



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 20, 2026

The News & Observer

Hurricanes stop Sabres in a game with a distinct Stanley Cup playoff feel

By: Chip Alexander

Sometimes, it's a better hockey game than anyone probably expected.

It was a national holiday. It was an afternoon game. It was the middle of January.

But sometimes, those games can surprise. It can be like it's April or May, with a lot more on the line, with some hard hits, chippy moments and desperation saves by the two goalies.

The Carolina Hurricanes and Buffalo Sabres had one of those games Monday. The Canes emerged with a 2-1 victory at Lenovo Center, but only after 60 hard-fought, don't-give-an-inch minutes that had both teams straining to come away with the two points.

Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov scored his fifth goal in the past three games — all five on Sebastian Aho assists — and Seth Jarvis notched the winner on a power play at 2:10 of the third period, Svechnikov and Aho with the assists.

But the big story in this one was Brandon Bussi, just as the Canes goalie has been much of the season. Can a goalie go from waiver wire to the Vezina Trophy? Maybe not, but Bussi has done little but win for the Hurricanes, and done it at a time when injured goalie Pyotr Kochetkov has been sidelined for the season and veteran Frederik Andersen inconsistent.

Bussi had 17 saves Monday in pushing his record to 18-3-1. More than a few were on Sabres star center Tage Thompson, who Bussi said once played with him a year in junior hockey, and one was bigger than the others.

"The season he's having and the accolades and the ability to put the puck in the net, you just have to keep an eye out when he's on the ice," Bussi said of Thompson, who has 25 goals this season.

One had to see the Bussi save to believe it. Thompson probably didn't believe it. He likely scores nearly every time when presented with the same opening and opportunity. He's that good a finisher.

The situation: the Sabres had a power play in the second period of a 1-1 game. Bussi suddenly was faced with a 2-on-0 situation in front of the crease, with Jason Zucker to his left and Thompson to his right.

Zucker made the pass and Thompson lifted a quick shot and Canes fans groaned and the TNT telecast graphic quickly showed the Sabres with a 2-1 lead. But ...

Bussi, a left-handed goalie, stuck out his glove and the puck found the back of the glove. No goal. Thompson, already

headed to the Buffalo bench, could only look to the rafters. The groans soon turned to thunderous "Bus-si, Bus-si" cheers with 11:29 left in the period.

"Save of the game, for sure, and maybe the year," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It would be tough to see a better save than that."

Asked if that was his best save of the season, Bussi smiled and replied, "The next one."

That has been his mentality since being claimed off waivers Oct. 5 from the Florida Panthers — take it save by save, period by period, game by game. Before this season, he had never played in an NHL game, and there he was Monday being interviewed after the game on TNT.

The final moments were hectic. The Sabres, who had pulled into a wild-card playoff position with a 15-2-1 stretch of games, pulled goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen for a sixth attacker.

Thompson twice put shots on net in the final half-minute, and it was a fierce battle in the Canes zone to the end.

Bussi's only thought: "Keep the puck out of the net, no matter what. Find a way."

The Canes (31-15-4) found a way and now have beaten the Sabres 13 straight times at home. Buffalo (26-17-5) scored quickly Monday as Rasmus Dahlin knocked the Sabres' first shot past Bussi for a 1-0 lead. But Svechnikov tied it off a perfect Aho feed and Jarvis put the Canes in front with a sharp-angle shot.

The only downside for the Canes in the game was losing forward Eric Robinson to an apparent shoulder injury. Brind'Amour said Robinson could be out for "a while" but did not know the severity of the injury.

But much of the talk Monday was about guy they call "The Bus."

Bussi has grown accustomed to being in the Canes' lineup, starting games. He has taken over Kochetkov's stall in the locker room opposite Andersen, and has taken over as the team's No. 1 goalie.

"I'll be frank with you. It will never feel normal," he said. "I think this is what you dream about your whole life, and I think that's a good thing for me. I'm fortunate to be able to do what I do for a living. To be able to hear the crowd cheer us on, cheer me on, is very cool.

"But I don't think I'm a person who ever takes that for granted."



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Bussi dazzles in Hurricanes' 2-1 win over Sabres | The North State Journal

By: Cory Lavalette

"Another level, definitely."

Those three words from Hurricanes forward Andrei Svechnikov summed up the performance of goaltender Brandon Bussi, who one-upped the record-breaking start of his career in a 2-1 win Monday over the visiting Sabres.

There was a handful of saves that belong on any postgame highlight reel, but Bussi's save on Buffalo center Tage Thompson — one of several the Carolina goaltender made on his former youth hockey teammate — with the game tied in the second period immediately belongs in a Hurricanes time capsule.

Carolina stole the puck on the penalty kill and looked to rush up ice shorthanded, but the Sabres forced a turnover to create a 2-on-0. Thompson passed to Jason Zucker next to Bussi's left and then quickly received the puck back. Thompson dropped to a knee to elevate the puck, but Bussi got back with his glove to rob the two-time 40-goal sniper.

"It's the save of the game, for sure, and maybe the year," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It's tough to see a better save than that."

It was just the main highlight of a signature performance for the Cinderella goalie who is now 18-3-1 since finally getting his NHL shot.

"I'll be frank with you: It'll never feel normal," Bussi (17 saves) said of his new, unexpected role. "I think this is what you dream about your whole life. And think that's a good thing for me. ... I'm fortunate to be able to do what I do for a living, and being able to hear the crowd cheer us on, cheer me on — it's very cool. And I don't think I'm a person that ever takes that for granted."

The Hurricanes also didn't take their limited power play opportunities for granted.

Despite several curious calls by the officials throughout the game, Carolina got its second chance on the man advantage two minutes into the third period.

Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal won the faceoff cleanly back to Seth Jarvis, who gave the puck to Sebastian Aho at the left sideboards. Aho then passed to the corner to Svechnikov, who threaded a pass through the hashmarks to Jarvis.

Buffalo goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (26 saves) stopped the initial one-timer, but Jarvis got the rebound immediately and scored his 22nd goal of the season at 2:10 of the third to put Carolina ahead.

"I think the guy kind of got a stick on me or I didn't get a great shot, so it kicked right back out to me," Jarvis said. "And when you're in that position, there's no other play really than throw it to the net. And luckily he was kind of down and out a little bit, so I was able to sneak it in there."

The two teams played to a draw through 40 minutes, with Bussi and Luukkonen both holding their ground in a battle of two of the league's hottest teams.

The Sabres jumped out to an early lead by scoring on their first shot attempt.

After Aho set up Svechnikov from a one-timer that went wide, Buffalo jumped out for an odd-man rush the other way. Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin called his own number, snapping a shot far side past Bussi for a 1-0 Buffalo lead 93 seconds into the game.

Svechnikov and Aho didn't misfire 5½ minutes later. After Carolina defenseman Sean Walker created a neutral zone turnover, Aho came up the right wing and fired a pass to the far post for Svechnikov, who tapped the puck past Luukkonen to tie the game at 7:04. It was Svechnikov's 17th goal of the season and fifth in three games.

"They score on our line, (and) you're always trying to get it back," Svechnikov said. "It was nice to score a couple of shifts after."

And Bussi did the rest.

"He was incredible," Jarvis said. "He didn't get tested too much early on, but that's what's so great about him. He stays in games and waits for his opportunities, and he made three or four unbelievable saves."

Notes: Eric Robinson was injured in the first period and did not return. Brind'Amour said he would be reevaluated Tuesday ... Shayne Gostisbehere and Noah Philp did not play due to injuries. Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Mike Reilly were healthy scratches. ... All three Hurricanes' penalties were called on Svechnikov.



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Recap: Canes Sink Sabres For Third Straight Win

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

Carolina climbs to first place in the Eastern Conference

RALEIGH, N.C - Another stellar effort from Brandon Bussi highlighted a third consecutive victory for the Carolina Hurricanes, who held off the Buffalo Sabres 2-1 at Lenovo Center on Monday.

Carolina was stung by a Sabres goal just 93 seconds into the contest, but quickly regained its footing and leveled the score just over five minutes later. After linking up three times on Saturday, the duo of Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho was at it again, as the latter found the former with a cross-crease pass for a tap-in at the back post.

Neither team added to the scoreboard during the second period, but the goalies were happy to provide the highlights with several impressive stops. The best of the bunch came from Bussi, who robbed Tage Thompson with the glove after a give-and-go had left the star Sabre all alone at the side of the net.

After the scoreless second, a Sabres penalty 2:03 into the third opened a window of opportunity for Carolina. And just seven seconds into that man advantage, Seth Jarvis buried his own rebound to give the Canes their first lead of the night. From there, Bussi and Co. shut things down in the defensive zone, with the 27-year-old backstop providing another flurry of highlight-reel stops to seal two points for Carolina.

Bussi finished with just 18 saves on the night but earned first-star honors for his contributions between the pipes, helping the Canes to their fifth one-goal victory of the season.

Stats & Standouts

Goaltender Brandon Bussi entered Monday's contest with the third-best high-danger save percentage (.866%) among NHL netminders, per NHL EDGE. According to Natural Stat Trick, the Canes' netminder was perfect in high-danger scenarios against the Sabres, going 6-for-6 in those situations on Monday.

Another win means Bussi's historic start to his career continues to pick up steam: his 18 victories are the most a goaltender has ever recorded through their first 22 starts in the League.

Forward Andrei Svechnikov scored for a career-high-tying third straight game, netting his fifth in that span. Svechnikov has now notched 17 goals this season, tied with Sebastian Aho for the second-most among Hurricanes skaters.

Forward Sebastian Aho picked up the primary assist on Svechnikov's strike, and has logged helpers on each of his linemate's five goals during his current three-game run.

That duo has now factored on the same goal for the 152nd time in their careers, tying Ron Francis and Jeff O'Neill for the fourth-highest total by a pair of teammates in franchise history. The top three are rounded out by Aho and Teuvo Teravainen (214x), Francis and Kevin Dineen (171x), and Andrew Cassels and Geoff Sanderson (163x).

Both Aho (7A) and Svechnikov (5G, 2A) have recorded multiple points in each of the last three games, marking the longest run of games with two or more points by a Hurricanes skater(s) this season.

Forward Seth Jarvis scored his team-leading fifth game-winning goal of the campaign, which is tied for sixth among NHL skaters at the time of publishing. Like his linemates Aho and Svechnikov, Jarvis is riding a three-game point streak (1G, 3A).

The Hurricanes have now won 13 straight home games against the Sabres, which is the longest active home win streak against a single opponent in the NHL.

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour on the contest...

"I thought we had a good first period - probably our best period. We gave them one, but it wasn't really giving them one. They make plays. Their (defensemen) are maybe the best in the league as a whole group. The way they skate and get up the ice, that's what happened - they beat us up the ice and rip a shot in the net. Other than that, I thought we did a pretty good job in the first period. It was a hard-fought game; both teams played well."

Brandon Bussi elaborating on his save of the year candidate and the victory...

"I hadn't seen a lot of work to that point; that might have been the fourth or fifth shot. I felt good prior to that, but I think it kind of gave the arena, our team, [and] myself a little bit of extra juice. Granted, I thought we played really, really well today. I think for pretty close to 60 minutes, we were playing our game, kind of limiting chances for the most part."

Seth Jarvis assessing Brandon Bussi's monster afternoon...

"He was incredible. Didn't get tested too much early on, but that's what's so great about him - he stays in games and waits for his opportunities. He made three or four unbelievable saves."



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Andrei Svechnikov with more praise for Bussi...

"Another level. Just played an unbelievable game... That was the save of the year. He was unbelievable tonight."

Brandon Bussi after earning his 18th win in his 22nd NHL appearance...

"I'll be frank with you, it'll never feel normal. This is what you dream about your whole life. I think that's a good thing for me. It doesn't mean that the lifestyle is not normal, but I'm fortunate to be able to do what I do for a living. Being able to

hear the crowd cheer us on, cheer me on, it's very cool. I don't think I'm a person that ever takes that for granted."

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 | Parking



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Jarvis breaks tie in 3rd period, Hurricanes defeat Sabres

By: Kurt Dusterberg

Svechnikov has goal, assist for Carolina, which wins 3rd in row

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Seth Jarvis broke a tie with a power-play goal in the third period, and the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Buffalo Sabres 2-1 at Lenovo Center on Monday.

Jarvis scored at 2:10, just seven seconds after Buffalo defenseman Owen Power was penalized for tripping Carolina forward Logan Stankoven. Jarvis capitalized on a sharp-angle rebound after Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped his shot from the right hash marks.

Andrei Svechnikov had a goal and an assist, and Sebastian Aho had two assists for the Hurricanes (31-15-4), who have won three in a row and are 7-1-1 in the past nine games.

Brandon Bussi, a 27-year-old in his first NHL season, made 17 saves to improve to 18-3-1.

"It wasn't like, for a couple periods, there weren't a ton of opportunities," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "But they were all like, that could be the difference, that could be the difference. (Luukkonen) made some good saves, too, so it was kind of a battle there in the net, and obviously our guy came out on top."

Rasmus Dahlin scored, and Luukkonen made 26 saves for the Sabres (26-17-5), who have lost their past two games (0-1-1). It was the first of a five-game road trip that continues at the Nashville Predators on Tuesday.

"There were a couple opportunities that I think we could have shot the puck, but we deferred to look for something off the back post," Buffalo coach Lindy Ruff said. "There was hard compete by both teams. It was a hard hockey game, and I thought that last 40 [minutes] we pushed through."

Dahlin gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead at 1:33 of the first period when he gathered the puck at the red line, skated the puck into the offensive zone and scored on a snap shot from the right face-off circle over Bussi's glove.

Svechnikov tied it 1-1 at 7:04. After Sean Walker forced a turnover in the neutral zone, Aho skated to the right circle before making no-look pass to Svechnikov for a backdoor tap-in at the left post.

"We're just trying to go back door hard and try to win that space," Svechnikov said. "Obviously, 'Fish' (Aho) is one of the best playmakers. I knew he was going to make that pass."

Bussi kept the game tied with a highlight-reel save at 8:29 of the second period, lunging across the crease to glove Tage Thompson's one-timer during a 2-on-0. Thompson passed to Jason Zucker at the right post before taking a return pass.

"I hadn't seen a lot of work up until that point," Bussi said. "I felt good prior to that, but I think it gave the arena, the team and myself a little bit of extra juice."

"Granted, I thought we played really well today. For close to 60 minutes, we were playing our game and limiting their chances for the most part."

Thompson, who had a game-high six shots on goal, tipped his cap to the Carolina goalie.

"I felt like I had the whole net, and his glove came out of nowhere," Thompson said. "It's tough. I think that built momentum for them, but we had plenty of chances."

"He was just feeling it tonight. When you run into a hot goalie, it's sometimes frustrating to keep getting those Grade-A looks when they're not going in."

Later in the second, Bussi made a left pad save on Dahlin (11:32), stopped Power from the slot (11:49) and turned away Thompson's backhand at the top of the crease (13:19).

"That's what's so great about him -- he stays in games and waits for his opportunities," Jarvis said. "He made three or four unbelievable saves. It builds a lot of confidence in our team, it gets the building going, which is always nice."

NOTES: Carolina has won 13 straight here against Buffalo, the longest active home win streak in the NHL against a single opponent. ... Brind'Amour said Hurricanes forward Eric Robinson will be "out for a little while" after he left the game in the first because of an upper-body injury. Robinson will be re-evaluated on Tuesday ... Jarvis also had five hits in 21:43 of ice time. ... Svechnikov (five goals, two assists) and Aho (seven assists) each have seven points during a three-game point streak. ... Dahlin extended his point streak to five games (three goals, three assists).



