



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 1, 2026

The Athletic

Identifying the biggest need for all 32 teams ahead of 2026 NHL trade deadline

By: The Athletic NHL Staff

The NHL trade deadline is about five weeks away, and teams are in the midst of meetings to identify their needs and potential targets.

What will your favorite team be looking to add? A difference-maker? Just a bit of depth? Or some futures to replenish the prospect pool?

The Athletic asked its NHL staff this week what they think each team needs most. Here's what they said.

Anaheim Ducks

More consistent No. 2 goalie

There are glaring holes in the Ducks' forward group, but those will be filled when Leo Carlsson, Troy Terry and Mason McTavish return from injury and the lineup resets properly. They need to keep the better defensive mindset they've adopted. But the options aren't great if their star, Lukáš Dostál, goes down. Ville Husso has been hit and miss, while Petr Mrázek has been mostly a miss. — Eric Stephens

Boston Bruins

Right-shot defenseman

The Bruins went after Rasmus Andersson as a long-term investment. Andersson would have been a good fit with Charlie McAvoy and Henri Jokiharju on the right side. Andrew Peeke is in the last year of his contract. — Fluto Shinzawa

Buffalo Sabres

Defensive depth

The injuries to Michael Kesselring and Conor Timmins have tested Buffalo's defensive depth. Both of them should be fully healthy after the Olympic break, but injuries have forced the Sabres' top-four defensemen to play heavy minutes lately. Adding another depth defenseman capable of playing a physical style would help them in their push for the playoffs. — Matthew Fairburn

Calgary Flames

More picks, prospects and youngsters

In Blake Coleman and Nazem Kadri, the Flames have two enticing trade targets who could help contending teams win a championship this season. GM Craig Conroy is better off staying the course and accumulating picks, prospects and young players who can contribute to his lineup sooner rather than later. — Julian McKenzie

Carolina Hurricanes

Forward upgrade

The Hurricanes are happy with their lineup — the team considers Logan Stankoven's move to center a success, and the team has found a way to balance its lines and get scoring up and down the lineup. Still, there's room for a boost up front. Whether that's getting an established second-line center to supplant Stankoven, a star winger to further bolster an offense that's top five in scoring or an addition to the fourth line, Carolina has the cap space and assets to improve. — Cory Lavoie

Chicago Blackhawks

Roster space

The Blackhawks have more prospects coming around the corner, and they need to free up current NHL roster space for those players. Anton Frondell, the No. 3 pick in the 2025 draft, could be with them as early as March. Sacha Boisvert, a 2024 first-round pick, could leave college after his season and join the Blackhawks for some NHL games. The Blackhawks also have some prospects in the AHL, most notably Sam Rinzler and Nick Lardis, who could be worthy of some more NHL games down the stretch, too. — Scott Powers

Colorado Avalanche

Third-line center

Jack Drury has been steady, but with only 18 points in 52 games, the Avalanche could certainly upgrade at 3C. Ross Colton has been injured and hasn't played nearly as well at center when he has been healthy, so that could be the position Colorado attacks most aggressively, similar to last deadline. I've mentioned Ryan O'Reilly before and still think he's a perfect fit, assuming Nashville will trade him now that it's climbed to within striking range of a wild-card spot. — Jesse Granger

Columbus Blue Jackets

Top-six winger

Mason Marchment, with eight goals in 11 games, has given the Blue Jackets a big boost since he was acquired from Seattle, but at no point this season have the Jackets' top-two lines clicked concurrently. The second line is the soft spot right now, where 23-year-old Kent Johnson is having a rough year and veterans Boone Jenner and Sean Monahan have been inconsistent. This club creates chances, but struggles to finish. A top-six winger — hello, Artemi Panarin — could disrupt things in a good way. — Aaron Portzline

Dallas Stars

Top-six forward



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Artemi Panarin sure would look good alongside Wyatt Johnston and Mikko Rantanen. One more proven scorer could be the difference for a team that always seems to be a goal or two short in the Western Conference final. The question is, does Dallas have the assets to make such a move? Jim Nill has no first-rounder in 2026 and a thin prospect pool. A more reasonable add might be someone like Connor Murphy, as the Stars need a right-handed defenseman as much, if not more, than a potential Tyler Seguin replacement. — Mark Lazerus

Detroit Red Wings

Top-four defenseman

The Red Wings have pulled back on Axel Sandin-Pellikka's minutes, especially when protecting late leads, which speaks to the need to bring in a more proven (and ideally heavier) second-pair defenseman for the playoff push. The bottom half of Detroit's defense is largely lighter and relatively unproven against playoff pressure, and for a team looking to snap a nine-year playoff drought, a steady option who can take 18-20 minutes next to Ben Chiarot would add stability on the back end. — Max Bultman

Could the Maple Leafs' Bobby McMann be a perfect fit for the Oilers? Vaughn Ridley / Getty Images

Edmonton Oilers

Third-line forward with speed and size

Size and speed on the third line are the primary issues. Goal-scoring ability would be a major asset, especially if the acquisition has had success scoring in a depth role. Bobby McMann of the Maple Leafs has been mentioned as a target recently. His max skating speed is 99th percentile, according to NHL Edge. He has 17 goals already and is on an expiring contract at \$1.35 million. That's a value contract for a fast player who has size and can score. It's a perfect fit for Edmonton's needs. — Allan Mitchell

Florida Panthers

Additional depth on defense

Seth Jones' injury has highlighted how vulnerable the Panthers could be on the back end with one absence, and with the aging Jeff Petry and inexperienced Uvis Balinskis pressed into too many minutes for a contending club. A home-run swing for the Panthers feels like a move that gives them options on the blue line with some term (Justin Faulk?), something that could also help them get into the playoffs in a very difficult Atlantic Division. — James Mirtle

Los Angeles Kings

Another scoring forward

Some think the Kings need to plan for the future rather than aim for the short-term view of sneaking into the playoffs. But that's unlikely to happen given their win-now focus and the importance of sending venerable star Anže Kopitar into retirement with postseason hockey. Multiple playoff spots in the West are within reach, and acquiring someone who can pump up their 28th-ranked offense through five-on-five play and on the power play without sacrificing their best prospects would help the cause. — Eric Stephens

Minnesota Wild

No. 1 center

For the 25th year in a row, the Wild are looking for a No. 1 center. However, this time feels different as Bill Guerin sizes up the market after his Quinn Hughes blockbuster trade put Minnesota in all-in mode, likely heading into a first-round matchup with Dallas. Even if Guerin can't find that No. 1 center now, it will be his goal in the offseason. If he has to wait, look for him to at least go after Vincent Trocheck, Nazem Kadri, Ryan O'Reilly, Charlie Coyle or someone else who can help now. — Michael Russo

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Montreal Canadiens

High-compete, penalty-killing forward

The Canadiens' penalty kill has been bad for most of the season, and while they addressed it with the acquisition of Phillip Danault, it remains broken. It is one of the bigger weaknesses on the team. At five-on-five, the Canadiens could also use a bit more jam in their bottom six. They already have too many forwards and don't have the cap space to add salary right now, so any trade they do make would likely be a hockey trade. — Arpon Basu

Nashville Predators

Center

The Preds are being carried by No. 1 center Ryan O'Reilly and have very little to offer after that. That doesn't mean GM Barry Trotz is going to make such an addition. On the contrary, the big question around the franchise is whether he's going to move O'Reilly for what would likely be a significant haul, or keep him and let this team fight to squeak into the playoffs. Any buy on Trotz's part would be malpractice. — Joe Rexrode

New Jersey Devils

Forward with offensive ability

The Devils are one of the lowest-scoring teams in the league this season, and they could use more offensive punch from their forwards. Tom Fitzgerald said he wants to add at forward, and the team now has some cap flexibility after dealing Ondřej Palát. This next stretch could determine how aggressive the team is. — Peter Baugh

New York Islanders

Non-rentals

The Islanders are in such an interesting position because they've exceeded expectations but are still retooling. So despite this season's success, it really doesn't make sense to go all in on rentals. Instead, the Islanders can take some swings on players with term such as Jordan Kyrou, or deal for a pending RFA who will stay under team control this summer. Those deals would help this team prep for a playoff run without veering too far off track from the overarching process. — Shayna Goldman

New York Rangers

Youth

As the Rangers embark on a self-proclaimed retool, team president Chris Drury has let it be known his focus is on "obtaining young players, draft picks and cap space." New York is actively working on an Artemi Panarin trade and



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listening on pretty much everyone else, with the goal of offloading veterans for younger alternatives and restocking a bare prospect cupboard. Skilled forwards with speed are priority No. 1, but this will be a multi-faceted process that targets every non-goalie position. — Vincent Z. Mercogliano

Ottawa Senators

Right-shot defenseman

If the Senators can continue to string together positive results ahead of the roster freeze next week, the pressure will be on GM Steve Staios to buy ahead of the trade deadline. If he does, don't be surprised if he leans toward a defenseman. Yes, Carter Yakemchuk waits in the wings. But the Senators need a surefire top-four defender who can be plugged into a second pairing (it would help if he could kill penalties, too). — Julian McKenzie

Philadelphia Flyers

Center

Even after signing Christian Dvorak to a five-year extension, the Flyers remain weak down the middle. Noah Cates hasn't been as effective since linemate Tyson Foerster's injury, Sean Couturier is in the midst of a dreadful goal-scoring drought, and journeyman Lane Pederson is currently the 4C. That said, it's unlikely the Flyers are going to be able to swing a deal for a high-end pivot before this year's deadline. That's the sort of transaction that's much more plausible in the offseason. — Kevin Kurz

Pittsburgh Penguins

Blue-line depth

I doubt the Penguins make a huge splash at the deadline. In the summer? Yeah, I could see that. For now, they are technically rebuilding, but Kyle Dubas won't hesitate to add a piece to ensure the feel-good season concludes with a playoff berth. Their biggest need is a depth defenseman. They would appear to be pretty well set at forward and between the pipes at the moment. — Josh Yohe

San Jose Sharks

Right-handed defenseman

The Sharks don't have anything close to a true No. 1 on their blue line, and that is hard to get at any point in the year. But the defense has been capable by committee, improving as the season has gone on. They could still use another righty as an upgrade, ideally one that is a longer-term option. However, this is a feel-good season in San Jose, and unless they can pull off another targeted buy up front, as they did with Kiefer Sherwood, riding a quiet deadline to an unexpected playoff berth wouldn't be the worst thing. — Eric Stephens

Seattle Kraken

Goal-scoring punch

The Kraken play a tough, disciplined defensive game, have reliably received solid-to-stellar goaltending this season and run relatively deep with solid two-way players, both up front and on the back end. The Kraken are a top-10 defensive team, but they rank 23rd in the NHL in goals for per game. That reflects, more than anything, a deficit of elite-level game-breaking talent that has dogged this franchise since its inception. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues

Unload players

With the Blues sitting near the bottom of the standings, they won't look to fill any needs heading into the deadline. In his final season as GM, Doug Armstrong will be looking to unload players. The Blues have five on The Athletic's trade board 5.0: No. 5 Robert Thomas, No. 21 Jordan Kyrou, No. 23 Justin Faulk, No. 31 Jordan Binnington and No. 35 Brayden Schenn. Some potential trades might take until summer to transpire, but a few of them before the deadline would not be surprising. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning

Scoring winger

Between J.J. Moser's growth this year and Darren Raddysh's breakout, the Lightning's blue line is going to be a lot deeper when Victor Hedman returns from injury. So instead, management's focus should be up front. Tampa Bay could take a more low-key approach and look for a middle-six winger to bolster its scoring depth. Or, the Lightning could take a big swing for a right-handed shot who could help kick the power play up a notch, since the team's PP1 could use a better one-timer option from the left circle. — Shayna Goldman

