



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 4, 2026

NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Staal's late goal gives Hurricanes 4-3 win over Senators

By: Cory Lavalette

Hurricanes center Jordan Staal, second right, celebrates his winning goal with Jordan Martinook, right, Jaccob Slavin (74), Jalen Chatfield, second left, and Nikolaj Ehlers (27) during Carolina's 4-3 win Tuesday over Ottawa. (Karl DeBlaker / AP Photo)

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes won't play again at Lenovo Center for 23 days, but they gave their fans something to remember during the Olympic break.

Nikolaj Ehlers sprung Jordan Staal for a breakaway with just over five minutes left in regulation, and the Carolina captain scored his 14th goal of the season to lift the Hurricanes to a 4-3 win over the Senators on Tuesday.

"(Ehlers) made, obviously, a great pass, a quick up," Staal said. "I saw them changing and got a good angle, and I closed my eyes and she went in."

It was one of just two shots on goal in the final 16:25 of the game, and the other tied the score at 4:57 of the third.

With Hurricanes center Mark Jankowski in the box for high sticking, Ottawa defenseman Jake Sanderson one-timed a pass from Drake Batherson past a screen and in to make it 3-3.

The Hurricanes responded nearly 10 minutes later by pouncing on the one big even-strength opportunity of the third as Ehlers caught the Senators making a poor line change and got the puck up to Staal for the game-winner. The goal gave Staal his fourth goal in the last six games.

"I can't say enough about him," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

That's because on top of being Carolina's shutdown forward, Staal has emerged as a catalyst on the power play. Since Brind'Amour started using Staal as a faceoff specialist on the man advantage on Dec. 4, the Hurricanes are converting at a 28% clip, third best in the NHL. The team is now up to 13th in the NHL for the season at 22%.

"Big shot right now," said Sebastian Aho, who scored for the third straight game and had three points.

Staal's faceoff win on the power play in the second period led to the first of Seth Jarvis' two goals to give Carolina its first lead.

It took just six seconds. Staal won the faceoff, and Aho worked the puck back to Jarvis at the left point.

Jarvis returned the puck to Aho, who then gave it to Andrei Svechnikov at the bottom of the left circle. Jarvis slashed to the slot and quickly snapped a Svechnikov pass into the net for a 2-1 lead at 12:39 of the middle frame.

"He's been incredible," Jarvis said of Staal's contributions on the power play. "That's a big reason, I think, why our power play's doing as well as it has been. Starting with the puck and letting us run our plays and give us a chance to kind of score right away, which again we did tonight."

Aho, who scored in the first period to tie the game, got his third point of the night just over three minutes later by sending Jarvis flying down the wing. After Brandon Bussi (22 saves) made a key stop, Aho got the rebound and passed to Jarvis in stride just outside the Ottawa blue line. Jarvis held off Sanderson and flipped a shot past James Reimer (14 saves) for his 25th goal of the season at 15:41 to extend the lead to 3-1.

"Maybe I look fat out there or something — they think I'm a little slow," Jarvis joked of defenders underestimating his skating. "But the speed's still in there somewhere. It's nice when you get those opportunities when you kind of catch them flat-footed and kind of throw it back a little bit."

Ottawa cut the lead back to one 40 seconds later when, with Carolina forward William Carrier in the box for interference, Sanderson set up Tim Stutzle for a wide-angle one-timer for his 27th goal of the year.

Another ill-advised penalty, the Jankowski high stick, allowed the Senators to tie the game on the power play just under five minutes into the third period.

But there was only one more shot on goal in the game, and it came off Staal's stick and into the net.

"It was a tight game, and it just takes one little mistake, which we capitalize on," Staal said of his winning goal. "It was nice to get the win."

It extended the Hurricanes' point streak to nine games with one matchup remaining, Thursday at Madison Square Garden, before the long Olympic break.

"I think we're finding ways to win, which is good," Brind'Amour said. "You're not always going to dominate the game or whatever; you have to find ways. And tonight, that's kind of what happened."

Notes: The Hurricanes outhit Ottawa 27-20. ... Stutzle and Sanderson — headed to the Olympics for Germany and



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Canada, respectively — were both minus 3 for the Senators. ... Bussi improved to 22-3-1. ... Carolina allowed multiple power play goals for the fourth time this season. ... After winning a season-low 32.1% of the faceoffs in the earlier

meeting against Ottawa, the Hurricanes won half of the 66 draws Tuesday. ... Eric Robinson (upper-body injury) and Mike Reilly (healthy) did not play for Carolina.



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Staal's goal pushes Hurricanes past Senators 4-3 in final home game before Olympic break

By: Aaron Beard

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Jordan Staal scored the go-ahead goal with roughly five minutes left to help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Ottawa Senators 4-3 on Tuesday night.

The captain scored his 14th of the season after a neutral-zone turnover by the Senators, with Nikolaj Ehlers coming up with the puck and sending it ahead to Staal at the blue line. Staal skated in and fired from the left circle, banging the puck into the upper right corner of the goal at the 14:53 mark of the third period.

That finally put Carolina ahead for good on a night when it pushed to a 3-1 lead, only to have the Senators respond with a pair of power-play goals to tie it. Before those scores, Carolina had gone 14 for 14 on the penalty kill in its last six games.

Seth Jarvis scored twice in the second period for the Hurricanes, while Sebastian Aho struck for Carolina's first goal late in the first. Brandon Bussi had 22 saves for the Hurricanes, including a big one while diving to his left in to

deny Jake Sanderson with Ottawa going 6-on-5 late after pulling Reimer in an attempt to tie.

Sanderson blasted a one-timer to tie the game at 3 early in the third for the Senators, who got on the board less than 3 minutes in with Stephen Halliday's redirection from the edge of the crease. Tim Stutzle also scored on the power play late in the second, a critical goal coming less than a minute after Jarvis' second score pushed Carolina to a 3-1 lead.

Reimer finished with 14 saves.

The Hurricanes had won 10 of 14 and carried an eight-game point streak entering their final home game before the Olympic break. That included a 4-1 win at Ottawa on Jan. 24, though the Senators had won all four games since and outshot Carolina 25-18 in this one.

Up next

Senators: Ottawa visits Philadelphia on Thursday.

Hurricanes: Carolina visits the New York Rangers on Thursday.

2 Canes players to play for Denmark at Winter Olympics

By: Emily Brietz

Frederik Andersen and Nikolaj Ehlers will trade the Carolina sweater for a place on the roster for Team Denmark at the 2026 Milan Cortina Winter Olympics.

Two members of the Carolina Hurricanes share not only a professional home but a home country. Both are in play this winter when Frederik Andersen and Nikolaj Ehlers trade the Carolina sweater for a place on the roster for Team Denmark at the 2026 Milan Cortina Winter Olympics.

Men's Olympic hockey competition begins on Feb. 11, and two Carolina Hurricanes players will take the ice for Denmark. Goaltender Frederik Andersen and forward Nikolaj Ehlers will trade in their Hurricanes jerseys for a few weeks as they chase national glory on the world's biggest stage.

Andersen, who has been with the Hurricanes since 2021, has a career save percentage of .914 and has 315 career wins. At the 2024 Men's Final Olympic Ice Hockey Qualification, he led Team Denmark with a 3-0-0 record, stopping 60 of 64 shots.

"For the first time in my career, I get to play with a Dane in my everyday team, so that's been fun," Andersen said. "We're looking forward to sharing this experience together."

Since signing with the Hurricanes in early July 2025, Ehlers has recorded 14 goals and 27 assists in his 54 games and tops the all-time NHL list among Danish players in goals, points and assists. He brought this same energy to the 2025 World Championships, scoring three times in four games.

The pair is preparing to shift from their Hurricanes mindset to representing their country on the Olympic ice.

"I'm trying to think about our season here, which is the most important right now," Ehlers said. "Once we're done here and ready to go over to Milan, it's going to be all Team Denmark in my head."

Team Denmark will be making its second-ever Olympic appearance, after finishing seventh at the 2022 Beijing Games.

Ehlers said he's looking forward to watching other athletes compete and taking in the Olympic village. Most of all, he's



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proud to be representing his country, especially after the World Championships in May.

"We made it to the semi-finals as a small country and beat Canada 2-1 in the quarters," Ehlers said. "That experience and seeing the whole country behind you was something I'd never felt before, and it was the most special feeling ever."

Nikolaj Ehlers, center, and Sebastian Aho, left, teammates in Carolina will represent their home countries in the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Unfortunately, Ehlers and Andersen won't be able to represent Denmark at the opening ceremony, as the Hurricanes are scheduled to play the night before.

"It seems like it's a small thing, but to us it's a big thing because you want to be able to take everything in and experience everything," Ehlers said.

Although they're disappointed by the tight timeline, Andersen said they'll still try to make the most of every moment.

The duo will set off to Milan on Feb. 7, spend a few days training with Team Denmark, and be ready for their first match on Feb. 12. With limited time to practice together, Andersen said they held preliminary meetings over the summer to help prepare.

"The good thing about Denmark—a small country—is a lot of us know each other from playing against each other growing up or with each other at different World Championships or qualification for the Olympics," Andersen said.

Ehlers added that Team Denmark knows each other well on and off the ice, so he doesn't think the quick adjustment will be too difficult.

"We've been able to create something special within that team and that's something I'm excited to get back to," Ehlers said.

Team Denmark is scheduled to compete against Germany, the United States and Latvia at the Games.

Ehlers and Andersen won't be the only Hurricanes players on Olympic ice. Sebastian Aho will represent Finland, and Denmark plays against Jaccob Slavin and Team USA on Feb. 14.

Ehlers said he's looking forward to the challenge. Andersen said that whoever wins the Denmark–United States game will "get some bragging rights back at home."

Once the Olympics conclude on Feb. 22, the duo will jump right back into the NHL season, as the Hurricanes are slated to play again on Feb. 26.



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Recap: 'Opportunistic' Canes Outlast Senators

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, N.C. - Three points from Sebastian Aho, two goals from Seth Jarvis and a late-game dagger from Jordan Staal lifted the Carolina Hurricanes to a 4-3 victory over the Ottawa Senators at Lenovo Center on Tuesday.

A hot start for one of the league's hottest teams produced a quick lead for the Senators, but the Canes responded late in the frame as Aho's rebound bid ricocheted off an Ottawa body and past James Reimer. On the other side of the break, Jarvis then turned a tie game into a 3-1 Carolina lead, striking twice in a span of 3:02 with a pair of highlight-reel efforts.

After taking the lead, penalty trouble began to hurt the Hurricanes, and the Senators equalized with a power-play goal on either side of the second intermission. A stalemate ensued until 5:07 remained in the contest, when Nikolaj Ehlers forced a turnover during an Ottawa line change and sent Staal in alone with a perfect stretch pass. The Canes' captain made no mistake, ripping the game-winner past Reimer's glove on the breakaway.

As was the case throughout the affair, Brandon Bussi held down the fort for the remainder of regulation. Including a handful of huge saves in the waning moments, the first-year netminder posted 22 saves on 25 shots for his sixth straight victory between the pipes.

Forward Sebastian Aho scored for the third straight game to reach the 20-goal plateau for the 10th time in his career, surpassing Eric Staal (9) for the second-most 20-goal seasons in franchise history. Only Ron Francis (16) has more.

Aho also became one of just four Finnish players in NHL history to record 10 seasons of 20 or more goals, joining Teemu Selanne (17), Jari Kurri (13) and Aleksander Barkov (10).

Forward Seth Jarvis registered his team-leading fourth multi-goal game of the season. The 24-year-old paces Carolina with 25 goals on the year, which ranks fifth among NHLers age 24 and younger.

Forward Jordan Staal bagged his second game-winning goal and 14th total tally of the season, surpassing last year's total in 22 fewer games. Eight of those 14 have been go-ahead goals, a total bested only by Seth Jarvis (10) among Hurricanes skaters.

Goaltender Brandon Bussi turned aside 11 of 12 high-danger chances (per Natural Stat Trick), comprising half of his 22-save total.

They Said It...

Jordan Staal giving his assessment of the win...

"It was a grind. There was not a lot of room. They do a good job of staying on top of guys, not letting you break the puck out clean. They did a lot of forechecking. Our defense did a good job of continually breaking pucks out and getting them in their end. It was a tight game, and it just takes one little mistake, which we capitalized on. It was nice to get the win."

Rod Brind'Amour sharing his thoughts...

"That's not typically how that game goes for us. Give Ottawa a lot of credit. They were on their game, and it's kind of very similar to the one up there when we played them, to be honest. I like the word opportunistic. [We] cashed in on a couple of really nice plays, and obviously we had some big saves..."

Jordan Staal on yet another stellar night from Bussi...

"Not much more can be said about him. He's been so steady ever since he showed up here. He's steady, but also makes the big saves too in big moments. Tonight was no different. There were probably four or five that were huge... He's been unbelievable."

Rod Brind'Amour continuing on Brandon Bussi...

"All game, he made crucial saves at big times. The second period, especially. We started getting into a little bit of a track meet there. [We had] a couple of bad changes and all of a sudden, they had odd-man rushes and turned in four Grade A-chances in a 10-second span. It was just like boom, boom, boom, over and over us making a poor decision. But that's what we need. That's what he's done pretty much every start for us."

Sebastian Aho on the team finding a way to win another tight game, after winning in overtime on Sunday....

"We'll take wins any way we can, right? That's what we're trying to do here: win hockey games, get some points and get to the playoffs. As of late, we've done a pretty good job on that."

Seth Jarvis setting the tone for the team's final pre-Winter Olympic break game on Thursday in New York...



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"It's huge. You don't want to sit on a loss for three weeks. You don't want to sit on a bad game. Just coming in with the mindset of keeping this thing rolling, grinding one more out, and leaving it on the ice, and you've got three weeks to recoup."

Postgame Quotes: Jordan Staal

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes will not practice before flying to New York on Thursday. They'll compete in their final game before the Winter Olympics break on Thursday night against the Rangers.

Next Game: Thursday, Feb. 5 @ NY Rangers | 7:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)

Next Home Game: Thursday, Feb. 26 vs. Tampa Bay | 7:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



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Staal breaks tie late, Hurricanes edge Senators to push point streak to 9

By: Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Jordan Staal scored the go-ahead goal with 5:07 left in the third period, and the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Ottawa Senators 4-3 at Lenovo Center on Tuesday.