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AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brandon Bussi makes 17 saves as the Hurricanes beat the Sabres 2-1 | AP News

By: Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Brandon Bussi made 17 saves for his 18th win of the season, Seth Jarvis scored the go-ahead goal on a power play early in the third period and the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Buffalo Sabres 2-1 on Monday.

Andrei Svechnikov had a goal and an assist for the Hurricanes, who have won three straight and secured at least one point for the eighth time in their past nine games. Sebastian Aho assisted on both of Carolina's goals, giving him nine in five games.

Bussi improved to 18-3-1 and now has the most victories for a goaltender in his first 22 NHL starts. Six of his saves came on U.S. Olympian Tage Thompson, including a highlight-reel glove stop and another with two seconds remaining.

Rasmus Dahlin scored for the Sabres, who have lost back-to-back games for the first time since Dec. 5 and 8. Ukko-

Pekka Luukkonen stopped 26 of 28 shots as Buffalo began a five-game road trip.

The Hurricanes have a 13-game home winning streak against the Sabres, the league's longest active streak of its kind.

Dahlin scored 1:33 in, pushing his points streak to five games. Svechnikov's fifth goal in three games tied the score later in the first period.

Jarvis' team-leading 22nd goal came seven seconds into a power play and 2:10 into the third.

The Hurricanes played the final two periods without winger Eric Robinson, who left with an upper-body injury in the first.

Up next

Sabres: Visit Nashville on Tuesday night.

Hurricanes: Host Chicago on Thursday night.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

“Magic Bus” - Hurricanes 2, Sabres 1

By: Bob Wage

Brandon Bussi made a few spectacular saves and the Carolina Hurricanes rode him to defeat the Buffalo Sabres, 2-1 on Monday afternoon at the Lenovo Center.

Bussi, who has been setting NHL records since his time with Carolina, set another one on Monday. He won his first 18 NHL games in the shortest period of time in NHL history, just 22 games. His record is now 18-3-1.

A couple of Bussi's saves were unbelievable including one against a wide open Tage Thompson where the TNT crew thought the sharpshooter had scored and announced it as such, but the replay actually showed that the goaltender had somehow gloved the shot.

The Hurricanes have now won three games in a row and they are 7-1-1 in their last nine games.

Just a minute and change into the game, Rasmus Dahlin fired a shot that got past Bussi to give the visitors the early lead.

Later in the opening period, the red hot Andrei Svechnikov tied the score off another nice pass from Sebastian Aho.

Svechnikov now has five goals in the last three games and Aho has assists on all of them.

Both teams battled back and forth in an entertaining, physical match up.

Two minutes into the third period, Seth Jarvis scored a powerplay goal to give the home team a lead they would struggle to hold onto the rest of the way.

Bussi made a few saves right up until the final moment to hold the Carolina lead.

The Canes now have a couple of well earned days off before they play their next game against Chicago on Thursday night.



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The Hockey News

'Our Team Was Willing To Do Whatever It Takes': Brandon Bussi, Andrei Svechnikov, Seth Jarvis, Rod Brind'Amour On Win Over Buffalo

By: Ryan Henkel

Bussi dazzles in net, Svechnikov and Jarvis strike as Hurricanes extend win streak. Brind'Amour praises crucial saves and offensive sparks.

The Carolina Hurricanes won their third game in a row Monday afternoon, beating the Buffalo Sabres 2-1.

Brandon Bussi had a standout performance, making 17 saves in the win, and both Andrei Svechnikov and Seth Jarvis scored in the win.

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

Rod Brind'Amour

On if this was Brandon Bussi's best game: Yeah, just based on a couple of the saves he made. Again, for a couple periods, it wasn't like there was a ton of opportunities, but they were all saves that made a difference. Obviously the one on the penalty kill where we pressed up and it turned into a 2-on-0 in front and he bails us out is very special. The other guys was playing good too. Their goalie made some pretty good saves too, so it was kind of a battle in net. Obviously our goalie came out on top.

On Eric Robinson's injury: I don't know the extent. I mean, he's going to be out, for sure, for a little while. I think he's gotta get checked out tomorrow, but obviously he couldn't return. That's not good. And Stanks got hurt, but he was able to come back, so that's good. I guess we'll know more tomorrow on him too.

On Brandon Bussi becoming a fixture on this team: Number one, any pro, really, you never get comfortable if you're good. That means you're always going to be trying to prove your worth every day that you are in this league and certainly in our locker room. So I think that's what he's referring to and that's what we want. Obviously your play has to back up your attitude, but he's got a great one and we're thrilled to have him.

On Andrei Svechnikov: If he's on the top line, he's got to score. I mean, at the end of the day, that's what has to happen. Those guys have to connect. I didn't love the penalty at the end, it wasn't much of a penalty, but certainly it put us in a jammer there, but we need him to be impactful and he was certainly tonight.

On if he thought Tage Thompson had scored on Bussi: Which one? Because I counted three times Thompson should have scored. But yeah, unfortunately when you've been around hockey enough and you know exactly what's happening... we almost get a turnover and everyone's going the other way because we're going to get a 3-on-1 and then

they've got two guys hanging out and you see the play develop, you know it's going to go right back there. And he dove across and made a huge save. Save of the game, for sure, and maybe of the year. Tough to see a better save than that.

On the game: I thought we had a good first period. It was probably our best period. We gave them one, but it really wasn't a gimme. They made good plays. Their D are maybe the best D in the league as a whole group. They way they skate and get up the ice and that's what happened. They beat up up the ice and ripped a shot in the net. But other than that, I thought we did a pretty good job in the first period. It was a hard fought game. Both teams played well.

On the power play: We've kind of been in a little bit of a spell where we're not getting a ton of chances here the last couple of games, but it doesn't matter. Everyone always looks at the percentages and this and that, but every game starts 0-for-0. It has to count now. I don't care what you've done in the past, good or bad. Tonight, the first one was eh, we got a couple opportunities and then obviously we get our set, you win the draw clean, which is the biggest part of any power play, for me, because now you can run the play that you want, and we were able to connect. We needed it tonight.

On having players ready to go every night: I know I have the best staff in the league in terms of preparing guys. That's never really been a question in any game we've ever played. So I appreciate that. With our group, I think we have great leadership that helps to drag us in. The Groundhog Days that are going on here, you just have to find a way to perform at your best every night. That's what good players, good teams, elite teams do and that's what we're trying to be.

Brandon Bussi

On if his 2-on-0 save got him more dialed into the game: Maybe a little. I hadn't seen a lot of work up to that point. That might have been the fourth or fifth shot. I felt good prior to that, but I think that gave the arena, our team, myself a little bit of extra juice. Granted, I thought we played really, really well today. For pretty close to 60 minutes, I thought we played our game and limited their chances for the most part.

On Tage Thompson: Me and Tage go back. I played a year of youth hockey with him, so I guess when you see a name like that and with the season he's having and the accolades and his ability to put the puck in the net, you just kind of have to keep an eye out when he's on the ice. But it felt good to come up with some saves. Our defense overall kind of limited his looks.

On what the final few seconds of the game were like for him: Just keep the puck out of the net no matter what. Find a way. I think we had a lot of sacrifice, a lot of blocked shots. Our team was willing to do whatever it takes to win.



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On if he feels he can play more free when the team has a lead: The more goals you get, the more free you can play. It's the NHL. There's going to be a lot of tight games. We need to be ready to play in those tight moments and see how we respond as a group. Good response today.

On if being in the NHL feels more regular to him now: I'll be frank with you, it'll never feel normal. I think this is what you dream about your whole life and I think that's a good thing for me. It doesn't mean that the lifestyle isn't normal. I'm fortunate to be able to do what I do for a living and being able to hear the crowd cheer us on, cheer me on. It's very cool. I don't think I'm a person that ever takes that for granted.

On if he feels the 2-on-0 save was his best of the year: ...the next one.

On the power play coming through: You see it as we're hitting the final stretch, obviously we have the Olympic break and stuff, but 5-on-5 is going to get tighter and tighter and special teams can be what makes or breaks you. It's been really reassuring to see our power play clicking. I felt confident in them the whole time even when it wasn't going in, but it's nice to see them get rewarded that's for sure.

On if he's glad to be a lefty: Every day I'm proud of it. It's a small union, so I gotta stay strong.

Andrei Svechnikov

On the game: Good game. Everyone grinded away. I think it was one of the hardest games. They play with speed, they're everywhere and it's always hard to play against those guys. I felt like we stuck with the game plan and obviously there was a lot of scrambles and all that stuff. You try to come to the bench and forget about it, but it happens and you just try to focus on the next shift.

On his goal: I think Fishy has set me up the last five goals here. We're just trying to go backdoor hard and I'm trying to win that space between me and the D. Obviously Fishy is one of the best playmakers and I knew he was gonna make that pass.

On getting a response goal after his line was scored against early: They score on our line, so you're always trying to get back. It was nice to score a couple shifts after. That was nice, definitely.

On Brandon Bussi's play: Another level. I think he just played an unbelievable game. He made the save of the year on the

kill when they went back and forth, but yeah, that was the save of the year. He was unbelievable tonight.

Seth Jarvis

On Brandon Bussi: He was incredible. Didn't get tested too much early on, but that's what's so great about him. He stays in games and waits for his opportunities. Three or four unbelievable saves.

On his big saves: That just builds a lot of confidence in our team, gets the building going, which is always nice. I think when the fans get into it, we amp up our game a little bit and really put it on them, so big timely saves, whether it's saves, blocked shots, anything that gets the fans going is huge.

On the game: That's a good team over there. They definitely put it on us as of late and they're on a good run. Hats off to them. They played a great game and we're happy to come out of there. We stuck with our game and waited for our opportunities and that's how you win games in this league.

On the power play: There weren't many, but you have to be able to capitalize. That's how a lot of goals are scored, special teams, and that's how you win games. To be able to capitalize like we did and to be able to contribute like that was huge.

On his goal: I think the guy kind of got his stick on me where I didn't get a great shot, so it kicked right back out to me and I mean, when you're in that position, there's no other play really than to throw it to the net. Luckily he was kind of down and out a little bit, so I was able to sneak it in there.

On what Bussi means to the team: It's pretty self-explanatory watching any of his games or looking at the stats. He's been incredible and someone that we've leaned on heavily, especially with [Pyotr Kochetkov] going down. So to have him and Freddie back there, both guys playing really well, it just puts a lot of confidence in our game. For him to come up with timely saves, like I said before, is massive.

On where the team would be without Bussi: I don't know, but I'm happy we have him. I don't want to think like that.

On Andrei Svechnikov: He's just been aggressive. I think that's when he plays his best hockey, when he's in your face. Obviously they'll be some penalties taken, but I think everyone is fine with that. When he's playing hard, playing heavy, hitting guys, yelling at guys, it gets the whole group going and I mean, he's red hot right now, so it's fun to be around him. Just try to find him and give him the puck whenever possible.

LINKS

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 20, 2026

SportScan

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

1376318 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes stop Sabres in a game with a distinct Stanley Cup playoff feel

Chip Alexander 5-6 minutes 19/01/2026

Sometimes, it's a better hockey game than anyone probably expected.

It was a national holiday. It was an afternoon game. It was the middle of January.

But sometimes, those games can surprise. It can be like it's April or May, with a lot more on the line, with some hard hits, chippy moments and desperation saves by the two goalies.

The Carolina Hurricanes and Buffalo Sabres had one of those games Monday. The Canes emerged with a 2-1 victory at Lenovo Center, but only after 60 hard-fought, don't-give-an-inch minutes that had both teams straining to come away with the two points.

Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov scored his fifth goal in the past three games — all five on Sebastian Aho assists — and Seth Jarvis notched the winner on a power play at 2:10 of the third period, Svechnikov and Aho with the assists.

But the big story in this one was Brandon Bussi, just as the Canes goalie has been much of the season. Can a goalie go from waiver wire to the Vezina Trophy? Probably not, but Bussi has done little but win for the Hurricanes, and done it at a time when injured goalie Pyotr Kochetkov has been sidelined for the season and veteran Frederik Andersen inconsistent.

Bussi had 17 saves Monday in pushing his record to 18-3-1. More than a few were on Sabres star center Tage Thompson, who Bussi said once played with him a year in junior hockey, and one was bigger than the others.

"The season he's having and the accolades and the ability to put the puck in the net, you just have to keep an eye out when he's on the ice," Bussi said of Thompson, who has 25 goals this season.

One had to see the save to believe it. Thompson probably didn't believe it. He likely scores nearly every time when presented with the same opening and opportunity. He's that good a finisher.

The situation: the Sabres had a power play in the second period of a 1-1 game. Bussi suddenly was faced with a 2-on-1 situation in front of the crease, with Jason Zucker to his left and Thompson to his right.

Zucker made the pass and Thompson lifted a quick shot and Canes fans groaned and the TNT telecast graphic quickly showed the Sabres with a 2-1 lead.

The problem: Bussi stuck out his glove and the puck found the back of the glove. No goal. Thompson, already headed to the Buffalo bench,

could only look to the rafters. The groans soon turned to thunderous "Bus-si, Bus-si" cheers with 11:29 left in the period.

"Save of the game, for sure, and maybe the year," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It would be tough to see a better save than that."

Asked if that was his best save of the season, Bussi smiled and replied, "The next one."

That has been his mentality since being claimed off waivers Oct. 5 from the Florida Panthers — take it save by save, period by period, game by game. Before this season, he had never played in an NHL game, and there he was Monday being interviewed after the game on TNT.

The final moments were hectic. The Sabres, who had pulled into a wild-card playoff position with a 15-2-1 stretch of games, pulled goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen for a sixth attacker.

Thompson twice put shots on net in the final half-minute, and it was a fierce battle in the Canes zone to the end.

Bussi's only thought: "Keep the puck out of the net, no matter what. Find a way."

The Canes (31-15-4) found a way and now have beaten the Sabres 13 straight times at home. Buffalo (26-17-5) scored quickly Monday as Rasmus Dahlin knocked the Sabres' first shot past Bussi for a 1-0 lead. But Svechnikov tied it off a perfect Aho feed and Jarvis put the Canes in front with a sharp-angle shot.

The only downside for the Canes in the game was losing forward Eric Robinson to an apparent shoulder injury. Brind'Amour said Robinson could be out for "a while" but did not know the severity of the injury.

But much of the talk Monday was about guy they call "The Bus."

Bussi has grown accustomed to being in the Canes' lineup, starting games. He has taken over Kochetkov's stall in the locker room opposite Andersen, and has taken over as the team's No. 1 goalie.

"I'll be frank with you. It will never feel normal," he said. "I think this is what you dream about your whole life, and I think that's a good thing for me. I'm fortunate to be able to do what I do for a living. To be able to hear the crowd cheer us on, cheer me on, is very cool.

"But I don't think I'm a person who ever takes that for granted."

This story was originally

Published January 19, 2026 at 5:46 PM.

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

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



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News Observer LOADED: 01.20.2026

1376319 Carolina Hurricanes

Bussi dazzles in Hurricanes' 2-1 win over Sabres

Cory Lavalette 4-5 minutes 19/01/2026

RALEIGH — "Another level, definitely."

Those three words from Hurricanes forward Andrei Svechnikov summed up the performance of goaltender Brandon Bussi, who one-upped the record-breaking start of his career in a 2-1 win Monday over the visiting Sabres.

