any of these three off. Kaprizov and Boldy are both top 20 in points, while Hughes sits sixth in points among defensemen. The Wild have entered the rarified air that Colorado and Edmonton usually live in: too many good players to leave off.

8. Detroit Red Wings, 28-16-4

Last week: 7

Sean: 8

Dom: 8

All-Stars: Alex DeBrincat, Moritz Seider

Remember that "sort by nationality" option we brought up regarding Robertson? It shines upon DeBrincat, too. His 24 goals this season are fourth among American players. Seider remains an absolute no-brainer. Detroit's offensive results with him have dipped a bit lately, but that's due to a shooting percentage of 2.6 percent (!) in the last seven games. We offer our apologies to Lucas Raymond, who popped up on our initial list of potential selections.

9. Montreal Canadiens, 26-15-7

Last week: 6

Sean: 9

Dom: 9

All-Stars: Nick Suzuki, Lane Hutson

During the team's rebuild, Montreal's representatives at the All-Star Game were mostly made to appease a criteria rather than being actually earned. Not so this season for a Canadiens team that sits firmly in the league's top 10. Nick Suzuki has been one of the league's best centers, while Lane Hutson is proving last year was no fluke with 45 points in 47 games. This year, the Canadiens' All-Stars have earned their fake spots.

10. Pittsburgh Penguins, 22-14-10

Last week: 8

Sean: 10

Dom: 10

All-Star: Sidney Crosby

If Crosby was in the NBA, being named to his 10th All-Star Game in 2024 would be a pretty big deal. Here, all it got was a shrug. Part of that is because the selection process doesn't actually select the best players, rendering the accolade hollow. Still, we know Crosby isn't getting any pity invites, and it's incredible that even at the ripe age of 38, he's still playing at such a high level. He's the easy choice for Pittsburgh every time.

11. New York Islanders, 26-16-5

Last week: 12

Sean: 11

Dom: 11

All-Stars: Matthew Schaefer, Ilya Sorokin

The next All-Star Game was supposed to be at UBS Arena, and for our purposes, we're going to pretend the Islanders are hosting our fake shindig. You know what that means: one extra representative as a treat for the Islanders faithful. Not that Schaefer and Sorokin didn't earn it on their own accord, but when the criteria demands room for some guy from Seattle, inclusion becomes tougher.

Sorokin has been a brick wall, but the real treat would've been seeing Schaefer challenge for fastest skater at the skills competition. We think he has an above-average chance in that event.

12. Toronto Maple Leafs, 23-16-8

Last week: 14

Sean: 12

Dom: 12

All-Star: William Nylander

Sorry, Auston, but if you wanted to make our All-Star Game, you should've shown up a little earlier than late December. It's tough to give a non-playoff team two of the 44 spots, so it's just one Leaf going, and that has to be Nylander. He picked up two points last night to bring his total to 48 in 37 games, the highest pace of his career.

13. Utah Mammoth, 24-20-4

Last week: 19

Sean: 13



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Dom: 14

All-Star: Clayton Keller

He hasn't quite followed up on his 90-point 2024-25, but Keller has still probably been Utah's best player. Dylan Guenther (1.67 goals per 60) and Nick Schmaltz (a plus-9.9 Net Rating, identical to Keller) got a look, too.

14. Edmonton Oilers, 23-17-8

Last week: 9

Sean: 15

Dom: 13

All-Stars: Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl, Evan Bouchard

McDavid's point streak ended at 20 games on Thursday night. He's lucky we already put in the order for our fake All-Star jerseys. We talked about this on "The Athletic Hockey Show" earlier in the day, but the lack of attention paid to that streak is pretty funny.

"It's not an All-Star Game," is the standard rationale for leaving Bouchard off the Olympic roster. We've got some good news!

Congrats to Draisaitl, too, for this fake honor, and for this NHL.com headline from Jan. 11: "Draisaitl honored by Oilers for 1,000th NHL point, family dog attends."

15. San Jose Sharks, 24-19-3

Last week: 17

Sean: 14

Dom: 16

All-Star: Macklin Celebrini

On Thursday morning, Capitals coach Spencer Carbery said Celebrini would get his Hart Trophy vote. "Go even-strength points for the San Jose Sharks, look at what he has and then the next closest person," Carbery said. At the time, Celebrini had 40 to Tyler Toffoli's 20.

"That's not a slight against the rest of his group," Carbery said. "It's just a compliment of how incredible of a season he is having and how impactful he is for the San Jose Sharks."

Then, Celebrini went out and got point No. 41 against Carbery's team in a 3-2 Sharks win.

16. Florida Panthers, 24-18-3

Last week: 18

Sean: 18

Dom: 15

All-Star: Brad Marchand

We considered giving some reverence to the defending two-time champs with two representatives, but ... eh. With the exception of Marchand, who looks rejuvenated in Florida with 46 points in 41 games, the Panthers look painfully mid.

17. Washington Capitals, 24-18-6

Last week: 16

Sean: 16

Dom: 17

All-Stars: Tom Wilson, Logan Thompson

Wilson was a point-per-game player in his first 41 games and should return from his lower-body injury on Saturday against the Florida Panthers. That's good news for the Caps and Team Canada.

Thompson wasn't at his best on Thursday, but he's still second in the league in save percentage among goalies with at least 20 starts (.915) and behind only Sorokin in goals saved above expected (35.1). He's been Washington's MVP, and he should be Canada's starter in Milan.

18. Boston Bruins, 27-19-2

Last week: 21

Sean: 17

Dom: 18

All-Star: David Pastrnak

Pastrnak hadn't scored a goal during Boston's recent hot streak until Thursday night. That six-assist game against the Rangers gave him a pass, though. The Bruins, winners of five straight, wake up Friday in a wild-card spot based on both points and points percentage.

It's wild to think that Pastrnak is the Bruins' rep here, given that Morgan Geekie had 25 goals on Dec. 20. The issue: Geekie has 25 goals on Jan. 16.

19. Philadelphia Flyers, 22-16-8

Last week: 13

Sean: 19

Dom: 19

All-Star: Dan Vladar

"Flyers All-Star goaltender" was such a jarring thought that we needed to check the historical context — and, indeed, Vladar could have joined Ron Hextall (1988) and Roman Cechmanek (2001) as the only guys to fit that bill during Sidney Crosby's lifetime. That's a comparison chosen at random.

Unfortunately, this is neither a real game nor a real honor, and Vladar (.905 save percentage, 15.8 GSAX) will have to settle for playing for Czechia at the Olympics ... assuming he's good to go. We did our best to include Trevor Zegras in our fake three-on-three tournament, but couldn't quite manage.

20. Seattle Kraken, 21-16-9

Last week: 15

Sean: 20

Dom: 21

All-Star: Philipp Grubauer

Picking just one guy off the Seattle "somehow on pace for 91 points" Kraken was shockingly difficult. We're going to go with the guy who was on waivers last year only to look like one of the league's best goalies over the last month.



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Grubauer's renaissance has been awesome to witness, and he would be a genuinely great All-Star story.

21. New Jersey Devils, 24-21-2

Last week: 23

Sean: 21

Dom: 20

All-Star: Jack Hughes

This is actually just a return invitation for 2024 All-Star coach Tate McRae.

22. Los Angeles Kings, 19-16-11

Last week: 20

Sean: 22

Dom: 22

All-Star: Darcy Kuemper

Has Kuemper been All-Star worthy? Ehhhhhhhhhhh. Has any other King been worthy? Definitely not. Kuemper it is.

23. Nashville Predators, 22-20-4

Last week: 22

Sean: 24

Dom: 23

All-Star: Juuse Saros

A tried and true strategy for fulfilling the one-per-team obligation: when in doubt, just pick the goalie. It's tough on bad teams when no one is all that deserving, and while we could've gone with Ryan O'Reilly, picking Saros meant saving room for a more deserving skater. Saros has been ... fine. Nothing less, nothing more.

24. Columbus Blue Jackets, 21-19-7

Last week: 25

Sean: 23

Dom: 24

All-Star: Zach Werenski

We may never agree on just how good a defensive player Werenski is (or is not), but his overall impact is undeniable. Only Makar has a better Offensive Rating among D-men than Werenski's plus-11.9. Makar has the edge in points (53-51), but Werenski has him beat in goals (18-14). The Net Rating gap of 5.3 between Werenski and No. 2 on the Blue Jackets (Charlie Coyle) is the biggest on any team outside of San Jose.

25. Ottawa Senators, 22-19-5

Last week: 28

Sean: 25

Dom: 25

All-Star: Tim Stützle

With Brady Tkachuk missing a lot of time and busy podcasting, Stützle is the obvious pick from the Senators.

He's on track for the second point-per-game season of his career.

26. Chicago Blackhawks, 19-21-7

Last week: 24

Sean: 26

Dom: 27

All-Star: Connor Bedard

One of the easiest picks to make from any team. Bedard has seriously leveled up this season, playing well enough to make his exclusion from Team Canada feel like a mistake. His game-breaking offense on an otherwise poor team has been the headline, but it's been the details all over the ice that have pushed Bedard into the superstar stratosphere this year.

27. Winnipeg Jets, 19-22-5

Last week: 32

Sean: 27

Dom: 26

All-Star: Mark Scheifele

With identical stat lines going into Thursday's game, picking between Scheifele and Kyle Connor was not an easy choice. Then Scheifele put up a four-point game in a dominant win to make the decision a lot easier. That feels only fair: one gets to go to the Olympics and one gets to go to our fake All-Star Game.

28. St. Louis Blues, 18-21-8

Last week: 27

Sean: 28

Dom: 28

All-Star: Jordan Binnington

Another star-studded team Binnington didn't deserve to make. Consider this a punishment to the rest of the Blues; the rest of them have been so bad that we might as well pick the team's tank commander.

29. Anaheim Ducks, 22-21-3

Last week: 30

Sean: 29

Dom: 29

All-Star: Leo Carlsson

A month ago, the Ducks might have had a few players deserving of selection. Now, it's picking between three just-OK options. Carlsson is the leader of the pack with 43 points in 44 games, though that's a steep drop-off from his red-hot start when he had 34 points in his first 25 games. Do the math, and Carlsson has scored just nine in 19 since.

30. Calgary Flames, 20-23-4

Last week: 29

Sean: 30



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Dom: 30

All-Star: Nazem Kadri

His age, his contract and the Flames' apparent delusions have thrown a wet blanket on those trade rumors, but Kadri (32 points in 47 games) remains their best player, which makes him one of the fakest All-Stars in the fakest All-Star Game.

31. New York Rangers, 20-22-6

Last week: 26

Sean: 26

Dom: 31

All-Star: Artemi Panarin

Not a lot has gone right for the Rangers, but at the very least, they still have Panarin, who has scored 51 points in 47 games. Now to take a big sip of water and check how long he's signed for.

32. Vancouver Canucks, 16-26-5

Last week: 31

Sean: 32

Dom: 32

All-Star: Filip Hronek

Since the Quinn Hughes trade, Hronek is tied for first on the team in points (11), and the Canucks have outscored opponents 11-10 with him on the ice. It's hard not to feel bad for h



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Hurricanes pummel Panthers 9-1 behind Ehlers hat trick

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — January isn't May or June, but it can still be pretty sweet.

The Hurricanes got a slice of revenge against the Panthers on Friday, scoring six third period goals, going 4 for 5 on the power play and dealing Florida a stunning 9-1 loss at Lenovo Center.

"It's been a long time coming against this team," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We just have never seen a breakthrough with goals. And tonight, we finally did."

Nikolaj Ehlers posted the sixth career hat trick, Alexander Nikishin had a breakthrough game with a goal and an assist, and the Hurricanes did the bullying against a team that has had their number for the better part of four seasons.

"It's always a tough match against Florida, and we lost a few times in the playoffs against them," Nikishin said via teammate and translator Andrei Svechnikov. "Tonight was a good win. We had to finish it with a win against the Panthers this season."

Nikishin — who got much of his first taste of the NHL against the Panthers in last year's Eastern Conference final — was a big part of it

Nikishin used his big shot twice in the second period to create a pair of goals, helping turn a tie into a rout while sending a message to a hated rival.

With the game at 1-1, Mark Jankowski cleanly won an offensive zone draw back to defenseman Mike Reilly. Reilly slid the puck across to Nikishin, whose one-timer couldn't be handled by Florida goalie Sergei Bobrovsky (26 saves). Jankowski located the puck and pushed it into the net for his fourth goal of the year at 13:09 of the middle frame.

Then after Carolina defenseman Sean Walker made a big hit on Jesper Boqvist — triggering a fight with Donovan Sebrango, the first of Walker's career — the Hurricanes came away with a power play.

"That's, in my mind, the turning point of the game because there's a good, hard, clean hit," Brind'Amour said. "And then they come in and do what they're going to do. And we've got to capitalize on that power play when that happens, and we did. And I think that's kind of where the game might have turned in our favor."

Again it was a Nikishin one-timer, and the 92.5-mph shot off a pass from Sebastian Aho cleanly beat Bobrovsky for his

sixth goal of the year at 16:28 of the middle frame and a 3-1 lead.

"I always tell him, 'You've got to shoot the puck,' because he's probably got the hardest shot on our team," Svechnikov said of Nikishin.

The Hurricanes entered the third up two goals — dangerous territory against the Panthers considering they beat Carolina twice in December when trailing by multiple goals.

But Friday was different.

The power play converted again, this time when Svechnikov scored for his 400th career point at 4:08 of the third to push the lead to 4-1.

"It took me probably five games or so, so at some point I had to get that point," Svechnikov said of the milestone. "But (Seth Jarvis) made a nice play 5-on-3, and I kind of popped out from the middle."

The floodgates then opened in the final nine minutes.

Ehlers scored his 13th and 14th of the season, sandwiching a Taylor Hall power play goal as the lead ballooned to 6-1 with just under seven minutes left.

"It felt fantastic, of course," Ehlers said of his four-point night and first hat trick with Carolina. "To be able to do that at home as well makes it even more special."

The Hurricanes smelled blood in the water and added two more goals in 12 seconds with under two minutes remaining — Hall's second of the game and Eric Robinson's 10th of the season.

Brandon Bussi (15 saves) had a front-row seat and improved to 17-3-1 on the season.

But this win is particularly sweet for all the Hurricanes.

"The goals came because we kept on doing the right thing," Ehlers said. "So to be able to win this game tonight after, for me, the last two games, but maybe for this team a little bit longer, felt great."

