



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

The News & Observer

Carolina Hurricanes push Canadiens to the brink with shutout win in Game 4

By: Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes took a 3-1 Eastern Conference Final series lead with a 4-0 Game 4 win.

Frederik Andersen posted a shutout as the Canes improved their playoff road record to 6-0.

Sebastian Aho scored a power-play goal to become the Hurricanes' career PPG leader.

The Carolina are one win away from playing for the Stanley Cup.

The Canes reeled off three rapid-fire goals in the opening period and kept the Montreal Canadiens mostly flustered and frustrated Wednesday in a 4-0 complete-game victory in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Final at Bell Centre.

The Canes, with goalie Frederik Andersen getting the 18-save shutout, took a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series and will look to close it out in Game 5 on Friday at Lenovo Center. Carolina will be after its third Eastern Conference title, reaching the Cup Final in 2002 and 2006, claiming the Cup in 2006.

After sweeping the Ottawa Senators and Philadelphia Flyers in the first two rounds, the Canes came off a long layoff and dropped a 6-2 decision to the Canadiens in Game 1 in Raleigh. But overtime wins the next two games gave them the series lead, and they controlled Game 4 in running their playoff road record to 6-0.

"We were solid, for the most part," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "There are certain areas we can be much better at, but it's tough to pick apart that game. We were good from start to finish and obviously that was the result."

Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Logan Stankoven scored in a span of 2:47 in the first period in what proved to be a lethal burst of offense. Andrei Svechnikov had a late empty-netter to cap the scoring and the Canes' defense was smothering from start to finish, allowing little.

"It's great to come out against a team like this and perform like that," Stankoven said. "At this time of year, you can't bring your 'B' game. You have to bring your 'A' game every night to win hockey games."

"We've shown the last little bit that we've been able to stick with a 60-minute effort. It's tough to play against when it's just waves and waves and you're playing defense."

The Canes were at their "A-level" best. The Canadiens again spent much of the game in their own end as the Canes' forecheck was relentless and effective. One defensive shift for the Habs in the third period lasted 2:30, leaving them exhausted, and some exhausted Montreal fans left the building early.

The three-goal surge was the second-fastest in Hurricanes playoff history and quieted the Bell Centre crowd. Stankoven used a boxing analogy to describe landing the big punch.

"Sometimes, you've got to (land) the body blows to get to the head," he said. "When you can stack shifts, good things will continue to happen."

And having a chance to close out the series?

"When you've got 'em right on the edge, you want to push 'em off," Stankoven said. "You don't want to let them hang around."

Hurricanes take early lead

Aho scored at 14:59 of the first period on a power-play blast off a Nikolaj Ehlers pass after the Canes' first power play of the game was punchless. It was Aho's fourth goal of the playoffs and his 11th career power-play goal, making him the team's career leader, passing Eric Staal (10).

It was also the Canes' first power-play score in the series after going 0-8 in the first three games.

Staal's second goal of the playoffs came 68 seconds later when he went to the front of the net and redirected the puck past goalie Jakob Dobes. Staal took a quick feed from K'Andre Miller, who backhanded a pass to the Canes captain on the move as he skated past the gate.

Just 1:39 later it was 3-0, Canes. The Stankoven line connected as Jackson Blake's pass set the center up with a shot off the rush at an open net and his eighth of the playoffs. It was Stankoven's first point of the series.

The Canes had a 13-5 shot advantage in the opening period as the Habs continued to struggle to put shots on goal. They had one in the opening 10 minutes of Game 4 after the Game 3 loss that had Montreal credited with one shot in the third period and one in 14:06 of the overtime.

Wednesday was the 25th birthday for Dobes, whose rookie season has been exceptional. He faced 42 shots, made a host of high-quality stops and had the fans chanting his name.

Late in the game, he was pulled for a sixth attacker and when Ehlers missed an empty net, Habs fans again cheered "Dob-by! Dob-by!" to honor their goalie — a touch of humor on a night when Montreal had little to smile about.

Hurricanes prepared for Canadiens' best

After the morning skates, the Canadiens said there was a need to be more physical and play at a better pace Wednesday against the Hurricanes. The Hurricanes, in turn, said they expected to see the Canadiens' best in Game 4.

"They're going to come out with everything they've got," Canes captain Jordan Staal said.

It didn't matter.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

The Canes had the Canadiens a bit muddled and indecisive after a pair of wins. Some of the Habs players mentioned after Wednesday's morning skate that they're facing a team that's "extremely well-connected" and applying pressure all over the ice, forcing mistakes.

"For us, it's about executing and knowing there's going to be pressure and making that right play," Habs forward Jake Evans said. "You have to make the right play, at the right time, under a lot of pressure. That's going to be the big key for us."

For the Canes, it's about applying more of the same. Keep being consistent. Keep the pressure on. Keep rolling four lines. Keep being quick and decisive in the defensive zone. Leave the rest to Andersen, who has started all 12 games in the playoffs and is 11-1.

As defenseman Jaccob Slavin put it: "He's been a brick wall for us."

Habs coach Martin St. Louis noted Wednesday that he has a fast team, but touched on one of his team's biggest problems in the series, saying: "When you turn the puck over, you don't look fast."

Brind'Amour answers ECF question, again

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour has been asked numerous times about past problems winning games in the Eastern Conference final.

Guess what? He was asked again Wednesday morning, although with a twist: What's different about this year's conference final as opposed to the others?

"I don't know what to tell you," Brind'Amour said. "We've won one more game, I know that, at this point."

It's the first time since the 2006 Eastern Conference Final against the Buffalo Sabres that the Canes have won more than one game in the ECF. The Canes, captained by Brind'Amour, won that series in seven games before beating the Edmonton Oilers for the Stanley Cup.

"The past is past," Brind'Amour said. "We have a new group, but we do have some guys who have been through it. You

learn from all your past successes and things that don't work out your way. I think that's a big thing.

"I think this is definitely an experienced group and every year that goes by they get a little more experience. I think that helps. Playoffs are all up and down. That's the nature of how this goes, and being able to handle that and understand it and just keep an even keel is so important."

Game 4 was a big one for both teams

No doubt a lot was at stake for the Canadiens in Game 4, but that can go both ways, Canes forward Jackson Blake said Wednesday.

"It's the biggest game of the series, I think," he said. "You either go home up 3-1 or you go home tied at two. This is a huge game for us, too."

The Canadiens had their chances to win Game 3 early in overtime — defenseman Mike Matheson hit the crossbar with a shot. Instead, the Canes won in OT for the fifth time in the playoffs and would like to add another road victory in Game 4.

"It's about sticking with our game plan, no matter how long the games are," Blake said. "Play your game and don't change anything as a group. Whatever they do, we're ready for it. We're not going to change what we do."

Ending the Svechnikov-or-Aho debate

If there still is a lingering question about who scored the overtime goal for the Canes in Game 3, Andrei Svechnikov or Sebastian Aho, it was Aho who wanted to make things clear — again — Wednesday after the morning skate.

"Svech scored it," he said, smiling.

Aho was positioned by the crease to the left of Dobes and jostling with forward Juraj Slafkovsky when Svechnikov took the shot from the top of the right circle.

"I've seen the replays and the puck might have hit something, but it wasn't off me or my stick," Aho said. "I didn't feel anything."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

The Athletic

The Hurricanes learned a tough lesson. They're taking it out on the Canadiens

By: Sean Gentille

MONTREAL — For weeks now, as the wins have stacked, and as the media contingent surrounding the Carolina Hurricanes has churned and grown, sifting for new narratives and exhuming the old, Rod Brind'Amour has fallen back on a line or three.

One of them: "The past is the past." Could be one game. Could be a few. Could be a series. Could be a season. Doesn't matter all that much. Move on from the good, just like you move on from the bad. To be unable to do that, Brind'Amour's logic goes, would be to lose sight of the work. If that's not a cardinal sin, it's something close.

There's value in the ethos, and the Hurricanes' status — one win from the Stanley Cup Final, one win from scaling the hill that comes before the mountain — is proof of its efficacy. Four victories over the Ottawa Senators gave way to four victories over the Philadelphia Flyers, and four victories over the Flyers have given way to three against the Montreal Canadiens. A rust-covered mess against Montreal is mixed in there. On Wednesday, after a 4-0 Hurricanes win that was somehow more lopsided than the score indicated, that lone postseason loss seemed a whole lot farther than five days in the rear-view.

It's on Carolina's record, though. Last year's conference-final loss to the Florida Panthers — an ugly result for an overmatched roster that had spent the regular season outkicking its coverage, maximizing its performance and raising expectations to an unreasonable level — is on that ledger, too.

For these Hurricanes, that's a good thing. It's a reasonable mistake to make about Brind'Amour's don't-stop-swimming approach, but it's a mistake all the same: There's room for growth, and there's room for lessons. The tenets of Brind'Amour's system — the pros and the cons, real and perceived — have been picked apart, reassembled and picked apart again for the better part of a decade. Going 1 for 13 in the conference final, as Brind'Amour's teams had done before the past six years, tends to have that effect.

It's fair, then, to wonder what has changed for a team that, as a baseline rule, plays every game the same way, and for the coach who demands it. A talent influx is part of the answer; the 2025 team fell short there, out of necessity if not design. Adding electrifying, productive winger Nikolaj Ehlers and rangy, do-everything defenseman K'Andre Miller helped Carolina turn that dial to the right. We've all seen it, just like the Canadiens (and Flyers, and Senators) have seen it.

What the Hurricanes are more easily copping to, now that they're closing in on the conference title that's eluded them,

is that while the past is the past, it gave them bits to carry along the way. One team in particular, actually.

Logan Stankoven was 27 games into his time with the Hurricanes at the start of last year's conference final. Acquired from the Dallas Stars as the centerpiece of a shocking deadline trade for winger Mikko Rantanen, a long-sought premium piece that the Hurricanes had added just weeks before, Stankoven had begun to adjust to the demands of Carolina's system — relentless pressure, "no breathers" in any zone, as Brind'Amour tells his players. He wasn't quite ready for the Florida Panthers.

"Last year against Florida was probably the toughest brand of hockey that I've played," Stankoven said of Carolina's five-game loss to the Panthers. He brought it up unprompted, in response to a question about how frustrating it can be for a team like Montreal to play a team like Carolina. "The way (Florida) played and how much physicality they bring, that's why they won the Cup back to back. So I think there's so many lessons that we've learned from those times. And now it's hopefully our turn to bring that and reciprocate that."

That might appear to be pay-it-forward benevolence from Stankoven. It is not. Asked what he meant, Carolina's leading playoff goal-scorer, who'd added his eighth in a game-deciding, first-period blitz, Stankoven expanded a bit.

"Physicality, composure, just how well they stuck together as a team and how consistent they were with their game. I think we've shown the last little bit that we've been able to stick with a full 60-minute effort and continue to roll over (forward lines). I think that's what Florida did to us last year."

The Panthers scored the first goal in games 1, 2, 3 and 5, winning all four. They held a 21-10 edge in overall scoring, 15-5 at even strength, and finished off the Hurricanes with elite talent and a full-series show of next-level physicality. Carolina kept pace in some regards but was overwhelmed in others. Stankoven, a few months away from assuming a larger place of prominence in Carolina's lineup as second-line center, took notes.

"It's tough to play against, when it's just waves and waves of playing defense," he continued. "When you're in the (offensive zone), it's a lot of fun to play, but it's hard to defend and it takes a toll on you, at times."

Miller wasn't part of those games. He was still a New York Ranger, marooned by a front office and three separate coaching staffs that blunted his impact and doubted whether he'd be worth a long-term investment. As Florida smoked the Hurricanes, beating them with a more-evolved version of their own game, Miller got to take it all in from his couch.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

"I got to watch a lot of the games and a lot of those battles," Miller said, "and it almost feels like a completely different team."

Later that summer, Carolina would acquire Miller for first- and second-round picks and sign him to a \$60 million extension. He may have been their best defenseman in Game 4. That's not an accident. The lessons Stankoven learned — ones about composure and consistency, about hitting levels of resilience and relentlessness that even Brind'Amour couldn't teach — have "absolutely" carried over, Miller said. That's the way it had to be.

"It's the players. They're the ones that were in it," Brind'Amour said. "We can help them and remind them about things, but they're the ones that are in it."

Continuing that synthesis — of theory and practice, of short-term goals and long-term ambitions — is the challenge, and the next step is closing out a team that's in the process learning a thing or two about itself. What's become clear is that the Canadiens are overmatched, and the Hurricanes, as tends to be the case in a series like this one, need to guard against overconfidence. The past might be the past, but it carries lessons on that topic, too.

"We understand," Brind'Amour said. "And maybe that's what Logan was talking about. We know how we have to play to go about our business, and we've got to bring that again (in Game 5). I don't think we're an overconfident group. I think we're a confident group in what we do, and we respect every minute of the playoffs."

They're 60 of those minutes away from buying themselves at least 240 more.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026



Quick-strike offense, suffocating defense fuel Hurricanes' 4-0 Game 4 win

By: Cory Lavalette

MONTREAL — The Canadiens had hope in every game of the Eastern Conference final.

By the end of Monday's Game 4 at Bell Centre, it was all gone.

Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Logan Stankoven scored in a span of 2:47 late in the first period, Frederik Andersen stopped 16 shots for his third shutout of the postseason, and Carolina smothered the Canadiens in a 4-0 win that gives it a commanding 3-1 series lead back to Raleigh.

"I just felt like we just were good from start to finish, and obviously we got the result," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

The onslaught started on the power play.

The teams combined for 14 power plays in the first three games of the series, but there were penalties aplenty in the first period.

After Carolina killed off two Montreal power plays and the Canadiens stopped the Hurricanes on their first, Aho scored his first goal of the series.

Nikolaj Ehlers came off the bench after Taylor Hall exited the penalty box to end a brief 4-on-4 sequence, and Shayne Gostisbehere hit him in stride entering the zone.

Ehlers quickly snapped a pass to Aho in the right circle. Aho one-timed the puck past Jakub Dobes (38 saves) for his fourth goal of the postseason at 14:59 and the Hurricanes' first power play goal of the series. Carolina has scored first in all four games of the series.

The Hurricanes doubled their lead 68 seconds later.

Carolina cycled in the offensive zone, and Ehlers handed the puck off to defenseman K'Andre Miller at the top of the zone.

Miller carried the puck low to the goal line and backhanded a pass in front of the Montreal net, and Staal — with his stick between the legs of Montreal's Josh Anderson — redirected it through Dobes' five-hole for a 2-0 lead at 16:07.

"I think that's the goal every night, to tire and wear out the opposition," said Miller, who is leading Carolina in ice time and has eight assists in 12 games. "I think that is the Carolina Hurricanes to a T — that's what we're known for, and it's been like that since I've been here. So I'm just trying to help out and be a part of it."

Carolina's second line then got in on the fun.

Gostisbehere went down and blocked a Lane Hutson shot from between the hashmarks, and the puck bounced off the Hurricanes defenseman and sent Jackson Blake and Stankoven on a 2-on-1 rush.

Blake waited for Montreal defenseman Jayden Struble to commit to him and then feathered a pass to Stankoven, who punched the puck past a lunging Dobes for his team-leading eighth goal of the postseason at 17:46.

"We had a couple moments in the first period, like (Gostisbehere's) block and a couple kills there that gave us momentum, and we were able to score a few goals and kind of take over the game," Aho said.

The Hurricanes didn't need to do more than that offensively. Carolina dominated the Canadiens for all 60 minutes, and it was particularly gruesome in the third period.

With Montreal needing its best period of the season, the Hurricanes instead shoveled dirt onto the wilting Canadiens. When Habs captain Nick Suzuki snapped a harmless shot at Andersen from the right circle — Montreal's first shot on goal of the final period — with 2:55 left in the game, the crowd that remained offered mock applause.

The biggest cheers all night were for Dobes, who played brilliantly on his 25th birthday but had no chance of singlehandedly willing his team to a win. The Bell Centre faithful saved their best moment of the game shortly after the Suzuki shot when, with Dobes on the bench for an extra attacker, Ehlers' shot from distance hit the crossbar, triggering a "Doby! Doby!" mock chant that both honored the team's goalie and scorned its players.

Andrei Svechnikov delivered the final dagger moments later, scoring into an empty net to send the Hurricanes back to Raleigh with one win needed to reach the Stanley Cup final.

"We've done a nice job of not getting ahead of ourselves and just focusing on, 'OK, we've got business to take care of,'" Brind'Amour said. "That's what we still have to do here."

Notes: Aho's 11th career postseason power play goal broke a tie with Eric Staal for the most in franchise history. ... Stankoven matched a career high (playoffs or regular season) with seven shots on goal. ... Hutson was minus 3. ... Sean Walker was plus 3. ... Forwards Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Nicolas Deslauriers, defenseman Mike Reilly and goalie Pyotr Kochetkov were healthy scratches for Carolina.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026



Hurricanes dominate Canadiens to take 3-1 lead in Eastern Conference Final

By: Brian Murphy, WRAL News

Carolina scored three times late in the first period and improved to 6-0 on the road in the postseason.

The Carolina Hurricanes are just one win away from the Stanley Cup Final after a dominant 4-0 victory Wednesday night over the Montreal Canadiens in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Final.

The Hurricanes scored three times in less than three minutes late in the first period, added an empty netter late and shut out the Canadiens for their third straight win in the series. Carolina leads the best-of-seven series 3-1 and can clinch Friday night in Raleigh.

"Tough to pick that one apart," coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

Carolina, the top seed in the Eastern Conference, is 11-1 in the postseason, including 6-0 on the road. Outside of a 6-2 loss in the series opener against Montreal, after 11 days off, the Canes have been unstoppable in the playoffs.

They were once again on their game Wednesday, controlling the action early, getting the game's first six shots and, for the fourth time this series, scoring first.

"We talk about starting like that, just keeping it simple early," Logan Stankoven said. "Sometimes you have to find the body blows to get to the head and open up the head. When you can stack shifts and set up the other guys for success, good things will continue to happen."

Good things did happen.

Sebastian Aho's one-timer from the left circle off a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers beat Montreal goaltender Jakub Dobeš with 5:01 remaining in the first period — Carolina's first power-play goal in the series on its 10th attempt. Carolina had been 0-for-9 on the power play in the series.

Just 68 seconds later, captain Jordan Staal made it 2-0 when he slipped a backhanded pass from K'Andre Miller through the legs of Dobeš. Staal battled Josh Anderson for position in front of the net and positioned himself perfectly to tip the pass.

Logan Stankoven capped the scoring binge with a goal off a feed from Jackson Blake on a 2-on-1 rush with 2:14 remaining in the period. The rush was set up by a blocked shot by Shayne Gostisbehere in the defensive zone. It was Stankoven's team-high eighth goal this postseason.

"Huge play in that game," Brind'Amour said.

That was more than enough for the Hurricanes against a Montreal team that went the distance in the first two rounds as the Hurricanes swept their first two opponents. Those six additional games, plus back-to-back overtime losses in Games 2 and 3, seem to have taken a toll on the Canadiens.

The Hurricanes outshot Montreal 42-16. Dobeš, who has started all 18 games for Montreal in the playoffs and turned 25 on Wednesday, allowed three goals on 12 shots in the first period. He stopped two breakaway opportunities from the Canes, including on Blake less than three minutes into the first and on Seth Jarvis midway through the third.

Andrei Svechnikov added an empty-net goal with less than two minutes remaining for the final score.

"Tonight was definitely one of our best games this playoff," captain Jordan Staal said on TNT after the game. "It's a good team, don't get me wrong. We were on it though. Our No. 1 goal is not giving them a sniff."

Montreal had just five shots in the first 20 minutes. The Canadiens were better in the second period, but couldn't get any past Carolina goaltender Frederik Andersen, who had several good stops with about 2:10 seconds remaining in the period. It came minutes after the Hurricanes were unable to capitalize on a lengthy 5-on-3 power play advantage.

Andersen, who recorded his third postseason shutout this year, has allowed just 19 goals in 12 postseason games.

"Freddie's been just a rock back there," Staal said. "He's so steady and so calm. And it is tricky at times, I think, for a goalie to be sitting and obviously they're going to get shots, and he made some big saves at the right time and that's what you need in a goaltender."

Carolina is making its fourth appearance in the Eastern Conference Final since 2019 under Brind'Amour. The Canes went 1-12 in the previous three series, but this year's team — with added depth and offensive firepower — is probably the best of the bunch and, now, closer to the Cup final than at any point in the last 20 years.

"The fourth one is always the hardest one to win," Staal said. "It's going to be a brand new challenge, brand new game and we're going to have to learn from this next game and then learn how we can get even better and find a way to close it out."

Vegas swept top-seeded Colorado, the NHL's best team in the regular season, in the Western Conference Final. The winner of the Eastern Conference Final will have home-ice advantage in the Stanley Cup Final with Games 1, 2, 5 and 7, if necessary, at home.

Previous coverage:

Game 1: Montreal 6, Carolina 2; Postgame rapid reaction

Game 2: Carolina 3, Montreal 2 (OT); Postgame rapid reaction

Game 3: Carolina 3, Montreal 2 (OT); Postgame rapid reaction

More on this



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Asset Thumbnail

Andrei Svechnikov scoring in overtime to win Game 3 of the Eastern Conference Final for the Carolina Hurricanes at Montreal was just his second goal and fifth point of the playoffs. It was a much needed moment for one of the team's leading scorers during the regular season. Coach Rod Brind'Amour ...

Asset Thumbnail

After a rusty start to the Eastern Conference Final, the Carolina Hurricanes look like their old selves. They lead the

Montreal Canadiens two games to one in the best-of-seven series after back-to-back wins in overtime. They have put 64 shots on net and allowed just 42 over that time. Shooting in...

Asset Thumbnail

Andrei Svechnikov scored at 14:06 of overtime as the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Montreal Canadiens 3-2 to take a 2-1 lead in the Eastern Conference Final. Shayne Gostisbehere and Taylor Hall scored in regulation for Carolina. Frederik Andersen made 11 saves. Mike Matheson and Lane Hutson sc...



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026



Recap: First-Period Flurry Leads Canes To Game 4 Win

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Canes now one win away from reaching the Stanley Cup Final for the first time in 20 years

MONTREAL - Three goals in 2:47 and a flawless 18-save shutout from Frederik Andersen helped the Carolina Hurricanes to a 4-0 victory over the Montreal Canadiens in Game 4 of the 2026 Eastern Conference Final.

[GAME SUMMARY](#) | [BOX SCORE](#) | [BUY PLAYOFF TICKETS](#) | [PLAYOFF HUB](#)

With no scoring through the first 15 minutes, there was a feeling that the two sides would retreat to their respective locker rooms with no scoring. Instead, striking thrice in under three minutes, Carolina obtained a commanding 3-0 lead before the break.

Starting with a Sebastian Aho power-play marker, the center one-timed home a Nikolaj Ehlers setup from Jakub Dobeš' glove-side circle. Just 68 seconds later, K'Andre Miller found a net-front battle-winning Jordan Staal to double the advantage. To conclude the flurry, Jackson Blake set up Logan Stankoven on a two-on-one to further extend the score and send the home crowd to the intermission silenced.

A scoreless second period whistled by with pace and saw perhaps Montreal's best chances on the night, but its 10 shots found nothing but Andersen between the pipes. Frustration then mounted for the Canadiens as ten shots became just three in the final frame, with the Hurricanes clamping down on their attack and dominating the closing 20 minutes.

With Dobeš on the bench for an extra attacker, Andrei Svechnikov found the empty net to make it a 4-0 Carolina win.