Toronto Maple Leafs

An upgrade on defense

While the Maple Leafs still need an upgrade or two in their top six, the more pressing need is on defense. The Leafs are unlikely to have Chris Tanev back this season and are relying heavily on 34-year-old Oliver Ekman-Larsson in his absence. Jake McCabe has struggled increasingly without Tanev by his side, and it's been a bumpy defensive year for Morgan Rielly. Even a minor upgrade would help. The question now is whether the front office should still attempt to buy. — Jonas Siegel

Utah Mammoth

Top-nine forward with term

The Mammoth are in a strong position to make the playoffs, but buying aggressively probably doesn't make much sense because the Central is loaded with three bona fide Cup contenders. The prudent move is likely a quiet deadline or maybe a cheap depth upgrade. If they do go big-game hunting, it should only be for a forward (ideally a center) whose age and contract fit with this core long-term. — Harman Dayal

Vancouver Canucks

Additional draft capital

The NHL's 32nd-place team needs more draft picks, should probably be aggressively attempting to shed long-term salary-cap liabilities attached to veteran players in their late 20s and must use this deadline to begin to shape a credible plan to turn the franchise around. — Thomas Drance

Vegas Golden Knights

Middle-six forward

The Golden Knights already addressed the blue line by trading first- and second-round picks to Calgary for Rasmus Andersson, so any further additions would likely be up front. Vegas doesn't have a first-round pick until 2028, so it may be



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looking at a lower tier of depth forward, but if adding a center can allow Mitch Marner to return to the wing, it could be worth it. — Jesse Granger

Blues' Jordan Kyrrou is an ideal fit for the Capitals. Dilip Vishwanat / Getty Images

Washington Capitals

Scoring winger

That was an easy question to answer thanks to GM Chris Patrick, who laid his cards on the table this month. The Caps will be connected to Artemi Panarin, as they should be, but Jordan Kyrrou is probably the ideal fit due to his age (27) and

his contract (signed through 2031). They don't shy from high-talent, mini-reclamation projects, either — Pierre-Luc Dubois and Jakob Chychrun come to mind. — Sean Gentile

Winnipeg Jets

Draft picks

This isn't the Jets' season, which means it's time to sell off a couple of pieces to recoup draft picks after years of moving them out to acquire win-now help. Logan Stanley should be the most obvious trade chip, but Winnipeg should see if there's a market for its other pending UFAs (i.e., Luke Schenn, Gustav Nyquist, Tanner Pearson) as well. — Harman Dayal



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Sourdif scores in OT to give Capitals 4-3 comeback victory over Hurricanes

By: AP

Washington Capitals right wing Justin Sourdif, right, celebrates his game-winning goal next to center Ethen Frank (53) in the overtime of an NHL hockey game against the Carolina Hurricanes, Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026, in Washington. (AP Photo/Nick Wass)

Justin Sourdif scored off a rebound at 1:42 of overtime and the Washington Capitals overcame a three-goal deficit to beat the Carolina Hurricanes 4-3 on Saturday night.

Down 3-0 early in second period, the Capitals tied it on defenseman Jakob Chychrun's goal with 6:42 left in regulation — his 19th of the season.

Hendrix Lapierre and Dylan Strome scored in the second period to start the rally and help give Clay Stevenson his first NHL victory. Stevenson won in his second career start and first of the season, stopping 19 shots.

Washington has won two in a row. It beat Detroit 4-3 in a shootout Thursday night to end a six-game trip.

Mark Jankowski, Sebastian Aho and Shayne Gostisbehere scored for Carolina, and Frederik Andersen made 38 saves. The Hurricanes had won two in a row and five of six.

Jankowski opened the scoring for Carolina with 6:33 left in the first. Aho made it 2-0 with 2:09 to go in the period, and Gostisbehere struck at 4:16 of the second.

Lapierre got one back for Washington at 7:52 of the second, and Strome made it a one-goal game with 5:02 left in the period.

Up Next:

Hurricanes: Host Los Angeles on Sunday.

Capitals: Host New York Islanders on Monday night,



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Recap: Canes 'Didn't Get To Our Game' In Washington

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

Carolina concedes three-goal lead but pushes point streak to seven games

WASHINGTON, D.C. - After building up a 3-0 lead through 25 minutes, the Carolina Hurricanes conceded four consecutive goals to the Washington Capitals en route to a 4-3 overtime defeat at Capital One Arena.

Under siege to start the evening, the Canes needed 19 first-period saves from Frederik Andersen to hold the hosts off the board. But with its backstop holding strong, Carolina was able to strike on the counterattack with a pair of first-period goals.

Not dissimilar to Thursday's historic conclusion, Carolina showed an ability to strike in quick succession once again, as Mark Jankowski and Sebastian Aho potted back-to-back goals in just 4:24, providing a nice cushion on the scoreboard for the visitors.

When the teams returned to the ice for the second period, the scoring continued, as Shayne Gostisbehere found twine for the third time in the last four periods to give his team a 3-0 advantage.

Unfortunately for Carolina, Washington's territorial advantage began to bear fruit as the middle frame wore on.

The Caps initially broke through Andersen during the middle stages of the second stanza, then inched within a goal before moving to the third. In the final 20 minutes of regulation, their push continued, and a third Washington goal necessitated the Canes' 15th overtime of the season.

A messy fourth frame ensued, with turnovers plaguing both clubs. But at 1:42, Caps rookie Justin Sourdif potted his own rebound to end the fight.

Andersen finished with 38 saves on 42 shots, his second-highest total of the season, as the Canes picked up at least a point with him between the pipes for the fifth straight game (2-0-3).

Stats & Standouts

The 19 first-period shots allowed by Carolina were the most allowed in any period by the team this season. The previous high was 18, done twice, most recently by the Vegas Golden Knights on Oct. 28.

Including their pair today, Carolina now has 59 first-period goals this season. That ties them with Pittsburgh for the second most in the league. Only Colorado (62) has more.

Forward Sebastian Aho scored his first goal since Jan. 3, ending a 12-game drought. Despite that gap, the Finnish Olympian remained productive with 18 points in 15 games during January, second only to Andrei Svechnikov (19) in that span.

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere lit the lamp for the second straight game since returning from injury and has totaled four points in those two contests.

Forward Mark Jankowski notched his fifth goal of the season, four of which have come since Dec. 30. The 31-year-old is up to five points in his last seven games.

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour following the final horn...

"We sure didn't get to (our game). From the opening puck drop to the end, I don't think I've ever been a part of a 60-minute game where we were that bad. Somehow, we managed a point. There's zero way we should have. They dominated us from start to finish... There was zero intensity. We just wanted to get through the game. That's very rare for this group. It was just nothing..."

Jordan Staal giving his assessment of the game...

"We got a couple freebies and we kind of sat back. We didn't really play... Our five-on-five play was pretty brutal. They just kept taking it to us, and it was just a matter of time. Thank goodness we had Freddie, otherwise it would have been over a lot quicker."

Jordan Staal discussing what needed to be different...

"Forechecking. We had to break out 1,000 pucks, I thought. They did a good job of just sending it down there, sending it down there, playing in the O-zone, creating havoc in front, and shooting pucks and doing what we usually do. They did it much, much better tonight."

Rod Brind'Amour on turning the page from this one...

"That's easy, because you can't get any worse than that. You just move on. We have a game tomorrow, and we should have a good answer for that, hopefully."

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes are scheduled to fly home immediately after the game. They're set to face the Los Angeles Kings at the Lenovo Center on Sunday.

Next Game: Sunday, Feb. 1 vs. Los Angeles | 3:00 p.m. ET | FDSNSO | Tickets | Parking



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Sourdif scores in OT, Capitals rally past Hurricanes

By: Harvey Valentine

Stevenson gets 1st NHL win for Washington; Carolina point streak hits 7

WASHINGTON -- Justin Sourdif scored at 1:42 of overtime, and the Washington Capitals rallied from a three-goal, second-period deficit for a 4-3 win against the Carolina Hurricanes at Capital One Arena on Saturday.

Frederik Andersen made the initial save on Sourdif, but he knocked in the loose puck at the right post to help the Capitals win their second straight game for the first time since a six-game streak Nov. 24-Dec. 3.

The goal was confirmed after video review initiated by the NHL Situation Room for goalie interference.

"It was pretty cool," Sourdif said. "I made a couple of mistakes there in OT so I'm glad it worked out. I was actually trying to change and then we kept getting odd-man rushes so I stayed out there. You can't take those for granted."

Jakob Chychrun had a goal and an assist and Aliaksei Protas had two assists for the Capitals (27-22-7).

Clay Stevenson, starting his first game this season and second in his career, made 19 saves for his first NHL win. He started because of injuries to Washington goalies Logan Thompson (upper body) and Charlie Lindgren (lower body).

"Even when we were down three, I said to myself on the bench -- [Rasmus Sandin] was sitting next to me, I was so close to turning to him and telling him, 'It just feels like we're winning this game,' when we were down three," Chychrun said. "We just had a great first, had a great second, and just kept pushing."

Mark Jankowski, Sebastian Aho and Shayne Gostisbehere scored for the Hurricanes (33-15-6), who have a seven-game point streak (5-0-2) and are 9-1-3 in their past 13. Andersen made 38 saves.

"We sure didn't get to [our game] from opening puck drop to the end," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I don't think I've ever been part of a 60-minute game where we were that bad. Somehow, we managed a point. Literally there's zero way we should have. They dominated us from start to finish."

Chychrun tied it 3-3 at 13:18 of the third period, scoring on a stick-side wrist shot from the high slot off a pass from Protas.

"We had some goals obviously in the first but for the most part they were creating a lot of shots and a lot of opportunities, and we didn't have an answer for that tonight," Hurricanes forward Jordan Martinook said.

Jankowski gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 13:27 of the first period. William Carrier gloved down the puck and passed to Jankowski, who scored on a snap shot from in front.

Aho made it 2-0 at 17:51. Capitals defenseman John Carlson fanned on a pass attempt above the left circle and Aho got the puck, skated into the slot and put a snap shot past Stevenson.

Gostisbehere pushed it to 3-0 at 4:16 of the second period when he scored over Stevenson's right shoulder with a wrist shot from along the wall for his third goal in two games.

"It was just one that catches me off guard," Stevenson said. "You can't really see it and then it's in the back of your net and we're down three. I have a really good next-puck mindset and just try to do my job to give them faith to keep pushing and they did that."

Hendrix Lapierre cut the deficit to 3-1 at 7:52, putting in his own rebound in front when Andersen was unable to control the puck.

Dylan Strome pulled the Capitals within 3-2 at 14:58 when he tipped in a centering pass from Protas.

Washington then outshot Carolina 16-5 in the third period and overtime.

"Zero intensity," Brind'Amour said. "We wanted to get through the game and that's very rare for this group. ... Freddie made some big saves to keep us alive, but it is what it is. Move on."

NOTES: The Capitals recorded their first three-goal comeback win since a 4-3 overtime win against the New York Islanders on Jan. 16, 2023. ... Chychrun has seven points (one goal, six assists) in a four-game point streak. ... Sourdif has 16 points (nine goals, seven assists) in his past 14 games. ... Aho has 31 points (15 goals, 16 assists) in 34 career regular-season games against the Capitals.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Canes Blow 3-0 Lead, Fall in Overtime to Caps

By: Evan Davis

The Carolina Hurricanes were the talk of the league with their historic comeback victory on Thursday night. And much of the pregame buzz centered on that win over Utah two nights ago.

The task for this team was to harness that momentum against an opponent desperate for a win, fighting for their playoff lives.

And for half of the game, it seemed as though the Hurricanes would be able to handle the Capitals.

But after Carolina built a 3-0 lead, the team sat back, had some defensive miscues, and allowed Washington to score four straight goals to earn the overtime victory.

