



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 12, 2026

## The Athletic

### Every first-round pick from the 2026 NHL draft that's changed hands, ranked by regret

By: Sean McIndoe

The first round of the 2026 NHL Draft is going to take some work to keep track of. Last week's deadline saw three trades involving first-rounders in this year's draft alone. That brings the total number of picks that have changed hands from just that round to an even dozen, potentially, although some will depend on conditions.

Of course, not all of the teams involved in those moves would make them over again. So today, let's get you caught up on which picks have moved while also turning this into a ranking of regret. We'll go through all 12 picks, ranked from the ones whose former teams have no regrets at all to those where a team might like a do-over.

We'll start with the least regrettable of them all, which turns out not to be a very tough choice...

#### 12. The Minnesota Wild's pick

Placement-wise, this is a tricky one to project. The Wild are on pace to post one of the best records in the league, but their path to the final four is as tough as it gets. If they lose in the first two rounds, this pick probably ends up in the mid-20s.

The trade: In December, the Wild traded this pick along with Zeev Buium, Marco Rossi and prospect Liam Ohgren to Vancouver for Quinn Hughes.

The thinking at the time: Quinn Hughes is awesome, and would probably continue to be awesome in Minnesota.

The thinking right now: Quinn Hughes is awesome, and has definitely continued to be awesome in Minnesota.

Regret rating: 0/100. Only because I've decided that we're not going to do negative numbers. Minnesota fans may have had some mild pangs over parting with Buium or Rossi, but a mid- to late-20s pick for arguably the best defenseman on the planet? I feel like the Wild front office can live with that just fine.

#### 11. The Dallas Stars' pick

There's a twist on this one, in that it's one of only two picks in the round that have been traded twice ... kind of. We'll get to that, but since we're focused on regret, it's the first trade we're focused on.

The trade: At last year's deadline, the Stars sent firsts in 2026 and 2028 to Carolina along with Logan Stankoven and two thirds for Mikko Rantanen.

The thinking at the time: Rantanen had gone from Colorado to Carolina earlier in the year but didn't want to sign an extension there, so the Hurricanes flipped him to Dallas.

The thinking right now: Remember when Rantanen single-handedly beat the Avs in the 2025 playoffs? That was cool.

Regret rating: 10/100. The deal cost the Stars plenty, and we'll see what the future first ends up looking like. But for now, no regret.

#### 10. The Colorado Avalanche's pick

The Nic Roy trade with the Toronto Maple Leafs raised a few eyebrows, but that's for next year's first. This one is likely to be very late in the round.

The trade: The Avs sent this pick and a 2028 third plus Oliver Kylington and Calum Ritchie to the New York Islanders for Brock Nelson and William Dufour. (This is the other pick that's been traded twice; the Islanders flipped it to the St. Louis Blues for Brayden Schenn last week.)

The thinking at the time: Nelson was a big name at the 2025 deadline, and the Avs were Cup-hunting.

The thinking right now: While some of us didn't love the move at the time, Nelson's proven us wrong as a great fit in Colorado.

Regret rating: 15/100. Knowing that and where this pick will land, the Avs make this move again in a heartbeat.

#### 9. The Detroit Red Wings' pick

The Red Wings haven't quite clinched a playoff spot yet, but they're close. A run to the conference final isn't out of the question in a weird Atlantic, but this pick will probably end up in the low 20s.

The trade: The Red Wings sent this pick along with Justin Holl, Dmitri Buchelnikov and a third to acquire Justin Faulk at least week's deadline.

The thinking at the time: The Red Wings needed a top-four defenseman in a market where not many were available. In addition, patience was wearing a bit thin for Steve Yzerman's conservative approach, especially after Dylan Larkin's comments about last year's (quiet) deadline.

The thinking right now: Pretty much the same, since it's been less than a week. But Faulk has looked good in his two games so far, and the response to the trade was reasonably positive.



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Regret rating: 25/100. Check back when we've had a chance to evaluate the deal with the benefit of at least one playoff run, but for now, Faulk still has that new-car smell.

### 8. The Anaheim Ducks' pick

Hey, I remember this trade.

The trade: The Ducks sent this pick and a third to the Capitals for John Carlson in what may have been last week's most surprising trade.

The thinking at the time: The young Ducks shocked many of us by trading a conditional first for a veteran UFA, apparently figuring that they had as good a shot as anyone at this year's Pacific.

The thinking right now: The same, except the weather is slightly warmer.

Regret rating: 35/100. Of all the moves on our list, this one feels the most "TBD." We haven't seen how Carlson fits in Anaheim, we don't know if they can (or want to) re-sign him, and most importantly, we don't know where the pick will end up being. The Ducks have the option to keep it if they miss the playoffs, which feels unlikely. But the difference between making it and winning at least two rounds is significant, so we'll see. For now, let's assume they're comfortable but maybe a little bit nervous.

### 7. The Vegas Golden Knights' pick

Right now, it would be in the late teens, which is surprisingly high, although in a weak Pacific it's not hard to imagine Vegas going to the conference final and pushing this pick to the end of the round.

The trade: This pick went to Calgary, but not for Rasmus Andersson; that's next year's pick. This one is from way back in 2024, when the Knights got Noah Hanifin for a first, a 2025 third and Daniil Miromanov (with the Flyers tagging in for some retention).

The thinking at the time: The Knights were the defending champs at the time, and were doing what they always do — shoving their way to the front of the line for the best player available.

The thinking right now: Hanifin's been fine in Vegas over the years.

Regret rating: 45/100. Do the Golden Knights ever regret anything? Does anyone in Vegas?

Noah Hanifin skates toward the bench with his stick in one hand after a Vegas goal.

Noah Hanifin has 10 points in 18 playoff games for the Vegas Golden Knights. Ethan Miller / Getty Images

### 6. The Florida Panthers' pick

This projects to be easily the highest pick we've had yet, coming in right around the ten spot if the season ended now.

The trade: The Panthers traded this pick along with Spencer Knight to the Chicago Blackhawks for Seth Jones and a 2026 fourth at least year's deadline. (If you're wondering, the Brad Marchand trade also cost the Panthers a first, but it's in 2027.)

The thinking at the time: Flags fly forever, let's go win another Cup. Besides, there's no way the pick will be all that high.

The thinking right now: They did indeed win that Cup, so we can't rank this one all that high. And crucially, it's top-10 protected, meaning there's a good chance the Panthers come out of this with a good pick and then get right back to contending next year. But it's also possible that they could end up sending the 11th or 12th pick to Chicago, which is a steep price for a team with no prospects.

Regret rating: 50/100. This is as high as I can go, given the Panthers won the Cup. But when you factor in the season Knight is having, you do wonder how this one looks down the line. At the very least, Hawks fans have to be thrilled with how this all worked out.

### 5. The Carolina Hurricanes' pick (maybe)

This one gets a bit complicated. The Hurricanes have two firsts, their own and the Stars' from the Rantanen deal, and the Rangers get whichever one is better. Right now, that would be the Hurricanes' pick, but it depends on how the rest of the season and playoffs go. This could just end up being the same Stars pick we've already covered. For now, let's assume it's Carolina's.

The trade: Last summer, Carolina traded this pick, a second and Scott Morrow to the Rangers for K'Andre Miller.

The thinking at the time: The Hurricanes apparently really like Miller, enough that they gave up a ton to get him and then signed him to a \$60-million extension.

The thinking right now: Miller's a solid player and at 26 still has room to grow, but the Hurricanes gave up plenty, both in terms of trade and contract.

Regret rating: 60/100. If you were expecting Miller to blossom into a Norris candidate in Carolina, it hasn't happened yet. If you were willing to settle for a solid second-pair guy, you're feeling OK.

### 4. The Edmonton Oilers' pick

This pick is top-12 protected, although it would take a significant Oilers collapse for that to come into play. Like the Ducks' and Knights' picks, it would be in the teens today but could jump to the end of the round if the Oilers emerge from the Pacific.

The trade: The Oilers sent this pick and Carl Berglund to the Sharks for Jake Walman at last year's deadline.

The thinking at the time: Walman's good and not too expensive for another year, and the Oilers were very much in "win now" mode. People thought the move was OK at the time.

The thinking right now: Walman signed an extension, which helps. He hasn't been amazing in Edmonton, but he's been fine, at least when he's healthy.

Regret rating: 65/100. We're getting into dicey territory here, although not quite full "I want a do-over" status. Any regret here is less about keeping the pick and more about opportunity cost — could it have been spent more wisely, either at the time or during this year's goalie hunt?

### 3. The Tampa Bay Lightning's pick



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Wait, the Lightning once owned a first-round pick?

The trade: The Lightning acquired Yanni Gourde and Oliver Bjorkstrand from the Seattle Kraken in a three-way deal involving Detroit as a cap broker. It cost them a package including this pick and next year's first, both top-10 protected.

The thinking at the time: A classic all-in push by a Cup favorite.

The thinking right now: Last year's Lightning only won one playoff game, in a series that Bjorkstrand missed due to injury and in which Gourde had only one point. They're favorites again this year, but with Bjorkstrand about to hit UFA and Gourde turning 34, this feels like a big overpay for two bottom-six depth pieces.

Regret rating: 75/100. It's not Tanner Jeannot trade bad, but it's a lot.

## 2. The Toronto Maple Leafs' pick

Did you know about this one? It doesn't come up very often.

The trade: The Leafs sent this pick, a 2025 fourth and Fraser Minten to the Bruins for Brandon Carlo at last year's deadline.

The thinking at the time: The price was sky-high, but the Leafs figured they were getting a long-term blue line piece, since Carlo was 28 and signed through 2027 on a deal the Bruins were eating some salary on. Besides, it will be a late first, right? Right?

The thinking right now: Uh-oh! The pick will not be a late-first, and since it's top-five protected (instead of 10 or 12 like most other protected firsts), the Leafs will likely end up surrendering a top-10 pick to a division rival for a player who hasn't fit well. Weird, they never do stuff like that.

Regret rating: 95/100. This won't be the trade that gets Brad Treliving fired in a month, but it will be mentioned in the first paragraph of his Leafs obituary. In fact, you were probably assuming it would take top spot on today's list. And it kind of does, except that ...

## 1. The Ottawa Senators' pick

I went back and forth on whether this one should even count. But while it's not a trade, the Senators used to have a first-

round pick and now they don't. That means it changed hands, right?

The trade: At the 2022 deadline, the Ducks sent defenseman John Moore and the contract of Ryan Kesler to Vegas for Evgenii Dadonov and a second. No, neither of those teams is the Senators, but stay with us.

The thinking at the time: What a relatively dull trade that surely will not cost anyone their job.

The thinking a few hours after that: Wait, it turns out Dadonov has a no-trade clause that the Knights somehow didn't know about, and the trade has to be scrapped. How does that happen?

The thinking after the league looked into it: It turns out the blame was with the Senators and then-GM Pierre Dorion, who apparently hadn't informed the Knights about the NTC when they sent Dadonov to Vegas in 2021. (Vegas wasn't on his list, so the clause didn't factor into that trade.)

The league punished the Senators by stripping them of a first-round pick in either 2024, 2025 or 2026, with the team getting to decide which pick it gave up. The rebuilding Senators kept their picks in 2024 and 2025, meaning the bill comes due this year. The debacle also helped cost Dorion his job.

The thinking right now: It's fair to say Senators fans aren't thrilled. New owner Michael Andlauer sure wasn't. And they have at least a bit of a case — losing a first isn't unprecedented, but it's harsh punishment. If the whole thing was Dorion's fault, Sens fans would argue, then he's already more than paid a price.

Unless the league backs down at the last minute — which would also not be unprecedented — the Senators could forfeit a pick in the mid-teens.

Regret rating: 100/100. Regret might not be the right word in Ottawa; maybe "rage" would be better. Either way, it's a mess. At least the Leafs still have Carlo in the lineup, where he could still theoretically help them someday. The Sens are going to lose their pick for nothing at all, because of how a GM their fans didn't like screwed up a trade his team wasn't even involved in. If you put this one on the list, I don't see how it goes anywhere but the top spot.



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## Nikishin Nets Historic Goal As Confidence Builds

By: Peter Dewar

"His game's growing, there's no doubt about it... He's going to be a good player here for a long time."

RALEIGH, N.C. - On March 7, Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Alexander Nikishin scored his eighth goal of the season with a 98.5 mph blast in Calgary — the second-hardest shot resulting in a goal by an NHLer this season.

His first in eight games, Nikishin's goal tied Justin Faulk for the most by a rookie defenseman in franchise history. Through the ups and downs of a player's rookie year, it was a nice feather in the cap for Nikishin as he continues to adapt to North America on and off the ice, but he wasn't finished there.

One game later, the 24-year-old took sole possession of that record, scoring in consecutive contests for the first time as an NHLer. His power-play marker in the third period helped the Canes to a 5-4 shootout win over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Tuesday.

"It feels good. Making history is special and (I'll) never forget that," he said via translation from Andrei Svechnikov.

Ranking in the 95th percentile among NHLers in both top shot speed (98.97 mph) and average shot speed (74.12 mph) per NHL EDGE, Nikishin's ability to wire the puck is his calling card, so a goal-scoring record is hardly unexpected.