After an Ottawa turnover in the neutral zone, Staal took a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers, skated over the blue line and scored with a snap shot under the crossbar.

"It was a tight game, and it just takes one little mistake, which we capitalized on," Staal said. "[Ehlers] obviously made a great pass, a quick up. I saw them changing and I got a good angle. I closed my eyes and it went in."

Seth Jarvis scored two goals, Sebastian Aho had a goal and two assists, and Brandon Bussi made 22 saves for the Hurricanes (35-15-6), who extended their point streak to nine games (7-0-2).

"That's not typically how that game goes for us," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "You've got to give Ottawa a lot of credit, they were on their game. They were able to cash in on a couple real nice plays, and obviously we had some big saves."

Jake Sanderson had a goal and an assist, and Dylan Cozens had two assists for the Senators (27-22-7), whose four-game winning streak ended. James Reimer made 14 saves.

"I liked our game a lot tonight," Ottawa coach Travis Green said. "It's not very often you come into Carolina and you keep them under 20 shots. I think we outchanced them two to one tonight. Their goalie played well, and we just came up short."

Ottawa took a 1-0 lead at 2:46 of the first period. Stephen Halliday screened Bussi and scored on a net-front tip off Jordan Spence's one-timer from inside the blue line.

Aho tied it 1-1 at 17:49. Reimer stopped Aho's shot in close, but the rebound deflected off the left skate of Sanderson in the crease and into the net.

"We were able to get a win, so that's what matters," Aho said. "Solid game. Ottawa played well and so did we. Good win."

Jarvis gave Carolina a 2-1 lead with a power-play goal at 12:39 of the second period, scoring on a snap shot from the right circle off a pass from Andrei Svechnikov.

Jarvis then extended the lead to 3-1 at 15:41. He took a pass from Aho in the neutral zone and drove the net on his backhand before chipping the puck over Reimer's blocker on his forehand for his 25th goal of the season.

The goal came eight seconds after Bussi made a strong save on Drake Batherson, who cut to the right hash marks for a snap shot.

"He came up huge with plays like that," Jarvis said. "They're kind of all in on that rush, so to be able to flip it on them, score and take advantage is huge. You don't get a lot of rush opportunities in the NHL, so if you can capitalize, it's massive."

The Senators scored on the power play to cut the lead to 3-2 at 16:21 of the second. Tim Stutzle buried a one-timer five-hole from the right circle off a pass from Sanderson.

Ottawa tied it 3-3 with another power-play goal at 4:57 of the third period when Sanderson beat Bussi with a one-timer from above the circles.

"Hard-fought game. I thought we played really hard, and we had plenty of chances to win that game," Sanderson said. "Credit to their goalie, he played a really good game and stood on his head."

NOTES: Aho recorded his 10th straight 20-goal season, tying Ron Francis (10 from 1981-82 to 1990-91) for the longest run in Hurricanes/Hartford Whalers history. His 10 career 20-goal seasons also passed Jordan Staal (nine) for the second-most in franchise history behind Francis (16). ... With 14 goals in 53 games, Staal surpassed his total from last season (75 games). He has four goals in his past six games, including two game-winners.



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AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jordan Staal scores in the 3rd to push the Carolina Hurricanes past Ottawa Senators

By: Aaron Beard

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Reimer finished with 14 saves.

The Hurricanes had won 10 of 14 and carried an eight-game point streak entering their final home game before the Olympic break. That included a 4-1 win at Ottawa on Jan. 24, though the Senators had won all four games since and outshot Carolina 25-18 in this one.

Up next

Senators: Ottawa visits Philadelphia on Thursday.

Hurricanes: Carolina visits the New York Rangers on Thursday.



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NHL power ratings: Avalanche clinging to No. 1 by a thread as they enter Week 18 of 2025-26 season

By: Scott Erskine

For the first three months of the 2025-26 NHL season, the Colorado Avalanche were on a pace that logically was not sustainable. They've proven just that this month.

The Avalanche earned at least one point in 38 of their first 40 games this campaign, improving to 31-2-7 with a 5-3 triumph over the Carolina Hurricanes in their first game in January. They've gone 5-7-2 since, losing three of their four contests in Week 17 as their lead in the race for the President's Trophy has shrunk to five points.

Five of those nine defeats came at home, where Colorado went 17-0-2 prior to the 2026 calendar year. The club has one more game at Ball Arena -- and overall -- before the NHL begins its 19-day break for the 2026 Winter Olympics.

While the Avalanche had a week they'd like to forget, two teams had fantastic seven-day stretches and now are nipping at their heels. The Minnesota Wild and Dallas Stars both won all four of their games and enter Week 18 trailing Colorado in the league standings by only five and six points, respectively.

Several other clubs were perfect in Week 17, with the Columbus Blue Jackets, Seattle Kraken and Ottawa Senators all going 3-0-0 and the Tampa Bay Lightning winning both of their contests. Meanwhile, the Montreal Canadiens posted a 3-0-1 record, and the Hurricanes and Boston Bruins each went 2-0-1.

Only two squads had a worse time than Colorado last week, as the Florida Panthers suffered four regulation losses to drop out of the top 10 ratings and the New York Rangers were 0-3-0. The Vegas Golden Knights were the only other team that failed to get in the win column, but they earned two points by losing once in overtime and once in a shootout.

Each week during the season I'll rank the league's top 10 teams based on both the previous week's performances and overall body of work in 2025-26. I'll also give brief synopsis for each club that explains why they're ranked where they are.

Let's dive into the power ratings entering Week 18 of the 2025-26 NHL season and highlight a few of the teams' notable accomplishments.

NHL Week 18 power ratings

1. Colorado Avalanche (1-3-0 in Week 17; 36-9-9 overall)

The Avalanche began last week with back-to-back road losses against the Senators and Canadiens, giving them setbacks in six of eight contests (2-4-2). They bounced back with a 5-0 triumph over the Detroit Red Wings to break even on their four-game trek but wound up splitting the home-and-home

series as they were shut out themselves 2-0 at Ball Arena on Monday. Nathan MacKinnon recorded two goals and an assist in Colorado's lone victory but was kept off the scoresheet in each defeat and is four points behind Edmonton Oilers superstar Connor McDavid, who leads the NHL with 95. Two-time Norris Trophy winner Cale Makar had an even more uneventful week as he failed to record a point. The 27-year-old enters Week 18 with his longest drought since a four-gamer from Jan. 6-11, 2025. Along with Ross Colton, Parker Kelly also scored twice last week and has converted in every other contest over his last eight.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning (2-0-0; 35-14-4)

Tampa Bay kept rolling in Week 17, cruising past the Winnipeg Jets 4-1 at home before recording an historic 6-5 shootout victory over the Bruins at Raymond James Stadium on Sunday in this season's installment of the NHL Stadium Series. The Lightning overcame a four-goal deficit for the first time in franchise history in that contest as Boston was ahead 5-1 midway through the second period before imploding. It was the eighth consecutive home win for Tampa Bay, which has gone 17-1-1 over its last 19 overall games. Two-time defending Art Ross Trophy winner and three-time overall recipient Nikita Kucherov is riding an eight-game point streak and has landed on the scoresheet in 18 of his last 19 outings. The 32-year-old Russian right wing also is in the midst of a four-game multi-point run as he had a goal and an assist against Winnipeg before netting a tally and setting up three others versus Boston. Meanwhile, defenseman Darren Raddysh's career season continued as the 29-year-old racked up two goals and three assists last week. Raddysh, who enters Week 18 with a four-game goal-scoring streak, already has set personal bests this campaign with 16 tallies, 33 assists and 49 points.

3. Dallas Stars (4-0-0; 33-14-9)

The Stars began last week with a perfect three-game road trip before ending it with their fifth consecutive overall victory and sixth in seven games, a 4-3 overtime triumph over the Jets. Defenseman Thomas Harley was impressive as he scored with 1:07 remaining in the third period last Tuesday to give Dallas a 4-3 win against the Blues in St. Louis, converted a power-play opportunity in a 3-2 victory over the Utah Mammoth on Saturday and netted the overtime winner versus Winnipeg two days later. Matt Duchene tallied in each game during Dallas' trek, including twice at St. Louis, to extend his goal-scoring streak to four contests and notched a pair of assists against the Jets. Mikko Rantanen got on the scoresheet in all four Week 17 games, collecting a goal and four assists, captain Jamie Benn set up five tallies and Sam



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Steel and blue-liner Miro Heiskanen recorded four assists apiece.

4. Minnesota Wild (4-0-0; 33-14-10)

With their four victories in Week 17, the Wild have earned points in six straight games (5-0-1) and eight of their last nine (7-1-1). Three players contributed offensively in all four wins, with Matt Boldy scoring a goal and setting up four others, Joel Eriksson Ek registering three tallies and three assists and defenseman Quinn Hughes amassing a goal and six assists. Boldy is in the midst of a six-game point streak (two goals, six assists), Eriksson Ek has netted a tally in four of his last five outings and Hughes has set up 14 goals during his nine-game assist streak while also converting twice in that span. Kirill Kaprizov has scored four times over his last three contests and posted multi-point performances in seven of his past nine outings.

5. Carolina Hurricanes (2-0-1; 34-15-6)

Much like the Lightning, the Hurricanes have stormed to the top of the Eastern Conference are riding an eight-game point streak (6-0-2) and have gone 10-1-3 over the last 14 contests. They began last week with a 5-4 triumph over Mammoth -- scoring three times in the final 1:59 of the third period, with captain Jordan Staal netting the winning goal with 30 seconds remaining. Carolina then squandered a three-goal lead in a 4-3 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals and let a two-goal advantage slip away before edging the Los Angeles Kings 3-2 in OT. Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere collected three goals and three assists in Week 17, while Andrei Svechnikov had two of each. Sebastian Aho appears to have broken out of his slump as he ended his 12-game drought with a tally against the Capitals and converted 1:25 into overtime versus the Kings.

6. Buffalo Sabres (3-1-0; 32-18-5)

The Sabres just might be for real as they won three of their four games last week. Since their three-game losing streak in early December, they've gone 21-4-1 over their last 26 contests. Alex Lyon has won 11 of his last 12 decisions, setting the franchise record with 10 consecutive victories during the stretch, and defenseman Rasmus Dahlin has landed on the scoresheet in 11 of his last 12 outings. Dahlin matched a career high with five points in a 7-4 triumph over the Toronto Maple Leafs last Tuesday, registering his first NHL hat trick in the contest. Two days later, Alex Tuch recorded his fourth career hat trick as Buffalo defeated Los Angeles 4-1. The 29-year-old right wing hasn't gone back-to-back games without a point since Dec. 20-21, amassing 11 goals and eight assists over his last 20 outings.

7. Montreal Canadiens (3-0-1; 31-17-8)

Montreal was less than 13 minutes away from a perfect week as it defeated Vegas, Colorado and Buffalo before taking a 3-2 lead against Minnesota 12 seconds into the third period on Monday. However, the club allowed the tying goal with 12:55 remaining and fell 4-3 in overtime. Defenseman Noah Dobson got on the scoresheet in all four games for the Canadiens, notching a goal and four assists, while Nick Suzuki increased his team-leading point total to 65 with two tallies and four assists. The 26-year-old Suzuki has picked up at least one point in eight of his last nine outings and hasn't been blanked in consecutive contests since Nov. 11 and 13.

8. Detroit Red Wings (1-2-1; 33-18-6)

The Red Wings fell eight spots in the ratings due to their rough week. They scored a total of one goal in regulation losses to Los Angeles and Colorado, and they were fortunate to earn a point in their shootout defeat against Washington as they tallied twice in the final 1:40 of the third period. Alex DeBrincat was Detroit's top offensive producer in Week 17 as he netted three tallies and set up another. The 28-year-old right wing scored in the team's 2-0 triumph over the Avalanche on Monday to reach the 30-goal plateau for the second straight campaign and fifth time in his nine-season NHL career.

9. Boston Bruins (2-0-1; 32-20-4)

The Bruins enter Week 18 with a six-game point streak and have gone 12-2-3 over their last 17 contests. They squandered a two-goal lead before defeating the Nashville Predators 3-2 in overtime last Tuesday and cruised past the Philadelphia Flyers 6-3 but were unable to hold a four-goal advantage in Sunday's Stadium Series matchup against Tampa Bay and fell 6-5 in a shootout. Morgan Geekie collected five points (three goals, two assists) last week while defensemen Charlie McAvoy and Jonathan Aspirot both notched four assists. The 27-year-old Geekie is riding a seven-game point streak during which he has netted seven tallies and set up four others. Meanwhile, McAvoy has racked up a goal and eight assists during his six-game run.

10. Pittsburgh Penguins (2-1-0; 28-15-11)

Pittsburgh began last week with victories over the Chicago Blackhawks and New York Rangers -- scoring six goals in each triumph -- but dropped a 3-2 decision to the Senators on Monday, ending its six-game winning streak and nine-game point run (7-0-2). Captain Sidney Crosby has a quiet Week 17, recording just one assist, but Anthony Mantha scored three goals and set up two others. Connor Dewar and Noel Acciari each registered two goals and two assists, while Evgeni Malkin had an assist in each of the Penguins' three contests to extend his point streak to six games (three goals, five assists). A two-time Art Ross Trophy winner, the 39-year-old Malkin has landed on the scoresheet in 13 of his last 15 contests, collecting seven goals and 12 assists in that span.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Bussi Does it Again - Hurricanes 4, Senators 3

By: Bob Wage

The Carolina Hurricanes won a tight battle with the Ottawa Senators, 4-3 on Tuesday night at the Lenovo Center.

Goaltender, Brandon Bussi earned the win and continued with his magical season by improving his overall record this season to 22-3-1.

While Bussi allowed three goals on the 25 shots he faced, many of his saves were off "high-danger" chances. The goaltender has now won six games in a row and his record is 15-1-0 on home ice.

After falling behind 1-0 early in the first period, Sebastian Aho was credited with his 20th goal of the season when his shot bounced in the net after Seth Jarvis crashed the net. The puck hit a Senator, so Aho got the credit for the score.

Aho now has 10 straight years of 20 goal seasons.

In the second period, Jarvis got on the scoreboard twice within a three minute time frame.

First, he blasted in a one-timer off a nice pass by Andrei Svechnikov during a powerplay chance.