There was a handful of saves that belong on any postgame highlight reel, but Bussi's save on Buffalo center Tage Thompson — one of several the Carolina goaltender made on his former youth hockey teammate — with the game tied in the second period immediately belongs in a Hurricanes time capsule.

Carolina stole the puck on the penalty kill and looked to rush up ice shorthanded, but the Sabres forced a turnover to create a 2-on-0. Thompson passed to Jason Zucker next to Bussi's left and then quickly received the puck back. Thompson dropped to a knee to elevate the puck, but Bussi got back with his glove to rob the two-time 40-goal sniper.

Save so good it had everyone stunned 🤯 pic.twitter.com/fENHCTG6gH

— Carolina Hurricanes (@Canes) January 19, 2026

"It's the save of the game, for sure, and maybe the year," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It's tough to see a better save than that."

It was just the main highlight of a signature performance for the Cinderella goalie who is now 18-3-1 since finally getting his NHL shot.

"I'll be frank with you: It'll never feel normal," Bussi (17 saves) said of his new, unexpected role. "I think this is what you dream about your whole life. And think that's a good thing for me. ... I'm fortunate to be able to do what I do for a living, and being able to hear the crowd cheer us on, cheer me on — it's very cool. And I don't think I'm a person that ever takes that for granted."

The Hurricanes also didn't take their limited power play opportunities for granted.

Despite several curious calls by the officials throughout the game, Carolina got its second chance on the man advantage two minutes into the third period.

Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal won the faceoff cleanly back to Seth Jarvis, who gave the puck to Sebastian Aho at the left sideboards. Aho then passed to the corner to Svechnikov, who threaded a pass through the hashmarks to Jarvis.

Buffalo goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (26 saves) stopped the initial one-timer, but Jarvis got the rebound immediately and scored his 22nd goal of the season at 2:10 of the third to put Carolina ahead.

"I think the guy kind of got a stick on me or I didn't get a great shot, so it kicked right back out to me," Jarvis said. "And when you're in that position, there's no other play really than throw it to the net. And luckily he was kind of down and out a little bit, so I was able to sneak it in there."

The two teams played to a draw through 40 minutes, with Bussi and Luukkonen both holding their ground in a battle of two of the league's hottest teams.

The Sabres jumped out to an early lead by scoring on their first shot attempt.

After Aho set up Svechnikov from a one-timer that went wide, Buffalo jumped out for an odd-man rush the other way. Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin called his own number, snapping a shot far side past Bussi for a 1-0 Buffalo lead 93 seconds into the game.

Svechnikov and Aho didn't misfire 5½ minutes later. After Carolina defenseman Sean Walker created a neutral zone turnover, Aho came up the right wing and fired a pass to the far post for Svechnikov, who tapped the puck past Luukkonen to tie the game at 7:04. It was Svechnikov's 17th goal of the season and fifth in three games.

"They score on our line, (and) you're always trying to get it back," Svechnikov said. "It was nice to score a couple of shifts after."

And Bussi did the rest.

"He was incredible," Jarvis said. "He didn't get tested too much early on, but that's what's so great about him. He stays in games and waits for his opportunities, and he made three or four unbelievable saves."

Notes: Eric Robinson was injured in the first period and did not return. Brind'Amour said he would be reevaluated Tuesday ... Shayne Gostisbehere and Noah Philp did not play due to injuries. Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Mike Reilly were healthy scratches. ... All three Hurricanes' penalties were called on Svechnikov.

The North State Journal LOADED: 01.20.2026

1376453 Websites

The Athletic / Ten potential Artemi Panarin destinations, from top-of-league teams to long shots

By Peter Baugh and Vincent Z. Mercogliano

ANAHEIM — Artemi Panarin's time with the New York Rangers is coming to a close. Signed in summer 2019 to a seven-year contract carrying an \$11.64 million average annual value, the winger has led the Rangers in scoring each year of his contract. He likely would again this year, but president and general manager Chris Drury told him Friday that the team will not offer him a contract extension. Instead, it will try to find a fit for him on the trade market.

The 34-year-old winger has total control of his situation with a full no-movement clause. The team will have to work with him to pick a destination. If Panarin will only waive for one or two places, it could significantly lower his trade value. If he's open to more, the Rangers will likely do better on a return.

Panarin's cap hit is another obstacle. New York can and likely will retain half, but many contenders would still struggle to fit \$5.82 million onto their books. Whether he wants to negotiate an extension as part of a trade or is willing to finish the season as a rental will be another aspect of his situation to monitor.

Speaking after the Rangers' win Saturday against the Flyers, Panarin said: "I'm still confused, but the GM decided to go in a different direction. I'm OK with that. I'm a Ranger player right now, so I'll play every game 100 percent."

The most applicable comps for a potential Panarin deal are Brad Marchand, who was traded from the Boston Bruins to the Florida Panthers last year for a conditional pick that became a first-rounder, and Claude Giroux, who went from the Philadelphia Flyers to Florida in 2022 in exchange for forward prospect Owen Tippett, plus first- and third-round



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picks. Giroux had a no-movement clause allowing him to essentially pick his destination. Marchand was injured at the time of his trade, likely lowering his value, and Boston wanted to do right by him by sending him to his preferred destination, even though he didn't have a no-movement clause. The Bruins received a second-round pick that became a first when Florida reached the conference final.

Panarin's preferred landing spots aren't yet public, but we've put together some potential fits. Below, we've examined the pros and cons of each situation, as well as what they have to offer.

Colorado Avalanche

The Avalanche were in contention to land Panarin during 2019 free agency, and they have had internal discussions about pursuing him again at the deadline, per a league source. They have been the best team in the league to start the season. If Panarin wants a prime chance to win, Colorado makes sense, from his perspective.

If the Avalanche want Panarin, they have a fairly straightforward path to creating cap space: including Ross Colton in the deal. Colton is a middle-six winger with another year of term at \$4 million AAV, and he has a 40-point season to his name. The 29-year-old has a 12-team no-trade list, but he's from New Jersey, so there's a decent chance New York isn't on it.

The bigger question is whether the Avalanche want to use their limited trade chips on Panarin. They could look to upgrade their third-line center position behind Nathan MacKinnon and Brock Nelson. But if center prices are sky-high, as it looks like they might be, general manager Chris MacFarland might prefer keeping his center group as is and pursuing Panarin, which would have a trickle-down effect among the forward group and allow third-line center Jack Drury (Chris' nephew) to play with better wings. Panarin would also likely give the Avalanche a boost on the power play, their only shortcoming as a team this season.

Colorado isn't hurting for offense — it is first in goals per game by a mile — and Panarin's inconsistent playoff track record could be a reason for concern. In Colorado, though, he would not be the top offensive option, meaning he would either get the benefit of playing with Nathan MacKinnon or facing easier defensive opponents.

Colorado has a weak prospect pool and limited NHL Draft capital (zero picks in the first three rounds this season), but it has its 2027 and 2028 firsts. Someone like Colton would also have value to the Rangers. He can slot in at center or wing and plays the hard-nosed style Drury likes.

Washington Capitals

The Caps are a popular pick for a couple of reasons, starting with their GM. Chris Patrick told reporters Friday that the team's No. 1 deadline priority is a "higher-end, skilled winger." The Rangers have the best one on the market.

Unlike many teams on this list, the Capitals have first-round picks at their disposal and ample cap room to fit Panarin, with PuckPedia projecting \$12.78 million in deadline space. They also have five players on colleague Corey Pronman's recent list of the top 137 players under the age of 23, plus a few mid-20s roster players who have been crowded out of prominent lineup spots: forwards Ethen Frank and Hendrix Lapierre and defenseman Declan Chisholm. Perhaps Drury would want to roll the dice on one of them.

A match makes sense, but only if Panarin has any interest in going to Washington. He would get to play with fellow high-profile Russian Alex Ovechkin, but we've heard they're not close friends. It's hard to say how much of a selling point that would be.

Florida Panthers

Florida is a popular pick among players with contractual control. Look no further than Giroux and Marchand.

The Panthers could have even more appeal to Panarin since he is close friends with goalie Sergei Bobrovsky. Plus, the back-to-back Cup champions could certainly use a spark; Florida is currently outside a playoff spot.

The salary cap would likely be the primary obstacle in a potential Panarin-Panthers deal. Florida is right up against it, and that's with Aleksander Barkov on long-term injured reserve. They could move some money to fit Panarin's cap hit in the regular season, with Evan Rodrigues (\$3 million AAV through 2026-27) a possible candidate to get them part of the way there. But that would still leave them well over the cap if Barkov returns in the playoffs. Having their captain and Panarin in the lineup for a postseason game would be nearly impossible unless the Panthers scratch someone with a significant salary. (Under new collective bargaining agreement rules, a team's 20-man lineup for individual games has to be under the salary cap.)

A Panarin trade might only make sense if Barkov is declared out for the season, and at that point, would Florida see it as worthwhile to make an all-in move? It wouldn't make much sense unless Panarin agrees to an extension as part of the deal.

The primary concern on the Rangers' end is whether the Panthers have much to offer. They don't own a first-round pick in either of the next two drafts and didn't have a single prospect on Pronman's U23 list.

Dallas Stars

The Stars would have to send a small amount of salary back to make it work, but losing Tyler Seguin for the season to a right ACL tear and placing him on LTIR makes this doable. They are tied for the second-most points in the West behind Colorado and check the Cup contender box. Panarin would give Dallas a clear top-six upgrade, and it could experiment with him on a line alongside fellow star Mikko Rantanen.

The primary holdup is that Dallas could prefer to seek a defenseman. The Stars didn't land Rasmus Andersson, though, so perhaps GM Jim Nill will pivot. The lack of cap space or a 2026 first-round pick means they probably won't have room for two big moves. If Nill decides he still wants to focus on a right-handed defenseman, perhaps he will ask about New York's Braden Schneider.

Carolina Hurricanes

Expect the Hurricanes to be in on Panarin — they've shown a recent willingness to go after stars, including when they briefly landed Rantanen — but their potential interest will matter only as much as Panarin is open to going there. Don't forget the no-movement clause. If he is open to it, the team has intriguing pieces: all its first-round picks (plus an extra in 2028), ample cap space and plenty of boldness to go after a big name.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Tampa Bay probably has some appeal for Panarin, but multiple hurdles stand in the way. Cap space is a big one, with no way for the Lightning to fit him without shedding significant salary. They don't have much to offer in return, with no first-round picks until 2028 and a prospect pool that ranks among the NHL's worst.

We can't completely rule out Tampa Bay because it seems like such a desirable destination, especially considering the existing Russian star power of Nikita Kucherov and Andrei Vasilevskiy. GM Julien BriseBois always seems to be going for it, but this one feels like a long shot.

Minnesota Wild

The Wild have been a rumored Panarin destination, but they seem unlikely at this point. For one, center is their biggest need. Additionally, Panarin shares an agent (Paul Theofanous) with Wild star Kirill Kaprizov. Theofanous and Kaprizov negotiated a huge extension with Minnesota going into the season, and our Minnesota-based colleagues Michael Russo and Joe Smith wrote Monday: "We find it hard to believe the Wild



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are going to want to add another Theofanous client after he leveraged them into giving Kaprizov a record \$136 million contract last September.”

Wild GM Bill Guerin presumably isn't done adding after going all in for Quinn Hughes, so perhaps he would have an interest in Vincent Trocheck, given his team's need up the middle.

Bill Guerin is still keeping a keen eye on possible trades to bolster the Wild ahead of the deadline.

Detroit Red Wings

The Red Wings have the cap space, young players and picks necessary to get a deal done, and Panarin already has a relationship with Patrick Kane. That might not be enough of a sell for him to waive his no-movement clause, though. Plus, Detroit might not view more of a perimeter winger as its biggest need.

Vegas Golden Knights

Vegas is another team that's always sniffing around on big names, as it showed Saturday by acquiring Andersson. Like other clubs on this list, however, the Golden Knights face challenges in terms of cap space and available assets. They have \$3.86 million to maneuver, according to PuckPedia, which wouldn't be enough to fit Panarin, and they'll have an even bigger crunch if William Karlsson or Brayden McNabb returns from LTIR during the regular season. They're also without a 2026 or 2027 first-rounder and have a bottom-three prospect pool in the league, according to Pronman.

The Golden Knights have surprised all of us before with a big-swing move. Panarin might be too much — even for them — but we'll throw them an honorable-mention nod.

New York Islanders

The Empire State rivals have made only three trades in their history, with the most recent coming in 2010 when the Rangers acquired defenseman Jyri Niemi from the Islanders in exchange for a sixth-round pick. But a trade of this magnitude is highly unlikely.

Even if the Rangers decided to overlook the rivalry, Panarin already said no to making Long Island his home when the Isles offered more money during his 2019 free-agent year.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.20.2026

1376454 Websites

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.

"Fire Drury!" chants continue pic.twitter.com/23SBG9rf5k

— Peter Baugh (@Peter_Baugh) January 15, 2026

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.

Panarin on how he received yesterday's news: "It's hard to say how I feel. I'm still confused, but the GM decided to go in a different direction. I'm okay with that. I'm a Ranger player right now, so I'll play every game 100%." #NYR

— Vince Z. Mercogliano (@vzmercogliano) January 17, 2026

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?

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



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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.

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.

On today's game, inarguably a season low point for the Flyers.

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 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,



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head down to the comments and let me know. I'm not seeing it, but I'm willing to be convinced.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.20.2026

1376455 Websites

The Athletic / The art of a modern NHL retool — and whether the Rangers are capable of one

By Shayna Goldman

The best-case scenario saw the 2025-26 New York Rangers returning to the contender's circle and proving last year was just a fluke. But there was a range of outcomes for New York heading into the season — and through the first half of the season, the worst-case scenario has come true.

Last year's struggles can't be fixed with a coaching change alone. Younger players, like Alexis Lafrenière and Will Cuyllé, haven't progressed enough to become difference-makers. The defense has been abysmal. Artemi Panarin is on his way out. As a result, the team is projected to miss the playoffs for the second straight season.

The Rangers aren't going to fade quietly into the background. The team is making waves with (another) dramatic statement of its intentions. Unlike The Letter 1.0™ in 2018, the plan isn't to start another rebuild, but to retool back into the playoff picture.

As ideal as it is for a team to have a strategy, it sparks two key questions for the Rangers: what a retool entails in today's NHL, and whether this front office can be trusted to lead this team in the right direction.

Chris Drury's letter opened the door for opposing general managers to ask about anyone on the roster. Here's who could be affected.

A team has to be honest about its trajectory and determine which path will best turn things around: a rebuild, a hybrid rebuild, or a retool.

Rebuilding is a long, grinding process. The risk is a never-ending cycle, or a faulty one that never materializes in deep playoff runs. Teams like the Buffalo Sabres and the Edmonton Oilers, back in the 2010s, show how instability can derail and delay the process, while past iterations of the Pittsburgh Penguins, Chicago Blackhawks and Tampa Bay Lightning show how rebuilds can lead to championships.

In today's NHL, the San Jose Sharks are becoming the shining example of how to turn a bleak outlook into a positive one. It doesn't just take strong planning, but luck, to pull everything off. Not every team has the wherewithal for the long haul, or the creativity to navigate potential setbacks. Any impatience can doom the entire process, too. That's why some general managers prefer a hybrid rebuild, or an accelerated one. The risk is a shakier foundation on Day 1, and a faster fall from contention instead of a long, sustainable window. That's why there was so much concern when the Vancouver Canucks floated the idea this season.

The Rangers' 2018 rebuild essentially became an accelerated process due to lottery luck (with the No. 2 pick in 2019, and No. 1 in 2020) and the Panarin signing. Just eight years later, the organization is back to the drawing board.