But his willingness to let it rip remains a work in progress, with his teammates imploring him to shoot a little more often, particularly as he grows into a role on the power play.

The 6-foot-3, 218-pound youngster has obliged in recent games, with five of his 10 hardest shots coming in the last 15 outings.

"I always tell him, 'You've got to shoot the puck,' because he's probably got the hardest shot on our team," said Svechnikov after Nikishin scored with a 92.5 mph clapper on Jan. 16. "When we were on the power play, we know he's got the good shot, and we tried to make that play for him. Also, whenever he shoots the puck from the middle, it opens up the space on the sides, so it's always nice to have that."

Echoing that sentiment, Shayne Gostisbehere, Nikishin's most frequent defensive partner at 5-on-5 this season, offered insights into the process of getting comfortable in the NHL. An NCAA star before turning pro, Gostisbehere

experienced a learning curve as he adapted to life at hockey's highest level.

The solution, he says, for someone like Nikishin, a perennial star in his home country looking to make a consistent impact in the NHL, is "simple."

"Every time he gets (the puck), I'm like, 'Just take a one-timer, man.' He's got the hardest shot in the world," said Gostisbehere with a chuckle after the Canes' win over Detroit on Feb. 28. "The simpler is the better for him. As you get going in the league, myself included when I was younger, trying to do too much hurts yourself. You've got to build that confidence and let the game come to you... He's evolving every game."

No stranger to making history, Nikishin arrived in North America with quite the track record from his days with SKA St. Petersburg in Russia's Kontinental Hockey League. Voted the best defenseman in the KHL by KHL GMs for both the 2023-24 and 2024-25 seasons, Nikishin boasts the most career goals (45), assists (112) and points (157) by a defenseman in SKA St. Petersburg history, and was the first defenseman in KHL history to put up three consecutive 40-point seasons.

It didn't take long for that success to translate to the NHL, where Nikishin tied the franchise record for the longest career-opening point streak by a first-year blueliner with points in his first four outings. But his latest first-ever feat represented more than just a record; it was another indication of his ongoing evolution from "raw" talent — as Rod Brind'Amour put it early in the year — to a more polished product, able to thrive in several situations at the NHL level.

As he continues to dial in the details on defense, something Brind'Amour says the coaching staff is "hammering home" with the young rearguard, Nikishin's overall talent is blossoming on a nightly basis, showing signs of a player who could anchor Carolina's blue line for years to come.

"Offensively, he's always had that confidence. We know he's got a big shot. I know sometimes, even tonight, after he got the one [goal], he didn't want- he was kind of hesitant. He needs to just keep shooting that thing, so we'll keep on that with him," said Brind'Amour.

"But his game's growing, there's no doubt about it... He's going to be a good player here for a long time."



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## Preview: March 12 vs. St. Louis

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Canes and Blues meet for the final time this regular season

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes will look to extend their home point streak to 13 games when they host the St. Louis Blues on Thursday.

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When: Thursday, March 12

Puck Drop: 7:00 p.m. ET

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

Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes App

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Canes Record: 41-17-6 (88 Points, 1st - Metropolitan Division)

Canes Last Game: 5-4 Win (SO) over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Tuesday, Mar. 10

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Blues Record: 25-29-10 (60 Points, 7th - Central Division)

Blues Last Game: 4-3 Loss (OT) to the New York Islanders on Tuesday, Mar. 10

Last Time Out...

A wild affair on Tuesday night at Lenovo Center ended with the Canes on top of the Penguins in a shootout, 5-4.

Alexander Nikishin had a goal and an assist, and Andrei Svechnikov and Jackson Blake both scored in the shootout.

Frederik Andersen earned a second straight win, stopping 24.

Season Series vs. STL...

Jan. 13: Joel Hofer stopped all 33 shots faced at Enterprise Center, backstopping the Blues to a 3-0 victory.

Historic Niki...

Alexander Nikishin made franchise history on Tuesday night, becoming the first rookie defenseman to reach nine goals (prev: Justin Faulk, 8, 2011-12).

Recording an assist as well, the 24-year-old also became the third defenseman in team history (since relocation) to put

up three multi-point games as a rookie, joining Jamie McBain (2010-11) and Noah Hanifin (2015-16).

In Net...

With Frederik Andersen having started on Tuesday against St. Louis, Brandon Bussi would be in line to get the nod this evening.

Bussi had his personal nine-game win streak snapped on Saturday in Calgary, a rare blemish on an otherwise historic first year in the league. Going 25-4-1 in his first 30 starts as an NHLer, Bussi will try to get back in the win column in his next start.

On The Other Side...

St. Louis arrives in Raleigh 4-0-1 in their last five games.

Forwards Robert Thomas and Jimmy Snuggerud have driven the bus for the team during their recent run, recording nine and eight points those games, respectively.

In net, 25-year-old Joel Hofer has taken over as the Blues' go-to. Having played 35 games this season, he has played more than Jordan Binnington (34) and has produced significantly better numbers in wins (Hofer: 16, Binnington: 9), goals against average (Hofer: 2.73, Binnington: 3.55), and save percentage (Hofer: .905, Binnington: .868).

Injury Updates...

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere (lower-body injury) left during the team's Mar. 6 win in Edmonton and did not return. Rod Brind'Amour said on Mar. 10 that he would likely miss "a couple of games."

Goaltender Pyotr Kochetkov (hip surgery) was declared "probably out for the year" by Rod Brind'Amour on Dec. 29.

What Are We Wearing?

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

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes are scheduled to practice on Friday before flying to Tampa. They'll face the Lightning on Saturday night.

Next Game: Saturday, March 14 at Tampa Bay | 7:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#)

Next Home Game: Wednesday, March 18 vs. Pittsburgh | 7:00 p.m. ET | [FDSNSO](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



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## NHL Power Rankings: Red Wings tumbling late, putting Stanley Cup playoff hopes in danger

By: Austin Nivison

Detroit is moving in the wrong direction in the East playoff race and could end up missing altogether for the 10th straight year

For much of the 2025-26 season, the Detroit Red Wings looked like a lock to halt their postseason drought at nine years. However, a late slide has put those hopes in jeopardy as the Eastern Conference wild card race has intensified.

Over its last 12 games, Detroit has gone 4-6-2, and the latest loss was the most devastating. On Tuesday night, the Red Wings held a 4-3 lead over the 15th-place Panthers with 90 seconds remaining. Then Detroit allowed two goals in 75 seconds to lose in regulation -- failing to pick up even one point.

Generally speaking, every team goes through stretches like this over the course of an 82-game season, but the Red Wings couldn't have timed this slide any worse. The Columbus Blue Jackets and Ottawa Senators have been rolling of lat and closed the gap. Columbus is just three points behind Detroit for the first wild card spot. Ottawa is six points back with two games in hand.

Even those teams in the rearview mirror wouldn't be all that concerning if the Red Wings were playing good hockey and simply failing to get results, but they've been a pedestrian five-on-five team all year. The team's 50.1% expected goals share in those situations ranks 16th, per Natural Stat Trick, and only three teams score at a lower rate.

When looking at the personnel, those numbers make sense. Offensively, the big three have played at a high level. Lucas Raymond, Dylan Larkin and Alex DeBrincat have all been excellent. Outside of that, it's been a struggle to find consistent contributors. Patrick Kane and James van Riemsdyk are in the twilight of their careers. Andrew Copp and J.T. Compher just don't move the needle enough either.

As the Red Wings hit a skid at the wrong time of year, here are the updated NHL Power Rankings.

All expected goals and goals saved above average data via Natural Stat Trick.

Biggest Movers

Up: 4 Blues

Down: 5 Red Wings

1

Stars Roope Hintz will be out indefinitely with a lower-body injury after getting tangled up with Nathan MacKinnon. That's a devastating loss for the Stars because Hintz was building a legitimate Selke Trophy case as the league's best

defensive forward. Dallas' center depth will be tested now.

-- 40-14-10

2

Sabres Since Jan. 1, Alex Lyon has been exceptional between the pipes. In his 10 appearances, Lyon has saved 9.74 goals above average and a .841 high-danger save percentage. Goaltending is one of the biggest reasons why the Sabres are about to end their lengthy playoff drought.

2 40-19-6

3

Avalanche I keep waiting for the Avs' power play to improve, and it never does. They've converted on just 15.8% of their power play opportunities, which ranks 30th. What makes that number even more painful is that Colorado has been on the man advantage 203 times, which is the fourth-most in the NHL. 1 43-11-9

4

Hurricanes Can the Hurricanes trust Brandon Bussi in goal this postseason? The undrafted rookie has won 25 of his 30 starts this season -- and his numbers have been relatively strong. However, Bussi has struggled a bit more of late. Over his last 15 appearances, Bussi has allowed 3.07 goals above average while posting an .884 save percentage.

1 41-17-6

5

Wild Kirill Kaprizov is the best player on the Wild, but the line featuring Mat Boldy and Joel Eriksson Ek has been driving the bus for most of the season. With those two on the ice at five-on-five, Minnesota has outscored opponents 34-19 while posting a 51.9% expected goals share. -- 38-16-11

6

Lightning Can we talk about the season Gage Goncalves is having for the Lightning? He's been a force at five-on-five. He boasts a plus-21 goal differential in those situations, and he's already tied his career high of 21 points. Goncalves has become a tremendous depth piece for Tampa. -- 39-20-4

7

Ducks Leo Carlsson missed the Olympics due to injury -- one that he tried to play through for most of December. Since getting some time off to get healthy, Carlsson once again looks like a budding star with three goals and eight assists in eight games. Anaheim needs that to continue if it wants to win the Pacific. 2 36-25-3

8



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**Penguins** Pittsburgh has now played eight games without Sidney Crosby in the lineup, and the team has weathered the storm relatively well. The Pens have gone 4-2-3 in that span, and Crosby is skating again. This team has refused to go away all season, and it just needs to hold on for 19 more games. 1 32-17-15

9

**Mammoth** John Marino is playing like a top-pairing defenseman for the Mammoth. The team is dominating his five-on-five minutes, outsourcing opponents 68-38 while Marino has already blown past his career high in points with 30 in 64 games. He's brought an exceptional two-way presence to the blue line. 2 34-26-5

10

**Canadiens** Earlier this season, it seemed like rookie Ivan Demidov was finding the scoresheet every night, but the rookie has struggled with consistency over the two months. His three goals are tied for ninth on the team in that span, and his 13 points are tied for sixth. -- 36-18-10

11

**Blue Jackets** Mason Marchment has been a perfect fit for the Blue Jackets since they acquired him from the Kraken in December. In 21 games, Marchment has 19 points and a plus-eight goal differential at five-on-five. I'm excited to see how Connor Garland meshes with this group as well. 2 33-21-10

12

**Islanders** Matthew Schaefer is ridiculous. He's the first 18-year-old defenseman in NHL history to score 20 goals, and he's three goals behind Brian Leetch's rookie defenseman record of 23. I don't think even the biggest Schaefer believers could've predicted something like this in his rookie campaign. -- 37-23-5

13

**Red Wings** After sitting on their hands at last year's trade deadline, the Red Wings did add veterans David Perron and Justin Faulk this year. That's better than nothing, but I'm not sure those two will be enough to get Detroit past the best teams in the Eastern Conference this postseason. 5 36-22-7

14

**Senators** Dylan Cozens has been scorching hot lately, and that's good news for the Senators' playoff push. He's got five goals and one assist in his last five games, and Cozens is now up to 23 goals on the season. If he's playing at a high level, Ottawa's center depth looks a lot more dangerous. 2 32-23-9

15

**Bruins** The Bruins just keep finding ways to win -- even if it's not always pretty. They've gotten the results in spite of some subpar five-on-five metrics. Boston ranks 28th in expected goals share (46.3%), but maybe I should just stop betting against it to make the playoffs. 1 36-22-6

16

**Oilers** Edmonton elected not to upgrade its goaltending at the trade deadline, and that was a bold decision. The Oilers already swapped Stuart Skinner for Tristan Jarry earlier in the season, and Jarry has been a mess since joining the team. He's allowed 10.5 goals above average while posting an .862 save percentage. 1 32-25-8

17

**Golden Knights** The Golden Knights' win over the Red Wings on March 4 was their first against a team currently in playoff position since Nov. 20. For whatever reason, Vegas has struggled to beat quality competition all season. That probably doesn't bode well for the postseason (assuming they get there). 1 29-22-14

18

**Kraken** One of the only reasons Seattle finds itself in playoff position is its goaltending. No matter who has been in the crease for the Kraken, they've been great. Joey Daccord, Philipp Grubauer and Matt Murray have combined to save 28.4 goals above average. 1 29-25-9

19

**Flyers** Things have seemingly gotten pretty awkward in Philadelphia. Rick Tocchet has verbally expressed his displeasure with Matvei Michkov all season, and the second-year winger has just 33 points in 63 games while playing under 15 minutes per game. 2 30-23-11

20

**Sharks** One player the Sharks would probably like to see hit another level is William Eklund. The 23-year-old has been fairly productive (38 points in 58 games), but it feels like there's still room for him to grow. The former No. 7 overall pick has the tools to be a high-end playmaker, and he could give San Jose another real offensive threat outside Macklin Celebrini and Will Smith. 1 30-26-6