Shortly after, he took a pass from Aho and made a pretty move to beat goalie, James Reimer to give the Canes a 3-1 lead. It was the 25th goal of the season for Jarvis.

The Senators took control of the game for awhile, especially in the third period. They tied the score and were looking to take the lead back, but Jordan Staal had other ideas.

During what looked like a bad line change by Ottawa, the Captain had a couple of steps on the opposition and roofed a perfect shot past Reimer which would eventually be the game-winner.

Nikolaj Ehlers made a beautiful pass to spring him.

The Hurricanes now have earned points in nine straight games. They are 7-1-2 in their last 10 and have an eight point lead over second place Pittsburgh in the Metropolitan Division, (76-68).

Staal also led the team with six hits. William Carrier was next with five.

The Hurricanes have one more game before the Olympic break which will be in New York against the Rangers on Thursday night.



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The Hockey News

'We Were Able To Be Opportunistic': Rod Brind'Amour, Jordan Staal, Seth Jarvis, Sebastian Aho On Win Over Ottawa

By: Ryan Henkel

Staal's game-winner seals a hard-fought victory as Brind'Amour, Jarvis, and Aho dissect the Hurricanes' ninth straight point.

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Ottawa Senators 4-3 Monday night at Lenovo Center to extend their point streak to nine straight games.

Brandon Bussi made 24 saves, Seth Jarvis scored twice and Jordan Staal netted the game-winner with just over five minutes to go in the game.

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

Carolina Hurricanes win 4-3 over Ottawa Senators.

Rod Brind'Amour

On Jordan Staal: Can't say enough about him. Two of the goals directly involved him. Obviously on the power play and then that rush goal. That was a great shot. And then all the other stuff. He's done that for us forever and now adding a few goals here, he's putting a little more attention on his game, but really, nothing's changed.

On the game: It's not typically how a game goes for us. Gotta give Ottawa a lot of credit. They were on their game and it was kind of very similar to the one up there when we played them, to be honest. We were able to be opportunistic and cash in on a couple of really nice plays. Then we obviously had some big saves and that's another way to win as well.

On Brandon Bussi: All game, he made crucial saves at big times. Second period especially, we started getting into a little bit of a track meet there, a couple of bad changes and all of a sudden, odd-man rushes turn into four grade-As in one 10-second span. It was just like boom, boom, boom, boom, over, really, us making a poor decision, but then that's what you need. It's what he's done in pretty much every start for us.

On how he feels about the team's play over the current stretch: Well, we're playing a lot of teams that are... you can see the desperation level and the intensity with which they're playing. So games are really tough. Not that the other ones aren't, but there's another element to that. We're finding ways to win, which is good. You're not always going to dominate the game or whatever, you have to find ways and tonight is kind of what happened.

On one more game before the Olympic break: We've been kind of talking about it for a little while, really the whole month. We know we have a break, but can we stay focused and push through. And it's easier said than done. Everybody's making plans and there's a lot of distractions. But we have to be

professional here. We have business to do and we have one more game to focus in on.

On handling the pressure of being one of the top teams: Competitive pressure, whatever you want to call it, is always there for us. It's kind of internal. We have certain standards in the way we want to play and if you do that right, we should be in that conversation. That's where we need to be and where we want to be.

On Nikolaj Ehlers setting up the game-winner: It was hanging onto it in the neutral zone, buying a little time and then catching them with a great pass up the ice. We know that he's one of those players that has a little extra composure element to his game and obviously the skill level, but it's been a great addition.

On the benefit of the upcoming break: Every team pushes hard, but I think we've pushed really hard all year. We demand a lot and guys... it will be good to get refreshed, for sure. I think the whole league needs it, just with the way the schedule has been for every team and with everybody being beat up because of the Olympics, but I think it'll be a welcome break for our guys.

On the top line: That line for the most part has been pretty solid. They've had a few games where they weren't maybe as noticeable, but tonight obviously they made a couple of really nice plays. We need them on the scoresheet. At the end of the day, they play in all the key situations, so if they're not chipping in on a nightly basis or at least fairly nightly, then we're not in great shape. But they've done a nice job.

Jordan Staal

On the game: It was a grind. There wasn't a lot of room and they did a good job of staying on top of guys and not letting you break the puck out clean. They did a lot of forechecking and our D did a good job of continually breaking pucks out and getting out of our end. It was a tight game and it just takes one little mistake and we capitalized on it. It was nice to get the win.

On his game-winning goal: Fly obviously made a great pass, a quick up. I saw them changing and I got a good angle so I just closed my eyes and she went in.

On if he really didn't pick a spot: No. Just trying to get it in the net.

On Brandon Bussi: Just... yeah. Not much more can be said. He's been so steady ever since he showed up here. He's steady, but also makes some big saves too in big moments. Tonight was no different. I think there were probably four or five that were huge. Not much more can be said about him. He's been unbelievable.



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On approaching the Olympic break: We need one more big game here and that's all we're really focused on. Obviously you want to play well and stack points and continue to take advantage of games here, but we're focused in on the last game here and then we'll take a little breather.

On Seth Jarvis: He was due, I think. Last game he had about 20 chances. It was bound to go in for him. A great power play play there to kind of get him going and then obviously an unbelievable individual effort on the second one. He's so talented with that speed and his hands. He played a great game for us.

On the team's top line: They're just talented and good players. I think the way they think the game and their speed and the way they read off of each other, it just gives more and more chances for them and tonight they went it. It was good to see and hopefully they continue to do that.

Seth Jarvis

On the game: They still got their chances, but that's gonna happen in the NHL. I thought we did a good job of just, kind of when they were getting momentum, flipping it on them. Taking advantage of our opportunities. It was a big win for us.

On Jordan Staal: He's been incredible and a big reason, I think, why our power play is doing as well as it has been. Starting with the puck and letting us run our plays and giving us a chance to score right away, which we did tonight.

On if he feels defenders underestimate his speed off of the rush: I don't know, maybe I look fat out there or something and so they think I'm a little slow. The speed's still in there somewhere. It's nice when you get those opportunities. You kind of just catch them flatfooted and throw it back a little bit.

On Brandon Bussi: He came up huge. Plays like that [his save on Drake Batherson before his second goal], like they're kind of all-in on that rush, so to be able to flip it on them and score and take advantage is huge. You don't get a lot of rush opportunities in the NHL, so when you can capitalize, it's massive.

On the dramatic wins as of late: It just comes from the leadership in our room. I think being able to be in tough games. We went through a tough stretch early on where we were blowing leads and struggling a little bit, so to be able to grind these out and be comfortable in these tight games and trust our process and know that we'll get our chances to score has been huge.

On the Olympics: I think I blew that opportunity already. I think that parts done. I mean, you never know. I'm just trying to play the best hockey I can for the Hurricanes and whether that results in me somehow ending up in the Olympics, that'd be cool, but that's definitely not my focus. I'm focusing on the guys in here and the team in here and winning however we can.

On his line: Everyone's been contributing in different ways. The way Svechy plays with his strength and his power creates a lot of loose pucks for me and Fishy to kind of swoop in and then from there, everyone on our line is talented and we can take advantage and make plays. I think we can get a little bit

of open ice and take advantage of it and that's been huge for us, right now.

On the final game before the Olympic break: It's huge. I mean, you don't want to sit on a loss for three weeks or sit on a bad game. So just come in with the mindset of keeping this thing rolling, grinding one more out and then just leaving it all out on the ice because you got three weeks to recoup.

On his telephone celebration following his second goal: I wasn't calling anybody. I don't know what happened. I blacked out a little bit there. Svechy was mad that I blew right by him, so now I gotta make it up to him.

Sebastian Aho

On the game: It was good. Obviously we were able to get a win so that's what matters. Solid game. They played well and so did we. Good win.

On if it felt like a game they needed to win for Brandon Bussi: Yeah, I mean, sure. Our goalie has been really good the whole year. He gives us a chance to win a hockey game every night and that's all you can ask. Bus made some great saves tonight, but yeah, to me, I gotta try to do what I do and let the goalies do their part. I don't let that part affect my game, but yeah, they've been unbelievable all year.

On the final game before the break: One more left obviously. You want to finish on the right note obviously. I talked about it this morning a little bit. Just trying to keep my focus. Obviously a lot of exciting stuff coming up, but just have to take care of the business here first and then enjoy that part. Just trying to keep my focus and do my job.

On the dramatic finishes as of late: I don't know. We'll take the wins any way we can. Sometimes games go like that. Like I said, what we're trying to do here is win hockey games and get some points and get us to the playoffs. As of late, we've done a pretty good job, so let's keep it going.

On his line: I'm playing with two really good players obviously. I like when we skate. We can all skate, battle hard, score goals and make plays. We're just playing good hockey as a line and also trying to not give them too much. Obviously that's the mindset that we have here, not to give them anything and wait for your chances and trust your skill that it will take over eventually. It's been good.

On Jordan Staal: He does a lot of things for us. Of course you want to see everyone score and feel good about their games and obviously he's been scoring some big goals for us as of late, the whole year really. I don't think he really changes how he plays, whether he scores or not, but it's obviously great to see him on the scoresheet. He earns those goals.

On his feelings on soon representing his country in the Olympics: It's hard not to daydream about it. You get asked about it a lot right now and I'm going to go home now and pack and do all the stuff. Obviously you're thinking about that stuff and you're just so excited about it and you're like... I don't know. I don't even know how to describe it, but I'm trying not to think about it too much. Just take care of the business in New York and go from there.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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yahoo!sports

Bussi's Heroics Pull Hurricanes to Victory Against Senators

By: Rachel Barkley

The Carolina Hurricanes did a lot right offensively in their 4-3 win over the Ottawa Senators, but Brandon Bussi made it possible against a hungry team.

Tuesday, the Hurricanes squeezed out a win in their final home game before the Olympic break. Of course, it didn't come as easily as the standings would deceitfully insinuate. The Senators, who were on a four-game winning streak, dug in throughout the night, with a strong push once Jordan Staal left them trailing late in the third period.

It cannot be underestimated how 'on it' Staal has been this season. His go-ahead goal with just a hair over five minutes left was a thing of beauty: top-shelf in open ice, thanks to an elite stretch pass from Nikolaj Ehlers. Not only that, he led the team in hits, with six, and in faceoffs, winning 55.0% of them. His performance in the dot was a welcome sight as he returned to the excellence on the draw he's been known for after a short stretch of below (his) average faceoff numbers.

Of course, Staal was far from the only Hurricanes to shine in the win, as both Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis set the top line on fire. Aho scored the Hurricanes' first goal with a fine wrister courtesy of a pass from K'Andre Miller, while Seth Jarvis scored two goals – once on the power play and once five-on-five.

Meanwhile, the player who kept the Hurricanes hanging on was goaltender Brandon Bussi, who faced an insane 17 high-danger chances against; an extremely rare number to see. Out of the 25 shots faced, he made 22 saves. At one point, he even attempted a mid-air stacked pad save.

Just One More Until the 2026 Winter Olympics

Though a sigh of relief may escape following the win, the Hurricanes cannot get too relaxed before the Olympic break, as they will quickly turn around and face the New York Rangers on Thursday before the flight to Milan-Cortina from the same city.

"You get asked about it a lot right now," Sebastian Aho, who will play for Team Finland, said after the game. "You know, I'm gonna go home now and pack all the stuff. Obviously, you think about that stuff and whatever, it is just you know you're so excited about it, and you're, like, I don't even know how to describe it.

"But, I'm trying not to think about too much, just try to take care of the business in New York and go from there."

Hurricanes Notes

Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis both achieved milestones on the season, with Aho notching his ninth consecutive 20-goal season and Jarvis hitting his third consecutive 25-goal season.

Jacob Slavin, Sebastian Aho, Frederik Andersen, and Nikolaj Ehlers will all compete for their national teams during the Olympics, while Seth Jarvis is on Team Canada's reserve list.

The Hurricanes' next home game will be their first back from the Olympic break, versus the Tampa Bay Lightning on February 26th.

LINKS

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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SportScan

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

1378436 Carolina Hurricanes

After Canes' win over Senators, why Carolina's next home game could have new feel

Justin Pelletier9-11 minutes 04/02/2026

Seconds after the puck drifted across the goal line behind Ottawa goalie James Reimer — after Seth Jarvis removed himself from the dog pile at the top of the crease in which Reimer was also entangled — Carolina Hurricanes center Sebastian Aho and his teammates gathered briefly to celebrate Aho's 20th goal of the season, before skating single file toward the Canes' bench.

Each player on the ice tapped hands with each player on the bench, customary for many teams following a goal.

Aho's goal tied the Hurricanes' game against the Senators at Lenovo Center on Tuesday at a goal apiece. Two Seth Jarvis goals, a snipe from captain Jordan Staal and 27 saves from Brandon Bussi helped the Canes defeat the Senators, 4-3.

The Hurricanes play again on the road Thursday at the New York Rangers, but Tuesday's matchup was the last at Lenovo Center until Feb. 26, on the back side of 2026 Olympic Games.

And it's fair to wonder how many of those players with whom Aho tapped hands Tuesday will be on that same bench the next time the Finnish forward scores a goal in Raleigh.

Aho, of course, isn't going anywhere, except to Italy to represent Finland in the Olympics. And Jarvis, snubbed for a spot on Team Canada, will most certainly be back after whatever sojourn he decides to take over the next couple of weeks.

But others on the bench and on the Canes' full roster? It depends what general manager Eric Tulsky, owner Tom Dundon and head coach Rod Brind'Amour decide the team needs to make an all-in run at the Stanley Cup — again.

NHL trade deadline looms after Olympic break

The NHL's trade deadline this season — March 6 — feels like it's a bit later than normal due to the two-week Olympic break. By then, the Hurricanes will have played 61 games, with just 21 remaining in the regular season. There is also a roster freeze during the Olympic break, meaning teams cannot make player transactions during that time.

But with those constraints in mind, some teams have already started tweaking their rosters.

The first big moves came simultaneously in December, with Minnesota acquiring star defender Quinn Hughes from Vancouver, and Edmonton

swapping starting goalies with Pittsburgh. Since then, Vegas added defender Rasmus Andersson from the Calgary Flames, the Islanders added forward Ondrej Palat from the New Jersey Devils, and the San Jose Sharks acquire forward Kiefer Sherwood from the Vancouver Canucks

The Hurricanes have made a series of minor moves, shifting players most likely to play the remainder of this season in the American Hockey League or in the ECHL. But in almost every corner of the Internet, rumblings about the Hurricanes being "in on" other players — high-impact players — continue to surface.