"And you could feel that in this room."

Notes: Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere and forwards William Carrier and Noah Philp did not play due to injury. ... The Hurricanes matched a franchise record with nine players with multiple points. ... Carolina won 38 of 58 faceoffs, led by Staal's 12 of 15. ... Jankowski had a goal and two assists.



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Ehlers hat trick helps Hurricanes dominate depleted Florida Panthers 9-1

By: Pat Welter

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Nikolaj Ehlers had three goals for his sixth career hat trick and first with Carolina, and the Hurricanes scored six times in the third period to cruise past the Florida Panthers 9-1 on Friday night.

Ehlers, who signed with Carolina in the offseason after playing 10 years with Winnipeg, also had an assist. Taylor Hall had two goals and Mark Jankowski had a goal and two assists. Alexander Nikishin and Andrei Svechnikov had a goal and an assist and Eric Robinson also scored.

Brandon Bussi made 16 saves for the Hurricanes, who had four power-play goals and improved to 5-1-1 in their last seven games.

Uvis Balinskis had the lone goal for the Panthers, who gave up eight unanswered goals and had their two-game winning streak stopped. Sergei Bobrovsky allowed all nine of Carolina's goals while stopping just 26 shots.

Ehlers gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead with 1:25 left in the first period. Balinskis tied it at 1:19 of the second — but it was all Carolina after that.

Jankowski put the Hurricanes up 2-1 at 13:10 of the second and Nikishin made it 3-1 with a power-play goal three minutes later.

Svechnikov, Ehlers and Hall also scored power-play goals in the third as Carolina pulled away.

Ehlers completed his hat trick on a one-timer off a pass from Stankoven to make it 7-1. Hall and Robinson capped the scoring.

Up next

Panthers: Play at Washington against the Capitals on Saturday night.

Hurricanes: Take on the Devils in New Jersey on Saturday night.



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Preview: January 19 vs. Buffalo

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, N.C. - After sweeping a back-to-back set on Friday and Saturday, the Carolina Hurricanes will seek a third straight win when they host the Buffalo Sabres for Kids Day presented by UNC Health.

When: Monday, January 19

Puck Drop: 1:30 p.m. ET

Watch: TNT, truTV, HBO Max | [Learn More](#)

Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes App

Canes Record: 30-15-4 (64 Points, 1st - Metropolitan Division)

Canes Last Game: 4-1 Win over the New Jersey Devils on Saturday, Jan. 17

Sabres Record: 26-16-5 (57 Points, 5th - Atlantic Division)

Sabres Last Game: 5-4 OT Loss to the Minnesota Wild on Saturday, Jan. 17

Last Time Out...

The Canes notched their second win in as many nights on Saturday, knocking off the New Jersey Devils 4-1 at Prudential Center.

Andrei Svechnikov led the way with a hat trick, with Sebastian Aho logging assists on all three goals.

Jackson Blake also scored, and Frederik Andersen put together a sterling 29-save performance in net.

Season Series vs. BUF...

November 8: Four Canes posted multiple points in a 6-3 win over the Sabres at Lenovo Center.

November 23: A 'flat' effort cost Carolina in Buffalo, falling 4-1 to the Sabres.

Powered Up...

It took until Dec. 6 (26 games) for the Hurricanes to score multiple power-play goals in one game, but in the 23 contests since then, they've done so seven times and logged

the second-most PPGs in the NHL with 22, trailing only Edmonton (23).

Highlighted by Friday's four-goal outburst on the man advantage, the Canes have clicked at a 30.1% rate in that span — good for fourth in the league.

On the season, the Hurricanes currently rank 13th with a 21.5% success rate. To put that into context, before embarking on its current hot streak on Dec. 6, Carolina's power play sat in 31st, having scored on just 13.2% of its chances to start the season.

In Net...

Brandon Bussi is expected to start tonight after Frederik Andersen got the nod in New Jersey on Saturday night.

Bussi faced just 16 shots in his last outing against Florida on Friday, turning aside 15 of those to notch his 17th win in 21 career starts.

On the flip side, the Canes could elect to keep Andersen rolling after the veteran backstop played a key role in Saturday's 4-1 win over the Devils. After a tough run to end 2025, Andersen is 2-0-1 in his last three outings.

On The Other Side...

One of the hottest teams in hockey, Buffalo's 16 wins and 33 points since Dec. 1 are second only to Detroit in that span. 10 of those victories came in consecutive fashion, which is tied for the second-longest winning streak by an NHL team this season.

Tage Thompson has been key to the Sabres' success during that run and throughout the season. Leading his club with 50 points on the year, Thompson's 25 goals are tied for seventh among all NHLers, and he enters tonight's tilt on a seven-game point streak with 13 points (5G, 8A) in that span.

With Alex Lyon sidelined since Dec. 29, it's been Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen and rookie Colten Ellis holding things down between the pipes in January. The duo has alternated starts over Buffalo's last seven games, and with Luukkonen logging the OT loss to Minnesota, the Canes could be in line to face Ellis this afternoon.

Injury Updates...



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Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere (lower-body injury) last participated in game action on Jan. 13 and is considered day-to-day.

Forward William Carrier (lower-body injury) last participated in game action on Jan. 10. but returned to practice on Jan. 15.

Forward Noah Philp entered concussion protocol on Jan. 6 and has not played a game since then.

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 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?

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 be off on Tuesday. They'll return to practice on Wednesday before hosting Chicago on Thursday.

Next Game: Thursday, January 22 vs. Chicago | 7:00 p.m. ET | ESPN+, Hulu | Tickets | P

Recap: Svechnikov, Andersen Lead Canes To Win Over Devils

By: Peter Dewar

NEWARK, N.J. - Andrei Svechnikov scored a hat trick, Sebastian Aho posted three assists and Frederik Andersen turned in 29 saves to help the Carolina Hurricanes knock off the New Jersey Devils 4-1 at Prudential Center on Saturday.

A well-rested Devils team came out firing in the first period but couldn't solve Andersen, whose solid start allowed his club to find its footing in the second stanza. That's where Svechnikov went to work, scoring twice in a span of 57 seconds as the Canes began to assert their will on the contest.

Aho picked up the primary assist on both plays, teeing up Svechnikov to pick his spots on back-to-back rush chances.

After New Jersey converted its fourth power play of the night to cut the Canes' lead in half 4:27 into the third, Carolina responded with its own kind of special teams goal. Jumping over the boards for Andersen during a delayed penalty sequence, Jackson Blake raced down the ice and collected a cross-ice pass from Nikolaj Ehlers to the right of the net before cutting to his backhand and tucking the puck past Jacob Markstrom.

With a two-goal lead once again in hand, the Hurricanes assumed control of the contest. And as the clock ticked under five minutes, Svechnikov capped off his trifecta with another five-hole finish, again set up with a pass from Aho, to lock down the win for the visitors.

With the win, Andersen has now helped the Canes take five of six possible points in his last three outings.

Stats & Standouts

Forward Andrei Svechnikov completed his first hat trick of the season and the fourth of his career, tying him for the ninth-most in franchise history. The 25-year-old has now recorded five points (4G, 1A) in his last two games.

For the second time this season, Svechnikov scored twice in less than a minute, joining his double in 54 seconds on Nov. 14 against Vancouver. It's the first time in team history (since relocation) and fourth time in franchise history that a player has scored twice in a minute multiple times in one season.

With Nikolaj Ehlers' first three-goal outing as a Hurricane last night, it's also the fifth time in franchise history and the first time since the 2008-09 season that the Hurricanes/Whalers have featured hat tricks in consecutive games. The other instances came on March 6-7, 2009, Feb. 20-21, 1993, Feb. 12-13, 1983 and Jan. 28-30, 1980.

Forward Sebastian Aho recorded three points and has also totaled five (all assists) over the last two contests. The team's leading scorer has now posted 50 points in 49 games, reaching the half-century mark in fewer than 50 games for the fifth time in his career.

Carolina is the second team to reach 30 wins this season, joining league-leading Colorado (33).

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour on what he saw from his group on Saturday...

"We didn't start great, and I was kind of afraid of that after the emotional game we had [last night]. It kind of took us a second or two — or a period — to get going. I thought coming out of that first period even was really the key, and from then on we played pretty solid."

Rod Brind'Amour on Frederik Andersen keeping the team in it in the first period...

"[He] was solid early... We only had four shots in the first period. We weren't really going, and he allowed us to get to our game. At the end of the day, that was the difference."

Frederik Andersen on the team's resilience after a slow start...

"I think we knew we had a little bit better, but I think we stuck with it and got to our game for the better part of this game... The schedule is tough, so kudos to everyone for getting back to it today and putting up a really good effort."

Rod Brind'Amour on Svechnikov and Aho providing a spark in the second period...

"Again, they kind of were a little slow to start, and then all of a sudden, that's what they can do. Within a minute, all of a sudden, you get a couple of opportunities, and Svechy



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buried them. That was good to kind of get our feet under us, and I thought after that we were pretty solid."

Andrei Svechnikov on what fueled his hat trick...

"My line with Fishy and Jarvy, they just made great plays tonight. Fishy just kind of created the space for me on all three goals. I just kind of had to shoot the puck. Amazing plays from them."

Recap: Canes Crush Cats In Historic Fashion

By: Peter Dewar

RALEIGH, N.C. - Led by a Nikolaj Ehlers hat trick and a team-record nine total multi-point performances, the Carolina Hurricanes hammered the Florida Panthers 9-1 at Lenovo Center on Friday.

A fast, physical start against the defending champs provided an early advantage for the Canes in shots (12-3), hits (20-9) and, most importantly, goals, as they took a 1-0 lead into the first intermission thanks to a late Nikolaj Ehlers marker. Jordan Staal served as the setup man on Ehlers' goal, showing off his strength in the corner to keep a Cat at bay before hitting a streaking Ehlers in stride for a tap-in tally.

Carolina's hot start hit a speed bump when Florida equalized just 1:19 into the second period, but the hosts reclaimed their lead later in the frame. Mark Jankowski chipped home an Alexander Nikishin rebound at 13:10 to put Carolina back on top, just three minutes before a 92.5 mph Nikishin power-play blast from the blue line doubled the Canes' lead heading into the final frame.

In the third, a strong showing for the Hurricanes became a downright dominant one. Another power-play goal from Andrei Svechnikov at 4:08 put the game on ice, but the Canes kept their foot on the gas with three goals in a span of 1:46, including their third and fourth consecutive man-advantage markers of the night and a pair from Ehlers to complete his hat trick.

Sandwiched around Ehlers' third of the night were two tucks from Taylor Hall, whose latter contribution at 18:23 was followed just 13 seconds later by an Eric Robinson breakaway bid to make it 9-1 as the clock ticked down.

Back in the Carolina cage, Brandon Bussi finished with 15 saves on 16 shots for his 17th win in 21 career starts.

Stats & Standouts

Carolina's nine goals match a team record (since relocation) for the most scored in one game, tying games on March 7, 2009 (9-3 W vs. TBL) and April 7, 2009 (9-0 W vs. NYI). The franchise record is 11 goals in a game, achieved four times by the Hartford Whalers.

The Canes' six-goal third also tied a team record for goals in a period, joining Jan. 11, 2007 (6-4 W vs. FLA), March 7, 2009 (9-3 W vs. TBL) and Dec. 13, 2016 (8-6 W vs. VAN). The franchise record is seven goals in a period, which the Hartford Whalers pulled off twice.

The Hurricanes had nine different players record multiple points in a game for the first time in team history, and the

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes will fly home post-game and will return to game action against the Sabres in a Monday matinee.

Next Game: Monday, January 19 vs. Buffalo | 1:30 p.m. ET | TNT, truTV, HBO MAX | Tickets | Parking

third in franchise history. The Hartford instances happened on Oct. 19, 1985, and March 18, 1981.

The Hurricanes scored four power-play goals in a game for the second time in the past 15 years (also 4 on March 5, 2023). The most Carolina has ever scored in a contest is five on March 28, 2008, and Nov. 29, 2002.

Forward Nikolaj Ehlers notched four points (3G, 1A) for the seventh time in his career and the first time as a Hurricane. His fourth game with at least three points ties Andrei Svechnikov for the most by a Hurricane this season.

Forward Jordan Staal provided the primary assist on Ehlers' goal. His 295th helper as a Hurricane puts him ahead of Kevin Dineen for the fifth-most assists in franchise history.

Defenseman Alexander Nikishin posted his second career multi-point game and became the second-fastest rookie blueliner in franchise history to reach 20 points in a season, doing so in 47 games. The record belongs to Mark Howe, who did so in 23 outings.

Forward Andrei Svechnikov tallied a goal and an assist to reach 400 career points. He joins Quinn Hughes and Brady Tkachuk as just the third member of the 2018 NHL Draft class to reach that milestone.

Forward Taylor Hall registered multiple points in a game for the third time in his last seven outings, after doing so just twice through the first 41 games of the season.

Forward Mark Jankowski tallied three points for the fifth time in his career, and the first since April 1, 2019.

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere and forward William Carrier each missed tonight's game due to lower-body injuries. For Carrier, it was his third straight game out of the lineup; for Gostisbehere, it was his first with this ailment.

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour on things clicking for the Canes on Friday...

"[At first,] I thought 'holy moly,' we were having a real nice game and their goalie was playing out of his mind, really. Three or four breakaways, I think he stopped. But what I liked was that we didn't change our game. Even when they tied it up, it was like 'Really?' And then, nope, we just kept playing. Maybe it's been a long time coming against this team; we just never seem to break through with goals, and tonight, we finally did."

Nikolaj Ehlers on what it means to break through against the Panthers...



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"I mean, the last two games against them were... We actually played really well for 40 minutes, and weren't able to finish it off. Tonight, it was 1-1 for too long. We had the chances, and the way that we played, I thought we played unreal. But the goals came because we kept on doing the right things. Of course, to be able to win this game tonight after— for me, the last two games, but maybe for the team, maybe a little bit longer — felt great, and you could feel that in this room."

Rod Brind'Amour on Sean Walker's big hit in the second period and the importance of scoring on the power play afterward...

"That part might have been the turning point of the game because it was a good, hard, clean hit, and (the Panthers) come in and do what they're going to do. We've got to capitalize on that power play when that happens, and we did. I think that's kind of where the game might have turned in our favor."

Nikolaj Ehlers on the success of the power play...

