



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 29, 2026

The Athletic

Ranking all 32 NHL teams' home rinks, from Montreal to MSG and more

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This article is part of our NHL Arena Rankings series, in which we rank all 32 current rinks and present stories about memorable rinks of the past and present.

What makes a great NHL arena?

Is there a science to it? Or is there something intangible, too, that makes a building special?

Throughout my career, I've been to nearly 1,000 hockey games across North America, and one of the things I always enjoy is seeing how the NHL buildings are different from one another. When the time came to decide what this year's big rankings project would be, I jumped at the chance to try and rank the rinks.

We couldn't have done it without your help.

A few weeks ago, we put out the call for The Athletic's subscribers to weigh in with our first-ever NHL arena survey. Several thousand of you responded with in-depth perspectives from all 32 markets, including thoughtful commentary on all that goes into your favorite (or, in some cases, least favorite) buildings. Nearly 30 percent of responses came from readers who are full or partial season-ticket holders in these rinks, meaning they know their ins and outs better than anyone.

We've now compiled your answers in four key categories — location, amenities, atmosphere and affordability — into a "Fan Score" and combined that with our own beat writers' ranking that factors in an outsider's perspective into what makes a particular arena great. The overall ranking is heavily weighted (80 percent to 20 percent) on the fan perspective.

Here's how we interpreted those four key categories:

Location: As simple as it sounds. Is the building in a convenient spot? Is it near great bars and restaurants? Can you take public transit and/or is parking abundant and easy to get in and out of? Are there intangible factors that place this rink in a great area of town?

Amenities: This includes everything from the seating and sight lines, food and drink options, the jumbotron and anything else that makes this building special beyond the team on the ice.

Atmosphere: How loud and engaged is the crowd? What about the in-game experience, promotions and music? Is there a fun vibe or is it a drag to watch your favorite team play here?

Affordability: "Expensive" obviously is a subjective concept, but we asked fans to consider everything from ticket prices to

the cost of food and beverages, parking and merchandise at the rink.

In some cases, the answers were to be expected, especially at the top of the list. But I came away surprised with a lot of what we learned here, and I think ultimately it made for a fascinating project. Hopefully you agree.

Thanks again to everyone who contributed their time to this article, as it really added a lot of depth to the process.

1. Bell Centre, Montreal

Capacity:

21,105

Opened:

1996

Location: 9.6 (1st)

Amenities: 8.7 (6th)

Atmosphere: 9.8 (1st)

Affordability: 5.0 (21st)

Fan score: 8.7 (1)

Beat writer score: 9.9 (1)

Overall: 9.0

Never in doubt.

Montreal is special city for any hockey fan, and Bell Centre captures that so well, especially during a big Canadiens playoff game. Despite being a massive building, it doesn't feel too spacious because of the engaged crowd. The diehard fans are what give it an unparalleled atmosphere (ranked No. 1).

Even our crusty ol' beat writers essentially gave the building a perfect score, with two-thirds of them picking it as the best arena in the league.

The only blemish here is the cost, but if you're a traveling fan, it's worth the one-time splurge to take it all in.

Fan perspective:

- "The passion of the fans really makes this arena unique. No other fans will boo the team off the ice after a bad first period, and then serenade the team so loudly when they come back and play well later in the game. It's a roller coaster, and the fans live and die with the team."

- "Best atmosphere in hockey by a wide margin, and it's based on passion and knowledge rather than on gimmicks, which you see in U.S. venues."



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• "The sight lines are great. But the concessions are tight and poorly laid out. The options are very limited. The fan experience is great because of the fans, not the arena."

• "I have been to some unbelievable sports atmospheres and now nine NHL arenas, and there is nothing like watching the Habs at the Bell Centre — especially in the playoffs — in all of sports. It should be a bucket-list item for any big-time sports fan."

2. T-Mobile Arena, Vegas

Capacity:

17,500

Opened:

2016

Location: 8.8 (8th)

Amenities: 9.0 (2nd)

Atmosphere: 9.6 (2nd)

Affordability: 5.8 (14th)

Fan score: 8.6 (3rd)

Beat writer score: 8.6 (3rd)

Overall: 8.6

The Golden Knights have done so many things right as a franchise since entering the league in 2017-18. They crushed the expansion draft, made the finals in Year 1, won the Stanley Cup in 2023 and remain contenders today.

T-Mobile Arena is part of what's worked, as it's a beautiful facility plunked right in the midst of the Vegas Strip and the in-game entertainment is second to none.

Vegas' building ranked in the top eight in every category except affordability. Our beat writers love the spectacle, ranking T-Mobile behind only Bell Centre and Madison Square Garden.

Fan perspective:

• "Everything is a spectacle. From the moment you enter the Toshiba Plaza, there is something to stare at. Drum line, showgirls, Chance (the mascot) with free swag. ...Then you enter the arena and it gets even more bonkers. One game I went to had Blue Man Group perform during the first intermission, and Cirque du Soleil performing during the second. ... I get three shows for the price of one."

• "The atmosphere is high energy and unique, which surely rankles some traditionalists. But it is uniquely Vegas, and it needs to be, considering the endless competition for the entertainment dollar here. Pricing is getting a bit much, however. Hockey tickets may be the only thing in California that are priced cheaper than they are in Vegas."

• "Outstanding effort by the team to provide in-arena experiences. I was a season ticket member for the first seven seasons."

3. Benchmark International Arena, Tampa Bay

Capacity:

19,092

Opened:

1996

Location: 9.0 (6th)

Amenities: 9.0 (3rd)

Atmosphere: 9.1 (3rd)

Affordability: 6.9 (5th)

Fan score: 8.7 (2nd)

Beat writer score: 6.9 (12th)

Overall: 8.3

The Lightning have become a world-class franchise in every respect under owner Jeff Vinik, and what was previously known as the St. Pete Times Forum and Amalie Arena is the crown jewel of what they've created in downtown Tampa.

Every year, the area around the building has improved, with more and more hotels and restaurants, including longtime hockey-themed bar Hattricks. The building itself has one of the biggest jumbotrons in the league, tesla coils that produce a real buzz, outdoor gathering areas and live music.

It's a fun place to watch a game, whether you're a local diehard or a tourist in town to visit the beach.

Fan perspective:

• "Thunder Alley before the game is the best! It's a great place to interact with Bolts fans and fans of the visiting team. Never had a bad experience."

• "Great downtown location where staff get to know you if you attend regularly."

• "Tesla coils go zap zap."

4. Bridgestone Arena, Nashville

Capacity:

17,113

Opened:

1996

Location: 9.6 (2nd)

Amenities: 8.4 (8th)

Atmosphere: 8.2 (14th)

Affordability: 6.4 (8th)

Fan score: 8.3 (5th)

Beat writer score: 7.6 (7th)

Overall: 8.2

What was a bizarre idea back in 1998 — having a hockey team based on Nashville's bar-filled Broadway area — has become a destination spot for the NHL. Live bands playing on a stage in the stands help the unique atmosphere, and the building is small enough to feel loud and intimate at the same time.

Predators fans noted they've seen the atmosphere dip over the past few years, as ticket prices have risen and the team



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has struggled on the ice. But the great location still bumped up Nashville's ranking into the top five.

Fan perspective:

- "Fun atmosphere, great game-day presentation, the location on Lower Broadway can't be beat, etc. It's held up exceptionally well for a 1990s-era arena."

- "The mini-concerts during intermissions are a particularly fun aspect of Preds games. The experience feels very connected to the city; you know you're in Music City when you're at a game. I've only been to games during bad streaks for the team, so maybe the energy is better when the team is doing better, but I was disappointed with the crowd."

- "Bridgestone Arena used to be a place with diehard fans, but they've priced out the diehard fans and the atmosphere is now more touristy. It might get better as the team gets better in the next couple of seasons."

5. Little Caesars Arena, Detroit

Capacity:

19,515

Opened:

2017

Location: 8.7 (13th)

Amenities: 8.9 (4th)

Atmosphere: 8.0 (16th)

Affordability: 5.2 (20th)

Fan score: 8.0 (8th)

Beat writer score: 8.0 (5th)

Overall: 8.0

While some folks still miss the old-school charms of Joe Louis Arena, it's clear Red Wings fans are enamored with their world-class new facility.

The LCA was ranked fourth overall for amenities and solidly average for location and atmosphere, the latter of which has only improved as Detroit has rattled off a lot of wins of late. Our beat writers are clearly won over, as well, putting it into their top five.

While there were some complaints about the steep upper bowl and a lack of development around the arena, it's clear the Red Wings did a lot right with their new hockey home.

Fan perspective:

- "Love the pizza palace; awesome atmosphere. Only real complaint is the lack of anything around the building. District Detroit is a field of parking lots."

- "I've been to 16 NHL arenas, and the LCA has some of the best (if not the best) sight lines for watching the game from the lower bowl. Plus the best concourse by a large margin."

- "It's legitimately an aesthetically beautiful arena, both in the arena itself and on the concourse. I've been to around one-third of the NHL arenas, and it's comfortably the best in terms of pure aesthetics. The main weakness is the atmosphere is just OK. Some of that may simply be due to zero playoff

games ever played there. But the fact that huge swaths of the lower bowl is off at their club buffet half the time really harms the vibe."

- "The curated and commercial experience of LCA is such a stark contrast to the Joe. Its hard to accept."

The cannon is a key attraction at Nationwide Arena in Columbus. Ben Jackson / NHLI via Getty Images

6. Nationwide Arena, Columbus

Capacity:

18,144

Opened:

2000

Location: 9.4 (3rd)

Amenities: 8.2 (12th)

Atmosphere: 7.7 (20th)

Affordability: 7.5 (1st)

Fan score: 8.4 (4th)

Beat writer score: 6.4 (15th)

Overall: 8.0

Blue Jackets fans are quietly some of the best in the league, given how little they've had to cheer for in the franchise's history, and these survey results help highlight their genuine affection for their team.

Columbus folks stuffed the voting with a ton of love for Nationwide, praising the location in the bustling Arena District, the great sight lines and unique design of the building.

More winning would certainly make it a better spot, but as is, the Blue Jackets' home punches above its weight. Even if you don't love the cannon that goes off after every home goal.

Fan perspective:

- "It's been open since 2000 and is as clean and well-maintained as the day it opened. The atmosphere for games is pretty good considering the team hasn't been very successful. Nationwide is truly a hidden gem and a must visit if you're in town."

- "Amazing fans, the unique cannon, great in-game experience. All around elite NHL atmosphere (despite the woeful team on the ice for 25 years)."

- "Very, very few bad seats in Nationwide Arena. Very family-friendly. Ticket prices are relatively low, which is both good and bad (too many away fans because it's so much cheaper to go to Columbus than their own home barn)."

- "There are a lot of good things about Nationwide Arena!! The bad thing: our team."

7. Grand Casino Arena, Minnesota

Capacity:

17,954

Opened:

2000



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Location: 8.3 (18th)

Amenities: 8.2 (11th)

Atmosphere: 8.5 (10th)

Affordability: 5.8 (12th)

Fan score: 8.0 (9th)

Beat writer score: 8.1 (4th)

Overall: 8.0

Lauded for its great sight lines, knowledgeable fans and terrific atmosphere for big games, the newly rechristened Grand Casino Arena scored well in most categories in our fan survey.