Elias Pettersson of Vancouver. Artemi Panarin of the New York Rangers. Old friend Vincent Trochek, also of the Rangers. Robert Thomas of the St. Louis Blues. Jordan Binnington, also of the Blues.

Search any of those names — and a few others — with "Hurricanes," and a treasure trove of possibilities pops up. There is most definitely smoke. But is there fire?

Probably. Tulsky has said many times the Canes are always kicking the tires on possibilities, that it never hurts to answer the phone, or make a call. But the cost has often not matched the return, and in most cases, Carolina (or another team) has taken a pass on the possible deal.

The Canes did swing big and succeed a year ago, landing star forward Mikko Rantanen (and Taylor Hall, by the way) for an outgoing package that included Martin Necas and Jack Drury.

We know how that turned out — Hall is still here, Rantanen is not, and Logan Stankoven and K'Andre Miller have since arrived as fruits of that trade tree.

But the Canes took that swing. They've proven unafraid to do so in recent years.

What big trade could the Canes cook up?

Signs point to the Hurricanes again making a good-sized move before March 6. They have cap space. They have specific roster needs — a high-end center, stability in goal — and they have a stable of young, talented players and some good draft picks to deal. The Canes also have a glut of NHL-ready players on their roster and a few with Chicago in the AHL, should they need a roster player or two to complete a deal.

But deals of that nature don't come cheap. Fervent fans who expect to acquire a star player while shedding struggling assets are continually disappointed during deadline dealings like this. In 2025, it took a top-line forward and a solid grinder and special teams ace, along with draft picks, to take a chance on Rantanen. Dealing from a position of weakness on the negotiating front — when teams already know what you want and need — can drive prices higher.

But the Hurricanes will almost assuredly need to do something, whether external or internal, to keep pace with other teams who will almost assuredly also do something.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Hurricanes have played well in 2026. After Tuesday night's win over the Senators, the Canes are 11-3-3 since the acorn dropped in Raleigh.

Through 56 games, the Canes are 35-15-6 (76 points). They are in first place by a healthy margin in the Metropolitan Division. They are at least tied for first place in the Eastern Conference with Tampa Bay, and trail only the Western Conference-leading Colorado Avalanche (81 points) for the NHL lead.

Jarvis, who had a pair of goals Tuesday, is on a heater. Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho are, too. The "Kids and (the) Hall" line are constantly buzzing around and making things happen. Staal, Jordan Martinook and (insert player here) continue to make life difficult for opposing players, and of late, Nikolaj Ehlers alongside the Jordans has added more offense to that group's repertoire.

Bussi, with his win Tuesday, is 22-3-1 on the season, and Frederik Andersen has a chance to recharge and find his game as he and Ehlers represent Denmark at the Olympics.

The biggest pieces are there. Who all is along for the ride 30 days from now remains to be seen.

News Observer LOADED: 02.04.2026

1378437 Carolina Hurricanes

Staal's late goal gives Hurricanes 4-3 win over Senators

Cory Lavalette 5-6 minutes 04/02/2026

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes won't play again at Lenovo Center for 23 days, but they gave their fans something to remember during the Olympic break.

Nikolaj Ehlers sprung Jordan Staal for a breakaway with just over five minutes left in regulation, and the Carolina captain scored his 14th goal of the season to lift the Hurricanes to a 4-3 win over the Senators on Tuesday.

"(Ehlers) made, obviously, a great pass, a quick up," Staal said. "I saw them changing and got a good angle, and I closed my eyes and she went in."

It was one of just two shots on goal in the final 16:25 of the game, and the other tied the score at 4:57 of the third.

With Hurricanes center Mark Jankowski in the box for high sticking, Ottawa defenseman Jake Sanderson one-timed a pass from Drake Batherson past a screen and in to make it 3-3.

The Hurricanes responded nearly 10 minutes later by pouncing on the one big even-strength opportunity of the third as Ehlers caught the Senators making a poor line change and got the puck up to Staal for the game-winner. The goal gave Staal his fourth goal in the last six games.

"I can't say enough about him," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

That's because on top of being Carolina's shutdown forward, Staal has emerged as a catalyst on the power play. Since Brind'Amour started using Staal as a faceoff specialist on the man advantage on Dec. 4, the Hurricanes are converting at a 28% clip, third best in the NHL. The team is now up to 13th in the NHL for the season at 22%.

"Big shot right now," said Sebastian Aho, who scored for the third straight game and had three points.

Staal's faceoff win on the power play in the second period led to the first of Seth Jarvis' two goals to give Carolina its first lead.

It took just six seconds. Staal won the faceoff, and Aho worked the puck back to Jarvis at the left point.

Jarvis returned the puck to Aho, who then gave it to Andrei Svechnikov at the bottom of the left circle. Jarvis slashed to the slot and quickly snapped a Svechnikov pass into the net for a 2-1 lead at 12:39 of the middle frame.

"He's been incredible," Jarvis said of Staal's contributions on the power play. "That's a big reason, I think, why our power play's doing as well as it has been. Starting with the puck and letting us run our plays and give us a chance to kind of score right away, which again we did tonight."

Aho, who scored in the first period to tie the game, got his third point of the night just over three minutes later by sending Jarvis flying down the wing. After Brandon Bussi (22 saves) made a key stop, Aho got the rebound and passed to Jarvis in stride just outside the Ottawa blue line. Jarvis held off Sanderson and flipped a shot past James Reimer (14 saves) for his 25th goal of the season at 15:41 to extend the lead to 3-1.

"Maybe I look fat out there or something — they think I'm a little slow," Jarvis joked of defenders underestimating his skating. "But the speed's still in there somewhere. It's nice when you get those opportunities when you kind of catch them flat-footed and kind of throw it back a little bit."

Ottawa cut the lead back to one 40 seconds later when, with Carolina forward William Carrier in the box for interference, Sanderson set up Tim Stutzle for a wide-angle one-timer for his 27th goal of the year.

Another ill-advised penalty, the Jankowski high stick, allowed the Senators to tie the game on the power play just under five minutes into the third period.

But there was only one more shot on goal in the game, and it came off Staal's stick and into the net.

"It was a tight game, and it just takes one little mistake, which we capitalize on," Staal said of his winning goal. "It was nice to get the win."

It extended the Hurricanes' point streak to nine games with one matchup remaining, Thursday at Madison Square Garden, before the long Olympic break.

"I think we're finding ways to win, which is good," Brind'Amour said. "You're not always going to dominate the game or whatever; you have to find ways. And tonight, that's kind of what happened."

Notes: The Hurricanes outhit Ottawa 27-20. ... Stutzle and Sanderson — headed to the Olympics for Germany and Canada, respectively — were both minus 3 for the Senators. ... Bussi improved to 22-3-1. ... Carolina allowed multiple power play goals for the fourth time this season. ... After winning a season-low 32.1% of the faceoffs in the earlier meeting against Ottawa, the Hurricanes won half of the 66 draws Tuesday. ... Eric Robinson (upper-body injury) and Mike Reilly (healthy) did not play for Carolina.

The North State Journal LOADED: 02.04.2026

1378555 Websites

The Athletic / Utah bill would allow concealed firearms permit holders to bring guns to Jazz, Mammoth games

By Ngwa Numfor

Feb. 3, 2026 9:29 pm EST



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 4, 2026

A Utah lawmaker has introduced legislation that would allow concealed firearms permit holders to bring guns into publicly funded venues such as the Delta Center, where the Utah Jazz and Utah Mammoth play home games in Salt Lake City.

If the legislation became law, it would directly conflict with policies in place by the NBA and NHL.

House Bill 452, sponsored by Rep. Candice Pierucci, "prohibits a private entity that receives a certain amount of public funds from restricting a concealed carry permit holder from carrying a concealed firearm on property owned, leased, or operated by the entity in certain circumstances."

The bill would impact any private venue that has received more than \$1 million in public funding. Beyond the Delta Center, other events could also be affected, including home matches for Real Salt Lake of MLS, the Utah State Fair, and even some private hospitals that have received public funding.

"The bill is intended to encourage a thoughtful conversation about whether entities that receive state funding should have the authority to limit constitutional rights, and under what circumstances," Pierucci, a Republican representing Herriman, wrote in a message to The Athletic. "It aims to foster a constructive dialogue about balancing public safety, individual liberties, and the appropriate use of taxpayer dollars."

Pierucci said she is working on the bill on behalf of a constituent who was not allowed to bring their gun to games.

"This legislation was prompted by a constituent who sought to exercise their constitutional right to carry a concealed firearm while walking downtown to an event, only to find that right restricted at venues receiving significant state support."

The NBA explicitly prohibits firearms at all games. NHL arenas have policies prohibiting weapons of any kind.

When asked for a comment, a spokesperson for Smith Entertainment Group, which owns the Jazz and the Mammoth, said, "Smith Entertainment Group will review the proposed legislation to understand the bill and its potential implications."

Andrew Wittenberg, a spokesperson for Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall, told The Athletic, "City events are typically held on city property, where guns are already permitted as we are preempted from prohibiting them by state law."

The office of Salt Lake City Police Chief Brian Redd did not immediately return a request for comment.

In 2025, Utah enacted a law that allowed concealed carry permit holders to carry guns on the campuses of public universities.

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The Athletic / Sam Bennett to replace injured Anthony Cirelli on Team Canada roster

By Chris Johnston

Feb. 3, 2026 Updated 10:17 pm EST

Sam Bennett will replace the injured Anthony Cirelli on Team Canada's roster for the upcoming Milan Cortina Olympics.

The Florida Panthers center was one of the more surprising omissions from the original 25-man roster named in late December after helping Canada win the 4 Nations Face-Off tournament last year. He also won the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP in June after leading the Panthers to a second straight Stanley Cup.

Cirelli was forced to withdraw from the Olympic tournament after sustaining an upper-body injury while playing for the Tampa Bay Lightning in Sunday's Stadium Series outdoor game against the Boston Bruins.

Like Bennett, he's a two-time Cup winner who was part of the 4 Nations victory.

This is the first injury replacement for Team Canada, which opens the Olympic tournament against Czechia next Thursday.

Bennett is in the midst of his most productive NHL season — with 19 goals and 42 points through 55 games — but will be deployed in a bottom-six role for Canada. His best attributes are a competitive nature and a willingness to engage opponents physically.

That was on full display at the 4 Nations tournament, where he fought Brady Tkachuk as part of the memorable three fights in nine seconds Canada and the U.S. engaged in to open their preliminary round game. The Olympics are played under IIHF rules, which ban fighting. However, Bennett also scored the goal in the 4 Nations championship game that helped Canada force overtime.

With puck drop around the corner, The Athletic asked its hockey staff for their bold predictions for the Milan Cortina Olympics.

When he was left off the initial Olympic roster, Bennett said he was extremely disappointed that he didn't do more to prove to decision-makers that he could help them win an Olympic gold. He also expressed gratitude for his 4 Nations experience.

"That was probably the proudest moment of my career getting to put on that (Team Canada) jersey," he said. "I'm going to be forever grateful for that opportunity."

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The Athletic / Was the Bruins-Lightning Stadium Series the best NHL outdoor game ever?

By Sean McIndoe

Feb. 3, 2026 10:53 am EST

Good morning to everyone except whoever decided the Tampa Bay Lightning are apparently just going to have four games in hand over the Detroit Red Wings all season long.

We had 10 games last night, to go with a surprise GM change (kind of). But many of us are still buzzing over what we saw on Sunday night, so let's start there ...

Wanna Take This Outside?

🌳 Best outdoor game ever?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Here's a peek behind the curtain: When I was putting together this week's Weekend Rankings, I had a line in there about Sunday's outdoor game between the Bruins and Lightning. The joke was that none of us outside Tampa had even realized the game was happening, because at this point there's so many of these outdoor games that the novelty has completely worn off. So, I took a little dig at the whole thing and how all of these games just bleed together these days. Trust me, it was a funny bit.

Then the game happened. And I had to delete my little joke.

Yeah, that game ruled. It was in Florida, but it was 41.8 degrees at puck drop, but there were pirates, and also the Lightning coaches dressed up like bad guys from Miami Vice. The atmosphere at Raymond James Stadium worked. The crowd, including plenty of traveling Bruins fans, was lively. The visuals were cool. The uniforms looked great.

And then the game itself started, and everything got even better.

You've seen the highlights by now. Or at least, you've seen the highlight:

Yes, we had an outdoor goalie fight, the first in the NHL's 45 total outdoor games. We also had a four-goal comeback, an OT controversy and Nikita Kucherov flexing all over the ice to remind us who won the last two scoring titles.

And then it ended in a shootout, because nothing in life is allowed to be perfect.

Still, even two days later, it's hard to get your head around just how cool that game was. And at the risk of turning into the NHL's hype man, I really think it's fair to ask: Was this the best outdoor game ever?

🌟 The candidates

I feel like we've realistically got a 10-spot of contenders here. In no particular order:

Bruins vs. Lightning, 2026: It feels like only yesterday. But it was actually the day before yesterday.

Rangers vs. Flyers, 2012: Maybe the most dramatic ending to an outdoor game, with Henrik Lundqvist stopping Danny Briere on a penalty shot with 20 seconds left in a one-goal game at Philadelphia's Citizens Bank Park.

Canadiens vs. Oilers, 2003: The original Heritage Classic was the first regular-season outdoor game in NHL history, played at Commonwealth Stadium, which is used mostly for CFL games. Nobody was quite sure the concept could work, but once we saw Jose Theodore in his toque, we were sold. And the game itself was pretty good, a 4-3 Habs win.

Sabres vs. Penguins, 2008: The original Winter Classic is often incorrectly called the first outdoor game ever, but it was probably the first most American sports fans had ever seen. And it delivered with beautiful visuals at Buffalo's Ralph Wilson Stadium, including a light snowfall as Sidney Crosby tucked home the shootout winner.

The Lake Tahoe games, 2021 (pictured above): This is cheating a bit because the NHL pulled double duty, serving up a pair of games (Avs/Knights and Flyers/Bruins) on the same weekend. Also, the league was apparently caught off-guard by the fact that the sun sometimes comes out during the day. Still, venue is everything for outdoor games, and you could argue this was the best one ever.