"We played direct. We wanted to get the puck to the net, and were able to get the rebounds again and capitalize off that. I think, when you just pass it around, pass it around and then maybe shoot it, and then you do another pass, you don't really get the [penalty-killers] box running around too much. When you're able to get pucks to the net and get the rebound back, that's when the box starts running, and that's when the little things, the little holes open up to make the plays that we were able to do tonight."

Nikolaj Ehlers on carrying the momentum into New Jersey tomorrow...

"Whether you win 2-1 or 9-1, it's still just two points. We've given up too many points in the last little bit. We want to get back to playing the right way, which we did tonight, and not just doing it for one game at a time. We want to keep doing it... Now we know how we need to play to beat these good teams."



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Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 Buzz

By: NHL.com

Welcome to the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 Buzz.

The Opening Ceremony will be on Feb. 7 with the first men's hockey games on Feb. 11.

This is the first time NHL players will participate in the Winter Olympics since 2014 in Sochi.

With the first games less than a month away, NHL.com is taking a daily look at any news, notes and numbers that impact the Olympics:

Here is the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 Buzz for Monday:

Jan. 19

Buffalo Sabres

Tage Thompson looks to match a career-high point streak (eight games in 2024-25) when the Sabres visit the Carolina Hurricanes (1:30 p.m. ET; HBO MAX, truTV, TNT). It's the last time the teams face each other before Thompson and Hurricanes defenseman Jaccob Slavin become teammates with Team USA at the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026. Thompson has 13 points (five goals, eight assists) in his past seven games.

Jan. 18

Vegas Golden Knights

Mark Stone and Mitch Marner continue to play big roles for the red-hot Golden Knights as they prepare to play together for Team Canada. Stone scored his 10th goal in his 11-game point streak in Vegas' seventh straight win, 7-2 against the Nashville Predators on Saturday. Stone is tied with Tomas Hertl for the second-longest point streak in franchise history, one behind Jack Eichel, who had a 12-game run in 2023-24. Hertl will play for Team Czechia and Eichel for Team USA at the Olympics. Stone has 18 points in his point streak since Dec. 29, tied with Nathan MacKinnon of the Colorado Avalanche for the most among Canadian Olympic players in that time. Marner has produced two points in five of the past seven games to set the Golden Knights record for fastest to 50 career points with them (47 games).

Toronto Maple Leafs

Auston Matthews is on a hot streak that he and the Maple Leafs absolutely needed, and the United States has to feel great about. Matthews, who will play for Team USA at the Olympics, has 10 goals and 17 points since the League returned from the holiday break on Dec. 27 after producing 23 points (14 goals, nine assists) in his previous 31 games. He scored a goal and assisted on Max Domi's overtime goal in a 4-3 win against the Winnipeg Jets on Saturday. Toronto is 8-1-3 in 12 games since Dec. 27. Matthews didn't play in a 4-0 win against the New Jersey Devils on Dec. 30.

Washington Capitals

Tom Wilson could be ready to return when the Capitals play the Colorado Avalanche at Ball Arena in Denver on Monday (4 p.m. ET; HBO MAX, MNMT, truTV, TNT). Wilson, who will play for Canada at the Olympics, has missed seven consecutive games with a lower-body injury. He has been skating and was a full participant in an optional morning skate before a 5-2 loss to the Florida Panthers on Saturday. The Capitals sent forward Brett Leason to Hershey of the American Hockey League on Sunday, opening a spot on the roster to activate Wilson off injured reserve. Wilson has 42 points (22 goals, 20 assists) in 41 games this season.

New York Rangers

Mika Zibanejad is playing arguably his best hockey since the 2022-23 season, when he set a personal NHL best with 91 points. It's a great sign for Team Sweden as Zibanejad figures to be one of its most important forwards. Zibanejad had a hat trick in a 6-3 win at the Philadelphia Flyers on Saturday to extend his point streak to eight games. He set the Rangers record for most career power-play goals (117) and consecutive 20-goal seasons (nine) and tied the team record for most career hat tricks with his ninth. Zibanejad is tied for the League lead in goals (nine) and tied for third in points (17) since Dec. 31.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Erik Karlsson (lower body) wore a noncontact jersey and practiced with the Penguins on Sunday. Penguins coach Dan Muse said the Swedish defenseman will travel with them on a four-game road trip that begins at the Seattle Kraken on Monday. Karlsson, who was selected to play for Sweden at the Olympics, has missed three games. He is second among Swedish defenseman with 33 points (four goals, 29 assists)



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in 44 games this season. Rasmus Dahlin of the Buffalo Sabres has 34 points; he will also play for Sweden at the Olympics.

Chicago Blackhawks

Teuvo Teravainen (upper body) will miss his third straight game for the Blackhawks when they host the Winnipeg Jets on Monday (8:30 p.m. ET; CHSN, TSN3, TVAS). There is no timeline for the forward's return. The 31-year-old, who will represent Team Finland at the Olympics, has 21 points (nine goals, 12 assists) in 45 games.

Philadelphia Flyers

Rodrigo Abols was placed on injured reserve by the Flyers on Sunday, jeopardizing the forward's chances of playing for Team Latvia at the Olympics. Abols sustained a lower-body injury during a 6-3 loss to the New York Rangers on Saturday. His right leg twisted awkwardly underneath him as he was battling for a puck at 6:10 of the first period. He did not put weight on his right leg as he was being helped to the dressing room. "It's not good. I'm not going to get into it, but it's not good," coach Rick Tocchet said after the game. Abols has 10 points (three goals, seven assists) in 42 games this season. Philadelphia recalled forward Lane Pederson from Lehigh Valley of the American Hockey League to replace Abols on the roster.

Jan. 17

Edmonton Oilers

Leon Draisaitl is taking a leave of absence to attend to a family illness in Germany, the Oilers announced Saturday before their game at the Vancouver Canucks (10 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, CITY). The forward, who was one of the first six players named to Team Germany's roster, has 67 points (25 goals, 42 assists) in 48 games this season. He is expected to return next week. "Obviously we'll miss him, but [the] job comes second," Edmonton captain Connor McDavid said. "Everybody in here is a brother, father, son, whatever it is, and that stuff comes first and he's got to go home and be with his family. We're obviously thinking about him and his entire family and we've got to take care of things while he's gone."

Philadelphia Flyers

Rodrigo Abols' potential to play in the Olympics could be in jeopardy after the forward sustained a lower-body injury in the first period of a 6-3 loss to the New York Rangers. Abols, who was named to Team Latvia, was battling for a puck along the boards when he fell, his right leg twisting awkwardly underneath him at 6:10 of the first period. He was helped off the ice and went straight to the locker room, not putting any weight on his right leg. "It's not good. I'm not going to get into it, but it's not good," Flyers coach Rick Tocchet said. Abols has 10 points (three goals, seven assists) in 42 games this season.

Chicago Blackhawks

Teuvo Teravainen will miss his second straight game with an upper-body injury when the Blackhawks host the Boston Bruins (8 p.m. ET; CHSN, NESN). The 31-year-old forward, who is on Team Finland's roster, has 21 points (nine goals, 12 assists) in 45 games this season.

Dallas Stars

Miro Heiskanen returned to practice after missing the past two games because of a family matter and the defenseman is expected to play against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Sunday (2 p.m. ET; The Spot, Victory+, NHLN, SN, TVAS). He has 36 points (seven goals, 29 assists) in 46 games and is averaging 26:04 of ice time this season, third in the NHL, and will be one of Finland's leaders at the Olympics.

Pittsburgh Penguins

It'll be a showcase for Team Latvia's goatending in Pittsburgh, where Arturs Silovs and the Penguins play Elvis Merzlikins and the Columbus Blue Jackets (7 p.m. ET; FDSNOH, SN-PIT). Each will represent Latvia in the Olympics. Silovs is 8-6-7 with a 3.06 goals-against average, .892 save percentage and one shutout in 21 starts this season; Merzlikins is 7-7-1 with a 3.84 GAA and .882 save percentage in 16 starts.

Jan. 16

Buffalo Sabres

Tage Thompson continues to play some of his best hockey as he prepares to play in the Olympics for the first time. The forward, who will be representing the United States, had five points (three goals, two assists) in Buffalo's 5-3 win against the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday. He's the first Sabres player to have a five-point game since defenseman Rasmus Dahlin (two goals, three assists) on Jan. 7, 2023. Thompson also is on a six-game point streak during which he has 12 points (five goals, seven assists).

Anaheim Ducks

Leo Carlsson will be out approximately 3-5 weeks after undergoing a procedure on Friday to treat a Morel-Lavallee lesion in his left thigh. A Morel-Lavallee lesion is a soft tissue injury that is usually caused by a high-velocity force. Carlsson left practice early on Monday and did not return. He then participated in the morning skate on Tuesday and was a game-time decision for their game against the Dallas Stars, but Carlsson did not play in the Ducks' 3-1 victory that ended their nine-game skid (0-8-1). The 21-year-old forward leads the Ducks with 44 points (18 goals, 26 assists) in 44 games this season. He was also named to Team Sweden's roster for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 earlier this month. Sweden is scheduled to play its first game of the tournament against Italy on Feb. 11.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Sidney Crosby reminded Philadelphia Flyers coach and Team Canada assistant Rick Tocchet what he'll bring to the Olympics next month. The Penguins captain had a goal and an assist in Pittsburgh's 6-3 win against the Flyers on Thursday. Crosby, who won gold with Canada at the Olympics in 2010 and 2014, leads the Penguins with 51 points (25 goals, 26 assists) in 46 games. It's the 19th time in 21 NHL seasons that he's had at least 50 points.

New York Islanders

Bo Horvat is unlikely to join the Islanders for the final three games of their seven-game road trip, which continues against the Calgary Flames at Scotiabank Saddledome on Saturday (3 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, MSGSN). The forward will miss his seventh consecutive game because of a lower-body injury sustained during the third period of a 7-2



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loss against the Utah Mammoth on Jan. 1. Islanders general manager Mathieu Darche told Newsday on Friday that Horvat, who was named to Team Canada for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026, has been skating for about three days and is expected to return before the Olympic break, possibly Jan. 24 when the Islanders return home to host the Buffalo Sabres. Horvat has 33 points (21 goals, 12 assists) in 36 games.

Minnesota Wild

Matt Boldy and Joel Eriksson Ek were placed on injured reserve Friday. Each forward has a lower-body injury. Boldy, who will represent the United States at the Olympics, had an assist and in 19:16 of ice time in Minnesota's 6-2 loss to the Winnipeg Jets on Thursday. He leads the Wild with 27 goals in 48 games, and his 51 points are second behind Kirill Kaprizov with 52. Eriksson Ek, who was named to Sweden's Olympic team Dec. 31, has been out since Jan. 8, when he left the second period of Minnesota's 3-2 overtime win against the Seattle Kraken. He has 32 points (11 goals, 21 assists) in 45 games.

Toronto Maple Leafs

William Nylander is doubtful to play for the Maple Leafs against the Winnipeg Jets on Saturday (7 p.m. ET; CBC, SNO, SNW, SNP, NHLN), and it's unknown whether the forward's absence because of a lower-body injury will be short- or long-term, or could potentially affect his availability for Team Sweden at the Olympics. "Right now, I can't answer that," Toronto coach Craig Berube said Friday. "With the last (lower-body injury) I thought it would be quicker and then obviously (it) wasn't. We'll just see how he feels here going forward." Nylander, who was one of the six players named to Sweden's preliminary roster in June, left at 8:48 of the first period and did not return to Toronto's 6-5 overtime loss to the Vegas Golden Knights on Thursday. It was Nylander's fourth game after he missed the previous six because of a lower-body injury.

Jan. 15

New York Islanders

Bo Horvat will miss his sixth consecutive game with a lower-body injury when the Islanders visit the Edmonton Oilers on Thursday (9 p.m. ET; TVAS, SN1, MSGSN). The forward sustained the injury in the third period of a 7-2 loss against the Utah Mammoth on Jan. 1. Horvat has 33 points (21 goals, 12 assists) in 36 games and was named to Team Canada for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026. The Islanders are playing the fourth of a seven-game road trip and Horvat did not travel with the team. "Bo's been missing for a bit now and we talk about it, we always have someone coming through for us," Islanders coach Patrick Roy said. "We just go out there and every day try to play for each other, knowing that someone is going to make a difference for us."

Tampa Bay Lightning

Victor Hedman could get back on the ice soon, Lightning coach Jon Cooper said Thursday. The defenseman was projected to return in time to play for Sweden in the Olympics after having a procedure on his elbow Dec. 15. He's been on injured reserve since Dec. 11. Hedman was Sweden's captain at the 4 Nations Face-Off and is expected to be a top

defenseman for Sweden at the Olympics. Cooper, who will be Canada's coach at the Olympics, also said there is no update on Brayden Point. The forward, who is on Canada's Olympic roster, will miss his second consecutive game Thursday and is week to week because of an undisclosed injury. Cooper said there still is time for Hockey Canada to make a decision on Point's availability for the Olympics or if they will need to replace him on the roster.

Philadelphia Flyers

Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen did not play for the Flyers because of an upper-body injury and goalie Dan Vladar sustained an unspecified injury during the first period and didn't return in Philadelphia's 5-2 loss to the Buffalo Sabres on Wednesday. Ristolainen, who is one of the eight defensemen named to Finland's Olympic team, is considered day to day. He also was named to Finland's initial roster for the 4 Nations Face-Off last season but could not play because of an upper-body injury. Vladar, who is one of three goalies on Czechia's roster, is expected to be reevaluated with a possible update coming Thursday before the Flyers play against the Pittsburgh Penguins at PPG Paints Arena (7 p.m. ET; ESPN, SNO, SNE).

Ottawa Senators

Forward Brady Tkachuk and defenseman Jake Sanderson each had a strong showing in front of United States coach Mike Sullivan in the Senators' 8-4 win against the New York Rangers on Wednesday. Sullivan also coaches the Rangers. Tkachuk scored his 200th NHL goal and had three assists for his second NHL four-point game. Sanderson scored the game-winning goal, had an assist and a team-high five blocked shots. Tkachuk is expected to play a top-six power forward role for the U.S. in the Olympics. Sanderson is expected to be a depth defenseman. Each played under Sullivan at the 4 Nations Face-Off.