The 26-year-old facility was praised, in particular, for some of its unique local touches, such as the banners that hang for the Minnesota high school state champion teams.

Fan perspective:

- "Fantastic atmosphere driven by very passionate fans who are really into the game because, most importantly, they really understand the game... and the sight lines are terrific because this is one of the few arenas in the NHL that was primarily built for hockey."
- "Great sight lines and easy to navigate in and out of. However, the crowd is fairly sleepy, and I say that as a lifelong Minnesotan."
- "Great place to watch hockey. Needs some updating though, both inside and outside. Brought up to a more state-of-the-art of today, not early 2000s."
- "The arena has great sight lines and the concourse area is wide and easy to navigate. We can afford to go to a game or two, but holy crap it ain't cheap. Tickets, food, beverages and parking can run close to \$400."

8. Climate Pledge Arena, Seattle

Capacity:

17,100

Opened:

2021

Location: 8.8 (10th)

Amenities: 8.9 (5th)

Atmosphere: 8.5 (8th)

Affordability: 4.9 (22nd)

Fan score: 8.2 (7th)

Beat writer score: 7.0 (11th)

Overall: 7.9

A remarkable renovation of historic Key Arena that dropped the floor deep into the ground created a one-of-a-kind home for the Kraken, a building that has to be seen to be believed.

Fans praised the building's location and the fact that a ticket comes with a free transit pass, and Climate Pledge scored well for its sparkling new amenities and atmosphere. The only real hit was affordability, as this is not an inexpensive place to take in a game.

Fan perspective:

- "You enter on the upper level and the view looking down into the ice is amazing. Overall, the aesthetics throughout the arena are top-notch."
- "Love the history of the arena with the modern update. Sight lines are great, in-arena showmanship and effects rock, and the location is perfect."
- "The structural design and interior of this arena is the best in the league."
- "Climate Pledge Arena feels like a first-class arena, but you have to pay first-class prices for this luxury."

9. UBS Arena, N.Y. Islanders

Capacity:

17,255

Opened:

2021

Location: 7.0 (28th)

Amenities: 9.4 (1st)

Atmosphere: 8.7 (5th)

Affordability: 5.7 (16th)

Fan score: 8.2 (6th)

Beat writer score: 6.1 (18th)

Overall: 7.8

Wow. OK, we hear you Islanders fans: You hate the parking situation here. Almost as much as John Tavares.

Nearly 200 of you flooded our survey with plenty of love for the new barn — after life in the outdated Nassau Coliseum and ill-suited Barclays Center — with praise for the high-end facilities and atmosphere (ranked fifth in the NHL). The location score, however, takes a big hit due to the struggle to get there, which is likely part of why the beat writer score is low.

Overall, however, this sparkling new rink is a fitting reward for fans who have longed for a home like this for decades.

Fan perspective:

- "Other than the parking lot being far enough that you need to take a bus to get to the arena, this place is fresh, clean, offers an amazing atmosphere and almost captures the noise level of the Coliseum. When the Islanders are good, the place is packed and it is a party."
- "It's world-class in every way. The food, facilities, sight lines and features are all state of the art."
- "The only way to describe the atmosphere of UBS Arena as a lifelong Isles fan is a love letter to the fans after years of uncertainty and struggle. The variety of food options, electric fans and connection to the Island make this a great destination. However, the pricing is a major concern."
- And, of course... "Parking sucks."

Fans ranked MSG lower than we would have guessed. Bruce Bennett / Getty Images



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10. Madison Square Garden, N.Y. Rangers

Capacity:

18,006

Opened:

1968

Location: 9.3 (4th)

Amenities: 7.8 (16th)

Atmosphere: 8.0 (17th)

Affordability: 2.8 (30th)

Fan score: 7.4 (20th)

Beat writer score: 9.3 (2nd)

Overall: 7.7

MSG all the way down in 10th place? How can that be?

Perhaps it is in part due to Rangers fans being extra surly over the state of the franchise, but they knocked their building down for amenities (16th) and atmosphere (17th). The real killer, however, was the affordability score, as only Toronto and Vancouver were marked lower than MSG's 2.8 out of 10.

Our beat writers, however, love the oldest building in the league, ranking it behind only the Bell Centre. Slightly more than 25 percent of our writers believe it's the best place in the league to watch a game.

Fan perspective:

- "Great location. The atmosphere has gone downhill due to too many corporate suits filling the seats. The average fan is being priced out."
- "Nothing beats the Garden. Been to 25 NHL arenas and nothing compares. Prime rib sandwich is the best concession item in the league."
- "There is no sporting event, other than a World Series at Yankee Stadium, that rivals a Rangers game in MSG. Atmosphere, fan involvement, all great. It is pricier than others but overall a great venue."
- "It's an unfriendly place. And I'm a Ranger fan."
- "Best arena for atmosphere and watching the game. Worst arena if you're trying to save money."

11. Rogers Place, Edmonton

Capacity:

18,347

Opened:

2016

Location: 8.8 (9th)

Amenities: 8.5 (7th)

Atmosphere: 8.6 (7th)

Affordability: 3.7 (26th)

Fan score: 7.8 (10th)

Beat writer score: 7.5 (8th)

Overall: 7.7

Edmonton's big, bold new home is an impressive state-of-the-art manifestation of Oilers fandom right in the heart of the city. Fans gave Rogers Place fantastic marks in every category except for affordability, in which the building was ranked 26th, greatly reducing its score.

But if you're willing to pay the freight, it's a fantastic place to watch a game — especially if Connor McDavid is in the lineup.

Fan perspective:

- "Knowledgeable fans. Loud. Great ice. Beautiful concourses."
- "Rogers Place is proof that Edmonton can build a world-class arena ... and still make you remortgage your house for popcorn."
- "Everything is expensive and keeps going up every year, but 97/29 (Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl) are worth the price of admission most nights and the building has settled in well to the point where everyone has their shortcuts and lineups and it's easier to go to a game than it was when the rink was new."

12. United Center, Chicago

Capacity:

19,717

Opened:

1994

Location: 7.4 (25th)

Amenities: 8.4 (9th)

Atmosphere: 8.6 (6th)

Affordability: 4.7 (23rd)

Fan score: 7.6 (16th)

Beat writer score: 7.3 (9th)

Overall: 7.6

The Madhouse on Madison (Part II) remains well-known for its unique anthem theatrics and generally great atmosphere, a category in which the rebuilding Blackhawks finished sixth.

The location in "a dead spot in the city," according to some fans, hurt the overall score, as did the fact that ticket prices are high for a team that hasn't won a whole lot of late. Our traveling beat writers, however, believe this remains a top-10 building to visit thanks to its cavernous size and raucous crowds.

Fan perspective:

- "The atmosphere is terrific, the history is always on display, the current on-ice product keeps getting better. Although the arena is very big and 30 years old, there's nothing like it when it's packed and the Hawks are really good."
- "The national anthem in the United Center is a top-three musical experience of all time."
- "The crowd atmosphere when it's sold out is second to none with the anthem. When the team is winning, this is such an electric building to be in. When the team is losing, it can get



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awfully quiet in a hurry, though. The overall product is good, even if the location isn't 100 percent ideal and the affordability is average compared to most rinks."

- "The United Center has really aged well. It is quite expensive, especially considering the quality of the team, but I can't really think of another negative thing to say about it."

13. Canada Life Centre, Winnipeg

Capacity:

15,325

Opened:

2004

Location: 8.3 (19th)

Amenities: 7.7 (19th)

Atmosphere: 8.4 (11th)

Affordability: 6.7 (6th)

Fan score: 7.7 (13th)

Beat writer score: 7.1 (10th)

Overall: 7.6

The smallest building in the NHL for years punches above its weight here, largely thanks to the rowdy fans who attend.

The CLC started its life as an AHL building for the Manitoba Moose but has become a destination spot to watch a playoff game, as the Winnipeg Whiteout brings with it one of the louder crowd experiences in the league. The Jets have also put more effort into fan relations of late after some attendance issues, and those have been positively received by the fans who filled out our survey.

Fan perspective:

- "Great views. Usually great atmosphere. Only issue is the 'tight' seating."

- "They've improved a lot since COVID. Live music pregame and at intermissions, redoing the concourse, more local food and drink options. Obviously the smallest arena in the league but fine for the size of the city. Great location downtown connected to multiple buildings with restaurants and underground parking via skywalks."

- "If you (measure) the arena atmosphere in January, it's average or below average even based on other arenas I've visited. If you take it in the midst of a playoff run, it's punching in the top three."

14. American Airlines Center, Dallas

Capacity:

18,532

Opened:

2001

Location: 8.5 (16th)

Amenities: 7.8 (17th)

Atmosphere: 8.4 (12th)

Affordability: 5.7 (17th)

Fan score: 7.7 (15th)

Beat writer score: 6.0 (20th)

Overall: 7.3

While the Stars and NBA's Mavericks may be at war while in the same building, the hockey fans who attend games here regularly feel just fine about the arrangement.

The AAC landed in the middle of the pack in every category, with the atmosphere garnering the highest score. Some Stars fans are concerned, however, that the building location might move outside of the downtown core as a result of the dispute, which would change their grades.

Fan perspective:

- "Honestly, one of the best parts of the AAC is its location and how easy public transit makes it to get to it from so many different points in the DFW area. I'm crossing my fingers and begging the people in my life to cross their fingers that the issues with the Mavs don't end with the Stars leaving downtown for some place like Plano or Arlington."

- "The Stars do a good job of putting on a 'show' for the fans (music, jumbotron, etc.). It's always fun no matter how the game goes."

- "Despite the great location in the heart of Dallas, the AAC just feels like it's lacking that certain something to give both the organization and building some culture, while still charging at a premium level. Will be interesting to see how the dispute with the Mavs shakes out and where the Stars' home will be by 2031."

15. Enterprise Center, St. Louis

Capacity:

18,096

Opened:

1994

Location: 7.7 (24th)

Amenities: 8.2 (10th)

Atmosphere: 8.0 (18th)

Affordability: 6.9 (4th)

Fan score: 7.8 (11th)

Beat writer score: 5.2 (27th)

Overall: 7.3

"It is perfectly adequate."

Those words from one of our fan respondents seem to sum up the vibe among the Blues' fan base when it comes to their arena. They knocked down the Enterprise Center for its less-than-ideal location, but scored it fourth in affordability and respectably in amenities and affordability.

St. Louis ranked a few slots higher than this in the Fan Score, as our beat writers were not as big of fans.

Fan perspective:



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- "The team has done a good job updating it as it ages."
- "Outside of beers being overpriced and parking being tough, it's fantastic, clean, comfy, great sight lines everywhere."
- "Great mix of atmosphere, accommodations and fans. Not a bad seat in the house."

It may not be in the best location, but affordability (and a couple Stanley Cup wins) helped boost Amerant Bank Arena in Florida. Bruce Bennett / Getty Images

16. Amerant Bank Arena, Florida

Capacity:

19,250

Opened:

1998

Location: 7.0 (27th)

Amenities: 8.1 (13th)

Atmosphere: 8.0 (19th)

Affordability: 6.9 (3rd)

Fan score: 7.7 (14th)

Beat writer score: 5.5 (25th)

Overall: 7.2

Built way out beside a swamp in suburban Sunrise, Amerant Bank feels like one of those arenas where the location could ruin everything.