Stats & Standouts

Frederik Andersen recorded his third shutout of the 2026 postseason and the fifth of his Hurricanes career in the playoffs, both of which established new franchise records.

Andersen also became the fifth goalie in NHL history to win each of their first six road games to start a postseason. The others: Jonathan Quick (10 GP in 2012 w/ LAK), Billy Smith (8 GP in 1980 w/ NYI), Sergei Bobrovsky (7 GP in 2023 w/ FLA) and Patrick Roy (7 GP in 1999 w/ COL).

Sebastian Aho's first-period goal was the 10th time in 12 games this postseason that the Canes have scored first. They are now 9-1 in those games, including 5-0 on the road.

Aho's 11th career power-play goal in the playoffs eclipsed Eric Staal for the most in franchise history. His eighth career playoff game-winning goal also moves him into a tie with Artturi Lehkonen (8) for the fourth-most by a Finnish player in NHL history, behind Jari Kurri (14), Esa Tikkanen (11) and Teemu Selanne (11).

Logan Stankoven's eighth goal of the postseason tied him for the sixth-most in a playoff year in franchise history.

The Hurricanes scored three goals in the first period of a road playoff game for the third time in team history. The other times were Game 6 of the 2002 Conference Semifinals at Montreal (5) and Game 2 of the 2009 Conference Finals at Pittsburgh (3).

The Canes scored three times in 2:47 to mark the second-fastest three goals in a playoff game in franchise history. The only time they did so faster was 1:19 in Game 2 of the 2024 First Round against the Islanders.

Carolina became the seventh team in NHL history to win each of its first six road games to start a postseason. The others: the Kings (10 GP in 2012), Avalanche (7 GP in 2022 and 1999), Islanders (7 GP in 1980), Oilers (6 GP in 1987) and North Stars (6 GP in 1981).

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour with a succinct, yet fitting description of the win...

"We were solid, for the most part. There's obviously certain areas we could be much better at, but I thought it was tough to pick apart that game."

Logan Stankoven on the team being on its game right from the start...

"We talked about starting like that, just keeping it simple early. Sometimes you've got to find the body blows to get to the head and open up the head, so I think when you can stack shifts and set up the other guys for success, good things will continue to happen."

Shayne Gostisbehere on his shot-block leading to Stankoven's goal and how it represents the team's mentality as a whole...

"You'll hear it time and time again from a bunch of guys: we're all pulling on the same side of the rope here, we're all the same players in the sense that we're going to do whatever we have to do to win. You look at Fish, you look at the skill guys, they're blocking shots too. And especially the grinders, so to say, for our team, they do it every night. For



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

me, it was my time. I didn't have a choice, and fortunately, it went positively and the other way."

Frederik Andersen on finding success despite facing fewer shots than other goalies...

"The shot count is useless for me to look at, to be honest. You're still out there for the 60 minutes, you've still got to focus the same way. Just pay attention to your process, I think that's really the key. As a goalie, you get older and you learn that stuff, you get better at it. Just resetting every shift when you can... Your starting point is the same, and I think that leads to success for me. If we score or they score, it's all about the next play, and I think that's how you stick with it throughout a long series and a long playoffs."

Sebastian Aho on if the team can still improve after three straight wins...

"Absolutely. That's just (our) approach. All year, and definitely in the playoffs, we watch video every day and try to

find an edge to be even better, so we're definitely not satisfied. Obviously, it's a good game, a good win by us, but at the same time, we're looking to improve every day. Coaching staff has done an unbelievable job to just keep pushing us, and hopefully we can take that next step in the next game."

Nikolaj Ehlers on going back to Raleigh with a 3-1 series lead and a chance to advance on Friday...

"It feels great, obviously. We played really well tonight, but we've got to get one more, and it's not going to come easy. They're a great team, so we've still got a lot of work to do."

What's Next?

The Canes will return to Raleigh on Thursday before looking to close out the Habs in Game 5 on Friday.

Next Home Game: Friday, May 29 | ECF, Game 5 vs. Montreal | 8:00 p.m. ET How To Watch | Tickets | Parking



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026



Hurricanes shut out Canadiens in Game 4, move 1 win from Stanley Cup Final

By: Sean Farrell

Hold Montreal to 3 shots in 3rd, can claim Eastern Conference crown at home

MONTREAL -- The Carolina Hurricanes moved within one win of reaching the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since 2006 with a 4-0 win against the Montreal Canadiens in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Final at Bell Centre on Wednesday.

The Hurricanes lead the best-of-7 series 3-1. Game 5 is at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Friday (8 p.m. ET; HBO MAX, tru TV, TNT, SN, TVAS, CBC).

"I'm definitely excited, for sure, having the success we're having," Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere said. "And it's hard not to look past it but we have to take care of business. It's a businesslike approach for us to finish this off if we can and the fourth one is the hardest, so just more of the same from us."

Frederik Andersen made 18 saves for his third shutout of these Stanley Cup Playoffs, and Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Logan Stankoven scored in a span of 2:47 in the first period for Carolina, the No. 1 seed in the Metropolitan Division and Eastern Conference. Nikolaj Ehlers and Gostisbehere each had two assists.

"It feels great, obviously," Ehlers said. "We played really well tonight but we've got to get one more and it's not going to come easy, you know, they're a great team. We've still got a lot of work to do."

Jakub Dobes made 39 saves for Montreal, the No. 3 seed in the Atlantic Division, which has lost three straight after not losing consecutive games in a pair of seven-game series wins in the first two rounds.

"It wasn't our best game," Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis said. "We lacked execution a lot early, turnovers. It's not easy to come from behind against them."

The Hurricanes converted their second power-play opportunity of the game to begin building a 3-0 lead with three quick goals.

"We got some odd-man rushes and were able to score on those, and get pucks to the net quickly off passes," Ehlers said.

Aho made it 1-0 on the man-advantage at 14:59. He scored on a one-timer from above the right face-off dot on a pass from Ehlers, completing a play Aho began with a pass back to Gostisbehere at the right point.

Staal scored at 16:07 to make it 2-0. The Carolina captain battled with Josh Anderson in front of the net to get his stick down and deflect K'Andre Miller's centering pass between Dobes' pads after the Hurricanes defenseman went wide around Canadiens forward Phillip Danault to set up Staal with a backhand into the goalmouth from the right corner.

Stankoven pushed it to 3-0 at 17:46. He broke down the right side 2-on-1 with Jackson Blake to take a cross-ice pass and score on a shot over Dobes' outstretched left pad for his team-leading eighth goal in 12 playoff games.

"Whenever you can start out good like that in an opposing building it's huge," Stankoven said. "Obviously they've got great fans here, they're very passionate, so it's nice to come out and have a great start, but going in after the first you can't be satisfied because there's still lots of hockey left. But we were able to keep at it the whole time."

The Canadiens were outshot 19-3 in the third period, prompting the crowd to chant, "Shoot the puck! Shoot the puck!" at one point when they held possession in the offensive zone before Nick Suzuki got their first shot of the period at 17:05.

"It kind of is what it is," said Suzuki, the Montreal captain. "I mean they have the right to speak how they want and we'd love to have more shots. So we're kind of in the same boat as them."

Andrei Svechnikov scored for a second straight game, shooting into an empty net with 1:54 remaining for the 4-0 final.

"I think they're very skilled and they're a team that moves the puck very well, and I don't think they're going to try and waste shots," Stankoven said. "I think they do a good job in moving the puck and they've got some skilled guys that can really shoot if you give them time and space. And I think that's what we've done -- we haven't given them a lot of time and space, their top guys, to make plays."

NOTES: Andersen, who has eight playoff shutouts, moved ahead of Cam Ward to set a Hurricanes/Hartford Whalers franchise record with his fifth playoff shutout for Carolina. He improved to 11-1 in these playoffs and is the fifth NHL goalie to win each of his first six road games in one playoff year. ... It was the Hurricanes' 64th win in regular season and playoff games this season. The only time Carolina had more was in 2006 when it had a combined total of 68 and won the Stanley Cup. ... Carolina is 6-0 on the road in the playoffs.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hurricanes beat the Canadiens 4-0 to move within a victory of the Stanley Cup Final | AP News

By: Associated Press

MONTREAL (AP) — Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Logan Stankoven scored in a 2:47 span late in the first period and the Carolina Hurricanes moved within a victory of the Stanley Cup Final, beating the Montreal Canadiens 4-0 on Wednesday night.

Frederik Andersen made 18 saves for his third shutout in 12 postseason games this year to help the Hurricanes take a 3-1 lead in the Eastern Conference Final. Game 5 is Friday night in North Carolina, with the series winner facing the Vegas Golden Knights.

"We have better," Stankoven said. "It's great to come out like a team like this and perform like that, but I think at this time of the year you can't bring your 'B' game. You have to bring your 'A' game every night."

Nikolaj Ehlers and Shayne Gostisbehere each had two assists for the Hurricanes. They are the seventh NHL team to win six or more road games to start a postseason.

"Definitely excited," Gostisbehere said. "Have to take care of business."

Anderson and the Hurricanes are 11-1 in the first three rounds. They put it away early in Game 4 after winning the previous two games in overtime.

The Hurricanes scored first for the fourth straight game when Aho beat Jakub Dobeš with a one-timer from the right circle on a power play with 5:02 left in the first.

Staal followed with 3:53 to go, tipping in K'Andre Miller's centering pass. Stankoven then finished off a two-on-one with Jason Blake with 2:14 remaining in the period.

"The game's going to humble you," Montreal coach Martin St. Louis said. "Whenever you get humbled, you stand tall."

Andrei Svechnikov had an empty-net goal in the third.

Carolina had a 19-3 shots-on-goal advantage in the third period for a 43-18 overall edge.

"It seemed like the only guy that showed up was Doby," Montreal defenseman Lane Hutson said. "Wasn't good enough. Didn't answer the bell."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026



Hurricanes-Canadiens Game 4 takeaways, grades, early look at Game 5 - ESPN

By: Kristen Shilton

The Carolina Hurricanes were bound to shake the rust off eventually. Consider them well cleansed. The Hurricanes dominated Game 4 of the Eastern Conference finals in every way to hand Montreal a lopsided 4-0 defeat and take a 3-1 series lead heading into Game 5 on Friday.

There is something about Game 4 that brings out the worst in the Canadiens -- they are 0-3 in that category during these playoffs -- and Wednesday was no exception. They had played with fire in Game 2 and Game 3, putting only a combined 25 shots on net and still reaching overtime in both outings (that turned into losses).

Montreal hasn't been good at home throughout the postseason, and the Canadiens never found a rhythm to match what Carolina was creating. Montreal got outshot by a wide margin (43-18), was 0-for-2 on the power play and was shut out for only the second time in 18 playoff games. This was an example of one team being at its best from start to finish, and another looking like it's struggling for answers.

Carolina Hurricanes

Grade: A-

Carolina initially made things hard on itself. The Hurricanes were peppering Montreal with shots in the first five minutes and earned a power play that went nowhere -- and then Jalen Chatfield and Taylor Hall killed their team's momentum further with back-to-back offensive zone penalties. The Hurricanes' short-handed prowess saved them, and the power play paid them back when Sebastian Aho got Carolina going again with a goal. That was the fourth time in as many games the Hurricanes have taken a 1-0 lead, and Jordan Staal swiftly added to the advantage when he redirected a pass from K'Andre Miller past Dobes while battling for position with Josh Anderson in the goalie's crease.

Then it was Logan Stankoven putting a puck past Dobes to spot Carolina a 3-0 lead through 20 minutes.

The Hurricanes continued to press offensively and were sharp defensively while Frederik Andersen looked more locked in than ever. Regardless of not piling on Montreal as the game wore on, they did more than enough to show they're worthy of being in position to punch a ticket to a Stanley Cup Final on Friday.

Montreal Canadiens

Grade: D+

The Canadiens' recent strategy of being resoundingly outplayed offensively while essentially leaving goalie Jakub Dobes to give them a fighting chance sort of worked in overtime losses in Games 2 and 3. But Carolina is too good for that luck not to run out eventually.

Montreal weathered an early push in Game 4, but when it came up short on both first-period power plays -- brilliant opportunities to capitalize on the Hurricanes' uncharacteristic carelessness -- Montreal had nothing. And it was all downhill from there.

The Canadiens gave up 10 chances off turnovers alone in the first 20 minutes. Coach Martin St. Louis tried to stop the bleeding by reconstructing all four lines going into the second period, but it didn't do much good. Montreal was simply too disconnected to make anything work. Dobes slamming the door through the second and third periods was the Canadiens' only saving grace, but they simply refused to help him out with support on either side of the puck. How could Montreal expect success when registering only three shots on goal (compared with 17 by Carolina) in the third period? The Canadiens did an excellent job of watching the Hurricanes take it to them in Game 4. And it'll be the last their home crowd sees of the Habs if they can't change something before Friday.

Players to watch in Game 4

Frederik Andersen

G, Hurricanes

Goaltending always matters. In this instance it's particularly critical for Carolina given Andersen's history. He has been to four conference finals in his career but has never backstopped his team to a Cup finals-clinching game. The closest Andersen came was in 2014-15, when he and the Anaheim Ducks had Chicago on the ropes in Game 5 of their tied Western Conference finals outing and a pair of goals from Jonathan Toews late in that one to force overtime seemed to bother Andersen in consecutive losses to see Anaheim out of the playoffs. Ancient history, though, right? Only Andersen can prove that's the case.

play

0:24

Frederik Andersen makes big-time save for Hurricanes

His playoffs overall have been strong -- and Wednesday was by far his best performance of the series -- but it's a different animal knowing what's on the line in Game 5. Andersen can't count on the Canadiens' offensive talents to stay quiet when infused with some desperation that maybe hasn't surfaced yet. How Andersen handles that push will determine whether Carolina boards another plane back to Montreal or gets ready to welcome Vegas into town.

Cole Caufield

RW, Canadiens

It was impressive when Caufield collected 51 goals in the regular season. But a scorer's reputation is cemented in the



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

playoffs, and now more than ever the Canadiens require the best out of Caufield. He has only one marker in the series so far -- part of that four-goal outburst from Montreal in Game 1 -- and since then has just one assist (albeit it a beauty).

Montreal's lack of offense is a collective problem, but this is no time for the Canadiens to be pinning the fate of their season on secondary performers. It's Caufield who needs to set the tone up front on Friday. Even if it can't be him individually lighting the lamp, then at least setting up linemates Nick Suzuki and Juraj Slafkovsky at even strength or being a key part of the power play (like he was on Lane Hutson's strike in Game 3) will be good enough. Caufield is too good and too important to be a passenger at this point.

Big questions for Game 5

Can Carolina close things out?

The Hurricanes have heard every version of the "Carolina collapses in the conference finals" narrative. This is when they write a new chapter ... right?

This is the Hurricanes' third appearance in the conference finals in four seasons, and they've already well surpassed the combined one win earned over those past two efforts. The final victory in any series is difficult to grasp. It's even tougher if there's added pressure to slay proverbial demons

of the past. Montreal has nothing to lose here. The Canadiens are a young, hungry, well-built team that will have years ahead with this core to be in the same position. There's a ticking clock for the Hurricanes and their veterans that can't become a factor from here. The Canadiens are an excellent road team squad and won't make it easy on Carolina to finish them off. This is when Carolina can prove once and for all it learned something from past failings.

Will Montreal stay excellent on the road?

The Canadiens were one shot away from leaving Raleigh with a 2-0 lead in this series. That's how good they've been away from Montreal in the postseason. The Canadiens are 7-3 to this stage on the road, and two of those three losses were in overtime.

The cliché is always one game at a time, but now it's a reality for the Canadiens like it hasn't been all postseason. They hadn't dropped consecutive games this spring until this series, let alone three in a row. It should be a blessing for Montreal to be out of its own building for Game 5. If the Canadiens can pick up a victory in Raleigh, all they'd have to do is find the win column once in Bell Centre to set up another road tilt for that Stanley Cup Final berth. But all that doesn't play out unless the road atmosphere once again brings out their best on Friday.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026



Damage runs deep as Canadiens lose again in Eastern Conference Final

By: Eric Engels

MONTREAL — It was an ominous statement from Joe Veleno, though it wasn't meant to be.

When the Montreal Canadiens forward said — just one day after Game 3 of this Eastern Conference Final — that the Carolina Hurricanes were applying so much pressure that it felt at times like they had six players on the ice, he was just trying to credit his opponents. There was no way of knowing to what extent he was also providing a window into his team's psyche.

We didn't pick up on it in the moment, either.

But the first 20 minutes of Game 4 revealed the damage done over the Canadiens' first consecutive losses in these playoffs. They expected so much pressure that they buckled even when they weren't under it, ultimately feeding the Hurricanes 10 scoring chances off turnovers and spotting them a 3-0 lead through the first period.

"Not an easy team to play catch-up hockey against," said Martin St. Louis after his Canadiens lost 4-0 to go down 3-1 in the series, extending their inexplicably bad post-season record at the Bell Centre to 2-6.

He made changes in the second period that he probably should've opted for in the first, and they led to more scoring chances.

But those disappeared in a third period that saw the Canadiens fumble in every zone before finally notching their first shot with 2:53 to go.

Fans chanted "shoot the puck" four minutes prior to that, with the Canadiens sitting on 15 after notching just 25 over their last two games combined.

But the home team couldn't oblige without first connecting as many as two passes in a row, and they had a hard time doing that from start to finish.

"I feel like we had players with the most space with the puck and we don't skate enough, we pass it to a player with no space," said St. Louis. "So, you kind of play into their pressure, and it's a little bit of that.

"It's just recognizing that, (with) the way they play, the guy with the most ice in space should take the ice, and we're not playing fast enough when we have the puck with our feet. We're not playing fast enough off the puck so we can kind of bypass the pressure, and they've got really, really good sticks."

The Hurricanes have wielded them expertly to inflict a physical and mental toll the Canadiens might not be able to overcome.

The collateral damage of two seven-game series has also unquestionably bubbled to the surface for them. Especially against a Hurricanes team that swept the Ottawa Senators

and Philadelphia Flyers through the first two rounds to earn an 11-day break — most of which was enjoyed while the Canadiens were still emptying the tank against the Buffalo Sabres.

"For sure (the rest) helps their style of game," said St. Louis, and that resonated, if only because their style of game — 200-foot, man-on-man, high-pressure hockey — has been seen as impossible to sustain over an entire regular season plus playoffs.

Hence the Hurricanes losing 12 of 13 conference final games under coach Rod Brind'Amour prior to this year.

But the Hurricanes never had an 11-day break prior to this year, nor a lead in a conference final in their current era of success, and there's almost surely a direct correlation between those facts when you consider how convincingly the Hurricanes have beaten the Canadiens since losing 6-2 in Game 1.

In the process, they haven't just exhausted an already-tired team; they've done the type of psychological damage that most will see as impossible to overcome.

So, how do the Canadiens repair it on time to prove most people wrong and at least bring this series back to Bell Centre for a chance to force Game 7?

"You've gotta be mentally strong. You've got to believe," said St. Louis. "You've got to believe that you can actually do it. To me, I don't doubt that I believe that we can do it..."

Alex Newhook said, "They make it hard on you to make plays and they try to collapse your space, but we have the skill and we have the team to be able to make plays through that," making it clear he also still believes.

So does Jakub Dobes, who made 39 saves on his 25th birthday and said, "It's over, tomorrow is a new day, and we'll get on a plane, prepare and show up with our best hockey for Game 5."

Captain Nick Suzuki talked about how he and five of his Canadiens teammates toppled the Toronto Maple Leafs from down 3-1 in the first round of the 2021 playoffs before eventually making it to the Stanley Cup Final.

"You have to be super desperate," he said. "(The Hurricanes have) obviously struggled in the conference final up to this point (in the past), and I think if we go over there and do a good job and bring our game, we can try to put some more doubt in their head."

The Canadiens must clear their own minds first.

They were clouded more than we thought in the lead-up to Game 4, and that showed as soon as the puck dropped.

The Canadiens immediately started giving it away and didn't stop.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

"I think we have to do a better job of recognizing when we do have a little bit of space," said Mike Matheson, "using our feet to keep that space available so we can execute afterwards."

That would lay the foundation for the Canadiens to rebuild their psyche, which was clearly damaged by the middle games of this series.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026



Hurricanes steamroll Canadiens, take 3-1 lead in Eastern Conference Final

By: Kyle Morton

The Carolina Hurricanes are one win away from their first appearance in a Stanley Cup Final since 2006.

A convincing win over the Montreal Canadiens in Game 4 at the Bell Centre on Wednesday night gave the Hurricanes a 3-1 series lead over the young, upstart Habs.

Carolina came out of the gate on fire, recording the first six shots on goal of the game while dominating the puck and pushing Montreal around.

An abbreviated power play gave the Canes their first lead, as Sebastian Aho hammered home a one-timer off a nice feed from Nikolaj Ehlers for his first goal since Game 4 of the first round against the Senators.

Just moments later, Carolina doubled the advantage, as K'Andre Miller made a strong play with the puck to attack toward the goal before feeding a pass to the net front, where Jordan Staal beat out Josh Anderson for positioning to deflect the puck in behind Jakub Dobes.

A gutsy blocked shot by Shayne Gostisbehere set up a two-on-one for Jackson Blake and Logan Stankoven, and the former fed the latter who sent it home to a yawning cage to make it 3-0 with a trio of goals in just 2:47 of game time.

The Canadiens came out with a better push in the second, showcasing some rare ability to generate shots on goal, but Frederik Andersen was up to the task, holding Montreal off the scoresheet for another 20 minutes that featured a pair of embarrassingly futile power plays for the Canes, including a 1:44-long 5-on-3 in which they did not even attempt a shot.

But more importantly, the three-goal lead was intact heading into the third, keeping the Canadiens in a hole they would not be able to dig their way out of.

Montreal could not break through in the third period either, as Svechnikov added an empty-net goal to make it 4-0 and Andersen finished the night with an 18-save shutout for his third of this postseason.

Game 5 is set for an 8:00 PM EST puck drop from the Lenovo Center in Raleigh on a night that could prove special for this team and fan base.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

The Hockey News

'It's Tough To Pick Apart That Game': Sebastian Aho, Shayne Gostisbehere, K'Andre Miller, Logan Stankoven, Nikolaj Ehlers, Andersen, RBA On Game 4 Win

By: Ryan Henkel

Carolina moved within one win of the Stanley Cup Final after a dominant shutout in Montreal. Rod Brind'Amour and his players break down the relentless performance.

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Montreal Canadiens 4-0 in Game 4 to move within one win of a berth in the Stanley Cup Final.

The Hurricanes finally found a bit more finish, getting goals by Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal, Logan Stankoven and Andrei Svechnikov, while continuing to give Montreal absolutely nothing.

After the game, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour along with... spoke with the media in Montreal. Here's what they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On the game: We were solid for the most part. There's obviously certain areas we can be much better at, but I thought it's tough to pick apart that game.

On who passes on the lessons from previous Eastern Conference Final runs: It's the players. They're the ones who are wearing it. I think we can help them on things, but they're the ones that are in it. Everyone is doing it and I give them full credit for that tonight, for sure.

On the opening shift setting a tone for the game: I liked our start. We had a couple of good opportunities. We had a breakaway there. Like, we had some, I thought, 'Oh, this could be good,' and then... I liked that even though we didn't score there, we just kept going. That's really the theme of tonight. I felt like we just were good from start to finish and got the result.

On the smothering of Montreal: I think we're working hard and the guys are in sync, which helps. Like I say, it doesn't always work out, but I liked the way we went about our business tonight. When you play like that, it's obviously what it looks like.