21

**Capitals** How will the Capitals respond to the John Carlson trade? Washington was in the thick of the playoff race when one of their best players and a team leader got shipped across the country. Regardless of what happens the rest of the way, the Caps should be commended for being realistic about their Cup chances in 2025-26. 1 32-27-7

22

**Panthers** The Cats can bury any hope of a three-peat, and that's OK. The first-round pick Florida sent to Chicago last year was top-10 protected, so if the Cats lose enough, that pick will shift to 2027. That would give the Panthers an opportunity to restock their depleted prospect pool -- or just use it to make a deal and reload for next season. 1 32-29-3

23

**Devils** If you're looking for any explanation as to why the Devils' season has gone so far off the rails, their lack of puck luck at five-on-five is probably a factor. New Jersey is dead last with a five-on-five shooting percentage of 6.59%. 1 32-30-2

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**Predators** Nashville has essentially relied upon four forwards for all of its offense this season. If some combination of Ryan O'Reilly, Filip Forsberg, Steven Stamkos and Luke Evangelista aren't getting it done, then the Predators are in big trouble. It's not a good sign for the franchise that only one of those players is under the age of 31. 2 29-27-8

25

**Kings** After struggling to generate any offense for the better part of two seasons, the Kings finally made a coaching change and fired Jim Hiller shortly before the trade deadline. That was a move that needed to be made, but it might be too little, too late at this point in the season. -- 26-23-15

26

**Blues** Will the Blues continue to explore a Robert Thomas trade this offseason after Alexander Steen takes over as general manager? Dealing a 26-year-old No. 1 center on a reasonable contract seems like something that could blow up in the team's face, even if it is looking at a multi-year rebuild. 4 25-29-10

27

**Jets** It seems like that legendary gold medal performance by Connor Hellebuyck really got him back on track. In five games since then, Hellebuyck has saved 2.76 goals above average while posting a .916 save percentage. 1 26-27-10

28

**Maple Leafs** The Maple Leafs haven't won a game since Feb. 3. Yes, the Olympic break makes that sound worse than it is, but the losing streak has still reached eight

games. Toronto is about to miss the playoffs for the first time since 2016. 4 27-27-11

29

**Flames** Devin Cooley could be an interesting trade chip for the Flames in the offseason. Dustin Wolf is the long-term No. 1 in goal, but the 28-year old Cooley has outplayed him this season with a sparkling .914 save percentage. Cooley is under contract for two more seasons at \$1.35 million. 2 25-32-7

30

**Rangers** If there is a real chance the Rangers could trade Adam Fox in the offseason, then 31 teams need to place a call as soon as the Stanley Cup gets handed out in June. For whatever reason, Fox has been labeled as overrated when he's one of the only reasons New York has been competent over the last two seasons. 1 26-30-8

31

**Blackhawks** With Connor Murphy now in Edmonton, the Blackhawks' blue line is veil thin. Spencer Knight is still working his way back from injury, and I can't imagine he'll rush back to play behind this blue line. 2 24-29-11

32

**Canucks** Jake DeBrusk just hasn't been able to find a rhythm in Vancouver since signing that seven-year contract in the summer of 2024. He's tallied just 32 points this season, and he owns a minus-9 goal differential at five-on-five. He may need a change of scenery this summer. -- 19-37-8



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## Jackson Blake comes up big in shootout sealing 5-4 win

By: Haley O'Neill

The Carolina Hurricanes blew a multi-goal lead, but held strong in overtime and forced a shootout. Winger Jackson Blake, third in the rotation, found the back of the net and secured the extra point.

The Canes (41-17-6) dictated the pace and held possession in the first and final period against the Pittsburgh Penguins (32-17-15), but fell out of rhythm in the second, spending almost half the period a man down with four penalties. Both teams combined had a total of 12 penalties throughout the game, bringing the physicality typically seen in the postseason.

"It's a playoff-style matchup out there," winger Mark Jankowski said. "Two good teams going at it, so you can't be afraid to be physical and get in there."

After the Penguins forced overtime, the Canes' main penalty killer, defenseman Jaccob Slavin, headed to the box for slashing. The special teams for Carolina had to come up big and fill the shoes of their teammate to take the game to a shootout. After a miss and a goal for the Canes, Blake stepped up and wasted no time skating the puck down the ice and put it in the back of the net past goaltender Stuart Skinner for the win.

"Right when I got the puck ... I just looked around everywhere," Blake said. "It's only what, a couple seconds [after] you get [on the ice], so you have to think of it quick. I tried to sneak one in five-hole, and luckily it went in."

Going into the third period, Pittsburgh was up 2-1. But their lead quickly evaporated and turned into a deficit.

With three different Hurricanes players tallying a goal and five tallying an assist, the Canes built a 4-2 lead before the Penguins' two late goals. Just under three minutes into the period, Jankowski tied the game on a follow-up from his own shot. 59 seconds later, Jarvis outskated the defenseman, capitalizing on a breakaway opportunity.

A 5-on-3 opportunity and quick passing from the Canes allowed defenseman Alexander Nikishin to record the final goal in regulation for the Canes. The pass across the goal from center Sebastian Aho assisted Nikishin in his ninth goal of the season and broke the franchise record for most goals by a rookie defenseman.

"Offensively, he's always had that confidence," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We know he's got a big shot. Even tonight, after he got the one, he was kind of hesitant. He needs to just keep shooting that thing, so we'll keep on that with him, but his game is growing. There's no doubt about it...He's going to be a good player here for a long time."

The Penguins didn't let off the gas, keeping the pressure high until the final whistle. A little over two minutes left to go in regulation, center Noel Acciari won the face-off and positioned himself in front of Andersen, blocking his view. Getting the puck from out wide, he placed it top shelf to cut the deficit to one. With an empty net and 36 seconds left on the clock, winger Bryan Rust found the net for the second time, giving his team a chance in overtime. But the Penguins were unable to secure the second point.

The Hurricanes take on the St. Louis Blues on Thursday, March 12, with a 7 p.m. puck-drop at the Lenovo Center.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## The Hockey News

### Carolina Hurricanes vs. St. Louis Blues: Lineups, Game Preview and How to Watch

By: Ryan Henkel

Hurricanes seek home win against struggling Blues. Key matchups, projected lineups, and broadcast details revealed for Thursday night's NHL clash.

What - Game 65 (41-17-6)

When - 7 p.m., Thursday, March 12

Where - Lenovo Center; Raleigh, NC

How to Watch - FanDuel Sports Network South, FanDuel Sports Network Midwest

The Carolina Hurricanes will look to continue their home success as they host the St. Louis Blues Thursday night.

Carolina is coming off of a 5-4 shootout win over the Pittsburgh Penguins and they've now won three of their last four games.

St. Louis is coming off of a 4-3 overtime loss to the New York Islanders in what has already been a really disappointing season.

Goals have been nearly impossible to come by for the Blues, who have also gotten nearly no goaltending support as well.

Things have gone downhill in a hurry for St. Louis, but as the Hurricanes already found out once earlier this season, underestimate them at your own peril.

#### Streaks

Seth Jarvis (2g, 5a) and Sebastian Aho (1g, 6a) have points in four straight games.

Alexander Nikishin (2g, 1) has goals in back-to-back games.

Andrei Svechnikov (1g, 2a) has points in back-to-back games.

#### Milestone Watch

Taylor Hall is two goals away from 300 career goals.

Sebastian Aho is three points away from 700 career points.

#### Game Notes

Carolina is 0-1-0 against St. Louis this season, having lost 3-0 on Jan. 13.

Andrei Svechnikov (7g, 13pts in 12gp) is a point-per-game player for his career against the Blues.

#### Key Matchups

#### Projected Starting Goalies

Brandon Bussi: 25-4-1; 0.899 Sv%; 2.38 GAA

Jordan Binnington: 9-18-6; 0.868 Sv%; 3.55 GAA

#### Leading Scorers

Goals - Seth Jarvis (28) / Jordan Kyrou & Robert Thomas (15)

Points - Sebastian Aho (66) / Robert Thomas (42)

#### Power Play

Carolina - 22.4% (11th)

St. Louis - 17.1% (25th)

#### Penalty Kill

Carolina - 79.4% (14th)

St. Louis - 74.3% (29th)

#### Hurricanes Projected Lineup

Andrei Svechnikov - Sebastian Aho - Seth Jarvis

Taylor Hall - Logan Stankoven - Jackson Blake

Nikolaj Ehlers - Jordan Staal - Jordan Martinook

William Carrier - Mark Jankowski - Eric Robinson

Jacob Slavin - Jalen Chatfield

K'Andre Miller - Sean Walker

Mike Reilly - Alexander Nikishin

Brandon Bussi

Frederik Andersen

Injuries and Scratches: Jesperi Kotkaniemi, Nic Deslauriers, Shayne Gostisbehere (LBI), Pyotr Kochetkov (hip)

#### Blues Projected Lineup

Dylan Holloway - Robert Thomas - Jimmy Snuggerud

Jake Neighbours - Dalibor Dvorsky - Jordan Kyrou

Jonathan Drouin - Pavel Buchnevich - Otto Stenberg

Alexey Toropchenko - Jack Finley - Pius Suter

Philip Broberg - Logan Mailloux

Theo Lindstein - Colton Parayko

Cam Fowler - Tyler Tucker

Jordan Binnington

Joel Hofer

Injuries and Scratches: Justin Holl, Oskar Sundqvist, Nathan Walker



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Alexander Nikishin Makes History

By: Ryan Henkel

Nikishin shatters Hurricanes rookie defenseman scoring record, showcasing offensive prowess and a relentless drive to make his mark in the NHL.

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Alexander Nikishin is no stranger when it comes to setting records.

The Russian blueliner had a prolific career in the KHL, twice setting the record for most points by a Russian-born blueliner, before making his way to North America and it seems like he didn't leave that side of him behind when he got to Carolina.

Tuesday night, Nikishin set a new franchise record for the Hurricanes, scoring his ninth goal of the season, which is the most goals ever by a rookie defenseman.

"It feels good," Nikishin said through Andrei Svechnikov. "Just making history is special and I'll never forget that."

Walt Ruff

Walt Ruff

@WaltRuff

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Alexander Nikishin is the first rookie defenseman in #Canes/Whalers franchise history to score nine goals in a season. 🏒

9:40 PM · Mar 10, 2026

The 24-year-old rookie had tied Justin Faulk's record just one game earlier in Calgary and so it seems that once he got a taste of the record books, he wasn't going to settle for a tie.

Nikishin started his career with a hot hand, registering four points in the team's first four games, but his pace slowed as the season continued.

However, he's started to pick his offensive game back up as of late, which is especially being helped along by taking over top power play responsibilities with Shayne Gostisbehere sidelined.

Even beyond his offensive game though, Nikishin brings a physical edge (he's fourth on the team in hits with 111) and he's had to play some big minutes too.

The Russian blueliner has long been touted as a top-tier prospect and so it's promising to see his game continue to grow as he adapts to the NHL game.

"Offensively, he's always had that confidence," said Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour. "We know he's got a big shot and I know sometimes, even tonight when he got the one, he was kind of hesitant. He needs to just keep shooting that thing. So we'll keep on that with him, but his game is growing. There's no doubt about that. We talk about how I'm not really concentrating on that part of his game. It's the other stuff that we're gonna keep hammering home. But he's gonna be a good player here for a long time."

### LINKS

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7106507/2026/03/11/nhl-draft-2026-first-round-picks-regret-ranking/>

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SportScan

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

1382823 Websites

The Athletic / Every first-round pick from the 2026 NHL draft that's changed hands, ranked by regret

By Sean McIndoe

The first round of the 2026 NHL Draft is going to take some work to keep track of. Last week's deadline saw three trades involving first-rounders in this year's draft alone. That brings the total number of picks that have changed hands from just that round to an even dozen, potentially, although some will depend on conditions.

Of course, not all of the teams involved in those moves would make them over again. So today, let's get you caught up on which picks have moved while also turning this into a ranking of regret. We'll go through all 12 picks, ranked from the ones whose former teams have no regrets at all to those where a team might like a do-over.

We'll start with the least regrettable of them all, which turns out not to be a very tough choice...

### 12. The Minnesota Wild's pick

Placement-wise, this is a tricky one to project. The Wild are on pace to post one of the best records in the league, but their path to the final four is as tough as it gets. If they lose in the first two rounds, this pick probably ends up in the mid-20s.

The trade: In December, the Wild traded this pick along with Zeev Buium, Marco Rossi and prospect Liam Ohgren to Vancouver for Quinn Hughes.

The thinking at the time: Quinn Hughes is awesome, and would probably continue to be awesome in Minnesota.

The thinking right now: Quinn Hughes is awesome, and has definitely continued to be awesome in Minnesota.

Regret rating: 0/100. Only because I've decided that we're not going to do negative numbers. Minnesota fans may have had some mild pangs over parting with Buium or Rossi, but a mid- to late-20s pick for arguably the best defenseman on the planet? I feel like the Wild front office can live with that just fine.