While fans did ding it with a 27th-best ranking in that category, all the winning lately boosted their other scores. Affordability, meanwhile, was the biggest winner, with the two-time defending champs coming in third behind only Columbus and Anaheim.

Two of our beat writers picked Amerant as their least-favorite road building, however, largely thanks to location complaints. (Anything this close to Fort Lauderdale, however, is a win in my books.)

Fan perspective:

- "Even as two-time defending champs, the overall cost of attending a game is still relatively affordable compared to the rest of the NHL and the other major sports. The building is showing its age in spots, but there have been vast improvements over the last handful of years (sound system, video board, LED strips, premium areas, game presentation, higher quality food offerings, etc.)"
- "It's one of the most affordable things to do in South Florida. There isn't a bad seat in the arena, and there is an underrated home atmosphere that exists. Yes, sometimes we have large pockets of away fans (especially Toronto, Montreal, Boston and both New York teams) but the Cats have created something special. There is truly nothing like it."
- "The location out in the Everglades is not the best; however, it's generally easy to get to and the traffic and parking are fine. It would be nice to have the arena closer to the bars and restaurants in downtown Fort Lauderdale and/or Las Olas. But it is hard to complain about anything the last few seasons."

17. Ball Arena, Colorado

Capacity:

18,007

Opened:

1999

Location: 8.5 (15th)

Amenities: 7.3 (21st)

Atmosphere: 8.5 (9th)

Affordability: 5.5 (19th)

Fan score: 7.5 (17th)

Beat writer score: 5.8 (23rd)

Overall: 7.2

While Avalanche fans love the good vibes the crowd builds behind one of the best teams in the league, they are clearly much less enamored with how much things cost at Ball Arena and with the now 27-year-old venue's aging amenities.

Our beat writers are big fans of work trips to Denver, but feel the arena is below average, scoring it 23rd overall.

Fan perspective:

- "Atmosphere and general hockey involvement are great. Food options improving year over year, but still similar to other arenas. This year's addition of half a dozen \$5 items (hot dogs, popcorn, etc.) and \$10 draft beers was helpful."
- "They kind of just miss by a bit on everything."
- "Winning hockey makes everything better."

18. TD Garden, Boston

Capacity:

17,565

Opened:

1995

Location: 8.8 (11th)

Amenities: 7.1 (24th)

Atmosphere: 8.1 (15th)

Affordability: 2.9 (29th)

Fan score: 7.0 (22nd)

Beat writer score: 7.8 (6th)

Overall: 7.2

TD Garden came in lower than expected here, especially considering our beat writers ranked it the sixth-best place to watch a game.

Boston's unbelievably rowdy crowds contribute to that score, for sure, but the fans ranked the atmosphere as merely middle of the pack in their accounting, perhaps due to the Bruins' downturn last season. And TD Garden took a hit in affordability, where it ranked fourth-last.



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Overall, however, this is typically a very fun place to watch an NHL game. Just be careful about wearing the visiting team's jersey when you do.

Fan perspective:

- "Bruins fans like to complain about everything. You can't beat the location. They do a good job with the in-game experience, and there are lots of upgraded food and drink options. It's really expensive, though."
- "Unbelievable experience at unbelievably high prices."
- "There is literally nothing like the Garden during a game. Yes, everyone is drunk. Yes, everyone is having the best and worst night of their lives. Also: They just got the novelty beer hockey sticks. I think it is one of the most expensive arenas in sports in general, so I guess that's what happens when it's home to legendary teams."
- "When the Bruins crowd get going, the arena's shakin'."

19. Lenovo Center, Carolina

Capacity:

18,680

Opened:

1999

Location: 7.0 (26th)

Amenities: 7.3 (20th)

Atmosphere: 9.0 (4th)

Affordability: 6.1 (9th)

Fan score: 7.4 (18th)

Beat writer score: 5.8 (23rd)

Overall: 7.1

The location — a bit removed from the city core — hurt the Lenovo Center, as did a lowish amenities score. The rocking atmosphere, both in the building and outside in the tailgate, however, provided Carolina with a big boost. And most fans feel that while ticket prices have risen, it's still somewhat affordable to take in a 'Canes game.

An ambitious plan to improve the building and the area around the arena in the coming years will likely lead to high rankings in future years.

Fan perspective:

- "Fans are great, but a lot of the facilities and seating could use an upgrade. The good news is that a big renovation has just started."
- "I don't think I've ever attended a game at the Lenovo Center where my ears haven't rang for the next day. It might be the acoustics of the arena, but it gets ridiculously loud in there."
- "Middle of nowhere (location) lends itself to a fantastic tailgating culture, and in-arena amenities are good with renovations underway. The game environment is unmatched despite everything: consistent winning, (some) postseason success and a consistent player core have earned the 'Loudest House in the NHL' claim."

20. SAP Center, San Jose

Capacity:

17,435

Opened:

1993

Location: 8.4 (17th)

Amenities: 7.9 (14th)

Atmosphere: 8.2 (13th)

Affordability: 6.1 (10th)

Fan score: 7.7 (12th)

Beat writer score: 4.7 (29th)

Overall: 7.1

There's no arena quite like the Shark Tank, which can feel like a huge, electrified tin can for big games. (Mostly in a good way.)

It's one of the oldest buildings in the league, and some fans feel those years are starting to show. Overall, however, Sharks fans ranked SAP in the middle of the pack in most categories, expressing affection for its various quirks.

Our beat writers, however, were less kind (ranking it 29th), which dropped San Jose down from the middle of the pack.

Fan perspective:

- "The Tank just feels shabby at this point. And now the concourse is crowded. It's still a better deal and easier to get to than the 49ers' stadium down the road or Chase Center in San Francisco, but those stadiums are much shinier and newer. In the upcoming renovations, if they could keep the more intimate atmosphere of the Tank but make it feel less dated, that would be ideal."
- "When it's rocking, the Tank is one of the top five loudest (arenas) in the sport. At times possibly top two. In the sad years, it's been very sad indeed. ... Having been to other barns, I'd say the Sharks fan experience may be slightly lagging behind by five to 10 years. However, the noise is the most important and Macklin (Celebrini) and Co. are bringing that part back pretty quickly."
- "It isn't too big. Even the last row can see the ice pretty well."

21. Delta Center, Utah

Capacity:

N/A

Opened:

1991

Location: 8.6 (14th)

Amenities: 6.5 (27th)

Atmosphere: 7.3 (22nd)

Affordability: 6.6 (7th)

Fan score: 7.4 (19th)

Beat writer score: 5.0 (28th)

Overall: 6.9



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The Mammoth likely deserve an "incomplete" here instead of this low-ish ranking, given the circumstances.

For an organization that had a shotgun start into an NBA arena not built for hockey, they've done a solid job getting the market engaged. Most fan responses, however, pointed out the upcoming renovations are badly needed given sight-line issues throughout the building.

And they feel the franchise is still finding its way in terms presentation and in-game entertainment for an NHL crowd. Utah scored the highest in affordability, where owner Ryan Smith has made considerable efforts to be best in class.

Fan perspective:

- "Once upper-bowl renovations are complete and the surrounding sports complex/district around the arena is complete, it'll be top 10."
- "They are just getting started... Hard to compare it to arenas originally built for hockey until the renovations are done. Great atmosphere from the crowd makes it fun."
- "The in-game experience still feels like they are trying too hard to figure things out two years in and it feels a bit amateurish compared to other buildings. ... That said, I'm so thrilled to have NHL hockey in SLC that I gladly suck it up!"

22. Xfinity Mobile Arena, Philadelphia

Capacity:

19,537

Opened:

1996

Location: 8.3 (20th)

Amenities: 7.7 (18th)

Atmosphere: 7.5 (21st)

Affordability: 4.4 (25th)

Fan score: 7.1 (21st)

Beat writer score: 5.4 (26th)

Overall: 6.8

Wholly average.

That was the verdict from the majority of Flyers fans, who have often given their home barn a hostile atmosphere for visiting teams over the years but seem to have lost their passion for the rink itself. Xfinity's lowest scores were reserved for atmosphere and affordability, both likely somewhat related to the Flyers' five-season playoff drought.

Ownership plans to have a new building open by 2030, which was welcomed by a lot of our respondents.

Fan perspective:

- "It is a soulless, multi-use arena akin to the cookie-cutter football/baseball stadiums of the 1960s and 70s. There is no personality to it."
- "It's not a bad place to watch a Flyers game, but much like the team that plays on the ice, it's mostly average: Some nights it's very good, some nights it's bad, but mostly just average."

- "Can't believe they're getting rid of this completely fine, serviceable and actually good arena. Senseless! It's completely fine and the renovations were great."

23. PPG Paints Arena, Pittsburgh

Capacity:

18,187

Opened:

2010

Location: 6.7 (30th)

Amenities: 7.8 (15th)

Atmosphere: 7.2 (23rd)

Affordability: 4.7 (24th)

Fan score: 6.8 (24th)

Beat writer score: 6.1 (19th)

Overall: 6.7

Still one of the NHL's relatively newer buildings, PPG Paints Arena nonetheless has lost its luster with Yinzers. Many reported in our survey that the new arena lacked the character of the old now-demolished Igloo and felt the area around the rink was never developed properly.

PPG Paints scored in the league basement for location and wasn't much better in terms of atmosphere or affordability, two categories likely affected by all the losing in recent years.

Fan perspective:

- "Seeing what Seattle did turning Key Arena into Climate Pledge, it makes me wonder 'what if?' with the Igloo. I had hoped for something like Nationwide Arena in Columbus, and what we got is a Home Depot with some windows."
- "The lack of options outside the arena is abysmal. They do a nice job during the game, but the crowd itself is generally very blah due to the high ticket prices."
- "Unless it's playoffs, it's dead in the arena. Even during sellouts. We've been spoiled by having Crosby and Malkin for so long that people don't get excited as they used to."

24. Prudential Center, New Jersey

Capacity:

16,514

Opened:

2007

Location: 6.9 (29th)

Amenities: 7.2 (22nd)

Atmosphere: 6.9 (24th)

Affordability: 5.7 (15th)

Fan score: 6.9 (23rd)

Beat writer score: 4.4 (31st)

Overall: 6.4



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No fan base was more critical of the food and drink options at their NHL arena than Devils fans, and they also reported the atmosphere has declined in recent years, in part thanks to the in-game entertainment.

That, combined with a tough location in downtown Newark, hurt New Jersey's ratings overall. Our beat writers, in particular, were hard on the Prudential Center, putting it in second last.

Fan perspective:

- "The Rock just doesn't have much that stands out. Pretty small footprint and not a lot of fun design/decor. ... The food is also pretty terrible."
- "I just wish it wasn't so loud every second of every minute. You can't talk to the person next to you."
- "There were three goals called back for the Devils (one game) and there were beers and chicken tenders flying all over the place. Overall, when the Devils do good, this place is electric. But they will turn on their team if it starts to go downhill."