This is a game that infuriates head coach Rod Brind'Amour, and his postgame comments reflect that:

From the opening puck drop to the end, I don't think I've ever been a part of a 60-minute game where we were that bad. They dominated us from start to finish.

Just two and a half minutes into the game, Taylor Hall takes a penalty. This was not the ideal start for Carolina, but the penalty was killed with just one shot allowed.

The Canes did not find their rhythm until about halfway through the first period. At the 13:27 mark, Mark Jankowski scored the first goal of the game. William Carrier took a hit in the corner to disrupt the clearing attempt that was kept in by Jesperi Kotkaniemi. Kotkaniemi got the puck back to Carrier, and he used his strength against the defender to settle the puck and get it to Jankowski alone in the slot.

A few minutes later, a heads-up pass by Frederik Andersen puts the puck near the opposite blue line. Sebastian Aho's relentless pursuit causes the Capitals' defender to fan on the outlet pass, and Aho picks it up and buries it for the 2-0 lead.

Carolina ended the first with a 2-0 lead despite a 19-12 shot advantage by Washington. For much of the period, Andersen was the Canes' best player.

The Hurricanes had a better start to the second. About four minutes into the period, Jordan Staal created a turnover in the neutral zone and put the Canes on the attack. Jordan Martinook pulled up at the half boards and hit Shayne Gostisbehere with a cross-zone pass. As he was streaking down the wing, a double screen by the Washington defenders allowed his wrist to find the back of the net for a 3-0 lead.

Just three and a half minutes later, Washington tallied their first goal of the game. The Canes won the faceoff, but failed to clear the puck. Hendrix Lapierre was left alone in front of Andersen and poked home a second chance opportunity to make it 3-1.

The action got sloppy in the middle part of the second, starting with a questionable interference call on Hall.

The Capitals' man-advantage did not last long as a Hurricanes shorthanded rush forced Ryan Leonard to interfere with Aho, and the teams were four-on-four.

Just 30 seconds later, Logan Stankoven drew an interference penalty that led to a four-on-three for 28 seconds and then a five-on-three for just over a minute.

Unfortunately, the Carolina power play was a bit slow to develop, and with blocks and wide shots, could not get a shot on goal during these prime opportunities.

Soon after these failed power plays, another failed clear led to another Washington goal that cut the lead to 3-2.

Hall took his third penalty of the night on a delay of game call with 1:33 left in the second, and the Capitals rode that momentum into the third.

A Sean Walker penalty just two minutes into the third allowed Washington to stay on the attack. The Hurricanes killed all four Capitals power plays in the game, but the offensive zone time helped to keep the ice tilted in their favor in the third.

An unfortunate sequence of events led to the game-tying goal with about seven minutes left in the game. Tom Wilson's elbow took a run at Stankoven's head, cutting his cheek on the play. The dirty play and no call, interference or otherwise, made Stankoven mad and caused him to chase the play at the other end, looking for bodies. That led to the game-tying goal from Jakob Chychrun alone in the high slot.

Andersen kept the Hurricanes in the game, and the team secured a point by advancing to overtime. The Hurricanes did not produce much in the extra frame, and the Capitals scored just 1:42 into overtime.

The Hurricanes return home to Raleigh for a game versus Los Angeles tomorrow at 3:00 PM at the Lenovo Center.



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LINKS

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SportScan

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

1378151 Websites

The Athletic / Santa Clarita Lady Flyers youth hockey team involved in deadly crash in Colorado

By Devon Henderson

Jan. 31, 2026 Updated 6:01 pm EST

On Thursday morning, a snowplow from the Colorado Department of Transportation collided with a van carrying members of the Santa Clarita Lady Flyers 12AA girls hockey team from California, killing the van's driver and injuring eight of the nine passengers in the van, one critically, according to the Colorado State Patrol (CSP).

According to the CSP, the plow driver, later identified as 29-year-old Colton Weidman of Littleton, lost control, breaking through the median of Interstate 70 about 60 miles west of Denver, colliding in the eastbound lanes with a Toyota Tacoma truck and then the van, sending the van down an embankment.

The van driver, who has yet to be identified, was declared dead at the scene, while four juveniles were transported via ambulance to a local hospital and later released. Three adults remain hospitalized, with one in serious condition.

A fifth juvenile was flown via helicopter to a trauma center and was in critical condition. No one else involved in the wrecks was hurt.

In a statement on Instagram by team president Prescott Littlefield confirming the incident, he wrote, "This is a message I never imagined I would send."

The NHL's Los Angeles Kings posted a statement of support as well.

"Our hearts are with the families of the Lady Flyers involved in the tragic accident in Colorado. We are in ongoing communication with team representatives and will continue working with them to support those affected."

The UCLA Ice Hockey organization also posted support for the Lady Flyers. The Flyers play at UCLA's "The Cube," which is an ice and entertainment center in Santa Clarita and the home arena of the UCLA men's hockey team.

"The Santa Clarita Flyers organization, who also play out of The Cube, are a staple of youth hockey in California. Many players on our team have either played for or against them growing up."

The Athletic LOADED: 02.01.2026

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The Athletic / Outdoor hockey in Tampa? How the NHL is making the Lightning's dream reality

By Joe Smith

Jan. 31, 2026 Updated 2:01 pm EST

TAMPA, Fla. — Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman said Sunday's outdoor game was "big motivation" for him to return from an elbow injury that has sidelined him since early December.

And judging from the fact that the Swede was at center ice leading Saturday's post-practice stretch at Raymond James Stadium, getting stick taps from teammates, it sure looks like he's playing against the Boston Bruins. Lightning coach Jon Cooper is expecting it.

"Barring him coming in saying, 'No,' which I think is extremely doubtful, he'll most likely be in tomorrow," Cooper said.

This would truly be a bucket-list moment for the Swede.

Hedman, who was drafted by the Lightning in 2009 and became a cornerstone as the then-depressed franchise won two Stanley Cups, shook his head Thursday at the idea that Tampa could host outdoor hockey.

"Never in my wildest dreams," he said with a smile.

Truth be told, the NHL didn't know if it was possible, either.

That's part of what makes Sunday's Stadium Series game at Raymond James Stadium so special. This is the 45th outdoor game in league history — and maybe the most ambitious.

"We've never done anything like this," said NHL president of content and events Steve Mayer.



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Part of it is the field design and pomp, with a treasure map surrounding the rink, a stick tap to the Gasparilla Pirate Festival that's expected to bring a half-million people into the downtown area over the weekend. There will be countless props, from barrels to boats to a shipwreck that has identifiers of both the Bruins and the Lightning. Players will walk a plank to get to the ice.

However, what really separates this event is the "engineering marvel," as commissioner Gary Bettman called it, that the league hopes will enable the teams to play on safe, NHL-caliber ice despite the Florida sunshine, temperatures and humidity.

An air-conditioned, tension-fabric building 34 feet high, 125 feet wide and 240 feet long has stood over the ice sheet for the past week. It'll be dismantled in a matter of hours on gameday for the 6:30 p.m. ET faceoff.

The forecast calls for an unseasonably frosty high in the 40s on Sunday, so the league changed its original plan of beginning to remove the structure at 6 a.m. Sunday, and will instead begin at 12 a.m.. It will be complete by 10 a.m.

"Gary Bettman, he's one hell of a commissioner," Cooper told The Athletic. "Anybody that can make it 40 degrees in Tampa on the night of an outdoor game, he's wielding some magic wand."

Jeff Vinik, who sold his ownership share of the team in 2024 but remains its governor, has been asking Bettman about getting an outdoor game in Tampa for as long as he can remember. He said it's taken about 15 years.

"It was pretty close to the day I bought the team," Vinik said, which would place his initial pitch in 2010.

Vinik got the NHL's attention by building the Lightning into a model franchise, winning the Stanley Cup twice and selling out Benchmark International Arena for 10 years straight. Filling the 65,000-seat football stadium was not a problem.

Actually pulling off a game like this was another story altogether.

Bettman said the Lightning were "relentless" in their pursuit of an outdoor game. That included the team/city putting up a billboard on the highway after the 2018 All-Star Game in Tampa so the NHL officials would see.

It was a photo of an outdoor game at Raymond James Stadium and a Stadium Series logo.

"Thank you, NHL!" it read. "Next time, let's go outside the box."

The Lightning have lobbied the NHL for an outdoor game for years. (Courtesy of the NHL)

By the time of the All-Star Game, the NHL wanted to try an outdoor game in Tampa. The Lightning were one of the best teams in the league that season, and would go on to win the President's Trophy the next season and then the Stanley Cup in 2020 and 2021. It also didn't go unnoticed that 25,000 Lightning fans traveled to the team's outdoor game in Nashville in 2022.

The city has pulled off Super Bowls, Final Fours — pretty much everything. Bettman said he felt the franchise "deserved" a Stadium Series game.

"The question was the logistics of actually doing it," he said.

How do you build an NHL-caliber rink in the heat and humidity, and protect it from rain?

"We felt the team could pull it off and the city could pull it off," Mayer said. "But could we execute it?"

The NHL made site visits to Tampa and engaged its architectural sports experts to try to figure out how to protect the ice. Dan Craig, who has long been in charge of building rinks for the league, did his research. The

league conducted tests at the Nashville outdoor game, stringing a cable the length of the rink between two forklifts to lift a plastic tarp over the rink. Figuring out how to secure it was a problem.

"The first gust of wind and boom, everything was gone," said NHL executive vice president of events Dean Matsuzaki. "We were like, 'OK, this isn't going to work.'"

One of the wilder ideas left on the cutting room floor would have had helicopters lifting a structure out of the stadium and into the parking lot. The league decided that wouldn't work and would be too dangerous.

It wasn't until a serendipitous moment during a layover that the NHL got its "eureka moment," as Mayer put it.

Ryan Hunter and Alex Lentowich were traveling together three years ago when they unknowingly got a big break.

The two co-owners of Texas-based GNB Global, a tension-fabric building manufacturer, were on their way to Winnipeg, near their shared hometown of Cooks Creek. A delayed flight from Nashville stranded them in Minneapolis overnight, forcing them to connect through Detroit the next morning to reach Toronto, then Winnipeg.

"A series of misfortunate events," Lentowich said.

At the Detroit airport, they saw several people wearing NHL backpacks. As huge hockey fans, they approached them, and after seeing a Stadium Series tag on one of the bags, started discussing outdoor games. One of the NHL reps was Derek King, the league's vice president of hockey operations, who manages ice conditions for major events. King mentioned the challenges they were having figuring out a solution for a Tampa outdoor game.

Hunter and Lentowich were intrigued and thought they could help. The league invited them to Carter Finley Stadium in Raleigh, N.C., for the next year's Stadium Series game to show them the setup and requirements. By the time they were flying back to Dallas, Hunter was already coming up with ideas and 3D models.

"Nothing is impossible, right?" Hunter said. "That's how it all started."

The idea was to build what looks like a gigantic tent but is actually a steel-framed structure covered in an engineered fabric membrane, inside which the climate can be controlled. Their real challenge was figuring out how to break down and remove it quickly and safely.

Once they came up with a plan, they conducted multiple test runs, the first in September in Texas. The company spent three days last week building the final version of the structure, which is divided into sections on rails so it can be assembled and taken apart without doing so over the rink itself.

"It was like a pit crew, you know?" Mayer said. "They've got everybody working together. They have it all down to a science in terms of dismantling and how quickly they can do it. If it took 10 hours, it took 10 hours. If it took seven, it took seven. We just needed to know for game day. Because once you start taking it down, there's no going back. It was pretty cool how it all came together."

A rendering from the NHL shows its vision for Sunday's Stadium Series game in Tampa. (Courtesy of the NHL)

The unfortunate part is that Vinik won't be there to see it.