Carolina Hurricanes

Jacob Slavin practiced in a regular jersey Thursday, an indication that the defenseman could play against the Florida Panthers on Friday (7 p.m. ET; FDSNSO, SCRIPPS, SNO, TVAS). Slavin did not play in the Hurricanes' 3-0 loss to the St. Louis Blues on Tuesday because of injury rehab protocol, the team said. The 31-year-old defenseman who will play for the United States in the Olympics was in Carolina's lineup in the two games prior to the game against the Blues but had missed 10 consecutive games with an upper-body injury before that. He has been limited to seven games this season because of injuries.

Vegas Golden Knights

Mark Stone (Canada) extended his point streak to nine games with the overtime goal, and an assist, in the Golden Knights' 3-2 win against the Los Angeles Kings on Wednesday. The forward has 14 points, including eight goals, during his point streak, which started Dec. 29. The only player with as many goals since then is Colorado Avalanche forward Brock Nelson, who will play for the United States in the Olympics. Not to be outdone, Vegas center Jack Eichel (United States) assisted on all three goals against the Kings to extend his point streak to five games (four goals, 10 assists). Canada likely will rely on Stone to play a versatile role in the Olympics, likely killing penalties but potentially getting some power-play time too. Eichel is



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expected to be one of the top two centers for the U.S. along with Auston Matthews of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Minnesota Wild

Jonas Brodin (lower body) will not play against the Winnipeg Jets on Thursday (8 p.m. ET; FDSNWIX, FDSNNO, TSN3), and Wild coach John Hynes said the Sweden-born defenseman is considered week to week. Hynes said he doesn't think Brodin's availability for the Olympics is in jeopardy yet, but he is going to be shut down for now and will continue to be evaluated. He will not travel with the Wild for their three-game road trip that starts in Buffalo on Saturday and continues in Toronto on Monday and Montreal on Tuesday. In addition, center Joel Eriksson Ek, also from Sweden, is not expected to play against the Jets and is day to day because of a lower-body injury. He will miss his third straight game. Eriksson Ek skated Thursday and will go on the road trip.

Jan. 14

Edmonton Oilers

Connor McDavid is playing his best hockey ahead of his Olympic debut for Canada. The Oilers captain had two assists in a 4-3 overtime loss at the Nashville Predators on Tuesday, his 29th birthday, extending his point streak to 20 games and taking over the NHL scoring lead. McDavid has 46 points (19 goals, 27 assists) during his run, the longest of his NHL career, and 82 points (30 goals, 52 assists) in 47 games.

Carolina Hurricanes

Jacob Slavin did not play in a 3-0 loss to the St. Louis Blues on Tuesday because of injury rehab protocol. The 31-year-old defenseman had played Saturday and Monday after missing 10 games because of an upper-body injury. Slavin, expected to play a key defensive role for the United States, has been limited to seven games this season because of injuries.

Dallas Stars

Miro Heiskanen did not play in a 3-1 loss at the Anaheim Ducks on Tuesday because of a family matter. The 26-year-old defenseman has 36 points (seven goals, 29 assists) in 46 games and is averaging 26:04 of ice time this season, third in the NHL, and will be one of Finland's leaders.

Florida Panthers

Forwards Matthew Tkachuk (United States) and Brad Marchand (Canada) each showed progress at practice Wednesday. Tkachuk, who hasn't played this season because of a lower-body injury, took contact. Coach Paul Maurice said it was a good test for him, and the Panthers will see how he recovers Thursday. Marchand, who has missed three games with an undisclosed injury, jumped into contact drills even though his status remains noncontact. Maurice said he's still day to day.

Chicago Blackhawks

Teuvo Teravainen is day to day with an upper-body injury and won't play against the Calgary Flames on Thursday, Blackhawks coach Jeff Blashill said. The 31-year-old forward, who is on Finland's roster, has 21 points (nine goals, 12 assists) in 45 games for Chicago this season.

Svechnikov gets hat trick for Hurricanes in win against Devils

By: Mike G. Morreale

Timo Meier scored and Jacob Markstrom made 29 saves for the Devils (24-22-2), who had won two in a row.

"There's a lot of stuff we have to clean up," Meier said. "It's frustrating. It's really important with this (four-game) road trip coming up and this stretch before the Olympic break to start collecting some points. It's tight but every point matters."

Carolina, which is first in the Metropolitan Division, is 3-0-0 against New Jersey this season. The Devils are sixth in the Metropolitan Division.

"It's a big difference when No. 74 (Jacob Slavin) is in the lineup," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said of his defenseman who returned to the lineup on Jan. 10 after missing 10 games with an upper-body injury. "I think you can't understate that. Suddenly he goes in there and it seems like whenever he's on the ice, we're in good shape, so it's a welcome addition to getting him back."

Slavin was a plus-2 in 19:21 of ice time for the Hurricanes.

"We're doing it to ourselves I feel like," Markstrom said. "It's a tough way to lose when you feel like we're doing the right things, then mistakes, and it's in the back of our net."

Svechnikov gave Carolina a 1-0 lead after taking a back pass from Aho and snapping a shot while skating down the slot at 13:12 of the second period.

"I was in the slot and had to shoot quickly, and personally I thought it was a pretty good shot underneath the glove," said Svechnikov, who has four goals in his past two games. "I'm kind of a big boy so I have to use my body. Whenever I use my body I kind of create the space for my linemates."

He made it 2-0 just 57 seconds later on a snap shot from the right face-off circle that beat Markstrom between the pads at 14:09.

"Svechnikov understands it's not just about getting a goal and creating offense," Brind'Amour said. "There's another element to the game and he's constantly working on that understanding time and place of games. I think he's matured in that area. Obviously, we know he's got a lot of talent."

Meier scored a power-play goal to pull the Devils within 2-1 at 4:27 of the third period on a shot from the top of the left face-off circle.

Jackson Blake made it 3-1 on a delayed penalty call when he took a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers in stride in the slot and scored on a backhand at 8:33 of the third.



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"They don't give you a lot of time and space to get into spots to get sustained offense but we were in alone on their goalie six times tonight so as much as it's not an abundance of offense or shots, we're in alone a bunch of times with some of our best people but got to make it count," said New Jersey coach Sheldon Keefe, whose team was 1-for-4 on the power play on Saturday. "We weren't disciplined and composed and paid for it."

Svechnikov scored his third goal on a snap shot from the bottom of the left circle at 15:52 of the third for the 4-1 final. Aho had the primary assist on all three Svechnikov goals.

Ehlers has hat trick, Hurricanes score 9 in win against Panthers

By: Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Nikolaj Ehlers had a hat trick and an assist to lead the Carolina Hurricanes to a 9-1 win against the Florida Panthers at Lenovo Center on Friday.

It was Ehlers' first hat trick with Carolina since signing a six-year, \$51 million contract (\$8.5 million average annual value) as an unrestricted free agent on July 3.

"It felt fantastic, of course," Ehlers said. "To do that at home makes it even more special. I think we played a great game tonight. We were able to capitalize on our chances."

Taylor Hall scored twice, and Mark Jankowski had a goal and two assists for the Hurricanes (29-15-4), who had lost two in a row but are 5-1-1 in their past seven. Andrei Svechnikov and Alexander Nikishin each had a goal and an assist, and Brandon Bussi made 15 saves.

The Hurricanes went 4-for-5 on the power play.

"We were having a real nice game [early], and (Florida goalie Sergei Bobrovsky) was playing out of his mind," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Even when they tied it up, we just kept playing. It's been a long time coming against this team. We just never seem to break through with goals."

Uvis Balinskis scored for the Panthers (24-19-3), who had won two in a row. Bobrovsky made 26 saves.

"We weren't right from the start," Florida coach Paul Maurice said. "And we found our way into the penalty box for a real tough third period. We haven't had one of those in a long time. We got beat. Thank God we play tomorrow (at the Washington Capitals)."

Ehlers put the Hurricanes up 1-0 at 18:35 of the first period. Jordan Staal held off Florida defenseman Gustav Forsling in the right corner before passing to Ehlers, who drove between the circles and scored on a snap shot.

Ehlers played for the first time on a line with Staal and Jordan Martinook, who anchor Carolina's checking line.

"The way that they battle, the way they win pucks back, I knew I would be able to get some more space out there, which is something I've kind of been looking for," Ehlers said. "That first goal was an incredible play. We want to keep building off this game."

"We've been together for eight years and playing on and off but I feel like we have great chemistry together," Svechnikov said when asked about playing with Aho. "We're always trying to go, go, go, every time."

NOTES: Svechnikov had his 30th career game-winning goal to pass Jordan Staal, Blaine Stoughton and Brind'Amour for sole possession of seventh most in Hurricanes/Hartford Whalers history. ... Forward Jesper Bratt had one shot on goal in 18:26 of ice time in his 600th NHL game, all with the Devils.

Balinskis one-timed a shot near the top of the right circle to tie it 1-1 at 1:19 of the second period. The defenseman signed a two-year contract with Florida earlier on Friday.

Sandis Vilmanis earned the secondary assist for his first NHL point in his third game. The goal marked the first time two Latvia-born players have earned points on the same NHL goal.

"We're a small country, and it's awesome that I have someone here to help me and to be there on the ice with me," Vilmanis said.

The Hurricanes took a 2-1 lead at 13:10. Jankowski won a face-off and skated to the net, where he scored by backhanding in the rebound of Nikishin's shot.

"We always work together, stick with each other and play physical, night to night," Nikishin said.

Nikishin put Carolina up 3-1 with a power-play goal at 16:28, scoring on a one-timer from the right point off a pass from Sebastian Aho.

"I always tell him he's got to shoot the puck because he's probably got the hardest shot on our team," Svechnikov said. "On the power play, we know he's got a good shot, and we try to make that play for him."

Nikishin, a 24-year-old rookie defenseman, has 20 points (six goals, 14 assists) in 47 games this season.

"The offensive part will keep growing, but there's not much more he needs to do there," Brind'Amour said. "It's such a learning curve playing defense on the other side of it, and that's where he's got to grow as a player. We're seeing signs of it for sure."

Svechnikov extended the lead to 4-1 at 4:08 of the third period with a power-play goal just as a 5-on-3 advantage expired. Seth Jarvis made a touch pass from the goal line to Svechnikov at the left hash marks for a snap shot inside the right post for his 400th NHL point.

"It took me [five] games, so at some point I had to get that point," Svechnikov said. "'Jarvy' made a nice play 5-on-3. I kind of popped out from the middle."



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The Hurricanes made it 5-1 at 11:17 on a 5-on-3 power play. Ehlers took a diagonal pass from Jarvis and scored short side.

"We played direct," Ehlers said. "We wanted to get the puck to the net. When you're able to get pucks to the net and get rebounds back, that's when the (penalty kill) box starts running, and that's when the little holes open up to make the plays we were able to do tonight.

Hall extended it to 6-1 at 11:38 with another power-play goal after Logan Stankoven passed to him in front for a net-front redirection.

Ehlers completed his sixth NHL hat trick on a one-timer in the right circle off a pass from Stankoven to make it 7-1 at 13:03.

Hall scored blocker side at the top of the crease to make it 8-1 at 18:23, and Eric Robinson scored on a short breakaway at 18:35 for the 9-1 final.

NOTES: The nine goals allowed were a career high for Bobrovsky. ... The Hurricanes last scored nine goals in a 9-0 win against the New York Islanders on April 7, 2009. ... Nikishin is third in goals by a rookie defenseman in Hurricanes/Hartford Whalers history, behind Justin Faulk (eight in 2011-12) and Jamie McBain (seven in 2010-11). ... Earlier Friday, Balinskis signed a two-year contract with the Panthers that begins next season. Financial terms were not disclosed.



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AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Svechnikov hat trick leads Hurricanes to 4-1 win over Devils

By: Allan Kreda

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Andrei Svechnikov had a hat trick and Frederik Andersen made 28 saves as the Carolina Hurricanes beat the New Jersey Devils 4-1 on Saturday night.

Jackson Blake also scored for the Hurricanes, who improved to 6-1-1 in their last eight games. Sebastian Aho had three assists as Carolina won a night after routing the defending champion Florida Panthers 9-1 at home.

Timo Meier scored for New Jersey, which had its two-game winning streak snapped. The Devils are 4-8-1 since Dec. 19 when they won 2-1 at Utah.

Svechnikov broke a scoreless tie at 13:12 of the second, whipping a shot past Devils goaltender Jacob Markstrom, who had 29 saves. The 25-year-old Russian forward scored again 57 seconds later to make it 2-0 after two.

Aho leads the Hurricanes with 50 points, including 17 goals. Svechnikov is second on the team with 40 points. The 36-year-old Andersen improved 7-10-3 this season.

Meier ruined Andersen's shutout bid with his 13th goal on the power play at 4:27 of the third with assists to Cody Glass and Dougie Hamilton.

Blake restored the two-goal margin with his 15th goal at 8:33 of the third before Svechnikov completed his hat trick with his 16th goal this season at 15:52.

The first-place Hurricanes lead the Islanders by seven points in the Metropolitan Division.

Carolina has won all three meetings with New Jersey this season, including a 3-1 victory at Prudential Center on Jan. 4. The teams meet again March 28 in North Carolina.

Up Next

Devils: Visit the Calgary Flames on Monday night to start four-game road trip.

Hurricanes: Host the Buffalo Sabres on Monday.

Nikolaj Ehlers shines with hat trick as Carolina Hurricanes dominate Panthers 9-1

By: AP News

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Nikolaj Ehlers had three goals for his sixth career hat trick and first with Carolina, and the Hurricanes scored six times in the third period to cruise past the Florida Panthers 9-1 on Friday night.

Ehlers, who signed with Carolina in the offseason after playing 10 years with Winnipeg, also had an assist. Taylor Hall had two goals and Mark Jankowski had a goal and two assists. Alexander Nikishin and Andrei Svechnikov had a goal and an assist and Eric Robinson also scored.

Brandon Bussi made 16 saves for the Hurricanes, who had four power-play goals and improved to 5-1-1 in their last seven games.

Uvis Balinskis had the lone goal for the Panthers, who gave up eight unanswered goals and had their two-game winning streak stopped. Sergei Bobrovsky allowed all nine of Carolina's goals while stopping just 26 shots.

Ehlers gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead with 1:25 left in the first period. Balinskis tied it at 1:19 of the second — but it was all Carolina after that.

Jankowski put the Hurricanes up 2-1 at 13:10 of the second and Nikishin made it 3-1 with a power-play goal three minutes later.