The Scotiabank Saddledome had its day, but is ready to be replaced. Derek Leung / Getty Images

25. Scotiabank Saddledome, Calgary

Capacity:

19,289

Opened:

1983

Location: 8.1 (22nd)

Amenities: 5.9 (31st)

Atmosphere: 6.4 (26th)

Affordability: 6.1 (11th)

Fan score: 6.2 (27th)

Beat writer score: 6.7 (13th)

Overall: 6.3

There was actually a ton of love for the old 'Dome in the fans' comments, but it also came with acknowledgement that it's time for an upgrade. The only category that Calgary's throwback barn scored well in was affordability, with fans pointing out they can often get tickets for a song on a game night.

Only the beat writers' score, in which the 'Dome was ranked the 13th-best building — largely thanks to its enduring charm (and dizzying press box view) — helps bump up this building out of the bottom five.

Scotia Place, the Flames' new home, is set to open in the fall of 2027, so there's still time to take in a game here if you've never been.

Fan perspective:

- "I know it's old and rundown, but they have great amenities, great location, great atmosphere, and they aren't so overpriced I feel taken advantage of. Prices are high, as in any pro sport, but reasonable. I enjoy every game there, and I'll be

sad when they blow it up. I've seen games there since I was a kid. It's old, but it's home."

- "The Dome is a classic arena and really feels like a true hockey experience every time you walk in. I'm looking forward to the upcoming new arena, but definitely going to miss the charm and atmosphere of the Dome."

- "I know it's old and being replaced, but a lot of what makes it good can be attributed to the fans who attend the game. The pyrotechnics when the Flames score, the iconic name and shape ... all add up to equal a very fun night out. Last time I went, I was up in the nosebleeds and even there, I could see very clearly."

26. Honda Center, Anaheim

Capacity:

17,174

Opened:

1993

Location: 7.9 (23rd)

Amenities: 6.6 (25th)

Atmosphere: 6.2 (27th)

Affordability: 7.0 (2nd)

Fan score: 6.8 (25th)

Beat writer score: 4.5 (30th)

Overall: 6.3

An enormous, ambitious renovation has the Honda Center and area around it going through a major transition right now, which dramatically affected the results in our survey.

Ducks fans, however, voted it as the second-most affordable place in the league to take in a game, behind only Columbus.

Fan perspective:

- "The ongoing construction work, which has closed most of the food concession stands, as well as the team store and multiple seating sections, has made the experience suboptimal this season. It is likely that once the OC Vibe project is completed, the experience will significantly improve."

- "It's an incomplete survey. ... In about two years, this could be the premier hockey arena in the entire league."

- "Easy in, easy out. It was designed specifically for hockey. Good sight lines. They have seat pricing for all."

27. Capital One Arena, Washington

Capacity:

18,506

Opened:

1997

Location: 8.9 (7th)

Amenities: 6.1 (30th)

Atmosphere: 6.5 (25th)



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Affordability: 3.7 (27th)

Fan score: 6.3 (26th)

Beat writer score: 6.2 (16th)

Overall: 6.3

The Capitals have had a nice resurgence on the ice recently, and the Stanley Cup win in 2018 still brings warm and fuzzy feelings. But the fans are very down on their home rink, which scored poorly in every category except location.

While our beat writers felt Capital One was a middling barn, Washington fans voted it 26th overall thanks to a variety of complaints, including expensive and lackluster food options, loss of the organist and a new premium-seat section called The Vaults that often sits empty during play.

Fan perspective:

- "It's a good location but badly needs the refresh that's underway. Good atmosphere."
- "They added new super-expensive seats on one side of the arena that have been 90 percent empty this season, which has killed some of the atmosphere."
- "Has gone downhill since the Cup win. Bring back the organ, discontinue high-priced empty seats, don't ban the horn guy, give us better food options."
- "If you enjoy waiting in long lines for overpriced food and consuming it in a tiny seat where the music blasted during each stoppage is so loud that you can't hold a conversation with your seat-mate, then Capital One Arena is your destination."

28. Scotiabank Arena, Toronto

Capacity:

18,800

Opened:

1999

Location: 9.1 (5th)

Amenities: 7.2 (22nd)

Atmosphere: 4.2 (32nd)

Affordability: 1.5 (32nd)

Fan score: 5.6 (30th)

Beat writer score: 6.7 (13th)

Overall: 5.8

As someone who has attended many, many games here as a media member since 2004, I am not surprised the Leafs are this low. In fact, I wondered if they might challenge for last place.

Not because Scotiabank Arena isn't a perfectly fine modern arena, with some great food options and gathering areas. But because ticket prices in Toronto are as outrageous as they get in the NHL and, on many nights, it can be a very corporate crowd and fans sit on their hands.

Toronto was voted last in both atmosphere and affordability, and it was not particularly close with second-last Vancouver.

While the Leafs have been a good regular-season team for nearly a decade and Scotiabank Arena is in a terrific location, right next to the main transit hub in one of North America's largest metro areas, the fact that they haven't had playoff success and the building itself and the area around it has been under construction in recent years haven't helped, either.

Fan perspective:

- "The place feels stale. Overpriced. Enjoy going to other arenas to watch the team. Many are more enjoyable and less expensive."
- "Possibly the worst game ops in the NHL. Dead crowd on most nights made worse by extreme loud music that prevents any potential atmosphere from developing. No longer a knowledgeable hockey crowd. Entire empty rows of last-row standing room tickets are unsold this season for most games because prices are way too high. Bizarre lower-bowl crowd that leaves early no matter what the score is."
- "Platinum seat ghosts are well-documented. As a diehard Leafs fan, when I have managed to score tickets in the 100s. I receive eye-rolls, 'embarrassed-for-you' and annoyed glances from the suits in response to my normal fan behaviors."

29. Rogers Arena, Vancouver

Capacity:

18,910

Opened:

1995

Location: 8.7 (12th)

Amenities: 6.5 (26th)

Atmosphere: 5.2 (31st)

Affordability: 2.5 (31st)

Fan score: 5.7 (28th)

Beat writer score: 6.2 (17th)

Overall: 5.8

It's tough times in a lot of ways for Canucks fans. The team just traded a star player. They're in last place in the standings. They're not happy with ownership.

And they don't like their rink anymore, either.

Rogers Arena was a huge deal when it replaced the Pacific Coliseum in the mid-1990s, and for its time, the atmosphere for games and concerts was excellent. But that time was more than 30 years ago now, and compared to more modern buildings, the concourse is cramped and hard to navigate. The fact that the Canucks have struggled for years and ticket prices are so high has also contributed to a steep decline in game atmosphere.

While our beat writers felt it was still a middling barn, Canucks fans ranked it 31st in atmosphere and affordability and 26th in amenities.

Fan perspective:

- "Obviously, the atmosphere is hurt by the Canucks being a horrible team since 2013. Really, there's nothing especially



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good or bad about Rogers Arena, besides the concourse being incredibly cramped compared to most arenas I've been to."

- "Rogers will never rank high simply because of its physical size. Being squeezed between two viaducts means tight concourses, which feels like you are constantly being pushed through a toothpaste tube. Visiting other arenas like Climate Pledge you notice that difference immediately."

- "Amazing location downtown and the new seats and video board are fantastic. But the building itself is nothing special, and the music and game ops people still think it's 1996. In as much as this team doesn't accept reality on the ice, there's a similar lack of innovation and trendsetting that permeates the fan experience."

- "I worry with ownership what will happen with this arena over time. ... Arenas have an expiry date."

Crypto.com Arena was hit by low perceptions of its location and atmosphere. Ronald Martinez / Getty Images

30. Crypto.com Arena, Los Angeles

Capacity:

18,188

Opened:

1999

Location: 6.5 (31st)

Amenities: 6.4 (28th)

Atmosphere: 5.5 (29th)

Affordability: 3.4 (28th)

Fan score: 5.7 (29th)

Beat writer score: 6.0 (20th)

Overall: 5.7

It was a bit of a surprise, as an outsider, to see the Kings down this far, although crowds have been surprisingly quiet for any recent games I've attended — even with a lot of rowdy fans of the visiting team in attendance. (Beat writers who have attended all 32 arenas rated the building just below average.)

The LA Live area is an interesting retail, restaurant and hotel complex around the building that accommodates tourists well, but getting in and out can be painful because of traffic and high-priced parking.

And many Kings fans who responded complained about the in-game experience overall, which is a contributing factor to placing 29th in atmosphere.

Fan perspective:

- "Artificial noise piped in, and artificial fans that would rather be seen than heard. It is usually a coffin inside the former Staples Center."

- "The in-game experience is unnecessarily loud, distracting and grating on the nerves. The flashing lights and club music are seizure-inducing. The jumbotron seems oversized and has too much going on at any given time, often making it impossible to find basic game information. ... As a lifelong hockey fan, I prefer watching the game at home."

- "Traffic is a nightmare, parking is expensive and often requires a long walk. Concession prices are outrageous. The in-game entertainment is so loud you have to wear ear plugs. But at least it's better than the Honda Center?" (Writer's note: Not according to our rankings!)

31. KeyBank Center, Buffalo

Capacity:

19,070

Opened:

1996

Location: 8.3 (21st)

Amenities: 5.2 (32nd)

Atmosphere: 5.3 (30th)

Affordability: 5.8 (13th)

Fan score: 5.6 (31st)

Beat writer score: 6.0 (20th)

Overall: 5.7

KeyBank was a fun place to watch games 20 years ago, when the Sabres were a top team and the building was rocking. All the years of losing have obviously had an impact on the fans. Even with Buffalo winning again, however, there are plenty of complaints about how far the arena and in-game experience have declined.

Fans voted KeyBank last for amenities and third-last for atmosphere, with many filling our survey responses with colorful descriptions of how bad the seats are (both in the stands and the bathrooms!).

Here's hoping, after so many years in the wilderness, that the Sabres can continue to fix more than just the team's record.

Fan perspective:

- "Fans make it good. The ownership not willing to spend money to improve arena keeps the condition of the arena in very poor shape."

- "It's a dump, but winning fixes a lot of things."

- "Barebones arena built out of necessity, but lacks anything to make it unique. I miss the Aud."

- "Too expensive to get in. Even worse after you're inside."

32. Canadian Tire Centre, Ottawa

Capacity:

18,652

Opened:

1996

Location: 2.5 (32nd)

Amenities: 6.1 (29th)

Atmosphere: 5.8 (28th)

Affordability: 5.7 (18th)

Fan score: 5.1 (32nd)



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Beat writer score: 4.3 (32nd)

Overall: 4.9

The Senators' rink was built out in the suburbs of Kanata, one of the original sins that the franchise is still struggling with. The CTC received a 2.5 score for location, which is a full four points lower than the 31st-place team. Other than affordability, Ottawa ranked in the NHL's bottom five in every category, including 28th for atmosphere.

Beyond the location complaints, many fans noted the bathrooms lack hot water and said parking is a nightmare.

A new building is coming at some point, but for now, this is a team making do with a less than ideal situation.

Fan perspective:

- "An NHL home game shouldn't feel like a road trip."
- "You sit for 45 minutes just to leave the parking lot and drive. Bring it to LeBreton (close to downtown) and I'm a half-season

ticket holder for sure, but in Kanata, I go to a handful of games per year. I hope they blow that building up once they build at LeBreton. It can't come soon enough."