### 11. The Dallas Stars' pick

There's a twist on this one, in that it's one of only two picks in the round that have been traded twice ... kind of. We'll get to that, but since we're focused on regret, it's the first trade we're focused on.

The trade: At last year's deadline, the Stars sent firsts in 2026 and 2028 to Carolina along with Logan Stankoven and two thirds for Mikko Rantanen.

The thinking at the time: Rantanen had gone from Colorado to Carolina earlier in the year but didn't want to sign an extension there, so the Hurricanes flipped him to Dallas.

The thinking right now: Remember when Rantanen single-handedly beat the Avs in the 2025 playoffs? That was cool.

Regret rating: 10/100. The deal cost the Stars plenty, and we'll see what the future first ends up looking like. But for now, no regret.

### 10. The Colorado Avalanche's pick

The Nic Roy trade with the Toronto Maple Leafs raised a few eyebrows, but that's for next year's first. This one is likely to be very late in the round.

The trade: The Avs sent this pick and a 2028 third plus Oliver Kylington and Calum Ritchie to the New York Islanders for Brock Nelson and William Dufour. (This is the other pick that's been traded twice; the Islanders flipped it to the St. Louis Blues for Brayden Schenn last week.)

The thinking at the time: Nelson was a big name at the 2025 deadline, and the Avs were Cup-hunting.

The thinking right now: While some of us didn't love the move at the time, Nelson's proven us wrong as a great fit in Colorado.

Regret rating: 15/100. Knowing that and where this pick will land, the Avs make this move again in a heartbeat.

### 9. The Detroit Red Wings' pick

The Red Wings haven't quite clinched a playoff spot yet, but they're close. A run to the conference final isn't out of the question in a weird Atlantic, but this pick will probably end up in the low 20s.

The trade: The Red Wings sent this pick along with Justin Holl, Dmitri Buchelnikov and a third to acquire Justin Faulk at least week's deadline.

The thinking at the time: The Red Wings needed a top-four defenseman in a market where not many were available. In addition, patience was wearing a bit thin for Steve Yzerman's conservative approach, especially after Dylan Larkin's comments about last year's (quiet) deadline.

The thinking right now: Pretty much the same, since it's been less than a week. But Faulk has looked good in his two games so far, and the response to the trade was reasonably positive.

Regret rating: 25/100. Check back when we've had a chance to evaluate the deal with the benefit of at least one playoff run, but for now, Faulk still has that new-car smell.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD READ NEXT

The Washington Capitals just traded John Carlson — will they lose Alex Ovechkin, too?

Ovechkin's contract expires after this season, and the Capitals just traded one of his close friends.

### 8. The Anaheim Ducks' pick

Hey, I remember this trade.

The trade: The Ducks sent this pick and a third to the Capitals for John Carlson in what may have been last week's most surprising trade.



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The thinking at the time: The young Ducks shocked many of us by trading a conditional first for a veteran UFA, apparently figuring that they had as good a shot as anyone at this year's Pacific.

The thinking right now: The same, except the weather is slightly warmer.

Regret rating: 35/100. Of all the moves on our list, this one feels the most "TBD." We haven't seen how Carlson fits in Anaheim, we don't know if they can (or want to) re-sign him, and most importantly, we don't know where the pick will end up being. The Ducks have the option to keep it if they miss the playoffs, which feels unlikely. But the difference between making it and winning at least two rounds is significant, so we'll see. For now, let's assume they're comfortable but maybe a little bit nervous.

### 7. The Vegas Golden Knights' pick

Right now, it would be in the late teens, which is surprisingly high, although in a weak Pacific it's not hard to imagine Vegas going to the conference final and pushing this pick to the end of the round.

The trade: This pick went to Calgary, but not for Rasmus Andersson; that's next year's pick. This one is from way back in 2024, when the Knights got Noah Hanifin for a first, a 2025 third and Daniil Miromanov (with the Flyers tagging in for some retention).

The thinking at the time: The Knights were the defending champs at the time, and were doing what they always do — shoving their way to the front of the line for the best player available.

The thinking right now: Hanifin's been fine in Vegas over the years.

Regret rating: 45/100. Do the Golden Knights ever regret anything? Does anyone in Vegas?

### 6. The Florida Panthers' pick

This projects to be easily the highest pick we've had yet, coming in right around the ten spot if the season ended now.

The trade: The Panthers traded this pick along with Spencer Knight to the Chicago Blackhawks for Seth Jones and a 2026 fourth at least year's deadline. (If you're wondering, the Brad Marchand trade also cost the Panthers a first, but it's in 2027.)

The thinking at the time: Flags fly forever, let's go win another Cup. Besides, there's no way the pick will be all that high.

The thinking right now: They did indeed win that Cup, so we can't rank this one all that high. And crucially, it's top-10 protected, meaning there's a good chance the Panthers come out of this with a good pick and then get right back to contending next year. But it's also possible that they could end up sending the 11th or 12th pick to Chicago, which is a steep price for a team with no prospects.

Regret rating: 50/100. This is as high as I can go, given the Panthers won the Cup. But when you factor in the season Knight is having, you do wonder how this one looks down the line. At the very least, Hawks fans have to be thrilled with how this all worked out.

### 5. The Carolina Hurricanes' pick (maybe)

This one gets a bit complicated. The Hurricanes have two firsts, their own and the Stars' from the Rantanen deal, and the Rangers get whichever one is better. Right now, that would be the Hurricanes' pick, but it depends on how the rest of the season and playoffs go. This could just end up being the same Stars pick we've already covered. For now, let's assume it's Carolina's.

The trade: Last summer, Carolina traded this pick, a second and Scott Morrow to the Rangers for K'Andre Miller.

The thinking at the time: The Hurricanes apparently really like Miller, enough that they gave up a ton to get him and then signed him to a \$60-million extension.

The thinking right now: Miller's a solid player and at 26 still has room to grow, but the Hurricanes gave up plenty, both in terms of trade and contract.

Regret rating: 60/100. If you were expecting Miller to blossom into a Norris candidate in Carolina, it hasn't happened yet. If you were willing to settle for a solid second-pair guy, you're feeling OK.

### 4. The Edmonton Oilers' pick

This pick is top-12 protected, although it would take a significant Oilers collapse for that to come into play. Like the Ducks' and Knights' picks, it would be in the teens today but could jump to the end of the round if the Oilers emerge from the Pacific.

The trade: The Oilers sent this pick and Carl Berglund to the Sharks for Jake Walman at last year's deadline.

The thinking at the time: Walman's good and not too expensive for another year, and the Oilers were very much in "win now" mode. People thought the move was OK at the time.

The thinking right now: Walman signed an extension, which helps. He hasn't been amazing in Edmonton, but he's been fine, at least when he's healthy.

Regret rating: 65/100. We're getting into dicey territory here, although not quite full "I want a do-over" status. Any regret here is less about keeping the pick and more about opportunity cost — could it have been spent more wisely, either at the time or during this year's goalie hunt?

### 3. The Tampa Bay Lightning's pick

Wait, the Lightning once owned a first-round pick?

The trade: The Lightning acquired Yanni Gourde and Oliver Bjorkstrand from the Seattle Kraken in a three-way deal involving Detroit as a cap broker. It cost them a package including this pick and next year's first, both top-10 protected.

The thinking at the time: A classic all-in push by a Cup favorite.

The thinking right now: Last year's Lightning only won one playoff game, in a series that Bjorkstrand missed due to injury and in which Gourde had only one point. They're favorites again this year, but with Bjorkstrand about to hit UFA and Gourde turning 34, this feels like a big overpay for two bottom-six depth pieces.

Regret rating: 75/100. It's not Tanner Jeannot trade bad, but it's a lot.

We're doing this with the total benefit of hindsight, which isn't fair to the general managers, but too bad for them.

### 2. The Toronto Maple Leafs' pick

Did you know about this one? It doesn't come up very often.

The trade: The Leafs sent this pick, a 2025 fourth and Fraser Minten to the Bruins for Brandon Carlo at last year's deadline.

The thinking at the time: The price was sky-high, but the Leafs figured they were getting a long-term blue line piece, since Carlo was 28 and signed through 2027 on a deal the Bruins were eating some salary on. Besides, it will be a late first, right? Right?

The thinking right now: Uh-oh! The pick will not be a late-first, and since it's top-five protected (instead of 10 or 12 like most other protected firsts), the Leafs will likely end up surrendering a top-10 pick to a division rival for a player who hasn't fit well. Weird, they never do stuff like that.

Regret rating: 95/100. This won't be the trade that gets Brad Treliving fired in a month, but it will be mentioned in the first paragraph of his Leafs obituary. In fact, you were probably assuming it would take top spot on today's list. And it kind of does, except that ...



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### 1. The Ottawa Senators' pick

I went back and forth on whether this one should even count. But while it's not a trade, the Senators used to have a first-round pick and now they don't. That means it changed hands, right?

The trade: At the 2022 deadline, the Ducks sent defenseman John Moore and the contract of Ryan Kesler to Vegas for Evgenii Dadonov and a second. No, neither of those teams is the Senators, but stay with us.

The thinking at the time: What a relatively dull trade that surely will not cost anyone their job.

The thinking a few hours after that: Wait, it turns out Dadonov has a no-trade clause that the Knights somehow didn't know about, and the trade has to be scrapped. How does that happen?

The thinking after the league looked into it: It turns out the blame was with the Senators and then-GM Pierre Dorion, who apparently hadn't informed the Knights about the NTC when they sent Dadonov to Vegas in 2021. (Vegas wasn't on his list, so the clause didn't factor into that trade.)

The league punished the Senators by stripping them of a first-round pick in either 2024, 2025 or 2026, with the team getting to decide which pick it gave up. The rebuilding Senators kept their picks in 2024 and 2025, meaning the bill comes due this year. The debacle also helped cost Dorion his job.

The thinking right now: It's fair to say Senators fans aren't thrilled. New owner Michael Andlauer sure wasn't. And they have at least a bit of a case — losing a first isn't unprecedented, but it's harsh punishment. If the whole thing was Dorion's fault, Sens fans would argue, then he's already more than paid a price.

Unless the league backs down at the last minute — which would also not be unprecedented — the Senators could forfeit a pick in the mid-teens.

Regret rating: 100/100. Regret might not be the right word in Ottawa; maybe "rage" would be better. Either way, it's a mess. At least the Leafs still have Carlo in the lineup, where he could still theoretically help them someday. The Sens are going to lose their pick for nothing at all, because of how a GM their fans didn't like screwed up a trade his team wasn't even involved in. If you put this one on the list, I don't see how it goes anywhere but the top spot.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.12.2026

1382824 Websites

The Athletic / NHL Calder Trophy race: Ranking top rookies at 2025-26 season's three-quarter mark

By Scott Wheeler and Harman Dayal

Each year at The Athletic, reporters Scott Wheeler and Harman Dayal publish a quarterly Calder Trophy list ranking the top rookies in the NHL.

In this final instalment of the 2025-26 season, they submitted five player ballots mimicking the PHWA's voting process. Here are their top five rookies in this year's class at the three-quarter mark, plus a few honorable mentions.

#### 1. Matthew Schaefer — LHD, 18, New York Islanders

Stats: 64 GP, 20 G, 26 A, 46 PTS, 24:16 ATOI, +12

Wheeler's ballot: No. 1

Dayal's ballot: No. 1

Dustin Wolf and Macklin Celebrini combined to take away 26 first-place votes from Lane Hutson last year. The year before that, Brock Faber took 42 first-place votes from Connor Bedard. It should be unanimous this year: Matthew Schaefer is to quote the definition of the award, the "player ... most proficient in his first year of competition in the National Hockey League." And while it's the record-breaking goal totals that have put it to bed, his impact on the Isles extends to being among the league leaders in ice-time and doing it with world-class skating and a great head on his shoulders, driving positive impact at both ends. He has single-handedly elevated the Isles' ambitions.

Even if Sennecke or Demidov were to go on a 30-in-20 heater to get close to point per game (the kind of season that wins the Calder in a landslide most years) Schaefer still probably runs away with it.

#### T2. Ivan Demidov — RW, 20, Montreal Canadiens

Stats: 62 GP, 13 G, 35 A, 48 PTS, 15:19 ATOI, +5

Wheeler's ballot: No. 2

Dayal's ballot: No. 3

Demidov isn't yet playing the high-teens minutes that allow a 60-point player to become a point-per-game player, but his impact in his minutes as a rookie has been undeniable. He's got a real chance at 65 points (a total that has won lesser players the Calder), his skill level has consistently flashed, and he has played to better underlying defensive results than Sennecke has. The "Ducks give up a ton as a team" excuse doesn't hold up quite as well side-by-side Demidov, either, because the Habs also give up a ton as a team and he has still managed to have an impact on that side of the puck.

He has also, to the eye, often looked like a driver on his line — like other guys enjoy playing with him and play better when they do, a marker of a true star.

Demidov and Sennecke feel neck-and-neck for the Calder silver medal.

#### T2. Beckett Sennecke — RW, 20, Anaheim Ducks

Stats: 63 GP, 20 G, 31 A, 51 PTS, 17:37 ATOI, -9

Wheeler's ballot: No. 3

Dayal's ballot: No. 2

There's a growing argument for Sennecke to overtake Demidov for second place on a lot of Calder Trophy ballots.