On Shayne Gostisbehere's block leading to offense: Both teams are doing it. At this time of year, everybody is doing that. You had your breakdown, it's gonna happen, and so what's the next thing? We need it from everybody, even your offensive guys. Everyone has to do what you have to do to win. Obviously you don't always get a block that goes for a chance, but that was a huge play in that game.

On being one win away from the Stanley Cup Final: Let's give it a couple hours before we start thinking about that. But I think it's just another game we have to go about our business in. Everybody says that one's the toughest one to get. We've done a nice job of not getting ahead of ourselves

and just focusing on the business we have to take care of. That's what we still have to do here.

On if the team needs to avoid overconfidence: There's none of that. We understand. We know how we have to play to go about our business and we have to bring that again next game. I don't think we're an overconfident group, but we are a confident group in what we do. We respect every minute of the playoffs, let me tell ya.

On Frederik Andersen: Freddie's game always looks easy. So regardless of the high-danger chances or whatever, he just never looks like he's diving around in there. It's a very calming goalie. Obviously he played well because nothing got behind him. So that's good, his puck handling was good. There's little things that maybe go unnoticed a little bit that certainly help us.

Sebastian Aho

On facing a hot goaltender: Honestly, for me, I don't really think about who's in net. Obviously he's a good goalie and he's been making big saves for them, but at the same time, it doesn't really affect how you prepare for the game or anything like that. I think you just go out there and try to do your job. If you have a chance to score, you try all you can to put it in.

On K'Andre Miller: Obviously a great defenseman. He kind of does it all. He skates really well, he has really long reach where he can break up plays a lot. He has really good offensive instincts as well. He's been a great player for us, for sure.

On if that's the way they wanted the game to go: Honestly, when you prepare for the game, you're just focusing in on the start, focusing in on your first shift and going from there. Obviously we had some moments in the first period like [Shayne Gostisbehere's] block and a couple of good kills there that kind of gave us momentum and then we were able to score a few goals and kind of take over the game. You don't really think about how the game is going to go. You just have to focus on a good start and go from there and I thought we did a good and solid job overall for the whole game.

On if there's anything more the team could have done better in the past three games: Absolutely. That's just how we approach it. All year and definitely in the playoffs, we watch video every day. We try to find another edge to be better. We're definitely not satisfied. Obviously this was a good win, a good game by us, but at the same time, we're looking to improve everyday. The coaching staff has done an unbelievable job of pushing us and hopefully we can take the next step in the next game.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

On if he's thought at all about being one win away from playing in the Stanley Cup Final: I haven't. It's a cliché, but it's one day at a time, one game at a time. And actually, it's within the game, one shift at a time. I think tonight, we did exactly that. There was different kinds of moments in the game that we really needed to focus on and I thought we did a solid job. So I haven't.

Shayne Gostisbehere

On the team's 11-1 run in the playoffs: I think it's just a compliment to the boys, the coaches, the organization as a whole just preparing us. To be honest, it doesn't feel like 11-1. We take it as a one game at a time approach. I know that's cliché, but you're not looking at an overall record. It's just the next game. Obviously Game 1, we didn't have what we needed, but we figured it out fortunately. Obviously the fourth one is the hardest one to win, so it's just going to be more of the same.

On blocked shots: You hear it time and time again from a bunch of guys. We're all pulling on the same side of the rope here. We're all the same players in the sense that we're going to do whatever we can to win. You look at [Sebastian Aho], you look at [Logan Stankoven], they're blocking shots too and especially so the grinders, sort of say, for our team. They do it every night. For me, it was my time. I didn't have a choice and fortunately, it went positively and the other way.

On what the team needs to avoid in Game 5: I don't know if we're going to avoid anything. It's just more of the same. Obviously we know it's working. Just doing our system and not giving guys time and space. As an offensive guy, you want as much time and space as possible. You want to feel the puck every night. And night in and night out, when you're just getting suffocated, it's tough and frustrating, for sure. So for us, I think it's more so just focusing on ourselves and just doing more of the same of what's got us here.

On frustrating the Canadiens: It starts with our forwards. When you see the extended shifts they have, their D is trying to do everything they can to break the puck out and it's just continually turnover after turnover and it's a momentum builder. When you see each shift setting up the next line and they just go out and do the same. It's kind of just sticking a fork in them in the sense that you just keep doing the same thing over and over. Yeah, it can be boring sometimes, but obviously we don't care about that. It's something that we live by. Making it hard on teams. Make them uncomfortable. That's something we live by and we try to do every day.

On if he's thought at all about being one win away from playing in the Stanley Cup Final: Definitely excited, for sure. Definitely having the success that we're having. Like I said, it's hard not to look past it, but we have to take care of business. It's a business-like approach again for us to finish this off if we can. The fourth one is the hardest one. Just more of the same for us.

K'Andre Miller

On dominating play: I think that's obviously something we've talked about from Day 1 of training camp. Bringing that intensity and dictating the pace of play. I think we did a great job of that and just smothering them with our tenacity and work ethic all night. I think we did a really good job of staying on top of the forwards and not giving them many chances or any looks.

On wearing Montreal down as the game went on: I think that's the goal every night, to tire and wear out the opposition. I think that's the Carolina Hurricanes to a T. That's what we're known for and it's been like that since I've been here. I'm just trying to help out and be a part of it.

On if he can see the lessons this team has learned from other ECF runs: Absolutely. Obviously I wasn't part of this group last year, but I got to watch a lot of those games and a lot of those battles and this honestly almost feels like a completely different team. It feels like we really did a 180 and it was a fun couple of months leading up to the playoffs this year. We knew what we had in this locker room and we just wanted to give it all we got.

On being one win away from playing in the Stanley Cup Final: I think we're just sticking with it. I mean, we're doing a lot of good things right now. I don't think we really need to change our game all that much. We're feeling really good in this locker room right now and we have a good thing going.

On if he felt this could happen when he signed with Carolina: Absolutely. That was one thing when I came in, I knew I had a good opportunity to help this team move on to that next level. I've just tried to absorb it, take it all in and learn from these other guys' experience and just try to do my part.

On playing with Carolina now instead of against: It's a lot easier. I remember my first time playing Carolina, I always talk about this, but my first time in Carolina, the first period, I think the shots were 15-2 and I think I went back for 12 breakouts and maybe got out one of them. It's definitely a new perspective to be a part of. Not looking back. It's been fun.

On the shot suppression: I mean, I don't think you can put that all on our defenseman right now. Our forwards are doing an unbelievable job of just smothering. They're working their butts off to get back and put pressure on the opposition and it's making our jobs really easy. Just keeping the play in front of us and transitioning and going right back at them. Just trying to wear them down, knowing that we're going to get our looks and our chances. Just sticking to the game plan.

On what it'll take to close out the series: Don't change anything. I think we've brought that intensity since Game 1 of the playoffs and I don't think anything really needs to change.

Logan Stankoven

On the strong start: The fans here are very passionate, so it's nice to come out and have a great start. But even after the first, you can't be satisfied because there's still lots of hockey left. But we were able to just keep at it.

On Shayne Gostisbehere's block leading to his goal: There's been a lot of guys selling out and just doing those little things. It doesn't always show up on the scoresheet but it's awesome. A guys sacrifices his body for a play like that and then we go down and score. Just about stacking good plays and sure enough, good things will happen.

On the shot suppression: I think it's just kudos to our defense. They've got great sticks and like I said, guys are sacrificing their bodies to block shots. It's nice, but you can't be satisfied with going up 3-1. Still have to play lots of hockey here and find a way to win one more.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

On not being satisfied: I didn't think our power play was great, so I don't think it gave us a whole lot of momentum at times. That's another thing you can't be satisfied with. There's always things to get better at and work on. Whether it's individually or as a team or as a unit. There's always video to watch and areas to improve upon.

On the opportunity to close the series out on home ice: Just one shift at a time. They have some very skilled guys over there. Guys with experience. So we're going to have to come ready to go and just take it one shift at a time. We can't get too far ahead of ourselves because they're very much right there in it. We'll have to come ready to play and hopefully be excited for that one.

On if the opening shift set the tone for the game: I think we started well. We talk about starting like that. Just keeping it simple early. Sometimes you have to find the body blows to get to the head. I think when you can stack shifts and set up the other guys for success, good things will continue to happen.

On if he could sense the frustration in the building with the Habs having so few shots: I don't know. I think they're very skilled and they're a team that moves the puck very well. I don't think they're gonna try and waste shots. I think they do a good job of moving the puck and they have some skilled guys that can really shoot if you give them time and space. I think that's what we've done. We haven't given them a lot of time and space to make plays.

Nikolaj Ehlers

On being one win away from the Stanley Cup Final: It feels great. Obviously we played really well tonight, but we have to get one more and it's not going to come easy. They're a great team, so we still have a lot of work to do.

On the first period scoring frenzy: We got some odd-man rushes and we were able to score on those. Getting pucks to the net quickly off of passes.

On if this was the team's most complete game this postseason: It was definitely one of them. I don't remember every single one at this point, to be honest, but it was definitely one of them. We played really well. They're a good team. They're going to get their chances, but at the same time, some of the ones that could have been big chances, we were able to get in front of and that's what is needed in the playoffs. We played really well.

On the team's hot start: Well, it's a big game. It's either 2-2 or 3-1. Every single game throughout a year, but especially the playoffs, you need to be ready from the start. They lost last game and they want to bounce back. But we also want to bounce back if you could say it that way. We wanted to come out just as hard or harder and we were able to do that, I'm proud of the guys.

On quieting the Bell Centre: This crowd is pretty amazing and it's pretty special to play games in Montreal. Even in the regular season, but especially the playoffs. It's great. I love it and you kind of feed off of that as well.

Frederik Andersen

On the team's ability to suppress Montreal: I think they've just come ready to play. The way they put it on them, it can't be really fun to play against. Getting hit and the way they cycle the puck is huge. Obviously it's the way we try to set up chances obviously, but it also prevents a lot from their top guys.

On how he stays locked in: I don't really think about the shot count. Just go through my process. It's a new shift every whistle obviously and you have to reset.

On learning lessons from the previous Eastern Conference Finals: I think we've gotten more comfortable in trusting our system and just knowing that that's enough. That's what has to happen to take care of our game. It's what we've built throughout the year and really set us up with the opportunity to be in this position. I think when we've played well, we have a good chance of winning. That's the key and that has to continue. We've liked our game lately and obviously been rewarded. Just building on that and obviously getting more experience is huge.

On the defensive corps keeping a lot of shots to the outside: We're putting a lot of pride on that effort. It's throughout the entire 200 feet. Just the work ethic and commitment to the game plan is huge. We see it everywhere up and down the ice. Guys are just putting in hard work and smart work too. I think that's even more key.

On staying in the moment: I think we've been very good at keeping our focus on right now. I think throughout the whole playoffs, we've been really good at just turning the page and coming ready to work the next day. That speaks to the leadership on the team, the coaching staff is just really good at dialing us in and making sure that we come prepared to do a job that day. Obviously getting rewarded.

On the adjustment to Carolina's system with them being a shot suppression team: The shot count is useless to me to look at, to be honest. I think you're still out there for the 60 minutes and you still have to focus the same way. You have to just pay attention to your process and I think that's really the key. As a goalie, you learn that stuff and get better at just resetting every shift. It's really a new Blackjack hand. You have to play every night, every few minutes is a new challenge. But your starting point is the same and I think that leads to success for me. Not getting emotional either whether we score, they score. It's all about the next play and I think that's how you stick with it throughout a long series and a long playoffs.

On if it was still a hard adjustment though: Not really. You have those games one every team where you don't see the puck a lot. I had had those before and I've had high shot counts too and I think anything in between. I've seen 10-15 shots all the way up to 60s. Going into the game, you don't know. No one tells you, 'Hey, there's going to be a shot in two minutes, be ready.' You have to be ready for every shot at all times. That's the real skill as a goalie. What you can do to stay present and stay in that moment and just be ready.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Hurricanes Curb Stomp Canadiens; Move Within One Win From Stanley Cup Final

By: Ryan Henkel

Carolina smothered Montreal in a dominant Game 4 shutout, stifling the Habs' offense while erupting for three goals in three minutes to push within reach of the final.

The series isn't over yet by any means, but the way they Carolina Hurricanes handled the Montreal Canadiens in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Final certainly makes it seem like it already may be.

The Hurricanes stomped the Canadiens in a 4-0 beatdown at Centre Bell on Wednesday in one of their more complete games of the postseason.

From the drop of the puck to the end, Carolina was far and away the better team.

They piled on the chances, outshooting the Canadiens 43-18 overall, and that was bookended by a hot start and a dominant finish.

The Hurricanes didn't allow a shot on goal through the first eight minutes of the game and then in the final period, they outshot the Habs 19-3.

Despite the Canadiens needing their best possible push in that third period, they didn't manage to put any rubber on Frederik Andersen until the final three minutes of the game, a testament to the Canes' defensive clinic.

The game looked much like the last two, where the Hurricanes held Montreal to 12 and 13 shots respectively, but the difference tonight is that they finally found a little more finish.

Carolina blew the game open midway through the first period, putting three past Jakub Dobes in less than three minutes.

Sebastian Aho got the party started with the team's first power play goal of the series, rifling home a Nikolaj Ehlers feed.

Just over a minute later, the Canes' third line got the cycle going and after a long o-zone shift, K'Andre Miller activated

down from the blueline and fed a perfect pass to Jordan Staal in front.

And then a minute and a half later, Jackson Blake and Logan Stankoven were sprung on a 2-on-1 thanks to a monster Shayne Gostisbehere block and the former fed the latter for his team leading eighth goal of the playoffs.

From there, the Hurricanes just put the pressure on the Canadiens and even though the Habs had a few pushes, Andersen was there, stopping all 18 shots he faced for his third shutout of the postseason (Andrei Svechnikov scored an empty netter at the end too).

Playwire House Ad

Again, the series isn't over by any means, but it's hard to see the Canadiens finding a way from here.

Outside of Carolina's disastrous Game 1 start, where they gave up four goals in the opening 14 minutes following 11 straight days off, there really hasn't been any portion of games where you can say Montreal was better.

Yes, they've gotten strong goaltending and they've certainly been opportunistic with their chances, but that's not a sustainable method.

Carolina has been better in every matchup, their defense has been dominant on both ends of the ice, they're more physical, they're quicker to pucks, they're more decisive.

I mean, the Hurricanes had as many shots on Wednesday as the Canadiens have had combined over the last three games, even despite playing at home and being able to dictate their matchups in the last two.

The Hurricanes are a machine and the Habs so far just don't have an answer.

That's been the story of the playoffs so far, as Carolina handled the Ottawa Senators and Philadelphia Flyers in back-to-back sweeps and now they sit just one win away from the Stanley Cup Final.

It's been a long road to get to this point, but the job is certainly not done.

LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article315880880.html>
<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7314528/2026/05/28/hurricanes-win-canadiens-game-4-lesson/>
<https://nsjonline.com/article/2026/05/quick-strike-offense-suffocating-defense-fuel-hurricanes-4-0-game-4-win/>
<https://www.wral.com/sports/hurricanes-vs-montreal-game-four-eastern-conference-final-may-2026/>
<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-first-period-flurry-leads-can-es-to-game-4-win>
<https://www.nhl.com/news/topic/playoffs/carolina-hurricanes-montreal-canadiens-game-4-recap-may-27-2026>
<https://apnews.com/article/hurricanes-canadiens-score-nhl-stanley-cup-9b0b8cf42631efba3d4c820c38ec3299>
https://www.espn.com/nhl/story/_/id/48890814/2026-nhl-playoffs-stanley-cup-eastern-conference-finals-game-4-grades-hurricanes-canadiens
<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/damage-runs-deep-as-canadiens-lose-again-in-eastern-conference-final/>
<https://www.canescountry.com/general/53765/hurricanes-steamroll-canadiens-take-3-1-lead-in-eastern-conference-final>
<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/game-day/its-tough-to-pick-apart-that-game-sebastian-aho-shayne-gostisbehere-kandre-miller-logan-stankoven-nikolaj-ehlers-andersen-rba-on-game-4-win>
<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/game-day/hurricanes-curb-stomp-canadiens-move-within-one-win-from-stanley-cup-final>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

SportScan

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

1392438 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes push Canadiens to the brink with shutout win in Game 4

Chip Alexander

14-18 minutes 27/05/2026

Montreal

The Carolina Hurricanes are one win away from playing for the Stanley Cup.

The Canes reeled off three rapid-fire goals in the opening period and kept the Montreal Canadiens mostly flustered and frustrated Wednesday in a 4-0 complete-game victory in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Final at Bell Centre.

The Canes, with goalie Frederik Andersen getting the 18-save shutout, took a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series and will look to close it out in Game 5 on Friday at Lenovo Center. Carolina will be after its third Eastern Conference title, reaching the Cup Final in 2002 and 2006, claiming the Cup in 2006.

After sweeping the Ottawa Senators and Philadelphia Flyers in the first two rounds, the Canes came off a long layoff and dropped a 6-2 decision to the Canadiens in Game 1 in Raleigh. But overtime wins the next two games gave them the series lead, and they controlled Game 4 in running their playoff road record to 6-0.

"We were solid, for the most part," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "There are certain areas we can be much better at, but it's tough to pick apart that game. We were good from start to finish and obviously that was the result."

Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Logan Stankoven scored in a span of 2:47 in the first period in what proved to be a lethal burst of offense. Andrei Svechnikov had a late empty-netter to cap the scoring and the Canes' defense was smothering from start to finish, allowing little.

"It's great to come out against a team like this and perform like that," Stankoven said. "At this time of year, you can't bring your 'B' game. You have to bring your 'A' game every night to win hockey games."

"We've shown the last little bit that we've been able to stick with a 60-minute effort. It's tough to play against when it's just waves and waves and you're playing defense."

The Canes were at their 'A-level' best. The Canadiens again spent much of the game in their own end as the Canes' forecheck was relentless. One defensive shift for the Habs in the third period lasted 2:30, leaving them exhausted, and some exhausted Montreal fans left early.

The three-goal surge was the second-fastest in Hurricanes playoff history and quieted the Bell Centre crowd. Stankoven used a boxing analogy to describe landing the big punch.

"Sometimes, you've got to land the body blows to get to the head," he said. "When you can stack shifts, good things can happen."

And having a chance to close out the series?

"When you've got 'em right on the edge, you want to push 'em off," Stankoven said. "You don't want to let them hang around."

Hurricanes take early lead

Aho scored at 14:59 of the first period on a power-play blast off a Nikolaj Ehlers pass after the Canes' first power play of the game was punchless. It was Aho's fourth goal of the playoffs and his 11th career power-play goal, making him the team's career leader, passing Eric Staal (10).

It was also the Canes' first power-play score in the series after going 0-8 in the first three games.

Staal's second goal of the playoffs came 68 seconds later when he went to the front of the net and redirected the puck past goalie Jakub Dobes. Staal took a quick feed from K'Andre Miller, who backhanded a pass to the Canes captain on the move as he skated past the cage.

Just 1:39 later it was 3-0, Canes. The Stankoven line connected as Jackson Blake's pass set the center up with a shot off the rush at an open net and his eighth of the playoffs. It was Stankoven's first point of the series.

The Canes had a 13-5 shot advantage in the opening period as the Habs continued to struggle to put shots on goal. They had one in the opening 10 minutes of Game 4 after the Game 3 loss that had Montreal credited with one shot in the third period and one in 14:06 of the overtime.

Wednesday was the 25th birthday for Dobes, whose rookie season has been exceptional. He faced 42 shots, made a host of high-quality stops and had the fans chanting his name.

Late in the game, he was pulled for a sixth attacker and when Ehlers missed an empty net, Habs fans again cheered "Dob-by! Dob-by!" to honor their goalie — a touch of humor on a night when Montreal had little to smile about.

Hurricanes prepared for Canadiens' best

After the morning skates, the Canadiens said there was a need to be more physical and play at a better pace Wednesday against the Hurricanes. The Hurricanes, in turn, said they expected to see the Canadiens' best in Game 4.

"They're going to come out with everything they've got," Canes captain Jordan Staal said.

It didn't matter.

The Canes had the Canadiens a bit muddled and indecisive after a pair of wins. Some of the Habs players mentioned after Wednesday's



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

morning skate that they're facing a team that's "extremely well-connected" and applying pressure all over the ice, forcing mistakes.

"For us, it's about executing and knowing there's going to be pressure and making that right play," Habs forward Jake Evans said. "You have to make the right play, at the right time, under a lot of pressure. That's going to be the big key for us."

For the Canes, it's about applying more of the same. Keep being consistent. Keep the pressure on. Keep rolling four lines. Keep being quick and decisive in the defensive zone. Leave the rest to Andersen, who has started all 12 games in the playoffs and is 11-1.

As defenseman Jaccob Slavin put it: "He's been a brick wall for us."

Habs coach Martin St. Louis noted Wednesday that he has a fast team, but touched on one of his team's biggest problems in the series, saying: "When you turn the puck over, you don't look fast."

Brind'Amour answers ECF question, again

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour has been asked numerous times about past problems winning games in the Eastern Conference final.

Guess what? He was asked again Wednesday morning, although with a twist: What's different about this year's conference final as opposed to the others?

"I don't know what to tell you," Brind'Amour said. "We've won one more game, I know that, at this point."

It's the first time since the 2006 Eastern Conference Final against the Buffalo Sabres that the Canes have won more than one game in the ECF. The Canes, captained by Brind'Amour, won that series in seven games before beating the Edmonton Oilers for the Stanley Cup.

"The past is past," Brind'Amour said. "We have a new group, but we do have some guys who have been through it. You learn from all your past successes and things that don't work out your way. I think that's a big thing.

"I think this is definitely an experienced group and every year that goes by they get a little more experience. I think that helps. Playoffs are all up and down. That's the nature of how this goes, and being able to handle that and understand it and just keep an even keel is so important."

Game 4 was a big one for both teams

No doubt a lot was at stake for the Canadiens in Game 4, but that can go both ways, Canes forward Jackson Blake said Wednesday.

"It's the biggest game of the series, I think," he said. "You either go home up 3-1 or you go home tied at two. This is a huge game for us, too."

The Canadiens had their chances to win Game 3 early in overtime — defenseman Mike Matheson hit the crossbar with a shot. Instead, the Canes won in OT for the fifth time in the playoffs and would like to add another road victory in Game 4.

"It's about sticking with our game plan, no matter how long the games are," Blake said. "Play your game and don't change anything as a group. Whatever they do, we're ready for it. We're not going to change what we do."

Ending the Svechnikov-or-Aho debate

If there still is a lingering question about who scored the overtime goal for the Canes in Game 3, Andrei Svechnikov or Sebastian Aho, it was Aho who wanted to make things clear — again — Wednesday after the morning skate.

"Svech scored it," he said, smiling.

Aho was positioned by the crease to the left of Dobes and jostling with forward Juraj Slafkovsky when Svechnikov took the shot from the top of the right circle.

"I've seen the replays and the puck might have hit something, but it wasn't off me or my stick," Aho said. "I didn't feel anything."

News Observer LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392439 Carolina Hurricanes

How does video help the Carolina Hurricanes win? Let's take a look at the replay

Chip Alexander

6-8 minutes 27/05/2026

Raleigh

Before Andrei Svechnikov scored in overtime, before the Carolina Hurricanes took a 3-2 victory Monday and 2-1 series lead over the Montreal Canadiens in the Eastern Conference Final, Chris Huffine was a showstopper.

Huffine is the Canes' video coach and a man who head coach Rod Brind'Amour has repeatedly called one of the MVPs of the team's success and its string of eight straight playoff appearances.

"He's a video coach, technically, but he's a coach," Brind'Amour said. "He's a huge reference and a comfort for me.