- "Location, location, location. I have struggled to give away excellent seats at times."

- "Ottawa has some of the very best sight lines in the NHL: There isn't a bad seat in the house. I'm often able to find affordable solo or group tickets close to game time. When the team is playing well, the atmosphere in the building is loud and energetic, and it's one of the best playoff barns in the NHL. Of course, location nearly kills every aspect of that. I think this instantly becomes one of the best rink/fan-base combos in the NHL once the move to LeBreton is completed."

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Preview: January 29 vs. Utah

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

Whalers Night returns as Canes host Mammoth

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes will sport retro threads for the third and final time this season when they host the Utah Mammoth for Whalers Night presented by Sandbagger.

When: Thursday, January 29

Puck Drop: 7:00 p.m. ET

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

Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes App

Canes Record: 32-15-5 (69 Points, 1st - Metropolitan Division)

Canes Last Game: 4-1 Win over the Ottawa Senators on Saturday, Jan. 24

Mammoth Record: 28-21-4 (60 Points, 4th - Central Division)

Mammoth Last Game: 4-3 Win over the Florida Panthers on Tuesday, Jan. 27

Last Time Out...

Brandon Bussi "won us the game" with 36 saves as the Canes downed the Ottawa Senators 4-1 on Saturday.

Seth Jarvis (1G, 1A) and Jalen Chatfield (2A) led the way with two points apiece, with William Carrier, Taylor Hall and Andrei Svechnikov picking up the other goals.

Back In Time, One More Time...

After rocking green and blue in a pair of battles with the Colorado Avalanche Nordiques on Oct. 23 and Jan. 3, the Canes are back in their Whalers kits for the final time this season.

Going 1-1-0 against Colorado, Carolina is 7-1-3 in its throwback threads since first turning back the clock in 2018.

Sebastian Aho seems to enjoy going retro more than most — the Canes' alternate captain has lit the lamp in eight of the team's 11 total Whalers-clad contests over the years, including both games against Colorado this season and each of the last five old-school outings.

In Net...

The Canes have alternated starts between Brandon Bussi and Frederik Andersen over the last five games. Andersen would be in line to start if that trend continues, but with four days since their last game, either netminder is an option.

Should the Canes go with Andersen, he'll look to help his team pick up a point in five straight appearances. Including his 19-save effort against Chicago on Thursday, Andersen is 2-0-2 in his last four outings.

Bussi has allowed just one goal in each of his last three outings. Notching his 19th win in 23 games on Saturday, Bussi has the chance to become the fastest goalie in NHL history to reach 20 career victories in his next start.

On The Other Side...

Winning six of its last seven, Utah enters tonight's contest tied for the NHL lead in victories (10) and points (21) in January.

The Mammoth's success this month has come by committee, with five different players recording at least 10 points over their last 13 games. Clayton Keller leads the team in scoring both in that span and overall, with his 17 January points boosting his season total to 50 in 53 contests.

In net, Utah has relied heavily on Karel Vejmelka, who leads the league in wins (25) and has played the second-most games (40) behind Juuse Saros. His eight-game winning streak was snapped in Tampa on Monday, but with Vitek Vanecsek getting the nod in Florida on Tuesday, it seems likely the Canes will face Utah's workhorse between the pipes this evening.

Injury Updates...

Forward Eric Robinson suffered an upper-body injury on Jan. 19. Rod Brind'Amour told the media after practice on Jan. 21 that Robinson will be "out for an extended period," and further revealed on Jan. 23 that the forward will likely be out until the Olympic break.

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere (lower-body injury) last participated in game action on Jan. 13 and is considered day-to-day. He returned to practice in a standard sweater on Jan. 28, with Rod Brind'Amour saying he's "hopeful" the blueliner can participate in tonight's game.

Forward Noah Philp entered concussion protocol on Jan. 6 and has not played a game since then. He practiced with the team in a non-contact sweater on Jan. 23, then skated in a standard sweater on Jan. 28.

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



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Defenseman Charles Alexis Legault suffered a cut to his hand via a skate blade on Nov. 9 and underwent surgery to repair lacerated tendons on Nov. 10. He is expected to miss three to four months, but practiced with the team in a non-contact sweater on Jan. 23.

What Are We Wearing?

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

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes are scheduled to practice on Friday before traveling to Washington D.C. for Saturday's clash with the Capitals.

Next Game: Saturday, Jan. 31 @ Washington | 7:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)

Next Home Game: Sunday, Feb. 1 vs. Los Angeles | 3:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



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Panarin out of Rangers lineup for roster management

By: Dan Rosen

Artemi Panarin was not in the New York Rangers' lineup in a 5-2 loss against the New York Islanders at UBS Arena on Wednesday for roster management purposes.

The forward is not expected to play in the Rangers' remaining two games leading up to the roster freeze for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 that begins on Feb. 4.

The Rangers also play the Carolina Hurricanes on Feb. 5, their last game before the Olympic break.

Panarin is in the last year of a seven-year, \$81.5 million contract that includes a full no-movement clause. He can become an unrestricted free agent on July 1.

Rangers general manager Chris Drury told Panarin earlier this month that the team is not planning to offer him a new contract but will work with him to find a new team to play for before the 2026 NHL Trade Deadline on March 6.

Keeping Panarin out of the lineup for roster management purposes now means the Rangers are either close to moving him or protecting him from injury because of the intent to trade him.

"The team decided to go in a different direction," Panarin said following a 6-3 win against the Philadelphia Flyers on Jan. 17. "I'm OK with that."

The decision to scratch Panarin came less than two weeks after Drury announced in a public letter to the Rangers' fan base that the team was going to begin retooling its roster.

The Rangers (22-26-6), who are 3-10-2 in their past 15 games, are last in the Eastern Conference with 50 points.

Panarin leads New York with 57 points (19 goals, 38 assists) in 52 games. He has been the Rangers' leading scorer every season since joining the team in 2019-20.

Panarin has 607 points (205 goals, 402 assists) in 482 games with the Rangers since 2019-20. In franchise history, he is 14th in goals, eighth in assists, ninth in points, and first in points per game (1.26).

His 607 points are sixth in the NHL since he joined the Rangers behind Connor McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers (802), Leon Draisaitl of the Oilers (718), Nathan MacKinnon of the Colorado Avalanche (701), David Pastrnak of the Boston Bruins (618) and Nikita Kucherov of the Tampa Bay Lightning (612).

"With our position in the standings and injuries to key players this season, we must be honest and realistic about our situation," Drury wrote on Jan. 16. "We are not going to stand pat. A shift will give us the ability to be smart and opportunistic as we retool the team. This will not be a rebuild. This will be a retool built around our core players and prospects."

The Rangers traded defenseman Carson Soucy to the Islanders on Monday.

Soucy is in the final season of a three-year, \$9.75 million contract (\$3.25 million average annual value) he signed with the Vancouver Canucks on July 1, 2023, and can become an unrestricted free agent after this season. He made his Islanders debut against the Rangers.



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Seven potential replacements if injured Canadian Brayden Point misses Olympics

By: Josh Beneteau

Team Canada is holding its breath on a key forward.

With less than two weeks to go before boarding the plane to Italy for Milano Cortina 2026, Brayden Point's Olympic status remains in doubt.

The Tampa Bay Lightning superstar has been out most of January with a lower-body injury. At the time he was hurt, Lightning and Canada head coach Jon Cooper said Point's season "was not over," but added that his recovery timeline was week-to-week. He has missed eight games so far.

While Canada hasn't officially ruled Point out yet, he's running out of time to get ready for the Olympics. Canada will travel to Italy late next week and open the tournament on Feb. 12 against Czechia.

Point is hard to replace as a high-scoring, two-way centre, but Canada's roster might be the deepest in the tournament. In fact, you could make a pretty competitive team just out of the players Canada will leave at home.

As we await word on Point's status, here are seven other players who could jump in to take his place:

NHL on Sportsnet

NHL on Sportsnet

Livestream Hockey Night in Canada, Scotiabank Wednesday Night Hockey, the Oilers, Flames, Canucks, out-of-market matchups, the Stanley Cup Playoffs and the NHL Draft.

Broadcast schedule

Hyman missed the first two months of the season after wrist surgery, but since returning on Nov. 15, he's been one of the hottest scorers in the NHL with 21 tucks in 35 games — a 49-goal pace over 82 contests. Much of Hyman's success comes from skating alongside Connor McDavid, and if he were to make Team Canada, the duo would presumably get a chance to continue that chemistry on the Olympic stage.

The Jets are enduring a down season, but Scheifele remains a scoring threat any time he hits the ice. In fact, he sits fourth

among all Canadian skaters with 61 points, trailing only McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon and Macklin Celebrini. Scheifele is a centre, like Point, but Team Canada's coaches would need to decide whether they can trust him to defend as well as he scores.

Bedard is in the midst of a breakout season at age 20, with 20 goals and 48 points in just 39 games. However, his offence was slowed by a shoulder injury in late December. Bedard returned on Jan. 9, but he owns just one goal and four points in eight appearances since. Even if Bedard doesn't get the call this time, he's likely to be playing a role on the national team sooner rather than later.

Bennett was a star for Canada at the 4 Nations Face-Off last year before going on to win the Conn Smythe as the Panthers defended their Stanley Cup title. Those performances helped him earn an eight-year, \$64 million contract — but they weren't enough to push him onto the Olympic team as Canada opted for Tom Wilson to fill his hard-nosed role instead. Unlike Wilson, though, Bennett plays centre and Canada might tap him to fill a spot in the middle of the fourth line if he winds up in Italy.

Stamkos is a future Hall of Famer, but the one thing missing from his resume is an Olympic medal. The 600-goal man missed out on playing for Canada in 2014 due to a broken leg and has had to wait 12 years to get another chance. He'll be 36 by the time the Olympic tournament starts, but Stamkos has seemingly turned back the clock in recent weeks. Since Dec. 1, Stamkos' 19 goals are tied for third-most in the NHL.

One of the brightest youngsters in the game, Johnston figures to be a Team Canada staple soon, even if he's not on the roster this time around. The 22-year-old has 27 goals and 56 points in 52 games. With two 30-goal seasons already in his young career, Johnston continues to raise his offensive ceiling.

Jarvis cracked Canada's roster for the 4 Nations Face-Off but missed the cut for the Olympics. While injuries have disrupted his season, he remains nearly a point-per-game player with 23 goals and 16 assists in 44 games. Jarvis plays both special teams for the Hurricanes and would be comfortable on any of Canada's forward lines.

LINKS

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6990216/2026/01/29/nhl-rink-rankings-home-arenas/>

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SportScan

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

1377582 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes veteran forward Taylor Hall still driven by one overarching NHL goal

Chip Alexander

11-14 minutes 28/01/2026

Raleigh

Taylor Hall was a few days shy of his 19th birthday the first time he came to Raleigh, a little sleepy eyed during an interview at The Umstead Hotel.

Hall was the first overall pick of the 2010 NHL draft, taken by the Edmonton Oilers. Much was expected of the slick, skilled forward, who had twice won the Memorial Cup with the Windsor Spitfires and enjoyed teen-idol status in Canada.