Red Wings vs. Blackhawks, 2009: This was only the second Winter Classic, and more importantly it was the first outdoor game to be held at a baseball stadium. The Wrigley Field game looked fantastic, and the two teams combined for 10 goals in a fun one.

Rangers vs. Kings, 1991: Yes, 1991. In the Caesars Palace parking lot in Las Vegas, to be exact. Was it as weird as it sounds? Trust me, it was so much weirder than that. Was it too weird? Come on, there's no such thing.

A bunch of prisoners vs. Gordie Howe, 1954: OK, maybe a game can be too weird after all.

Ducks vs. Kings, 2014: I might be biased because I was there, but this game at Dodger Stadium was all sorts of fun. It was the first time the tradition-bound NHL steered hard in the other direction, with palm trees and beach volleyball. The game itself was just OK, but that's fine, because we got to see Gary Bettman getting assaulted by the guys from Kiss.

Red Wings vs. Maple Leafs, 2014: This was the Winter Classic at the Big House, and it saw roughly 105,000 fans from both sides of the border pack the place for a classic Norris Division matchup.

👉 I think we can probably narrow our final list of options down to a half-dozen. Now it's your turn: Vote for your pick for the NHL's best outdoor game on our survey page.

Trivia Time

As good as all those games were, you might note that we left out the one that provided arguably the most memorable outdoor moment ever: Corey Perry's walk of shame from the 2020 Winter Classic.

That was the game that saw Perry ejected just a few minutes in, followed by him having to make the long walk from the rink to the dressing room at the Cotton Bowl, spawning a million memes in the process.

But do you remember what Perry did to get ejected, and who he did it to?

Answer below.

Coast to Coast

❤️ Three junior hockey players from the Southern Alberta Mustangs were killed in a motor vehicle crash while traveling to practice yesterday. "There are no words that can adequately express the depth of our grief," the team said in a statement.

☐ Scared of heights? Look away. Julian McKenzie details what it's like to make the harrowing walk over the Saddledome's ceiling-high catwalk in Calgary.

🏆 Ready for the Olympics? On the men's side, Dom Luszczyzyn has a look at the history of five of the sport's superpowers, and how those storylines will come together in the next few weeks. Our staff also made plenty of bold predictions. And keep an eye on our Olympics page — we'll be previewing the women's side soon, as that tournament begins in just a couple of days.

🗡️ Aaron Portzline goes deep on the history of the Blue Jackets cannon, which is evil and should be banned beloved in Columbus.

🐱 Jesse Granger spoke to Andrei Vasilevskiy, and it turns out the whole "Big Cat" thing is not just a nickname. And speaking of goalies, Julian McKenzie has the inside story on Linus Ullmark's return to the lineup.

🐟 Other Sean might just get you off the couch with his list of the NHL's best in-arena traditions. Yeet the fish, indeed.

🗣️ On the Monday episode of "The Athletic Hockey Show," Max Bultman and Mark Lazerus decide whether teams such as the Panthers, Leafs, Jets and Caps are cooked or not. Listen here.

You Can't Fire Me, I Quit

What just happened? 🤔

Yesterday was a weird one in Nashville.

We had breaking news in the morning, with the insiders reporting Barry Trotz was stepping down as the Predators' GM. That was a stunner — while the 63-year-old Trotz hadn't exactly been racking up Jim Gregory votes based on his front-office work so far, he was such a local legend



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based on his 15 years as head coach that you figured he'd hold the job as long as he wanted. Mix in that GMs don't typically walk away from their jobs in the middle of the season, and it felt like something was up.

That led to some immediate speculation that Trotz could be battling health problems, which thankfully were shot down. The next thought was that he could be eyeing a return to coaching, but apparently that wasn't it, either.

Instead, we eventually got some clarity: Trotz is retiring, but not quite yet. He'll keep the GM's job until the Predators can find a replacement, and it doesn't sound like they're necessarily in much of a hurry to do that, with owner Bill Haslam indicating that a new hire might wait until the offseason.

All of this raises two obvious questions. The first: What does this do to the prediction contest, and the question about teams switching GMs? Nothing yet, because Trotz still has the job. But if he does leave before July 1, it will cost only 44 of you. I thought that would be higher. You all might be smarter than you look.

And the slightly bigger question: Who'll ultimately get the job? It can be tough to hire a GM in the middle of a season because teams typically wouldn't have access to any options from other organizations. Promoting from within is an option; it's what the Sabres did with Jarmo Kekäläinen in December, and that's worked out OK. But if the Predators were going to go that route, why not just announce the succession plan today?

It sure looks like the Predators may have their eye on somebody who's currently busy with a job somewhere else. And because we can all agree that it would be irresponsible to speculate beyond that, let's change the subject. Hey, anyone remember who the very first captain in Predators history was?

What to Watch

Senators @ Hurricanes

7 p.m. ET on ESPN+ / TSN5 / RDS

The Senators looked like they were cooked just a few weeks ago, but they've been giant-slayers lately, with impressive wins over the Golden Knights, Avalanche and Penguins. They get another shot at a contender tonight.

Sabres @ Lightning

7:30 p.m. ET on ESPN+ / Hulu

The two hottest teams in the Atlantic square off in what could be a first-round playoff preview. This is the first of four matchups between the two teams in the second half of the season, which should offer plenty of opportunity to get sick of each other before the postseason rolls around.

Maple Leafs @ Oilers

8:30 p.m. ET on ESPN+ / Sportsnet / TVA

An Auston Matthews versus Connor McDavid matchup right before the Olympics probably looked better on paper last summer than it does right now, with the Oilers spinning their wheels and the Leafs skidding into a ditch. Still, these Leafs-Oilers matchups are almost always fun, and the Edmonton crowd should be hot.

Full NHL schedule here. Try streaming games like these for free on Fubo.

Trivia Answer

Perry was ejected just 2:44 into the game for an elbow to the head of Nashville's Ryan Ellis.

The play was reviewed to confirm the ejection, and rightly so. It was a nasty hit, one that resulted in Ellis taking a walk of his own — to a medical cart that took him back to the room for further evaluation.

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The Athletic / Olympic hockey bold predictions: Jordan Binnington's excellence, USA's medal hopes and more

By The Athletic NHL Staff

Feb. 3, 2026 6:00 am EST

Jordan Binnington will prove once again to be the greatest goalie on Earth.

A debate is about to break out over who is the best women's player in the world.

Czechia will return to Olympic glory.

Those were among the responses The Athletic got this week when it asked its hockey staff for their bold predictions for the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics.

Here are some prognostications from writers, with puck drop around the corner.

Czechia plays for a medal in the men's tournament

Goaltending is the great equalizer in a single-elimination tournament. The goalie is the only player on the ice who can truly singlehandedly narrow the talent gap between countries. In Sochi, little-known Latvian goaltender Kristers Gudlevskis put quite a scare into Canada — now considered perhaps the best hockey team ever assembled — with a superhuman performance, making 55 saves. The game was tied 1-1 until late in the third period, when Shea Weber finally scored on a power play, allowing Canada to escape with a 2-1 victory in the quarterfinals. Lukáš Dostál is far more accomplished than Gudlevskis and is capable of stealing a game or two. He'll knock off one of the Big Four in the quarterfinal, which will put Czechia in one of the medal games. — Mark Lazerus

Czechia returns to glory in the men's tournament

Back in the old days, Czechia was one of the top hockey powers, headlined by a generational duo of Jaromir Jagr and Dominik Hasek. The Czechs have fallen from their gold medal heights in 1998, but appear to be a nation back on the rise. What this current version lacks in quality depth (just 11 NHL players), it makes up for in star power (David Pastrnak, Martin Necas) and potentially strong goaltending. It's the latter that gets Czechia back on the podium. — Dom Luszczyzyn

A debate for the world's best women's hockey player emerges

Marie-Philip Poulin is the current best player in women's hockey, cementing that status with every gold she wins (and gold-winning goal she scores) with Canada. But that debate could be opened if Kendall Coyne Schofield keeps up her 2025-26 PWHL dominance and Team USA grabs gold this time around. While Poulin has been the better player the past two seasons (league-leading plus-12.4 Net Rating to Coyne Schofield's plus-9.4), it's her American counterpart that holds the edge in 2025-26. Coyne Schofield's league-leading plus-5.1 Net Rating is backed by a PWHL-best 10 goals and 16 points in 15 games. That's closed the gap in overall PWHL value; a big-time Olympics with a gold medal around Coyne Schofield's neck could make it a real discussion. — Dom Luszczyzyn

Brianne Jenner runs it back



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Think fast, and don't look it up: Who was the MVP of the 2022 tournament? Was it Poulin, who's approaching GOAT status in the sport? Hilary Knight, hands-down the best American player of her generation? Sarah Fillier? Sarah Nurse? Buzzers all around. It was Brianne Jenner — a player who spent a too-large chunk of her career operating in Poulin's shadow and then, post-2022, struggled both in the PWHL and at World Championships. She's having a bounce-back season for the Ottawa Charge, though, and seems capable (once again) of forcing her way past higher-profile stars. She might not have another nine-goal tournament, but I'd bet on her being a force. — Sean Gentille

The American women lap the competition and don't lose a game

The only thing that could derail the United States is overconfidence or a bad goaltending outing at the worst possible time. The U.S. proved during the 2025 Rivalry Series that it is younger, faster and better balanced than its rivals from Canada, which will be its chief competition. In a four-game sweep of Canada between Cleveland, Buffalo and Edmonton, the U.S. outscored Canada by a whopping 17 goals. While the Americans said all the right things after their fourth consecutive win, such as Knight calling themselves "underdogs" and Laila Edwards pointing out that the Olympics is a far different "battlefield," it's just hard to imagine any country defeating the Americans, let alone them not taking home gold. — Michael Russo

Quinn Hughes leads all Olympians in ice time and defensemen in points

Well, the ice time part isn't exactly bold. Maybe not even the points part. But what many folks took for granted during the 4 Nations Face-Off when the United States came up one goal short to Canada in the championship is that the Americans played the tournament without the country's most electric offensive defenseman, the injured one-man breakout that is Quinn Hughes. Nobody in the NHL has the puck on his stick more than Hughes, and what he has done for the Minnesota Wild offensively since his Dec. 14 arrival has been nothing short of extraordinary. Hughes should pile up points for the U.S. in the Olympics and help create a daunting power play for opposing penalty kills to extinguish. — Michael Russo

Team USA's rising stars steal the spotlight in the women's tournament

In 2022, Fillier's breakout performance for Team Canada was the story of the tournament. And on the other side of the gold medal matchup, Team USA was criticized for over-sheltering its up-and-coming talent. There was no smooth "changing of the guard" transition; it was an over-reliance on veterans instead of a balance between Team USA's stalwarts and Olympic rookies. But it's not 2022 anymore; there is so much rising talent on Team USA this time around, and a coaching staff that is more than willing to deploy them. So while Knight will rightfully get a lot of attention in her final Olympic Tournament, the story will be the young guns making an impact. It's going to be the Abbey Murphy show up front, with Hannah Bilka earning a lot of recognition. And on the back end, with some Olympic experience under her belt (in a very limited role in 2022), Caroline Harvey is going to show that she is one of the most dynamic offensive defenders in the world. Edwards will become more of a household name, too, with her all-around game. It's finally going to be a new era at the Olympic level. — Shayna Goldman

Rasmus Dahlin is Sweden's MVP

Team Sweden is dealing with a lot of key injuries. Jonas Brodin and Leo Carlsson are out, and defensive snub Simon Edvinsson is now injured and can't replace them. While Gabriel Landeskog and Victor Hedman (who only just recently returned for Tampa Bay) are expected to be back for the tournament, the real question is whether they will be healthy enough to play or truly make an impact. This opens the door to another defenseman getting the chance to step up: Dahlin. He really hasn't had the chance to show what he can do in this type of setting, since he has never played at the Olympic level or in the NHL postseason. But considering how elite his all-around game has been on a Sabres team

that struggled through a lot of ups and downs over the years, Dahlin should be able to amp things up even more on a star-studded roster. That could be the key to Sweden going on a real run here, especially with a disruptor such as Czechia pushing for a medal this year. — Shayna Goldman

Sweden upsets to get on the women's podium

Most players and pundits predict a Finland versus Czechia bronze medal match. And it's a safe bet; that's how it's been at back-to-back women's world championships. However, Sweden is a fun dark horse team to watch with an exciting young roster, headlined by Ohio State freshman Hilda Svensson, who has 44 points in 26 games. The Swedish team has suffered in international competition due to the women's group format. So, the team would need to win Group B and upset either Finland or Czechia in the quarterfinals to make a real podium push. But these are supposed to be bold predictions, after all. — Hailey Salvian

U.S. men fight for bronze

If these are truly bold predictions, I'm going to say Team USA fails to make the Olympic gold medal game. They lost to Canada at 4 Nations and didn't really tweak the roster in a way that appeals to me. But mostly I'm thinking about how Team USA won only a single game in 1998 when NHL players debuted at the Olympics. Almost 30 years later, as a Canadian, it's funny to think about history repeating itself as NHL players make their return to the Olympic stage. I'll be realistic and assume they at least make the bronze medal game this time around. — Hailey Salvian

Jordan Binnington, the greatest goalie on Earth

"Goaltending is voodoo" is a very trite phrase. It is a very annoying phrase. It is also a very accurate phrase, and it may as well have been coined with Binnington in mind. The worse Binnington looks for the Blues — and as I write this, he has literally saved fewer goals than expected than any goaltender in the league, with a save percentage that's one of the league's worst — the better I believe he'll play in Milan. That's simply how it works. In 2014, Carey Price allowed three goals in five games. Put Binnington down for two. And if he stinks? You're welcome, America. — Sean Gentille