After all the years of dreaming and campaigning and nudging the league for an outdoor game, Vinik suffered a major leg fracture during a snowmobiling accident on a trip to Norway with his kids. The team said in a statement Friday that he's expected to make a full recovery but won't be able to attend Sunday's game.

Vinik, in a recent conversation with The Athletic, talked about how much having this Stadium Series game means to him.



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"This just isn't a story about Tampa Bay or the National Hockey League or the sport of hockey," Vinik said. "This is a story about sports being able to pull something off like this, and it's going to be a spectacle. We're pleased to be able to share this with our fans. Our fans want an outdoor game every bit as much as the guy you're speaking with. It's going to be on Gasparilla weekend, too. It's going to be a place to be."

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The Athletic / From 'Olé Olé' to 'Yeet the Fish': The most memorable local traditions in NHL arenas

By Sean Gentile

Jan. 31, 2026 7:00 am EST

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.

There are reasons not to bother attending NHL games.

This is not breaking news. A big reason our arena rankings exist is to give fans a space to vent about elements of the experience that bother them — and vent you did.

The cost of getting in the building is, largely, obscene. Food prices aren't far off. Parking can stink, and transit can stink, and the music choices can stink. Maybe worst of all, some of the buildings feel as if they came off an assembly line. (Was there a more devastating burn in the rankings than the one comparing Pittsburgh's arena to a Home Depot? No. No, there was not.)

Despite the best efforts of bad actors, though, watching hockey in the company of 20,000 of your closest friends can still feel unbeatable — and parts of the in-arena experience are unmatched.

That brings us to our list — which is closer in line with an awards show, except one based on some guy's very unscientific opinion. If your own personal favorite went unmentioned, all apologies.

Best prop: Columbus' cannon

Usually, the cannon goes boom only after a Columbus Blue Jackets goal. But by the end of the 2015 All-Star Game in Nationwide Arena, when we heard that monstrosity go off 12 times after goals, some version of Stockholm Syndrome had set in for me in the press box.

Did I enjoy what I was being subjected to? No. Did I understand it, in some way? Absolutely. The best traditions should annoy outsiders. They should make you ask, "How is this allowed, and who is responsible for it?" They should have enough of a connection to the team's overall aesthetic that they wouldn't work as well anywhere else. And, even so, they should make you a little jealous that your team didn't think of it first. The cannon checks all those boxes. I hate it.

Honorable mention: The Tesla coils in Tampa

Best chant: "Olé Olé" in Montreal

I was lucky enough to experience the singing at a Canadiens game last spring, when fans at the Bell Centre experienced their first postseason games since 2017. Often imitated, never duplicated.

More generally, hockey writers love Montreal for a variety of reasons — some cliché, some not — and I figured out last season that I was immune to none of them. Example A: I kept a decibel-measuring app running on

my phone during games. Every arena experience, ultimately, is unique; none is unique in more ways than the Canadiens'.

Best postgame fan interaction: "Yeet the Fish" in Seattle

This is the newest tradition on the list. When a Kraken player is named the first star of the game, he chucks a replica salmon into the crowd. It's got local roots, thanks to fishmongers at Pike Place Market, and it's a fresh take on the more standard practice of throwing T-shirts or game-used sticks into the crowd.

Honorable mention: the Hurricanes' "Storm Surge"

Best anthem gimmick: Chicago

Fans standing and cheering the U.S. national anthem started during the 1985 playoffs at Chicago Stadium, continued through some putrid Blackhawks years at United Center and remains a mainstay during the Connor Bedard era. That longevity is enough to make it stand out in a league in which plenty of fan bases try to put their own spins on the anthem-singing process.

Honorable mention: Winnipeg fans shouting "True North"

Best goal song: "Puck Off" in Dallas

Every team, in one way or another, has a goal song. Very few have a goal song written specifically for them. Only one has a goal song written specifically for them by Pantera. "Puck Off" has been part of Stars game since 1999, and it is perfect in every way.

Best on-ice toss: Rats in South Florida

I love the city of Detroit, I love the octopus toss, and I pray for its eventual return to the NHL landscape. This isn't a history class, though. "There Will Be Blood" is not eligible for the 2026 Academy Awards. Until the Red Wings make the playoffs and fans start smuggling dead cephalopods into Little Caesars Arena, the rats are king.

Best usage of maximalism: Vegas

No modern list of the coolest in-arena experiences would be complete without including something about the pregame scene at T-Mobile Arena. Everybody has a gigantic video board, on-ice projections and ridiculous light shows, but nobody puts them together quite like the Golden Knights. This is another one that made me roll eyes until I actually experienced it.

Best local character: "Towel Man" in St. Louis

Since 1990, Ron Baechle has counted out goals, exhorted the rest of the crowd to do the same and chucked rally towels from his seat, currently on the 300 level of Enterprise Arena. This one is as grassroots as it gets; Baechle picked up the idea from an AHL game in Peoria, Ill., and brought it to St. Louis.

It took years, but folks started joining in — and in the decades since, Baechle has become a local celebrity, starring in commercials and legitimately becoming one of the faces of the Blues' fan base. Not the organization at large, though; he says he pays for his own tickets.

Best celebrity cameo: Tom Green and "Unleash the Fury" in D.C.

Every arena shows pump-up videos. Many of them consist of stitched-together clips from movies and TV shows — and while the Washington Capitals weren't the first team to incorporate a Tom Green bit from the movie "Road Trip," they certainly leaned in the hardest. It turned into a capital-T "Thing" during the 2008 postseason, and Green — the MTV legend himself — re-recorded the scene while wearing a Caps jersey.

Best puck-drop signal: "Let's Play Hockey!" in Minnesota

It'd be weird not to mention the Wild in some capacity. Grand Casino Arena was firmly in the top 10 of our overall rankings for a reason, and there's plenty to like about the vibes in St. Paul. We're making special note of their puck-drop tradition. Lots of arenas do something similar, but



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there's something particularly wholesome about shouting "Let's Play Hockey" in the State of Hockey™.

Honorable mention: The storm siren at Hurricanes games

The NHL Arena Rankings series is part of a partnership with StubHub. The Athletic maintains full editorial independence. Partners have no control over or input into the reporting or editing process and do not review stories before publication.

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The Athletic / Identifying the biggest need for all 32 teams ahead of 2026 NHL trade deadline

By The Athletic NHL Staff

Jan. 31, 2026 7:00 am EST

The NHL trade deadline is about five weeks away, and teams are in the midst of meetings to identify their needs and potential targets.

What will your favorite team be looking to add? A difference-maker? Just a bit of depth? Or some futures to replenish the prospect pool?

The Athletic asked its NHL staff this week what they think each team needs most. Here's what they said.

Anaheim Ducks

More consistent No. 2 goalie

There are glaring holes in the Ducks' forward group, but those will be filled when Leo Carlsson, Troy Terry and Mason McTavish return from injury and the lineup resets properly. They need to keep the better defensive mindset they've adopted. But the options aren't great if their star, Lukáš Dostál, goes down. Ville Husso has been hit and miss, while Petr Mrázek has been mostly a miss. — Eric Stephens

Boston Bruins

Right-shot defenseman

The Bruins went after Rasmus Andersson as a long-term investment. Andersson would have been a good fit with Charlie McAvoy and Henri Jokiharju on the right side. Andrew Peeke is in the last year of his contract. — Fluto Shinzawa

The Bruins are not in a position to make pure player rentals right now. They are looking toward tomorrow.

Buffalo Sabres

Defensive depth

The injuries to Michael Kesselring and Conor Timmins have tested Buffalo's defensive depth. Both of them should be fully healthy after the Olympic break, but injuries have forced the Sabres' top-four defensemen to play heavy minutes lately. Adding another depth defenseman capable of playing a physical style would help them in their push for the playoffs. — Matthew Fairburn

As much as the Sabres have been rolling lately, there are still some areas where the team could improve.

Calgary Flames

More picks, prospects and youngsters

In Blake Coleman and Nazem Kadri, the Flames have two enticing trade targets who could help contending teams win a championship this season. GM Craig Conroy is better off staying the course and accumulating picks, prospects and young players who can contribute to his lineup sooner rather than later. — Julian McKenzie

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Inside the Rasmus Andersson trade, and what's next for the Flames: Catching up with Craig Conroy

The Flames general manager explained the Andersson trade from his end and the organization's current thinking on other in-demand veterans.

Carolina Hurricanes

Forward upgrade

The Hurricanes are happy with their lineup — the team considers Logan Stankoven's move to center a success, and the team has found a way to balance its lines and get scoring up and down the lineup. Still, there's room for a boost up front. Whether that's getting an established second-line center to supplant Stankoven, a star winger to further bolster an offense that's top five in scoring or an addition to the fourth line, Carolina has the cap space and assets to improve. — Cory Lavalette

Chicago Blackhawks

Roster space

The Blackhawks have more prospects coming around the corner, and they need to free up current NHL roster space for those players. Anton Frondell, the No. 3 pick in the 2025 draft, could be with them as early as March. Sacha Boisvert, a 2024 first-round pick, could leave college after his season and join the Blackhawks for some NHL games. The Blackhawks also have some prospects in the AHL, most notably Sam Rinzler and Nick Lardis, who could be worthy of some more NHL games down the stretch, too. — Scott Powers

Colorado Avalanche

Third-line center

Jack Drury has been steady, but with only 18 points in 52 games, the Avalanche could certainly upgrade at 3C. Ross Colton has been injured and hasn't played nearly as well at center when he has been healthy, so that could be the position Colorado attacks most aggressively, similar to last deadline. I've mentioned Ryan O'Reilly before and still think he's a perfect fit, assuming Nashville will trade him now that it's climbed to within striking range of a wild-card spot. — Jesse Granger

Columbus Blue Jackets

Top-six winger

Mason Marchment, with eight goals in 11 games, has given the Blue Jackets a big boost since he was acquired from Seattle, but at no point this season have the Jackets' top-two lines clicked concurrently. The second line is the soft spot right now, where 23-year-old Kent Johnson is having a rough year and veterans Boone Jenner and Sean Monahan have been inconsistent. This club creates chances, but struggles to finish. A top-six winger — hello, Artemi Panarin — could disrupt things in a good way. — Aaron Portzline

Dallas Stars

Top-six forward

Artemi Panarin sure would look good alongside Wyatt Johnston and Mikko Rantanen. One more proven scorer could be the difference for a team that always seems to be a goal or two short in the Western Conference final. The question is, does Dallas have the assets to make such a move? Jim Nill has no first-rounder in 2026 and a thin prospect pool. A more reasonable add might be someone like Connor Murphy, as



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the Stars need a right-handed defenseman as much, if not more, than a potential Tyler Seguin replacement. — Mark Lazerus

Detroit Red Wings

Top-four defenseman

The Red Wings have pulled back on Axel Sandin-Pellikka's minutes, especially when protecting late leads, which speaks to the need to bring in a more proven (and ideally heavier) second-pair defenseman for the playoff push. The bottom half of Detroit's defense is largely lighter and relatively unproven against playoff pressure, and for a team looking to snap a nine-year playoff drought, a steady option who can take 18-20 minutes next to Ben Chiarot would add stability on the back end. — Max Bultman

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Red Wings trade targets: 13 players who fit Detroit's needs this deadline

The Red Wings need a top-four defenseman, and possibly a top-six forward as well. Who might be available?

Edmonton Oilers

Third-line forward with speed and size

Size and speed on the third line are the primary issues. Goal-scoring ability would be a major asset, especially if the acquisition has had success scoring in a depth role. Bobby McMann of the Maple Leafs has been mentioned as a target recently. His max skating speed is 99th percentile, according to NHL Edge. He has 17 goals already and is on an expiring contract at \$1.35 million. That's a value contract for a fast player who has size and can score. It's a perfect fit for Edmonton's needs. — Allan Mitchell

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Why the Edmonton Oilers must continue to pivot away from high-priced veterans

Here's what we might see from GM Stan Bowman and the Oilers at the deadline and into the summer.