"Definitely there are expectations, but that comes from playing in a Canadian market," Hall said in November 2010 before playing the Carolina Hurricanes. "I think you can take it personally, or you can take it with a grain of salt and make sure you're playing your game and having fun every day you come to the rink."

Flash forward to 2026.

Hall is 34 years old, married and a father. He has played nearly 1,000 NHL games, been traded five times, has been named the NHL's most valuable player, and now is with the Hurricanes, his seventh NHL team.

"There is one thing left, basically the only thing I want to accomplish," Hall said last week.

The Stanley Cup.

Carolina calling

Now in his 16th year in the league, Hall said he still has fun coming to the rink. And especially with the Hurricanes, who have made him feel part of the group and a welcomed addition since his trade to Carolina on Jan. 24, 2025.

Hall was on the undercard of the mega trade that reverberated about the NHL. The Colorado Avalanche sent star forward Mikko Rantanen to Carolina for forwards Martin Necas and Jack Drury, with draft picks also changing hands.

Another part of the deal, and almost overlooked: the Chicago Blackhawks sent Hall to the Hurricanes in the three-team transaction while retaining half of Rantanen's salary.

"Taylor brings a lot of skill and some size and some speed, and we think he's going to fit and upgrade our scoring punch also," Canes general manager Eric Tulsky said after the trade.

Rantanen, visibly disgruntled in his 13 games with the Canes, was quickly sent on to the Dallas Stars, where he appears to be happy enough. Forward Logan Stankoven was sent to Carolina. And Hall has proven to be an upgrade with his speed, versatility and offensive skills.

"He's been great," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said last week. "It's not easy sometimes for anyone to come into a new lineup, but for a former MVP I think he's done a great job of whatever you ask him to do, and however minutes, and who he'll play with and what situations, he's been really good.

"And I think this year he probably feels more comfortable in everything we're doing. I think his play has been very solid."

'Whatever it takes'

Hall, who signed a three-year, \$9.5 million contract with Carolina late last season, has been used on the wing on all the forward lines and on the power play. He has 12 goals and 27 points in 52 games this season, getting his 12th goal Saturday in the Canes' 4-1 road win at Ottawa built around the 34 saves of goalie Brandon Bussi.

Hall had a few words with a referee after the Senators' Dylan Cozens drove him head-first into the boards in the second period. No penalty was called and Hall expressed his displeasure in some profane terms, resulting in a two-minute unsportsmanlike penalty and then a 10-minute misconduct penalty.

After leaving the ice, Hall stood in the tunnel behind the Canes bench, glaring, more than heated.

But it's that competitiveness, that fire, that continues to help drive him, keeping him productive deep in his career. It's noticeable to his teammates.

"He's been around a long time," forward Seth Jarvis said. "He came in really young, won a Hart Trophy. He's got a lot of knowledge. And just watching the way he approaches every day, and the way he takes care of his body and being able to be effective up and down the lineup, that's the biggest thing that's stuck out for me. That and his ability to adapt to whatever role he's given.

"He's willing to do whatever it takes to win."

And off the ice?

"He's hilarious," Jarvis said. "Yeah, he can be quiet, but he has this dry humor that gets me laughing a lot. I love him."

One goal: the Stanley Cup

Hall comes across has one of the most thoughtful of the Hurricanes players. He speaks in measured tones in media interviews, fully digesting a question before answering.

Hall, in an N&O interview last week, was asked about first coming into the NHL, about being the first pick of the draft and all that brought with it, leading to this response:

"I never thought I was generational and I never put that pressure on myself, that I needed to be one of the top three players in the league by



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my third year. Growing up playing hockey, I wasn't like the best player all the time. I just had a pretty quick ascent once I started playing junior. To go No. 1, obviously everything happened so quickly. You're still processing everything. You go from being in Grade 12 to a year later playing with men that go home to their families. I think there's just a lot to process on and off the ice, trying to be the best player I can be and getting used to living on my own and paying bills and doing laundry. And it's definitely a hard league. You learn that right off the bat."

Hall's hockey odyssey took him from Edmonton to the New Jersey Devils, where he won the Hart in 2017-18, to Arizona, Buffalo and Boston before Chicago. And now he's with the Hurricanes, trying to help make them the best team in that hard league.

"We're all good skaters in here and we're all good players who have a good motor and a high work ethic," Hall said. "I like to think I fit well with that type of play.

"We have younger guys, but it's an older group, with a lot of guys with kids. We're going through the same things off the ice, and we all want the same thing on the ice."

The Stanley Cup. Only a few of the Canes players have won it. Hall wants to be part of that select group.

"I think we have a fantastic chance and that's a big part of what I wanted to be here," he said. "This team has had playoff success and seen what it takes. That's the reason I'm still playing and want to keep playing."

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

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

News Observer LOADED: 01.29.2026

1377693 Websites

The Athletic / NHL trade board 5.0: The latest on all the top targets as the sellers begin to sell

By Chris Johnston

Jan. 28, 2026

The NHL's sellers are all selling.

They've helped create a steady drip of trade activity ahead of the Olympic roster freeze, which takes effect Feb. 4 and runs 18 days throughout the Milan Cortina Games.

The New York Rangers made their first of what's expected to be multiple moves, trading Carson Soucy across town to the New York Islanders on Monday. The Vancouver Canucks dealt pending unrestricted free agent Kiefer Sherwood to the San Jose Sharks last week. And the Calgary Flames shipped Rasmus Andersson to the Vegas Golden Knights a day before that.

Each of those teams still has other pieces in play and remains well-represented on our latest Big Board, which includes nine new targets to expand to a total of 40.

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

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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs should be deadline sellers, but have bigger questions to answer first

Justin Bourne

TORONTO — The past month of watching the Toronto Maple Leafs has been less of a roller-coaster and more of a "Tower of Terror"-style free fall. They were bad enough heading into Christmas that they fired a coach, which was the start of the ascension on the ride. And up, up it went (against non-playoff teams), so high that you could see the landscape of the whole league after a 7-0-2 run.

There, peering out with a hand shielding their eyes from the sun, you started to hear the beginnings of real hope. "Boy, nobody's very good out there, are they, maybe we could do something here?"

The elevator hung dangling out over the edge, until, with a sudden woosh, the bottom dropped clean out.

And now, fans can feel their stomachs in their throats.

The last time the Leafs went winless over a five-game homestand was over 40 years ago, spanning from Dec. 29, 1984, to Jan. 9, 1985. This time around, they were outscored 25-12 in the process, clearly showing they aren't built to hang with legitimate playoff teams, and have established themselves as the worst defensive team in the NHL.

Earlier Wednesday, Mike Kelly of Sportlogiq tweeted out rankings in each of these defensive categories:

I believe coaches refer to bad defence as an issue of "will, not skill," but there's a good case to be made it's both here. The Leafs are well out-talented on the back end and the play is uninspired.

Quite the combo.

Waking up today, back at the bottom, they step off that ride onto a totally different landscape.

The public conversation around the Leafs flipped hard from, "Could they mount a rally, add a small piece or two, and still make playoffs," to "They're eight points back with 29 games to go, they have to sell now, how should they retool?"

The debate is over, at least externally.

Hopefully, internally, too.

Most models have their playoff chances at somewhere between five and 18 per cent, but that doesn't even matter. Fans have eyes, and they know that even if this team went on some insane run of luck from here until mid-April and clawed into a playoff spot, I'm not sure the right to get publicly flogged by the Tampa Bay Lightning is some great prize, particularly when it comes with walking a bunch of pending UFAs out the door.

Fans would be no more hopeful next season than they are right now.

The team has to pivot, and that's going to be in the form of a "retool" rather than a "rebuild" (as GMs around the league are apparently heavy into semantics); as in the Leafs' case, they just have too many good players to go full punt. Getting difference-makers is almost impossible, and so while you have Auston Matthews and William Nylander under 30 years old, and Matthew Knies at 23, you're going to want to try to reload and go again in some way.



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As I often do with good players (talking now about the above three), allow me to beat back the “You can’t win with that guy” trope — whether it’s Phil Kessel or Nazem Kadri or, heck, Alex Ovechkin back in the day — that lazy expression is only true of talented players until they do win, and these are uniquely skilled guys. People used to say it about Steve Yzerman, for god’s sake. Like the others, they need the right situation, which is what you’ve got to set out to provide.

Some bigger conversations — like the future of the aforementioned captain Matthews — exist on the backburner, because if the team is no good next year, you might be looking at a Quinn Hughes situation, where he lets them know he’s not sticking around for a full rebuild. And, so, you need to find a way to recoup assets from this season’s group so you have something to spend on improving the team, and improving it quick.

With these retools, people have been pointing to Boston’s quick turnaround, though I’m not sure Leafs GM Brad Treliving can bring that example to his bosses, considering it was the Leafs who handed them Fraser Minten and a first-rounder. But, still, they recognized they have David Pastrnak and Charlie McAvoy and a good goalie in Jeremy Swayman, and so they set about filling in around those guys, much as the Leafs will with their good players (the Leafs also have good goalies who’ve just had weird years).

The Washington Capitals had some success in the short-term with a “retool,” (though it’s not holding up well in ensuing seasons), this year’s Islanders made a hard pivot ... the point is, this is not impossible, but it is hard.

I’ll have plenty of time to write about what they should do with specific players over the next five weeks (leading up until March 6 trade deadline), which for me involves taking calls on Bobby McMann and Oliver Ekman-Larsson, as much as they’re two of the team’s more useful players. Those guys could garner quality returns, and then there’s a few names where the return is less important, but you just need to move on from a roster-fit perspective. I’ve got Max Domi and Matias Maccelli on that list, and if you want to think bigger, I’m here to have the Morgan Rielly conversation too.

But to go back to the phrase, “It’s not impossible, but it is hard,” I think you have to stop and spend a second there. Because it really is hard, you have to have the conversations about the GM and the coach, and to try to assess how much you trust that GM to conduct the hard pivot, and the coach to lead it.

I can’t say the state of the Calgary Flames doesn’t affect the way in which people are looking at Treliving’s ability to get this thing headed in a fresh direction. I can’t say the manner in which the management chose to replace Mitch Marner — with Maccelli, Dakota Joshua and Nick Roy — doesn’t also affect the way people feel about it.

There are certainly things Treliving could point to, in his defence. The Leafs won the Atlantic last year with 108 points, and this year they’ve been missing their best D (Chris Tanev) and a lot of Nylander, and even Matthews, at times. Their goaltending hasn’t been as good.

But many also see last year as partly a percentages-driven fluke (they were top-five in both save percentage and shooting percentage), given the underlying numbers weren’t very good then either. It just seems like they never have the puck, and that was true last year as well. Every night now, it feels like they’re undertalented and unstructured.

As for coach Craig Berube, well, just look at those defensive stats above. A coach’s impact is most clearly felt in a few places, and to me that’s with defensive structure and special teams, as well as ice-time allocation. I’m not sure there’s any of these where the staff comes off well, aside from the PK. At five-on-five, the system never felt like it fit the roster, but more damning than that is that the players haven’t bought in, not a lick. Every video session has to be just F3 diving in, leaving rushes heading the other way.