Switzerland wins the bronze medal

There is legitimate star power on Team Switzerland with Roman Josi, Nico Hischier, Timo Meier, Kevin Fiala and others. But more importantly, there is team cohesion. Most of the players on this year's team were also on the team that reached the 2024 IIHF men's worlds final before losing to Czechia (a country that will also benefit from that experience). There is a shared experience of success there that could transfer to this tournament. Also, Switzerland's non-NHL depth all play in the highly competitive Swiss NL. They are good players who might be unfamiliar to NHL fans but will play depth roles effectively. The big question is goaltending and whether the trio of Josi, J.J. Moser and Jonas Siegenthaler can carry the load on the back end. But in the grander scheme of Swiss hockey, there is a "Last Dance" feel to this team as some of their NHL stars begin to age with not much in the way of young talent coming through the pipeline. The world championship silver in 2024 was a big moment for Swiss hockey. This might be their last chance for a while to do something ever bigger. And a bronze at these best-on-best Olympics would definitely be much bigger. — Arpon Basu

One of the biggest stories of the Olympics will be one we don't find out about until later

All the lobbying that will go on between players in advance of this year's trade deadline and free agency. NHL teams aren't allowed to tamper, and while we can quibble about how strongly that rule is actually enforced, we know GMs can't call up players who are under contract to another team and beg them to jump ship. But that rule doesn't apply to players themselves, who'll want to have conversations with the temporary teammates they're spending all that time with. If that conversation



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happened to turn to how much fun it is to play for a certain team or in a certain market, well, that's just some friendly banter, right? Sure ... until a player from your favorite team comes back from Italy and suddenly seems to have his eye on a new home. Will any players receive any salesmanship talking points before they head over? Will any teams complain about their players being targeted? Would the league want to open a can of worms by doing anything about it? It would be interesting to find out. — Sean McIndoe

The Canada-USA rivalry sees more bad blood on the women's side than on the men's

Some of that is based on history — the women's rivalry has been hockey's best for the last decade or so. Some of it is familiarity, with the recent Rivalry Series still lingering. And some of it will be international experience. Remember, last year's epic 4 Nations battle essentially came under NHL rules, while the Olympics is a different deal. The men will have to be careful to adjust, while the women already know the drill. Add it all up, and while we won't see three fights in nine seconds, don't be shocked if we see more scrums, trash talk and general nastiness from the women. — Sean McIndoe

Matt Boldy is Team USA's best offensive game breaker

Team USA is stacked with an elite blue line and strong goaltending. The big question for them, though, is whether they have enough elite offensive game breakers up front to outgun Canada, especially because they controversially left Jason Robertson and Cole Caufield at home. Jack Eichel is a two-way superstar, but he may not dominate offensively because of how daunting his defensive matchups could be, particularly if he's matched against Connor McDavid or Nathan MacKinnon in any potential games against Canada. The Tkachuk brothers were a force at 4 Nations, but Matthew is coming off an injury and Brady has played well but isn't filling the net offensively this season (14 goals in 34 games). Perhaps Auston Matthews, who has turned a corner since Christmas, becomes Team USA's best offensive weapon, but I'm going to predict Boldy is the one who steps up. Boldy was really noticeable at 4 Nations, and he's taken another step this season, on pace for 46 goals. Most importantly, I think Boldy's combination of size, athleticism and high-end skill will translate well offensively in what will likely be a tight-checking tournament where space is hard to find. And since his defensive duties on the wing won't be as demanding as Eichel's and Matthews', there's extra reason to believe he can emerge as America's best pure offensive game breaker at forward. — Harman Dayal

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The Athletic / A history of hockey's international superpowers and their paths to gold in 2026

By Dom Luszczyszyn

Feb. 3, 2026 Updated 1:51 pm EST

At long last, after a 12-year hiatus, true best-on-best hockey is back with the NHL's return to the Olympics. To look forward, though, we first have to look back.

With the NHL's Olympic return, one storyline has emerged for each of the Big Six hockey nations attending (Canada, United States, Sweden, Finland, Czechia) based on their historical strength at past best-on-best tournaments. Using a timeline of each country's strength relative to the field and a comparison to the strength of past Olympic entries, the goal is

to add context to each nation's current place in the Big Six hierarchy — and where they might be trending. Russia, obviously, will not be part of this exercise, but we'll have more on them later in the week.

Each country's historical strength is based on its expected win percentage using true talent estimates of each NHL player's Net Ratings in the year of each event (methodology for pre-2008 data is at the bottom). That starts with the 1996 World Cup of Hockey and culminates with this year's Olympic rosters for each team. For the sake of the exercise, the 2016 World Cup was excluded due to the existence of Team North America, and hypothetical rosters for the 2018 and 2022 Olympics were included to account for the gap between tournaments.

Here's how strong each nation has looked on paper over the last 30 years based on the NHL talent on its roster.

With that in mind, here are five questions regarding the current state of each participating hockey nation.

Can Canada maintain its steady presence at the top?

It should come as no surprise to see Canada's presence at the top of the best-on-best timeline above. For the past 30 years, Canada has been the best hockey nation in the world at every single tournament played (and not played, in the case of the 2018 and 2022 Olympics). Whether they won it all (2002, 2004, 2010, 2014, 2025) or lost (1996, 1998, 2006) doesn't change the fact that every single time, Canada was the team to beat. The results only cement that status or dictate the disappointment that, for Canada, it's always been gold or bust.

Over the past four years, though, the landscape has shifted. While Canada's roster is as good as it's ever been, the rise of Team USA has created a two-headed monster at the top. The reason for that: the USA has caught up to Canada's depth advantage.

From 1998 to 2022, the top of Canada's lineup (top six forwards and top three defensemen) was 30 goals better than the USA's on average. That fact still holds true this year with a 28-goal edge. The bottom of the lineup, though, held an even larger edge, being 33 goals better on average from 1998 to 2018. In 2022, though, that would've slipped to 14. This year, it's a four-goal advantage for Team USA instead.

Looking at the roster comparison from the chart above, it's clear why. Canada loves role players when it comes to depth and while it's obviously worked in the past, that may not be the case in a world where they have an equal.

Finding the right role players can be a valid approach, but this year, the Canadian brass arguably did a little too much in that regard. Anthony Cirelli and a trio of "safe" defensemen — Colton Parayko, Drew Doughty, Travis Sanheim — are the biggest culprits, falling below the usual trend of players in their role. I'll give Brayden Point and Brad Marchand a pass, but it would've been nice to get one more difference-making forward on the team and one more elite offensive defenseman to maintain a gap in talent with Team USA.

It's that decision-making at the margins that's made things a little too close for comfort. That was fine when Canada was the team to beat, but it'll be something to watch now that the USA has caught up.

If the Canadians have a saving grace, it's the trio of Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar being better than any other top-three option Canada has ever brought to an Olympics. That alone may be enough.

Can the U.S. capitalize on its next 'golden' era?

The Americans entered their first golden era in 1996, winning the first World Cup of Hockey. When it came to Olympic hockey, though, they failed to seize the moment in both 1998 and 2002. The next "golden" era of USA hockey is here, but it's not actually golden until they win gold. Will this generation finally get it done?



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That's the big question facing this year's group, one that is likely the best American team ever assembled. Yes, there were weird snubs, but the sheer depth of American talent even allowing that to happen is the real story.

The 2026 team left off Adam Fox because they already had Quinn Hughes and Zach Werenski. The 2010 team willingly took Brooks Orpik, Tim Gleason and Jack Johnson because they didn't have many other choices — and won silver! The 2026 team brought J.T. Miller and Vincent Trocheck, but neither of those guys hurt as much as having someone like Joel Otto or Ryan Callahan.

Those tough decisions at the margins are ones Team USA didn't really have to make at past Olympics and that's perhaps the strongest indicator of the rapidly closing gap. In every year since 2010, the Americans have slowly crept closer to their North American rival, inching to this current point: co-favorites at this year's tournament. While it would've also been evident in 2022, this will be the first Olympics where Canada and the USA are truly neck-and-neck.

That's because every part of this team is better than past versions. Excluding the 2018 and 2022 teams that never were, Team USA usually has two skaters above a plus-15 Net Rating. This year, they have seven: Auston Matthews, Jack Eichel, Jack Hughes, Matthew Tkachuk, Jake Guentzel, Quinn Hughes and Zach Werenski. That's more high-end talent than they had at the 1996 World Cup, where they had five such players. This roster is loaded.

On top of that, the Americans usually have five forwards and one defenseman above plus-10. This year they have 12 (!) and three respectively. Every single lineup slot has been improved by at least two goals and 4.7 on average. The goaltending, which has rarely been a problem, is also at its best ever too.

Star power, depth, goaltending, offense, defense — you name it, Team USA has it. None of that will matter, though, if the Americans don't make it count. This is their best chance at a different outcome.

Can Sweden thrive without a superstar?

Peter Forsberg. Mats Sundin. Daniel Alfredsson. Markus Naslund. Henrik Zetterberg. The Sedins. Nicklas Backstrom. Nicklas Lidstrom. Sweden's Olympic history is lined with superstar talent; this year's version falls well short.

Of the top Swedish players by projected Net Rating since 1998 (including would-be teams from 2018 and 2022), Sweden's current best player, Rasmus Dahlin, would rank 25th. Their best forward, Lucas Raymond at plus-11.1, would rank 34th and slot in as the fourth option on the average Swedish team.

With veterans like Victor Hedman falling off over the last four years, a lack of high-end talent relative to Canada and the USA is, without question, the biggest hurdle facing Sweden at this year's Olympics. Sweden's top four forwards and top defenseman usually combine for 70 goals of value. The 2026 roster sits at 55.

Sweden more than makes up for that deficit with its increased depth across the board. Every other skater slots higher than the average Swedish team from the past. But in a short tournament, game-breakers matter and Sweden's lack of superstars looks like it could be a problem.

The Olympics may be the perfect environment for a player to rise to the occasion. This could be Raymond and Dahlin's moment, and unfortunately, we won't get to see Leo Carlsson get a chance to prove the same. Until they prove their superstar bona fides, though, Sweden enters the Olympics unusually unproven at the top of the lineup.

Can Finland make the most of its newfound star power?

Finland has a well-earned reputation at best-on-best tournaments as scrappy underdogs that almost always punch above their weight. Despite

usually having less on-paper talent than the rest of the Big Six, the Finns join Canada as the only nation to reach the podium in four of five Olympics with NHL players.

That's important given the strength of the current generation. The 2026 roster is the best on-paper team Finland has ever sent to the Olympics — and that's without Aleksander Barkov. If the Finns can keep up their usual ethos of being more than the sum of their parts, that's a potentially dangerous mix with a team that's now significantly more talented.

That shows with improved depth across the board, but is more obviously felt by the quality and quantity of star players Finland now has at its disposal. Between 1998 and 2014, Finland had four players combined with a projected Net Rating over plus-10: Teemu Selanne in 1998 and 2006, Olli Jokinen in 2006 and Mikko Koivu in 2010. This year's roster has four on its own and would've had five with Barkov.

Team Finland missed a massive opportunity in 2022 at the height of their star players' powers with the NHL not attending. Whether the Finns can make the most of this one will depend on whether their star power can lift the usual underdog spirit to new heights.

Can Czechia get back to its winning formula?

There was a time when Czechia was a dominant hockey superpower. Winning gold in 1998 and bronze in 2006 was no fluke; the Czechs were right there in terms of roster quality with the best-of-the-best.

The key to that was two-fold: a collection of elite forwards and exceptional goaltending, led by two of the greatest ever. The Jaromir Jagr and Dominik Hasek combo in 1998 was arguably the best one-two punch in hockey; both were the top rated players at their position at the time. From 1998 to 2006, the Czechs assembled quality depth across the lineup behind Jagr, found another elite goalie (Tomas Vokoun) to run with as Hasek aged, and stayed competitive with the best in the world.

Since 2006, though, Czech hockey has declined heavily. That's apparent from this year's roster, a group that features just nine NHL skaters — Czechia's lowest NHL representation ever at the Olympics. The 2010 Olympics were the start of the drop and while there were no NHL players at the 2018 and 2022 Olympics, those two tournaments would've likely cemented Czechia's status at the bottom of the Big Six hierarchy.

The cause for Czechia's hockey decline was the fall of the nation's two prongs. Jagr was still Czechia's best player in both 2010 and 2014, but there was obviously a massive difference between prime Jagr (age 26-30) and elder Jagr (age 38-42). It's the same story with Patrik Elias and without an elite successor, the Czechs were without their usual high-end offensive stars. While things would've shifted in 2018 as David Pastrnak rose to prominence, that would've been around the time Czechia lost its second prong: goaltending. Between the pipes, the Czechs still had Vokoun in 2010, but had to settle for Ondrej Pavelec in 2014 and would've likely tuned to Petr Mrazek in 2018 and 2022. Not great!

All of that is to say, there's a very notable uptick in Czechia's expected win percentage going into the tournament. They're not back to full power, but they're trending in the right direction. That has a lot to do with the country's winning formula being back in play.

Pastrnak and Martin Necas are not prime Jagr and Elias, but they're the closest things the Czechs have had in decades. Add Tomas Hertl to the mix, and Czechia's top trio isn't far off the team's high-end talent from 2002 and 2006.

Ditto in net, where both Lukas Dostal and Karel Vejmelka stack up well to Vokoun in 2010; by projected GSAX per game, both rank among the league's top 10 goalies.

Czechia enters the 2026 Olympics fifth in the pecking order among contenders with depth as a major concern. But the team's offensive star power and goaltending look a lot closer to the peak Czech teams of the early 2000s — maybe even enough to surprise with a medal.



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Methodology

Data from before the analytics era is incomplete at best, but there's enough there to reverse-engineer decent ratings for players, especially on offense. That's done by using a multiple regression to compare current player stats that were available at the time to each player's current Offensive and Defensive Ratings.

For Offensive Rating, I used points broken up into goals, primary assists, secondary assists and separated by strength state (even strength and power play). I also used shots, percentage of even-strength and power-play ice time and the strength of the team's offense. For Defensive Rating, I used plus-minus, blocks, percentage of even-strength, power-play and short-handed ice-time, and the strength of the team's defense. I also used Offensive Rating to serve as a proxy that eliminates the pluses in plus-minus. For seasons before 1997-98, it's the same process, but without TOI or blocks.

It's far from perfect on defense, with the lack of on-ice scoring chance stats and the dependence on plus-minus. But the ability to separate points into strength states as well as goals, primary assists and secondary assists paints a pretty close picture.

Those stats were adjusted for era based on the relationship between team goal difference and wins and turned into "true-talent estimates" using a simple marcel weighting of the current season with the prior two.