Since mid-November, Sennecke has scored 39 points in 45 games (a 71-point pace). He's got a seven-goal and three-point lead over Demidov in the scoring race for the season and has arguably been more important to his team as well — Sennecke is Anaheim's leading point-getter since mid-November, and had to step up when Leo Carlsson was injured.

Sennecke's combination of power, speed and silky smooth skill is extremely rare. He drives controlled entries and rush offense, has a fun, creative bag of dekes and is already a prolific shot generator (leading all rookies in shots on goal). He adds a unique dimension with his physicality and snarl, which has been more and more noticeable night-to-night.

Demidov is winning his matchups more decisively in terms of five-on-five goal differential, but you could argue that Sennecke's underlying play-driving profile has actually been more impressive. Demidov's line has earned 45 percent of shots and 46 percent of expected goals, whereas Sennecke has driven 51 percent of shots and 51 percent of expected goals.

The surprise with Sennecke isn't that he's emerged as a star winger, but rather how quickly he's hit this level — he was 19 at the start of the season, was viewed as a raw project, and wasn't even a guaranteed full-time NHLer for 2025-26.



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4. Jesper Wallstedt — G, 23, Minnesota Wild

Stats: 26 GP, 14-6-5, .913 SV%, 4 SO

Wheeler's ballot: No. 4

Dayal's ballot: No. 4

Before the Wild acquired Quinn Hughes in December, who vaulted the team to Cup contender status, it was Wallstedt who arguably saved the team's season. Minnesota ended October with a nightmare 3-6-3 start, with the club's woes keeping pucks out of their net emerging as one of their biggest issues.

With the Wild in trouble, Wallstedt went on one of the hottest streaks we've seen from any NHL goaltender this season: From Nov 1 onward, he won nine of his next 10 games while rocking an outrageous .954 save percentage. The Wall from St. Paul has come back down to Earth lately — his save percentage is .888 since Jan. 1 and Filip Gustavsson has re-established himself as the starter — but overall, this has been an enormously impressive breakout season.

Stylistically, he's such a treat to watch — Wallstedt's technical mastery and positioning are pristine. He's exceptionally calm, poised and in control in his crease, which allows him to make spectacular saves look easy at times. The 23-year-old Swede rarely overcommits to a play, which ensures that he stays in excellent position to stop second- and third-chance opportunities.

5. Ben Kindel — C, 18, Pittsburgh Penguins

Stats: 60 GP, 15 G, 15 A, 30 PTS, 15:21 ATOI, -8

Wheeler's ballot: No. 5

Dayal's ballot: No. 5

Kindel, Oliver Kapanen and Fraser Minten don't have the counting stats to truly compete with Sennecke and Demidov but what they do have for down-ballot consideration is that they've each centered top-nine lines on teams that, at the present moment, are all in a playoff position. We leaned Kindel here because of his craft, smarts and excellent defensive metrics. He has also featured more prominently on his team's power play and has really stepped up in stretches this season when the Penguins have been banged up.

HM. Oliver Kapanen — C, 22, Montreal Canadiens

Stats: 62 GP, 19 G, 13 A, 32 PTS, 14:50 ATOI, +3

Kapanen has filled in admirably as the Canadiens' second-line center this season, a high-leverage role that the club would have otherwise struggled to adequately patch over. The 22-year-old Finn is third among rookies in goals and fifth in points. He isn't the main driver of Montreal's second line — Demidov and Juraj Slafkovský (before his recent move back to the first line) have done a lot of the heavy lifting — but he's been an excellent complementary fit. Kapanen is fast enough to keep up with Demidov as an offensive threat off the rush, has a great knack for getting open in the slot, and can handle some of the dirty work to win battles and regain puck possession. He deserves down-ballot consideration, but we ended up giving Kindel a slight edge because he's had significantly worse linemates, which makes his comparable offensive results and superior two-way metrics more impressive.

HM. Ryan Leonard — RW, 21, Washington Capitals

Stats: 58 GP, 12 G, 21 A, 33 PTS, 14:30 ATOI, +1

Leonard is already a fun player to watch. The winger is a top-notch puck transporter, capable of driving dynamic entries and rush chances with ease. He's shown tremendous growth in his playmaking, as his knack for finding dangerous east-west seams and setting up teammates for Grade-A scoring chances has been prolific. Leonard's precocious impact as a solo driver of play and offensive chances — which you have to see on a

shift-by-shift basis to truly appreciate — makes him a slam-dunk future star.

Leonard has hit a wall in the second half, though. He was playing at a 58-points-per-82-games pace during our midseason check-in, but has slumped lately. We're still very high on the player, though, and believe he's only scratching the surface of his potential, especially since he's averaged only 14:30 per game this season.

HM. Noah Ostlund — LW/C, 22, Buffalo Sabres

Stats: 52 GP, 10 G, 14 A, 24 PTS, 13:46 ATOI, +8

Ostlund has been an immediate difference-maker in Buffalo's middle six. The undersized but crafty forward is an excellent stickhandler in traffic and boasts strong playmaking vision. His overall point totals may not jump off the page, but his five-on-five point production rate is already second-line level. He's also holding his own from a two-way perspective, as the Sabres are controlling a positive share of shots, scoring chances and have a plus-10 goal differential during Ostlund's five-on-five shifts.

HM. Fraser Minten — C, 21, Boston Bruins

Stats: 63 GP, 14 G, 15 A, 29 PTS, 15:00 ATOI, +17

If you sort this year's NHL rookie class by goal differential, No. 1 on the list is Minten. Strong two-way play isn't normally enough to drive voting for the NHL's major awards without the production to match it, but Minten's game is built around reliability and he has been just that as a young center in the league this year, helping the Bruins fill an important hole in their lineup. The top three spots on Calder ballots feel pretty sewn up (with variation likely in terms of ordering Nos. 2 and 3) but Minten deserves real consideration for Nos. 4-5 on folks' ballots and we expect he'll get some votes.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.12.2026

1382825 Websites

The Athletic / Why do Cup contenders keep going after one of NHL's slowest, oldest players? 'Instant culture'

By Chris Johnston

Julien BriseBois is known for the laser focus and discipline in his decision-making as general manager of the Tampa Bay Lightning, and it's a large part of what helps the Lightning remain a perennial contender.

Even BriseBois has his limits, though, and he had to break one of his own fundamental unwritten rules this past week at the NHL trade deadline.

BriseBois typically likes to avoid placing all of his eggs in one basket by acquiring players with term remaining on their deals. But on Friday, he handed the Los Angeles Kings a second-round pick for a player on an expiring contract. Why?

"There's only one Corey Perry," he told reporters.

And because there's only one Perry, there always seems to be a top NHL team with a need for the 40-year-old winger. Perry has gone from the Dallas Stars to the Montreal Canadiens to the Lightning to the Chicago Blackhawks to the Edmonton Oilers and now back to the Lightning while appearing in five of the past six Stanley Cup Finals.

He's got a real shot to extend that streak after landing back with a Lightning team that's led the way in the Atlantic Division for most of the season.



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On the surface, Perry is an unlikely candidate to be in that kind of demand. He's the second-oldest skater in the entire league, trailing only 41-year-old Brent Burns of the Colorado Avalanche, and he's also one of the slowest. Among the areas where the NHL's Edge data lists him below the 50th percentile are maximum skating speed, skating distance and speed bursts above 18, 20 and 22 miles per hour.

Still, amid those considerable headwinds, Perry finds a way to get the job done. He's a difference-maker.

"I don't think it's a coincidence that he's been to five Finals in six years," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "That doesn't just happen. He's a catalyst for a lot of runs he's been on. I think you see an opportunity to bring him back, (you do it). He transcends time."


What does that look like behind the scenes?

According to a front-office member from one of Perry's recent stops, he's "instant culture." A player who holds teammates accountable and improves a team's circumstances both in the dressing room and on the bench. An uber competitor who is "the most mentally tough human in the league."

Plus, Perry remains incredibly effective around the opponent's net, consistently working his way to the hardest areas of the ice with an ability to finish on chances once he gets there. He scored in back-to-back games following Friday's trade back to Tampa Bay, bringing his season total to 13 goals in 52 games.

"That's a guy you want on your team," Lightning forward Brandon Hagel said. "That's a guy that's going to push everyone to that next level. And that's a guy you want to win for. Really, really happy that was the guy that we went with."

Local grandfather Corey Perry still has it. [pic.twitter.com/Rjvs8YP7cg](https://pic.twitter.com/Rjvs8YP7cg)

— dom  (@domluszczyszyn) March 6, 2026

Perry found himself with a decision to make when the Lightning expressed interest in him last week. BriseBois pivoted in his direction after considering other targets who would have come with much higher acquisition costs and more perceived risk. The familiarity from his 2021-2023 stint with the Lightning was a plus on both sides of the ledger.

"He has this ability to bring guys into the fight," BriseBois said. "He knows when and how to raise the temperature on the ice. He knows when to calm things down, when that's what's needed, and that's priceless if you want to go on a long playoff run."

Perry waived his no-trade clause to facilitate the deal after giving some consideration to remaining in Los Angeles and perhaps even signing an extension with the Kings. His wife Blakeny and 8-year-old son Griffin stayed back in California while he quickly packed up to join the Lightning for a weekend back-to-back against the host Toronto Maple Leafs and Buffalo Sabres.

"We were kind of going back and forth on whether to stay, whether to leave," Perry said. "We had a bunch of discussions, my wife and I, and then obviously with my little guy — he's got his school, he's got baseball, hockey, lacrosse. He's got all kinds of stuff going on. It's tough leaving them, but at the end of the day, you have a chance to win a Stanley Cup. That's what the end goal is."

You can't blame him for allowing that to become an all-encompassing pursuit by this point.

Perry won a Stanley Cup with the Anaheim Ducks in 2007, his second NHL season, before improbably ending up on the losing end of the championship series in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024 and 2025.

The first two of those defeats came against Tampa Bay in COVID-19-era Cups — while playing for the Stars and Canadiens, respectively — before he joined the Lightning in free agency just in time for them to fall

short of a threepeat by losing to Colorado. In the past two years, Perry's Oilers fell to the Florida Panthers in consecutive Finals.

"When you lose five of the last six, there's some hunger still in there," he said.

Perry now sits fourth all-time in NHL history with 237 career playoff games on his resume — behind only Chris Chelios (266), Nicklas Lidström (263) and Patrick Roy (247). He's fond of saying that he plans on playing hockey professionally until they cut his skates off.

Beyond his strong leadership qualities and ability to produce offense from the bottom six, what's allowed Perry to remain such an attractive commodity into his 21st season is a love for the game that's never waned or wavered.

For example, the Lightning gave Perry the option to sit out Saturday's visit to Scotiabank Arena after travel delays kept him from arriving at the team hotel in Toronto until 6 a.m., only to have him insist on dressing and then score in the first period of a 5-2 win over the Leafs.

"He's just built the right way," Cooper said.

For yet another team with Stanley Cup aspirations, he's viewed as an X-factor capable of helping a really good roster blossom into a great one this spring.

"(With) Corey, I think at the end of the day, it's passion — passion for the game," BriseBois said. "I don't know that any player is as passionate as Corey Perry about hockey. He loves the game. He loves to compete. He loves to muck it up. He loves the challenge of doing the hard things and the rewards that come with that."

"So I would say it's not so much a skill set as a mindset. That's what separates him from the other players. That's why he's still playing at a really high level at this age."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.12.2026

1382826 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Fowler takes another step towards his destiny in win

Eric Engels

You knew Jacob Fowler was locked in from the second the puck dropped at Canadian Tire Centre, through to the final minute of play when he pulled out four consecutive stops to help his Montreal Canadiens plunge a spike right through the wheel of the Ottawa Senators' playoff push.

In a word, his performance was revealing.

The stakes made it so.

This wasn't your regular, run-of-the-mill Wednesday in Kanata. This was the second half of a back-to-back for the Canadiens, up against a rested Senators team playing to extend hope created off a 10-game sequence that saw them only lose once in regulation. Four points were on the line in both directions; lose and the strong hold on a playoff spot weakens, win and the chasm between them and the Senators widens, while the gap between them and the teams they're chasing at the top of the Atlantic Division narrows. And Martin St. Louis put the puck in Fowler's glove for it.

The young goaltender squeezed it and held on tight, making 31 saves.

"I felt pretty calm," the 21-year-old told reporters after the 3-2 Canadiens win, though he didn't need to say it.



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We could see it, the Canadiens could see it, and the Senators won't be able to unsee it.

Everyone had better get used to it, though, because this kid is well on his way to becoming the man in Montreal.

For now, he gives the Canadiens and starter Jakub Dobes what they need — what Samuel Montembeault hasn't been able to deliver with any consistency this season.

Insurance, for one. But also confidence.

"It does have a bit of a calming effect to see him make those big saves but act like it's just another routine save," said Alex Newhook, who banked one off Senators goaltender Linus Ullmark to create the rebound Ivan Demidov capitalized on for the winning goal.

That came with 7:20 to go in a game that saw momentum ping-pong at full velocity.