Florida Panthers

Additional depth on defense

Seth Jones' injury has highlighted how vulnerable the Panthers could be on the back end with one absence, and with the aging Jeff Petry and inexperienced Uvis Balinskis pressed into too many minutes for a contending club. A home-run swing for the Panthers feels like a move that gives them options on the blue line with some term (Justin Faulk?), something that could also help them get into the playoffs in a very difficult Atlantic Division. — James Mirtle

Los Angeles Kings

Another scoring forward

Some think the Kings need to plan for the future rather than aim for the short-term view of sneaking into the playoffs. But that's unlikely to happen given their win-now focus and the importance of sending venerable star Anže Kopitar into retirement with postseason hockey. Multiple playoff spots in the West are within reach, and acquiring someone who can pump up their 28th-ranked offense through five-on-five play and on the power play without sacrificing their best prospects would help the cause. — Eric Stephens

Minnesota Wild

No. 1 center

For the 25th year in a row, the Wild are looking for a No. 1 center. However, this time feels different as Bill Guerin sizes up the market after

his Quinn Hughes blockbuster trade put Minnesota in all-in mode, likely heading into a first-round matchup with Dallas. Even if Guerin can't find that No. 1 center now, it will be his goal in the offseason. If he has to wait, look for him to at least go after Vincent Trocheck, Nazem Kadri, Ryan O'Reilly, Charlie Coyle or someone else who can help now. — Michael Russo

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Wild insider: From Trocheck to Stamkos, potential trade fits for Minnesota

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

Montreal Canadiens

High-compete, penalty-killing forward

The Canadiens' penalty kill has been bad for most of the season, and while they addressed it with the acquisition of Phillip Danault, it remains broken. It is one of the bigger weaknesses on the team. At five-on-five, the Canadiens could also use a bit more jam in their bottom six. They already have too many forwards and don't have the cap space to add salary right now, so any trade they do make would likely be a hockey trade. — Arpon Basu

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

Kent Hughes says Canadiens will be prudent around NHL trade deadline

Canadiens GM Kent Hughes is keeping a measured approach to how his team is performing this season, knowing the best is yet to come.

Nashville Predators

Center

The Preds are being carried by No. 1 center Ryan O'Reilly and have very little to offer after that. That doesn't mean GM Barry Trotz is going to make such an addition. On the contrary, the big question around the franchise is whether he's going to move O'Reilly for what would likely be a significant haul, or keep him and let this team fight to squeak into the playoffs. Any buy on Trotz's part would be malpractice. — Joe Rexrode

New Jersey Devils

Forward with offensive ability

The Devils are one of the lowest-scoring teams in the league this season, and they could use more offensive punch from their forwards. Tom Fitzgerald said he wants to add at forward, and the team now has some cap flexibility after dealing Ondřej Palát. This next stretch could determine how aggressive the team is. — Peter Baugh

New York Islanders

Non-rentals

The Islanders are in such an interesting position because they've exceeded expectations but are still retooling. So despite this season's success, it really doesn't make sense to go all in on rentals. Instead, the Islanders can take some swings on players with term such as Jordan Kyrou, or deal for a pending RFA who will stay under team control this summer. Those deals would help this team prep for a playoff run without veering too far off track from the overarching process. — Shayna Goldman

New York Rangers

Youth

As the Rangers embark on a self-proclaimed retool, team president Chris Drury has let it be known his focus is on "obtaining young players, draft picks and cap space." New York is actively working on an Artemi Panarin trade and listening on pretty much everyone else, with the goal of



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offloading veterans for younger alternatives and restocking a bare prospect cupboard. Skilled forwards with speed are priority No. 1, but this will be a multi-faceted process that targets every non-goalie position. — Vincent Z. Mercogliano

WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

New York Rangers trade targets: Which players could be on the retool radar?

With the retool official and the Rangers looking for trade partners, who might they get back? Let's break it down.

Ottawa Senators

Right-shot defenseman

If the Senators can continue to string together positive results ahead of the roster freeze next week, the pressure will be on GM Steve Staios to buy ahead of the trade deadline. If he does, don't be surprised if he leans toward a defenseman. Yes, Carter Yakemchuk waits in the wings. But the Senators need a surefire top-four defender who can be plugged into a second pairing (it would help if he could kill penalties, too). — Julian McKenzie

Philadelphia Flyers

Center

Even after signing Christian Dvorak to a five-year extension, the Flyers remain weak down the middle. Noah Cates hasn't been as effective since linemate Tyson Foerster's injury, Sean Couturier is in the midst of a dreadful goal-scoring drought, and journeyman Lane Pederson is currently the 4C. That said, it's unlikely the Flyers are going to be able to swing a deal for a high-end pivot before this year's deadline. That's the sort of transaction that's much more plausible in the offseason. — Kevin Kurz

Flyers trade tiers: Options are limited if the team becomes a seller

The team's recent downturn could make management more open to some sort of deal between now and March 6.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Blue-line depth

I doubt the Penguins make a huge splash at the deadline. In the summer? Yeah, I could see that. For now, they are technically rebuilding, but Kyle Dubas won't hesitate to add a piece to ensure the feel-good season concludes with a playoff berth. Their biggest need is a depth defenseman. They would appear to be pretty well set at forward and between the pipes at the moment. — Josh Yohe

San Jose Sharks

Right-handed defenseman

The Sharks don't have anything close to a true No. 1 on their blue line, and that is hard to get at any point in the year. But the defense has been capable by committee, improving as the season has gone on. They could still use another righty as an upgrade, ideally one that is a longer-term option. However, this is a feel-good season in San Jose, and unless they can pull off another targeted buy up front, as they did with Kiefer Sherwood, riding a quiet deadline to an unexpected playoff berth wouldn't be the worst thing. — Eric Stephens

Sherwood is in the final year of a two-year deal, with a modest cap hit of only \$1.5 million.

Seattle Kraken

Goal-scoring punch

The Kraken play a tough, disciplined defensive game, have reliably received solid-to-stellar goaltending this season and run relatively deep with solid two-way players, both up front and on the back end. The Kraken are a top-10 defensive team, but they rank 23rd in the NHL in goals for per game. That reflects, more than anything, a deficit of elite-level game-breaking talent that has dogged this franchise since its inception. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues

Unload players

With the Blues sitting near the bottom of the standings, they won't look to fill any needs heading into the deadline. In his final season as GM, Doug Armstrong will be looking to unload players. The Blues have five on The Athletic's trade board 5.0: No. 5 Robert Thomas, No. 21 Jordan Kyrrou, No. 23 Justin Faulk, No. 31 Jordan Binnington and No. 35 Brayden Schenn. Some potential trades might take until summer to transpire, but a few of them before the deadline would not be surprising. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning

Scoring winger

Between J.J. Moser's growth this year and Darren Raddysh's breakout, the Lightning's blue line is going to be a lot deeper when Victor Hedman returns from injury. So instead, management's focus should be up front. Tampa Bay could take a more low-key approach and look for a middle-six winger to bolster its scoring depth. Or, the Lightning could take a big swing for a right-handed shot who could help kick the power play up a notch, since the team's PP1 could use a better one-timer option from the left circle. — Shayna Goldman

Toronto Maple Leafs

An upgrade on defense

While the Maple Leafs still need an upgrade or two in their top six, the more pressing need is on defense. The Leafs are unlikely to have Chris Tanev back this season and are relying heavily on 34-year-old Oliver Ekman-Larsson in his absence. Jake McCabe has struggled increasingly without Tanev by his side, and it's been a bumpy defensive year for Morgan Rielly. Even a minor upgrade would help. The question now is whether the front office should still attempt to buy. — Jonas Siegel

Monday Morning Leafs Report: Is this season beyond salvaging?

The Leafs are five points out of the final wild-card spot in the East. There's still a chance, but is it worth pursuing for Brad Treliving?

Utah Mammoth

Top-nine forward with term

The Mammoth are in a strong position to make the playoffs, but buying aggressively probably doesn't make much sense because the Central is loaded with three bona fide Cup contenders. The prudent move is likely a quiet deadline or maybe a cheap depth upgrade. If they do go big-game hunting, it should only be for a forward (ideally a center) whose age and contract fit with this core long-term. — Harman Dayal

Vancouver Canucks

Additional draft capital

The NHL's 32nd-place team needs more draft picks, should probably be aggressively attempting to shed long-term salary-cap liabilities attached to veteran players in their late 20s and must use this deadline to begin to shape a credible plan to turn the franchise around. — Thomas Drance

Vegas Golden Knights

Middle-six forward



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Golden Knights already addressed the blue line by trading first- and second-round picks to Calgary for Rasmus Andersson, so any further additions would likely be up front. Vegas doesn't have a first-round pick until 2028, so it may be looking at a lower tier of depth forward, but if adding a center can allow Mitch Marner to return to the wing, it could be worth it. — Jesse Granger

Washington Capitals

Scoring winger

That was an easy question to answer thanks to GM Chris Patrick, who laid his cards on the table this month. The Caps will be connected to Artemi Panarin, as they should be, but Jordan Kyrrou is probably the ideal fit due to his age (27) and his contract (signed through 2031). They don't shy from high-talent, mini-reclamation projects, either — Pierre-Luc Dubois and Jakob Chychrun come to mind. — Sean Gentile

Winnipeg Jets

Draft picks

This isn't the Jets' season, which means it's time to sell off a couple of pieces to recoup draft picks after years of moving them out to acquire win-now help. Logan Stanley should be the most obvious trade chip, but Winnipeg should see if there's a market for its other pending UFAs (i.e., Luke Schenn, Gustav Nyquist, Tanner Pearson) as well. — Harman Dayal

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Sportsnet.ca / Jarry's rough stretch leaves Oilers with goaltending questions once again

Mark Spector

5–6 minutes

The dressing room, team confidence, a need for someone fresh in goal... They all added up to a pricey trade that — right from the start — seemed more a lateral move than a significant or obvious upgrade.

This morning, as Tristan Jarry stumbles towards the Olympic break, pulled on Saturday for the first time as an Oiler after allowing three questionable goals in a 7-3 loss to Minnesota, the Oilers would gladly take "lateral move" when folks are evaluating this goaltending transaction.

Thus far, it has not been anything close to lateral.

After a horrid performance against the Wild, however, Jarry more than hinted that his troubles were due to leaky team defence in front of him.

"It's tough," he began. "The chances we are giving up, some of the shots, they're tough. It's a lot of Grade A's, a lot of breakdowns. So I think it's tough (for him) to really think about your game at this point. It's a whole team game."

In the crucial second period around which this game turned, Edmonton outshot Minnesota 17-7 but was outscored 3-0. The high-danger chances in Period 2, according to Natural Stat Trick, were 5-4 for Edmonton, but we're not sure any of the three goals allowed by Jarry came on particularly dangerous chances.

Mats Zuccarello scored right off a draw, one-timing a puck that came to him when Mike Hartman won the faceoff. There was no screen,

Zuccarello was standing still as he shot it, and frankly, Jarry did not appear to be ready for the shot.

Then Jarry surrendered a goofy one by Quinn Hughes, whose shot hit a leg and deflected off the end boards right back to Hughes. The former Canuck stuffed the rebound underneath of Jarry, who once again was slow to react to what was not a Grade A chance.

Then Vladimir Tarasenko rifled one far side off the post and in off the rush — from not a great angle. We'll chalk that up to a premier NHL shooter scoring a premier NHL goal — those will happen.

"It's not terrible," head coach Kris Knoblauch said of the Tarasenko goal. "You'd like to have a save there, but it's not one that you're thinking, 'That was awful.'"

What a resounding review that was.

Skinner, in 12 starts as a Pittsburgh Penguin, has a save percentage of .895 and a goals-against average of 2.53. Jarry's time in Edmonton has produced an .873 save percentage and a 3.59 goals against.