A retool is the path of least resistance because it generally doesn't require as drastic a teardown or as substantial a timeline. A handful of teams that have pulled it off recently have set the standard of how this process can successfully work — from the Penguins ahead of their back-to-back Stanley Cups, to the 2018 St. Louis Blues and 2023 Washington Capitals, among others. There are even notes to take from teams like the

Boston Bruins and New York Islanders, who are in the midst of their own retools right now.

Not every team can get away with the retool; there has to be a core of players worth reloading around. Timing is also of the essence. If teams aren't proactive enough with 1) the decision to start the process or 2) the timetable of it all, it can set a team back even further (and potentially push it to fully rebuild).

Getting that timing right can require a team to pull itself out of the playoff picture — that's what the 2018 Blues did and the 2023 Capitals, despite only sitting a few points outside wild-card seeds. But that's what it takes to avoid another finish in the mushy middle sometimes.

Then comes the sell-off. Teams have to walk a fine line between tearing a roster down too far, because a team can only build itself up so much in a short span of time. It's even tougher now that free agency has become less and less of a resource for team-building; it's more of a way to supplement a roster (and the Red Wings and Canadiens' rebuilds are a reminder of that).

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Can patience still drive an NHL rebuild? What the Red Wings and Canadiens reveal

The Red Wings and Canadiens have taken very different paths back to playoff contention, offering lessons for other NHL rebuilders.

Instead, retooling teams can load up on draft picks, prospects and up-and-coming NHL talent via trade to reset a lineup.

The best way to add difference-making talent is through the draft and development process. In this year's Player Tiers project, 91 of the top 150 were added by their current clubs through the draft. While there can be hidden gems later in rounds — like Kirill Kaprizov in Round 5, Brayden Point in Round 3, and Igor Shesterkin and Jacob Slavin in Round 4 — there is rightfully an extra emphasis on first-rounders.

First-round picks are a true commodity because players drafted earlier are generally expected to have higher ceilings and are expected to reach them sooner. Of the 91 drafted players in Player Tiers, 29 were top-five picks; 32 others were selected later in Round 1.

Those first-rounders can also make for coveted trade assets for other needle-movers. Shortly after adding the Bruins' 2023 first in the Dmitry Orlov-Garnet Hathaway trade, the Caps flipped the pick to Toronto for a young defenseman in Rasmus Sandin. That brought in a player who could grow with the Capitals. The Blues, on the other hand, took a different route by adding Ryan O'Reilly in the offseason after replenishing their asset pool with the Paul Stastny trade.

A key part of all of this is a willingness to get creative and take an outside-the-box approach by spotting potential reclamation projects. For Boston, that was Casey Mittelstadt last year, and for the Islanders, it was Emil Heineman, who had yet to pop off in Montreal. That line of thinking also extends to veterans like Viktor Arvidsson and Jakob Chychrun, who joined the Bruins and Capitals during their respective processes. Maybe the biggest swing in recent history was Washington's on Pierre-Luc Dubois (and his massive contract). The Caps leveraged their cap space and took a risk to address one of their most pressing areas of weakness down the middle.

Then comes the challenge of knowing when to shift gears into a buying, right-now approach. The Capitals had a quiet 2023 offseason and let some of their up-and-coming players cook in more meaningful roles in 2023-24 under Spencer Carbery. After a Round 1 exit in 2024, management got to work and added the third-most value in the league to their roster. That innovative approach led to the Caps becoming one of the top contenders to watch less than two seasons after kicking off this process.



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With a handful of teams providing lessons and pitfalls of retooling, the Rangers have a blueprint to guide them.

Retools don't require the same depth of root changes as rebuilds, which gives management an existing foundation to build off. Right now, it appears to be Shesterkin, Adam Fox, Vladislav Gavrikov, J.T. Miller and Mika Zibanejad. But this isn't a new front office coming in to fix the previous regime's mess: it's the same management group that put them in this position. So can the team truly reinvent itself on the fly, without a change at the top?

There's reason to be skeptical, considering all the missteps made by Chris Drury and the Rangers' front office over the last five years.

One of those missteps: underestimating the ripple effect of key subtractions.

It goes back to Drury's first summer in the position with the Pavel Buchnevich trade. But in the last season and a half alone, there have been dicey exits that contributed to last season going off the rails, from Barclay Goodrow and Jacob Trouba to Chris Kreider. While management deserves credit for shedding contracts in their entirety, these players weren't adequately replaced on the ice or in the locker room (which may be even more damning for a front office that emphasizes character).

The J.T. Miller situation is another strike in the Drury era. Sure, he fit the meat-and-potatoes energy that the Rangers were seeking, but even with the buy-low cost of acquisition, it was a risky move considering his up-and-down play over the years, age and contract. Adding Miller in exchange for a first-rounder and then selling months later at the deadline shows how conflicting last year's philosophies were, which directly contributes to the current situation.

Last year's deadline should have been the official start of the retool, but it's tough to facilitate that process without a first-rounder in 2025. After the 43rd overall pick, the rest of the draft was somewhat uninspired — and that highlights one of the biggest issues along the way of Drury's tenure.

It's not that the Rangers' pipeline ranks poorly now. The Capitals ranked 25th in 2023, before the team started the process, and have since jumped up to ninth. The Islanders were in a similar position this time last year and in less than one season of a retool, now have five players in the top 122 in Prospect Tiers (and only one was with the organization before the 2025 trade deadline). Lottery luck plays into it with Matthew Schaefer, but Cal Ritchie was brought in with the Brock Nelson trade, while Victor Eklund and Kashawn Aitchison were drafted with picks from the Noah Dobson deal.

Instead, it's that this Rangers front office hasn't drafted well over the years or promoted the development of those players, and that could be back-breaking here. Only one of 31 players drafted by this front office has become a mainstay in the NHL: Noah Laba. Gabriel Perreault may be on that path, as one of just two in Prospect Tiers (in 4A). But the lack of high-end talent is glaring, and it's been a theme for years now.

2019 No. 2 pick Kaapo Kakko never hit his ceiling in New York before being traded to Seattle. Lafrenière hasn't consistently been a difference-maker. Braden Schneider, who will be an RFA this summer, has also plateaued. And if the Rangers give up on either player now, they would be selling low.

Cuyllé has also stumbled. With the right direction, he could still follow the path of comps like Roope Hintz or Kreider, but he could also become the next Luke Kunin, Denis Gurianov or Nathan Bastian. And that could be another separator between the Rangers' retool from the Capitals, since Washington already had rising talent like Aliaksei Protas and Connor McMichael to reload around.

So even if this team can flip players like Panarin and Vincent Trocheck, among others, to the highest bidder, it comes down to whether the team can actually maximize the returns.

After wasting another season with their core players, the Rangers are rightfully changing their strategies. But even with teams around the league setting models for successful retools, this front office may not have the chops to turn things around. Whether an overemphasis on character over skill is to blame, a rotating bench of coaches, or the absence of a developmental system, the Rangers' woes stem from the top. So while retools generally reset a team's timeline, the pressure is only mounting in New York.

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The Athletic / NHL trade board 4.0: The sprint to the Feb. 4 Olympic trade freeze is officially on

Chris Johnston

The New York Rangers have put up the "For Sale" sign, and the Calgary Flames are off and selling.

The sprint to the NHL's Feb. 4 Olympic trade freeze is officially on.

Calgary made the first of what could be multiple big deals on Sunday night, sending heart-and-soul defenseman Rasmus Andersson to the Vegas Golden Knights. That's an important piece of business done early for a rebuilding team.

Meanwhile, the Rangers' decision to publicly embark on a retool has brought plenty of accomplished veterans into play on the trade front.

Check it out on a refreshed Big Board.

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

Note: Net Ratings and market values are via Dom Luszczyszyn's model and are projected for the full season based on statistics through Jan. 17. Goals saved above expected (GSAX) are via Evolving-Hockey, also through Jan. 17. Contract info is via PuckPedia.

1

Artemi Panarin

NEW YORK RANGERS

FORWARD

WINGER

2

Kiefer Sherwood

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

FORWARD

WINGER

3

Nazem Kadri

CALGARY FLAMES



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FORWARD

CENTER

4

Dougie Hamilton

NEW JERSEY DEVILS

DEFENSEMAN

RIGHT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

5

Luke Schenn

WINNIPEG JETS

DEFENSEMAN

RIGHT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

6

Vincent Trocheck

NEW YORK RANGERS

FORWARD

CENTER

7

Elias Pettersson

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

FORWARD

CENTER

8

Jesper Kotkaniemi

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FORWARD

WINGER

CENTER

9

Blake Coleman

CALGARY FLAMES

FORWARD

WINGER

10

Steven Stamkos

NASHVILLE PREDATORS

FORWARD

WINGER

CENTER

11

Andrew Mangiapane

EDMONTON OILERS

FORWARD

WINGER

12

Alex Tuch

BUFFALO SABRES

FORWARD

WINGER

13

Connor Murphy

CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS

DEFENSEMAN

RIGHT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

14

Justin Faulk

ST. LOUIS BLUES

DEFENSEMAN

RIGHT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

15

Robert Thomas

ST. LOUIS BLUES

FORWARD

CENTER

16

Ondrej Palat

NEW JERSEY DEVILS

FORWARD

WINGER

17

Boone Jenner

COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

FORWARD

WINGER

CENTER

18

Carson Soucy

NEW YORK RANGERS

DEFENSEMAN

LEFT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

19

Simon Benoit

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

DEFENSEMAN



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LEFT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

20

Conor Garland

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

FORWARD

WINGER

21

Jake DeBrusk

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

FORWARD

WINGER

22

Logan Stanley

WINNIPEG JETS

DEFENSEMAN

LEFT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

23

Andrew Peeke

BOSTON BRUINS

DEFENSEMAN

RIGHT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

24

Brayden Schenn

ST. LOUIS BLUES

FORWARD

WINGER

CENTER

25

Jordan Binnington

ST. LOUIS BLUES

GOALIE

26

Brett Kulak

PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

DEFENSEMAN

LEFT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

27

Mario Ferraro

SAN JOSE SHARKS

DEFENSEMAN

LEFT-SHOT DEFENSEMAN

28

Evander Kane

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

FORWARD

WINGER

29

Brennan Othmann

NEW YORK RANGERS

FORWARD

WINGER

30

Michael Bunting

NASHVILLE PREDATORS

FORWARD

WINGER

31

Jonathan Marchessault

NASHVILLE PREDATORS

FORWARD

WINGER

32

Ryan Hartman

MINNESOTA WILD

FORWARD

WINGER

CENTER

33

Bryan Rust

PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

FORWARD

WINGER

34

Brad Lambert

WINNIPEG JETS

FORWARD

WINGER

35

David Kämpf

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

FORWARD

CENTER

36

Jordan Kyrou



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ST. LOUIS BLUES

FORWARD

WINGER

37

Ryan O'Reilly

NASHVILLE PREDATORS

FORWARD

CENTER

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ESPN / Which injuries will have biggest impact on Olympic hockey? - ESPN

Arda Ocal

We are less than four weeks away from the start of the men's Olympic hockey tournament in Milan Cortina on Feb. 11 and have reached the "injury concern" portion of the proceedings.

The latest is Leo Carlsson, who is out three to five weeks with a thigh injury. His Olympic participation with Team Sweden is now in question. The 21-year-old Anaheim Ducks sensation had 38 points through 29 games this season, but he had been struggling recently to the tune of six points in 15 games. Coach Joel Quenneville noted that Carlsson played through the pain for some period of time before undergoing a procedure for the issue. Carlsson still leads the team with 44 points in 44 games.

Meanwhile, Carlsson's Sweden teammate -- and Minnesota Wild defenseman -- Jonas Brodin's Olympic hopes are in jeopardy due to a lower-body injury; he is week-to-week. "It's something that has been building up a little bit," Wild coach John Hynes recently noted to reporters.

Canada's Brayden Point was placed on injured reserve by the Tampa Bay Lightning. Point scored a goal in last Monday's game against the Philadelphia Flyers, but his leg was tangled with Cam York's, leaving Point grabbing his knee in obvious pain while exiting the ice. "I think we all saw [the injury], so let's see," Lightning and Team Canada coach Jon Cooper said after the game.

Team USA defenseman Seth Jones hasn't played since the Winter Classic on Jan. 2 due to an upper-body injury and is also on injured reserve. However, Florida Panthers coach Paul Maurice recently told reporters that "we expect him back before the Olympic break. We're hopeful for that."

A young hockey player's dream is always to win the Stanley Cup. Growing up, you played out Game 7 overtime in your driveway or frozen pond -- but you would also throw in overtime in the gold medal game every now and then, especially in an Olympic year.

An injury leading up to the Games is one of the most crushing moments for a hockey player in their career. What makes it more painful is that the Olympics come around just once every four years -- representing one's country at the World Cup of Hockey or IIHF World Championship just isn't the same.

It matters immensely to the NHL players to be there. They fought for it in the CBA, and they got it.

"I grew up watching all those Olympic teams, 2010 and 2014. To be a part of it now is a dream come true just like every other American [player]," New Jersey Devils forward Jack Hughes told The Drop. "I remember I was crushed in 2010 when [the U.S.] lost in the final. It's just so special the NHLers are back in the Olympics and I'm so excited to be a part of it."

Hughes is especially looking forward to playing with his brother Quinn -- they didn't have the chance to play together at the 4 Nations Face-Off due to Quinn's injury.

But speaking of injuries ... given the rough nature of the sport, I asked T.J. Oshie whether players ease up physically on national teammates when facing off in an NHL game. Are they motivated to play harder against their upcoming international opponents in those games?

"I was linemates with David Backes," Oshie recalled. "Maybe he won't tell you this, but every time we got that close to the Olympics, if there was a Canadian on the other team -- you can go back and search this -- if we were playing [Sidney] Crosby, Backes was on him. Any Canadian ... I think [Ryan] Getzlaf was another one. Backes was 100 percent on him. He is going [hard]."

Jump ahead:

Games of the week

What I loved this weekend

Hart Trophy candidates

Social post of the week

Stick taps

Biggest games of the week

Winnipeg

Jets at

Chicago

Blackhawks

Monday, 8:30 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Without a doubt the most emotional game of the week -- in a positive way, compared to what Mitch Marner will face in his Toronto return -- will be when former Blackhawks captain and three-time Stanley Cup winner Jonathan Toews returns to the Windy City for the first time as a visitor, wearing Jets blue.

There have been some great ceremonies and tribute videos that have elicited a lot of real emotion from players, and I expect this to be no different for "Captain Serious."

Team to WATCH: Seattle Kraken

The Kraken have been playing "playoff hockey"-style games lately and nestling into that third playoff spot in the Pacific. Seattle followed up a nine-game win streak with a three-game losing streak, so this will be a critical stretch.

Seattle has had solid goaltending from Philipp Grubauer, and scoring by committee -- only two players are above 30 points so far this season (Jordan Eberle and Matty Beniers). It's not all Grubauer, though; the Kraken have done an excellent job in limiting high-danger chances in front of the net, keeping offensive threats toward the boards and away from the center of the ice.

It's a homestand this week for the Kraken, hosting the Pittsburgh Penguins on Monday, the New York Islanders on Wednesday, the Ducks on Friday and the Devils on Sunday. There are a good mix of teams that are all still battling for playoff positioning.