The Senators seized it right from the start with two quick strikes Fowler thwarted, and then they surrendered it when Dylan Cozens bowled Fowler over and sent the Canadiens to the power play.

Juraj Slafkovsky's 24th goal of the season gave the visitors a lift, but then the Senators got three consecutive power plays and two goals from Drake Batherson to take a lead to first intermission.

They knocked the tired Canadiens on their heels, but Fowler kept them alive long enough to bounce back to their toes.

Alex Texier, who was replacing Cole Caufield (sick) on Montreal's top line after being scratched from the last four games, scored with less than three minutes to go in the second period, and then the Canadiens kept the Senators in their own zone for the first 13 minutes of the most important period of their season.

When the pressure shifted, when it mounted squarely on Fowler's shoulders, he came up with his best saves of the night — on Giroux with exactly one minute remaining, then on Cozens in the slot, then again on Giroux, and once more on Cozens — and did exactly what was expected of him.

Think about what it says about Fowler that this would be expected of him in his 11th NHL game.

"I think he's a confident guy, confident player, and I think you can tell when he's in the net," St. Louis told Sportsnet's Shawn Mackenzie prior to warmup.

His answer wasn't just based on Fowler's 10-game sample prior to Wednesday's start, it was rooted in watching Fowler rise through the ranks of the American development system, which St. Louis had been a part of through his entire post-playing, pre-NHL-coaching career.

He saw Fowler emerge out of Florida, saw him establish himself as a top prospect with the USHL's Youngstown Phantoms, watched him dominate both at Boston College and with Team USA at the world junior championships, and he's kept close tabs on his shining professional compartment in the American Hockey League since late last season.

Fowler had been there since Jan. 16, following two losses with the Canadiens that — coupled with the brief resurgence of Montembeault — made the timing ripe for him to return to Laval.

But Fowler wasn't surprised when he was sent to Ottawa Tuesday and told he'd be starting against the Senators Wednesday.

No, he was ready.

And St. Louis was ready to give him that opportunity.

"I think it's where we're at today," he said earlier in the day. "The result is important, and I think it's the best decision for the game tonight."

After Dobes stopped 17 of 18 shots in a win over the Toronto Maple Leafs Tuesday at the Bell Centre, after Montembeault didn't stop enough of them in a 6-5 loss to the Anaheim Ducks last Thursday, it was a logical one.

But Fowler made it a no-brainer because these are the situations he's built for.

"We know what he's capable of," said Newhook. "Some of those saves he made late in the game there, it's a big reason why we won the game tonight. A lot of credit to him, and it's great to see."

Get used to it.

We're going to see more and more of it from here to the end of the season, and this is just the beginning for Fowler.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.12.2026

1382827 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Brock Boeser ready to be veteran pillar in rebuild: 'I'm better mentally'

Iain MacIntyre

It's a puppy named Winnie, a rescue dog he and his fiancée, Bella, adopted in Minnesota and brought to their new home on Vancouver's west side in December. Brock and Bella have been together for several years but the couple got engaged during the National Hockey League's Olympic break.

The puppy fills the void caused by the sudden loss in October of Coolie, the dog Boeser adopted as a 20-year-old rookie while attending the 2018 NHL All-Star Game in Tampa.

"She's kind of like the one we lost, Australian cattle dog, with pitbull, which caught us off guard, border collie, German shepherd," Boeser explained. "She's going to be a medium-sized dog, but she's got a lot of energy and she's fast."

"Like, I'm a big rescue (dog) guy. Because I love dogs so much, I feel like it's my duty to get another dog and take another dog off the streets or whatever. But it took me a good month and a half to start loving the dog, because I felt guilty. But we love her now."

A vet discovered widespread cancer in Coolie during the Canucks' first long road trip this season, and Boeser took a two-game leave of absence to fly home to say goodbye to the dog that had helped him through agonizing times that included the death of his father, Duke Boeser, in 2022 and a grief-filled season that followed in which Brock demanded a trade before rescinding the request.

But this isn't a story about one dog lost and another found.

It's about a player getting back to a happier place, mentally and physically, so that he can get his game back, too.

Boeser's problems this season go beyond Coolie. The 29-year-old winger struggled for weeks to play through a winter injury that was never disclosed, and generally just underperformed as most Canuck veterans have in a season that collapsed soon after it began, causing the franchise's first rebuild this century and months of uncertainty about which players that would affect.

Two years ago, during the Canucks' 109-point season that now feels like a dream, Boeser scored a career-high 40 goals. His production last year plummeted to 25 goals, and with 18 games remaining this season Boeser is on pace to finish with 20.



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But the longest-serving Canuck has scored five of his 15 goals in the last 10 games, and Boeser is lately playing with noticeably more pace and even some physicality, for which he is not known.

There was a play in Monday's 2-0 loss to Ottawa in which Boeser made up a half-step on Thomas Chabot as the fleet defenceman was streaking with the puck behind the Vancouver net, then angled him into the boards to separate the Senator from the puck.

In a game last week against Carolina, Boeser was credited with a career-high seven hits, which prompted him to message former teammate Kiefer Sherwood, the San Jose Shark who is the NHL record-holder for hits in a season.

"I said, 'I'm trying to play like you,'" Boeser said after Wednesday's practice at Rogers Arena. "He just laughed.

"I'm trying to play the right way, and I think part of winning hockey is you've got to take the body. But I don't think I had seven hits that game. I think they might have given me a couple extra there."

But three games after surviving Friday's trade deadline in a season that long ago became hopeless for the Canucks, Boeser is playing with more speed and overt competitiveness than we've seen in a long time.

"I'm better mentally," he explained. "I mean, most people know I lost my dog out of left field. In a way, that was as hard as losing my dad. I think we all know that I'm not great when I have something personal going on, trying to separate that (from hockey) and be good on the ice. But I don't want to make excuses; I still need to show up and do the best I can. I'm doing a lot better now."

Is he faster?

"I feel like I am, yeah," he said. "I feel like I've been working really hard in the gym and I feel like I always work hard in practices when we go out on the ice. I've been really trying to do more morning skates lately, just get my feet moving in the morning. I've been really working hard in the gym with Mark (Cesari, the Canucks' strength coach), working on quick feet and jumping and all that stuff that can help me be quicker on the ice. I do feel like I'm moving better."

Boeser was among the veteran Canucks reported last week to be open to a trade, although he said Wednesday that management never approached him about the no-movement clause in the seven-year, \$51-million contract he signed on July 1, and he hasn't asked for a trade.

"I committed to signing here for that long, and I'm not just going to bail on the guys," he told Sportsnet. "I'm not going to go ask for a trade; that's not who I am as a person. You know, maybe, we see how things are in the summer — obviously, everyone has their meetings — and talk it over and make sure you fit in where they want. There's a lot of things to talk about and figure out, but I committed to being here and that's my goal.

"I've always expressed how much I love it here and how supportive everyone's been — the fans, you guys, just everyone. If you ever do think about (leaving), it definitely crosses your mind how much you love it and just that the people have been so great. But I'm not even thinking about that; I'm just happy to be here. You know, we've got a house now, and I've talked about how nice that is. And I think we've got a great group. They've got some learning to do. . . but we're getting there."

At 29, Boeser is going through his first rebuild, but not his first dark age with the Canucks. In 2015, the Minnesotan was one of the first foundational pieces drafted by Jim Benning when the former general manager tried to retool the team by surrounding a few prospects with older players acquired by trade or free agency.

"There were way more older guys then. . . where now it's like there's very few old guys and we've got a lot of young guys," Boeser said. "I feel like that's how it's way different. You can see the talent level of these young guys. We didn't have that (when I arrived). What was it, just me and Bo

(Horvat) maybe and that was it? So it's way different. They were trying to build a team back then with older guys, where now it's like we're trying to get young. We're trying to see the talent level of these guys and teach them the right way."

If Boeser stays in Vancouver beyond this season, he should be a candidate to captain the team although the Canucks, with so many under-25 players developing in the NHL or on their way to it, could defer naming a replacement for Quinn Hughes.

"This is who Brock is," coach Adam Foote said. "He's gets it, he understands it, he's a pro and he wants to lead the right way by example. He understands what's going on and he understands that, you know. . . young guys need support, and how he carries himself goes a long way to where the direction the young guys are going to go."

"I feel like I'm really trying to focus on trying to set a culture," Boeser said. "Like, we're restarting again. We talked about (culture) two years ago, and I thought we did a good job. And then last year was chaos. And now we're resetting again. Us older guys had talks once the trade deadline passed, and we're really focused in on that. I feel like we've set some good stuff to build off right now."

The Nashville Predators visit Rogers Arena on Thursday.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.12.2026

1382828 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / The strange state of captaincy among Canada's NHL teams

Justin Bourne

While there are debates to be had about the true value of a good captain, nobody argues against the need for strong leadership in general.

Whether it comes from one person or a group or people doesn't matter; if you've got shining examples of what the coach and team want executed, you can establish a healthy direction for your team.

With that, the debates about who actually wears the coveted letter probably matter less than many think on the outside. Still, the choice does tell us something — mainly, who the organization sees as 'The Guy,' and I don't just mean the coaches, but the offices above that too.

Today's captains are still supposed to be those "shining examples," but they're more commonly franchise players now, the types who are going to be with the organization from start to finish (ideally), the types the team wants to present to their fans and the world as their face of the franchise. That means that some superstars are handed that letter young and meant to grow into it.

We're talking about it today because it's a pivotal time of the season where leadership matters more (post-trade deadline and pre-playoffs), but also because if you look around Canada, the state of the captaincy is . . . unusual.

World events, contract timing, flailing franchises and a few other reasons have taken what's typically one of the few solid things about a team and put it on shaky ground.

So in the interest of keeping it democratic, let's talk about all seven Canadian teams, their captaincies and the direction of the capital-C in Canada.

Backlund has one of the most impressive NHL careers that few outside Alberta appreciate. He's played in parts of 18 seasons for a total of 1,130



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games, and he's about to hit 600 points, all with the Flames. But while he's had eight head coaches, he's only played under two captains: Jarome Iginla and Mark Giordano.

With all due respect (so much!), he's not on those guys' level, and Backlund feels like a steward of the 'C' now. He turns 37 next week and has one more year under contract, but the Flames would love for their captain to provide more, from on-ice play to the ability to sell jerseys.

I'm sure they'd love to see Backlund carry them through to the better days, quietly and effectively (just like his career), but eventually they're hoping the next Iginla comes their way in time for the new building, and the turnaround.

McDavid is Canadian hockey at this point, the heir apparent to Team Canada's captaincy when Sidney Crosby is done. He checks every box of what you want your captain to be.

Some may say "but he hasn't won" (because pretending the 4 Nations wasn't a huge deal at the time is convenient for narratives). But the problem is that he feels that way, too. He wants to win, has to win — and wants to do it in Edmonton.

The problem there — much like another captain we'll get to below — is that years of "going for it" have stripped the Oilers' cupboards thin, and so it gets harder to win each year, and it's tough to imagine him spinning his wheels in his early 30s for a retool, rebuild, re-anything. He has two years under contract after this one, but as has been written other places, he's not going to leave Edmonton empty-handed were he to bolt, so it's down to this year and next for the Oilers to figure it out.

The stakes are high in the games, and the Oilers have as good a shot as anyone in the Pacific. I'd never bet against McDavid. But that underlying pressure adds another layer that hasn't really been there in the past.

This one is fun to write about, because really there's nothing to see here. The Canadiens have a star-level captain who's respected, defends and says all the right things.

He's prime age, the rebuild has them closer to Cup contention than the lottery, and he's not going anywhere. There's really nothing to note here aside from "nailed it."

This one is different, isn't it? In the wake of the Olympics and all the U.S. flag-waving and other things that stirred up particularly patriotic feelings in both Canada and the U.S., there was a bit of a weird tension between American captains and their fans.

Tkachuk was one of those guys handed the captaincy young with the expectation that he would grow into it, and you can't question his commitment to his team between the whistles. These are great things. But no doubt people are aware of a few other things too, like his relationship with his brother in Florida, and of said brother's recent comments to Brady about how there's less pressure, taxes and snow down south.

Hint hint.

Fans are aware that his contract is timed the same as McDavid's and Auston Matthews', which leaves him two seasons after this one. It's also well established that the final one is the "exit" season, as leaving as Mitch Marner did from Toronto is clearly a way to burn any goodwill fans would have for a departing player, and nobody wants to do that.

There's just sort of an underlying vibe of "you know he lays it all on the line when he plays, but you wouldn't be shocked if he did what brother Matthew did and asked to leave." That guy would lay it on the line for whatever jersey he's wearing.

But the Sens have team control and want him to be their guy, of course. And he's saying all the right things. In the end, the Sens want him to stay, their fans do too — the guy is a prime-aged physical star — and so they

hope they can be competitive in the years ahead. After all, winning is the best way to hang on to players who want to win.

Toronto Maple Leafs: Auston Matthews (with Morgan Rielly and John Tavares)

I mentioned above that "there was a bit of a weird tension between American captains and their fans," and, well, there's only one other American captain: Matthews.