"He knows what I need to see. In the eight years I've been here, he's the guy I lean on the most."

Huffine did what he does best in Game 3 at Montreal's Bell Centre. Canadiens defenseman Noah Dobson had scored eight minutes into the third period for an apparent 3-2 lead and the teeming arena was loud.

But Huffine had spotted something on the replays: Montreal forward Cole Caufield appeared to be offside on the Habs' entry to the offensive zone as the scoring sequence was beginning.

Huffine relayed the information to the bench. A coach's challenge was made. After review, it was ruled Caufield was offside. The goal was overturned and the decision announced to the Bell Centre crowd, quickly ending the cheers.

"All the teams, they're on it," Brind'Amour said. "As soon as the entry goes in they're already buzzing you if it's close. I give credit to (Huffine) because that was a bit of a tricky one.

"They did a great job there. Obviously, it was a huge point in the game."

The man with the key information

Huffine is not the type to claim credit for such things. He quietly goes about his job, breaking down film, looking for tendencies, analyzing systems, looking to compile talking points for the coaches. He's a resource for the players, providing them with video clips of all of their shifts in a game, if requested.

Forward Seth Jarvis, is 24, Gen Z, growing up in the age of constant video. He relies on Huffine's work.

"I like watching goalie video a lot," Jarvis said. "I like to see how a goalie operates, maybe where their weaknesses are.

"He puts in a ton of work. He probably stresses himself out a little bit but he puts in a ton of time making sure we're prepared, what we need to



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

look out for. He probably puts in the most hours of anyone in the organization in terms of doing the job.”

Huffine, smiling, said he’s a “little obsessive/compulsive” when it comes to video, saying Brind’Amour “pumps my brakes and keeps me in check.”

“We try to cover everything without beating anything into them,” Huffine said of the players. “We try to keep it short and to the point so their attention spans are sharp.”

Digital preparation in NHL playoffs

After the Canes swept the Philadelphia Flyers in the second round of the playoffs, there was the long wait for the Canadiens and Buffalo Sabres to finish up their second-round series. Huffine had the video ready on both teams.

“One night I’m focusing here and the next night focusing there,” Huffine said.

When the Canadiens won Game 7 in Buffalo, finally setting up the conference final with Carolina, it meant for another long night.

“I had downloaded the game and once it was over I started breaking down the layers of what we need and what we need to work on in practice, what the coaches need to see,” he said. “In the playoffs, you’re just trying to get a good base on everything and make sure nobody is surprised by anything. We’ll know after the first game what adjustments we need to make and what they’re trying to do.”

The Canes’ first game against the Canadiens was a mess. The Canes made mistake after mistake, the Habs took a 6-2 win in Game 1. Huffine went back to work and the video sessions the next day were said to be super intense with Brind’Amour not holding back.

“You’ve got to take what Roddy is saying, not how he is saying it, knowing it’s coming from a good place,” Jarvis said.

Much of the video was prepared by Huffine.

“He works his tail off for us in helping us prepare,” forward Jackson Blake said. “If I had one word for him it’s ‘preparation.’ His passion for our team is like no other.”

A Canes employee from the early days

Huffine, who has been with the team since the days in Greensboro, has his name on the Stanley Cup as a member of Carolina’s 2006 championship run.

“To be honest with you, I never dream about me holding the Cup again,” Huffine said. “There are guys in our locker room I’ve watched every NHL game they’ve played and it would be more to me to see them hold the Cup.

“Roddy held it up in 2006 as a player. I’d love to see him hold it as a coach.”

Huffine mentioned assistant coach Tim Gleason, a former Canes defenseman. He mentioned Jorge Alves, the Cane’s longtime equipment manager and part-time practice goalie.

“Guys who give everything they have to this organization,” he said. “Those are the guys I would treasure seeing lift the Cup, guys who went through the lean years that helped us build what we have now.

“It would thrill me to help put my brothers’ names on that Cup.”

That would make for a special video.

News Observer LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392440 Carolina Hurricanes

Quick-strike offense, suffocating defense fuel Hurricanes’ 4-0 Game 4 win

May 28, 2026

Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports

MONTREAL — The Canadiens had hope in every game of the Eastern Conference final.

By the end of Monday’s Game 4 at Bell Centre, it was all gone.

Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Logan Stankoven scored in a span of 2:47 late in the first period, Frederik Andersen stopped 16 shots for his third shutout of the postseason, and Carolina smothered the Canadiens in a 4-0 win that gives it a commanding 3-1 series lead back to Raleigh.

“I just felt like we just were good from start to finish, and obviously we got the result,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said.

The onslaught started on the power play.

The teams combined for 14 power plays in the first three games of the series, but there were penalties aplenty in the first period.

After Carolina killed off two Montreal power plays and the Canadiens stopped the Hurricanes on their first, Aho scored his first goal of the series.

Nikolaj Ehlers came off the bench after Taylor Hall exited the penalty box to end a brief 4-on-4 sequence, and Shayne Gostisbehere hit him in stride entering the zone.

Ehlers quickly snapped a pass to Aho in the right circle. Aho one-timed the puck past Jakub Dobes (38 saves) for his fourth goal of the postseason at 14:59 and the Hurricanes’ first power play goal of the series. Carolina has scored first in all four games of the series.

The Hurricanes doubled their lead 68 seconds later.

Carolina cycled in the offensive zone, and Ehlers handed the puck off to defenseman K’Andre Miller at the top of the zone.

Miller carried the puck low to the goal line and backhanded a pass in front of the Montreal net, and Staal — with his stick between the legs of Montreal’s Josh Anderson — redirected it through Dobes’ five-hole for a 2-0 lead at 16:07.

“I think that’s the goal every night, to tire and wear out the opposition,” said Miller, who is leading Carolina in ice time and has eight assists in 12 games. “I think that is the Carolina Hurricanes to a T — that’s what we’re known for, and it’s been like that since I’ve been here. So I’m just trying to help out and be a part of it.”

Carolina’s second line then got in on the fun.

Gostisbehere went down and blocked a Lane Hutson shot from between the hashmarks, and the puck bounced off the Hurricanes defenseman and sent Jackson Blake and Stankoven on a 2-on-1 rush.

Blake waited for Montreal defenseman Jayden Struble to commit to him and then feathered a pass to Stankoven, who punched the puck past a lunging Dobes for his team-leading eighth goal of the postseason at 17:46.

“We had a couple moments in the first period, like (Gostisbehere’s) block and a couple kills there that gave us momentum, and we were able to score a few goals and kind of take over the game,” Aho said.

The Hurricanes didn’t need to do more than that offensively. Carolina dominated the Canadiens for all 60 minutes, and it was particularly gruesome in the third period.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

With Montreal needing its best period of the season, the Hurricanes instead shoveled dirt onto the wilting Canadiens. When Habs captain Nick Suzuki snapped a harmless shot at Andersen from the right circle — Montreal's first shot on goal of the final period — with 2:55 left in the game, the crowd that remained offered mock applause.

The biggest cheers all night were for Dobes, who played brilliantly on his 25th birthday but had no chance of singlehandedly willing his team to a win. The Bell Centre faithful saved their best moment of the game shortly after the Suzuki shot when, with Dobes on the bench for an extra attacker, Ehlers' shot from distance hit the crossbar, triggering a "Doby! Doby!" mock chant that both honored the team's goalie and scorned its players.

Andrei Svechnikov delivered the final dagger moments later, scoring into an empty net to send the Hurricanes back to Raleigh with one win needed to reach the Stanley Cup final.

"We've done a nice job of not getting ahead of ourselves and just focusing on, 'OK, we've got business to take care of,'" Brind'Amour said. "That's what we still have to do here."

North State Journal LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392441 Carolina Hurricanes

Category 5: Hurricanes look for repeat performance in Game 4

May 27, 2026

Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports

MONTREAL — The Hurricanes will look to take a commanding lead in the Eastern Conference final when they play the Canadiens on Wednesday night at Bell Centre.

Carolina has bounced back from a disappointing performance in Game 1 to earn back-to-back 3-2 overtime wins to lead the series two games to one. A win Wednesday in Montreal would push the Habs to the brink of elimination.

1. The Hurricanes' top line finally got what it needed — a big goal at a big time.

Andrei Svechnikov's overtime game winner in Game 3 doesn't guarantee that his line with Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis will snap out of its scoring funk, but the trio certainly hopes so.

"Obviously, you'd love to see more go in, but to get one like that in a moment like that was huge for everybody," Jarvis said Tuesday. "Just to start help contributing to the team offensively is what we want to do, and keeping it simple seemed to pay off."

The line was the most effective it has been in the series in Game 3. Carolina outshot Montreal 6-2 and allowed one high-danger chance with the trio on the ice at 5-on-5. Svechnikov in particular was very impactful, finishing with 10 shot attempts, five scoring chances and two high-danger chances in the game.

"The whole game I felt really good about how they were going," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of his top line after Game 3. "And those guys in particular had a lot of good chances and were around it. You never know how it's going to unfold, but we certainly had our opportunities."

2. The Aho line feasted on Kaiden Guhle in particular.

The Montreal defenseman finished the night with 42 shot attempts against at 5-on-5, 13 more than any other Canadiens player, while finishing with a Corsi For percentage of 25%.

Guhle and partner Alexandre Carrier were outshot 12-1 and on ice for two of Carolina's three goals. The expected goals for the pairing were ... as expected: 1.86 to 0.20.

Montreal defenseman Noah Dobson knows a thing or two about playing the Hurricanes in the playoffs.

Dobson played a combined 11 games against the Hurricanes in the 2023 and 2024 playoffs, and he had a front row seat to how swarming Carolina can be when the team is on its game. He's seeing more of that in his first postseason in Montreal.

"You know what you're getting each night from them," Dobson said after Wednesday's morning skate. "Their work ethic's always at the highest level, the compete — they make it hard on you. It's obviously high pressure, so you know what to expect. And now it's just on us to go out and execute and handle that pressure and make our plays."

Dobson was one of four Canadiens who finished above 50% in 5-on-5 shot attempts when on the ice in Game 3, and he's hoping Montreal can collectively figure out Carolina's forecheck and even the series.

"Obviously the forecheck's been their bread and butter for a while now," Dobson said. "And there's been moments where I feel like we've handled it pretty good and moments where we can do better, and we'll continue to do our best and try and handle it as best we can."

3. Fourteen months ago, 19-year-old Ivan Demidov was playing in St. Petersburg, Russia, for SKA of the KHL. His captain? Grizzled Alexander Nikishin, all of 23 years old.

Just over a year later, the two NHL rookies — and friends — are on opposite sides in the Eastern Conference final.

"It's pretty crazy," Demidov said Wednesday. "I wouldn't say that one year ago, we (would) think that we're going to play in the (conference final). So, yeah, life is funny."

Demidov has learned the same thing as Nikishin in his first season in the NHL — "Everything is faster, everyone is stronger."

Demidov said he has noticed how Nikishin has had to dial back his game with the Hurricanes.

"Carolina is playing that system that they're not allowed to do much," he said. "It's more of (the) defensive side right now, but he's doing good, so I'm happy for him."

The two rookies stayed in touch throughout the season, but Demidov said the texts have stopped now that they're going head to head.

In the Hurricanes' locker room, Nikishin broke into a big smile at the mention of Demidov, but he concurred that the lines of communication are closed right now.

"Not even on the ice," Nikishin said.

4. A 3-1 series lead is a lot different from 2-2, and Carolina has a chance Wednesday to push the Canadiens to the edge for a Game 5 back in Raleigh.

"It's a big game for both teams, obviously," Hurricanes left wing Taylor Hall said Wednesday. "We're worried about tonight and playing our game and playing the best that we can. We know what's at stake in the series, and I think we have momentum."

"It's important for us to carry that into tonight and just know how we have to play. I think we're a group that is pretty consistent, and we don't have a lot of lulls, and it's important tonight is not one of those nights."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Montreal forwards Jake Evans and Josh Anderson met with the media after Wednesday's morning skate, and both seemed a little lost for words on what it will take to get back momentum in the series.

Evans repeatedly used the word "connected" to describe the Hurricanes.

"They're a team that pressures you everywhere," Evans said. "It feels like they're all over the ice, and we have to find ways to put pucks in the right areas for each other."

That's easier said than done, it seems. Montreal managed 12 shots on goal in Game 2 and, despite being able to dictate the matchups, 13 in Game 3.

5. If you were wondering whether Frederik Andersen was at all sour that his agent, three-time Stanley Cup champion Claude Lemieux, carried the ceremonial torch to the Bell Centre ice before Game 3, you'd be terribly wrong.

Lemieux, who won his first title with Montreal in 1986, emerged from the tunnel in the lead-up to puck drop wearing the No. 32 he donned for seven seasons at the start of his career.

Andersen told me Lemieux reached out to him beforehand to tell him he had been asked to be a torchbearer, and Andersen broke into a big smile talking about what an honor it was for Lemieux and how he had no issue whatsoever with his longtime agent firing up the opposing team's crowd.

"He's like family," Andersen told me, reiterating that it was a big deal for Lemieux's entire family for him to be recognized in that way.

Andersen said he hadn't seen video of Lemieux walking in, but he planned to check it out. Long story short, Andersen couldn't have been happier for Lemieux, even given the circumstances.

North State Journal LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392442 Carolina Hurricanes

Canadiens vs. Hurricanes Game 4: Key takeaways from Carolina's emphatic win

Arpon Basu, James Mirtle, Sean Gentille

9-11 minutes 28/05/2026

MONTREAL — In two of the last three postseasons, the Carolina Hurricanes had short stays in the Eastern Conference final.

They're one game away from another — and they're enjoying this one a bit more.

Carolina beat the Montreal Canadiens 4-0 in Game 4 at the Bell Centre on Wednesday, pushing their series lead to 3-1 and moving within one victory of a matchup with the Vegas Golden Knights in the Stanley Cup Final.

A three-goal first period Wednesday fueled the Hurricanes, who turned the territorial dominance they'd established in Games 2 and 3 into a multi-goal lead against a desperate opponent. The early advantage allowed them to tighten the screws even more against the Canadiens, whose first shot of the game didn't come until more than eight minutes after puck drop.

The start unfolded exactly as the Hurricanes hoped.

"Sometimes you gotta find the body blows to get to the head," forward Logan Stankoven said. "When you can stack shifts and set up the other guys for success, good things will continue to happen.

By the end of the period, Carolina held a 3-0 lead and a 12-5 edge in shots, and the gap only increased as the game progressed; Carolina finished the game with 43 shots to the Canadiens' 18. Montreal didn't log a shot on goal in the third period until 2:55 remained.

It might have been the strongest game of the postseason for the Hurricanes, who swept the Ottawa Senators and Philadelphia Flyers before dropping Game 1 to Montreal by a score of 6-2. They've charged back since, putting themselves 60 minutes from their first Eastern Conference title since 2006. They've lost in this round three times since, including in four games to the Florida Panthers in 2023 and in five games last year.

Carolina's first-period goal scorers were Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Stankoven. Andrei Svechnikov added an empty netter. Nikolaj Ehlers assisted on Aho's and Staal's goals, and goaltender Frederik Andersen made 18 saves.

This is not the first time these playoffs the Canadiens have had their season on the line; they won Game 7 twice in the first two rounds. But a 3-1 deficit is a challenge this group has not faced since the first round of last year's playoffs, when they lost Game 4 on home ice to the Washington Capitals before losing Game 5 on the road, a game they also trailed 3-0 before finally losing 4-1.

It's not the losing that should bother the Canadiens — the Hurricanes are an extremely difficult opponent — but the repetitive nature of the losses should be of some concern to this young team and its bench boss, Martin St. Louis, coaching his fourth career playoff series.

The one repetitive thing that is most encouraging for the Canadiens is the continued excellence of rookie goaltender Jakub Dobeš, who celebrated his 25th birthday with 39 saves, including stopping breakaways by Jackson Blake and Seth Jarvis.

"I feel like we've been underdogs the whole season, the whole playoffs," Dobeš said. "So we are a super underdog right now. We'll got to Carolina and try to win Game 5, come back and try to win (Game 6), and hopefully we'll get to Game 7."

Carolina, meanwhile, wants to end things at home Friday night.

"When you have them right on the edge, you want to push them off," Stankoven said. "You don't want to let them hang around. That fourth game to win is always the toughest. So, we're going to expect their best, and we're going to have to come ready to play."

For the first time in this series, the goals came in a big ol' bunch for Carolina, as all three of the Hurricanes' top centers tallied in a span of just 2:47 late in the first for their first three-goal lead of the series.

Aho scored first on their second power play of the game, a questionable hooking call on Zack Bolduc that the Canes' top unit made very short work of via a cross-ice one-timer with five minutes left in the opening frame.

Staal made it 2-0 a minute and change later by winning a big boy net-front battle with Josh Anderson to pound in his second of the playoffs and continue his line's dominance over the Canadiens.

Then Stankoven recorded his first point of the series by capping a two-on-one off a pass from Blake as the wheels started to come off for Montreal. Only 17:46 into the game, it was 3-0 — and the Canadiens had a massive hole to dig out of. — James Mirtle, senior NHL writer

Where was the Canadiens' adjustment to Hurricanes' forecheck?

The Canadiens registered their first shot on goal at 8:07 of the first period, by which point the Hurricanes already had six.

Going back to the third period of Game 3, from the moment Noah Dobson was credited with a shot on goal at 10:06, the Canadiens



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

registered one shot on goal in 32:57 of game time, or more than half a game's worth.

But perhaps more important than the lack of shots in the first eight minutes is that, at least by our rudimentary count, the Canadiens already had seven failed zone exits by that point. That was really the story of the opening period for the home team, and has been the story of the series over the past three games.

The Canadiens' inability to clear the puck from their own zone under the relentless Hurricanes forecheck was going to be the biggest adjustment we would see in Game 4. Or so we thought.

And nowhere was it more evident than on the Hurricanes' second goal. It would be easy to look at Anderson's inability to tie up Staal in front of the net as the main reason for that goal, but while the culprit would be correct, the moment would not be. That came several seconds earlier, when Anderson had the puck on his stick not far from the blue line in the defensive zone and took a moment to think about what to do with it. In that moment, the Hurricanes took the puck off his stick and went back to work in the offensive zone.

And just like that, the Canadiens' issues in this series were summed up in one play, with a nice, pretty bow on it. — Arpon Basu, senior Canadiens writer

Score effects or a positive line shuffle?

Score effects are most definitely a real thing. A team that is up three goals will play differently, and so will a team that is down three goals.

When St. Louis shuffled all four of his forward lines to start the second period, however, already down 3-0, and the Canadiens suddenly became far more dangerous, it was hard not to wonder why he began the game with the same line combinations as in the previous three games.

Considering the Canadiens put 10 shots on goal in the second period alone after putting up 13 and 12 in the previous two games, which each went to overtime, it is a fair question.

The speed of Alex Newhook next to Nick Suzuki and Cole Caufield gave that line a jolt. Bolduc playing with Phillip Danault and Anderson created a fast, physical line, and Juraj Slafkovský had a lot of success in the middle of the regular season playing left wing on a line with Ivan Demidov.

Perhaps the changes will bode well in Game 5 with their season on the line, but maybe Game 4 would have been different had the Canadiens either started this way or in any different way from the previous two games, which went so poorly for them.

The bump from the changes, however, did not even carry over to the third period, let alone Game 5.

"I felt like we got a jolt, I liked our second, I felt like we had to kill big penalties, too, and it gave us momentum," St. Louis said of the changes. "Unfortunately we just couldn't execute in the third."

With a little under seven minutes left in regulation and the Canadiens sitting on zero shots on goal in the period, the Bell Centre fans briefly chanted "Shoot the puck! Shoot the puck!" which, it should be clear, is not a great look, especially if this was the Canadiens' final home game of the season.

"It's not fun to hear that," St. Louis said. "But they're not wrong."

Wednesday wasn't the first postseason game in which K'Andre Miller was the most attention-grabbing Hurricanes defenseman, but it might've been his best.

Miller earned a primary assist on Staal's goal, Carolina's second of the first period, by carrying the puck from the blue line to the goal line, going wide on Danault. That drew Dobeš' attention away from the traffic in the

crease — and Miller, with plenty of space between himself and Danault, banked the puck off Staal's skate back toward the Canadiens' net.

It was a slick play, the sort of thing Miller does with some degree of regularity, and it certainly came at a crucial moment for the Hurricanes, giving them a two-goal lead and setting them up to tighten the screws on Montreal. Miller's shift-in, shift-out performance has been a bigger deal, though; his skating and reach are elite, and he's used both to regularly erase scoring chances by all three of Carolina's postseason opponents, including several by Montreal throughout Game 4. Carolina, of course, acquired him from the New York Rangers in the offseason for first- and second-round picks and defenseman Scott Morrow.

Miller, 26, flashed potential with the Rangers but also struggled at times, playing for three coaching staffs and frequently being deployed in matchup minutes with mismatched partners. In him, the Hurricanes saw a player who could thrive in their system, and he's done just that.

"He kind of does it all," Aho said. "He skates really well. He has really good offensive instincts, as well. He's been a great player for us."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392443 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes or Canadiens: Which opponent should Golden Knights prefer in Stanley Cup Final?

Jesse Granger

8-10 minutes 27/05/2026

After their improbable sweep of the top-seeded Colorado Avalanche in the Western Conference final, the Vegas Golden Knights have time to recuperate as they await their opponent in the Stanley Cup Final.

They will sit and watch as the Carolina Hurricanes and Montreal Canadiens continue to battle in the Eastern Conference final. The Hurricanes hold a 2-1 series lead, with Game 4 tonight at Bell Centre. There's no question Vegas will be rooting for seven grueling games between the sides, but which team should the Golden Knights prefer to emerge?

It's an interesting question, and the answer differs depending on how it is approached.

From a betting odds perspective, which is essentially just a reflection of the public's perception of the teams, the Golden Knights should clearly prefer to face Montreal. In a hypothetical series between Vegas and Montreal, oddsmakers have the Golden Knights as minus-137 favorites. That's an implied win probability of 57.8 percent.

Meanwhile, the same odds would have Vegas as a plus-146 underdog against Carolina, which is an implied win probability of only 40.7 percent.

Beyond that, the Golden Knights and Hurricanes are plus-105 to win the Stanley Cup, while the Canadiens are a distant plus-950 in the futures market. However you look at it, the betting market clearly believes Montreal is the weakest of the three remaining teams.

Interestingly, the regular-season results say the opposite. The Golden Knights played their potential opponents twice this season. They beat Carolina in both meetings, while losing both matchups to Montreal.

It's been a while since the Hurricanes and Golden Knights faced off, as both regular-season meetings occurred in eight days in late October. On Oct. 20, Vegas raced out to an early 2-0 lead at T-Mobile Arena and cruised to a 4-1 win. A little more than a week later, the Golden Knights



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

scored four consecutive third-period goals to come from behind and win 6-3 in Raleigh.

The Hurricanes were the most dominant possession team in the NHL during the regular season, and have continued that in the playoffs. Albeit in an incredibly limited sample size, the Golden Knights have done better than most teams against Carolina in that department. Vegas was one of only three teams to hold an edge over the Hurricanes in shot attempts (98-95) and shots on goal (49-37) at even strength this season.

It's worth wondering how much those results actually mean, considering how different both teams look compared to October. Akira Schmid was in net for those games for Vegas and is now the third goalie. Carter Hart has yet to face Carolina as a member of the Golden Knights, but he is 4-6-1 in his career against the Hurricanes with a .913 save percentage and 2.93 goals against average.