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Other key games to watch

MONDAY

Buffalo

Sabres at

Carolina

Hurricanes

1:30 p.m. ET | TNT/HBO Max

Washington

Capitals at

Colorado

Avalanche

4 p.m. ET | TNT/HBO Max

Minnesota

Wild at

Toronto

Maple Leafs

7:30 p.m. ET | ESPN+

TUESDAY

Minnesota

Wild at

Montreal

Canadiens

7 p.m. ET | ESPN+

San Jose

Sharks at

Tampa

Bay Lightning

7 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Boston

Bruins at

Dallas

Stars

7:30 p.m. ET | TNT/HBO Max

WEDNESDAY

Detroit

Red Wings at

Toronto

Maple Leafs

7 p.m. ET | TNT/HBO Max

THURSDAY

Vegas

Golden Knights at

Boston

Bruins

7 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Buffalo

Sabres at

Montreal

Canadiens

7 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Pittsburgh

Penguins at

Edmonton

Oilers

9 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Detroit

Red Wings

Minnesota

Wild

9:30 p.m. ET | ESPN

FRIDAY

Vegas

Golden Knights at

Toronto

Maple Leafs

7 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Tampa Bay

Lightning at

Chicago

Blackhawks

7 p.m. ET | ESPN

Philadelphia

Flyers at

Colorado

Avalanche

9 p.m. ET | ESPN+

SATURDAY

Buffalo

Sabres at

New York

Islanders

1 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Montreal

Canadiens at



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Boston

Bruins

7 p.m. ET | NHL Network

Washington

Capitals at

Edmonton

Oilers

10 p.m. ET | ESPN+

SUNDAY

Colorado

Avalanche at

Toronto

Maple Leafs

1:30 p.m. ET | NHL Network

What I loved this weekend

Imagine getting a call that you need to suit up for the Chicago Blackhawks after eating lunch at Hooters? That's exactly what happened to 45-year-old David Nozzolillo, who is on the rotation as one of four designated emergency backup goaltenders (EBUGs) for the Hawks. The flu had gone through the team's dressing room, thinning the goalie roster. Arvid Soderblom and Spencer Knight were unavailable, so in came Nozzolillo.

Emily Kaplan wrote a great article about the surreal experience Nozzolillo had that night as an EBUG -- with his name on the back of a Hawks jersey and sitting on the bench and all.

The EBUG has long been one of the most loved and endearing moments in sports; every fan lives vicariously through this one guy, for this brief moment turned into an NHL player, on NHL ice, playing against NHL players. One day you're an accountant, the next you're trying to make saves against Auston Matthews.

The CBA rules next season will effectively end this era of EBUGs -- NHL teams will hire a third goalie that fills the EBUG role -- so Nozzolillo's tale will be one of the final instances.

Hart Trophy candidates if the season ended today

Unless Nikita Kucherov and Leon Draisaitl pick up the pace, our current top three candidates -- Nathan MacKinnon, Connor McDavid and Macklin Celebrini -- might just stay there the rest of the way.

Following Saturday's games, McDavid is first in scoring at 83 points, followed by MacKinnon (82) and Celebrini (72). In January, McDavid has 13 points in eight games, MacKinnon has 12 in seven and Celebrini has 10 in seven. And oh yeah, they'll all be teammates for Canada in Milan Cortina.

play

2:26

Connor McDavid nets hat trick vs. Predators

Connor McDavid scores three goals for the Oilers in their 6-2 win against the Predators.

Don't think I forgot about the goaltenders. Here are three I'm most focused on:

Scott Wedgewood continues to shine, with a league-leading .917 save percentage (minimum 20 games played) and just three losses.

Jesper Wallstedt is in hot pursuit, with a .916 save percentage and just four losses.

If the New York Rangers somehow turn this thing around and make a run, Igor Shesterkin will be a big reason why. Though currently injured, he has a .913 save percentage and the fourth-most total saves in the NHL this season (864).

Social media post of the weekend

First, shoutout to this fan at the Flyers game on Saturday who chugged a beer out of his own prosthetic leg while Gritty was cheering him on. Iconic.

A guy just chugged a beer out of his own prosthetic leg with @GrittyNHL at the @NHLFlyers @NYRangers game. What a legend. pic.twitter.com/11RN9oZVkm

— Jake Brown (@JakeBrownLive) January 17, 2026

Also, Jaxson Dart has had himself a fun stretch lately; on Saturday, he was cheering on his hometown Utah Mammoth just as news of his New York Giants hiring coach John Harbaugh was made official:

You heard him, #TusksUp!!! pic.twitter.com/hYpxH0eq71

— Utah Mammoth (@utahmammoth) January 17, 2026

The week before, he was casually crushing the trench run and blowing up the Lego Death Star projected onto Sphere in Las Vegas while sitting in a life-sized Lego X-Wing:

All wings report in. JD6 standing by.

Last night, quarterback for the New York Giants, Jaxson Dart lived out his Rebel pilot dream by bringing the brand new LEGO® Smart Brick to life at Sphere in Las Vegas. pic.twitter.com/JT9lkOSOqj

— Star Wars (@starwars) January 8, 2026

Stick taps

The snow in the Northeast over the weekend was a burden to many but not kids in backyards across the state -- particularly 4-year-old Ollie, who took his passion for hockey to another level by creating this snowman hockey player, complete with a South Carolina Gamecocks hockey sweater, beanie, hockey gloves and stick:

The snowman would record a hat trick, add two assists and was a plus-6 in the game.

Speaking of snowmen with a similar name to Ollie, there is only one prominent NHL player in history with the first name Olaf: former Washington netminder Olaf Kolzig, who took the Caps to the Stanley Cup Final in 1998. Some who are close include Avalanche winger Victor Olofsson and former Rangers prospect Olof Lindbom.

ESPN LOADED: 01.20.2026

1376458 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'It's a grind': Weary Maple Leafs running out of no-show losses

Luke Fox

TORONTO — No excuses, they say. Plenty of reasons, though.

In the hours leading up to and in the minutes following a game in which they trailed from tip to tail, the Toronto Maple Leafs spoke about the



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gruelling travel involved in their first road trip involving multiple time-zone changes and multiple overtimes.

The nagging injuring to top-six forwards William Nylander and Matthew Knies were major talking points.

So, too, were the tight playoff race and tighter schedule.

Too many wins feel like an effortful struggle, and each loss carries the heft of opportunity squandered.

"It's a grind," captain Auston Matthews told reporters, after his team sagged through a 6-3 thumping at home to the Minnesota Wild on Monday. The better team won.

"I thought we were just flat from the start of the game," he added. "Didn't seem like we had the legs we needed tonight."

Didn't have their legs in Utah last Tuesday, either, when the Leafs also surrendered a touchdown. Lost their legs in Vegas on Thursday, when they blew multiple multi-goal leads.

Perhaps the Maple Leafs deserve more grace in this space. Since Christmas, they do rank among the circuit's hottest clubs, going 8-2-3 and mounting a .730 points percentage in the face of injury woes.

Problem is, their generally crummy performance from October through late December has narrowed their margin for error, their permission to shrug off scheduled losses.

"It's always hard coming back from the West Coast," Scott Laughton said pre-game.

"It's a crazy schedule right now. I know the league is feeling it," Joseph Woll said post-game.

These are accurate statements, and they aren't delivered in a woe-is-us tone.

So, sure, a little understanding might be granted.

But not sympathy.

Not for a team built to be a playoff lock but still on the outside looking in with 34 to go.

Not by Toronto's improving divisional opponents, only one of which (Ottawa) has fewer wins than the Leafs' 24.

And not by a Scotiabank Arena crowd that booed the local heroes off the ice after 40 minutes, when they were losing 5-1 and starter Woll was mercy-pulled for Dennis Hildeby.

"We didn't play well enough. That's it," Craig Berube summed.

"We made too many mistakes."

A bad line change. A sluggish forecheck. Some poor reads and sloppy decisions.

The coach wasn't giving his players the "flush game" pass he granted them last week in Salt Lake City.

Nor should he.

The Wild dominated the Leafs' top guns at even strength with defenceman Jonas Brodin and their entire second line — Matt Boldy, Joel Eriksson Ek, Marcus Johansson — sidelined by injury.

But power forward Marcus Foligno torched the Leafs with his first career hat trick, and Minnesota's all-Olympian defence pair of Quinn Hughes (two assists, plus-3) and Brock Faber (two assists, plus-4) showed what a difference swift-skating puck-movers can make from the back end.

"It's hard to get your forecheck established," said Matthews, limited to one shot. (He scored on a garbage-time breakaway.)

No question last week's long flights and every-other-night slate resulted in fatigue for the Leafs' homecoming.

"That's true. In saying that, that's where you gotta be smarter, and you gotta manage it a little better," Berube countered.

"Right here," as the coach pointed to his head. "Mental."

Trying to predict the Eastern Conference playoff picture will drive a fan mental these days.

Do the Leafs have enough talent to survive the sprint? Absolutely.

Do they have enough track left? To be determined.

"It's a tight race, so all of them matter," Knies said. "Every point is important right now."

Every stinker is less easily shrugged off, and every point is more crucial, because the Maple Leafs left so many on the table in the first two months of the season.

No rest for the weary.

The Detroit Red Wings — one of the eight teams ahead of Toronto in the Eastern Conference standings — roll into town Wednesday.

"Tomorrow's a new day," Woll said. "Back to work."

Because they're running out of days to take off.

Fox's Fast Five

- Whatever lower-body injury Knies is playing through — and he's been managing it since at least November — benefits from rest.

Knies scored four goals in three games immediately following the Christmas break. Since then, the Leafs have given him a pass some practices.

Knies was a game-time decision Monday and skipped line rushes, yet he did play on the second line.

He has scored one goal in his past 10 games.

"It's obviously bothering him a lot, for quite some time," Berube said. "It hasn't gotten really much better."

The silver lining of the power forward not making Team USA is that he can use the Olympic break to rest and heal for Toronto's playoff push.

"The more wear and tear on it, it's not going to get better," Knies said. "It's been, honestly (expletive), but I gotta do my best to prepare as well as I can."

- Berube revealed that it is a groin injury Nylander has been dealing with since Dec. 28 and that he aggravated in Las Vegas on Thursday. There is no timeline for return.

"I'm not sure when he's going to be on the ice," Berube admitted.

The Swedish superstar's Olympic participation looms large here.

- Matthews's hot streak continues. The captain's 25th goal of the season gives him 11 in his past 12 games and allows him to pass Borje Salming for fourth all-time in Maple Leafs scoring (769 points).

- Aging sniper Vladimir Tarasenko's productivity has taken a turn for the better. The veteran scored just 11 times in 80 games as a hired gun for Detroit last season, converting on just 8.3 per cent of his shots.

The 34-year-old Russian has already matched that total in his first 43 games with Minnesota, enjoying a three-point showing that included the game-winner Monday.

He was acquired by the Wild for nothing, a pure \$4.75-million salary dump by the Red Wings.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Pot a few timely ones in the post-season, and he'll be worth every penny.

• A fun and fiery Laughton moment was caught on camera by a fan in Winnipeg Saturday. Immediately following Max Domi's overtime winner, Laughton gave the Jets fans behind the visitors' bench a crybaby face.

"I was pretty fired up at the end of the game just with that penalty," Laughton explained, referring to Gabriel Vilardi's embellishment of a Knies high-stick.

"And then I caught it out of the corner of my eye. He was kind of giving it to me. So, I was hoping for a nice overtime winner there so I could get him back. I stayed in that spot and made sure I was in a good position."

Beauty.

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Sportsnet.ca / Whitecloud parachutes in for impressive Flames debut

Eric Francis

CALGARY – Zach Whitecloud smiled when asked what was going through his head when he had the puck on a 2-on-1 just a few shifts into his Calgary Flames debut.

"Why is a parachute tied to my ass?" laughed the stay-at-home defenceman, who wasted no time making it clear he's going to fit in just fine around here.

To be fair, that sinking feeling he had of not being able to pull away had plenty to do with speedy Jack Hughes being on his tail to break up the play.

But as far as ice-breakers go, his ease with the media mirrored his comfort on the ice, as the 29-year-old fired two shots on net, had one hit and three blocked shots while logging more ice time than every Flame but partner Kevin Bahl on Monday in a 2-1 overtime loss against the New Jersey Devils.

Poised with the puck, solid defensively, and a steadying force with a series of solid breakout passes, the consensus was that the new guy was pretty impressive in his first game.

Not bad for a guy whose day started in Vegas with an 8 a.m. flight, a 4:15 p.m. arrival at the rink and a crash course in Flames strategy in the hours leading up to puck drop.

"I thought he actually played well considering the circumstances," said coach Ryan Huska.

"I thought he skated well. I thought he made some smart plays with the puck. I was very impressed. He skates a little better than I thought he did. I knew he moved well, but I thought tonight he looked really good on the ice. He's able to close gaps really quickly. I think he's going to be a really good player."

Punctuating his post-game availability by shaking hands with every media member and asking for names, it's clear the 29-year-old Stanley Cup champion the Flames acquired Sunday as part of the Rasmus Andersson trade is a polished leader who can help carry some of the big minutes No. 4 used to log.

"I feel good, surprisingly," said the Brandon, Man. native who played 22:33 alongside Bahl on the team's first defensive pair.

"I honestly went in with zero expectations on how I was going to feel. Obviously, a busy transition for my fiancée and I, so I just kind of hit the ground running."

Given the option to take a few days before joining his new club, Whitecloud insisted on jumping right in, which says plenty about how keen he is to be playing on one of the Canadian teams he grew up watching as a kid.

"When you hear Calgary, you start thinking of a Canadian market and hockey city, hockey people, people that care about their team, care about the way the team's playing, care about how the people are in the community, and those are things that I pride myself on," said the well-spoken defender.

"I'm excited to be here, contribute to that culture and try to push this in the right direction, and be involved every single day."

His enthusiasm is infectious.

It's easy to see why his first night in his new town was such a positive experience, outside of his team losing in OT.

"Very vocal," was Bahl's scouting report on his new partner.

"It was good. I thought he thought he had a good game, so that was fun. The biggest thing is communication, but also just get out there and play a game. Then you start to learn the habits and the reads. I learned a lot from him getting back for pucks, and him making certain plays. So, yeah, it's good."

Bahl has elevated his game and physicality of late, and one wonders as roles continue to evolve if perhaps the steadying influence of Whitecloud will prompt Bahl to explore more offensively. It certainly seemed that way Monday, when Bahl jumped up in the rush for a brilliant give-and-go Nazem Kadri finished off to snap a 13-game goalless drought.

Whitecloud comes across as a genuine sort, which makes sense given his mantra as he walked into a new environment as part of his first trade was simple:

"Be yourself, I think that's the most important part," said the six-foot-two, 210-pound righty.

"I'm not going to come in here and change who I was from my time in Vegas, nor did I change myself when I was there. I understand who I am as a player, and as a person, and I kind of know my place and know my voice and my impact.

"I think my impact is valuable, and I'm very aware of that, and having confidence in that ability to come into a room and introduce yourself and know that this is family now, and come in here and play the right way and contribute to the culture that's growing here."

It's been emotional, as he is the first to admit.

He felt it was important to experience all the feels that came from the surprising news of his trade, the sadness of leaving teammates who came in droves to his home to say goodbye, and the excitement of a new city, and new challenge.

He is not a fill-in with these Flames, he is clearly ready to help lead.

He won't be able to fill Andersson's shoes offensively, but can play a significant role defensively, shutting down the opposition at even strength, on the penalty kill and adding grit as a steadying influence on a blue line full of emerging youngsters who will benefit from his experience.

Monday night was a good start.