I'd argue that this captaincy situation has been shoved into "dire" pretty quickly for the Leafs and their fans. They spent years with Matthews as the face of the franchise before finally giving him the 'C,' which he essentially was even when he wasn't wearing it. Everyone looked to him to pull them through; he bore the brunt of the pressure, he was undeniably Their Guy. Suddenly though, you've got:

- The aforementioned weird tension
- Matthews' personal numbers in stark decline for the second straight season
- A team much closer to the lottery than playoff contention
- A guy with two more seasons on his contract, knowing the last one is a "move" season if it isn't working

With this season a write-off, that means the Leafs basically have one season — and you might say half of next season, not the whole thing — to show Matthews that they've got a direction that's worth sticking around to be a part of. (Unless you think there's a world in which he sticks around through a multi-year rebuild, which probably isn't an outcome worth betting on.)

Even in decline, Matthews is a star, and it's not impossible that with a long summer and a new coach, he's got a few more elite seasons left. The Leafs badly want to capitalize on that talent, they want him around (for winning and ticket sales alike), and so the question becomes "how do they reposition the Leafs between today and next training camp in a way that allows them to compete again next season?" That's just six months away.

If the Leafs can't prove that they've got a direction by October, they won't be any better off by December, which means next trade deadline could involve some big conversations. It's go time for the front office, or Matthews could follow fellow (former) American captain Quinn Hughes down south.

Vancouver Canucks: Vacant (Brock Boeser, Filip Hronek and Elias Pettersson)

Ah yes, Quinn Hughes. It would maybe make fans of the above teams feel better if they hadn't just seen one of the world's best players say "I like it here captaining a team in Canada, but not enough that if we're bad I want to stick around and answer questions after losses for multiple years."

While the Canucks have not yet doled out the 'C' after losing their star captain, give them credit: they've only recently embarked very clearly on this rebuild, and it's too early to say who's going to be the figurehead of this new direction. They may give it to a proven vet who's willing to stick around, but it's possible the next great Canucks captain doesn't even play on the team yet.

The Jets have gone with a Team Dad type of captain, which is always a popular coach's choice (less so management and those who want to sell jerseys). But Lowry is actually a very Canadian selection for captain: we tend to like a guy who does it the so-called right way, shows up to work every night and leads by example.

Sure, Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor may play more, produce more and matter more — Josh Morrissey too — but you can't teach their talent and you're trying to get others to emulate the effort of Lowry.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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It's not the perfect scenario, having your leader play 14:33 a night. Maybe they'll eventually do what the Leafs did with Tavares and Matthews, and hand it over to Scheifele or Morrissey.

But for now, you can safely say there's more stability with the Jets' captaincy than some of these other situations mentioned above.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.12.2026

1382829 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames making waves on U.S. college front

Eric Francis

NEW YORK — Jonathan Castagna is open to signing with the Calgary Flames as early as this spring, and he's not alone.

Sportsnet has learned the lone U.S. college free agent the Flames have targeted, Tyson Gross, is days away from inking an NHL contract, and his hometown Flames are on the short list of teams the highly sought-after Calgarian is considering.

The six-foot-three, 195-pound centre, who captains St. Cloud State, is a product of Springbank minor hockey, who sits 15th in the nation in scoring and won more faceoffs than any other player in college hockey.

The 23-year-old just wrapped up his third year in college with 18 goals and 41 points in 36 games.

It's an exciting possibility for the Flames, who already own the rights to a handful of other high-end U.S. college players, one or two of whom could also potentially join the club before season's end.

Castagna was one of the latest to join that list when the third-year centre at Cornell was acquired in last week's MacKenzie Weegar trade with Utah.

While it was clear the six-foot-two, 198-pound Toronto native wasn't intending to sign with the Mammoth because of the logjam of centres in their system, he said in a phone call Monday he's wide open to the possibility of inking with the Flames when his season ends.

"I'm definitely excited because there is a lot more opportunity for myself in Calgary, and I've heard such great things about the staff and organization from top down," said the third-round pick from 2023 out of St. Andrews College high school, who leads the Big Red with 14 goals and 32 points in 29 games.

"It will be nice to stay in Canada.

"I'm not saying anything definite right now, but hopefully I can contribute to the Flames. It's been my dream. If I get to have that opportunity to play in the NHL, and make an impact in the NHL, I'm going to take it. So we'll have to see how it all plays out.

"I guess the only thing I can tell you right now is I will not shut it down."

The Flames have three of their 50 roster spots open, and some of those could be filled by U.S. college stars soon after their respective seasons end.

Gross's season at St. Cloud State is already over, making his decision on where to sign imminent.

Collegiate players who make the jump to the NHL often like to do so immediately after the conclusion of their school's season, so they can burn one year of their entry-level contract.

"I don't like to get into that, because they're still playing in the playoffs, but there's definitely players that we want to sit down with and talk to and figure out what's best for them," said Flames GM Craig Conroy, when asked about college kids who could debut with his club before season's end.

"I don't want to rush them, even though they are good players and they're having really good years. But I want to see where their mindsets are at, and what they think is best for them too. We will work together, and if that means going back for another year, or come out and sign, we're open to that too.

"We're going to do it the right way — we're not going to try to just rush something for one year."

One of the Flames' most exciting college hotshots is Ethan Wyttenbach, who has been one of the NCAA's biggest stories of the year, going from a fifth-round pick in 2025 to a Hobey Baker frontrunner. Despite being a freshman, the 19-year-old New York native leads the nation with 24 goals and 57 points in 36 games at Quinnipiac University.

That's nine points ahead of second-place Gavin McKenna of Penn State, who is projected to go first overall in this summer's draft.

On Tuesday, Wyttenbach dropped by Madison Square Garden with his advisor to watch the Flames and chat with Conroy, telling Sportsnet that while his breakthrough season has likely sped up his timeline to turn pro, he hinted he's likely content to stay in school another year.

Same goes for Cole Reschny, the Flames' first-round pick from last summer, who has also had a brilliant freshman season at the University of North Dakota, where he has 33 points in 32 games, despite being just 18.

Reschny had a stellar showing as an underager at the World Juniors, where the playmaker from Macklin, Sask., had four goals in seven games for Canada.

Abram Wiebe is a six-foot-three, 209-pound left-shot defenceman at North Dakota who has made plenty of headlines of late, being named his conference's defenceman of the month, following three straight weeks of being named NCHC defenceman of the week.

Acquired from Vegas in the Rasmus Andersson trade, the 22-year-old alternate captain has 27 points in 36 games, and will seriously consider signing with the Flames this spring, given the opportunities that abound with the club's deadline decision to go into a full rebuild.

Castagna, who was named Ivy League's First Team on Wednesday, certainly sees it that way.

"To get to be a part of that would be pretty cool," he said of the team's youth movement, which could very likely include him, Wiebe and Gross this spring.

"I'll always have a soft spot for Utah because they took a chance on a kid from a high school program three years ago. Same goes for Calgary right now, taking a chance on me in a pretty big trade. So I'm flattered and honoured to be part of that deal."

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1382830 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Thomas Chabot must elevate without Jake Sanderson for Senators to make playoffs

Alex Adams



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 12, 2026

OTTAWA — Life without Jake Sanderson means that Thomas Chabot will be living in his teammate's skates for the foreseeable future.

For many years, Chabot was “the guy” as Ottawa's best defenceman, but since Sanderson's arrival on the scene in 2022, he has taken a second-pair seat.

With Sanderson out week-to-week with an upper-body injury, Chabot is reclaiming the role of Ottawa's No. 1 defenceman. According to reporting by The Sick Podcast's Jimmy Murphy, Sanderson is dealing with a separated shoulder.

Chabot would tell you he loves more minutes and a bigger role, although he is likely gutted for Sanderson.

“I realized that with Jake being so good, I'm not going to get as much offensive time and looks as I did before,” Chabot told Sportsnet.ca last week, before Sanderson's injury. “But that's fine, and I've said it multiple times, it's about finding ways to contribute.”

Well, that's just changed dramatically.

“You ask any hockey player if they want to play 30 minutes. I don't think any of us will say no, right?” Chabot said last week.

The conundrum is that Chabot had been playing the best hockey of his career in a second-pair role, with reduced minutes against easier competition. He told Sportsnet.ca that “it's way better” than 2019-2022, when he averaged over 26 minutes a night for three straight years.

When Sanderson came on board in 2022-23, Chabot's ice time immediately dropped, and this season he's averaging the lowest ice time per game since his rookie campaign. Meanwhile, despite playing second fiddle, Chabot has been scoring at the second-highest point-per-game output of his career.

But it's easier to adjust to a new job if you've done the job before.

“Chabby is a really confident guy as well. He knows how good he is,” said Senators forward Tim Stutzle about Chabot's new role. “Probably early in his career, everybody was saying he was just an offensive guy, but I think he's been really stepping up his defensive game.”

For years, Chabot was overworked, and the Senators' lack of talent and poor defensive play routinely exposed him. Chabot will never be as good defensively as Sanderson, yet he must elevate his defensive game as he's done in the past two seasons under coach Travis Green.

“When I became the coach of the Senators, Chabot probably had a little bit of a stigma around him. I wasn't sure what to expect,” Green said earlier this season. “Stigma’ might not be the right word, but just if you would have asked me, ‘What do you think of Thomas Chabot?’ I probably would have thought he was a very offensive defenceman that isn't great in his own zone.

“Right from our first conversation, he's been impressive. He changed his game. He stopped playing on the move, and just a little more stop-and-start to his game, not trying to cheat for offence.”

Chabot's defensive metrics have dramatically improved.

Although part of his defensive improvement, he'd tell you, was due to a specific reason.

“(Playing) 21-23 minutes, whatever it might be, every night. You're able to jump in the rush and make plays in the offensive zone, but also defend as hard as you can,” Chabot said earlier.

He will now try to defend at a high level with an increased workload. In his new role against Vancouver on Monday, Chabot played with Artem Zub, an elite defensive defenceman who compensated for Chabot's shortcomings. The duo was solid together, as Chabot played 24:29 — over two minutes more than his average ice-time this season — but took two undisciplined penalties. You also wonder what GM Steve Staios

would have done at the deadline if Sanderson had gotten hurt on Thursday instead of Saturday, the day after the deadline.

Nevertheless, it's also easier to defend when you have the puck constantly, which is Chabot's strength.

“At the end of the day, if every time I'm on the ice, I spend a lot more time in the offensive zone, it means we don't have to defend, and I'm doing my job for this team,” said Chabot. “I take a lot of pride in taking possession and hemming teams in their own zone for longer shifts and creating a lot of shots on nets or scoring chances or looks for my team at five-on-five.”

According to Evolving Hockey's Wins Above Replacement (WAR) metric, Chabot sits 33rd in that category since the beginning of the 2024-25 season. When Leon Draisaitl and Connor McDavid sit first and third in that category, you know the statistic has some merit.

His absence was felt this season, too, which speaks to his significance to the Senators, who are 7-8-0 without him this season compared to 25-14-9 with him.

One of the biggest adjustments for the longest-tenured Senator will be running a ninth-ranked power play.

There was a reason Sanderson supplanted Chabot as the first power-play unit's quarterback: he was more effective.

A big part of the Senators' surge to find themselves only three points out of a playoff spot, going 9-1-2 in their last 12, was because their vaunted power play, led by Sanderson, had scored eight goals in 12 games.

The second unit, which was run by Chabot until the Sanderson injury, has produced 10 of Ottawa's 47 power-play goals this season, but it has struggled of late. The last time the second unit scored was Jan. 18, going 14 games without a power-play goal.

You don't have to tell Chabot to enjoy the offensive side of the game.

“You always do (enjoy producing offence),” said Chabot. “I mean, we're all hockey players. We're all competitive.”

In all, the Senators need more from Chabot if they are to get into the playoffs without their star defenceman. Sometimes, one star's dimming light allows another's to shine.

Adams' apples

Chabot is known for his fun-loving attitude, whereby he never turns down a joke or a reason to smile.

When you listen to a Senators game broadcast, keep your ears attuned whenever Chabot is behind his net retrieving the puck from his netminder. Chabot will say thank you to his shotstopper. He told Sportsnet.ca that it first started as a joke with Linus Ullmark, who found it funny when Chabot thanked him for stopping the vulcanized rubber. Chabot decided to continue the playful act.

“I don't feel my age. I don't feel like I've been here for a long time. It feels like we're all still kind of young kids in here and having fun,” said Chabot.

Stats to know

Shoutout to Sportsnet Stats for these three gems:

Sens fans making their presence known

There have been a lot of shots thrown at the Senators' fan base over the years, especially when Montreal fans invade the Canadian Tire Centre as they will on Wednesday Night Hockey (Sportsnet, Sportsnet+, 7:30 p.m. ET).

With that being said, it was really cool to see Sens fans take over Vancouver while cheering “Go Sens Go.” Sens Nation is underrated.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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PK adjustments

On Jan. 24, Green announced that assistant coach Nolan Baumgartner would not be running the penalty-kill unit; instead, it was placed on the shoulders of assistant Mike Yeo.

At the time, Ottawa had the second-worst short-handed unit in the league at a clip of 71 per cent conversion. Since the move, Ottawa has the 10th-best penalty kill with an 81 per cent conversion rate, and the Senators have gone 9-2-2. Special teams win games.