And all those Stu Skinner haters in Edmonton? You could hear a collective "Gulp!" all the way to Fort MacMurray when Knoblauch went to his reliever Saturday, as Jarry posted his worst performance as an Oiler.

"We were just on the wrong side of it tonight. There's obviously a lot of goals that went in," Jarry said. "Everyone knows when we play the game that we want to put on the ice, that will put us on the better side of things. But to be on that side, we just have to tighten up and eliminate some of the chances.

"We want to play fast, we want to play up, we want to play in their end. When we're taking some of those chances, they come back at us, and it's tough. We just have to make sure we're managing the puck a little bit better."

Here are Jarry's save percentages in his last five games: .882, .739, .867, .902, and .750. Add them all up, and that's an .836 save percentage in his past five.

On Saturday, two good teams each gave roughly as good as they got. The only obvious difference in the game was in the crease, where Jesper Wallstedt stopped everything you would expect him to stop, plus a few more. Jarry made some exceptional saves — but allowed two pucks to get in that never should have.

That turned a 2-2 game at the first intermission into a 5-2 game after 40. The Wild aren't San Jose — there would be no three-goal, third-period comeback on this night.

"We could get another save," allowed Knoblauch, when asked about his goaltending. "The amount of chances (Edmonton gives up) isn't that many. The quality of the chances is something that's got to be addressed. It has to get better — more perimeter shots, less breakaways or two-on-ones, odd-man rushes, those kind of things that are leading to goals."

So, the debate becomes: maybe it's not the goalies at all. Perhaps a save percentage in the relatively high .800's is all any goalie could ever have behind the kind of defensive structure the Oilers sport prior to the trade deadline.

Edmonton sits ninth from the bottom in the NHL in goals allowed per game (3.25). It's never been their strong suit, and they've never had — if one even exists — a goalie who can bring their defensive stats in line with the type of playoff team they've been for about five years now.

Maybe they should trade for Wallstedt, whom the Oilers chose not to draft when he was sitting there in 2021.

Or start the Pickard kid...



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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OIL SPILLS — Leon Draisaitl's first-period goal was the 1,034th point of his career, which ties Mark Messier for fourth most points in franchise history. He missed a couple of shifts when he left the bench to have his right hand looked at after a collision, but returned to play a regular shift the rest of the game ... Evan Bouchard recorded his 60th point of the year, which is tied with Zach Werenski for the most by a defenceman this season.

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Sportsnet.ca / 'Weren't going to be denied': Maple Leafs empty tank to defeat Canucks

Luke Fox

5-6 minutes

VANCOUVER — Sure, it required a date with the league's 32nd-ranked team and 65 minutes plus a shootout, but the Toronto Maple Leafs' six-game losing streak has come to an end.

Mercifully.

"We're on a one-game winning streak, so we'll think about that," Max Domi said Saturday at Rogers Arena, where celebratory music once again blasts from the visitors' quarters.

What could well have shaped up to be a one-anthem shame — a clash between the NHL's worst team and its most disappointing — turned into a pretty fun night at the barn.

When it comes to rallying all the way into a playoff berth, the struggling Leafs may have better odds of dressing more Petterssons than the Canucks.

But considering the state of these organizations, both positioned to be trading by deadline, Toronto's annual 4 p.m. local in Vancouver was lively on and off the sheet.

The lottery-bound Canucks put forth an honest effort, the Leafs dug deep till the end of their 3-2 nailbiter, and every goal was rejoiced in by a crowd half-filled with Leafs supporters.

"It's different, for sure, in Canada," said Nicolas Roy, formerly of Vegas. "I feel like today, there was obviously a lot. In Winnipeg a couple weeks ago, there was a lot.

"Not all the teams have this luxury. So, it's fun to be part of it, for sure."

Fun isn't a word heard around the Maple Leafs' postgame availabilities much these days, and rediscovering that feeling required outshooting the Canucks 41-30 and goaltender Joseph Woll making a couple 10-bellers late.

Nothing comes easy, even the easy ones.

"It's a good feeling in there right now, after losing six in a row. It's tough," coach Craig Berube said. "But they worked their way out of it tonight, in my opinion. Like, they weren't gonna be denied."

Despite losing minute-munching Morgan Rielly mid-game to an upper-body injury (the defenceman will undergo further evaluation Sunday), Toronto tilted the ice something fierce in the third period, outshooting the home side 18-5.

Jake McCabe (27:40) and ex-Canuck Oliver Ekman-Larsson (28:10) picked up the load.

"We talked before going in there," Berube said. "Look, it's gotta be our best period of the year. It was pretty close. I mean, we had the puck the whole period. Couldn't find the back of the net."

And a steady bounce-back performance by Joseph Woll — including what he described as "a bit of a heart attack" instinctual toe stop on Conor Garland in OT — ended the goaltender's personal career-worst five-game skid.

"Glad I saved it," Woll said.

All the Leafs' smiles curled with relief.

"Yeah, we got it done," chuckled Craig Berube, forehead stitches now removed. "It took a bit."

A bit of time. A lot of effort.

"Emptied the tank tonight," Domi said.

No practice Sunday.

So, just how badly did the Maple Leafs need this win?

"Well," Matthews said, "I think I could've said that a couple games ago."

Fox's Fast Five

- Nylander says his groin injury never had him worried about missing the Olympics.

"That experience is going to be incredible," Nylander says. "Playing with Team Sweden and playing against the best players in the world at an Olympics is something that doesn't happen too often. And it'll be a first for me, so I'm going to be very excited for it."

Nylander, who tops all countrymen with 1.3 points per game, will be the face of Team Sweden.

"I'm fine with it, and I'm happy to be in that position for sure," he says. And there's only one shade of medal that'll suffice.

"Going there for the mindset to be happy with the silver or bronze, I mean, why are you going there?"

- With Nylander returning, Easton Cowan was healthy scratched.

The rookie hasn't scored in nine games. He's a dash-4 over that span, and Berube believes he was due a reset.

"He's lost a bit of his swagger, and that's a big part of his game. I'm not seeing that right now in his game. Maybe worried about making mistakes," Berube said.

As a London Knights alum, Cowan isn't used to losing. Berube believes losing skids like the one that smacked Toronto in January have a greater effect on young players.

- Saturday signalled the one-year anniversary of the J.T. Miller trade.

Since that headline-snatching deal, the Canucks have the NHL's worst record (33-44-10). The Rangers own the fifth-worst (37-42-9).

(P.S. Elias Pettersson did not register a shot Saturday. Either of them.)

- Toronto's win snuffs out a run of eight consecutive home victories by the Canucks over the Leafs.

- Berube did something he'd never done in his history of coaching. He called a timeout in overtime before Auston Matthews took his penalty shot.

Just so the man could catch his breath.

"He needed it," Berube said.

"He could sense I was pretty gassed," Matthews said. "I mean, I was out there for a couple minutes, and then that rush down took a lot of me."



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Matthews tried to end the game by going high glove on a backhand deke, but goalie Nikita Tolopilo got a piece.

The captain saw space glove side, though, so he went back to the well in the shootout.

"Luckily, I got that second opportunity," Matthews said. "I didn't want to make that mistake twice, so I just stuck to it again and found that opening there."

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens beat Sabres to ace character-testing week

Eric Engels

January 31, 2026 - 11:57PM

Cole Caufield had a pair of goals and an assist, Nick Suzuki added two assists and Juarj Slafkovsky scored a power play goal to help lead the Montreal Canadiens past the Buffalo Sabres 4-2.

The Montreal Canadiens went from heel to toe to notch the first six shots of Saturday's third period against the Buffalo Sabres.

Down a goal, chasing their closest divisional rivals in the standings, the Canadiens had their backs against the wall. It was put there by a punishing Sabres forecheck and then pinned there by their own lack of discipline towards the end of the second period.

The Canadiens took three penalties—interrupted only by one from the Sabres—and fell down 2-1.

But they pushed back with that flurry to start the third, with Cole Caufield's 31st goal of the season the eventual fruit of that momentum-swinging labour.

His neat tip from the high slot came in the fifth minute of the frame to tie the game, and his 32nd just over five minutes later, put the Canadiens in position to win it.

What they did over the final 9:47 of play to hold that position only further exemplified the character with which they undertook this week.

It started with Brendan Gallagher saying: "It's hard not to look at the upcoming games and see what you have."

That was after Monday's practice, as part of a media availability that forced him to relive the Canadiens blowing a third-period lead in a loss to the pursuing Boston Bruins last Saturday—a game that followed a 4-2 loss to the Sabres.

You can imagine Gallagher left the rink that day thinking about the Vegas Golden Knights, the Colorado Avalanche, the Sabres, and the Canadiens' loose hold on the first wild-card spot in a vice-tight playoff race.

Surely Gallagher wasn't alone in thinking his team's character was facing the ultimate test.

Three wins later, the Canadiens earned an A+.

After wiping the sweat away from a nail-biting overtime win over the Vegas Golden Knights Tuesday, the Canadiens pasted the league-leading Colorado Avalanche 7-3 to edge their way towards that grade.

But Saturday's resilient 4-2 win over the Sabres, which was stamped by Oliver Kapanen's empty-net goal, sealed it.

A third loss in a row in a span of 16 days to the Sabres would've sullied it, even considering how dominant Buffalo had been.

The Sabres' two wins earlier this week made it five in a row for them. They beat the Toronto Maple Leafs and Los Angeles Kings by a combined score of 11-5 to pad their ridiculous run as the highest-scoring team in the league since Dec. 9.

The Sabres came into Saturday's game with a league-leading 20-3-1 record since that date, and they were a perfect 17-0-0 when leading through two periods over that stretch.

Alex Lyon was looking to extend his franchise record with an 11th straight win, and Alex Tuch told reporters in Buffalo on Saturday morning that the Sabres would bleed to get it for him.

But it was the Canadiens who proved more desperate in the end.

It started with Jakub Dobes, who battled to make 10 of his 36 saves on the night after Caufield scored his second goal.

Between Caufield completing the play started by Kirby Dach and set up by Nick Suzuki and Kapanen's insurance marker, the Canadiens also fought hard, blocking seven shots, killing a penalty—and six-on-four and six-on-five advantages.

But they also pressed and had three quality scoring chances—suppressed only by Lyon—to make last Saturday's loss to the Bruins a distant memory.

The gutsy performance pushed the Canadiens back into third place in the division, placing them two points up on both the Sabres and Bruins. It got them to one point back of the Detroit Red Wings, who are in second, and to three back of the leading Lightning, who still have three games in-hand. It also capped a week that saw them prove what coach Martin St. Louis said about them after the win over the Avalanche.

"We're playing good hockey," he said, "and we've been able to correct ourselves."

St. Louis didn't like the Canadiens' forecheck in the first period of their last game against the Sabres, but it's been at the heart of every win since.

He didn't love his penalty kill against the Bruins, but it stepped up to kill eight of nine this week.

And while the coach didn't blame Samuel Montembeault for allowing two goals in 12 seconds in the third period of that loss to the Bruins, he knew what role Dobes played in the wins over the Golden Knights, Avalanche and Sabres.

"Dobes played an excellent game," St. Louis said during his post-game press conference at KeyBank Center.

He added that the guys in front of him were "a pain to play against."

The Canadiens matched the Sabres in that regard through the first, but it was really only after the Sabres put them in a difficult spot in the second that we once again saw their true colours.

They flashed them all week, and now they'll be challenged to keep doing so through the final two games before the Olympic break.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Ohgren, Lekkerimaki put chemistry on display vs. Maple Leafs



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Iain MacIntyre

6–8 minutes

VANCOUVER – It was like an upside-down playoff game, two teams battling desperately to win near the wrong end of the National Hockey League standings.