Svechnikov, Ehlers and Hall also scored power-play goals in the third as Carolina pulled away.

Ehlers completed his hat trick on a one-timer off a pass from Logan Stankoven to make it 7-1. Hall and Robinson capped the scoring.

Up next

Panthers: Play at Washington against the Capitals on Saturday night.

Hurricanes: Take on the Devils in New Jersey on Saturday night.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Svechnikov Tallies Hat Trick as Hurricanes Take Down Devils, 4-1

By: Kyle Morton

The Carolina Hurricanes entered Newark in as brutal a scheduling situation as there is.

After a 9-1 drubbing of the Florida Panthers in Raleigh on Friday night, they touched down in Newark for the second half of a back-to-back on Saturday against a New Jersey Devils team that had been waiting for them with two full days of rest, having last played on Wednesday.

It didn't matter.

Andrei Svechnikov recorded a hat trick, and Frederik Andersen delivered one of his best starts of the year as Carolina defeated a hungry and desperate Devils squad to strengthen their grip atop the Metropolitan Division standings.

The first period went by scoreless, with Andersen making several key stops as the Canes struggled to find a real rhythm.

They found their legs in the second period, though, and after a few physical altercations, they took the lead when

Svechnikov closed hard on Luke Hughes, forcing him to turn the puck over to Sebastian Aho.

Aho entered the zone and found a trailing Svechnikov, who buried one past Markstrom to make it 1-0.

Svechnikov quickly made it 2-0 when he streaked down the right wing and fooled Markstrom, who allowed it to trickle through for a two-goal lead that Carolina took into the third.

The Devils got one back when Timo Meier beat Andersen with a tricky shot from distance on a power play, but it took the Canes just over four minutes to answer back.

That came in the form of Jackson Blake's 15th goal of the year, which he tallied on a nice move to his backhand to beat Markstrom after a slick feed from Nikolaj Ehlers, who kept his momentum rolling after his hat trick against Florida.

Svechnikov once again beat Markstrom low with just over four minutes left in the third period to pick up his 16th goal of the season and give Carolina a hat trick in a second straight game.

"Cloud Nine" - Hurricanes 9, Panthers 1

By: Bob Wage

The Carolina Hurricanes played one of their most entertaining games of the season as they thoroughly dominated the Stanley Cup Champion, Florida Panthers, 9-1 on Friday night at the Lenovo Center.

Nikolaj Ehlers had a hattrick, goaltender Brandon Bussi picked up another win, (17-3-1) and every Carolina forward had at least one point in the shellacking.

The Panthers were missing some key players due to injuries but this win has to help the Hurricanes get over the mental block which they seemed to have when they played this team.

The home team dominated the first period but skated into the dressing room with a slim 1-0 lead.

Ehlers scored the first goal off an absolutely beautiful no-look pass by Jordan Staal.

The Panthers tied the score early in the second period off an odd play but that would be it for the visitors.

Later in the period, Mark Jankowski knocked in a rebound off of a blast by Alexander Nikishin to make it 2-1.

A couple minutes later, Nikishin rocketed another shot during a powerplay that got by Bobrovsky to make it 3-1 and the Canes never looked back. The shot was clocked at 92 MPH.

Speaking of the powerplay, the team officially went 4 of 5 for the night and the penalty kill was perfect, 0-5.

In the previous two meetings against the Panthers, the Canes gave up multi-goal leads in the third period and ended up losing, but that was not happening on this night.

Andrei Svechnikov sniped another PP goal to start things off in the third. A bit later, Ehlers scored another powerplay tally, his second of the night.

Just 21 seconds later, Taylor Hall scored yet another powerplay goal to make it 6-1, but the Canes were not done yet.

Next up, Ehlers scored his third and the hats rained down upon the Lenovo Center ice.

Hall then scored again and 10 seconds later, Eric Robinson made it 9-1 and the celebrations started.

There were several heroes in this game and the team was physical throughout.



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The Canes outshot the Panthers, 33-16. They outit them 30-19 and were dominant in the faceoff circle winning 66% for the game.

Jordan Staal was finishing his checks from start to finish and was awarded six hits. Sean Walker was very physical in this one as well and also had a team high six hits.

Panther, Donovan Sebrango took exception to one heavy hit and went after Walker. The defenseman answered the bell as the two dropped the gloves until Walker took him down. According Cory Lavalette, it was Walker's first career NHL fight.

It was the first game that Ehlers played on the same line with Staal and Martinook. After the game when asked about it, he said he was looking forward to it.

"The way they play, the way they battle and get pucks out, I knew I would get more space out there. And that is something I was looking for."

Nikishin had one of his best games in the NHL with a goal and an assist.

I could on and on about this game but there is another one coming up soon enough as the Hurricanes traveled after this game to New Jersey, where they will play yet another back-to-back scenario.

Highlights -



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Svechnikov's hat trick leads Canes to 4-1 win over Devils

By: Liela Hafshejani

Right wing Andrei Svechnikov celebrates after scoring a goal during the game versus the Florida Panthers at the Lenovo Center on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026. Svechnikov scored one goal for the Hurricanes. The Hurricanes beat the Panthers 9-1.

Right wing Andrei Svechnikov celebrates after scoring a goal during the game versus the Florida Panthers at the Lenovo Center on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026. Svechnikov scored one goal for the Hurricanes. The Hurricanes beat the Panthers 9-1.

In a game that was tied halfway through the second period, it looked as though the Carolina Hurricanes had used all of their offensive might the previous night with the nine goals they scored.

But finally developing offensive momentum in the back half of the contest, the Canes (30-15-4) tallied four goals and downed the New Jersey Devils (24-22-2) for the third time this season, this time in Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey.

Energy from the Canes' side was high after its 9-1 blowout against the Florida Panthers the previous night, but the Devils weren't shaken during the opening 20 minutes. In a goalless first period, the Devils matched the Canes punch for punch. New Jersey dominated shots-on-goal against Carolina, putting up nine in comparison to four from the Canes.

It took over 33 minutes, but right-wing Andrei Svechnikov finally broke the stalemate with consecutive goals to cement the Hurricanes' lead.

Center Sebastian Aho intercepted the puck near middle ice and passed the puck back to Svechnikov, who shot the puck directly past Devils goaltender Jacob Markstrom.

Using similar tactics one minute later, the puck was passed to Aho by defensemen Sean Walker in the middle of the rink. Once again, Aho moved the puck back to Svechnikov for his second goal of the night.

New Jersey got itself on the board five minutes into the final period when right wing Timo Meier — assisted by center Cody Glass and a former Hurricane, defenseman Dougie Hamilton — shot the puck past goaltender Frederik Andersen to make the score 2-1.

As it inched closer to the middle of the third period, Carolina fought for a more comfortable lead, which right wing Jackson Blake delivered. Skating close to the Devils' net, Blake wrapped the puck from the right side to the left after obtaining it from left wing Nikolaj Ehlers and defenseman K'Andre Miller, bringing the score to 3-1.

Taking inspiration from Ehlers after he scored a hat trick 24 hours earlier, Svechnikov scored his third goal of the night with four minutes remaining. The puck made it back down the ice after the Canes' defense pickpocketed New Jersey, allowing Aho and center Seth Jarvis to assist Svechnikov in his snap shot goal, marking his fourth career hat trick and tying him for ninth-most in Canes history.

Andersen saved 29 of the 30 shots on goal that he faced, helping contribute to the win. Andersen has had a less-than-ideal season coming back from injuries and recorded career lows last month. But with more and more time on the ice, the Canes staple has slowly begun to return to form.

Carolina will travel back home to take on the Buffalo Sabres on Monday, Jan. 19. Puck drop is set for 1:30 p.m.

Canes cause chaos in 9-1 win against Panthers

By: Liela Hafshejani

Right wing Jackson Blake and defenseman Jalen Chatfield congratulate left wing Nikolaj Ehlers after a goal during the game versus the Florida Panthers at the Lenovo Center on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026. Ehlers scored a hat trick for the Hurricanes. The Hurricanes beat the Panthers 9-1.

Right wing Jackson Blake and defenseman Jalen Chatfield congratulate left wing Nikolaj Ehlers after a goal during the game versus the Florida Panthers at the Lenovo Center on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026. Ehlers scored a hat trick for the Hurricanes. The Hurricanes beat the Panthers 9-1.

Putting up nine goals to secure its largest margin of victory this season, including a hat trick from left wing Nikolaj Ehlers, the Hurricanes pounded the Panthers.

Meeting for the third time this season, the Carolina Hurricanes (29-15-4) hosted the Florida Panthers (24-19-3) at Lenovo Center, having lost the first two after holding multi-goal leads in both games. It's always a spectacle when these two teams meet — this night being no different.

"The goals kept coming because we were doing the right thing," Ehlers said.



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Following a scoreless first 19 minutes, Carolina got the puck past Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky when captain Jordan Staal passed the puck in front of the Panthers' net to have Ehlers sweep in and put the Canes on the board.

As the second period rolled around, the tables seemed to flip as Florida scored one minute in. The Panthers took advantage of the substitution on the Canes' side as they flew down the ice to overwhelm goaltender Brandon Bussi. As players crowded around him, right wing Mackie Samoskevich and left wing Sandis Vilmanis helped assist the goal that defenseman Uvis Balinskis scored, tying the board.

Left wing Mark Jankowski responded, wrapping the puck around Bobrovsky — with help from defensemen Alexander Nikishin and Mike Reilly — to take back the lead. Four minutes later, Nikishin furthered the lead, but this time, he was the goalscorer. During a Canes power play, Nikishin shot the puck from the right side of the net, cruising past three Panthers players to bring the score up to 3-1.

"We always work together and just stick to each other and played a physical night tonight," said Nikishin. "If you had an opportunity, we would score."

It's not often that calls are made after the period, but this game was like no other. As the final seconds of the middle frame expired, Canes defenseman Jalen Chatfield got into it with Panthers center Sam Bennett, and it escalated quickly. Two-minute penalties were given to each team, as well as a 10-minute misconduct penalty to Bennett to wrap up the second period.

The agitated energy seemed to transfer into the early parts of the third period when left wing Jordan Martinook took a stick to the face two minutes in.

Two minutes later, Carolina scored its second power-play goal of the night. Right wing goalscorer Andrei Svechnikov,

with centers Seth Jarvis and Sebastian Aho, fell into a triangular formation to the right of the goal, tactically sending the puck into the net and securing a comfortable 4-1 lead.

Halfway through the final period, tempers reignited. Panthers center Eetu Luostarinen attempted to cut into the Canes' lead but was denied by Bussi. Frustrated, he skated into Bussi, who then grabbed Luostarinen's stick. Luostarinen yanked Bussi's stick out of his hand and threw it behind him with enough force to knock Bussi off his skates.

Their altercation was ended quickly by the referees, but as everyone on the ice returned to their places, Lenovo Center was overtaken by chants of Bussi's name.

Creating a pattern for the night, repeat actor Ehlers scored his second goal during a Carolina power play. Eleven minutes into the third period, with only three Panthers' players on the ice, Ehlers rocketed the puck from the right side of the net to make the score 5-1 with help from Jarvis and Svechnikov.

Completing his sixth-career hat trick and his first donning the red-and-white, Ehlers scored another goal 13 minutes into the final period to further extend Carolina's lead to 7-1. Center Logan Stankoven and right wing Jackson Blake pickpocketed the puck from Florida and sent it down to Ehlers, who was met by a flurry of hats from the Hurricanes' faithful after scoring.

Left wing Taylor Hall tallied two goals of his own as the other multi-goal scorer of the night. Left wing Eric Robinson scored the final goal of the night, capping off a dominant 9-1 win for the Canes.

The Hurricanes will travel to New Jersey to face the Devils tonight at 7:00 p.m.



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The Hockey News

5 Takeaways: Carolina, Yet Again, Wins In New Jersey

By: Ryan Henkel

The Carolina Hurricanes became just the second team this season to reach 30 wins as they finished off their back-to-back with a big 4-1 win over the New Jersey Devils on Saturday.

The Canes didn't have the best start, but once they found their game, they didn't look back and they once again were standing over the Devils when the horn sounded.

Here are five takeaways from the win:

1. Back-to-Back Hat Tricks

Following Nikolaj Ehlers' hat trick against the Florida Panthers on Friday, Andrei Svechnikov followed up his teammate with a hat trick of his own Saturday night in New Jersey.

According to colleague Cory Lavalette, the last time the Hurricanes had hat tricks in consecutive days was March 6 and 7, 2009 when Ray Whitney and Eric Staal each registered three goals apiece in sequential nights.

With the three-goal outing, the Russian winger moved up to third on the team in goals (16) and second in points (40). His six goals since the turn of the calendar also paces the team and his 13 total points is second.

It's also Svechnikov's seventh straight season with 40+ points and he's looked to have really turned a corner this season.

2. Frederik Andersen's Vintage Performance

It was a vintage performance for Frederik Andersen, as he stopped 29 shots and saved 2.12 goals above expected in the win.

It's no secret that this has been a tough year for the veteran netminder, but he was exceptional Saturday night, especially early when the team was struggling to get to their game.

"I felt good," Andersen said. "Nice to be out there for a nice win. A good weekend for us."

Andersen stopped 10 shots in the first period alone and it took until the third period for him to finally be beaten by a lucky bounce during a New Jersey power play.

The Hurricanes have been looking for more from the Great Dane and Saturday was certainly that.

"In the first period and weren't really going and he allowed us to get to our game and that's really, at the end of the day, the difference," Brind'Amour said.

3. Turning It On

It was not a great start for the Hurricanes skaters though Saturday as the team mustered just four shots in the opening frame to the Devils' 10.

New Jersey was by far the better team and the multiple power play chances weren't helping things either.

But when Carolina turned it on, boy did they ever take it to the Devils.

After being outshot 18-7 through the first 30 minutes of the game, the Canes flipped the script and outshot the Devils 20-12 the rest of the way.

The Hurricanes are so good at seizing momentum and once they get rolling, that pressure builds and builds and you saw that lead to multiple goals on Saturday.

"Obviously we didn't start great and I was afraid of that after the kind of emotional game that we had," Brind'Amour said. "Took us a period to get going so coming out of that first period was really the key. Thought from then on, we played pretty solid."

4. Jordan, Jordan and Nikolaj

I'll be honest, this seemed like a really weird trio when Rod Brind'Amour put them together before Friday's game, but tell me why has this been such a great line?