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1382831 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why it's time for Maple Leafs to go full tank mode

Luke Fox

MONTREAL — Team Tank is welcoming all new recruits.

Losing is the new winning.

Every day between now and April 15 is Opposite Day.

Yes, the Toronto Maple Leafs' tumble down the leaderboard has been so aggressive and precipitous, all that flak general manager Brad Treliving is getting for not protecting his 2026 first-round draft choice through top 10 may be moot.

With a little lottery luck and more performances like Tuesday's 3-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens, these once-mighty Leafs may indeed fall all the way to the NHL's bottom five and keep the pick they surrendered to Boston (in a pricy package for Brandon Carlo) after all.

Like a campy horror flick, the Maple Leafs are so bad, it's good.

In an Atlantic Division that appears flipped, turned upside down, the Maple Leafs have gone from first to worst.

Still seeking their first win since the Olympic torch got extinguished, the Leafs are now losers of eight straight.

Year over year, their goal differential has plummeted by 63 goals over 65 games, from plus-37 to minus-26. That's worst in the Eastern Conference. They have two regulation wins over their past 21 attempts.

Were it not for a solid performance by goaltender Joseph Woll (.938) at Bell Centre, the Maple Leafs — who were outshot 33-18 by the younger, faster and suddenly more relevant Canadiens — wouldn't have hung around long enough to keep this one close until Jake Evans' empty-netter in the final minute.

What's changed now, though, after trading away three legit forwards for picks and giving more shifts to Marlies, is that the Maple Leafs are embracing the suck.

"At the beginning there out from the break, there's a lot of frustration and everything," said William Nylander, the only Leaf to score.

"But now, I mean, it's not going to help being frustrated. And so, I think the mood in locker room has changed a little bit. And I think that's made it a better environment for everybody."

The fifth stage of grief is acceptance.

Nylander is getting there, slowly.

The club's leading scorer says if someone told him the Leafs would be here in mid-March, much closer to last place in the conference than a wild-card spot, he wouldn't have believed them.

"I mean, hard to really stay optimistic in this situation," said Nylander, who only sees "snippets" of quality hockey from his team lately.

The sulkier the Maple Leafs can remain, the better their lottery odds.

The sport's hardest slumping team now sits seventh from the basement with a 6.5 per cent chance of winning the first-overall pick.

That Toronto's next seven opponents — Ducks, Sabres, Wild, Islanders, Hurricanes, Senators, and Bruins — are all strong outfits trying to win bodes well for the cause.

Hockey lovers are supposed to live in a world where the Leafs and Canadiens are both good and trying to win at the same time. Strangely, a decisive Montreal victory benefits all involved, as the Habs try to stave off a late push from the Ottawa Senators.

No one is crossing his fingers for a bottom-five spot more than Treliving, who maintains he "pushed" for top-10 protection on the Carlo pick yet would be hard-pressed to find much precedent.

The Florida Panthers, also in tank mode, protected their 2026 first-rounder in the Seth Jones trade with Chicago through the top 10, for example.

Tank hard enough, and Treliving could dodge at least a sliver of embarrassment on that one.

Forfeit overall pick No. 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 to the rival Bruins? That alone is cause for dismissal.

Ironically, what's now good for the organization does not reflect well on a bench boss only geared for one mission.

"I keep my head down and coach and try to get guys to play the best hockey they can play," Craig Berube said. "That's how I handle it. Nobody's happy we're in this situation, but you got to keep fighting and keep working and keep building and try to get better."

That goes for a shell-shocked Nylander, too.

"It's new for him, for sure. But every player and team goes through adversity at one point in their career, and this is some adversity that he's normally not used to," Berube said. "He's got to work his way out of it."

If the Maple Leafs aspire to work their way out of this mess and return to relevance and respectability next season, a top-five pick would go a long way.

Because missing the playoffs after nine straight years of springtime hockey must be a one-off. This thing will get back on the rails. Right?

"I mean, I sure hope that that's the case, for sure," Nylander said. "Otherwise..."

The superstar's thought remained unfinished.

Instead, it was left bouncing around like a fluttery lottery ball.

Where it'll settle, no one yet knows.

Fox's Fast Five

• Auston Matthews's goal drought has reached 12 games. One more game without a tuck and he ties his record, set way back as a rookie in 2016.

The captain has now fired 47 consecutive shots without hitting twine.

"It's been tough stretch for everybody, myself personally and us as a team," Matthews told reporters. "We're having a tough time creating offence, finding the back of the net."

The callup skated as third-line centre, earned some successful penalty-killing shifts, got a couple shots on net and skated 14:13 — more than five other Leafs forwards.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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No reason Groulx, recipient of a Berube back pat, shouldn't play Thursday.

- John Tavares, 35, got a jolt last season following a forced rest during the 4 Nations Face-Off tournament. We thought the Olympic break would do the only Leaf who's played every game some good.

Tavares, who came out the gates flying, has hit a bit of a wall. On the ice for all three goals against Tuesday, he's now a minus-22 over his past 20 games.

Yikes.

- Basketball fan Matthews on swapping jerseys with Jason Kidd: "It was really cool. I loved watching him growing up and kind of had some mutual people that we knew. Cool to meet somebody like that."

- Scott Laughton struggled to make his mark offensively when he got dealt last March to Toronto. He wanted to help his childhood team so bad; the lack of impact ate at him.

He freely admits that getting traded for the first time was a tricky adjustment.

Perhaps already being through that upheaval once is benefitting him in L.A., where he's already put up three points in two games.

Not-so-fun fact: Laughton never had a multi-point game as a Leaf.

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1382832 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers find building block in rallying win over Avalanche

Mark Spector

DENVER — They've muddled through 60-plus games in search of a game like this one. A road trip like this one, where something gets built rather than confidence being chipped away.

A trip that started in Vegas, where the Edmonton Oilers handed the Golden Knights a 4-2 loss. Then on to Denver to slay the dragon that beat you 9-1 when last you met, grabbing a 4-3 regulation win over the Colorado Avalanche that's going to have some staying power inside the Edmonton Oilers' collective psyche.

"These are games that you can look back on next month and really rally behind," said two-goal man Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. "Understand that, if we play like that we can beat anyone."

As the bench got roomier, with neither Colton Dach or Ty Emberson coming out for Period 2 due to injuries, the sense of a team being forced to pull together grew stronger. Then goalie Connor Ingram gets clocked out of the game by Nathan MacKinnon late in the second period — a goalie interference call that earned MacKinnon five-and-a-game — and suddenly you're in one of those tilts that you're going to be talking about for a while.

A game that's going to tell you a lot about yourselves. One way or another.

"It felt big too, on the bench," Nugent-Hopkins said. "I mean, we just understand where we're at. The time of the year, standings-wise. You're playing a really good team, there's lots of adversity tonight, and it would have been easy to pack it in. We did a great job just sticking to it and trusting each other."

In a long season full of faceless, forgettable hockey games, hockey players love games like this one: A game where you come together, dig

in and rip two points out of the toughest building in the National Hockey League.

A game where Tristan Jarry showed his teammates he'll go to battle with them. Where the shot blockers rack up 23 blocks to Colorado's eight. Where Trent Frederic went toe to toe with Nicolas Roy, before Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl provided the game-winner on a power play that just wasn't going to be denied.

"It's a good one. An important one," said Zach Hyman. "It's an important road trip against really good teams. And we're off to a good start on it."

"When you win games like this it builds belief in the group," Hyman added. "The whole way through, we played well. It wasn't just a fluky win. It was a good team win."

For the fragile Jarry, it was an unexpected opportunity to show his teammates what he was made of.

In a week where there has been some superfluous narrative floating around the internet regarding Jarry and his teammates — overblown, yes, but out there nonetheless — Jarry came on in relief and battled right alongside everyone else.

It's been a long, rocky road for Jarry since he was traded to Edmonton, devoid of nights where he walked out of a hockey rink feeling the way he did on Wednesday in Denver.

"Any opportunity you have to step in the net is another chance to be better," he said. "Tonight was another opportunity, and being able to seize that is a whole different moment. It's just (about) getting traction from that."

His teammates won't make a big deal about it publicly. But had it gone the other way for Jarry, this could have been a real back-breaker for the struggling 'tendy vis a vis his tenure in this dressing room.

"It's big. I mean, it's important," Hyman said. "You come into a game like that — a big game — and you're able to shut the door and help us get a win? It's got to feel good."

"We need him," Hyman continued. "We need him to get back to the level that he's capable of playing at, because he's a difference maker."

"He should feel very good about this," Knoblauch agreed. "He gets in there with 30 seconds left in the second period, and he's tested two times. Then in the third period, he made some big saves, a couple on Colorado's power play. Yes, he should feel very good about this, and we're going to definitely need him right away. Once, if not twice, going into this back to back (at Dallas and St. Louis)."

Knoblauch reports that it was the concussion spotter that took Ingram out of the game, not some other injury after that hellacious run in with MacKinnon. If Ingram wakes up feeling fine, it's possible he could start Saturday in St. Louis.

But it will be Jarry's net in Dallas Friday.

He earned that start, and a whole lot more, by holding off the mighty Avalanche.

"We're also a very good team," he points out. "But being able to size up to a team like that — play a team game like that — everyone did a great job, for sure."

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1382833 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / St. Louis' 150th win with Canadiens earned his way



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 12, 2026

Eric Engels

MONTREAL — Martin St. Louis chipped away until he finally broke through, kind of like Brendan Gallagher, who swung wildly until he connected with Jake McCabe's chin.

One more beating for the Toronto Maple Leafs, who have now lost eight in a row.

Whoa. Woe.

It was St. Louis' Montreal Canadiens delivering this knockout. They did it his way.

"I felt we played a deep game not necessarily just dumping pucks," the coach said. "We carried pucks deep, we activated our o-zone, I feel like we took what they gave us. We weren't stubborn through the neutral zone, and I felt like we did a much better job managing the neutral zone when they were coming at us, inside our structure, with some of the details we've been hammering the last few days. And I felt it helped us out."

It was St. Louis' 150th as Canadiens coach and, as Jake Evans said after sealing it with an empty-net goal, his fingerprints were all over it.

"I think he's a great coach because he's hard on us when he needs to be," Evans said, "and he reasons with us when sometimes we deserve better and it didn't go our way."

You can guess which version of St. Louis the Canadiens got after that trip through California.

While they were on the road, the details he was hammering away on were about puck management, about establishing offensive-zone presence rather than one-and-done rush chances, and about how to defend at five-on-six.

Everything finally sunk in against the Leafs, who, according to their traveling reporters in attendance at the Bell Centre, were dominated in the first period in a way they hadn't been in any other period over their horrid post-Olympic stretch.

The Canadiens managed the puck near perfectly through the neutral zone, not giving it away in that area of the ice a single time through those first 20 minutes. They carried or dumped the puck in and cycled the Leafs through a turbine before finally breaking them on the play Ivan Demidov, Alex Newhook and Oliver Kapanen connected on. And shortly after Phillip Danault put them up 2-0, they went to the intermission also leading in shot attempts (32-9), scoring chances (14-3) and high-danger chances (7-1).

"I'd have liked for us to have separated a bit more," said St. Louis.

But at least he could say that after momentum swung Toronto's way in the second period — with penalties for Arber Xhekaj and Lane Hutson helping and a giveaway from Noah Dobson leading to a William Nylander goal — the Canadiens quickly got things back on the rails and found a way to close the game out the right way.

Even without Cole Caufield, who missed all but two power-play shifts over the final 26 minutes because he was sick.

How the Canadiens did it at five-on-six was exactly what they had practised a week prior in San Jose.

It had become a hot-button issue to correct after allowing nine goals in such situations over the first 59 games of the season, and it continued to be one through the final two games of the California trip.

The Anaheim Ducks made the Canadiens pay for it last Thursday when Chris Kreider tipped an open point shot from Jacob Trouba to tie the game 5-5 before Alex Killorn won it in the shootout. The Kings nearly

made them pay for it on Saturday, when St. Louis said their survival in that situation had been more good fortune than good structure.

But against the Leafs, the Canadiens stuck to their positions in the middle of the ice instead of chasing the puck on the sides when it was in the opposition's full control. They got aggressive when the puck shook loose on the boards, and when the Leafs got it back and tried to attack, the Canadiens communicated, retreated to the middle and blocked Toronto's best shot attempts.

"That's what it takes to win," said St. Louis.

It takes Mike Matheson eating one in the foot with 38 seconds to go before springing Evans for the goal that cemented this 3-1 lead.

"He was awesome tonight," said Evans of the defenceman who had an assist and came up with two other huge blocks while playing most of his game-high 23:49 against Toronto's most dangerous players.

But Evans could've said the same of Demidov, Kapanen or Hutson. Or linemates Zachary Bolduc and Kirby Dach. Not to mention Nick Suzuki and Juraj Slafkovsky, or Jakub Dobes, who made 17 saves and notched his 21st win of the season.

It was a group effort, with the Canadiens pounding on the battered Maple Leafs.

The outcome wasn't all that surprising, but the way it was achieved was a departure of what we've seen from them of late — much to St. Louis' satisfaction.

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