If Berube likes hard, defensive-minded players, why can’t Scott Laughton get ice time? He’s playing two minutes less per game than he did in Philadelphia. Why can’t Roy play as much as he did for Vegas?

It feels like just about all their forwards save for two or three have, at every turn, prioritized pushing up for offence and points rather than staying in structure. Part of that is the stripping of defensive personnel, in the likes of Pontus Holmberg and David Kampf and Marner, but you see offensively talented guys commit to defence on great teams all around the league, and the Leafs simply haven’t done that.

So while everyone recognizes the Leafs “Tower of Terror” drop has brought them to face a new reality, what to do about it really starts with the question “Who gets to do something about it?”

For now, it’s Treliving and his management staff, it’s Berube and his coaching staff. But when the results are this grim, it’s just the reality of the business that these conversations have to be had, and so we’re having them (and we will further on “Real Kyper and Bourne” in the days ahead).

If these two leaders remain at the helm, they’ll need to make full pivots. For Treliving, a pivot to selling. To Berube, a pivot to evaluating.

Coaches don’t coach to lose, and frankly, the Leafs shouldn’t be playing to lose anyway. They’re handing the Bruins their pick, so you want it to be as far from that dreaded sixth overall spot as possible (the pick is top-five protected, at fifth they’d keep it and punt the pick a year). But surely the focus has to change now to some better assessment of what guys can do, or at least should.

For fans, the scary part of the drop should be over, and the adrenaline all but gone. That particular ride was fun but it’s over. The trick now is finding the next great one, and getting in the fast lane.

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Sportsnet.ca / What trade candidate Artemi Panarin would bring to a new team

Adam Vingan

Earlier this month, the New York Rangers produced the sequel to “The Letter,” preparing their fans to “(say) goodbye to players (who) have brought us and our fans great moments over the years.”

That likely means forward Artemi Panarin is on his way out of Manhattan after seven highly productive seasons. Players of Panarin’s calibre are rarely available, which will make the bidding war for his services fascinating to watch ahead of the March 6 trade deadline. (Panarin, whose \$11.6-million-per-year contract expires this off-season, has a no-movement clause.)

“It’s hard to say how I feel,” Panarin told reporters recently. “I’m still confused, but the GM decided to go in a different direction. I’m OK with that.”

Sportsnet’s Elliotte Friedman reported last weekend that the Rangers are seeking a return similar to the one that the New York Islanders received for forward Brock Nelson last season. It included a first-round pick, top forward prospect Cal Ritchie and a conditional third-round pick from the Colorado Avalanche.

Such an ask is more than reasonable for Panarin, who has averaged 1.26 points per game since signing with the Rangers in 2019, sixth most



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in the NHL among 275 players who have appeared in at least 400 games over that span.

Panarin is the fuel that powers New York's offence. He is the Rangers' runaway leader in offensive-zone possession time at 53:35 this season (1:02 per game). Captain J.T. Miller is next at 31:04 of total OZ possession time. Only seven players — Connor McDavid, Quinn Hughes, Mathew Barzal, Leon Draisaitl, Nathan MacKinnon, Jack Eichel and Clayton Keller — have recorded more OZ possession time than Panarin this season.

Panarin (40.4 per cent) is also one of six players this season who have factored on at least 40 per cent of their team's total goals. McDavid (49.5 per cent), Macklin Celebrini (48.1 per cent), Nikita Kucherov (45.5 per cent), MacKinnon (44.7 per cent) and Mark Scheifele (41.2 per cent) are the others.

Capitals general manager Chris Patrick has gone on record about his desire to trade for a "higher-end, skilled winger." Washington's power play has been a source of frustration, falling from 23.5 per cent last season to 16.9 per cent. Panarin is a consistent shooting threat on the power play, averaging the third-most shot attempts in the league per two minutes this season. Since 2019, Panarin's 7.25 power-play points per 60 minutes rank fourth out of 136 players who have played at least 1,000 minutes on the man advantage.

Perhaps the most interesting destination on Sadler's list is Detroit, where the Red Wings are challenging for the Atlantic Division title after missing the playoffs in each of the past nine seasons. As Sadler wrote, the Red Wings have "a wealth of desirable prospects, all of their first-round picks, and oodles of cap space" to take a run at Panarin.

Under the surface, Detroit has one of the league's most dynamic offences, ranking seventh in expected goals per game in all situations. But it could use a boost to turn those expected goals into actual ones. (The Red Wings are 18th in scoring per game.)

The thought of Panarin joining Dylan Larkin and Lucas Raymond on Detroit's top forward line is tantalizing. And of course, Panarin started his career alongside Patrick Kane with the Chicago Blackhawks, who dominated play when they were on the ice together. The Blackhawks outscored opponents 52-37 at five-on-five during their shared minutes back in 2016-17. (New York outscored opponents 6-5 at five-on-five after Kane reunited briefly with Panarin at the 2023 trade deadline.)

"We just see hockey the same," Panarin told reporters following the Rangers' acquisition of Kane in February 2023. "We just feel comfortable (with each other)."

Although Panarin's Rangers career will end without a Stanley Cup win, it should still be considered a success. New York won the Presidents' Trophy and reached two conference finals with Panarin, who is ninth on the franchise's all-time points list. The team that pays up for him at the trade deadline will be making a big statement.

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Sportsnet.ca / Raymond's rise and fall with Canadiens a cautionary tale for Marciano

Eric Engels

MONTREAL — Eric Raymond was fired by the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday.

It was a move that was anything but shocking, given the disappointing results of the goaltenders he was overseeing this season, but also one that highlighted just how fickle this profession can be.

"It's part of the business we're in," Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis said to reporters gathered in Brossard, Que., at the team's practice facility.

It is an unforgiving one, as highlighted by Raymond's steady rise and rapid decline with the Canadiens.

He was hired in 2021, and it was a no-brainer to give him a two-year contract extension in July of 2024.

That was Raymond's reward for helping Jake Allen maintain his market value — which the Canadiens eventually cashed in on — and for coaching up Samuel Montembeault from waiver-wire pickup to reliable starting goaltender.

Roughly six months later, with Jakub Dobes notching wins in his first five NHL starts and Montembeault trending towards becoming one of the top goaltenders in the league in the most relevant statistical category — goals saved above expected — there were calls from the fanbase to promote Raymond to director of goaltending so that his voice could be the most influential one in how all goaltenders in the organization were being developed.

But with Montembeault stumbling out of the gate this season, and then all-too-briefly catching his balance before losing it again, that became a distant memory.

Dobes failing to perform to his ability in between was cause for concern. And Jacob Fowler's sudden dip in his last two starts, after an impressive first eight games in the NHL, heightened that concern.

So, with the Canadiens firmly in a playoff spot through all 53 games despite ranking 25th in team save percentage (.879), president of hockey operations Jeff Gorton chose to amplify a different voice.

It is a familiar one, belonging to Marco Marciano, who's been with the Canadiens' minor-league affiliate since 2013.

Marciano was a video coach for two seasons with the Hamilton Bulldogs before continuing in that role for one year with the St. John's Ice Caps. He then took over as goaltending coach for the Ice Caps and has been thriving in the position for the Laval Rocket ever since their inaugural season in 2017-18.

"Marco's an intelligent guy, works hard, he's got a good rapport with his goalies, everybody we know speaks highly of him," said Gorton. "We've had interest from around the league for Marco, so we've sort of held him back. It's just time. We just felt like this was his time."

Gorton made it clear the clock was already running out on Raymond before he and general manager Kent Hughes officially stopped it Wednesday.

There was pause on making such a move earlier this season, with concern it might further destabilize both Montembeault and Dobes at the peak of their struggles.

But Gorton and Hughes deliberated further in discussions with St. Louis and decided waiting any longer didn't make sense after they were in consensus that Raymond's expiring contract wouldn't be renewed in the off-season.

Firing him to promote Marciano was a logical next step at this juncture.

It was taken with the hope Marciano can be as good an influence on Montembeault as he appeared to be before Christmas, when the goaltender accepted an eight-day conditioning stint with the Rocket to mentally and technically reset before returning to win four of his first five starts back with the Canadiens.



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Marciano previously helped Dobes quickly ascend to the NHL after coaching him up through 51 AHL games, and the work he did with Fowler this season had to have influenced some of the success the 21-year-old immediately enjoyed with the Canadiens.

So, it's anything but a wild bet that the 43-year-old coach can be effective in his new duties.

Marciano is assuming them on an interim basis, though, giving him little time to either affirm his reputation or potentially undo it.

Raymond's plight should serve as a cautionary tale to him. Things change fast in this business, as Gorton would attest to.

"Today is a difficult day when you have to let somebody go that's been a big piece for you," said Gorton, who brought Raymond to the Canadiens after overseeing his work with Igor Shesterkin and Alexandar Georgiev when he was general manager of the New York Rangers and Raymond was goaltending coach of the AHL's Hartford Wolfpack.

"He's done a lot of good things for us," Gorton continued. "But at the same time, we're moving forward with Marco, and that's the decision we made."

No other ones appear to be on the front burner.

When asked if he still had faith in Montembeault and Dobes, Gorton responded, "We believe in our goalies, and yeah, we're very comfortable."

Still, Marciano has an opportunity to help them be more predictable and consistent.

That's what the Canadiens need, especially as the team that's scored the fourth-most goals (180) in the league this season.

The Canadiens would be higher in the standings if not for giving up the sixth-most (177), and while Gorton said that's not all on the goaltenders, firing their coach spoke for itself.

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Sportsnet.ca / Dylan Cozens hitting stride with Senators nearly one year after trade

Alex Adams

OTTAWA — There have been fewer wins than the Ottawa Senators would like this season, but they've certainly won their side of the Dylan Cozens for Josh Norris trade.

Unfortunately for the well-liked Norris, his injuries have plagued him since his move to Buffalo, while Cozens has lived up to his moniker, the workhorse from Whitehorse.

The Senators needed health from the second-line centre, and they've found that with Cozens, who hasn't missed a game since the trade last March.

It hasn't been a perfect odyssey for the Yukon native to the nation's capital. After a hot start right after the trade at last year's deadline, Cozens was quiet in the post-season and, until recently, had struggled for offence at five-on-five.

Cozens was Ottawa's complement to Tim Stutzle and Shane Pinto, excellent first and third-line centres, but his counterparts outshone him. However, since getting united on a line with Brady Tkachuk and Ridly

Greig seven games ago, Cozens has been on fire, cooking up nine points.

"He's playing a strong game right now. He's moving his feet. He's been good with the puck, playing physical," said Senators coach Travis Green. "He's got a tremendous shot. I think his confidence is where it needs to be to play."

For most of the season, Cozens had been flanked by Drake Batherson, who's an excellent player. But it's no surprise that he has been hot since partnering up with Tkachuk. Like his captain, Cozens has become an imposing force, leading the Senators in hits with 141 — a whopping 40 more than second-place Nick Cousins. Cozens is 16th in the NHL in hits.

In Buffalo, Cozens was seen as a talented player, with skill, physicality and a scoring touch. But he joined the long list of the uber-skilled who lost their hockey soul in Buffalo.