"Mistakes are going to happen, you're new to a team, but the guys were great out there, talking, communicating," he said.



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"Bahler makes the game really easy. He's easy to read off of, and fantastic defensively. That's something I pride myself on. So I thought for the first game, hitting the ground running, I thought we did a good job."

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Sportsnet.ca / Scout's Analysis: What Sharks, Canucks get in Kiefer Sherwood trade

Rory Boylen

When Kiefer Sherwood signed in Vancouver less than two years ago as an unrestricted free agent, the market and the hockey world at large didn't know too much about him.

At the time, Sherwood was 29 years old and had 24 NHL goals in his career. Ten of those goals came in 2023-24 over 68 games with Nashville, while another seven came the previous season in just 38 games. Six others came four years prior to that when Sherwood played 50 games as a rookie with the Anaheim Ducks in 2018-19.

His two-year contract ended up being a steal for a player who immediately had a breakout season and is taking another leap now. Sherwood broke the NHL record for hits in a single season last season while scoring a personal-best 19 goals. This season, he already has 17 more goals, well on his way to eclipsing 20 for the first time.

Had things gone to plan, Sherwood would have been a physical, secondary scoring force to support Vancouver's stars come playoff time. Of course, the front office's blueprint dissolved, and now that the Canucks are embracing a deeper rebuild than they initially preferred, Sherwood became a luxury it could no longer afford.

Sherwood arrived in Vancouver a gritty underdog. He leaves a fan favourite. The path he took to this point is a road less travelled.

"I hope that it opens up some pathways for other late bloomers one day, whether it's here or other places because there a lot of guys who are good players in the 'A' they just sometimes need some time to figure it out and get some opportunity," Sherwood said after Monday's trade. "That's what I was so grateful for coming here just the opportunity to blossom and be myself. I couldn't have asked for anything more from my experience in Vancouver. To have the fans be as appreciative as they are and chant my name is crazy."

Now 30, Sherwood is in the final season of that bargain of a contract and could become an unrestricted free agent in a thin market this summer. While the Canucks did at one point attempt to re-sign Sherwood, the team's mounting losses and a gap in negotiations made this conclusion an obvious one.

Vancouver did seek out a first-round pick for Sherwood, but ultimately settled on two second-rounders from San Jose and 25-year-old AHL defenceman Cole Clayton.

Sherwood's next destination is certainly an interesting one. San Jose has not reached the playoffs since 2019, but is now attempting to rise out of its own rebuild with an exciting young core. With a 24-20-3 record, San Jose currently holds the second wild-card spot in the West and sits tied with the Seattle Kraken for third in the Pacific in points and points percentage.

The Canucks, however, are still just getting started down their next path. With Sherwood gone, attention will turn towards other pending UFAs such as Evander Kane and Teddy Blueger. And the cuts may go deeper

than that into tenured players including Elias Pettersson, Jake DeBrusk and Thatcher Demko.

Next week, San Jose will travel to Vancouver and that could be a chance for Canucks faithful to give Sherwood a proper send-off. Currently injured, however, it's not clear if Sherwood will be ready to play in that game or not.

"I don't know," he said. "I need to make sure this is right. We'll see."

For more on Monday's trade, we turn to scout Jason Bukala.

Scout's Analysis

Back in 2024, when the Canucks signed Sherwood to a two-year contract (\$1.5 million cap hit), they had come off a hard-fought playoff series against Sherwood's previous team, the Predators, and felt he was exactly the kind of player they required. Vancouver was hoping he would add to the team and help keep it pointed on an upward trajectory.

Now that the reality of the Canucks' current scenario is setting in, as the team enters a full-on rebuild, they have shipped Sherwood to the upstart San Jose Sharks and made out very well in the process.

To San Jose: Kiefer Sherwood

I have a ton of respect for how hard Sherwood has worked to become a very valuable NHL player. He's a highly motivated competitor who empties the tank every night. He led the NHL in hits last season with an astounding (and record-breaking) 462 and sits second this year with 210. His combination of power and speed has led to a significant uptick in his goal scoring. He had a career high 19 goals and 21 assists last season and he's on pace to surpass 25 goals this year.

Sherwood earned every dollar of his contract in Vancouver and leaves the Canucks with gifts in the form of the two second-round picks they acquired from the Sharks for his services.

Sherwood is due a significant raise. The fact the Canucks end up with the extra draft capital is a stroke of luck for Vancouver.

To Vancouver: 2026 second-round pick, 2027 second-round pick, Cole Clayton

Vancouver now holds two first- and two second-round picks in the upcoming draft and replaces a 2027 second-rounder it gave up from a previous trade with Chicago in June 2024.

If Vancouver is serious about rebuilding the organization, it will need to continue to acquire as much draft capital as possible and hope the majority of the players it selects with its extra picks turn into NHL players in the next three or four years.

Here's a look at their draft grid after the trade with the Sharks:

Meantime, Clayton is a six-foot-two, 198-pound, right-shot defenceman who has spent his entire career at the AHL level. He's 25 years old, was never drafted, and is essentially a finished product at this stage of his career.

Clayton is a capable skater on straight lines, but his upward style leads to some small-area contain issues below the hash marks and goal line in his zone. The bulk of his ice time comes at even strength and on the penalty kill. He's very competitive and engaged physically. His long reach is an asset and he works to get in shooting lanes on the penalty kill to block shots.

Clayton's NHL projection is as a potential short-term recall, or someone who can provide organizational depth on the blue line.

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Sportsnet.ca / Look out, Vegas rolling the dice again with Andersson acquisition

Ryan Dixon

We should have known the Vegas Golden Knights would never sit on their hands two years in a row.

We're conditioned to look southwest during the NHL's busiest in-season trade window — which is basically now, until the March 6 deadline — because you can usually count on the Golden Knights making a significant move.

Last season, however, no serious desert deals got done leading up to the deadline and the Golden Knights were bounced in the second round of the playoffs by the Edmonton Oilers.

So, back come the Knights, picking up right-shot defenceman Rasmus Andersson from the Calgary Flames on Sunday afternoon. As it happens, Vegas is playing its best hockey of the year — the squad snagged its seventh straight win with a 7-2 smackdown of Nashville on Saturday — and the team's success is largely being driven by deadline acquisitions from previous years who — as many expect Andersson will to do — made Vegas a permanent home.

Captain Mark Stone — acquired Feb. 25, 2019, from Ottawa — scored for the third straight game, versus the Preds, and is putting up the most crooked numbers of his career and some of the craziest per-game totals in the league. Stone has missed 16 games this season, but among NHLers who've played 30 contests, the Canadian Olympian ranks fifth in points per game (1.52) and is tied for fourth in goals per game (0.58). Over 82 contests, that's a 48-goal, 125-point season.

Five years after landing Stone, Vegas snagged Tomas Hertl from San Jose ahead of the 2024 deadline. The big centre is a huge presence for the Knights, recording four goals and 12 points since the start of the seven-game winning streak on Jan. 6. Hertl has really been killing it for a month, recording 20 points in 16 outings since Dec. 17.

Two days before GM Kelly McCrimmon snagged Hertl in March 2024, he connected with Calgary on a swap for defenceman Noah Hanifin. As it happens, 13 of Hanifin's 19 total points this season have come in 15 games since Dec. 20. Now that Calgary and Vegas have come together on another trade, Hanifin figures to be reunited with his old Alberta pal Andersson.

It's all great news the Pacific Division-leading Knights, who never veer too far from get-your-guy mode.

Weekend Takeaways

- With Vegas triggering the first big trade domino of 2026, you wonder if other teams will soon follow suit. Specifically, Dallas and Washington — two clubs with Stanley Cup aspirations who are really struggling — might be a couple to keep an eye on. The Stars are securely in a playoff spot, but are 6-7-4 since Dec. 11 after being dropped 4-1 by the red-hot Tampa Bay Lightning on Sunday in Texas. Dallas had been linked to Andersson, so we'll see if there's a pivot for GM Jim Nill and the Stars.

Washington, meanwhile, is outside the Eastern Conference playoff picture. The Caps — who finished second overall last season — are 6-10-3 since that same Dec. 11 date after being dropped 5-2 on Saturday by a Florida Panthers team they're scrapping it out with for a post-season berth. Will Washington — which has the 28th-ranked power play and 23rd-ranked PK — reach for the trade lever to try to improve its fortunes?

- Now that they're writing retool letters again, there's going to be all kinds of attention around the New York Rangers as the deadline approaches. On Sunday, Michael Amato touched on the potential for Artemi Panarin

and Vincent Trochek to be moved. While we're at it, how about one of the hottest sticks in the league, Mika Zibanejad? The 32-year-old centre had his second hat trick of 2026 in Saturday's 6-3 win in Philadelphia. And although Zibanejad is on an unsustainable heater — an outrageous 17 points in his past eight contests — he was basically a point-per-game player for a quarter season before that run, recording 21 points in 22 games from early November to Christmas. Zibanejad is a right shot who can play both the middle and wing. Like all the big-name Blueshirts, he's got some trade protection, so it will be interesting to see where this goes and what teams make of a guy who has an \$8.5-million cap hit through his age-36 campaign in 2029-30 (which is only one year longer than Trochek's contract runs).

- Speaking of heaters, check out Roman Josi putting together his fourth straight multi-point showing in Saturday's loss to Vegas. The Preds blueliner has 10 points in his past four outings.

- Is there a Rick Bowness-led resurgence happening in Central Ohio? The Blue Jackets won in Pittsburgh 4-3 in a shootout on Saturday and have won four straight contests overall and three in a row since Bowness was hired to replace Dean Evason early last week. If the Jackets are going to make a push to get back in the playoffs, Columbus will have to stay hot during a five-game homestand that starts Tuesday versus Ottawa.

Red and White Power Rankings

1. Montreal Canadiens (27-15-7) Lane Hutson had three assists in the Canadiens' 6-5 OTW in Ottawa on Saturday. Since Dec. 11, he's fifth in NHL scoring with 28 points in 20 outings, and first among defencemen.

2. Toronto Maple Leafs (24-16-8) The Leafs are working overtime these days, with five of their past eight contests going past three periods, including Saturday's 4-3 OTW in Winnipeg.

3. Edmonton Oilers (25-17-8) A huge stick-tap to Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, who played his 1,000th NHL game on Sunday and netted a goal in Edmonton's 5-0 whitewash of St. Louis. If he plays all 32 games remaining on the Oilers schedule this year, RNH will be just five games behind Kevin Lowe for the franchise record of 1,037.

4. Ottawa Senators (22-19-7) On Saturday, the Sens had a 5-3 third-period lead over the Canadiens and fell in OT. On Sunday, Ottawa jumped out to a 2-0 first-period advantage in Detroit and couldn't get the hay in the barn, losing 4-3 in extra time in goalie James Reimer's debut with the club. It's tough sledding with Linus Ullmark away from the team, but the Senators need to start stacking some two-point nights.

5. Calgary Flames (21-23-4) As a pending UFA, Rasmus Andersson was always the most likely candidate to move among the Flames' veteran crew. Now, we'll really see what kind of appetite Calgary has for trading the likes of Nazem Kadri — who has three years left on his deal after this season — or the injured Blake Coleman, who is under contract through next season.

6. Winnipeg Jets (19-22-6) For what it's worth — and for as grim as the standings are for Winnipeg — the Jets are one of only five Western Conference clubs to have a positive five-on-five goal-differential (plus-5).

7. Vancouver Canucks (16-27-5) In all sincerity, Vancouver — which has lost seven straight after getting hammered 6-0 by Edmonton on Saturday — is getting some important separation in the race to the bottom. If this is a rebuild, why not start with the best lottery odds to land the first pick in 2026?

The week ahead

- The Florida Panthers play four games this week — beginning Monday night in Sunrise versus the Sharks, which will be Matthew Tkachuk's season debut.



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• It's a big week for players visiting their old haunts. Don't expect anything but deafening cheers on Monday night when Jonathan Toews plays his first NHL game in Chicago since April 2023. Toews — who captained the Blackhawks to three titles between 2010 and 2015 — is playing his best hockey of the season for the Jets, with four goals and nine points in his past 11 outings. Mitch Marner isn't going to get the same reception in Toronto, but we'll see if there's still some support for the hometown kid when Vegas visits the Leafs on Friday. Chicago gets a second homecoming on Sunday when Seth Jones — maybe the most important deadline pickup last year, when Florida got him from the Hawks — heads back to the Windy City, where he spent nearly four full seasons.

• Monday is Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the United States and the holiday brings afternoon action around the league, including a good 1:30 p.m. ET / 10:30 a.m. PT tilt in Buffalo between the Canes and Sabres. The Capitals and Avs will also clash at 4 p.m. ET / 1 p.m. PT in Denver, while the Penguins and Kraken duel at 5 p.m. ET / 2 p.m. PT in Seattle.

• The Red Wings have beaten the Leafs three times this season and can go for the sweep when they visit Toronto on Wednesday. After picking up an assist on Sunday against the Sens, Patrick Kane is three points away from passing Mike Modano to become the highest-scoring American-born player in NHL history. Also, he's only 19 points away from tying Brett Hull — born in Belleville, Ont. — as the highest-scoring American, full stop.

• Buffalo and Montreal could both suddenly have something to say about how the Atlantic Division plays out. They'll meet for the second time in seven days when the Sabres head to Quebec on Thursday. That same night, Sidney Crosby will go head-to-head with Connor McDavid and the Oilers in Edmonton. On Saturday, it will be Alex Ovechkin and the Capitals visiting Northern Alberta.

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Sportsnet.ca / Sherwood trade makes Canucks worse as they continue to lean into rebuild

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — It's easy to cheer for the Vancouver Canucks' rebuild when they lose 6-0, like they did Saturday at home against the Edmonton Oilers. It's harder when they trade Kiefer Sherwood for a couple of draft picks that may or may not produce a National Hockey League player three or four years from now.

Two months after notifying teams that Sherwood and the Canucks' other free-agent-eligible players were available for trade, general manager Patrick Allvin sent his leading goal-scorer to the San Jose Sharks on Monday for second-round picks in 2026 and 2027 and minor-league depth defenceman Cole Clayton.

Unable to pry a first rounder from someone in a relatively deep draft year, the Canucks made their best deal for Sherwood six weeks ahead of the March 6 trade deadline and a couple of weeks before the Olympic roster freeze.

A pair of seconds from the Sharks is fair compensation for a 30-year-old winger on an expiring deal and whose next contract wasn't going to fit the Canucks' rebuild — or even just their salary chart on right wing where Brock Boeser and Conor Garland signed long-term extensions last July 1.

But the return was still slightly disappointing if only because Sherwood, one of the most relentless hitters in the NHL and the Canucks' leading

scorer with 17 goals, was the most valuable and easily-tradable piece the organization had to move this winter.

And Sherwood was a Canuck success story — a late-bloomer who was signed for depth from the Nashville Predators two years ago and turned himself into a middle-six winger whose shot, motor and combativeness puts him on every opponent's radar.

Sherwood made the Canucks better. And his trade Monday will make them worse. But that's a rebuild.

"I'm really thankful for everything that the city and this organization has given me," Sherwood told reporters as he stood in front of the Canuck backdrop, a Canucks cap on his head, at Rogers Arena. "They say you earn it, but you've got to have the opportunity. You know, as a guy that has been a late bloomer, (Vancouver) was everything I could have hoped for and more. This is really a special place to play.

"That's the hard part at times about the business, you get attached to certain cities and communities. I feel like this city, and this place to play, this organization, they do things the right way. They really live and breathe hockey. I know, no matter what people feel like, the organization is going to benefit from this with the picks and whatnot. So I'm just really grateful for everything. I couldn't have asked for more coming into this."