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1378560 Websites

The Athletic / The scariest walk in the NHL: Tales from the terrifying ceiling-high Calgary catwalk

By Julian McKenzie

Feb. 3, 2026 6:00 am EST

One night, during my time covering the Calgary Flames for The Athletic, I was minding my business in the Scotiabank Saddledome press box when a visiting broadcaster approached.

The broadcaster, a former NHL player — who will remain nameless because he didn't respond to a recent request for an interview — was searching for the broadcast booth. The problem was, he was on the wrong side of the arena. And the only way he could get to the opposite side, without a lengthy trip back downstairs, was by crossing a metal drawbridge — the catwalk — that hangs dozens of feet directly above the ice surface, with wooden boards as guides.

When another colleague and I explained this, our guest was horrified. He couldn't believe he had to essentially walk over the arena's scoreboard while using the accompanying railings to protect him from potentially falling. There are even stairs to navigate in some areas. It was like asking him to walk a tightrope above a pit of swimming sharks. So, he asked my colleague and me to cross the catwalk with him.

The three of us tried not to look down — especially because while doing the walk, you literally could look down through the Saddledome video board (until the team got a new one in 2024). The broadcaster finished his journey, and my colleague and I bravely made the walk back to our seats.

Moments later, another reporter from The Athletic received a text from the broadcaster, saying that his legs were still shaking. He is not the only

one to face his fears along that catwalk, known as the scariest walk in the NHL.

"I don't think I've done it in 20 or 25 years," said Vancouver Canucks broadcaster John Shorthouse, who'd much rather take the long way and reach the broadcast booth through a public elevator filled with fans. He's not alone.

The Scotiabank Saddledome is the NHL's second-oldest arena, behind Madison Square Garden in New York City. It opened in October 1983 and hosted events at the 1988 Winter Olympics. It has endured as one of the city's most prominent landmarks, thanks to the literal saddle shape of the arena.

And inside, near the ceiling, is that dreaded catwalk that has struck fear, or curiosity, into many media members and journalists.

"You walk on that plywood," TSN broadcaster Gord Miller said. "How long has that plywood been there?"

"There's a GM I know who is famous, and he rides the public elevator. He'll sign the autographs and pose for pictures (with fans) rather than walk that catwalk."

For those who might want to avoid the public elevator — or might have to cross from one side of the press box to the other and prefer to not take two elevator rides — the catwalk is the way to go. None of it is for the faint of heart. Even the press box itself — and the walkway that leads to it — is suspended in the air over a section of seats.

TSN broadcaster Jamie McLennan did a video call with his wife and son while walking the catwalk before a game last season. During his days as the Flames' goalie coach, he crossed the catwalk back and forth between each period to go downstairs and meet with then-coach Darryl Sutter.

"It was a gong show," McLennan said. "But it's a bit of a rite of passage."

Decades ago, Shorthouse made the fearful walk along the catwalk with former broadcast partner Tom Larscheid and would not let go of him.

"He would go ahead," Shorthouse said. "I would just hold on to the back of his jacket, and stare at the back of his head, and walk and not look down. Because it freaks me out."

Sportsnet broadcaster Jason York, who flies in from Ottawa to call several games a week in Calgary alongside play-by-play man Jon Abbott, avoids the catwalk due to his fear of heights.

"My kryptonite is heights," York said. "I don't know when it started. When I was a kid, I wouldn't go up on the CN Tower. When I have a straight look down, my legs get super light. All of a sudden, I'm like, 'I might lose my balance and fall over here and plummet to the ice.'"

"You will never see him cross it," Abbott said. "He doesn't even really like putting his back to the ice, like when we have to turn around for the camera (in the booth)."

But that treacherous walk to the broadcast booth isn't for nothing. Once broadcasters enter the Pete Maher broadcast booth — named after the longtime, legendary Flames broadcaster — they're treated to some of the best sight lines in the league for broadcasters.

"It's old-school," York said.

"You are right over the top of the ice," said Sportsnet's national television play-by-play broadcaster Harnarayan Singh. "So it's just a phenomenal view for calling the game when you need to cross over to the other side."

Abbott said, "You get the ambience and the crowd noise because you're not at the top of the rafters, you feel like you're more in it. When I'm at the edge of the booth, I can see the fans beneath me. I can hear them behind me. I can see the ice extremely well. I'm able to pick up all the little details. It just puts you in the middle of the ambience. It puts you in the middle of the vibes. It puts you in the middle of the atmosphere in the



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arena. And so you feel it's just so easy to have an energetic call because it's surrounding you, and all you have to do is embrace it."

Despite the charm, the Flames' days in the Saddledome are numbered. Its successor, Scotia Place, is currently being constructed across the street from the 'Dome and is set to open in the fall of 2027. And once the new arena is operational, the Saddledome and its terrifying catwalk will be demolished. Broadcasters, obviously, hope their vantage points will be just as good in the new rink. But some will still miss the Saddledome's charm when it goes away.

Ground breaks on Calgary Flames' new arena, expected to be completed in 2027

The new event centre is expected to be completed in time for the 2027-28 NHL season and will have a capacity of 18,400.

"It's going to change part of the identity that goes with Calgary," Abbott said. "The new one will take over the new era. But it's one of those long-standing hallmarks of the city of Calgary, so it's going to feel a lot different when that place isn't there."

But not everyone will feel nostalgic about the arena's catwalk.

"I hope the new building doesn't have it," McLennan said.

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1378561 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Can Maple Leafs' sweep of Western Canada change deadline plans?

Luke Fox

7-9 minutes

EDMONTON — They had to wait a while, but once the Toronto Maple Leafs got themselves a couple of power plays, they sure made 'em count.

The score was knotted 2-2 midway through Tuesday's pre-Olympic finale against the Edmonton Oilers when, finally, after more than eight periods without a whistle in their favour, the visitors jumped to the man-advantage.

"I don't think I've ever seen that in my career, three games almost without a power play," Matais Maccelli said.

Six seconds later, Edmonton's Mattias Janmark high-sticked Auston Matthews and — what's this? — 104 glorious seconds of man-advantage action.

Bang, bang.

John Tavares scored on the 5-on-3, Maccelli one-timed some Max Domi sauce on the 5-on-4, the PP went 2-for-2, and the visitors locked down a 5-2 victory.

"We were all itching to get out there and just get some opportunities and get it clickin'," Matthew Knies said. "Those are important goals and obviously led to the win."

The turning point of the night was clear as day, but a three-game win streak for the Maple Leafs heading into the trade freeze only muddies the picture.

Toronto was outshot 36-27 by Edmonton, and we shouldn't dare read much into wins over bottom feeders like Vancouver and Calgary, right?

Surely, this is fool's gold, the ol' Troy Stecher sweep of Western Canada, the six points they'll take back to the Six. A mirage. A tease.

And yet... the Maple Leafs have crawled within five points of a wild-card spot. And, on nights like this one at Rogers Place, they can sprinkle kernels of hope for the diehard Be-Leafers. They'll flick at a formula that works.

Their special teams proved to be a difference-maker, goaltender Anthony Stolarz looked like his swaggery old self, and they committed to defending their net-front hard.

Led by a shutdown tandem of Brandon Carlo and Jake McCabe, the Leafs were that rare team to keep both Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl off the scoresheet. Even when Kris Knoblauch paired his rested superstars for a classic third-period push.

"Oh, it was fantastic. I mean, Brando stepping up, getting to a fight, Caber playing against their top line, the way they were able to block shots, keep guys on the outside and just stay physical," Stolarz raved.

"It's tough. We played a game last night, travelled, so they definitely earned these next couple weeks here off."

Carlo was quick to tip his cap to McCabe, who has picked up the slack all season in the absence of Chris Tanev.

"You know, just watching him, his defensive skill, the way he's been all year, but especially tonight, handling 97 and handling 29. He's a special player, for sure," Carlo said. "And he gives me confidence right next to him, to have my gaps, do my thing."

"We just kept it simple and kept those guys to the outside as much as possible. When they did get their opportunities, Stollie was there."

The vibes are high in Leafland right now as the stars turn their attention to Milan, and the majority scatters for sunshine and bruise healing.

The duelling "Let's go, Oilers! Go, Leafs, go!" chants in Edmonton morphed into "Go, Leafs, go!" by the end.

Despite all the doubt and rumours, the long odds and unsatisfying under-the-hood metrics, the players themselves aren't willing to go out quietly.

But have they proven enough to the brass to not turn into the sellers they should be? Or at least extend the hmm-let's-see process for a few games in March?

"You're never out of it," Carlo asserted.

"This break will be nice, but we want to come back with the same intensity that we brought through these last three games and continue to build our game. You can kind of tell just the feeling within the room when we're playing our right game, playing our right way."

"It's a good feeling within that room and something you definitely want to be a part of."

Fox's Fast Five

• Top five (healthy) Maple Leafs who will benefit from the Olympic break:

5. Jake McCabe: Averaging a career-high and team-high 22:25 per night, Toronto's plus/minus leader gets the hard matchups and plays them hard. The ask is big.

"Especially with (Chris Tanev) out, we put a lot on his shoulders," Knies said. "He's handled the challenge, and he's done a phenomenal job."

4. Easton Cowan. The rookie has hit a wall, resulting in three straight scratches. A mental reset and, perhaps, some AHL shifts could boost his confidence. "I think the break is gonna do him well," Berube says.



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3. Brandon Carlo. From surgery recovery, right back to blocking shots. We've seen Carlo leave the ice on this trip with a noticeable limp, and he's barely looked 100 per cent most nights all season. Oh, and he just dropped the gloves with a much more experienced pugilist in Darnell Nurse.

2. John Tavares. The 35-year-old has been fading for a few weeks now, and he was a beast coming out of 2025's 4 Nations break.

1. Matthew Knies. He is dealing with a knee issue that only benefits from rest, is being sheltered on the third line, and is a noticeable facsimile of his best self.

"A lot of us need a refresher," Knies says. "This is valuable time for me."

- Between Boxing Day and Groundhog Day, Leafs goalie Joseph Woll started 14 times, one of his busiest stretches as a pro.

"It's a lot of games. It's a pretty crazy schedule. So, it's nice to just get away, right? Like, we're not really afforded this ability too often in hockey, where you get three weeks and you can actually get away and rest your brain and come back refreshed. So, it will be good for our team."

Woll is chasing the sun south, then spending some time in California.

"I'm really excited for a few days there, and then we have a nice solid week of practice. So, it'll be good to go back and work on the details. There's not much practice time right now, so I'm actually looking forward to that."

- Maccelli in 2024-25: eight goals and 18 points in 55 games.

Maccelli in 2025-26: 10 goals and 24 points in 46 games.

- If you're making bets on the next NHL goalie to fight, you could do worse than throwing a chunk of change down on Stolarz. He's sick of anyone getting too close to his crease:

- Carlo on his open-ice hit on McDavid and ensuing fight with Nurse: "Puck just came to the middle. I kinda swung my hip a little bit. I felt like I got him on the hip. I don't know where I got him necessarily, but obviously he was a little stunned after that. Understandably, when he gets hit, or any sort of situation where it looks like he could maybe get hurt, all 20 guys on the ice are going to be standing up for him. So, I knew something was coming, and I have a lot of respect for guys who stand up for their best players. So, nothing wrong there.

"When you get into a fight, the adrenaline's going. So, just trying to do my best, throw a couple punches, and I felt like I did pretty well. He's definitely a big guy, a strong competitor and tough fighter as well. So, it was good in all regards that I didn't get knocked out or anything. Glad to get that one under the belt and then continue from there and win the game."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 02.04.2026

1378562 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers don't look like contender after disappointing homestand

Mark Spector

5-6 minutes

EDMONTON — We're 57 games into the season, and the Edmonton Oilers have 64 points.

They are, to this point, an average team playing slightly above average on some nights, well below on others.

They resemble a Stanley Cup contender at this juncture of the season about as much as the Vanier Cup resembles the Super Bowl, or I resemble Brad Pitt.

"We can't be letting in five, six, seven, goals per game. It's just it's too much. It's just not the right way to win," Kasperii Kapanen said after the Toronto Maple Leafs spanked Edmonton 5-2 on the Oilers' home ice. "I feel like we're just always trailing by two, three goals. And they've scored four or five."

"As a good team, we can't be doing that moving forward, and it's something that we've addressed," he said. "You know, it doesn't happen overnight. We're trying, guys. We're trying, and we want to be better defensively."

This is where the tracks always lead in Edmonton, home of those "High Flying Oilers."

This team is never dominant until it starts to defend. Killing penalties, blocking shots, playing a simple, effective game.

In short, Edmonton's advantage in scoring ability is most acute when the two teams are splitting up a minimum of scoring chances, not a maximum. When the high danger chances are coming by the boatload at either end of the ice, it in fact levels the playing field, history tells us.

"It's a little bit of everything," said head coach Kris Knoblauch, who seems increasingly perplexed as each week passes and his team still doesn't get it. "Five-on-five defending. Obviously the penalty kill (0-for-2 Tuesday) — we've talked about how many penalty kill goals we've given up. And some goaltending. It's a little bit of everything."

On this night, the Oilers climbed back from 1-0 and 2-1 deficits before Matt Savoie took an unfortunate interference penalty at 6:38 of Period 3. Six seconds into the penalty kill, Mattias Janmark was racing for a puck against Auston Matthews and high-sticked him in the face.

The Maple Leafs scored on the ensuing five-on-three, and again on the five-on-four.

Game, set and match.

"I felt like I was maybe held a little," explained Janmark. "I'm not going in there trying to high-stick a guy. But at the end of the day, they're on a two-minute five-on-three in a 2-2 game in the third.

"It cost us the game."

It was an original way to lose, something the Oilers have become rather inventive at. The familiar face, however, is their goals against, now at 3.28 and the seventh highest in the entire National Hockey League.

And the much-ballyhooed eight-game homestand on which Edmonton was going to vault into the Olympic break with a nice first-place cushion?

Yeah, they went 4-4, allowing 32 goals in the final seven games. If they hadn't rescued two games with the goalie pulled, it would have been a full-on disaster.

"We haven't been playing our best and obviously playing eight games in a row at home, you'd like to win more games," Kapanen said. "But that's how it is now, and you can't do anything about it."

They'd better figure out how to do something about it, because despite playing in an extremely forgiving division, loose, turnover-laden hockey with average goaltending simply does not take a team into May.