The three have had a 21-4 edge in scoring chances at 5v5, including having seven high-danger chances on Saturday alone.

They combined for a beautiful goal on Friday and they could have easily had many more in either game.

I really like what we've seen from them so far, so hopefully they can keep up the brilliant work.

5. Historical Dominance Over New Jersey

Since the start of the Rod Brind'Amour era, Carolina is 24-10-0 over the Devils including both the regular season and the playoffs.

In the past four seasons, they're 18-6-0 and have beaten the Devils in two playoff series, both times in five games.

In fact, it's been so one-sided as of late, that the Hurricanes had a streak 27-straight penalty kills against the Devils, a run



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that dated back through the playoffs and the prior season and had even outscored New Jersey 1-0, come to an end Saturday.

Carolina has just had New Jersey's number for a while now and I don't see that changing anytime soon.

"It's never easy to play here," Svechnikov said. "It's always hard and they're always a good match. They have a great team here which is why they're in the playoffs every year, but we kind of know how to play against them."



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The Athletic / NHL trade grades: Andersson adds punch to Vegas' blue line, but did Flames get enough?

By Mark Lazerus and Harman Dayal

Mark Lazerus: It wouldn't be an NHL trade deadline — even a so-called "soft" deadline ahead of the Olympic break — without Vegas going big-game hunting.

There is no future in Vegas. It's always win-right-now. Love them or hate them, every fan wishes their team operated the same way.

And as they so often do, the Golden Knights landed one of the premier players on the market in defenseman Rasmus Andersson. With Alex Pietrangolo's career likely over, Vegas had a glaring need (and a ton of LTIR money) on the right side behind Shea Theodore (a lefty shot who typically plays on his off side). Brayden McNabb, being week-to-week with an upper-body injury, only heightened Vegas' need. Consider that need filled.

Andersson is a consistent producer offensively — 41 goals over the last four seasons — who can handle a heavy workload; his average ice time of 24:14 is 16th in the league. He's hardly a shutdown defender, but Theodore can handle the tougher assignments, which should free up Andersson to do what he does best. Plus, his physicality and tenacity on the puck are custom-made for the playoffs, which is why he was such a sought-after player.

Vegas doesn't have an extension in place — yet — but the Golden Knights never seem to have trouble with such matters. It's a team that lives exclusively in the now, and currently, the Knights are cooking.

They've won seven straight, always harbor legitimate championship hopes and are never shy about putting all their chips in the middle of the table. In fact, the Knights might have the most favorable path to emerge out of the Western Conference while the league's center of power is in the Central Division. Vegas is in prime position as the Pacific's clear front-runner, with Colorado, Dallas and Minnesota likely to take massive chunks out of each other in the first two rounds of the playoffs.

The only question is, can they add Artemi Panarin? It's Vegas. Kelly McCrimmon is as ruthless a general manager as the NHL has, and he always seems to find a way.

Calgary did about as well as can be expected, including landing a viable and affordable NHL defenseman with term (two more years after this one) in Whitecloud. Yet, to get a nondescript prospect and what's sure to be a late first-round pick not this year but next (and possibly another one in 2028) even while retaining half of Andersson's salary is a sobering reminder of just how far the Flames have to go in this so-called retool.

Vegas grade: A-

Calgary grade: B-

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Flames trade Rasmus Andersson to Vegas Golden Knights for Whitecloud, two picks: Sources

The defenseman is in the final year of a six-year contract carrying a \$4.55 million cap hit, with Calgary retaining half.

Harman Dayal: The Golden Knights have done it again. In a market where true impact players are becoming increasingly difficult to acquire externally, Vegas won the bidding to land a premier defender at a position where the club needed a boost.

Andersson was Calgary's best defenseman this year. He's a do-it-all No. 2/3 defender — he drives offense (10 goals and 20 assists in 48 games



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this season), capably moves pucks and brings a physical edge and toughness that will be valuable come playoff time.

Andersson's defensive metrics in Calgary have declined significantly over the last three years. There were times last year when he appeared to have lost half a step with his skating (though he was also playing through a broken foot down the stretch last season), and his rush defending can be a weakness at times. Those are legitimate yellow flags, especially if he receives a long-term extension.

However, he's going to a significantly better Vegas team where he'll be insulated with more talent and better structure, so there's a good chance that Andersson's underlying metrics will rebound. By the eye test, this is still a player who boasts a ton of great tools. And the cost isn't all that bad when you consider how late Vegas' picks will likely be, and the strong likelihood of Andersson extending.

I'm a little surprised at how much flak the Flames received for this return. Yes, the picks they got from Vegas will likely be late in each round, but rental top-four defensemen in their late 20s are rarely moved at the deadline for true blue-chip/Grade-A prospects. Getting a first and a second as the foundation of a return seems pretty standard. Maintaining Whitecloud's value will be important for the Flames to find a way to monetize him for a decent return at some point in the future, to juice the value from this Andersson package.

Vegas grade: B+

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The Athletic / Broncos-Bills ending reminded Sabres' Lindy Ruff of 1999 Stanley Cup 'no goal'

By Matthew Fairburn

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Buffalo Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff knows better than most what Sean McDermott and the Buffalo Bills are going through.

The Bills' 33-30 overtime loss to the Denver Broncos in the divisional round on Saturday was the latest heartbreaking end to a Buffalo sports season. And it is also the latest Buffalo sports loss with an officiating controversy. Bills receiver Brandin Cooks initially appeared to catch the ball, and then, as he went to the ground, Broncos defensive back Ja'Quan McMillian ripped the ball from his hands. The play was ruled an interception. McDermott called timeout, hoping to get a better explanation and implore the officials to take a closer look at the play. A completed pass would have put the Bills in range for a game-winning field goal. Instead, the Broncos went down the field and made a game-winning field goal.

Ruff was feeling the emotions other Buffalonians were feeling in the aftermath of the game. But he also could empathize with McDermott as a coach. During the 1999 Stanley Cup Final, Ruff was coaching the Sabres when their season ended due to a Brett Hull goal in triple-overtime of Game 6. As the Dallas Stars were celebrating their championship, Ruff had a closer look at the goal and realized Hull's foot was in the crease before he swiped the puck in. Ruff was irate, pleading with NHL commissioner Gary Bettman to review the goal.

"I wanted Bettman to answer why there was no review," Ruff told reporters after the 1999 game. "He almost turned his back on me. There was no answer. There was no review. It was as if he knew it was tainted.

"This was the worst-case scenario. This was the worst nightmare."

After the series, Sabres fans gathered at city hall to thank the team for the season. Ruff stepped up to a microphone and offered two words: "No goal." That sent the crowd into a frenzy. It has lived on as one of the biggest what-ifs in Buffalo sports history.

After Saturday's loss to Denver, McDermott delivered an impassioned rant against the call on that overtime pass to Cooks.

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Bills' Sean McDermott furious over key overtime ruling: "You can't convince me that's not a catch"

"I'm standing up for Buffalo, dammit," McDermott said. "What went on — that is not how it should go down, in my estimation."

"It's hard for me to — and I've had a chance to look at it — it's hard for me to understand why it was ruled the way it was ruled," McDermott said after the game. "If it is ruled that way, then why wasn't it slowed down, just to make sure that we have this right. That would have made a lot of sense to me. To make sure that we have this thing right, because that's a pivotal play in the game. We have the ball at the (20-yard line) and maybe kicking a game-winning field goal right there.

"... But I'm saying it because I'm standing up for Buffalo, dammit. I'm standing up for us. What went on — that is not how it should go down, in my estimation. These guys spent three hours out there, playing football, pouring their guts out. To not even say, 'Hey, let's just slow this thing down.' That's why I'm bothered."

Ruff couldn't help but think of his own experience nearly 27 years ago.

"The play that Sean was talking about is eerily like our 'No Goal' in '99," Ruff said after Sabres practice on Sunday. "You know, what's the rule? We've had that debate. I totally get it. If I looked at the football game against the Jags and it took two or three minutes to decide whether the clock expired, why wouldn't it take two or three minutes to decide whether this guy was down on the ground with the ball and had been touched and is that a catch? Why was that definitive so fast? I don't know enough about it to even be standing here commenting, but like most Buffalo fans, it just felt like you had been stabbed in the gut with a knife. That's what it felt like to me."

After Saturday's game, referee Carl Cheffers spoke with a pool reporter and explained, "The receiver has to complete the process of a catch. He was going to the ground as part of the process of the catch, and he lost possession of the ball when he hit the ground. The defender gained possession of it at that point. The defender is the one that completed the process of the catch, so the defender was awarded the ball."

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Bills-Broncos: NFL rules analyst weighs in on controversial overtime interception

NFL rules analyst Walt Anderson gives his take on the Broncos' controversial overtime interception against the Bills.

Cheffers also said the ruling was upheld by a review in New York. That explanation didn't sit well with McDermott.

"That play is not even close," McDermott said. "That's a catch all the way. I sat in my locker and I looked at it probably 20 times, and nobody can convince me that that ball is not caught and in possession of Buffalo. I just have no idea how the NFL handled it, in particular, the way that they did. I think the players and the fans deserve an explanation."

Ruff knows what McDermott was feeling. The Bills played an imperfect game with four other turnovers in addition to the controversial interception. Like the Sabres in 1999, there were other factors that led to their season ending. But in the immediate aftermath, it's hard to reconcile with one of those factors being something outside of your control.



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"It's nothing more than just being emotional about the game and how it ended," Ruff said. "You're not blaming. You want a better explanation. You feel like maybe there was a better call to make like tie goes to the offensive guy. Tie goes to the runner in baseball. I thought tie went to the offensive guy in football. I might be a biased Bills fan, though. That's probably the way everybody will take it."

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ESPN / NHL trade grades: Report cards for biggest deals of 2025-26 - ESPN

Ryan S. Clark

The 2025-26 NHL trade season is off to a wild start. That continued Sunday, as the Calgary Flames traded defenseman Rasmus Andersson to the Vegas Golden Knights for a package that included defenseman Zach Whitecloud, draft picks and a prospect. The Flames are retaining 50% of Andersson's salary.

Previously, the Vancouver Canucks traded Quinn Hughes to the Minnesota Wild, in exchange for Zeev Buium, Marco Rossi, Liam Ohgren and a 2026 first-round pick. Earlier, the Pittsburgh Penguins sent goaltender Tristan Jarry and forward Sam Poulin to the Edmonton Oilers in exchange for goaltender Stuart Skinner, defenseman Brett Kulak and a 2029 second-round pick.

Throughout the season up until the March 6 deadline, ESPN reporters will be grading each side on all of the big swaps, with the latest deals highest up on this page.

Read on for more, and keep this page bookmarked as the trade volume rises throughout the season.

Jump ahead: Andersson to VGK

Hughes to MIN

Jarry to EDM

Jan. 18: Andersson traded to the Golden Knights

Trading for a top-pairing defenseman from the Calgary Flames is something the Vegas Golden Knights have done before, landing Noah Hanifin in 2024.

They did it again Sunday, acquiring Rasmus Andersson in a deal with the Flames in exchange for defenseman Zach Whitecloud, a 2027 first-round pick, a 2027 second-round pick that becomes a first-round pick if Vegas wins the Stanley Cup, and prospect defenseman Abram Wiebe. The Flames are retaining 50% of Andersson's salary, and his contract expires after this season.

Let's take a look at how each front office performed in the NHL's latest trade.

Golden Knights grade: B+

This trade had quite a few angles. It starts with why the Golden Knights felt it was necessary to trade for the most sought-after defenseman weeks before the Olympic break.

Vegas is without Alex Pietrangolo for what could be the rest of the season, if not his career, which forced the Golden Knights to navigate the first half of the season without a proven, top-four right-handed defenseman who can be trusted to play in every situation.

Their underlying metrics show that their defensive structure was finding success. They entered Sunday giving up the fewest shots against per 60 minutes, the second fewest high-danger chances allowed per 60, and the ninth fewest scoring chances allowed per 60.

It's one of the major reasons they enter this week sitting atop the Pacific Division standings, with the eighth-most points in the NHL.

The disconnect has been with their goaltending throughout most of the season. The Golden Knights have a .884 team save percentage in all situations, tied for the third-lowest percentage in the NHL.

Maybe more could have been done in net -- with the idea that there's still time ahead of the March 6 deadline. Alternatively, they might believe they have the answer in Akira Schmid, considering he has 15 wins, a 2.45 goals-against average and a 2.90 goals saved above average that is 26th among the 56 goalies with more than 700 minutes played.

But there's another question: Is there such thing as a team being too good on defense? Especially when there has been a need to find more consistency in net?

That presents another reality within all the angles of this deal: the Golden Knights' presumed second defense pairing is good enough to be a top pairing elsewhere.

Adding Andersson to the mix means they'll likely reunite him with his former Flames defense partner in Noah Hanifin. Andersson and Hanifin were the Flames' top defense pairing for two-plus seasons before the latter was traded to the Golden Knights during the 2023-24 season.

Using that duo did more than just give the Flames a trusted top partnership. It gave them two defenseman who could each score more than 10 goals, facilitate the puck, and be trusted to play in every possible situation.

But the trade does raise at least some concern about risk.

Sportsnet reported that the Boston Bruins removed themselves from the Andersson race because there was no extension as part of the deal, with the idea that the Golden Knights believed they could eventually get a new deal done at some point before this summer.

ESPN's Emily Kaplan reported Sunday that Andersson, who is in the final year of his current contract, made it known that Vegas was his preferred destination. If so, it creates an expectation that he and the Golden Knights will eventually find common ground on a new deal.

It's a similar situation the Golden Knights had a few years ago with, you guessed it, Hanifin before he signed an eight-year contract extension worth \$7.35 million annually.

Let's say Anderson does end up signing an extension. This trade would become another one that lands the Golden Knights front office an "A" grade in their win-at-all-costs pursuit for the second title in franchise history

Flames grade: B+

It's becoming an all-too familiar script for the Flames over the past five or so years: moving on from some of their best players with the mission of finding a deal that helps the franchise in the short and long term.

With Andersson entering the final months of his contract, it was the latest example of that dynamic. What further reinforced the reality of the second part is that the Flames came into Sunday as one of five Western Conference teams within seven points of the final wild-card spot.

So, finding a return for Andersson that could help them now and in the future was crucial. It appears that this particular trade could help them accomplish that mission.