Frederik Andersen was in net for the contests against Vegas this season and struggled with a .864 save percentage. Over his career, Andersen is 5-6-0 against Vegas with a .901 save percentage and 3.00 goals against average.

While Vegas went 2-0 against Carolina this season, the Hurricanes did win the previous four meetings, dating to 2023.

The Golden Knights' matchups against Montreal happened more recently, but still well before the coaching swap from Bruce Cassidy to John Tortorella. On Nov. 28, the Canadiens scored the first three goals and went on to win 4-1 at T-Mobile Arena. On Jan. 27, they came from behind to top the Golden Knights 3-2 with an overtime winner by Jake Evans at Bell Centre.

Schmid was also in net for those games, while the Canadiens had Sam Montembeault in the crease for the November meeting and Jakub Dobeš in for the second contest. Hart, who has yet to face Montreal with Vegas, has a career record of 2-3-3 with a .900 save percentage and 3.26 goals against average against the Canadiens.

This Canadiens team has changed dramatically over the past five seasons, but there are six players remaining from the 2020-21 team that beat Vegas in six games in the semifinal round, including Phillip Danault, who gave the Golden Knights problems.

The betting odds point in one direction, while this year's results point in the other. Considering how long ago those meetings took place, and how different all three teams look at this point, it's probably not wise to put a lot of stock into those results. After all, the Golden Knights didn't have a winning record in the regular season against Utah, Anaheim or Colorado, and then went a combined 12-4 against those three teams in the playoffs to reach this point.

From a style perspective, Montreal is a better matchup for Vegas. The Canadiens are constructed similarly to the Golden Knights' first three playoff opponents, specifically Utah and Anaheim. They are youthful, with the youngest average age of any team to qualify for the playoffs. They play with speed and excel in open ice with a transition attack that utilizes lateral passes, very similar to the way Utah, Anaheim and Colorado attack.

Vegas has shown the ability to counter that style incredibly well. Its strong center depth, overflowing with defensively-minded, 200-foot players, allows the Golden Knights to stay on top of opponents in the rush game and force them to fight for every inch of open ice. Jack Eichel is one of the best all-around centers in hockey and neutralized Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon in the conference finals. William Karlsson is a true shutdown center and plays with Mitch Marner, who has received votes for the Selke Trophy in eight straight seasons.

The Canadiens also rely heavily on their blue line for offense, and Vegas has defended that exceptionally well in this postseason. Montreal's 213 points by defensemen in the regular season ranked second in the NHL

behind Colorado. The Mammoth and Ducks also ranked highly in that stat, but found little success against Vegas.

Utah defenseman Mikhail Sergachev struggled in the opening round series. After tearing the Edmonton Oilers apart with nine points in the first round, Anaheim's Jackson LaCombe had only a single assist and finished with a minus-6 rating against Vegas in the second round. Colorado's Cale Makar obviously was banged up heading into the series with Vegas but didn't appear on the scoresheet in his two games, and Colorado's talented blue line didn't score a single goal in the four-game sweep.

We've seen the Golden Knights lean on these types of teams, and eventually wear them out as the series progresses. The Canadiens could be the best version of that style that they've faced, but there's a level of comfort for the Golden Knights, knowing they've been building their game against this particular style of hockey over the last month.

Meanwhile, Carolina poses an entirely new challenge. Much like Vegas, the Hurricanes are built with a defense-first mentality. They apply more pressure, more consistently, than any team in the league. The Golden Knights were an excellent shot-suppression team in the regular season, but the Hurricanes were one of only two teams to allow fewer shots.

Offensively, the Hurricanes don't boast the same elite goal-scoring talent atop their lineup that the Canadiens do with Cole Caufield and Juraj Slafkovsky. They score by committee, with seven different 20-goal scorers in the regular season. Logan Stankoven has had the hot hand throughout these playoffs, but it's much harder to pinpoint one player or one line to focus on when it comes to Carolina.

The Hurricanes like shooting from everywhere, but particularly from the point. During the regular season, Carolina's 627 long-range shots were second to only Colorado. We just saw how effective Vegas' shot blocking was against Colorado and how it frustrated the Avalanche shooters. There could be a similar dynamic if they face Carolina next.

Given how well the Golden Knights are playing, they should feel good about their chances regardless of their opponent in the final. From a stylistic standpoint, the Canadiens appear to be the preferable matchup, based on Vegas' proven strengths in this postseason.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392444 Carolina Hurricanes

How the Carolina Hurricanes are beating the Montreal Canadiens at the matchup game

James Mirtle, Sean Gentile

9-12 minutes 27/05/2026

MONTREAL — Carolina Hurricanes winger Andrei Svechnikov ended Game 3 of the Eastern Conference final, giving his team a 3-2 overtime victory and 2-1 series lead over the Montreal Canadiens.

It was a huge win for the Hurricanes, and the way they got there — a crunch-time goal from their first line — made it even bigger. If Carolina is to keep control against Montreal and beyond, it'll need more of the same from Svechnikov, Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis, who'd largely been kept in check in the first 10 games of the postseason.

The run-up to the game winner, though, was crucial, too, and an indication of how the Hurricanes had thrived without production from their most talented players. With 6:54 remaining in the period, Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour sent his fourth line — center Mark Jankowski and



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

wingers William Carrier and Eric Robinson — out for an offensive-zone faceoff on their fifth overtime shift. Jankowski won the draw; Robinson eventually put a shot attempt on Canadiens goalie Jakub Dobeš; Jankowski and Carrier logged hits against Montreal defensemen Lane Hutson and Noah Dobson, respectively. About 10 seconds after they headed to the bench, the game was over, and the Hurricanes had their first lead in a conference final since 2006.

Jankowski, Carrier and Robinson have emerged as a fairly rare commodity; a physical, play-driving fourth line that logs high-leverage minutes in postseason games.

"I think they can play against anybody," Brind'Amour said Tuesday. "It certainly helps our overall group. It helps me, being able to sit back there and just go, 'OK, go ahead,' when they're playing at this level."

In 73:01 postseason minutes with Jankowski-Carrier-Robinson on the ice, the Hurricanes hold a 76-57 edge in attempts, a 26-24 edge in shots and an expected goal share of 57 percent while outscoring opponents 3-1. They've done their best work against Montreal (27-16 in shot attempts, 3-0 in goals, 6-3 in high-danger chances, 57 percent expected goal share), but they were effective in the first two rounds as well, playing the Ottawa Senators to a draw, then driving plenty of zone time and scoring chances against the Philadelphia Flyers.

All three represent wins for Carolina's front office. Jankowski was a 2012 first-round pick by the Calgary Flames who'd gone on to play for three organizations in five years and was acquired at the 2025 trade deadline from Nashville for a fifth-round pick. Robinson spent time in the American Hockey League the season before signing a one-year, \$950,000 contract in the summer of 2024. Carrier was a known bottom-six commodity for the Vegas Golden Knights, but the specifics of the deal he signed with Carolina in 2024 — tons of term (six years), not a ton of money (\$12.6 million) — were outside the box.

The overtime shift Monday embodies what Brind'Amour asks of his forwards: Dominate the puck, stress the opponent at all times, believe that the goals will follow. If one line doesn't score, it can still make it easier for the next.

"It's huge," Jankowski said. "It puts a lot of confidence in us that the coaching staff believes in us to be able to go out there and have some good shifts, string some good shifts together (and gain) some momentum for our team. We're feeding off it. We appreciate that confidence that the coaching staff is giving us, and we're trying to run with it and trying to do everything we can to help the team, whether that's a big hit one way (or) creating a scoring chance the other way."

Canadiens must figure out tough matchups

On the flip side, one of the tough aspects of the Canadiens' results through three games is that the vast majority of their lineup hasn't gotten much traction. Some of Montreal's top players — such as Hutson — are spending so much of their time in their own end, as evidenced by lopsided scoring-chance and expected goals (xG) numbers for the series.

The Hurricanes, meanwhile, are getting more and more confident rolling all four lines, no matter who else is out there — which is a key advantage when playing on the road.

Here's how all four lines stack up for both teams entering Game 4 on Wednesday, using results for the centers on each line. Lines are ranked by five-on-five ice time in the series.

Canadiens xG share

Line 1: Nick Suzuki: 64.1 percent

Line 2: Jake Evans: 29.3 percent

Line 3: Phillip Danault: 29.4 percent

Line 4: Joe Veleno: 24.4 percent

Hurricanes xG share

Line 1: Logan Stankoven: 59.7 percent

Line 2: Sebastian Aho: 54.3 percent

Line 3: Jordan Staal: 76.9 percent

Line 4: Mark Jankowski: 59.7 percent

The silver lining for Montreal is that its top line is finding a way to make an impact territorially, including impressive totals for high-danger chances. The tough news: Basically no one else is anywhere close.

The Hurricanes have had especially great results with Staal, Jordan Martinook and Game 2 hero Nikolaj Ehlers out there, as they're thriving while taking some of the heavy defensive lifting. It's been very noticeable how active (and physical) Staal and Martinook, in particular, have been on the forecheck and through the neutral zone in snuffing out almost every attempted Montreal breakout.

While Brind'Amour attempted to get that trio up against the Canadiens' top line in Carolina, that wasn't the case in Game 3, as with last change Montreal coach Martin St. Louis was able to largely avoid them. Of the 23:25 Suzuki played at even strength in that game, just 4:28 of it was against Staal.

The remaining challenge is that Suzuki and linemates Cole Caufield and Juraj Slavkovský are still getting a heavy dose of defenseman Jaccob Slavin, who is doing a nice job limiting the damage after a tough outing in Game 1.

All of this presents other problems for Montreal, however. Whom exactly should the Canadiens want out against Staal's line, given everyone has struggled against it? And whom do they worry about more defensively between Stankoven's and Aho's lines, which could have some renewed mojo after scoring the Game 3 winner?

The Canadiens' plan in Game 4 has to involve playing some of these matchups closer to a draw than it's been, as Carolina has been putting far too much pressure on Hutson, Dobeš, their depth D and what should be a heavily sheltered fourth line that St. Louis is clearly reticent to use. Perhaps that means simply shifting to more of a grinding, dump-and-chase style when the Suzuki line isn't on the ice, given Brind'Amour's Game 2 adjustments toward a high F3 lock have meant getting any room — or odd-man rushes — through the neutral zone appears unlikely the rest of the series.

Overall, in addition to Carolina getting more from its fourth line, there's a real mismatch in this series between the middle-six forward groups. That's not going to be an easy riddle for Montreal to solve given the talent gap and the fatigue factor of having played six additional games in the first two rounds — especially when the series shifts back to Raleigh, N.C., for Game 5, where Brind'Amour will regain last change.

The unflappable Mr. Andersen?

Brind'Amour was asked early in his availability about goaltender Frederik Andersen and how he had expressed excitement about playing in this series, in the third round, in a hockey-mad city such as Montreal.

Brind'Amour raised his eyebrows a bit at the notion of Andersen being fired up.

"I just saw him walking out of here," the coach said in the media room. "He didn't look too excited. That might be you guys (in the media causing that), though."

That's Andersen, Brind'Amour went on to explain. Not a big talker. Calm and earnest. There's a reason he's earned the nickname Steady Freddy over the years.

While some have pointed to the Big Dane as the Canes' one tangible weakness through three games, it's also fair to note how challenging it



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

can be to play goal when you're sometimes going 10 to 15 minutes without facing a shot on net, the way he has in this series.

After facing just 46 shots through three games in this series, Andersen is averaging the lightest workload in the NHL playoffs at 20.2 shots against per 60 minutes played. Among goalies who made at least 30 appearances during the regular season, Andersen was tied for third-lowest in that statistic (24.2 per 60), and Canes backup Brandon Bussi was ahead of him.

Andersen has an .804 save percentage in the series after posting a .950 in going 8-0 through the first two rounds. His coach hardly seems worried about him, however.

"He's very even-keeled, and for that position, that's really important," Brind'Amour said. "The way he plays is to be that way. You wouldn't know if he had a good game or a bad game."

"Playing behind this team, we have the puck a lot," Andersen said. "We pressure hard. So these kinds of games, they have quite often. You take that experience and battle with yourself to be focused on what's next."

The fact Andersen, a pending unrestricted free agent, has been this far in the playoffs three times before and fallen short also isn't lost on him. At 36 and having been through some tough injuries — including this season — this could be one of his last, best chances to win.

"I think all our guys are (appreciative of being here)," Brind'Amour said. "You can't take it for granted. The older guys for sure get it, but I think we do a good job in making sure our young guys understand that, too. You can't take a day in this league for granted, let alone a Stanley Cup playoff game. It's easier for the older guys to appreciate that, but I know he certainly does."

"I'm just thankful for the opportunity, really," Andersen said. "I've been through a lot. But I'm grateful for being around, and being able to play for this long has been really cool. We all dream about these times of year. It's special."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392506 Websites

The Athletic / NHL rumblings: Massive trade attempts coming, top picks available, latest on Matthews, McDavid, more

By Pierre LeBrun

What happens when the NHL salary cap jumps in a major way — again — giving teams money to spend in a year with very few Grade A options to splurge on in the July 1 unrestricted free agent market?

Trades, trades, trades.

Based on conversations with multiple NHL front offices and agents over the past week, it sounds like teams are calling around to gauge the temperature on all kinds of names. Not just the obvious ones.

There's a storm brewing with the potential for massive trades. At the very least, there will be massive attempts.

One player who fits that criteria is 23-year-old forward Mason McTavish, which is a little obvious after he was scratched for two playoff games. I have zero evidence to suggest the Anaheim Ducks are the ones picking up the phone and calling teams about him. But I know for a fact that several teams have inquired about him. He's coming off a season in which he regressed after a contract stalemate delayed his start.

Still, the third pick from the 2021 draft is an appealing target, especially since he's signed to a contract for another five years at a \$7 million cap hit. Some teams view him as an ideal reset candidate. All the more reason Anaheim wouldn't move him unless a team steps up in a major way.

What's major, you ask? Well, if Auston Matthews watches the Toronto Maple Leafs' offseason play out over the next five or six weeks and decides he's not sure they are still a contender and says he's open to a move, I would venture to guess Anaheim would be on his list of seven or eight potential desired landing spots. And the Ducks would have the pieces to make it work in a larger package.

All things being equal, I think it's more likely No. 34 stays in Toronto for at least another season, but it's just an example for the kind of scenario that the Ducks could potentially see come their way.

Also worth noting, with young stars Leo Carlsson and Cutter Gauthier due for big raises this summer, one can see why the Ducks might at least listen on McTavish as they put all the pieces of the puzzle together in the bigger picture.

Top picks available?

Will any of the top five picks in the draft be on the move?

Not that the Maple Leafs are intent on moving the No. 1 pick, but new general manager John Chayka also isn't hanging up the phone if and when teams call. Why would he? If a team steps up in a meaningful way with the kind of package that helps the Leafs get back in contention, Chayka will at least listen, according to league sources.

I do think it's unlikely he moves it, though.

The San Jose Sharks, meanwhile, are far enough along in their rebuild that GM Mike Grier is absolutely open to moving the No. 2 pick, depending on the offers, per league sources.

Same goes with Chicago Blackhawks GM Kyle Davidson and the No. 4 pick. Chicago views the pick as a heck of an asset, given the talent available in the top five, so it would be need to be a darn good NHL player to move it, but the Blackhawks are open to it, per league sources.

We'll see if any team makes San Jose or Chicago blink.

Preds after MacFarland?

There's no question in my mind that the Nashville Predators have been waiting for the Colorado Avalanche season to end to reach out and see if they can chat with GM Chris MacFarland.

It might be a long shot, but the Preds have cast a wide net in this drawn-out process and have said all along they're in no rush, so why not take a shot at one of the game's top GMs, even if the answer ends up being no? You don't know until you ask.

Captains on the move?

It's not exactly clear yet how things will play out for pending UFAs Anders Lee and Boone Jenner, who are both captains.

Let's start with Lee, who turns 36 on July 3, coming off a contract paying him \$7 million per year. After a 29-goal season in 2024-25, he scored 19 this past season. But there are obviously more elements to his game.

My understanding is that New York Islanders GM Mathieu Darche has indicated to Lee's agent, Neil Sheehy, that the team does have interest in re-signing Lee but that it needs to make a few other moves before it can go down that road.

Lee is also interested in staying on Long Island, but the sides would need to find common ground on salary and term, and I don't think that's a slam dunk given his age.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

As for Jenner, 32, he recently changed representation and is now with Pat Morris of Newport Sports, as our Columbus Blue Jackets beat writer, Aaron Portzline, reported last week. The second-longest-serving captain in franchise history, Jenner is interested in re-signing with Columbus, but the first go-around in terms of contract talks saw both sides pretty far apart when it came to term.

Having said that, GM Don Waddell is comfortable negotiating at the 11th hour, as he did with Ivan Provorov a year ago, so I still wouldn't be ready to say Jenner is definitely going to market. Some things still need to play out there.

Carlson's value

Ducks defenseman John Carlson, 36, will be an intriguing name to watch over the next month or so.

The Ducks have spoken with Carlson's camp, led by veteran agent Rick Curran, and communicated a desire to start negotiations on a new contract. Carlson is open to having those talks but needs a bit more time to mull over what he wants to do as July 1 approaches.

Carlson had been in talks with the Washington Capitals before they moved him at the trade deadline in March about a two-year extension worth \$9 million per season.

I doubt very much Carlson signs for less than two years and \$9 million per year, regardless of whether that's in Anaheim or on the open market. And my sense is there are four or five teams in the East hoping Carlson hits the July 1 market.

Nemec trade request?

For what it's worth, I checked into reports that New Jersey Devils defenseman Šimon Nemeč has asked for a trade, and everyone involved refuted it.

That's not to say Nemeč's definitely staying put. He's a restricted free agent and needs a new contract.

Market for Perry

Corey Perry turned 41 on May 16, but he told me last month during the Tampa Bay Lightning's series against the Montreal Canadiens that he isn't ready to quit yet.

"I still want to continue to play," Perry said.

Just to make sure that wasn't adrenaline talking and he hadn't changed his mind with time to reflect, I checked with his agent, Pat Morris, this week, and he confirmed that Perry absolutely still intends to play if there's a fit somewhere that makes sense for him. He had 17 goals this past season between the Los Angeles Kings and the Lightning, so it does appear there's juice left there.

It doesn't sound like a return to Tampa Bay is in the cards, though.

Matthews and McDavid

And finally, let's circle back on Auston Matthews and Connor McDavid.

The reality as of now is that it's a holding pattern on both fronts. Matthews and McDavid are most likely staying put for at least another season, but neither can yet commit 100 percent to that. For starters, both of their teams still need to hire a new head coach. That's going to be a factor.

Matthews and his agent, Judd Moldaver, who also represents McDavid, had a Zoom call with Chayka and Leafs senior executive adviser of hockey operations Mats Sundin about 10 days ago, and it went well by all accounts. But Matthews and Moldaver still need to see how the Leafs' offseason moves play out before they can say that they're for sure committed for next season.

The same goes for McDavid. The Oilers' moves over the next five or six weeks are important to monitor before McDavid and Moldaver sign off for next season.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392507 Websites

The Athletic / Ranking 2026 NHL Draft's top 20 overagers: Egor Barabanov leads this year's re-entry prospects

By Scott Wheeler

Each year, overage players — or re-entry players — account for roughly one round's worth of picks at the NHL Draft.

Here, I've ranked my top 20 overagers in getting a second or third crack at the draft in 2026. The list is made up of 2007- and 2006-born players. The first five names made my final 2026 NHL Draft ranking, which will be released next week. A few others were close and are worthy of strong consideration for the draft. And the rest are development camp invite types, or are players I'd at least keep a peripheral eye on.

This list of overagers combines with my 30 honorable mentions (posting tomorrow) and my final top 100 to form my 2026 NHL Draft package for a total of 150 player reports this year.

1. Egor Barabanov, C, 6-foot (Saginaw Spirit)

Barabanov finished fourth in the OHL in scoring this year, registering 28 goals, 63 assists and 91 points in 68 games as the Spirit's first-line center, often playing between Nikita Klepov (2026) and Dima Zhilkin (2027). He's a heady, skilled and competitive player who was named the Western Conference's second-smartest player and its No. 1 playmaker in the OHL Coaches Poll this year.

A former Penn State commit who is now committed to UMass, Barabanov sees the ice at an advanced level, finding his way around the offensive zone in possession and then making plays from the outside in. He looks a bit awkward skating, and presents a little lanky, but he's stronger than he looks and still gets around the ice quite well. And while I wouldn't say competitiveness defines his game in the way it does Zhilkin's, he's willing to compete. His game is primarily about his good skill, his offensive know-how (in terms of spacing, timing, reads, anticipation) and his ability to break down coverage.

2. Ethan MacKenzie, LHD, 6-foot-0.75 (Edmonton Oil Kings)

Every year or two, there's an undrafted player or two who plays their way into the mix for Canada at the World Juniors and then the draft. In Gothenburg, it was Owen Allard and starting goalie Mathis Rousseau. The year before that, it was Thomas Milic. Before them, there was famously Joe Hicketts. This year, MacKenzie's excellent first half in the WHL (which included 10 goals, 31 points and a plus-22 rating in 30 games) played his way onto the team — his first Hockey Canada experience. He had injury troubles in his first two years in the WHL that held him back from showing what he could do, but he felt he had a good enough year last season to get drafted (32 points in 54 games). This year, his 58 points in 59 games put the question to bed. He told me he had a couple of talks with NHL teams last season, but said they never felt serious. This year has been different. And not only did he make Team Canada, but he rose from No. 7 to the top six, even playing some PP2 for them at times.

A North Dakota commit for next year, his skating is high-end and will carry him. He can break up plays with his stick, seems to see the ice well, moves and carries pucks effectively and has a good shot and a



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

strong build. He has a chance to be a two-way depth skating defenseman.

3. Tomas Galvas, LHD, 5-foot-10 (Bili Tygri Liberec)

Galvas, despite being a small and slight D, was one of the only players on my board all the way back in his first year of eligibility in 2024 who didn't get picked. He skates effortlessly and played the last three seasons at Czechia's pro level to positive two-way results and steady growth in production. He has excelled internationally at U18s and three World Juniors, playing big minutes (he also just played at men's worlds). He was absolutely tremendous at this year's tournament and had a very good year professionally in his third and final crack at getting picked.

At his best, he can be everywhere with his skating and is often deep in the offensive zone, but rarely caught out of position back the other way because he swings back to the point so quickly. He can control play. He thinks it. He competes for his size. And the mobility is elite. He's a natural handler who blends good touch with his four-way mobility to rotate around coverage, shape play crossing over and maneuvering across the blue line, or carry pucks past the first layer of pressure. I like the way he jumps in and out of coverage while still recognizing where his responsibilities are and when he needs to hop back out to the blue line. I like the way he jumps on pucks and gets them out of danger so that he can spend less time defending. He makes little plays under pressure to seamlessly outlet pucks from his own zone, uses his feet to annoy opposing carriers as much as a player his size can, and thinks the game at an advanced level all over the ice to limit some of his physical deficiencies. He works to help compensate for his size (alongside his superb mobility). He has good posture and looks taller on the ice than he is. He'll try to push and involve himself when he can. He handles the puck smartly and excels in particular at skating backwards, which gives hope that he'll continue to be able to defend up levels. There aren't many defensemen his size in the NHL, so there's always inherent risk there, but he has defended well at the pro level already and with some more strength and reps, there could be something there. He should be a good AHLer at minimum, and I'd strongly consider a mid-to-late-rounder on him again.