The knock on Cozens in Buffalo — and by inference why he was traded — was that he didn't fulfill his potential offensively and was a defensive liability. Both aspects travelled with him and were still affecting his game when he first got to Ottawa. In the playoffs, Green didn't play Cozens in any big matchups, preferring Pinto. In essence, Cozens was relegated to being the third most important centre. Similarly, this season, Cozens wasn't producing at five-on-five, but in his recent heater, he has tallied seven five-on-five points in seven games. That is seven out of the 18 five-on-five points he's contributed this season.

Cozens acknowledges he needed to improve his five-on-five play.

"It's a part of my game that I want to develop more of, is that O-zone game, and being able to produce from the O-zone and not just off the rush," he told Sportsnet.ca. "I think I'm getting better at it, and I just want to continue to improve. And just find more greasy goals around the net and find ways to get loose around the net."

Do between-the-leg goals count as greasy?

We think so.

In Sunday's 7-1 win over the Vegas Golden Knights, Cozens scored his first of two goals when he showed off his big frame, getting to the net-front and quickly finishing a tap-in on his knees with a clever backhand between the legs. Later in the game, he made a perfect bank pass in transition to Tkachuk and received a smart return pass to wire one home from the slot.

Three of Cozens' seven five-on-five goals this season have come in the last seven games.

"For me, it's a different kind of play than I'm used to; we get a lot more O-zone time," Cozens told Sportsnet.ca earlier this season. "And I'm used to, obviously, the run-and-gun, like odd-man rushes and stuff (from Buffalo)."

It's taken a while for Cozens to thrive in Ottawa at even strength, he says, due to a difference in playing style in Ottawa. The Senators play a more possession-based style while the Sabres prefer to attack in transition.

In the meantime, Cozens is fourth on the team in expected goals share at five-on-five at an elite 54 per cent. Last Tuesday in Columbus, Cozens made a great pass to Ridly Greig, who potted home a goal. An uptick in five-on-five offence for Cozens is what the Senators sorely need from their second-line centre.

When the swap for Norris was made, general manager Steve Staios said Cozens' ability to drive play at five-on-five made him attractive. At the time of the trade, Norris was producing more than Cozens despite lower underlying metrics, like a 46 per cent expected goal share.

Meanwhile, in an awful Sabres' environment, Cozens had a 49 per cent expected goal share. Three percentage points don't explain everything,



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but it suggests Cozens was the better play driver with potential to improve.

The wager on Cozens so far hasn't been a home run, but it is looking more and more encouraging for the Senators.

Cozens has become one of the upper-echelon power play merchants in the league, sitting 12th in power play goals and 17th in power play points this season. Don't forget, production on the power play counts just the same as at five-on-five.

Yet, for Cozens to have more power-play goals and points than at five-on-five through 52 games is rare.

Quite the dichotomy.

"I got to be greasier, you got to beat a guy, you got to win a battle, and you just got to be around the net more, not shooting off the rush," Cozens told Sportsnet.ca. "I think I can score more goals around the net."

Another issue: Cozens is minus-11 this season. On the surface, that is worrying, even given that plus/minus is a very imperfect stat.

"His plus/minus isn't where he wants it to be, but I've seen that part of his game steadily improve as well," said Green.

"I think my defensive game has come a pretty long way this season," added Cozens. "Obviously, my plus/minus isn't great, but I think that's more just (not) producing offensively and (not) scoring more goals five on five."

"But the end of the day, I couldn't really care that much about plus or minus, and I know not many players do so, you know, but I think my defensive game has come a way."

Plus (pun intended), the Senators' goal differential when he's been on the ice has markedly been better the last two months. Since Dec. 10, Cozens has been a plus-two; prior to that point, he was a minus-13.

Cozens explains that it took him a while to master Ottawa's zonal defensive coverage scheme. Although he still has a bad turnover in his game.

"(I'm better at) reads in the defensive zone, I'm learning the system," said Cozens. "I don't have to think as much anymore, but my reads are more automatic. And I'm just getting more comfortable in our D-zone coverage and knowing my job without having to think about it as much."

His defensive improvement is stark. Out of 594 players who've played at least 300 minutes this season, Cozens is 19th with 2.15 expected goals allowed per game at five-on-five when he's on the ice.

Don't forget that if the Senators didn't have the worst team percentage in the league, it could be a much prettier picture for Cozens. When Cozens has been on the ice, the Senators have a ridiculously bad .876 team save percentage at five-on-five.

The question when Cozens arrived in the 613-area code was which version of him would the Senators get? The seventh overall pick with immense promise after scoring 31 goals in his age-22 season, or the player who ultimately struggled to live up to that potential in Buffalo?

He has more goals in 52 games this season (17) than he did in all 82 games last season (16).

The recent five-on-five production, defensive improvement and clean bill of health make Cozens a more-than-fine Senator.

Ottawa wanted the best brand of Cozens when they traded for him. They have gotten just that, and they are better for it.

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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' brutal homestand signals time to sell

Luke Fox

TORONTO — From must-win to must-sell.

The 2025-26 Toronto Maple Leafs may not yet be mathematically eliminated from Stanley Cup contention, but with only 10 games till trade deadline and 29 till tee off, this collection of hockey players has already waved the white flag.

Even if Brad Treliving denied surrender during his most recent appearance, which was a little more than month ago, the roster constructed by the general manager has done more than enough talking for him.

Scraping and clawing for their playoff lives, the Maple Leafs approached their recent five-game homestand with the same zest an eight-year-old tackles household chores.

All dragged feet and sullen faces, they fell behind early, gave up late and still expected to get paid.

The Leafs went 0-4-1 and got outscored by a combined total of 25-12 by Minnesota, Detroit, Vegas, Colorado, and now — thanks to Tuesday's 7-4 drubbing by the surging Sabres — Buffalo.

They were the second-best team dressing the second-best goalie and, at best, second-best star player in each of those games.

Not since 1984-85 have the Maple Leafs endured a homestand so long and so unproductive. That edition finished dead last, knocked out by the ol' Chuck Norris.

Only one Eastern Conference franchise has fewer wins (24) than this version of the Leafs, and that team's GM has already written a letter to fans explaining that they're giving up and will be busying taking trade calls on their most dynamic player.

It's time for Treliving and his boss, Keith Pelley, to crumple their original blueprint as bargain buyers and decide how deep of an incision to make on this corpse.

When a veteran team led by a \$13.25-million superstar and a Cup-winning coach can't summon the requisite urgency for critical games involving divisional rivals, or featuring a star that spurned them, or, in Tuesday's case, preceded by a leadership meeting and a motivational chat by Leafs icon Darryl Sittler, well, maybe they just don't have it.

For the second game in a row, hats hit in Scotiabank Arena's ice in celebration of an opponent's hat trick (Brock Nelson's Sunday and defenceman Rasmus Dahlin's first-ever Tuesday, just part of his five-point show).

Something else was doffed and chucked after the buzzer, though.

As half-hearted boos rained on the Maple Leafs by a half-filled home crowd, a replica sweater was discarded by a fan in disgust.

Stripped captain John Tavares silently scooped the stripped jersey with his stick and carried it off to the shadows. Trying to clean up a mess.

"It's a tough one to explain," Tavares said. "Once again, I don't think we executed as well. They seem to be really quick and just getting to their game better than we did."

Which begs the question: What is the Maple Leafs' game anyway?

After a 53-game sample, what has coach Craig Berube identified as their identity?



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"We look at scoring as everything — and it's not everything," Berube said post-game. He sounded fed up. "You're not going to consistently win this league by focusing on just scoring goals. You got to play the full rink. And right now, we're not doing a good enough job without the puck."

Part of that is execution. Zone exits are a burden. Puck management is a chronic issue.

Part of that is personnel. Puck-transporting game-breaker William Nylander and expert retriever Chris Tanev have been holed up in the press box with the Drumsticks and George Parros decisions.

Part of that is goaltending. Joseph Woll has lost a career-worst five straight. Anthony Stolarz is rusty. And Dennis Hildeby's breakout season got pushed down to the farm in the name of roster management.

Part of that is on Treliving, for not building a defence corps fast or mobile enough to keep pace with a league speeding past Toronto's contention window.

What did Berube learn about his team over this stretch?

"We got to learn to keep the puck out of our net is what I learned," Berube said. "Until we decide to do things right and keep the puck out of our net — and that's the goalies included — this is what you're going to get. We scored enough goals on this homestead to win games, but we didn't keep the puck out of our net."

"No more than that. I don't want to talk about it anymore. That's all it is. I don't need to learn anything about our team. I know our team, and they're capable of doing it."

Added Matthew Knies: "We have a ton of skill and a ton of talent in his locker room. I think there's a ton of confidence. I think it's just putting it all together."

Our takeaway from Toronto's past five efforts in particular and first 53 as a whole: A rejig is in order. Either there isn't enough talent, or they've wasted too much time to bother using it.

Engage in hard conversations with pending free agents Troy Stecher, Bobby McMann, Scott Laughton, Matias Maccelli, and Nick Robertson.

If the players wish to re-sign at reasonable rates and term, go for it. You need role players, and they all bring something. If they are noncommittal or ask for a windfall, trade them to restock those barren cupboards.

Get creative. You won't be trading them all, of course, but a refresh is necessary.

Develop a plan. Recoup assets.

Reload and try again in October.

Because, sadly, this Maple Leafs campaign is not worth investing any more assets.

"Disappointing, no doubt," said Tavares, addressing the homestand. "You know, there's a lot of hockey left here, and nothing's been determined."

Unfortunately, it's the 2025-26 Toronto Maple Leafs who haven't been determined.

But we hope the decision-makers have seen enough to at least terminate their fate.

Fox's Fast Five

- Pretty awesome how Sittler was reunited with his original, game-worn sweater from that historic 10-point night 50 years ago.

Together with friend and teammate Tiger Williams (who was dash-2 in that 11-4 win, Sittler reminds), the Leafs legend gave a pep talk to the current team at morning skate and showed off his 50-year-old sweater.

"Talking about how he had to throw the fight strap on for the Broad Street Bullies, it's a testament to the type of hockey they were playing at that time," McMann said. "You can see how weathered the jersey is and how many stitches it has. You know he was playing a hard game."

Sittler and Williams, Toronto's all-time leader in penalty minutes, shared tales from their heyday, attempting to rile up the lads.

"The message I said to the players was, you don't achieve anything without your teammates," Sittler relays. "You don't have (success) on your own. It's you as a group. It's important to realize that."

- Matthews on Sittler's big show in 1976: "Ten points? Like, two hat tricks he had. It's really hard to wrap your head around that. Yeah, I don't think that's getting touched anytime soon."

Sittler himself said he thought '80s-era Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux were the best bets to join him in the Double-Digit Club. He's breathing a little easier now.

No one has even hit nine points.

Edmonton's Sam Gagner (2012) is the only player since 1988 to score eight points in one game.

- Yeah, the Sabres ain't trading Alex Tuch.

- The Maple Leafs have won 19 consecutive offside coach's challenges.

- Knies opened the scoring and snapped a 10-game goal drought, the winger's longest since his rookie days.

The 23-year-old is labouring though a lower-body injury that is screaming for time off.

"The (Olympic) break is going to be pretty valuable for me to heal up and rest and try to come back as a different player," he said. "One that's at 100 per cent and playing to his full abilities."

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