Whitecloud helps them now, in that they get a proven right-shot, top-four Stanley Cup winner who can play heavy minutes. He has two years left



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on his contract after this season, worth \$2.75 million annually. It's the sort of contract that allows the Flames to explore a few options.

The first is that they keep him given his experience and contract value for a team that now has \$8.545 million in salary cap space, per PuckPedia. The second is they could seek to trade him either this season or in the future to a contender in need of defensive help; again, he provides extensive Stanley Cup playoff experience at a team-friendly price.

Another detail that has proved important for the Flames and other teams in their situations is draft capital. That's why it was so crucial for them to get a first-round pick when they traded Hanifin. That's what also made it necessary to do the same for any team that wanted Andersson.

Now they have two first-round picks in 2026 and again in 2027, with both of those extra first-rounders coming by way of the Golden Knights. (And potentially another one down the road if Vegas wins the Cup.)

Wiebe was a seventh-round pick in 2022 who is currently in his third year at the University of North Dakota. The 6-foot-3 Wiebe has three goals and 14 points in 24 games for UND. He becomes added defensive depth for the Flames' system.

Dec. 12: Wild land Hughes in a December blockbuster

Everything was quiet Friday ... until it wasn't. Because that's when the first blockbuster trade of the season happened, with an expected name going to an unexpected place.

The Vancouver Canucks traded captain and star defenseman Quinn Hughes to the Minnesota Wild with defenseman Zeev Buium, forward Liam Ohgren, forward Marco Rossi and a 2026 first-round pick going in the other direction.

How did both general managers perform in what is easily the biggest trade of the season to this stage?

play

1:47

Why Quinn Hughes' trade to Wild puts rest of NHL on notice

Greg Wyshynski breaks down why he loves the trade of Quinn Hughes to the Minnesota Wild.

Wild grade: A-

In recent years, the Wild built one of the best farm systems in the NHL. Investing in their system and in player development gave them options ... and they used three of those options to land one of the NHL's best defensemen.

Hughes gives the Wild a Norris Trophy winner who can be used in every situation, starting with the offensive zone. Finding ways to consistently score goals has been a challenge for the Wild over the past few seasons.

Not that Hughes can single-handedly solve for that one problem. But he can definitely help, considering he has had four straight seasons of more than 60 assists and is projected to finish with 56 having missed a portion of this season with an injury.

How crucial is that for the Wild? Hughes' 60 assists alone would have been tied for second on the team in points last season. His 76 total points also would have led the Wild outright in that category. The 21 assists that he has this season would already be the most if he played the whole season for the Wild, and his 23 points are tied for the third most on the roster.

Hughes also provides the Wild with another option -- in addition to Brock Faber -- who can be trusted to play in every key situation for long periods. The Wild could even pair them together if needed to form a combination that can defend and then quickly break out into transition.

The Wild's top-four defensive unit also features Jonas Brodin, Jared Spurgeon and Faber, while Jake Middleton is logging more than 18 minutes per game.

Of course, adding Hughes came with a premium package going the other way. Buium was in his first full NHL season, having been a first-round pick in 2024. Ohgren was a first-round pick in 2022, and Rossi was a first-round pick in 2020.

The thought was that Buium would be part of the long-term plan, whereas Ohgren was a bit more of a work in progress given he had spent part of the season in the AHL. Rossi re-signed with the Wild having just spent the 2024-25 season and the early portion of the offseason as a possible trade target before agreeing to that new deal.

But there was also the matter of where those three fit into the Wild's current lineup. Buium was on the third pairing, with the idea that he could be elevated into the top four at some point. Ohgren was playing amid the Wild's injury crisis -- Rossi and others had been on IR this season -- but has zero points in 18 games.

Parlaying a sizable part of their future to get Hughes signals that the Wild are intent on breaking into that collection of teams that are in a championship window. Two of them -- the Colorado Avalanche and the Dallas Stars -- are ahead of the Wild in the Central Division standings right now.

Hughes has one more year left on his current contract at \$7.85 million before hitting free agency in the summer of 2027, but he can sign an extension as of July 1, 2026. Whatever happens between now and then could play a role in defining one of the biggest trades in Wild franchise history.

Canucks grade: A

Going from being a game away from the Western Conference finals in 2024 to potentially winning the lottery over a two-year period prompted some difficult questions in Vancouver.

Figuring out whether the franchise needed to move on from Hughes might have been the most difficult.

Speculation about Hughes' future ramped up significantly this offseason, when team president Jim Rutherford said that Hughes wanted to play with his brothers, Jack and Luke, who are on the New Jersey Devils.

Eventually, the Canucks were playing out two hypotheticals: one in which they kept Hughes, attempted to turn things around but ran the risk of losing him in free agency with nothing in return at the end of the 2026-27 season, and another in which they moved on from him at some point, commanding the sort of trade package that could help them now and in the future.

They went with the second option, which has a chance to potentially start paying dividends now for a franchise that entered Friday with the worst record in the NHL -- but that is also the owner of two first-round picks in this summer's draft.

Buium projects as a top-pairing, puck-moving defenseman who could be used in various situations. He joins a top four that includes Filip Hronek, Marcus Pettersson and Tyler Myers. He gives the Canucks another young defenseman for the future, in a young group that also includes Elias N. Pettersson and Tom Willander. He's in the second year of his entry-level contract and will become a restricted free agent at the end of the 2026-27 season.

Ohgren is a potential top-nine option who has shown promise with what he has done at the AHL level. By skating more minutes with the Canucks, he could possibly find offensive consistency. He has two years remaining before becoming an RFA.

Rossi has a chance to establish himself as the Canucks' second-line center upon his return from injury. Trading J.T. Miller last season created



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a void that was slated to be filled by a player who came over in that deal, Filip Chytil. Chytil had three goals through six games before sustaining an upper-body injury that has kept him out of the lineup since Oct. 19.

Rossi, who is in the first year of a three-year bridge deal, could return as soon as Sunday to provide the Canucks with another top-six option down the middle.

Dec. 12: Oilers land Jarry, send Skinner to Penguins in goalie swap

The Edmonton Oilers finally addressed their multiple-season problem in goal by acquiring Pittsburgh Penguins netminder Tristan Jarry.

The Oilers sent goalie Stuart Skinner, defenseman Brett Kulak and a 2029 second-round pick to Pittsburgh for Jarry and forward Sam Poulin.

How did both GMs do in this deal? Let's dive in.

Penguins grade: B+

This trade is primarily about Jarry, of course. But it's about someone else, too: Sergei Murashov.

The 21-year-old, who was a fourth-round pick by the Penguins in 2022, has grown into potentially their most promising prospect. He starred in the MHL, the premier Russian junior league, for two seasons after he was drafted. He also won four of his seven KHL games while posting a .928 save percentage in those stints.

Murashov came to North America last season where he posted a .922 save percentage over 26 ECHL games before a .913 mark in the AHL in 16 games. He has a .943 save percentage in 11 AHL games this season, while having a .912 save percentage and a 1.90 goals-against average in four games with the Penguins.

It's the sort of trajectory that makes it evident that the Penguins have found their goalie of the future -- who could be playing right now. Even more so given Murashov has a chance to be the latest Russian goalie to make an impact in what has been a golden age for Russian netminders.

Murashov has one more year left on his contract at a team-friendly \$861,000. Arturs Silovs and Skinner, who are both on the NHL roster, are in the final years of their deals. Together, they cost the Pens a combined \$3.45 million in cap space, with Silovs set to become a restricted free agent this coming offseason.

Skinner does provide them with an experienced option in net, given that Murashov is in just his second season of North American hockey while Silovs has only 32 games, with a career-high 13 of those performances coming this season.

It creates the sort of environment that allows the Penguins to continue developing Murashov with the idea that they can give him the necessary minutes, rather than trying to juggle his workload versus that of a goalie such as Jarry, who was a significant financial investment with two more years left on his contract at north of \$5 million annually.

Getting Jarry's contract off the books means the Penguins can now pave the way for Murashov to receive more playing time. They are now also armed with the sort of cap space that will allow them make other moves in their bid to reach the playoffs for the first time in three years.

PuckPedia projects that the Penguins have \$9.164 million in salary cap space after the trade, which could give the Penguins an advantage entering the trade deadline. They entered Friday in the second Eastern Conference wild-card spot in a race that has 10 teams separated by six points.

Adding Kulak in the deal gives the Penguins an experienced top-six defenseman and someone who could anchor their bottom pairing. The Penguins have a clearly established top four, but have shuffled through their bottom-pairing options; they've had five defensemen who have played more than nine games and who have logged close to or more

than 15 minutes per game. Kulak is averaging 17:42 in ice time per game this season.

Kulak can also provide the Penguins with another option on their penalty kill, as he has logged more than 100 short-handed minutes in two of his three most recent seasons.

Oilers grade: B

Any personnel decision the Oilers make is going to be viewed through the prism of whether it can help them win the Stanley Cup now. Trading for Jarry -- or any goaltender -- while moving away from Skinner reflects that reality.

There had been more than enough evidence in place to suggest that the Oilers needed a change in net. Advancing to the Stanley Cup Final in consecutive seasons made it extremely clear that the Oilers are in a championship window. Constantly having to press the proverbial reset button on Skinner in both of those runs to the Cup Final, however, played a significant role in what made their chances of winning a title rather murky by comparison.

Skinner recovered the first time the Oilers pulled him and brought him back during the 2024 playoffs. He finished with a save percentage greater than .900 in eight combined Stanley Cup Final and Western Conference playoff games. Last postseason, Skinner had four games with a save percentage greater than .900 in the Cup Final and conference finals -- with three of those games coming in the conference finals.

It's an even more damning reality with the consideration that the Oilers have possessed one of the strongest defensive structures in the NHL since hiring Kris Knoblauch in November 2024. The last two years have seen the Oilers rank in the top eight in allowing the fewest shots per 60 minutes, the fewest scoring chances per 60 and the fewest high-danger scoring chances allowed per 60, according to Natural Stat Trick.

Only to then have the ninth-lowest team save percentage in 5-on-5 play over that same span.

This season has been no different. The Oilers are a top-10 team in terms of the fewest shots allowed per 60 and the fewest high-danger scoring chances allowed per 60. That's why they entered Friday in the first of the two Western Conference wild-card spots.

But despite that strong defensive structure, they are last in team save percentage in 5-on-5 play. That's also why they entered Friday in a wild-card spot instead of sitting atop the Pacific Division -- granted, they're just five points behind first place.

Another item that hinted that a change could be coming was the fact that Skinner and Calvin Pickard are in the final season of their respective contracts, at figures that could be moved. Skinner is earning \$2.60 million this season, while Pickard is at \$1 million.

Jarry provides the Oilers with a two-time All-Star goalie who they believe can give them the consistency that's been missing. Five of his six most recent campaigns have seen Jarry finish with a save percentage of more than .900.

He will also be under contract for two more years after this one, at \$5.38 million annually. That means he'll come off the books after the 2027-28 season -- the same time that superstar captain Connor McDavid's two-year extension will be over and could potentially see him hit free agency for the first time.

Will the Oilers have won a Cup by then? Or will the next two years see them get close only to fall short again? -- Ryan S. Clark

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Sportsnet.ca / Why Conroy felt time was right for Flames to trade Andersson

Eric Francis 6-7 minutes 1/18/2026

CALGARY — With every painful shot block absorbed by his prized trade chip, Craig Conroy felt increasingly compelled to pull the trigger on a Rasmus Andersson trade.

However, it was the phone call he received early Sunday that made it clear it was time to make a deal.

"I think at the beginning, at times, they were open to the idea of signing (an extension) with teams, but then I was informed this morning they weren't open to signing with other teams," said Conroy Sunday night, shortly after trading Andersson to the Vegas Golden Knights for two picks and two players.

"That definitely changes the game a little bit.

"You're hoping they will work with you to try to get a deal signed somewhere. But I also feel that's within his right. He deserves that. He's going to be a UFA at the end of the year.

"So then we're trying to maximize what we can on a rental and have a team step up and do it. Some teams were out of it when they found out he would not sign, which I understand, as they're going to give up a lot to get Ras because he's a good player."

If anyone was going to be comfortable gambling on the ol' rent-to-own gambit, as it pertains to Andersson, of course it would be the Golden Knights.

As one of the league's most desirable destinations, Vegas had already rolled the dice on a similar acquisition with Noah Hanifin two years earlier, with the ultimate payoff coming months later.

Given reports that Andersson had previously expressed interest in playing in Vegas, who would bet against Anderson eventually putting pen to paper on a long-term extension there?

With that in mind, the Golden Knights put together an offer that beat out four other teams, which included their first round pick in 2027, a conditional second in 2028 (that turns into a first rounder if Vegas wins the Cup in 2026), Zach Whitecloud, and rights to college prospect Abram Wiebe.

No, the deal doesn't immediately address the Flames' shortfall of skill.

Patience is obviously required for that to materialize.

"You don't see a lot of skill moving around — we have to draft skill, we have to develop skill, and that's why you saw Matvei Gridin in the lineup yesterday, because he brings that skill," said Conroy, who will also retain half of Andersson's salary the rest of the year.

"I saw all the things online I should have got. There's a difference between fantasy and reality, and we have to work in the reality part. How many young skilled players get given up?

"To get skill is tough."

Whitecloud is a 29-year-old right-shot defenceman who is physical, kills penalties, can play big minutes and is a Stanley Cup winner.

The 6-foot-2, 210-pounder has recently played alongside Hanifin on the second pairing — a role he'll continue in Calgary for two more years at \$2.75 million.

Wiebe is a 6-foot-3, 209 pound left-shot defenceman at the University of North Dakota, where the unsigned seventh-round pick wears an 'A' and has one more year of eligibility left.

"A very solid, all-around player," said Conroy, who saw him play at UND while scouting two other Flames prospects on the team.

"He's going to see an opportunity for a young guy to play, and hopefully the guys at North Dakota put a good word in for us. I don't see a problem signing him."

The former captain of the Chilliwack Chiefs has three goals and 14 points in 24 games this season and is a native of Mission, B.C.

Conroy gave Andersson plenty of credit for the way he elevated his game this year despite the fact he had no chance of staying here.

Andersson would not give the Flames any numbers to work with, in terms of what it would take to extend him.

Never made sense anyway, given his age and the youth movement the team needs to take.

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

Hockey fans already know the name, but this is not the blog. From Sportsnet, 32 Thoughts: The Podcast with NHL Insider Elliotte Friedman and Kyle Bukauskas is a weekly deep dive into the biggest news and interviews from the hockey world.