4. Niko Tournas, RW, 6-foot-2 (Moncton Wildcats)

Tournas, 20, is a late-blooming double overager who led the NAHL in scoring last year and then made the jump to the Q this year. He was one of Moncton's best forwards for much of the year, too, and finished his rookie season with 49 goals and 92 points in 85 combined regular-season and playoff games, leading the Wildcats in goals. Despite his age, he's still raw. By all accounts, he's dedicated to getting better and has the tools, including a hard NHL shot and good size. He didn't penalty kill for the Wildcats this year, but he played nearly four minutes per game on the power play and scored goals in a lot of different ways (off the flank, rebounds, dekes, catch-and-release, bad angles, backdoor, tips, jam plays, drives). He's moving on to the University of New Hampshire next season and is expected to get drafted. He has to improve his pace and reads/decision-making, but there's an interesting skill-shot-size combination there, and he clearly still has runway despite his age.

5. Michal Orsulak, G, 6-foot-4.25 (Prince Albert Raiders)

Orsulak is an overager in this class, but only by three weeks. He's a big, heavy goalie who made the jump from Czechia's junior level to the WHL this year and won the starting job for a Prince Albert Raiders team that he backstopped to the WHL final. He has also been a consistent member of Czechia's 2007 age group internationally; he started at last year's World Juniors and is eligible to return for the tournament in Edmonton this December.

I watched him play some games, particularly early in the year, where he stole wins for the Raiders and was the best player on the ice. He has some real power to his pushes and can make difficult stretch saves. He seals his posts and the bottom third of the net effectively. He plays a

confident, challenging style. But I've also seen him falter or give up soft goals and look smaller than he should in the net. His highs and his size/tools have made him NHL Central Scouting's No. 2-ranked North American goalie after he started the year with a "C" rating for them (which "indicates a 4th/5th round candidate").

6. Liam Lefebvre, C, 6-foot-2.75 (Chicoutimi Saguenéens)

A member of the QMJHL champs and a Vermont commit, Lefebvre made the jump from the U.S. prep circuit to the Q this year as an 18-year-old (he turned 19 on May 15) and registered 37 goals and 71 points in 79 combined regular-season and playoff games. He also finished strong at the Memorial Cup, including the overtime winner in a two-goal performance to beat the Rockets. He's a big, heavysset center (though he split time between the middle and the wing this year) who can shoot it and finish around the net. He has some one-on-one skill and a varied NHL shot (one-timer, catch-and-release, natural wrister). Despite being an overager, his game is still quite raw and has some development to do in terms of reads, pace and playmaking. He also still has some work to do on his fitness level. He's relevant, though, and I considered ranking him in my top 100.

7. Alex Kostov, RW, 6-foot-3.5 (Flint Firebirds)

Kostov, who has Bulgarian and Slovakian heritage but was born in Canada, is a big, rangy winger who attended Maple Leafs development camp last summer and Predators main camp. He wore an "A" for the Firebirds this year and registered 64 points in 55 combined regular-season and playoff games, missing time in the winter with an upper-body injury. And while NHL Central Scouting list him as a winger, he played more center this year (he has work to do in the dot and won just 47 percent of them, but his 577 faceoffs were second-most on the Firebirds). He was a crucial part of Flint's team this year, averaging 20 minutes per game and featuring on both the PP and PK. He's a fluid north-south skater (I think he skates better than people give him credit) who can attack in straight lines or on angles. He plays and works hard. He plays direct and likes to challenge with his wrister. He's athletic. I liked watching him play this year and think he's at least got a chance to become a bottom-sixer someday. He was one of the final cuts for my board.

8. Ben Hrebik, G, 6-foot-2.25 (Barrie Colts)

Hrebik, a Providence commit, posted back-to-back .920 save percentage seasons in the OHL the last two years and was the biggest reason the Colts beat the Brantford Bulldogs to advance to the OHL final this year. He's a very hardworking, competitive goalie who battles for every puck and uses active feet to fight to stay in plays and move to spots early. He gets up and down into and out of his butterfly quickly, making a lot of recovery saves and shutting down the bottom of the net. He'll occasionally get scrambly and pull himself off his lines, but he anticipates and moves well in the net and has great hands when he needs to recover. He plays with a bit of a hunch and wants to be on his toes, but has good size and is athletic.

9. Matias Vanhanen, LW, 5-foot-10.75 (Everett Silvertips)

Vanhanen is technically an overager, but he was born less than a week away from being eligible as a first-timer for this class. He has also grown more than two inches since he passed through the draft at 5-foot-8.25 last year. He made the jump from Finland to the WHL this season and registered 111 points in 80 combined regular-season and playoff games with the WHL champs, leading Everett in regular-season scoring and finishing second on the team in playoff scoring. He also played well at the World Juniors, where he registered six assists in seven games for the Finns (who he can play for again next year). He lacks physicality for his size and can play a little too deferentially or on the perimeter at times, but he's a very, very intelligent player on and off the puck, his skating has improved, he sees the ice at an advanced level, and he can play on both the power play because of his feel and vision and the penalty kill



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

because of his anticipation. There's definitely a chance he tops out as a second-line playmaking winger in Europe or the AHL, but scouts and those around the WHL have some time for him, and he'd make a perfectly worthwhile late-round pick.

10. Liam Danielson, RW, 6-foot (Orebro HK)

Danielson is a very likable player who, despite an ordinary profile in terms of tools, always finds a way to be effective. He registered 21 points in 28 total HockeyAllsvenskan games this year as a 19-year-old and was a really serviceable up-and-down-the-lineup player for Sweden's gold-medal winning team at the World Juniors, where he registered five points in seven games. He also finished the year with 16 points in eight J20 playoff games (his only J20 games of the season). He's a hardworking, well-rounded, committed and consistent winger who has been productive against his age group over the last couple of years. He gets to good spots, has good habits, skates well, has some skill and can be trusted to make the right plays. He can play with anybody. There's a lot to like. If he were a little more dynamic in any one area, he'd be a legit NHL prospect. Even without that, though, I think he has earned a late-round selection.

11. Oliver Sjoström, LHD, 5-foot-11 (Lulea HF)

Sjoström wasn't ranked by NHL Central Scouting at all a year ago, but he had been a top-four D for the '07 Swedish age group internationally and was productive at the J20 level for his age across two seasons, and I listed him as an honorable mention for last year's top 100. He then spent his post-draft season this year on loan with Bjorkloven in HockeyAllsvenskan and appeared in the SHL playoffs with his club team Lulea. In HockeyAllsvenskan, he played an offensive role, averaged 14-15 minutes per game, and led all under-19 players in scoring with 26 points and a plus-12 rating in 48 games. In the SHL playoffs, he played 10 minutes per game.

His challenge is that he's undersized, and while he has smooth offense, skating and puck-moving ability, it's not dynamic, take-over-a-game talent. I do like him defensively as well, though. He has been a go-to penalty killer on his teams at times over the years, even if he didn't do it professionally this year, and he has a good stick. He has a balanced skating posture going backward and gaps up well (though I do think there are times when he could close earlier, and he waits for carriers to come to him head-on). His profile makes him a bit of a long shot for the NHL, but he's already well on his way to becoming an offensive D in the SHL at minimum, and that's more than can be said for some players who are going to get picked this year.

12. Alexander Sapozhnikov, LHD, 6-foot-6 (HK Sochi)

Sapozhnikov is a giant who made the jump from the NMHL to the MHL this year, registered 15 points in his first 19 MHL games and quickly earned his first five KHL looks in the fall. His boots are heavy from a standstill, and his feet can look a little clunky, but he moves well enough (he'll occasionally open up for the one-timer or walk the line) to be interesting and then has the raw strength to overpower opponents physically and hammer a puck from the point. After playing big minutes with Stupino to start the year, he did play a reduced role after a move to SKA, though. And while his results were generally positive defensively, he's still very much learning the game and playing catch-up with some of the finer details. A team using a late-round flier on him would be treating him as a long-term project, even though he's an overager.

13. Matthew Minchak, G, 6-foot-5 (Kingston Frontenacs)

Minchak got off to an excellent start to this season and outplayed first-year eligible Gavin Betts early on. While he wasn't able to take and hold the starting job, they basically split starts, and he finished the year with the better numbers of the two (.910 to .905). A Colgate commit, Minchak (NHL Central Scouting's No. 15-ranked North American goaltender) was playing 18U AAA a year ago and adjusted quickly to the big jump, playing his way into the OHL Top Prospects Game (which he started for Team East). He has size and room to get stronger while already being decently

athletic (I wouldn't call it a standout trait, but he's not slow or uncoordinated either). He plays with composure. He tracks the play well and does a good job holding his lines and controlling his rebounds for his size.

14. Timofei Runtso, RHD, 6-foot-2.25 (Victoria Royals)

Runtso, a Miami University commit, made the jump from the NAHL to the WHL this season and led all Royals D in scoring with 44 points in 68 games. He averaged nearly 25 minutes per game and played in all situations from the jump, playing more than two minutes per game on both the PP and PK. A Belarusian-American, Runtso has a pro look to him, with an athletic build and a direct disposition on and off the puck. He makes a good first pass but will also drop a shoulder and drive past the first layer of pressure in the offensive zone into puck protection or a hard wrister from the high slot. He plays with a certainty to his game and decision-making. His feet aren't quick, but his stride is strong, and he's sturdy over his feet. He has some pop off his blade and keeps his shots on target. He's not super physical, but he plays firm defensively. There are some pro attributes and habits there.

15. Yaroslav Bryzgalov, LW, 6-foot-3.25 (Medicine Hat Tigers)

Bryzgalov, a Merrimack commit, is a big, heavy winger who can play the power game and check but also has some secondary playmaking feel and vision that you typically don't find in a forward his size (he's listed at 216 pounds) at that age. He registered 69 points in 79 games as a first-year WHLer with Medicine Hat this year and did it while averaging only about 15 minutes per game on a deep team and primarily on PP2. He cooled off in the middle third of the season but started and finished strong, producing in the playoffs. He didn't PK, and he had some learning to do off the puck, but he's willing to track and came up with his fair share of takeaways. He also quickly identifies his options when he gets the puck and does a good job pre-scanning so that he can get pucks to his teammates in space early and surprise opposing D with a heady pass. He also does a good job attacking inside ice and using the attention his big frame gets when he does to hit the backdoor option. And while I'd like him to shoot more, he has a quick release. He needs to develop his skating and play with more tempo more consistently, but he protects the puck well and can slow it down. He has some proponents.

16. Dakota Rhéaume-Mullen, LHD, 6-foot-0.5 (University of Michigan)

The son of legendary goaltender Manon Rhéaume, Rhéaume-Mullen is a late-2006 who, after two years at the NTDP, played college hockey with the Wolverines in his draft year and then had a really solid season on their blue line as a sophomore this year to play his way onto the World Junior team and help Michigan to the Frozen Four. His minutes per game rose from 14:13 as a freshman to 18:12 as a sophomore (fourth among Michigan's D), and he finished with a respectable 18 points in 40 games. He impressed in particular at last summer's World Junior Summer Showcase, where he played his way into the mix for the U20 team and made some things happen.

He's a good skater with projectable four-way mobility. He handles pressure well and has some poise. His head and eyes stay up, and his reads seem to be in a good place. But whenever I watched him over the years, I felt he had more smarts and offense and that an opportunity to show it just didn't come pre-draft due to both roles at the NTDP and Michigan. He played behind Cole Hutson and Logan Hensler for offensive opportunities at the program, and that carried over into Michigan, where his role and game got caught in no-man's land. This year, after PPQB Henry Mews went down with a season-ending injury, he got some PP reps. I could see him take another step as a junior or senior and become an involved, puck-possession two-way D. He may well end up as an AHLer/ECHLer in the end, but he now looks like he's going to play pro hockey.

17. Ben Wilmott, C, 6-foot-1.25 (Barrie Colts)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Wilmott, an Ohio State commit, made the jump from the USHL to the OHL this year and was immediately a really solid player for the London Knights in advance of a trade to Barrie. Between those two spots and then a run to the OHL final in the playoffs, he registered 38 goals and 88 points in 86 games, averaging 20 minutes per game and winning the strong majority of his draws (58 percent in the regular season and 53 percent in the playoffs, though Utah first-round Cole Beaudoin took the toughest ones). He played the net-front/goal line well on the power play. He does a good job staying on his toes and winning races for loose pucks. He does a really good job slipping off coverage to get open and then has a good catch-and-release shot he can strike with around the home plate area. He has decent hands. The playmaking and skating/pace are just average, though.

18. Felix Carell, LHD, 6-foot-1 (Malmo Redhawks)

Carell is a pro-built, thick-bodied defenseman who played 20 minutes per game for Sweden at World Juniors to positive results, establishing himself as a stable option for a gold medal-winning team. He also spent almost this entire season in the SHL as a teenager, and while he didn't pick up his first points until the playoffs, he held his own. His game is vanilla, but he competes, he gaps up well, he has a good stick and he's willing to play physical and battle. He's a sound, reliable player. That's normally not enough to be more than SHL/AHL depth, but that he's already that at a young age and has been a trustworthy stopper against his peers isn't nothing, either. He's a decent skater, too, so there's a base there.

19. Kade Stengrim, LW, 6-foot-4 (Medicine Hat Tigers)

Stengrim, a University of St. Thomas commit, made the jump from the USHL to WHL this year and registered 32 goals and 55 points in 81 combined regular-season and playoff games with Medicine Hat, where he found ways to contribute in a bottom-six role on a deep team and was a factor on PP2. He's a big, strong forward who can use his size to protect pucks along the wall and take them to the net and then when he gets there, he has an NHL shot and can score around the slot (and occasionally even from the high slot when he has time to really lean into one). There's not a lot else to his game, but you'd be betting on the athletic build and bottom-six traits.

20. Daniil Ustinkov, LHD, 6-foot-1 (Zurich SC)

Ustinkov, who represents Switzerland but also has Russian citizenship, impressed scouts years ago with his play at U18 worlds and the Hlinka Gretzky Cup but has struggled to take that next development leap since then and has bounced between the NL and second-rung SL in Switzerland (he was also a solid player for them at his second World Juniors this year but never became their No. 1 D, either).

He's a late-August birthday who has always played a mature game for his age. He makes the right choices with the puck and reads without it, consistently on both fronts and in all three zones. He has some poise, simplicity and efficiency to his game. I've seen him command the puck and try to make something happen against his peers inside the offensive zone and extend himself (though I'm not sure he has the jump to have that be much of an element in his game up levels). His head is always on a swivel, and he's an intelligent player who takes what's given to him and advances and steers the play. I've also seen him force things defensively, mistime step-ups trying to break up plays early instead of gapping up. Generally, he moves pucks quickly, he's got a good first pass, he manages the puck well, he'll make the odd play through or around coverage, and he has proven he can be active and involved against his peers on both sides. He needs to get a little quicker getting back to pucks, but he's helped by knowing where to be, good enough edges, competitiveness and a desire to make a difference.

His challenge is that all of the tools are about average, and that's going to make it hard for him to define himself up levels and likely limits him as a depth NL/AHL D.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392508 Websites

The Athletic / NHL Mock Draft 2026: Pronman, Wheeler and Bultman play GM and pick Round 1

By Corey Pronman, Scott Wheeler and Max Bultman

A few years ago, we decided to test out a new idea: In place of our typical predictive mock, let's build a mock where we are the general managers for each team and have to make the decisions ourselves based on our own lists and weighing our given team's needs.

Today, for a fourth year in a row, it's back by popular demand. Our editor randomized the order, and Max Bultman joined so that prospect writers Corey Pronman and Scott Wheeler couldn't anticipate where the other was going to go based on their knowledge of each other's lists.

After the draw, Pronman selected first, Bultman second and Wheeler third.

Here's how they drafted the first round from the helm of their draft tables.

Note: This mock exercise was completed before the Vegas Golden Knights beat the Colorado Avalanche in the Western Conference final. The St. Louis Blues, who hold Colorado's first-round pick, will select 29th. The Calgary Flames, who hold Vegas' first-round pick, will select either 30th or 31st, depending on the result of the Stanley Cup Final.

1. Toronto Maple Leafs: Chase Reid, RHD, Sault Ste. Marie (OHL)

Reid is, by the slimmest of margins, the best player on my board. The Maple Leafs are in a tough situation, though. They're in win-now mode despite being a bottom-five possession team this season, so they have a lot of work to do to get back to contending. I think Gavin McKenna, Ivar Stenberg and potentially Alberts Smits could provide more immediate help. I don't think any of them make an impact in the NHL next season, though. I'm not even sure it's a smart bet to count on anyone in this draft truly moving the needle by two years out. Reid has the best chance of anyone in this draft to become an impact player at a premium position, even if that's no sure thing. In the draft, you have to take the long view, not knee-jerk to fill short-term roster holes, and I would bet on the 6-foot-3, highly skilled and mobile two-way defenseman who has at least a chance to become a No. 1 D.

People will argue don't go against the grain here, it will get you fired, but odds are in Toronto, you're getting fired quickly anyway, so may as well do what you think is best for the franchise. — Pronman

2. San Jose Sharks: Carson Carels, LHD, Prince George (WHL)

The surprise with the No. 1 pick here puts San Jose in an interesting spot. The Sharks have the opportunity to take McKenna (or Stenberg) and add an exciting young forward prospect to an already talented pool up front. But does adding to what's already an organizational strength really move the needle more than a do-it-all defenseman?

Reid was probably the ideal candidate, but Carels is a smooth skater, tough to play against, and probably hasn't gotten enough credit for his offense in the WHL this season. I don't think he's that different from Jake Sanderson in his draft year. That's a highly compelling profile that would really round out the Sharks' build. As tempting as McKenna is on talent, taking the all-situations D at this spot makes San Jose a better team for the long-term. — Bultman

3. Vancouver Canucks: Gavin McKenna, LW, Penn State (NCAA)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

The Wheeler-led Canucks no longer feel like they lost the lottery as we get our No. 1-ranked player at No. 3 here. This organization is starving for a star, and McKenna remains the brightest star in this class. We're not going to pontificate about position or beat him up for his imperfections; this is the draft's biggest talent. — Wheeler

4. Chicago Blackhawks: Alberts Smits, LHD, München (DEL)

Smits is my No. 2-ranked player, but he fits here not only on talent but also seamlessly into Chicago's depth chart, which has a lot of good young defensemen but could use a premier name on the left side. Smits projects as a heavy-minutes, two-way defender who can play on both special teams. I would be tempted to take Stenberg here for Chicago, who need more high-end skill to surround Connor Bedard with. Between Bedard, Stenberg, Frank Nazar and Roman Kantserov, it would be a very small top six, though. Given I think the two players are rather close on pure ability, my lean is to take Smits for all the above reasons. — Pronman

5. New York Rangers: Ivar Stenberg, LW, Frölunda (SHL)

There could be some temptation for the Rangers to chase a center here, which is a major need in their system. But they need top talent, period, and Stenberg is the top talent available. He had a monster year for a draft-eligible in the SHL, similar to what the Sedins produced at the same age. Stenberg may be on the smaller side, but he's highly skilled, intelligent and competitive, and that has top-line winger written all over it. — Bultman

6. Calgary Flames: Caleb Malhotra, C, Brantford (OHL)

The Flames jump on the No. 1 center in the draft, a player they can build around and their potential No. 1 center of the future. Malhotra and Cole Reschny give Calgary two legit two-way prospects down the middle. — Wheeler

7. Seattle Kraken: Keaton Verhoeff, RHD, North Dakota (NCAA)

I'm ecstatic for our organization to get Verhoeff here. A 6-foot-4, right-shot defenseman who can skate and pass pucks up the ice and projects as a big-minutes NHL D on both special teams is exactly what the Kraken pipeline needs, and he was the best player available on our board, too. — Pronman

8. Winnipeg Jets: Viggo Björck, C, Djurgården (SHL)

Björck may be on the smaller side for a center, but we've seen Logan Stankoven and Zach Benson be major difference-makers in the Stanley Cup playoffs, and Björck has the tools to do the same. He's a high-motor, high-skill pivot who can play hard minutes, and because of his pro experience, may be able to get to Winnipeg fairly quickly, too. — Bultman

9. Florida Panthers: Daxon Rudolph, RHD, Prince Albert (WHL)

Coming off a stellar draft season, Rudolph has firmly established himself in the top D group. He has the size, handedness and legit offense and gives the Panthers their first stud D prospect since they took Aaron Ekblad No. 1 all the way back in 2014. — Wheeler

10. Nashville Predators: Wyatt Cullen, LW, U.S. NTDP (USHL)

It's a near tie between Cullen and Malte Gustafsson on our list. Typically, we would lean toward Gustafsson; the tall, mobile puck-moving profile in a top four is very valuable, and they don't have a ton of that in Nashville. The Predators have used a lot of draft capital in recent years, though, on hardworking two-way profiles that can drive play. They have nobody in the system who is a game-breaker with the puck and comfortably projects into a top six. Cullen would become the most dynamic player in the pipeline. It's a tough decision, but Nashville decides to use this pick to add skill. — Pronman

11. St. Louis Blues: Ethan Belchetz, LW, Windsor (OHL)

This pick comes right around where the last top centers and D are available, and Gustafsson and Tynan Lawrence are certainly tempting at premium positions. But the true power forward is becoming just as hard to find in the modern game, and Belchetz blends huge physical traits with legit offensive ability. That's a worthwhile upside swing while still keeping a projectable floor. — Bultman

12. New Jersey Devils: Tynan Lawrence, C, Boston University (NCAA)

This decision came down to two players who are very close on my board right now: Lawrence and defenseman Ryan Lin. The Devils' abundance of good young D (Luke Hughes, Simon Nemec, Anton Silayev, Seamus Casey) pushed me in Lawrence's direction. The Devils don't have a legit C prospect, and Lawrence, a teammate of Devils prospects Mikhail Yegorov and Conrad Fondrk at BU, gives them one. — Wheeler

13. New York Islanders: Malte Gustafsson, LHD, HV71 (SHL)

I have slight hesitations about going this way because the Islanders drafted two left-shot defensemen in the first round last year. But their farm system is too thin, and Gustafsson too good, to be overly swayed by that variable, even if I would be tempted to take a forward here. A potential long-term top four with Gustafsson, Matthew Schaefer and Kashawn Aitchison could be the envy of the division. — Pronman

14. Columbus Blue Jackets: Oscar Hemming, LW, Boston College (NCAA)

Hemming is a big, hard-to-play-against forward who can bring offense in multiple ways, both by getting to the hard areas and with a powerful shot from distance. He has good touch for a big man and is the kind of player who can help the Blue Jackets get over the hump in late-season hockey. — Bultman

15. St. Louis Blues: Ryan Lin, RHD, Vancouver (WHL)

The Blues' pool could use a center more than a D or wing (especially after taking Belchetz), but I think there's a ledge between Lin and that next tier of centers. And the Blues' D prospects (Adam Jiricek, Theo Lindstein, etc.) don't look or play like Lin. I like him a lot for them here. — Wheeler

16. Washington Capitals: Oliver Suvanto, C, Tappara (Liiga)

Suvanto is barely behind a winger or two on our board as the pure BPA, but Washington has drafted a winger in the first round four years in a row, and eventually, the Capitals need to address depth down the middle. Suvanto is a highly competitive and skilled center who may not be the most dynamic, but could potentially have an Anton Lundell-type trajectory. — Pronman

17. Los Angeles Kings: Alexander Command, C, Örebro (J20 Nationell)

The Kings need everything, but especially need a center, and get a well-rounded one in Command, a riser in this class with slick hands who can make plays or score around the net. — Bultman

18. Washington Capitals: Elton Hermansson, RW, MoDo (SHL)

The Capitals have drafted a lot of wingers of late, but with the way the draft has played out, there's a gap between the top available wings and the next-best centers and D for me here. With their second pick, I like taking a cut on the skilled Hermansson from a position of strength as a result. — Wheeler