That soliloquy is how Sherwood began his final press conference in Vancouver, which by its very existence reflected the character of the person and the player.

It is hard to express just how low a priority the media is for most players who have just been traded, but Kiefer Sherwood wanted to speak to us. Well, not us so much as the community.

He was accountable on the ice, accountable in the dressing room and, on Monday, made himself accountable for a trade in which he bore no responsibility.

"I saw some of the guys, and I guess that's when it started to sink in a little bit, just giving everyone hugs," Sherwood said of his suddenly former teammates. "Like I said, there's a lot of special guys in there. When you spend more time with the team, you get closer to certain guys and make relationships for life. So I just want what's best for them.

"I just want to say how thankful I am for them and all the memories that we've built together over this time."

After months of uncertainty, the trade brings closure for Sherwood, who revealed that his wife, Ariel, is expecting their first child in April. He expressed gratitude to Allvin and Canucks president Jim Rutherford for providing clarity to his professional situation now.

"I mean, tough one," Allvin said of the trade. "Kiefer Sherwood has been a great addition here to our team. We believed in him as a player (when we signed him) and I think he has taken tremendous steps here over the two years. He's a well-liked player on the ice, well-liked person in the community. He's going to be missed.

"We were looking to accumulate more draft capital here for this year and also for moving forward. We felt the respect to Kiefer and his family, where his situation is, if we were ... pleased with the return, we felt we weren't going to just sit and wait for something else."

The Canucks were already missing Sherwood, who came out of the lineup with an upper-body injury four games ago. Vancouver has been noticeably less physical without the undrafted winger from Columbus, Ohio, who obliterated the single-season NHL hits record last year with 482.

Sherwood was unsure if he'll be able to play when the Sharks visit Vancouver on Jan. 27.



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"You know, I love the guy," Canucks coach Adam Foote said. "Love his play, how he brings it every night. You know, we're going to miss a guy like that. You never want to see that happen."

"I'm a coach, and I want all the good ones. I want them all to stay, but there's reasons why it doesn't happen."

Allvin said he expects more trades before March 6.

The Canucks will try to sell potential UFAs Evander Kane and Teddy Blueger, and are willing to listen on any trade conversations other teams want to have about Vancouver's veteran players.

But Allvin reiterated he does not believe in stripping the roster of experienced players in order to build a new team from scratch.

"We definitely need to keep players around," he said. "I don't want to see what happened here the other night, losing 6-0. It's not good for anyone, it's not good for the fans, it's not good for the players."

"We're extremely fortunate to have good veteran players here, good people more so, to teach our young guys. But I've said it before, (if a trade) is making sense for us long term, we'll definitely look into it."

At 0-8-2 in their last 10 games, tied for their longest winless streak in 28 years, the Canucks face the New York Islanders Monday night at home.

"Any year you underperform or teams go in a different direction, you lose good players and good guys," Garland said philosophically. "We've dealt with it in the past. We've had years where we've brought guys in as well. But it's one of those years we're going to see guys go out. Woody's a fun teammate to have. You know, he's a gamer. He's a really good player, he's been awesome for us. We'll miss him in the room and on the ice quite a bit."

ICE CHIPS – Foote and Allvin said the Canucks and Thatcher Demko are gathering further assessment on the goaltender's lower-body injuries. The organization hasn't ruled out shutting him down for the season ... Allvin said he does not expect injured defenceman Derek Forbort to return this year. He came out of the lineup for maintenance two games into the season and hasn't played since. "It's sad because it's more so a setback from a previous injury," the GM explained. "When we took him out, honestly, it was just for a day to rest. He ended up having an injection and that flared up. There is a small chance that he might be back, but I don't count on it now." ... Centres Blueger and Filip Chytil, both out since Oct. 19, are expected to play this week.

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Sportsnet.ca / 'It's something exciting': Maple Leafs' Bobby McMann talks impending free agency

Luke Fox

TORONTO — Only time will tell if Bobby McMann remains a Toronto Maple Leaf beyond this season. But the speedy winger wastes no time in responding that would be his desire.

"Yeah, it'd be cool. This place kind of has everything that you could ask for. Made a lot of good friendships, good relationships with a lot of great people, a lot of great staff in this organization. So, it's definitely a spot that I could see myself being in," the impending free agent told Sportsnet.ca Monday morning.

"And the fans are great here. It's like a hockey centre. Everybody loves watching hockey, whether it's our games or anyone's. I think it's just a cool spot to be for hockey."

And a cool spot to get first-line shifts, as the late-blooming, cap-friendly McMann has taken over the No. 1 left wing role alongside Auston Matthews during the Leafs' best stretch of hockey all season.

Over his past 15 games, the streaky 29-year-old has racked up seven goals and 11 points. The 17:58 in ice time McMann is averaging in January is easily his most in any NHL month.

(Worth noting: Matthews' usual left wing, Matthew Knies, has been battling a lower-body injury that has been lingering since at least December and is a game-time decision Monday.)

McMann, you may recall, was healthy scratched in coach Craig Berube's first game in Toronto. He is hesitant read too much into his recent promotion.

"I don't see that much meaning behind it. It's more just like we try a bunch of combinations throughout the year, and sometimes some of them work, some of them don't. Sometimes you start winning games and things are clicking," McMann said. "That's how I see it, as just trying to contribute to a spot on a line that maybe has certain aspects that I can fill and bring to the table."

No doubt, McMann has brought more to the table this season than any other. Berube loves the pace and physicality the undrafted McMann has injected into Matthews' unit and appreciates the Wainwright, Alta., native's increased physicality.

"It's a little unfair, honestly, how fast he is," Knies said, flashing a smile. "It's crazy."

McMann's 15 goals, 10 assists, 40 penalty minutes, 104 hits, and 20 blocks have him on pace for career highs across the board.

Among McMann's fellow pending UFAs, only Alex Ovechkin, Nick Schmaltz, Artemi Panarin, Jordan Eberle, Alex Tuch, and Keifer Sherwood (who was traded to the San Jose Sharks on Monday) have scored more goals this season.

McMann is younger and cheaper (\$1.35 million AAV) than all of them.

Make no mistake: This summer is the ECHL graduate's best shot at setting himself up with a life-altering payday and professional security.

Pickings are slim, and the cap is rising.

"It's not something I really, one, try to think about, or, as much as I can, do think about. You always want to enjoy the journey," McMann said.

"Yeah, there's maybe a little bit on the line personally, but it's not something I want to focus on. I think it's something that is exciting. But I want to focus on winning games, focus on being the best version of myself, reaching my potential any year that I'm playing and contributing as much as I can to a team."

McMann said no serious extension talks have begun yet.

The trade deadline looms roughly six weeks away and compelling decisions await.

GM Brad Treliving already extended McMann once, but McMann's play has shifted leverage to the player side. The same goes for fellow UFAs Scott Laughton and Troy Stecher, two more integral role players outperforming their current salaries.

Treliving has a saying: Only two pesky little things get in the way of a seamless contract negotiation. Money and term.

McMann says that the sides have not delved into serious talks yet. Discussions are preliminary.



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"No, it's not something that I'm trying to get into or really focus a lot of energy on," McMann said. "I'm trying to let my agents figure things out. But, no, I haven't really gotten into it."

McMann is represented by Brian and Scott Bartlett, who also represent Buffalo's Tuch.

Tuch is believed to be asking the Sabres for an eight-figure salary on a long-term deal. A rising tide floats all boats.

Perhaps it would serve McMann, and Sherwood, for that matter, to wait for the most proven power forward of this UFA class to sign.

The Maple Leafs like McMann.

Do they like him at \$4 million per season? Or \$5 million?

We are talking about a player who has failed to score — and has managed just three assists — in his 13 career playoff games, a player with only 187 games played at the NHL level.

Would McMann be content to ride out this impactful season and deal with business in the summer?

"Yeah. I mean, it's kind of both ways," McMann replied. "Like, what the team wants, what works for me, and I think I just trust my agents to represent me and figure it out. Because I don't really know the market and how that works.

"Like, I haven't really negotiated a lot of deals or anything. Obviously, they've done a ton. So, I'm just trusting that they'll guide me in the right direction."

The way top-line McMann is playing these days, the only direction is up.

"Yeah," he smiled. "That's where I focus my energy — winning and my play."

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Sportsnet.ca / For Canadiens' Guhle, latest comeback a lesson that poise doesn't always pay off

Eric Engels

BROSSARD, Que. — This was one mind game Kaiden Guhle wasn't anticipating, and it played tricks on him almost immediately.

Guhle knew that spending nearly three months out of NHL action would rust more than just his skate blades. Unfortunately, his extensive previous experience on the sidelines taught him that his hands and feet may also betray his mind on occasion, with timing always the last piece to fall into place. And he planned for his lungs and legs to burn a bit more than he was accustomed to after surgery to repair a partially torn adductor muscle forced him into the longest rehab of his career.

But Guhle couldn't have expected that the poise he'd been developing over his first three seasons in the league would be an impediment to his smoothest return possible, until it proved to be exactly that in a 4-0 loss for his Montreal Canadiens against the Detroit Red Wings on Jan. 10.

Don't get us wrong. Eight days before his 24th birthday, Guhle rode adrenaline through a relatively strong individual performance against the Red Wings, especially considering how much time he had missed.

But if there was one knock on Guhle's game that night, it was that he was a bit slow to react to how quickly his time and space with the puck was being taken away by his opponents.

You could forgive Guhle for thinking he had more of it. Convincing himself of that got him playing what he believed was the best hockey of his life last season. And watching the Canadiens play so many games from the press box since — as his latest injury healed up — gave him a false sense of security that time and space would once again be there for him when he would finally step back into a game.

But Guhle fell into a trap, and he acknowledged that he hadn't quite dug his way out of it through the two games that immediately followed his first one against Detroit.

Guhle struggled against the Vancouver Canucks last Monday, and he had an even tougher time against the Buffalo Sabres Thursday after skipping Tuesday's game against the Washington Capitals.

"I think I'm just trying to do a little bit too much at times, trying to maybe make a perfect play and thinking a little bit too much, too," Guhle said from Ottawa on Friday. "As good as it is to be able to watch up top at times to see every play develop, you can kind of overthink the game a little bit (once you're back on the ice), which for me is not where I need to be mentally."

In a 6-5 win over the Senators on Saturday, Guhle got to a better place. He played a much simpler 15:42 spread over 18 shifts and registered three hits and, most importantly, zero giveaways. He moved the puck harder, faster and without hesitation, meeting his goal to reset the foundation of his game.

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.

Latest episode

Once that foundation is firmly back in place, and once he's regained rhythm and caught back up to speed, Guhle can begin to start slowing things back down again.

Just like he was doing last winter.

"That time-and-space factor, I started to get really comfortable with that at both ends of the ice," Guhle said.

It was most apparent before he fell and cut his quadricep muscle last January.

"You get hurt, then you kind of start from ground zero," said Guhle. "Then you have summer, and you work on stuff and go to camp and deal with something. And then five games and, boom, you're out for three months. It's tough."

The condensed schedule made Guhle's return even tougher, and not just because of how taxing it could be on a freshly rehabilitated player.

Guhle jumped back into what was a playoff flow established for everyone else around him back in October. He returned as his own team was in the middle of its most hectic sequence — five games in seven nights — and his opponents were playing at a similar clip.

None of them had time for practice, but none of them needed it that much either.

Guhle did. Everyone else could play with poise, but it took time for him to realize he'd be better off relying on less of it for now.

Kirby Dach should have the same approach if he plays Tuesday against the Minnesota Wild.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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A broken bone in his foot has sidelined the forward since Nov. 15 and the poise he generally plays with could be a disadvantage to him in the opening phase of his return.

Until Dach gets through it, he should just play simple, hard and as fast as he can.

Guhle is doing that now, and he intends on regaining his poise in due time.

"I'm not going to say I have all the time in the world to get it back," Guhle said, "but I believe in myself that I am going to find that part of my game again. I'm still confident."

No sleep for Martin St. Louis

The Canadiens took four flights last week, but their coach took six because his other job was calling.

"Your son only turns 18 once," St. Louis said when we asked him about it Monday.

On Friday, the Canadiens surprisingly practised because, as assistant coach Stephane Robidas said, it was a better option for the team than just sitting around the hotel in Kanata.

St. Louis' best option was to be with his son, Mason, on his milestone birthday.

"His two brothers are in college, and they played on Friday, and so I wanted Mason to feel the presence of his family," St. Louis said. "You try to do as much as you can, and I can only do so much. But when there's an opportunity, I take advantage of it.

"The easiest thing to do would be nothing, because there's logistics to it. But I'm willing to deal with the logistics because these are moments you can't get back."

To enjoy this one, St. Louis stayed in Buffalo on Thursday and flew home Friday morning.

He and his wife then hosted Mason's entire hockey team, including parents of all the players, for a birthday dinner at his golf club Friday night before he flew first thing Saturday to Ottawa, arriving in Kanata on time to conduct his morning meetings with Canadiens coaches and the players.

The Canadiens-Senators game on Saturday night started late due to a ceremony to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Tire Centre, and, mercifully for St. Louis, it ended 33 seconds into overtime.

The coach then did his post-game press conference 20 minutes later before rushing to the airport for another flight home.

This one was to catch Mason's Sunday hockey game in person, and St. Louis made it with plenty of time to spare.

"But the game ended up getting cancelled due to bad weather," he said.

St. Louis still got extra hours with his wife and son before returning to Montreal to run Canadiens practice Monday.

There wasn't much time for sleep baked into his insane schedule, but he didn't seem to care about that.

"It meant a lot to me for me to be there," St. Louis said. "It worked out great."

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Sportsnet.ca / Desperate Senators turn to former nemesis James Reimer for stability

Alex Adams

OTTAWA — Sometimes a quote says the quiet part so loud, it speaks volumes.

"I think Leevi (Merilainen) made some good saves. But I think, at the end of the day, you got to make more than 10 saves to win a game," Senators defenceman Jake Sanderson said after Ottawa's 6-5 loss to Montreal on Saturday.

You can understand the frustration for Sanderson, who had one of the best games of his career, tallying his second four-point game. His effort deserved a W as a reward — not a quote that reverberated around the Senators fanbase and the NHL.

We will never blame a player for being honest, and one imagines Sanderson would take the comment back if he could. It's sometimes hard in the heat of the battle to not be emotional during a post-game presser.

What's telling is the frustration and palpable emotion from Sanderson, a player otherwise known for his stoicism. Like the fanbase, he was visibly in anguish, the epitome of the 2025-26 Ottawa Senators.

If the season finished today, the Senators would have the third-worst team save percentage in the NHL since 1991-92. Of course, the Senators also are first and second on that list, but that was way back, when the team was wobbling into existence.

On Sunday night, the Sens lost 4-3 in overtime to Detroit in the second of a brutal back-to-back, with James Reimer between the pipes — his first appearance in an NHL season game in nearly a year. Maybe he's the solution, but that's a big if.

How many times can we write the story about how the Senators' goaltending is holding the team back?

We surely will try — again.

Why? Simply because goaltending is the sole reason the Senators are not in a playoff spot and are on the verge of another lost season.

In the end, Sanderson's statement was an ugly truth at a perilous time. He might regret it, but sometimes the truth hurts.

Merilainen hasn't been good enough. At the same time, it's not all on the 23-year-old, who was the de facto backup with 12 career games under his belt before this season. And he just played 10 in a row, capped by his poor performance against Montreal.