The Vancouver Canucks, at least as an organization, have the advantage of clarity. They are last in the league, traded away the best player in franchise history six weeks ago, and have pivoted irrevocably towards a rebuild.

Well below the playoff bar themselves, the Toronto Maple Leafs still have to decide what they are and where exactly they're trying to go. White-knuckling their way to a 3-2 shootout win here Saturday against the Canucks was hardly reassuring about their direction.

Look at the matchup this way: the Leafs' second-line centre was John Tavares, and the Canucks' second-line centre was David Kampf, the castoff who Toronto management decided wasn't good enough for their fourth line.

It took shootout goals by William Nylander and Auston Matthews to grind out a victory against this Vancouver team that has lost 15 of its last 17 games to buttress its top seeding for the draft lottery.

"It was a good hockey game, a good effort," Canucks coach Adam Foote summarized. "We played against a desperate team. It was a good game."

In the context of the darkest January in franchise history, the Canucks' game on Saturday was actually pretty great.

They played with structure and led after 40 minutes, didn't look too uncomfortable absorbing the Leafs' perimeter pressure in the third period, had chances to win in the wildy back-and-forth overtime, and lost because Matthews and Nylander beat Canuck goalie Nikita Tolopilo in the shootout while Elias Pettersson was stopped by Joseph Woll after Jake DeBrusk hit both Toronto posts with his one shot.

And given that this was another in a long string of rebuild games for the Canucks, the most impressive part for Vancouver was the contribution from prospects who will be key to whatever comes next for the franchise.

Rookie defenceman Tom Willander scored from Evander Kane's brilliant cross-ice pass on a rush, and Jonathan Lekkerimaki, the top forward prospect in the organization, sniped a world-class goal from friend and countryman Liam Ohgren's pass after a terrific keep-in by Canuck defenceman Pierre-Olivier Joseph.

Ohgren was acquired Dec. 12 from the Minnesota Wild in the Quinn Hughes trade, but he and Lekkerimaki have been waiting three years to play together again – since they were teammates for Djurgardens in Stockholm.

Ohgren, who turned 22 on Wednesday, and Lekkerimaki, 21, were so good as junior teammates in Sweden that the Canucks drafted Lekkerimaki 15th overall in 2022 while the Wild chose Ohgren 19th. Their centre at Djurgardens, Noah Ostlund, went 16th to the Buffalo Sabres.

"First of all, we're good friends outside (hockey)," Ohgren said after the game. "That helps a lot. We've known each other for a long time, played with each other a lot. And I think my playstyle and his playstyle fit pretty good together. I'm a hard worker and he plays with a lot of speed. I try to win puck battles for him to make plays and, like today, he uses his shot."

Playing just the third game of his third NHL stint this season, Lekkerimaki quickly loaded and released a snap shot from the high slot that beat Woll stick-side to open scoring at 1:55 of the second period. It was the first game Foote reunited Ohgren and Lekkerimaki, playing them beside veteran centre Teddy Blueger.

"Yeah, that has happened before, I can tell you that," Ohgren said of his scoring play with Lekkerimaki. "We had a lot of those combinations back in the day, so now it's fun getting one here in the NHL as well.

"It's nice to get that going again. I think we had some good shifts, and we got that goal, which was important. Obviously, it was super fun to play with him."

Mostly as linemates, Ohgren had 33 goals and 58 points in 30 games for Djurgardens' junior team in his draft year, while Lekkerimaki had 20 goals and 35 points in 26 games.

Before his recall this week, Lekkerimaki had 10 goals in 16 games in the American Hockey League, twice missing time with injuries. He is still in just his second season of North American Hockey, and Lekkerimaki's game on Saturday was only his 93rd at the NHL or AHL level. Ohgren has played 70 NHL games for Minnesota and Vancouver, and 53 in the AHL.

"I played a lot in the Abby," Lekkerimaki said of the Abbotsford Canucks farm team, "so I'm just trying to keep my confidence when I come up here and try to keep going. Obviously, (scoring) is good for my confidence. I thought we played solid, our line."

Lekkerimaki didn't play in the final nine minutes of the third period or in overtime. He made a coverage mistake on Nicolas Roy's goal for Toronto in the second period. Ohgren, however, had one shift late in the third period and two short twirls in overtime while finishing with 15:03 of ice time, his third-most as a Canuck. Lekkerimaki logged 12:06.

"It's more of the defensive side of it," Foote explained of his late deployments. "(Lekkerimaki's) getting there, for sure. The more time he's with us, the more he'll know certain things and the trust will be there. It's just being young; it's not even a mistake. He's a smart guy, he'll get that pretty quick."

Both Lekkerimaki and Ohgren think the skills and chemistry they developed in junior can translate to the NHL.

"Yeah, I think so," Lekkerimaki said. "I mean, our passing game is really good. We know where you are. So, yeah, I think we can build from this game and try to bring the same next game."

Ohgren said: "I think we will only get better and better, every game and every year that we spend together. I mean, we have already spent a lot of time together playing, so if we just keep going I think it can be even better."

ICE CHIPS – Tolopilo was down at his post too early on Max Domi's tying goal from the faceoff dot at 2:32 of the third period, but the Canuck callup made a lot of good saves and finished with 39 stops after getting a second straight start from Foote. . . Kampf had a solid game against his former team, finishing 15-6 on faceoffs. . . Before scoring in the shootout, Matthews and Nylander combined for 12 shots for Toronto. Pettersson, who had the second assist on Willander's goal, had no shots for Vancouver, and was destroyed 11-1 in the faceoff circle. . . The Canucks' final pre-Olympic games are Monday in Salt Lake City and Wednesday in Las Vegas.

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Sportsnet.ca / Frost's dominance shows Flames the danger of trading him

Eric Francis



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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5–6 minutes

CALGARY — There are games when Morgan Frost makes you believe again.

Games when the hands, the feet, the speed, the creativity all sync up and you suddenly remember why he went 27th overall.

Why he was once viewed as a core piece in Philadelphia.

Why coaches rave about his potential. Why GMs convince themselves he's just one stretch away from breaking out for good.

Saturday was one of those games.

In the Flames' 3-2 win over San Jose, a badly needed morale-booster after five-straight losses, Frost wasn't just noticeable. He was the best player on the ice. First star. Game-tilter.

The kind of centre you build around, not shop around.

A goal. An assist. Five shots on goal. Ten shot attempts. Two penalties drawn. A dangle around Mario Ferraro that drew gasps.

And, maybe most impressively, a 15-for-18 night in the faceoff circle, the very area he set a personal goal to improve this season.

"Today, that's the best I've seen him play since he's been with us," said Flames coach Ryan Huska.

"The faceoff circle. He had pace to his game. He was setting people up. He's scoring goals. If you get that version of Morgan Frost every day, I think you're pretty happy."

That version is why it's dangerous to even think about trading him.

But the other version — the one that disappears, the one that stops moving his feet — is why the Flames have to at least listen.

Frost is the kind of player who can drive a coach crazy.

When he's on, he looks like a second-line centre for the next decade. When he's off, he's pedestrian.

"Yeah, 100 per cent," said Huska when asked if the key to Frost's success is using his speed.

"He tries to play through people standing still. And when you play that way, you're an easy guy to play against. But when he's moving and he's got some grit to his game... he's a really good player."

That's the Frost paradox.

He can be elite. He can be invisible.

He can be a foundational piece. He can be a trade chip.

With the organization prioritizing its youth movement, no one is being pushed out the door, but no one is untouchable either.

A 26-year-old centre with upside is valuable, especially in an organization devoid of them.

A centre with inconsistency is movable.

Which version is he?

On Saturday, Frost didn't just score. He didn't just create. He didn't just flash.

He drove the game.

Playing between Matvei Gridin and Jonathan Huberdeau, it was Frost's slick setup that sprung Gridin for a game-tying tally the rookie called his first "real" NHL goal.

It was Frost's pace that forced the Sharks into mistakes. It was Frost's confidence that allowed him to try that outrageous move around Ferraro,

and prompted Huska to put him on the ice just to take the faceoff that led to Joel Farabee's game-winning shorthanded snipe.

"I think I was moving my feet," said Frost, who banged in a power-play goal late in the first to tie the game 1-1.

"It gets talked to me about every day, and I think I did a good job today. When I'm feeling confident, that's when I can start to be a little more creative and do some of the things that I know I can."

To Frost's credit, he's not delusional about his inconsistency.

"I was definitely going through a rough stretch there before," he said. "That's always been the thing with me, keeping it going for a long stretch of time."

He knows the book on him, and he knows the solution.

One area where Frost has made undeniable progress is the dot.

His goal entering the season was to get above 53 per cent - a lofty target for a guy who didn't crack 50 per cent until last year. Now he's 21st in the league at 55.6 per cent.

"That's something I can feed off," he said.

"There were a few times Husk threw me out there basically just for the faceoff... it can get you out on the ice more, and that's where you want to be."

A centre who can win draws, drive play, and create offence is valuable. A centre who can do all that at 26 is even more valuable.

Which brings us back to the dilemma.

Trade Him? Or Keep Him?

It's not like the Flames are actively shopping Frost. But they're listening. They have to.

For a team desperately in need of centres, trading a 26-year-old evolving middleman feels counterintuitive, but letting him walk for nothing in two years would be worse.

Saturday's performance, and the three goals in four games that came with it, is the kind of stretch that makes you want to keep him forever.

But the stretches before that? Those are the ones that make you wonder what his value might be on the market.

The Flames are going to find out.

If the Flames ever do move Morgan Frost, it won't be because of nights like Saturday.

It'll be because there aren't enough of them.

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1378160 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Quick Shifts: Maple Leafs must prove themselves worthy of Auston Matthews

Luke Fox

11–14 minutes

A quick mix of the things we gleaned from the week of hockey, serious and less so, and rolling four lines deep. Honey, I'm not broke. I'm just accruing cap space.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Citing multiple sources, Friedman reported that the groundwork for Auston Matthews' four-year extension, which was signed in August of 2023, was laid in the summer of 2022, two years before the superstar could potentially leave as a UFA and one year before he was eligible to extend.

Matthews informed the Maple Leafs he would re-sign, provided the team that drafted and built around him was still contending for a Stanley Cup. Relatively speaking, negotiations ran smoothly, and the future captain recommitted before training camp opened. As rich as his deal was, he could've milked Toronto for more.

That two-years-out mark with Matthews (UFA 2028) is coming around again this summer, and the underachieving Maple Leafs — currently 15th in the Eastern Conference — must gain similar clarity this off-season.

Do we need to worry?

No need to get alarmist here.

Matthews has never indicated a desire to jump ship; the Maple Leafs have never indicated a willingness to trade their centrepiece. In fact, GM Brad Treliving was asked point-blank in December if Matthews had asked out.

No.

Not while 34 is still in the city.

However, the 2026-27 season is shaping up as Matthews' "Quinn Hughes year," the year before his walk year, where wheels begin to turn and, in this age of player control, the team must prove worthy.

Like Hughes, Matthews has the individual accolades. He's seeking that elusive team success. Our sense is he'd prefer to win where he started this decade-long journey.

But what if Toronto's slide isn't a one-off? What if the Leafs don't get this train back on the rails, the way Vegas and Tampa did, missing the playoffs in cursed campaigns before rebounding to hoist their banners?

As in Vancouver at the outset of this season, the pressure to get off to a strong start will be high in Toronto come fall.

Matthews is far from alone in this regard.

It's no secret that his agent, Judd Moldaver, also represents Norris-conversation defenceman Zach Werenski and Connor McDavid. They've all been loyal to their original organizations; they're all desperate for team success.

They're all free to walk in 2028.

What's encouraging, though, is that Moldaver worked with the Leafs and Oilers on his leverage-wielding superstars' most recent deals. The sides knew where each other stood.