19. Utah Mammoth: Casey Mutryn, RW, U.S. NTDP (USHL)

The Mammoth select the big, fast, physical, highly versatile Mutryn. He's not only our BPA, but he also slots in well into a deep depth chart given his abilities to play on both special teams and potentially fit anywhere in Utah's lineup in a few years. — Pronman

20. San Jose Sharks: Adam Novotný, LW, Peterborough (OHL)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

San Jose considers doubling down on D here to keep building up the blue line, but after getting our defensive building block early, we'll add some firepower up front with Novotný, a sturdy-built offensive winger who can really shoot it and play around the net, too. — Bultman

21. Philadelphia Flyers: Nikita Klepov, LW, Saginaw (OHL)

My BPA here is Klepov, the OHL's leading scorer this year and a commit to Porter Martone's alma mater, Michigan State. He's an average-sized winger, but the Flyers prioritized size with their two firsts and four seconds last year, and I don't think it's something they need to be chasing for their pool now. They've also chased centers to a fault at times for me. Klepov injects some skill into their pool. — Wheeler

22. Pittsburgh Penguins: Gleb Pugachyov, LW, Torpedo (VHL)

Pugachyov, to me, is a similar player to Hemming, but is likely going to fall to this range of the draft because he plays in Russia. He's a huge power winger who's one of the draft's most punishing physical players, while also having the speed and hands to create chances at the next level. At 22, I'm willing to roll the dice on the unique profile here. — Pronman

23. Boston Bruins: Adam Goljer, RHD, Dukla Trencin (Extraliga)

The Bruins' pipeline is pretty light on defenders, so we'll address that with a projectable righty out of the Slovak pro ranks. Goljer is a fluid skater with size and some offense, and could become a second-pair type in the future. — Bultman

24. Vancouver Canucks: JP Hurlbert, C/LW, Kamloops (WHL)

There are two routes I considered here with the Canucks' second pick: skilled but frustrating wingers like Marcus Nordmark or Mathis Preston, or projectable, pro-styled centers like Ilia Morozov and Jack Hextall. But neither route felt like the right one for an organization that already has one of the former in Jonathan Lekkerimäki and one of the latter in Braeden Cootes. Hurlbert became the middle ground between the two. He checks the skill box and could potentially check the positional one after playing a lot of both this year (though the consensus view is that he's a pro winger). — Wheeler

25. Seattle Kraken: Jack Hextall, C, Youngstown (USHL)

The Kraken have drafted a lot of centers, although you can never have too many due to not everyone panning out or some moving to wing. Hextall would be a strong two-way option, potentially for the middle of their lineup, who may not be elite offensively but can drive play and play on both special teams. — Pronman

26. New York Rangers: Ilia Morozov, C, Miami (NCAA)

After grabbing Stenberg early, now the Rangers get their center in Morozov, an impressive athlete at 6-foot-3 who plays hard and has good hands as well. The big center had very respectable production as one of the youngest players in college hockey this year, and when you combine that with his projectable pro traits, this is a nice get for New York late in the first round. — Bultman

27. Buffalo Sabres: Xavier Villeneuve, LHD, Blainville-Boisbriand (QMJHL)

The core of the Sabres' blue line is big, and they've got another one on the way in Radim Mrtko. That makes them fertile ground for a talent like Villeneuve as a contrast. Not only is he one of my BPAs here, but this is also the range where he really starts to make sense as a worthwhile swing. The Sabres are a team, with their still-young group up front and on the back end, that can afford to take it. — Wheeler

28. Calgary Flames: Brooks Rogowski, C, Oshawa (OHL)

Calgary addresses its center depth issues by adding two pivots now in this draft. Rogowski is one of the best pure athletes in the class, a 6-foot-

7 center who can skate and showed decent offense over the course of the season. He projects as a potential third-line center in the NHL. — Pronman

29. Montreal Canadiens: William Håkansson, Luleå (SHL)

The Canadiens have a bit of everything at this point, so they take the hulking left-shot defenseman in Håkansson, adding a different flavor blueliner from the playmakers they already have in place. Håkansson will make his impact at the other end, killing plays and winning battles to let the Canadiens' skill get back to work. — Bultman

30. Carolina Hurricanes: Marcus Nordmark, LW, Djurgården (J20 Nationell)

I've always appreciated the Canes' willingness to take swings that others won't, and Nordmark might be the biggest representation of that in this class. In that spirit, I'd start to consider taking that swing on his talent and hope he can figure out the rest at this point in the draft, at the end of the first round/beginning of the second, when the talent gap starts to widen between him and the remaining prospects. — Wheeler

31. St. Louis Blues: Tobias Trejbal, G, Youngstown (USHL)

The Blues cap off a productive first round by getting the best goalie in the draft. Trejbal is tall, athletic, intelligent and was highly productive this season in junior. I debated someone like Liam Ruck here, but the Blues have a lot of wingers, as previously mentioned, and don't have a second-round pick, making it difficult to acquire the twins together if we wanted to. — Pronman

32. Ottawa Senators: Liam Ruck, RW, Medicine Hat (WHL)

Ottawa isn't in an ideal position to unite the twins either, but we'll still take a shot on the WHL's second-leading goal scorer in Liam, who can not only shoot the puck but also gets himself to good scoring areas. And now we begin plotting how to move into the second round for Markus. — Bultman

The Athletic LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392509 Websites

ESPN / Hurricanes-Canadiens Game 4 takeaways, grades, early look at Game 5 - ESPN

Kristen Shilton

The Carolina Hurricanes were bound to shake the rust off eventually. Consider them well cleansed. The Hurricanes dominated Game 4 of the Eastern Conference finals in every way to hand Montreal a lopsided 4-0 defeat and take a 3-1 series lead heading into Game 5 on Friday.

There is something about Game 4 that brings out the worst in the Canadiens -- they are 0-3 in that category during these playoffs -- and Wednesday was no exception. They had played with fire in Game 2 and Game 3, putting only a combined 25 shots on net and still reaching overtime in both outings (that turned into losses).

Montreal hasn't been good at home throughout the postseason, and the Canadiens never found a rhythm to match what Carolina was creating. Montreal got outshot by a wide margin (43-18), was 0-for-2 on the power play and was shut out for only the second time in 18 playoff games. This was an example of one team being at its best from start to finish, and another looking like it's struggling for answers.

Carolina Hurricanes

Grade: A-



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Carolina initially made things hard on itself. The Hurricanes were peppering Montreal with shots in the first five minutes and earned a power play that went nowhere -- and then Jalen Chatfield and Taylor Hall killed their team's momentum further with back-to-back offensive zone penalties. The Hurricanes' short-handed prowess saved them, and the power play paid them back when Sebastian Aho got Carolina going again with a goal. That was the fourth time in as many games the Hurricanes have taken a 1-0 lead, and Jordan Staal swiftly added to the advantage when he redirected a pass from K'Andre Miller past Dobes while battling for position with Josh Anderson in the goalie's crease.

Then it was Logan Stankoven putting a puck past Dobes to spot Carolina a 3-0 lead through 20 minutes.

The Hurricanes continued to press offensively and were sharp defensively while Frederik Andersen looked more locked in than ever. Regardless of not piling on Montreal as the game wore on, they did more than enough to show they're worthy of being in position to punch a ticket to a Stanley Cup Final on Friday.

Montreal Canadiens

Grade: D+

The Canadiens' recent strategy of being resoundingly outplayed offensively while essentially leaving goalie Jakub Dobes to give them a fighting chance sort of worked in overtime losses in Games 2 and 3. But Carolina is too good for that luck not to run out eventually.

Montreal weathered an early push in Game 4, but when it came up short on both first-period power plays -- brilliant opportunities to capitalize on the Hurricanes' uncharacteristic carelessness -- Montreal had nothing. And it was all downhill from there.

The Canadiens gave up 10 chances off turnovers alone in the first 20 minutes. Coach Martin St. Louis tried to stop the bleeding by reconstructing all four lines going into the second period, but it didn't do much good. Montreal was simply too disconnected to make anything work. Dobes slamming the door through the second and third periods was the Canadiens' only saving grace, but they simply refused to help him out with support on either side of the puck. How could Montreal expect success when registering only three shots on goal (compared with 17 by Carolina) in the third period? The Canadiens did an excellent job of watching the Hurricanes take it to them in Game 4. And it'll be the last their home crowd sees of the Habs if they can't change something before Friday.

Players to watch in Game 4

Frederik Andersen

G, Hurricanes

Goaltending always matters. In this instance it's particularly critical for Carolina given Andersen's history. He has been to four conference finals in his career but has never backstopped his team to a Cup finals-clinching game. The closest Andersen came was in 2014-15, when he and the Anaheim Ducks had Chicago on the ropes in Game 5 of their tied Western Conference finals outing and a pair of goals from Jonathan Toews late in that one to force overtime seemed to bother Andersen in consecutive losses to see Anaheim out of the playoffs. Ancient history, though, right? Only Andersen can prove that's the case.

play

0:24

Frederik Andersen makes big-time save for Hurricanes

His playoffs overall have been strong -- and Wednesday was by far his best performance of the series -- but it's a different animal knowing what's on the line in Game 5. Andersen can't count on the Canadiens' offensive talents to stay quiet when infused with some desperation that

maybe hasn't surfaced yet. How Andersen handles that push will determine whether Carolina boards another plane back to Montreal or gets ready to welcome Vegas into town.

Cole Caufield

RW, Canadiens

It was impressive when Caufield collected 51 goals in the regular season. But a scorer's reputation is cemented in the playoffs, and now more than ever the Canadiens require the best out of Caufield. He has only one marker in the series so far -- part of that four-goal outburst from Montreal in Game 1 -- and since then has just one assist (albeit it a beauty).

Montreal's lack of offense is a collective problem, but this is no time for the Canadiens to be pinning the fate of their season on secondary performers. It's Caufield who needs to set the tone up front on Friday. Even if it can't be him individually lighting the lamp, then at least setting up linemates Nick Suzuki and Juraj Slafkovsky at even strength or being a key part of the power play (like he was on Lane Hutson's strike in Game 3) will be good enough. Caufield is too good and too important to be a passenger at this point.

Big questions for Game 5

Can Carolina close things out?

The Hurricanes have heard every version of the "Carolina collapses in the conference finals" narrative. This is when they write a new chapter ... right?

This is the Hurricanes' third appearance in the conference finals in four seasons, and they've already well surpassed the combined one win earned over those past two efforts. The final victory in any series is difficult to grasp. It's even tougher if there's added pressure to slay proverbial demons of the past. Montreal has nothing to lose here. The Canadiens are a young, hungry, well-built team that will have years ahead with this core to be in the same position. There's a ticking clock for the Hurricanes and their veterans that can't become a factor from here. The Canadiens are an excellent road team squad and won't make it easy on Carolina to finish them off. This is when Carolina can prove once and for all it learned something from past failings.

Will Montreal stay excellent on the road?

The Canadiens were one shot away from leaving Raleigh with a 2-0 lead in this series. That's how good they've been away from Montreal in the postseason. The Canadiens are 7-3 to this stage on the road, and two of those three losses were in overtime.

The cliché is always one game at a time, but now it's a reality for the Canadiens like it hasn't been all postseason. They hadn't dropped consecutive games this spring until this series, let alone three in a row. It should be a blessing for Montreal to be out of its own building for Game 5. If the Canadiens can pick up a victory in Raleigh, all they'd have to do is find the win column once in Bell Centre to set up another road tilt for that Stanley Cup Final berth. But all that doesn't play out unless the road atmosphere once again brings out their best on Friday.

ESPN LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392510 Websites

ESPN / Latest on Matthews, McDavid, Hughes and other big-name players - ESPN

Emily Kaplan



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

As the NHL season nears a close, teams are gearing up for what could be a busy summer. A jump in the salary cap means more flexibility. And if the Vegas Golden Knights making their third trip to the Stanley Cup Final in nine years proves anything, teams that act boldly often get rewarded.

Here's what I'm hearing about the key storylines emerging over the next few months.

AUSTON MATTHEWS AND Connor McDavid are in similar spots: As captains in pressure markets, there will be noise about them and their future any season the team doesn't win. They're both under contract through the 2027-28 season. Though they have loyalty to their teams, what they're looking for most is conviction.

Matthews and McDavid are represented by the same agent, who preaches the same thing: Why make a decision before they have to? So as they move through the primes of their career, they're constantly assessing whether their organizations are acting aggressively enough to put them in position to win. Neither team has hired a coach for next season yet, which is a major data point. Don't expect any news from McDavid after a disappointing Oilers season. He just signed a short-term, team-friendly deal last summer. Edmonton already knows it's on the clock with its generational superstar.

On Matthews, there's a bit more uncertainty given the management change. But there's still a strong belief that nothing will change with Matthews' situation ahead of next season. He loves being captain in Toronto, loves the city and wants to win there.

There is supposed to be a meeting between Matthews, new general manager John Chayka and president of hockey operations Mats Sundin. This isn't unusual. When Kyle Dubas was fired as Maple Leafs general manager after the 2022-23 season, Matthews also took time, met with new leadership and worked through what the next era would look like. The only reason it hasn't happened yet is logistics: Matthews is recovering from knee surgery after the hit by Radko Gudas and can't travel far from Arizona as he rehabs. Sundin is relocating his family from Europe. They're knee-deep in scouting meetings in Toronto. But the lines of communication have been open. Chayka hasn't tipped his hand publicly, but there's belief the Leafs want to stay aggressive and compete now -- not pivot toward any kind of rebuild. Management is not asking for Matthews' input on decisions such as roster moves or coaches, but they are keeping him in the loop.

ANOTHER THING THE Leafs have kept close to the vest: what they'll do with the No. 1 draft pick. Most scouts and executives I've checked in with still believe Gavin McKenna is the most likely pick simply because of his high ceiling. Beyond the skill, McKenna showed at Penn State this season he can handle noise -- and often feed off it. Whether it was a loud building or moments when scrutiny turned negative, evaluators saw a player who used that energy as fuel, not something that rattled him. A GM's worst nightmare is passing on a talent like McKenna and he hits, then spends years making you regret it.

But Ivar Stenberg has made this more of a conversation than many expected. His profile has increased steadily through his draft year, and some evaluators believe his maturity, two-way detail and pro-ready game have at least forced a deeper internal debate. Caleb Malhotra is also getting a ton of love and might surprise some with just how high he has climbed on several team's draft boards.

It's an uber-talented class. But it still runs through McKenna. One front office executive put it bluntly: "You better be absolutely sure if you're going to pass on McKenna."

ALEX OVECHKIN RETURNED to Moscow last week, and from everything I'm hearing, little has changed in his situation. The decision appears to be whether to retire from the NHL or return to Washington on a one-year contract. Ovechkin's mother, Tatiana -- one of his closest confidants -- has also been in Russia as he considers the next step. The most recent timeline I was given was around the draft -- before or shortly

after -- when many players begin ramping up offseason training. But if Ovechkin needs more time, the Capitals appear willing to give it to him. Communication has remained open between Ovechkin and the organization as both sides continue to work through key questions, including what his role would look like next season. That conversation is particularly notable after Washington hired power-play coach Ray Bennett.

THE COACHING CAROUSEL might still run through Vegas -- and a trip to the Stanley Cup Final could further complicate it. The Golden Knights have made clear their focus is on the playoffs, and as of now, are waiting until their season is over before deciding whether to grant permission for Bruce Cassidy to interview elsewhere. The league is not expected to intervene, as it views Vegas within its league and legal rights to withhold permission while Cassidy is still under contract. There is mutual interest between Cassidy and Edmonton, and I believe he'd also like to speak with Los Angeles, which also has interest. But even when Vegas' season ends, there's no guarantee the organization will allow those conversations.

That matters because Edmonton has made it clear it wants a veteran coach. And now, some executives around the league are wondering: If Cassidy isn't available, do they pivot to John Tortorella as Plan B? Tortorella signed with Vegas only through the end of the season. The long-term expectation had been that the Golden Knights would eventually turn to Ryan Craig -- their AHL coach, someone they've developed internally for years and who has a long-standing relationship with Kelly McCrimmon since junior hockey. But Tortorella's success this spring might have complicated that timeline. How can Vegas turn away from Tortorella now? So the bigger question might not just be whether Cassidy is available. It's whether Vegas suddenly has to make a coaching decision of its own.

THE MAPLE LEAFS have real interest in coach David Carle and he seems to be at least entertaining it. But he has been highly selective about making the jump to the NHL and has never wanted to do it just for the sake of it.

Part of that is the cutthroat nature of NHL coaching contracts. He already has one of the best jobs in hockey at the University of Denver, where he has built a powerhouse with the stability and control few NHL coaches ever get.

And around hockey circles, there long has been a belief that if Carle does leave, the Colorado Avalanche could be the ideal fit. He has deep ties there, and many around the league have wondered whether he'd rather wait for a job like Colorado than jump at just any NHL opening.

So now that Colorado has suffered a stunning playoff exit, does that suddenly add another layer to the conversation around Jared Bednar -- and Carle's future? Bednar, extremely well-regarded around the league, would not be out of work for long.

ALEX TUCH'S EXTENSION talks were intentionally shelved at the end of the regular season and through the playoffs. The Buffalo Sabres had the luxury of patience, and so did Tuch. At that point, they were not close on money. They'll now circle back on conversations, and Tuch's camp feels as if it doesn't yet have a final answer from GM Jarmo Kekalainen. So the question is whether that gap has narrowed into striking distance. Tuch played below market value on his last deal, and though money is not the only factor here, he is viewed around the league as a highly desirable player who could command double-digit average annual value in a weak free agent class. If Buffalo gets competitive, there's a path. If not, this could become a relatively straightforward decision. Either way, Tuch's zero-point performance against Montreal is not a major factor here. Every team, but specifically Buffalo, will be looking at the 30-year-old's larger body of work and all-around impact (including the fact he was a big reason the Sabres made the playoffs, and his four goals against Boston in the first round).



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

WHEN I CHECKED in with Bill Guerin this week, he said he was "confident" the Wild would re-sign Quinn Hughes when he's eligible for an extension on July 1 -- citing their relationship, Hughes' positive experience in Minnesota, and what he knows matters most to the star defenseman: winning.

The Wild would like Hughes as long as they can have him. Guerin acts with conviction, the owner has no problem signing checks for big-time talent (see: Kirill Kaprizov) so this could be a massive deal. But the Wild also know this is about what Hughes wants. The expectation around the league is that Hughes ultimately re-signs in Minnesota, with a three-year deal viewed as a logical structure because it would align with brother Jack Hughes' contract timeline.

Hughes will have more serious conversations with his agent and family in the coming weeks as he weighs what's next. A clear path to the Stanley Cup is important. There was a real feeling internally that if the Wild had been healthier -- particularly with Jonas Brodin and Joel Eriksson Ek available against Colorado -- that series could have looked different. But for Hughes, family is also part of that equation, with two brothers already in the league. From Minnesota's side, it will continue to be aggressive this summer, with finding a center still an absolute priority, but only if it's the right deal and the right fit.

AS FOR THE next wave of cornerstone franchise contracts? We could see a few massive ones this summer.

Macklin Celebrini is eligible to sign an extension July 1, and the expectation is the Sharks won't drag this out if both sides are aligned. This is a franchise-defining negotiation. Because this is the last offseason before the new CBA changes max extension length, Celebrini can sign an eight-year deal if it's registered before Sept. 15. NHL contracts are capped at 20% of the salary cap, meaning the Sharks can offer Celebrini eight years by \$20.8 million for \$166.4 million total, which would surpass Kaprizov's \$136 million (\$17 million AAV) deal from last offseason. They can also include sweeteners such as max signing bonus structure and a no-movement clause. Celebrini wearing a "C" as captain next season is all but guaranteed. But whether San Jose goes all the way to that number, or whether Celebrini wants to commit that long as a 20-year-old in a rapidly changing cap landscape, is a separate question.

Then there are Connor Bedard and Leo Carlsson. Both players effectively bet on themselves, putting long-term contract talks on the back burner this season -- and both followed it up with massive production efforts that only strengthened their leverage. Now it becomes a bit of a game of chicken. Whichever side moves first could help define the next tier of superstar contracts. If one signs first, that deal immediately becomes a benchmark -- not only on AAV, but structure, term, bonuses, and how aggressively teams are willing to pay elite young centers entering their prime. Many around the league are expecting Bedard to go first; there seems to be no rush on Carlsson and the Ducks' side when I checked in this week.

THE JASON ROBERTSON saga will finally see some clarity and all signs point to an extension in Dallas, rather than a trade. There's interest from the Sabres to extend Zach Benson and the Flyers to re-sign Trevor Zegras. Pavel Dorofeyev has made himself a ton of money this season, especially with how he's scoring in the postseason. As usual, Vegas will need to do some maneuvering (like finding a new home for Adin Hill, and possibly other shocking moves) to create space.

Other young players who could be due big extensions this summer include Simon Edvinsson and Adam Fantilli. Patience is the word for the restricted free agents. All too often they don't get settled until September, right before the season. As for offer sheets -- they remain hockey's favorite offseason hypothetical. But for one to actually happen, everything has to line up: cap space, draft-pick compensation, player buy-in and a team willing to push the risk. That's why the noise almost always outweighs the action.

ESPN LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392511 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Damage runs deep as Canadiens lose again in Eastern Conference Final

Eric Engels

MONTREAL — It was an ominous statement from Joe Veleno, though it wasn't meant to be.

When the Montreal Canadiens forward said — just one day after Game 3 of this Eastern Conference Final — that the Carolina Hurricanes were applying so much pressure that it felt at times like they had six players on the ice, he was just trying to credit his opponents. There was no way of knowing to what extent he was also providing a window into his team's psyche.

We didn't pick up on it in the moment, either.

But the first 20 minutes of Game 4 revealed the damage done over the Canadiens' first consecutive losses in these playoffs. They expected so much pressure that they buckled even when they weren't under it, ultimately feeding the Hurricanes 10 scoring chances off turnovers and spotting them a 3-0 lead through the first period.

"Not an easy team to play catch-up hockey against," said Martin St. Louis after his Canadiens lost 4-0 to go down 3-1 in the series, extending their inexplicably bad post-season record at the Bell Centre to 2-6.

He made changes in the second period that he probably should've opted for in the first, and they led to more scoring chances.

But those disappeared in a third period that saw the Canadiens fumble in every zone before finally notching their first shot with 2:53 to go.

Fans chanted "shoot the puck" four minutes prior to that, with the Canadiens sitting on 15 after notching just 25 over their last two games combined.

But the home team couldn't oblige without first connecting as many as two passes in a row, and they had a hard time doing that from start to finish.

"I feel like we had players with the most space with the puck and we don't skate enough, we pass it to a player with no space," said St. Louis. "So, you kind of play into their pressure, and it's a little bit of that.

"It's just recognizing that, (with) the way they play, the guy with the most ice in space should take the ice, and we're not playing fast enough when we have the puck with our feet. We're not playing fast enough off the puck so we can kind of bypass the pressure, and they've got really, really good sticks."

The Hurricanes have wielded them expertly to inflict a physical and mental toll the Canadiens might not be able to overcome.

The collateral damage of two seven-game series has also unquestionably bubbled to the surface for them. Especially against a Hurricanes team that swept the Ottawa Senators and Philadelphia Flyers through the first two rounds to earn an 11-day break — most of which was enjoyed while the Canadiens were still emptying the tank against the Buffalo Sabres.