The decision to make Merilainen the No. 2 is squarely on general manager Steve Staios. Staios also traded for Linus Ullmark with his injury history and signed him to a massive \$33-million contract. Staios couldn't have predicted Ullmark would be away from the team for personal reasons, but Ullmark was one of the worst netminders in the league this season, before his absence. That's on Staios, too.

The good news is that Ullmark is closer to returning. Meanwhile, the journeyman Reimer played his first game as a Senator in a respectable debut. Perhaps there is hope for the Senators in net. But is it too late?

When you think of Reimer's career, you think of the Toronto Maple Leafs; now the Senators' season might rest on their erstwhile foe to turn heel into the ... "Reim-burglar"?

Either way, the Senators' bet on Reimer is as much a prayer as it is a calculated wager. It was rewarded on Sunday, as Reimer was the Senators' best player. Only one other time this season, in Las Vegas (when it was Ullmark), has the netminder been the team's best player.

We're at game No. 48.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Reimer wasn't perfect, but he didn't allow any softies, thwarting 30 of 34 shots, with .74 goals saved above expected, according to Moneypuck.com. A Senators goalie saved more shots than expected! Hang the banner and plan the parade on Bank Street.

5.83
2022-23

"A couple big servings of trust and grace," said Reimer, about his approach to his first NHL game in almost a year.

.890

With Reimer — whose nickname is "Optimus Reim," a nod to the Transformers — the Senators' aspirations are that he can transform their playoff odds.

3.48

Nevertheless, there was a reason Reimer had remained unsigned. He got a professional tryout with Toronto, of all places, in pre-season but was cut and then played for Canada at the Spengler Cup.

-19.15
2023-24

Since his days in Toronto, the 37-year-old Reimer has never played more than 48 games in a season and bounced around from team to team as a backup. He finished the 2024-25 season with an .896 save percentage. The Senators would be a playoff team with that degree of success.

.904

Ironically, as a Leaf, Reimer was a stud at the Canadian Tire Centre, tormenting the Senators. The hope is that he can replicate that form in a red-and-black-crested Senators uniform.

3.11

During his 15 NHL seasons, Reimer has a 12-4-1 record and .935 save percentage at the Canadian Tire Centre.

0.26
2024-25

"I joke about the water," said Reimer, about his success in Ottawa. "Maybe it's the beds at the Brookstreet (where opposing teams stay). I don't know what it is. It's where I played my first game. It's special in that way. There's something about this rink and the crowd that it just seems like it's an earnest, excitable fan base. The building — it gets loud and it's just a fun place to play."

.896

What Reimer represents for Ottawa — a team last in every goaltending category — is the possibility of league-average goaltending, because that's what he's been for the last five seasons.

3.04

Season

-2.63

Courtesy of Natural Stat Trick

Save percentage

Of course, age is a factor in Reimer's play, but with the goaltending position, your birthdate doesn't affect your play as much as it does forwards and defencemen. Ottawa fans remember how good Craig Anderson was at age 36, leading them to the conference final in 2017.

Goals-against average

Then there is Ullmark's return and what that means for the Senators. At a human level, let's hope the break has set his mind at peace. He is travelling with the team on the current road trip and we could see him play as soon as this week. Who knows which Linus Ullmark the Senators will get?

Goals saved above expected

Whatever the answer, there is no room for him to play his way into form.

2020-21

The Senators need wins.

.906

Play the better goaltender.

2.66

Adams' apples

-1.24

Montreal fans invade Ottawa: "We're used to it. Playing an away game at home," said Sanderson, about the Montreal fans who invaded Ottawa on Saturday night. "It happens quite often."

2021-22

Optics matter. There was a reason Ridly Greig sent home Toronto fans with an empty-net slapshot in his own building.

.911

The Senators organization sells seats at significantly higher prices against Canadian teams, specifically Montreal and Toronto, knowing opposing fans would pay top dollar. And some season-ticket holders cash in on the secondary market at prices that help fund the rest of the season. The result is a sea of Leafs blue or Habs red whenever Ottawa plays its biggest rivals.

2.90

Not ideal.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Last season, during the playoffs against Toronto, fans were worried. At the time, a Senators superfan, Kevin Lee, led a charge to keep the Canadian Tire Centre from turning blue in the Battle of Ontario playoff matchup.

In the end, all three home games in the playoff matchup were rocking with seats filled with Sens fans.

During last year's playoffs, the organization gave season-ticket holders priority access to buy their usual seats at a discount compared to the general sale prices, and also the ability to secure two more seats for the entirety of the playoffs. Finally, season-ticket holders were allowed to buy four additional tickets for family and friends, which were restricted from sale on the secondary market.

The organization and the fanbase need to come together to end the away games at home. There is no clearcut solution, but one thing is evident: more Senators fans need to have their butts in the Canadian Tire Centre whenever Montreal and Toronto come to town.

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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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TSN.CA / Matthews driving hot streak by pushing pace



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 20, 2026

Mark Masters

The Maple Leafs and Minnesota Wild skated at Scotiabank Arena on Monday.

Auston Matthews scored again on Saturday is now up to 10 goals in 11 games since Christmas. The Leafs centre scored 14 goals in 31 games before the holiday break. What allowed Matthews to flip the switch this season?

"A lot more pace in my game," he told TSN before a game in Las Vegas last week. "I'm hanging onto pucks more, carrying it through the neutral zone and creating from there."

"His lateral movement has been exceptional," observed linemate Bobby McMann. "It's always been one of his strengths, but I feel like he's generating a lot with off his shots, off receiving passes and things like that to generate offence."

During that interview in Las Vegas, Matthews made it clear he had grown weary of questions about Leaf-turned-Knight Mitch Marner, but the departure of his long-time linemate likely played a role in his early issues.

"There was an adjustment period," said TSN Hockey Insider Chris Johnston. "A lot of different linemates for Matthews through this season, but with the current look [between McMann and Max Domi] they're finding places for him to shoot and he's burying on a lot of those chances."

Johnston reports that health is the biggest factor.

"You see it in things like his shot speed," Johnston said. "Some of his best and hardest shots of the year have come in this stretch."

Matthews has missed six games due to an undisclosed injury this season.

Whatever the reason, there's no debating the impact Matthews is having on the Leafs through his improved play.

"When he's dominating the puck and controlling play, dominating play and doing so many things well, it obviously drives the team in so many facets," said centre John Tavares.

"He's a big reason why we're having the success we're having," said defenceman Troy Stecher. "That's what you want out of your captain is to kind of drag the rest of the guys into the fight, and he's definitely done that."

The Leafs are 8-1-3 since Christmas (.792 points percentage), which is second overall behind only the Tampa Bay Lightning (10-0-1).

Matthews faces a big challenge on Monday night with the Minnesota Wild in town. He has produced just one assist in his last four showdowns with Quinn Hughes. Those previous four games came when Hughes played for the Vancouver Canucks. The smooth-skating defenceman was traded to the Wild on Dec. 12.

"I'm starting to get a little bit comfortable in understanding my teammates and the system and all these different things," Hughes said. "A little bit more of a process than probably what I anticipated ... If you're working for a company for seven years and then you go to a new company, you don't know anyone. I mean, that's going to be a change for you, I bet."

Hughes has produced two goals and 16 assists in 17 games since the trade. Eleven of those points have come in the past eight games.

Hughes is happy with the quality of chances he's getting, but feels he can do a better job finishing. He scored on Saturday, which was his first goal since his first game with the Wild.

"You have to be you," the 26-year-old said of the transition. "But also you are going to a really good team ... It's not the Quinn Hughes show. Like, there's great players here and it's a great team, and I just want to do my part. That's the fine line the first five, six, seven, 10 games. We're trying to figure it out. And I feel like now it's going pretty good, so I just got to keep going."

One thing that hasn't changed: Hughes is still playing a lot. He's averaging 27 minutes and 55 seconds per game since joining the Wild, who deploy him against top lines.

"He's a great-skating defenceman," said Wild coach John Hynes. "He can close gaps on the rush. He's tough to beat off the rush because of his ability to skate. He's got a good stick. I think down low in the corners he's such a smart player. He uses his leverage and his quickness to be able to kill plays and end plays and when he's called upon to close a play or box out or defend in the hard areas there's a willingness to do it."

William Nylander did not skate on Monday morning and the winger will miss a second straight game. Head coach Craig Berube revealed that the team's leading scorer is dealing with a groin injury.

"I don't know how long the timeline will be for him," Berube admitted. "But, you know, when he feels good enough to get on the ice and he goes out there and skates and it feels good, then, you know, I expect him to be back fairly quick then. But I'm not sure when he's going to be on the ice."

Nylander initially sustained the injury on Dec. 28 and missed six games before returning on Jan. 10. He aggravated the injury early in Thursday's game in Las Vegas.

Matthew Knies missed the morning skate and is considered a game-time decision, per Berube. The big winger continues to be plagued by a lower-body injury, which forced him to miss three games in November.

"It's obviously bothering him a lot [and] for quite some time," said Berube. "It hasn't gotten really much better. Other than when he gets some breaks, you know, Christmastime and stuff, he comes back, it feels better, but it's an ongoing issue."

Knies scored four goals in three games immediately after the Christmas break, but has been limited to one goal in the past nine games.

With Knies absent, Scott Laughton moved up to the second line beside Tavares on Monday morning. There is some built-in chemistry between the veterans, who both grew up in Oakville, Ont.

"We always laugh about the Oakville connection," Tavares said.

"That's exactly right," Laughton said with a grin when informed of that comment. "Johnny's setting it up. He was all morning. So, yeah, we'll see what happens. We're proud Oakville guys, and still got a bunch of people there. So, yeah, we joke about it quite a bit."

Laughton has spent most of the season as Toronto's fourth-line centre.

"He's got a lot more playmaking offence than maybe a lot of people give him credit for," Tavares stressed. "He plays a hard-nosed game, does a lot of little things really well, but he's got real soft hands, and has a real good understanding for the game."



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"Me and Johnny trained together in the summer and worked on a lot of things," Laughton noted. "So if that happens, then I'm comfortable there for sure."

Laughton has six goals and two assists in 30 games this season, but recorded a career-high 18 goals and 43 points in the 2022-23 season with the Philadelphia Flyers.

Laughton is an emotional leader for the Leafs.

"He's just a heck of a competitor," said Tavares. "He plays a major role for us, does so many little things well, and just the life of the locker room. Any time you play with a guy like that, it's a lot of fun."

Laughton showed off his fiery nature once again on Saturday in Winnipeg. After Knies was whistled for high sticking Gabe Vilardi late in the third period, Laughton got in the face of the Jets forward.

"I don't want to speak too much about it," Laughton said. "It happens quick. The game happens quick, and things happen. But, yeah, I thought it went off the top of the helmet. It's still technically a high stick but, yeah, it happens. And it's happened to me, for sure, in my career. But in the moment you're in the game and things happen, and you get fired up."

Laughton then got into it with a Winnipeg fan after the Leafs scored an overtime win on Saturday night.

"I was pretty fired up at the end of the game just with that penalty," he explained. "And then I caught it out of the corner of my eye. He was kind of giving it to me. So, I was hoping for a nice overtime winner there so I could get him back. I stayed in that spot and made sure I was in a good position."

Tavares can only chuckle.

"That's just who he is, he's always got something up his sleeve," Tavares said. "It's hard to look at him with a straight face because you just know there's something going on in the back of his mind that he's trying to get one up on someone ... Just an amazing guy, amazing energy, and just a funny dude that competes like hell. We love him in here."

Laughton will not have to worry about opposition fans for the next little bit. Monday marks the start of five straight games at home for the Leafs.

"We've been good at home all year," Laughton said. "It's always hard coming back from the West Coast, so we need to have a good first 20 minutes here and set ourselves up for not only this game but the homestand in general."

The Leafs have the second-best home record in the league (16-5-5) behind only the Colorado Avalanche (19-1-3). Toronto has won seven straight games at Scotiabank Arena.

"Just been feeling good about it," said McMann. "Feeling good about the fans that are here, feeling good about the energy that this place has had. Definitely feeling comfortable at home. Had some extended road trips that we definitely had to battle through, but it's nice to have everything kind of in one spot. You get that familiarity of being at home and hopefully we can keep it rolling for this homestand."

Lines at Leafs morning skate:

McMann - Matthews - Domi

Maccelli - Tavares - Laughton

Cowan - Roy - Robertson

Lorentz - Quillan - Jarnkrok

Rielly - Carlo

McCabe - Ekman-Larsson

Benoit - Stecher

Benning - Myers

Woll starts

Hildeby

Stolarz

Lines at Wild morning skate:

Kaprizov-Hartman-Zuccarello

Trenin-Yurov-Tarasenko

Foligno-Haight-Hinostroza

Jones-Sturm-Pitlick

Hughes-Faber

Middleton-Spurgeon

Hunt-Jiricek/Spacek

Gustavsson starts

Wallstedt

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TSN.CA / 3-on-3 OT is headed in the wrong direction

Travis Yost

The National Hockey League's adoption of the 3-on-3 overtime format in the summer of 2015 was well-received, and in the following years the altered extra frame satisfied the league's dual mandate of reducing the number of regular-season games ended by a shootout while providing a more entertaining product.

The concept of the five-minute, 3-on-3 overtime was simple: pulling skaters off the ice would force an up-tempo type of hockey, one that would see flurries of scoring chances at both ends of the ice.

The format hasn't been flawless; I've long argued that to dramatically reduce the number of games decided by shootout, the 3-on-3 format necessitates about 10 minutes of game time.

In recent months there has been increasing debate about the staleness of the format; fans have noticed it has grown a bit trying, and there is data suggesting the players are thinking about 3-on-3 strategy differently now than they did in years past. We've also seen other leagues start to experiment with tweaks to 3-on-3 overtime.

The Champions Hockey League implemented a "no return" rule for its format after initial trials, prohibiting teams with possession and control of the puck in the attacking zone from retreating back into the neutral zone. Violations result in dangerous defensive zone faceoffs, and the threat of losing possession and being forced back onto the defensive side of the puck has kept teams aggressive and on the attack.

This one change increased the percentage of games being completed in overtime, identical to the NHL's goal. The early returns have been



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encouraging: an additional 12 per cent of games are now ending in overtime.

Bringing this back to the NHL: if it feels like the pace during 3-on-3 has felt painfully slow and methodical relative to years past, you're not wrong. What we are seeing in the data suggests a meaningful change in approach from teams, generating far less offensive volume (and scoring far fewer goals) than anything from the past decade:

Yost1

Both scoring and offensive shot volume per 60 minutes are at 10-year lows, and the offensive shot volume year over year is the type downtrend no league wants to see. If the league's mandate was to create a high-tempo, offensive product that kept games out of the shootout format, the current structure is failing to accomplish its goals.

The numbers speak for themselves. This season, 27 per cent of games – more than one in every four games played – is requiring extra time, in line with prior seasons. What's quite different is how frequently the league is requiring the shootout to resolve these games again, up considerably versus prior periods and surely correlated with the offensive slowdown we are seeing in 3-on-3 play:

Yost2

It's fair to say the NHL is aware of the growing concerns with the current format and listening to potential tweaks to bring offence back to the forefront, but nothing serious has manifested yet.

I do wonder if a season like this – one where the product has clearly taken a step back – facilitates more serious conversation about the structure and any corresponding rule changes, not dissimilar to my hope the Central Division finishing with the three best teams in the league would force decision makers to seriously consider a playoff-format overhaul.

Data via Natural Stat Trick, NHL.com, Evolving Hockey, Hockey Reference

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