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"Where we are in the standings, and the way the season started, this was probably the way it was heading for sure," said Conroy.

"We love Ras as a player and what he's done. I give him all the credit in the world to come in and play with all this stuff going on around him and he's had one of the best seasons he's ever had.

"But where the team is at, and where we are trying to get to, this made the most sense for us moving forward."

Now was the time, well ahead of the self-imposed Olympic roster freeze the Flames wanted to deal Andersson by.

"This is something we needed to do sooner than later only because of injuries — you're a little concerned every night," said Conroy, citing two of his Kings teammates who returned home injured from the 2006 Olympics.

"One of the opening remarks I made when I took the job was I wasn't going to just let guys walk for nothing. And if he would have gotten injured then who knows what I would have got."

So what's next?

"I don't even want to speculate — we're going to continue to work at it and see where this goes," said Conroy, who is listening to offers on Blake Coleman and Nazem Kadri, amongst others, as he decides just how deep the rebuild will go.

Andersson got a chance to say goodbye one day earlier, when he was called out as the game's third star, clapped and waved to the crowd, and had earlier high-fived all his teammates as they left the ice.

Those who take umbrage with Andersson refusing to commit anywhere long-term are way off base.

It's hypocritical and wrong to suggest any athlete should feel they need to sign long-term anywhere they don't want, especially if the long-term offer isn't considered optimal. He's earned the right to choose on his timeline.

As one of the Flames' most successful draft and development stories in decades, he's already done enough for the organization.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 19, 2026

The four-man package he earned the club Sunday is a generous parting gift.

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers cap perfect weekend with another shutout

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — The Edmonton Oilers and shutouts. They don't exactly go together like Jack and Coke, if you know what we mean.

Since the Oilers entered the NHL in the 1979-80 season until now, 33 teams have played in the league. The Oilers rank 27th in shutouts, behind a Florida Panthers team that has played more than 1,100 fewer games and an Arizona franchise that was never any good, truth be told.

But here's Edmonton, with back-to-back shutouts on back-to-back days. Tristan Jarry shut out the woeful Vancouver Canucks 6-0 on Saturday, and Connor Ingram — who is starting to look like one of the best trades in the league this season — goose-egged the St. Louis Blues 5-0 on Sunday.

The last time the Oilers had shutouts on back-to-back days? Jussi Markkanen and Tommy Salo, 24 years ago.

And one of those was against the Atlanta Thrashers!

"We were giving up a lot of goals early in the season," said head coach Kris Knoblauch, whose team is ranked a season-high 17th in goals against per game. "I think that had to do with our puck play. But that being said, when you're getting the saves, that is the biggest point. And our goalies have been playing really well right now."

When you watch the Oilers half-assing their way through October and November, winning games 5-3, losing them 4-3, it can be hard to believe they are back-to-back Western Conference champions. Then they pick up their defensive game, and you are reminded that even the best offensive players in the sport can and will play the kind of responsible hockey required to make the long runs folks have become accustomed to here.

Now, what if the Edmonton Oilers added superior goaltending to that mix?

What if one of Connor Ingram, who stopped 27 pucks to run his save percentage to .917 Sunday, or Tristan Jarry — who is at .907 after a tidy Saturday night in Vancouver — gave the Oilers considerably better goaltending than Stuart Skinner has the past two seasons?

What if both did?

As for Ingram, he's rebuilt his career after some time in the NHL/NHLPA player assistance program. The Oilers hoped he could possibly return to the form he showed in posting back-to-back .907 save percentages with Arizona from 2022-24.

Now, he might be even better than that — playing behind a team that knows how to win.

"This team is built a lot different than that team was," Ingram said of the Coyotes. "We had some wild years down there in Arizona before we kind of figured it out. So (I'll) just try and keep it going as long as I can."

He's a recovering OCD patient who shies away from any big-picture questions. Ingram is relentless in his quest to keep his world small.

"Any day you're in the NHL is a good day, no matter where you are or what you're doing," the Imperial, Sask., native said when asked about the rest of the season. "I mean, (Edmonton) is the mecca of hockey in Western Canada. This is what you watch growing up. This is one of the nicest buildings in the NHL. So just to be a part of it for however long it'll be, is something I'll remember for a long time."

On Ryan Nugent-Hopkins night at Rogers Place, Ingram made sure Nuge's game-opener — a bullet wrist shot that ripped high over Jordan Binnington's blocker — stood up as the winner.

"I think it went as good as a night like tonight can go," Ingram said. "It's a big day for Nuge, a big day for the organization, and everything seemed to click. I mean, playing your 1,000th game and you score the game-winner? It doesn't get much better than that."

What's Ingram's life like these days?

"My life's just hockey," he shrugged. "There are a couple days a week I don't even make it outside. I just walk through the pedway (from the JW Marriott) over here. I sleep and play hockey right now — it's an easy life.

"I miss my family, I miss my dogs. But right now it's just simple. And I think that's helping."

His wife and dogs are still in Bakersfield, where Edmonton's farm team is located.

"I've got two dogs down there, so somebody's got to look after them. Poor Sarah's down there by herself," he said.

With Team Canada GM Doug Armstrong in the building, Zach Hyman scored twice — his 18th and 19th goals in 31 games this season, after recovering from that dislocated wrist.

With Brayden Point injured and iffy to play in Milan, does Hyman feel like he made a good impression Sunday?

"You can ask (Armstrong) the questions, because I don't have answers for you," smiled Hyman, who has now scored 17 goals in his last 20 games.

OIL SPILLS — Nugent-Hopkins becomes just the 10th player in NHL history to score in his first and 1,000th games ... The Oilers have never recorded back-to-back shutouts in franchise history when scoring five-plus goals in each contest ... Edmonton closes a stretch of five games in seven days with a 3-1-1 record, having given up just five goals in regulation — three in an OT loss to Nashville.

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Sportsnet.ca / Sunday Overreactions: Rangers' declaration could fuel major trade spree

Michael Amato

Letter writing has become a lost art in today's world, except to maybe the New York Rangers.

The Rangers finally waved the white flag on this season after New York general manager Chris Drury released a letter to their fans on social media Friday letting them know a re-tool was coming. This isn't the first time the Rangers have done this, as the team released another similar letter almost eight years ago that explained to their fans, in a roundabout way, to expect a rebuild. However, we never really saw that rebuild. Igor



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Shesterkin soon arrived, the Rangers signed Artemi Panarin a year later, and they were off and running again. This time, though, a quick fix for New York's problems seems very unlikely to fall into its lap.

It's taken until mid-January for us to finally have our first true seller in the Eastern Conference. The standings have been so bunched up that no one was really out of it, but a recent slide and perhaps a realization by the Rangers that they could get a jump on the market saw them throw up the for-sale sign. The Rangers also have a lot of assets they could sell if they like, with the most obvious being Panarin. Shortly after the letter came out, Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman reported that they wouldn't be offering Panarin an extension and they'd work with him on a trade prior to the deadline. Nick Kypreos had both Panarin and Vincent Trocheck on his trade board this week, with the latter also being a very intriguing target for teams.

Trocheck is still under contract for three more years after this one at a very reasonable \$5.6 million cap hit, so he would have a massive market if he's made available. The veteran forward is a good two-way centre that has a perfect style for the playoffs. Any team that acquires him will get him for multiple post-season runs.

Given how at one point there were so few sellers, there was a belief that this year's deadline could end up being very quiet. With the Rangers now open for business, though, there could be some massive moves on the horizon.

This year's deadline could be the most impactful in years

Now that the Rangers have declared their intentions, there could be a rush from other teams to try and move some their other key pieces first before New York gets going. There still aren't that many sellers, but those that are planning to deal have some impactful players. Besides the Rangers, you can probably also count the Vancouver Canucks, Calgary Flames and St. Louis Blues among those willing to sell. A Rasmus Andersson deal seems inevitable and there have been rumblings about Nazem Kadri and Blake Coleman as well. It sounds like the Canucks are willing to listen on just about anybody and when it comes to the Blues, it doesn't sound like too many players are off limits. That means even captain Brayden Schenn, Jordan Kyrou and Justin Faulk could potentially be had for the right price.

This doesn't even account for additional teams falling out of it in the coming weeks that may also want to get into selling mode. If all the stars align, we could see more than handful of big names change addresses before the deadline.

Overreaction? No

What's interesting about this year's deadline is that there might technically be two. There will be a trade freeze from Feb. 4-22 during the Olympic break and some general managers may be hoping to get business done before then. We could see a handful of moves prior to the players heading off to Milan. Then, the actual trade deadline will follow very quickly after the Olympics. It's possible some GMs will use the break to strategize about what moves to make to counter what some teams have already done. Let's say Andersson gets moved to the East — then, we could see some other Eastern Conference teams look to also bolster their defence to keep pace. With the standings being so tight, any advantage could be the difference between making the playoffs or not.

There are a ton of teams that can't afford to miss out on the post-season this spring, so expect a plethora of trades as desperate teams try to load up.

Ilya Sorokin is the biggest reason for the Islanders' turnaround

There's a new energy around the New York Islanders this season and there's no denying it's because of Matthew Schaefer. The 18-year-old phenom is taking the NHL by storm and has put the franchise on an entirely new trajectory. A mediocre team for a few years prior, the Isles

now seem like a decent bet to get back to the playoffs thanks to the already-likely Calder winner. With all that said, Schaefer isn't doing this alone — goaltender Ilya Sorokin could make a case that he's an even bigger reason for the Isles' improved play. Sorokin might even be the best goalie in the NHL this season.

Overreaction? No

Sorokin was solid for the past two seasons but nowhere near the level he displayed in his first three years in New York. This year, though, he's re-established himself as one of the league's elite netminders. Sorokin is up to a .915 save percentage and leads the NHL with a whopping 22.3 goals saved above expected. Since Nov. 1, he's been even better, with a .929 save percentage and five shutouts. The Islanders have needed Sorokin to be this good, too. They haven't been giving him a ton of offensive support, as the Islanders rank 23rd in goals per game and they've also been one of the worst teams at giving up quality looks. New York has given up a league-worst 502 high-danger chances against.

Schaefer has been an incredible story this year, but I don't think the Isles would be sitting second in the Metropolitan Division if not for the heroics of Sorokin.

The Stars are in trouble

There was a time not too long ago that the Dallas Stars were nipping at the heels of the Colorado Avalanche for first overall in the NHL. Now, they've won just two of their last 11 games and are tied with the Minnesota Wild for second in the Central. Dallas is also struggling to find the back of the net, scoring only five goals in its past three contests and being held to one goal in each of its past two. Thomas Harley doesn't have a point in four games and is enduring a down year overall, having not scored since the middle of December. It's been a disappointing development for a Stars blue line that already isn't as deep as other Western Conference powers. Plus, Jake Oettinger hasn't been in top form this month, sporting an .862 save percentage and allowing at least four goals on three different occasions.

To make matters worse, Dallas's schedule doesn't get any easier for the rest of the month. The Stars still have to face Tampa, Boston, Vegas and Utah before the Olympic break. Right now, the team doesn't look like the Stanley Cup contender they were hoping to be.

Overreaction? Yes

The good news for the Stars is they still have a massive cushion in regards to their playoff position. Sure, it's possible if they continue to slide that Minnesota may overtake them for second in the division, but they're still 11 points up on Utah in fourth. It would take a massive collapse for them to not finish as one of the top three teams in the Central and an even bigger one to be in any kind of jeopardy of missing the playoffs.

I'd also expect the Stars to be very active leading up to the trade deadline, with defence being their primary focus. Their forward depth can rival anyone and Oettinger has been excellent over the past two post-seasons, so upgrading the back end with a top-four blue liner will easily put the Stars in position for another deep playoff run.

It's been a very disappointing season for the Columbus Blue Jackets and Kent Johnson's production is one of the main reasons for that. Johnson has floundered this season to the tune of just five goals and 14 points in 47 outings, which is a massive step back for his potential and that of the 2021 fifth-overall pick. The Blue Jackets were forced to trade away another first-round pick in Yegor Chinakhov not too long ago when it was clear things weren't working out in Columbus. Johnson is still young enough and has shown enough promise that the Blue Jackets should be able to get a decent return for him if they decide to explore his trade market.

Overreaction? Yes



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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At some point, the Blue Jackets have to start recouping some value from their high draft picks in recent years and it was only a season ago where Johnson tallied 24 goals and 57 points in 68 games. That's nearly a 70-point pace over 82 outings. If I'm general manager Don Waddell, I'm not giving up on that type of talent in a player that is still only 23 years of age. Plus, I'd also give Johnson some time under new head coach Rick Bowness, who just took over behind the bench earlier this week. He's already looking better in his first three games under his new coach, seeing his ice time significantly increase and picking up two points on Thursday. The Blue Jackets appear to be in the middle of a new-coach bump that Johnson could take advantage of to spark his game. At the very least, Columbus wouldn't want to trade him when his value is at an all-time low. Give Johnson some time to figure things out with Bowness and hopefully he finds his groove again.

Connor Bedard receives most of the attention when it comes to the Chicago Blackhawks these days and rightfully so, but another Windy City forward is having an impressive campaign as well. Tyler Bertuzzi has quietly tallied 24 goals, which is already one more than he scored all of last year and puts him in the top 20 in NHL goal scoring. What's perhaps most impressive about Bertuzzi's campaign is that he's being doing much of his damage without playing with Bedard. The two play together on the power play, but Bedard and Bertuzzi have only skated together about 17 per cent of the time at even strength. Bertuzzi is scoring at around a 44-goal pace with a little less than half a season to go, so can he reach 40 goals for the first time in his career?

Overreaction? No

If you're skeptical when it comes to Bertuzzi keeping up this pace, it's likely because of his shooting percentage. Bertuzzi is currently shooting almost 23 per cent, something he likely won't be able to sustain throughout the entirety of the season. That said, Bertuzzi only needs 16 more goals in 34 games to hit 40, something that seems reasonable even if his shooting percentage dips. He's also shooting the puck a lot more frequently this year, as Bertuzzi is on pace for a new career high of nearly 200 shots. Not to mention Chicago's power play is clicking at over 22 per cent this year, so Bertuzzi should be able to feast on the man advantage for at least another half dozen goals. With some expected regression, I don't see Bertuzzi finishing at his 44-goal pace, though 40 does seem in reach.

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