"We have to do our individual jobs better and not point any fingers," said Darnell Nurse, who was screened by an official and missed a pass that led directly to the 2-1 goal. "I've been out there (for goals against). I have



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to be better in that department, so I'm not going to deflect it anywhere else."

Toronto is 11-2-1 at Rogers Place in their last 14 visits, while Edmonton is now 0-9 this season when Connor McDavid doesn't get a point, and the Leafs kept him off the scoreboard Tuesday.

Winger Andrew Mangiapane drew into the lineup for the first time in four games and was Edmonton's best player in the opening period. Then he turned a puck over just inside the offensive blue line in the second period, causing the Oilers to have a bad change, and seconds later the game-opening goal was in Edmonton's net.

Knoblauch sat him out for the final 12 minutes of Period 2, but played him in the third.

"Obviously the turnover had an effect on his ice time," Knoblauch said after the game.

Mangiapane was very effective on the fourth line, for a team that has had zero production from its Bottom 6 of late. It will be interesting to see if he plays Wednesday in Calgary, with general manager Stan Bowman actively shopping him around the league.

Usually, when a player who is being traded plays well, he stays in the lineup.

But when the coach can't stand the player....?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 02.04.2026

1378563 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Liam Ohgren exceeding expectations in 'fresh start' with Canucks

Iain MacIntyre

7-9 minutes

But when he started playing games for the Canucks, after his inclusion in the blockbuster trade of Quinn Hughes in December, the trait that became impressively evident was Ohgren's power.

The just-turned-22-year-old winger isn't overtly physical, doesn't run over people or smash defencemen through the boards on the forecheck. But there's a power element to his game that goes beyond just pace. Ohgren has a heaviness to his play that, in combination with his speed and shooting ability, makes him a lot more substantial than just the fourth-most valuable asset the Canucks acquired from the Wild.

"You know, not everybody's going to score 50 goals," veteran winger Conor Garland said after the Canucks practised Tuesday in Las Vegas. "But when you build a team, you have pieces that fit. And he's a piece. He's a really, really good player — that speed and his decision-making at a young age is really good. You know, it's more about winning than it is his points. There's a lot of stuff he does really good for such a young age. Right away, I was like, 'Oh, I'd love to play with that guy.'"

For most of the seven games since Teddy Blueger returned to the Canucks from injury, the two-way centre has been flanked by Garland and Ohgren.

They were easily Vancouver's best trio in Monday's 6-2 loss to the Utah Mammoth.

The acceleration, power and release Ohgren displayed in skating away from Dylan Guenther and past defenceman Nick DeSimone to finish from

Garland's first-period pass are why the Canucks are so excited about him.

"He's so young," coach Adam Foote said Tuesday, "but to see power and a stride and his strength at that age is pretty impressive because you're just going to get stronger as you get that true man-strength. I also like that he's very coachable. He just wants to keep getting better, and he's a sponge of information. I see him having a bright future."

Ohgren has four goals and four assists in 25 games since his trade. In the last five games, the Swede has three points and is plus-three while averaging 14:38 of ice time. In a fourth-line role in Minnesota, the 2022 first-round pick was pointless in 18 games, which tempered expectations for him when he joined the Canucks in New Jersey on Dec. 13.

The left winger, who had 33 goals and 58 points in 30 games for Djurgardens' junior team in Stockholm during his draft year, has soared past expectations so far.

"I think I'm the same player, but I think my mind is at a better place," Ohgren explained. "I'm more comfortable around the guys and around the staff. You know, it's tough when you come to a new club, new people everywhere, and have to get to know everyone. . . but still try to make a good impression every day. I think I'm on a good path.

"For sure, confidence (is a factor). I mean, when you don't have a point in 18 games, it's tough, especially when I've always put up points to help the team in that way. It's tough when you don't score, when you don't get those points. But at the same time, I feel like when I came here, I didn't really have the same, I don't know, pressure on myself. I just wanted to show my game and then everything just came to me (naturally) and then I got confidence from that."

Last season, his first full one in North America, Ohgren had 19 goals and 37 points in 41 games for the Wild's farm team in Iowa. But he struggled to threaten offensively in the National Hockey League during extended auditions over parts of two seasons in Minnesota.

That's often how draft pressure works. Ohgren will always be the 19th pick of the 2022 draft, but that's not a burden he has to carry with the Canucks because they're not the team that picked him. The opposite applies to Ohgren's friend and junior teammate, Jonathan Lekkerimaki, who was drafted by Vancouver four places ahead of Ohgren.

"I think that's a good point," Ohgren said. "You always. . . you want to be a good pick for the team, and you want to show that they made the right choice. You want to show the team, the fans and all those people that you're a good player and that they have a good player in you. So, it was kind of a fresh start coming here, and I didn't have a lot to think about. I just had to play."

Canucks assistant coach Brett McLean coached Ohgren in the American Hockey League.

"Brett told us he could skate, and he had some power," Foote said. "And then we saw it the first game. He just looked like. . . he wasn't going to get the guy (on the forecheck) and then he got him. This game's about pressure. And when he does that, he's very effective. We saw early, I think he was in Boston, he put down a pretty big defenceman in front of the net (Hampus Lindholm on Dec. 20) — a big guy that usually doesn't go down like that — so it shows his strength. And then he had the shootout (winner). So who knows where he'll go, but it's a good piece."

Asked about the power element emerging in his game, Ohgren said: "I haven't really been that physical early in my career. When I played juniors and stuff, I didn't hit that much. I mean, I went in the battles, but I didn't have to play physical. I think that's a factor now; you have to be physical in this league. It's a tough league and you have to win puck battles, and I think being strong and brave, I think that's important."

The six-foot, 190-pound winger said the physicality feels "natural."



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"But I don't think too much about it," he added. "I mean, sometimes when you're maybe not into the game. . . it's good to make a hit or maybe play hard. But I think it's still coming natural with my skating ability and my physicality. It can be a part of my game, for sure."

With his directness and heaviness on the puck, his ability to put opposing defencemen under duress and get to the net, Ohgren certainly looks like a power forward.

"I don't get into those terms, I just think he's a good player," Garland said. "After the game (in Utah), guys were commenting on his speed; he kind of can get going from a quick start. He pushes their D back, opens up space, makes quick little plays. And he's got so much growth, too."

"His pull-up game is getting better, his rush game is getting better. He's young and he wants to learn. He wants to keep getting better, and he loves the game. I think that's half the battle, if not more."

ICE CHIPS — Battling illness, Garland was given Tuesday off but will play against the Vegas Golden Knights on Wednesday. . . Foote said centre Filip Chytil, who left halfway through the Utah game just six games into a comeback from his latest concussion, is out with migraine issues. . . Canuck players were cheered on to the ice for Tuesday's practice — by their moms. The team has organized its first Mothers Trip since before the 2020 pandemic.

HOW THE CANUCKS PRACTISED

Forwards

Kane-Pettersson-O'Connor

Ohgren-Blueger-Mancini(Garland)

DeBrusk-Kampf-Karlsson

Sasson-Raty-Lekkerimaki

Defencemen

Pettersson (Junior)-Hronek

M. Pettersson-Willander

Joseph-Myers

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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Bobby McMann talks Oilers trade noise

Luke Fox

3-4 minutes

Of all the forwards the cap-tight Edmonton Oilers could add by the trade deadline, well, the kid who grew up a couple hours down the road, in Wainwright, Alta., might make the most sense.

Set to play in his annual homecoming game Tuesday, and with the Olympic trade freeze kicking in Wednesday, McMann is both aware and trying to ignore the speculation linking him to Oil Country.

The money and the geography and the two teams' trajectories this season all give the idea credence.

"Doesn't matter. I could hope for it. I could not hope for it. Like, it doesn't make a difference because I'm not in control of it," McMann told Sportsnet.ca Monday in Calgary.

"I like it here (with Toronto). I wouldn't necessarily want to go anywhere. I want to run with these guys. I want to make a push here. I can't really control what happens outside of that. I'll just have to deal with it then."

Then is soon.

While there is no sense that Maple Leafs general manager Brad Treliving will rush a deal this week, instead taking the break to devise a plan for the six-game ramp to March 6, McMann's fate must be decided soon.

And as an impending free agent with zero trade protection, he has no say over his fate — even though he's been forthright about his love for Toronto.

"I don't pay attention to it as much as possible," McMann said. "But, inevitably, anybody technically could get traded if the right deal just comes along. I try to put it out of my head. As much as I can, I don't put any thought into it, because I can't control whether it happens or not. I'm trying to focus on just being good into the break here."

Using his elite speed to secure an empty-net, victory-sealing goal, McMann was good again Tuesday. He's on pace to follow up 2024-25's 20-goal breakout with a new personal-best campaign, and he's now getting top-line minutes alongside Auston Matthews.

Because of his quick feet, increased physicality, and modest \$1.35-million cap hit, McMann is attracting plenty of interest.

Most consider Vancouver's Kiefer Sherwood return from San Jose — two second-round picks — as the ballpark return for a McMann rental.

Sherwood was moved without a Sharks extension in place, though.

With so few uncomplicated adds on the market, could McMann fetch a first-rounder with an extension? Would Treliving get crafty and attempt to rent McMann now and re-sign him on July 1?

Those answers await.

For now, McMann is happy to be back on the winning track and back around familiar faces. More of those show up to his Edmonton game than anywhere else.

"I'm just used to the Alberta air, so I'm breathing it in, and it feels a little better. It's better to see family and friends, but it's also (about) treating it like other games throughout the season. They're just as important, and we need those wins," McMann said.

And what if he stays a Leaf? How much does he trust they can pull off the near-impossible here and make the playoffs?

Does he believe?

"As long as it's mathematically possible. We have some really good players in this group," MacMann said.

"When you look at some of the really good teams in our league, some we've played well against, and they went on massive runs as well. So, it's definitely possible."

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TSN.CA / Canadian ice master says NHL stars will love Olympic surface

Mark Masters

6-7 minutes



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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MILAN - Don Moffatt, the ice master at the 2026 Olympic hockey tournament, is working his fifth Winter Games in Milan. The pride of Peterborough, Ont. has never experienced anything like this.

"This one has been unbelievably challenging," Moffatt told TSN. "The other Olympics I've had test events a year out, so I learned the systems. I learned the buildings. And then, when it comes time to put the ice in for the Olympics, I usually have it in at least three to four weeks ahead of the Olympics. I can get it skated on, broken in, and really finely tuned. This one was definitely a challenge."

Due to construction delays at the privately funded Santagiulia Arena, which will host the biggest games at the Olympic tournament, Moffatt only started putting in the ice last week.

"I waited until the last second, until most of the construction around the field of play here was completed," Moffatt said. "I've kind of been, you know, an a----- the last week. I can count on one hand the number of people that have been on that ice surface so far. About three days ago, it was the owner of the actual building that I screamed at, and he very nicely got off the ice. A couple of people came out to take pictures and I'm like, 'Not allowed. Sorry.'"

But the 67-year-old, who oversees ice-making for the Colorado Avalanche at Ball Arena, is now finally ready to share his creation with the world. And Moffatt believes this ice is among the best he's made at any Olympics.

"It's dense," he said. "It's solid. Your skates don't go into it. I'm kind of a bigger guy and I tried. I've skated my entire life. I'm obviously not nearly at the talent level that's coming here to play, but I'm big enough that I should be able to cut the ice if I want to and I couldn't. So, yeah, it's in really good condition right now."

The ice, aesthetically, also looks much better than it did at the delayed test event that was eventually held at the arena in December.

"That was produced in the middle of a construction site," Moffatt noted. "Ice quality was very good, but the look was horrible. It was kind of brownish and that was based on all the construction going on around us."

The first practice at the arena took place on Monday night with the French men's team hitting the ice. The host Italians will play the first game at the arena on Thursday afternoon when they open the women's tournament against France.

"We have a very ice-friendly schedule here," Moffatt said. "We start with some women's games. Absolutely no disrespect to the women, but they really don't damage the ice. They're skilled and they're incredible players, but they're not heavy enough to actually do a lot of damage to it. So, it really helps me to have some women's games on here to just kind of break the surface in. I tell people that ice is kind of like a muscle. You have to break it down a little bit and then build it back up and it'll get stronger. So that's what we'll do for this first week."

The first men's games at the venue will be held on Feb. 11. Team Canada will play its first game at the arena on Feb. 12 when Sidney Crosby and company open their tournament against David Pastrnak and Team Czechia.

"I think the players are going to love it," Moffatt said.

The ice and much of the bowl is looking mostly ready, but there's still lots of work taking place inside the arena.

"There's still a lot that needs to be done under the seats and stuff," Moffatt acknowledged. "I don't have a room to put my spare board parts and glass parts yet. Coming this week, I hope, you know, so it's definitely going to be last minute. But it is amazing just being here and seeing how many people are working, trying to get things done."

"I feel good," said Veronika Muhlhofer, who is the event general manager at Santagiulia Arena. "The closer we get, the better we feel. We'll feel

best once we drop the first puck. There will be a small sigh of relief and then we're off to the races."

The concourses still need work, but the fan experience will be a good one, Muhlhofer promises.

"The bathrooms are already open and all of us are testing them as we spend our days here," she said with a smile. "We've also taste tested the [concession] food, which was really good ... There's a lot of cleaning we still want to do."

Muhlhofer readily admits not everything will get done. For example, there won't be as much parking available as initially planned.

"There will be bits that aren't necessarily used by the Games," she said. "You might walk past and then you would see okay, this is an area that's not used by the Games."

Santagiulia Ice Hockey Arena

The bottom line is the arena will be ready for the Olympics. But just barely.

"These are my ninth Games, and I totally understand why people would have been nervous because it was, let's say, a non-traditional timeline getting up to this," Muhlhofer said. "It's been a while in the Winter Games since we've had such a case. This isn't what you'd normally expect to see. A month ago, it wasn't what you'd normally expect a month from the games."

But there's some Olympic magic mixed into all the dust still inside the building.

"During the test event a lot of the construction workers would come in and they would watch," Moffatt recalled. "Seeing their faces was really kind of cool. It was almost comical because they hadn't seen hockey and they didn't really know what was going to go on in the building. And there seemed to be a totally different atmosphere after the test event. People realized what was going to happen and got a little more excited."

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