Worst-case scenario, we don't foresee a burning of the bridges if Plan A goes poof in smoke.

We also don't see any of those three eager to be part of a full-scale rebuild while they're still in their prime.

2. Treliving has made some fine individual moves. The signing of Oliver Ekman-Larsson pops to mind, as do the RFA extensions for Matthew Knies and Dennis Hildeby, which should age nicely.

But the last-minute 2025 deadline deal of centre prospect Fraser Minten plus a first- and fourth-rounder to a divisional rival in exchange for Brandon Carlo is aging like left-out camembert in the Sahara.

At 21 years old, Minten is on pace for 20 goals and 40 points. Bruins fans have fallen head over heels.

The 2026 first is top-five protected, so we don't know the total damage just yet.

But the Leafs are low on defensively responsible forwards, and it should be infuriating that the past regime (in the case of Zach Hyman) and the current one (Minten and Pontus Holmberg, who's doing fine in Tampa) failed to retain the ones they had.

3. Climate Pledge Arena was charging \$90 (U.S.) for event parking at Thursday's Leafs-Kraken game. That's steep when the entertainment is stingy, grinding, low-scoring hockey by a bubble team begging for star power.

Empty seats could be found.

As January ends, the Kraken still don't have a 40-point player. The team's top point-getters, Matty Beniers and Jordan Eberle, are tied for 94th-best in the league.

No wonder Seattle is making a pitch (along with everyone and their mother) for Artemi Panarin.

At least risk-averse Lane Lambert is coaching to the personnel at his disposal, overseeing a top-10 defence in terms of goals against.

"They've defended pretty well this year. Their goaltending has been really solid. And they've got some skill up and down their lineup. It's not all on one line. I think, you know, they're pretty deep with three lines," Toronto's Craig Berube said.

"Lane has got them playing good defence. That's what they're relying on — and their goaltending."

4. Quote of the Week.

"Scary for him." — Leon Draisaitl, on the idea of lining up against Canada's Connor McDavid at the Olympics

5. If you think Moritz Seider is playing a lot now (25:34), wait 'til Milan.

Of the seven German skaters in the NHL, the Red Wings dress the only defenceman. And he can't wait to feed Draisaitl passes as opposed to guarding him down low.

"But also, we gotta be honest with ourselves. We've got 20 other guys who can do the job, too. It shouldn't all be on his shoulders. Yes, he's our spotlight. He's our player and our go-to guy. But we cannot only rely on him. There are 20 other players. We all have to step up and share the load," Seider said.

Love that attitude.

Germany will be in tough against the U.S. in round-robin action, but beating Group C opponents Denmark and Latvia could well pave way to the knockout round.

Add Tim Stütze and JJ Peterka, and Germany has never dressed so many game-breakers.

"You got to limit those expectations a little bit," Seider said. "Yes, we'll have the best team ever. But so does everyone else."

"We do a lot of good work for a small hockey country as we are, but we'll be the underdog. And that's totally fine. We got to take it game by game and just embrace the challenge, and really try to soak in the whole spirit of the Games. And then everything's possible within one game. Hopefully get to a good start against Denmark and Latvia, and then you have a great challenge against the U.S., obviously a very fun team to watch."

"Then it's one playoff game at a time. So, in one game, everything's possible."

6. Seider gets a kick out of talking to newly minted U.S.-born scoring champ Patrick Kane about "the good old days." (Way to make a reporter feel old, Moritz.) But he's quick to add a caveat.



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"We try to create our own memories too, and hopefully we can tell a couple stories in a couple years with him and about him," Seider said. "We always listen to him in crunch situations. He's been through everything. He's kind of lived every situation this sport has to offer. So, he's always a very good person to listen to. And then, he's just a lot of fun too."

"He's a tremendous hockey player, but he's a great guy off the ice who really cares about each and every one in this locker room. I think that's why we're so happy to have him on the team. He isn't afraid to even throw his body on the line when it has to be. And that just shows a lot of character, too. If Kaner does it, everyone else should do it, too."

7. The Avalanche have a knack for finding impactful blueliners.

Chris McFarland got the jump on D-man Sam Malinski's contract year, preventing the late bloomer from hitting the open market with a life-changing four-year, \$19-million extension.

Malinski, 27, more than tripled his salary.

The right shot plays fast, which suits the team's style, and he couldn't have timed his career year better. He's a plus-27 asset despite starting half his shifts in the D-zone, and 24 of his 25 points have come at even strength.

Tidy business.

8. So much to love about this photograph of Colorado's all-time defencemen. But seeing Ray Bourque on his tiptoes is delightful.

9. Mathieu Darche's bet on character and clutch led him to take the long-shopped Ondrej Palat off the hands of the New Jersey Devils, a Metro rival.

The cap-crunched Tom Fitzgerald has been under the gun to clear the 34-year-old's \$6 million salary, so he accepted a reclamation project, Maxim Tsyplakov, and surrendered a third-rounder to do so.

Don't let them tell you players with no-move clauses can't be moved.

You just need the right dance partner.

Palat is a big winner here, as he gets a fresh start and an opportunity to skate on Islanders centre Bo Horvat's top line.

10. Macklin Celebrini is next-level impressive. A treat to watch. And he's dragging the San Jose Sharks into relevance the right way.

See this?

Celebrini is also not No. 1 on my (fluid) Hart Trophy ballot... yet.

When our forefathers invented hockey's MVP award, they deemed it should go to "the player most valuable to his team."

I don't believe the spirit here is to study the gap between the best and second-best player on each team and to punish the best for happening to also have good teammates.

Connor McDavid goes down a notch because he has Draisaitl in his room? Nathan MacKinnon gets docked because Cale Makar is awesome and Martin Necas is a threat?

That a teenage Celebrini (79 points) is 42 points ahead of the second-most-productive Shark (Will Smith, 37 points) is bonkers.

But McDavid, MacKinnon and Nikita Kucherov shouldn't be punished because the Sharks don't have a proper supporting cast this season.

11. As the Maple Leafs silently walked off the ice in Seattle, heads hung, Carlo's stride was hindered by a noticeable limp.

The big D-man is one of countless NHLers who should be served well by the Olympic break.

"It's definitely not going to be a bad thing to have a mental reset, by any means. It's lucky that the season will afford to have that time," Carlo says.

"For me, specifically, with the injuries and whatnot, there's been some battles to go through this season, mentally and physically. But right now, with our group, a mental reset would be a huge thing for us. And you got to be capable of doing that in-season regardless. We're trying to do that tonight, not wait (three) games to have that mental reset."

A big family-oriented guy, Carlo will fly home to spend time with loved ones in Colorado, then drop the kids off and zip to Mexico with his wife for some sunrises.

He says it's human nature for the mind to wander when a bye week or Christmas break looms.

"But the best recipe I found is just trying to stay present. Because if you're focused on that stuff, it can take you out of the present from the games and the task at hand that we need to be handling right now," Carlo continued.

"If I had any two cents on that, I'm just trying to stay as present as possible for these next games."

12. All the Buffalo Sabres do is win. Since Dec. 9, no hockey team has been better.

Dare we say, they look... for real.

"Top to bottom, everyone's doing their job, everyone's having fun out there," winger Josh Doan said between signing his extension and extending their latest win streak to five. "We're playing fast. Playing fast is something that's allowed us to have success."

Tage Thompson believes the Sabres' in-sync quickness wears down the opposition.

"Our identity as a team is our speed. When we're playing fast and moving the puck north is when we get a lot of our looks. The only thing that really gets us into trouble is managing the puck."

Run and gun and super fun, kinda like owner Terry Pegula's other team.

"They're really dynamic off the rush. That's one aspect of their game that they've kinda always had, and they've really expanded with that," said Toronto's Bobby McMann.

"They're a good offensive team. They play fast, and they can turn around quick on you if you're not smart with the puck."

Good on Western New York. Those sports fans deserve something to get excited about.

This response from Buffalo native Alex Tuch is run-through-a-wall stuff:

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Sportsnet.ca / How defence has propelled Lightning into a Cup contender once again

Adam Vingan

4-5 minutes

No one is talking about the Tampa Bay Lightning. Or at least it seems that way.



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The NHL's second-best team has somehow flown under the radar despite recently reeling off a 15-game point streak (14-0-1). The Lightning, however, will be in the spotlight Sunday when they host the Boston Bruins in the outdoors at Raymond James Stadium (Sportsnet, Sportsnet+, 6:30 p.m. ET / 3:30 p.m. PT).

As usual, Tampa Bay is an offensive powerhouse, led once again by the wizardly Nikita Kucherov, who finished January with an astounding 31 points in 13 games. Kucherov is now one of eight players in league history to record 30-plus points in a calendar month at least three times.

But the story of the Lightning's season has been their significant improvement on defence, which they have accomplished despite missing leaders Victor Hedman and Ryan McDonagh for long stretches. Hedman, who underwent elbow surgery in December, has missed all but 18 games this season, though he could return Sunday. McDonagh suited up Thursday after being sidelined for 33 of Tampa Bay's previous 36 games.

Even without Hedman and McDonagh, who have combined to play more than 2,100 NHL games, Tampa Bay is the league's No. 1 defensive team based on expected goals (shot quality) against per game. The Lightning have cut down on the number of shots on net they have allowed from the slot and tightened up defensively off the rush to a notable degree.

The absences of Hedman, McDonagh and fellow veteran Erik Cernak (19 missed games) forced Lightning coach Jon Cooper to lean on the pairing of J.J. Moser and Darren Raddysh. Moser entered this season with some experience playing big minutes, averaging 20:49 per game over two seasons with the Arizona Coyotes from 2022-24. But Raddysh averaged just 17:55 of ice time across his first four seasons in Tampa Bay.

Raddysh's ice time this season, however, has ballooned to 22:23 per game. He and Moser have been downright dominant during their minutes at five-on-five. The Lightning have outscored opponents 30-9 and generated 65.4 per cent of the expected goals in 526:48. Only two of the 230 other defence pairs that have played at least 100 minutes at five-on-five — Carolina's Jaccob Slavin and Jalen Chatfield, as well as the Hurricanes' Mike Reilly and Alexander Nikishin — have a higher XGF percentage.

"(Moser and Raddysh) have proven that they can play against (top competition)," Lightning assistant coach Rob Zettler told the Tampa Bay Times. "So instead of (McDonagh) or (Hedman) playing 24, 25 minutes (per game), they don't have to play those minutes. Now we feel good about bringing those minutes down, and now everybody's got energy."

Tampa Bay has also received contributions from 27-year-old defenceman Charles-Edouard D'Astous, who made his NHL debut this season. D'Astous' 81.4 per cent completion rate on outlet passes leads all 186 defencemen who have played at least 500 minutes, and his 10.2 per cent turnover rate is second behind only Minnesota's Quinn Hughes.

When the Lightning defence has a rare breakdown, Andrei Vasilevskiy has been there to clean up the mess. Vasilevskiy is in the midst of a 14-game unbeaten streak (13-0-1), tied for the second longest of his highly decorated career. He has allowed two goals or fewer in 11 of those starts, saving 16 goals above expected during his point streak.

For the season, Vasilevskiy ranks third in both total goals saved above expected (30.4) and quality-start rate (82.4 per cent). He has saved more goals than expected in 28 of his 34 starts.

"He's been the backbone for this team," Raddysh, who had 18 points in 13 January games, told reporters. "He does it all. ... Having him back there gives us a lot of confidence to be aggressive and try and play the way we want to play."

There will come a day when the Lightning are no longer considered perennial Stanley Cup contenders, but it does not appear to be coming this season.

"Our success stems from our commitment to being a really good defensive team," Lightning general manager Julien BriseBois told reporters earlier this month. "Going back to last season, I think our group has re-established itself as one of the top defensive teams in the league, and that's why we've had success, and that's why I have reason to believe we're going to continue to have success."

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