"For sure (the rest) helps their style of game," said St. Louis, and that resonated, if only because their style of game — 200-foot, man-on-man, high-pressure hockey — has been seen as impossible to sustain over an entire regular season plus playoffs.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Hence the Hurricanes losing 12 of 13 conference final games under coach Rod Brind'Amour prior to this year.

But the Hurricanes never had an 11-day break prior to this year, nor a lead in a conference final in their current era of success, and there's almost surely a direct correlation between those facts when you consider how convincingly the Hurricanes have beaten the Canadiens since losing 6-2 in Game 1.

In the process, they haven't just exhausted an already-tired team; they've done the type of psychological damage that most will see as impossible to overcome.

So, how do the Canadiens repair it on time to prove most people wrong and at least bring this series back to Bell Centre for a chance to force Game 7?

"You've gotta be mentally strong. You've got to believe," said St. Louis. "You've got to believe that you can actually do it. To me, I don't doubt that I believe that we can do it..."

Alex Newhook said, "They make it hard on you to make plays and they try to collapse your space, but we have the skill and we have the team to be able to make plays through that," making it clear he also still believes.

So does Jakub Dobes, who made 39 saves on his 25th birthday and said, "It's over, tomorrow is a new day, and we'll get on a plane, prepare and show up with our best hockey for Game 5."

Captain Nick Suzuki talked about how he and five of his Canadiens teammates toppled the Toronto Maple Leafs from down 3-1 in the first round of the 2021 playoffs before eventually making it to the Stanley Cup Final.

"You have to be super desperate," he said. "(The Hurricanes have) obviously struggled in the conference final up to this point (in the past), and I think if we go over there and do a good job and bring our game, we can try to put some more doubt in their head."

The Canadiens must clear their own minds first.

They were clouded more than we thought in the lead-up to Game 4, and that showed as soon as the puck dropped.

The Canadiens immediately started giving it away and didn't stop.

"I think we have to do a better job of recognizing when we do have a little bit of space," said Mike Matheson, "using our feet to keep that space available so we can execute afterwards."

That would lay the foundation for the Canadiens to rebuild their psyche, which was clearly damaged by the middle games of this series.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392512 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Real Kypers' Trade Board 7.0: A first look at the off-season

Nick Kypreos

Connor McDavid, Auston Matthews and Brady Tkachuk are NHL stars whose names resonate within their markets like few others can. They represent the hopes and dreams of their respective NHL teams and the fan bases that follow them.

That vision, however, now comes with a "limited time only" label because each of these three players have only two years left on their contracts before they can test the UFA market.

That means there is a palpable buzz that any, or all, could be wearing a different jersey in the future, and that life without them is something Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa are all having to begin thinking about more seriously than they would have been a year ago.

As we approach the off-season for every franchise, the trade rumour mill will kick up again, and McDavid, Matthews and Tkachuk may all get caught up in it. However, as I was working up this trade board with a first look into what's coming this off-season, there's still not enough noise to put any of them on here just yet. I will continue to monitor each situation.

However, two other teams are facing tough decisions with their own star players that could very well become major off-season storylines: Minnesota with Quinn Hughes and Dallas with Jason Robertson.

Unlike with McDavid, Matthews or Tkachuk, there is some urgency for the Wild to figure out what Hughes' intentions are since he will begin the final year of his contract in the fall. The Wild are prepared to make him a big offer and are more than willing to make him as happy as they did with Kirill Kaprizov last year, when they signed him to a \$17-million contract.

But will Hughes reciprocate? Would he agree to a long-term deal, or perhaps a shorter one? Or is he not ready to consider an extension at all?

There is no question that Hughes is saying all the right things publicly, that he's open to staying and is happy in Minnesota. But, as one source told me, we can't forget why he left Vancouver in the first place. Former Canucks president Jim Rutherford openly acknowledged multiple times Hughes' desire to one day play with his brothers. What the Wild have to figure out is if that desire comes as early as 2027, when Hughes would become a UFA.

If that is indeed the case, the time for Wild GM Bill Guerin to trade Hughes is this summer, and not at next season's trade deadline.

In theory, Guerin has the same option Rutherford did and could trade Hughes to any NHL team because he doesn't have trade protection. But there is one major difference this time. Heading into the final year of his contract, Hughes would now be seen as a rental player and so there might not be a team willing to spend what the Wild did in their trade to acquire Hughes. If he's destined to head to free agency, Guerin might be limited to dealing only with the Devils.

Coincidentally, there might be a swap that makes some sense. Nico Hischier is also heading into the final season of his contract before being able to test the UFA waters, and the Wild very much need to solidify a big hole they have at centre. Hischier would fill that void.

For now, the Hughes situation is one I'm continuing to monitor before putting him solidly on the trade board.

Meantime, in Dallas, Robertson is one of the more talented scorers in the NHL and he is a restricted free agent this summer, eligible for salary arbitration before becoming UFA eligible in 2027. He could instead choose to re-sign with Dallas on a long-term extension, provided the Stars are willing to make a commitment of at least \$12 million or more per season. But Dallas is feeling a salary-cap squeeze and will need to make a decision sooner than later. The last thing the Stars want is to face the same type of scenario Toronto found itself in with Mitch Marner, where they are left scrambling next trade deadline without a contract in place.

Given this uncertainty and urgency, Robertson is on the trade board.

We're also keeping an eye on certain players who are in dire need of a fresh start, including Morgan Rielly, Dougie Hamilton and Darnell Nurse.

The overwhelming feeling around the league is that all three of these players in their early-30s still have plenty left to offer if they are priced correctly and placed more fittingly on a depth chart. That means a team



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

looking into acquiring any of them may want their trading partner to retain some money.

And finally, in Vancouver, Elias Pettersson was on the trade board all season and there is no indication that a new management team will be enough to save his long-term future in British Columbia. Pettersson, along with every one of his teammates, will be available at the right price.

There is lots more to come and much can change over the next few weeks as we head toward the draft and free agency. Next week, teams will come together at the draft combine in Buffalo, where lots of conversations will be had that will set the tone for the June draft and beyond. Seeds will be planted next week and it will be fairly important for the non-playoff teams, especially, to get the ball rolling on their off-seasons.

So, for now, here is my latest trade board that peers into the summer. I'll follow up with another one in June, when the trade market will start getting red hot again.

(All contract information via PuckPedia and reflects next season.)

It wouldn't be ideal for this process to go through arbitration, leaving Dallas with a star player heading into his walk year. Don't expect it to get that far. This situation is far more likely to be resolved, either with a contract extension or a trade, if no agreement can be made. Even if the Stars do re-sign Robertson, they'll be facing a cap crunch, so keeping him on a long-term deal would lead to other questions and potential trade rumours, namely around Mavrik Bourque, who is also an RFA this summer.

A regular on my in-season trade boards, the Rangers looked hard into trading Vincent Trocheck during the season, but no one met their price. They will try again this summer. As the Rangers look to reset themselves, it wouldn't be great to hold on to Trocheck, who will be 33 when next season begins. Still a highly regarded two-way player who scored 53 points in 67 games this season, New York would do well to find a trade now while he's still contributing at a high level.

Robert Thomas was among the many Blues on my in-season trade board as Doug Armstrong looked at several options, but he was never all that close to moving because the Blues never got an offer that blew them away. Jordan Kyrou is a different story. After a 46-point season and with new GM Alexander Steen taking over after a non-playoff season, Kyrou comes into focus as a trade candidate here. It's a lot more likely Kyrou will be traded this summer than most other players on the Blues' roster.

Given how Joel Hofer stepped up this season, the Blues will continue to explore trading Jordan Binnington to allow the younger goalie to grow his role. Binnington will be heading into the final season of his contract and has a 10-team no-trade list. I think the Oilers are still looking into this. I also think there's a possibility that Sergei Bobrovsky can find more money as a free agent this summer and leaves Florida, which would make the Panthers another candidate for Binnington. It seems like the market for Binnington is beginning to grow again and that his future is not in St. Louis.

We can't ignore the fact that the Blues were trying to move Colton Parayko before this year's trade deadline and nearly did trade him to Buffalo before he flexed his no-trade clause. He will have an NTC next season as well. It's debatable if the Blues will still be trying to trade him this summer, but perhaps someone other than Buffalo will have interest.

As I wrote about Rielly in April, before Toronto's new front office was put in place, industry sources believed the Leafs would be looking into moving on from their longest-tenured player. That remains true, now that Mats Sundin and John Chayka are in place. The way it's been told to me is that Toronto is looking into things, Rielly is aware of it, and that he will be presented with a few options if they arise. Rielly still has no-movement protection for the next two years, but the belief is that wouldn't be a major

hurdle to overcome. However, if there isn't anything on offer that Toronto is happy with, it will keep him.

Edmonton will have around \$15.5 million in salary cap space this summer, but a good chunk of that will be used up if it can re-sign some of its most important UFAs. Jason Dickinson, Connor Murphy and Kasperii Kapanen all played well and contributed something to this year's team. Combined, those three could combine to eat up at least \$10 million of the available space. The Oilers have been pinched against a cap tighter than this before, but this off-season comes with greater urgency in that GM Stan Bowman has to improve the team and have a roster in September that can get back to taking a run at a Stanley Cup. The McDavid clock is ticking. To change up the group, Nurse is a trade candidate to watch, though the Oilers might have to both retain some of his \$9.25-million cap hit (depending on the trade) and get Nurse to sign off on anything, given he has a no-movement clause for next season as well.

The Devils are another team that will be wrestling some with the salary cap. With Arseny Gritsyuk and Simon Nemeč becoming RFAs, their available cap room will be taken up quickly and so new GM Sunny Mehta will be looking for other ways to shave off money. Hamilton had appeared on my trade board all regular season and the challenge remains finding a taker for his \$9-million cap hit, or retaining money on that to make a deal work. He has two years left on his contract.

Another player we had our eye on all season, Pettersson has now had declining point-per-game averages for three consecutive years and he barely reached the 50-point mark this season. The trick here remains to be the fact he comes with an \$11.6-million AAV, is signed through 2030-31 and has a full no-movement clause. The Canucks are rebuilding under new management and need to shake up the group, which trading Pettersson would accomplish. But this will not be easy to achieve.

The situation just has not worked out as planned with Jake DeBrusk in his two years with the Canucks. His own production has remained relatively steady in recent years, but he's meant to be a big, complementary winger with strong linemates instead of a team's goal-scoring leader, which he was in Vancouver this season. He makes \$5.5 million through the 2030-31 season, which is not a bad rate for a player of his skill as the cap rises. Lots of teams are thinking long and hard about this player, and getting him to waive his no-move out of Vancouver is not expected to be an issue.

At times this season, I had Jesper Wallstedt on my trade board as a piece the Wild could potentially move in their ongoing search for a No. 1 centre. But there is no question that Wallstedt became more of a No. 1 guy in the playoffs. At the same time, Filip Gustavsson will be just starting on a new contract next season making \$6.8 million against the cap and he has full no-move protection. There's also an injury factor. Gustavsson will have off-season hip surgery and Wild GM Bill Guerin said he wouldn't know if the goalie will be ready for the start of next season until after that procedure is finished. So, I don't know if teams are in a hurry to trade for him now. The most likely outcome is that both Wallstedt and Gustavsson remain with Minnesota when training camp rolls around, but the team is still trying to find the centre it needs. I believe one of these goalies will eventually be traded, it's just a matter of when.

After several rumours that Nemeč had asked for a trade, it now sounds like he wants to stay. However, that doesn't mean he will. It all depends on whether or not the Devils can move Hamilton, or if they can bring in Quinn Hughes. If New Jersey does go down the road on a Hughes trade, Nemeč would certainly be a candidate to be part of the deal heading back to Minnesota. He is an RFA this summer.

The Golden Knights won't be in a rush to change their goalie depth chart, but the possibility of a move is growing. With Carter Hart locking into the No. 1 job over this playoff run, Hill has become an expensive backup. However, Hill makes \$6.25 million through 2030-31 and Hart has just one more season left on his contract at \$2 million before he could become a



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

UFA. Vegas will want to look at its options, but returning next season with this duo making \$8.25 million isn't a bad cap situation.

In his second full NHL season, Shane Wright's point production fell from 44 to 27, but some teams will still see an attainable young player with upside. Seattle needs scoring, that is no secret, and would be chasing that attribute in a Wright deal. Back in 2018, when Vegas traded prospect Nick Suzuki for Max Pacioretty, it sent away the 13th-overall pick who hadn't yet played an NHL game for an established veteran scorer. The Golden Knights maybe didn't see Suzuki becoming the player he has, but were able to get a type of player they needed. That could be a blueprint for the Kraken. Wright is still just 22 years old and several teams are seeking to bring in skilled players in that age range. Would one of them move a veteran scorer for him? There is mounting pressure in Seattle to get into the playoffs and start showing some positive momentum, so look for it to be active this summer.

Rasmus Ristolainen has been another regular on this trade board for a while, but he remained in Philadelphia because the Flyers couldn't get their asking price and, this season, were a competitive playoff team. Now this situation is coming to a head, though. Ristolainen will be going into the final season of his contract in 2026-27 and there is little reason to believe he'll re-sign with the Flyers. Turning 32 in October, Ristolainen is a big right-shot defenceman, and he had a pretty good season for Philadelphia, contributing to the team's success.

The Flames are continuing to look at moving veteran players off the roster for the right mix of future assets. For this trade board, we'll focus on Blake Coleman. Coming off a 20-goal season (in 69 games) Coleman will make \$4.9 million against the cap in the final year of his contract and might be able to bring back to Calgary the healthiest trade return of the remaining available players. The bottom line is that the Flames are open for business this summer, and that's what Coleman represents here.

With new contracts coming to pending RFAs Leo Carlsson and Cutter Gauthier this summer, Mason McTavish's contract is vulnerable to be moved. He just signed a six-year extension at \$7 million last September, missing training camp, and the first year of the deal did not go as planned. McTavish's offensive numbers took a year-over-year dip and he was a healthy scratch in two playoff games. It makes sense for the Ducks to shop him around to see what they can get. He's still a highly valued centre, just 23 years old.

The Sabres have three important players due big raises this summer. Alex Tuch will be one of the most sought-after free agents, if he makes it to market, and should be able to pull an AAV of at least \$10 million. Peyton Krebs and Zach Benson are both RFAs, the latter coming out of his ELC after a career-best regular season and strong playoff. Buffalo will feel the pinch and, since it is so strong on the blue line, one of the defencemen may become a casualty. Michael Kesselring was acquired in last year's J.J. Peterka trade but managed to play just 34 games. He is also an arbitration eligible RFA this summer and the Sabres might be in tough to even live with his qualifying offer, putting the possibility of a trade on the table.

After getting into just three playoff games, I've heard the Bruins are looking into moving the 25-year-old Mason Lohrei. He's a good player making \$3.2 million for another season before he becomes an RFA, but the Bruins are doing their due diligence to see if his upside is appealing enough to another team to allow Boston to get back someone else who will help them in another part of the lineup.

The second-overall pick in 2019, Kaapo Kakko still hasn't managed a 20-goal season and his career high in points is 44. Now, as the Kraken look for ways to improve their roster, Kakko is very much a trade candidate, already staring down the possibility of joining his third team at just 25 years old. Is there anyone willing to take a shot on him as a reclamation project with two years remaining on his contract with a \$4.525 million AAV?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392513 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'We believe in the plan': Henrik Sedin says Canucks locked in on rebuild

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — It wasn't the prestige and lustre of the title that led Henrik and Daniel Sedin to become co-presidents of the Vancouver Canucks, but the message that came with the job offer.

"It's the vision that we want to follow, something that we can really buy into," Henrik said Tuesday of the Canucks' commitment to rebuild. "If you had to fight that battle first (to get a rebuild), then there's no way we would have stepped on. But it was very clear that this was going to be a process of a few years, at least, where we're trying to build something good. That's No. 1."

The message to the Sedins came in a phone call from Francesco Aquilini and later in a meeting with the managing owner's family.

It wasn't until departing president Jim Rutherford told reporters at a May 6 press conference that he planned to step back into an advisory role after the National Hockey League draft in June, that the Sedins were seriously approached about taking over hockey operations.

But the bigger surprise must have been ownership's embrace of a rebuild, something the Sedins had long believed was necessary but saw little appetite for during 26 years on or near the team, the last five years as advisors to former general manager Jim Benning and player-development coaches under Rutherford and ex-GM Patrik Allvin.

When this disastrous season ended with Rutherford firing Allvin in April and hinting at his own imminent retreat from power, the Sedins weren't even sure they'd be back.

But having witnessed the Canucks' competitive collapse, enabled by an erosion of dressing-room standards and culture that the Sedins built as Hall of Fame players, the twins leaped at the opportunity to oversee the reconstruction.

"This happened really quickly," Henrik said. "Nothing happened until the season ended and Jim decided to step down. So what was that, four weeks ago? The timing was right there around the draft lottery. I don't know if Jim had talked to the owners before that, but it was right around there.

"After Jim decided to take a step back, I think they were already ready to do (a rebuild) but we had a meeting and they told us that they want to do it the right way. They were tired of missing the playoffs year after year while at the same time trying to win. They wanted to have a fresh start and build from the ground up and put the care back into the crest, where you get players that are proud to play for the city, and have this city and team be a place where players want to play again.

"When you step into that role, it's less stressful on a daily basis to try to win tomorrow. You try to do everything the right way, which in a way is hard, but there is a plan that you try to follow, which for me makes it a little bit easier. We believe in the plan and we think it's doable if you do it the right way."

Sedin said events this month transpired so quickly, they didn't even speak with friend and former teammate Trevor Linden, who famously clashed with the owners in 2018 and left the Canucks after four years as president, before taking his old job.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

"We talked to him about it afterwards," Henrik said. "This (rebuild) was a plan that was put in front of us, and I believe that it's a different plan than when Trevor took over. But for sure he's happy for us, and reached out, and congratulated us. We talk regularly to Trevor, and I'm sure we're going to talk more in the future."

The Sedins' own commitment is at least a little surprising because when they rejoined the Canucks in 2021, after a self-imposed three-year break to spend time with their families following their retirement as players, there was no grand plan to work their way up through management and eventually run the Canucks or another NHL organization.

Their desire was simply to give back to the only NHL team they ever played for, help where they could, and eventually move back to Sweden when their kids — Henrik has two sons, Daniel two daughters and a son — finished school in Vancouver.

"Our plan has always been to go back to Sweden at least for a year to try to see if it works there or not," Henrik said. "But we've spent 27 years now in the city, and our kids feel like home here. I think that they feel very much like Vancouverites and not Swedish in that way. So there's no set plan for us going forward. Again, I'm not going to speak for them, but I think our kids might end up on this side of the Atlantic."

"We still have kids in school, so our plan was to spend at least the next three, four or five years here, anyway. And we always said that Canucks are part of us, and we want to work for the organization. So we thought that we could take this on. That's why we did it."

Henrik's older son, Valter, who is 19 and plays soccer professionally in Sweden after graduating from the Vancouver Whitecaps academy, has played internationally for Canada at the Under-18 level and has just been named to the Canadian U-20 team.

The youngest of the five Sedin children, Daniel's daughter, Anna, is 15.

With Henrik and Daniel spending 17 seasons together as Canuck linemates, family has always overlapped their professional and personal lives.

The 45-year-old twins have some perspective on the benefits and challenges of working with family, which is why Henrik — emphasizing he was speaking only hypothetically — said he would have no problem if general manager Ryan Johnson and Canuck scouts want to draft Caleb Malhotra in June, even if Manny Malhotra is coaching the team.

Sedin declined Tuesday to discuss ongoing discussions about the team's vacant head coaching job, which is expected to go to Malhotra, the Canucks' minor-league coach who has a strong relationship with Johnson and the twins. Henrik said only that there is a "process" the team is going through.

But regarding the idea that father and son could be on the Canucks next season, he said: "I don't think it's an issue. You can't disqualify a player that you really like at that spot just because — and I'm talking theoretically here — because his dad might be the coach. That would be wrong for everyone, and that would be wrong for our organization. So, if Caleb is there and our scouts really love him, then that's a non-issue."

Could there be a Malhotra parallel for what the Sedins experienced in the NHL?

"Yes and no," Henrik said. "We were brothers, so it was a little bit different that way. But there were coaches who split us up, and everyone knows how much we enjoyed playing together. There's always going to be cases (within a team) where you think things should be different. But as long as there's some integrity and you do things for the right reason, there shouldn't be an issue. We're all adults in this business."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392514 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Scout's Analysis: Why you shouldn't overlook Ivar Stenberg's offensive upside

Jason Bukala

Preparing for every new draft cycle is an exciting process that begins every August at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup and concludes at the men's World Hockey Championship and Memorial Cup at the end of May. A big part of this journey is monitoring players in as many high leverage games as possible throughout the season, when the stakes are the highest and the pressure builds.

Rankings and lists form and evolve through the year and scouts must supplement what they have observed by also breaking down video to confirm what they value in any given player.

As we head to the end of this year's scouting calendar, Ivar Stenberg remains my top-ranked prospect for the 2026 draft, a place he has occupied since January after the world juniors. And he's still not quite finished. Stenberg is in the process of ending his draft-eligible season on a high note representing Sweden at the World Championship as they head into the quarterfinal round on Thursday.

I have long been on the record about how I value Stenberg compared to Gavin McKenna, the other potential top pick in the draft. I see McKenna as a dynamic offensive talent with game-breaking skill, but he lacks the all-around detail that Stenberg plays with off the puck, and in the defensive zone.

However, somewhere along the line, Stenberg's own offensive upside has been blurred by the description that he is a defensively responsible player. McKenna very well may score more than Stenberg at the NHL level, but there's also a chance he won't. Make no mistake: Stenberg also has elite, top-line skill. Do not lose sight of that when I mention his defensive strengths.

The bottom line is that the top two prospects in the 2026 NHL Draft approach the game, and deliver results, in very different ways. It's that simple and who you choose depends on how you project they will develop in the coming years.

And it won't be an easy choice to make at the top of the draft.

Given the narrative that has developed around Stenberg's defensive strengths, and since I believe his offensive abilities are being overlooked, I wanted to spend some time today focusing more on why he's also a threat to score and create chances.

Ivar Stenberg's performance at the World Championship

The preliminary round is finished, so here's a quick statistical breakdown of what we've seen from Stenberg so far at the worlds:

Stenberg has averaged around 19 minutes of ice time per game, all at even strength and on the power play. His high-water marks came against Czechia (21:48 TOI) and Norway (22:15). In Sweden's final game of the round-robin, which was a win-or-go-home contest versus Slovakia, Stenberg played 16:52 and scored the game-winning goal.

The amount of offence Stenberg has produced at the World Championship puts him in some elite historical company among draft eligible players at this event.

With the medal round still ahead of him (at least one more game, possibly three), here is how Stenberg compares to other draft year prospects since the year 2000 at the worlds:

PLAYER



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

COUNTRY

POINTS

Patrik Laine

Finland

12

Auston Matthews

USA

9

Juraj Slafkovsky

Slovakia

9

Ivar Stenberg

Sweden

8

Kaapo Kakko

Finland

7

Jack Eichel

USA

7

I still have Stenberg No. 1 overall because I am very comfortable with his overall game. I trust him defensively and value his offensive upside. In time, I believe he has the potential to produce in the 80-95 point range in the NHL.

I wanted to highlight what I've seen from Stenberg on the offensive side of the puck that makes me so high on him.

The first clip is pretty straight forward. Stenberg leverages himself against an Italian defender off the puck drop and gains possession for his group on Sweden's power play. He patiently identifies the quadrant of ice he is most likely to receive the puck in and very quickly deposits it in the back of the net:

The next highlight displays the efficiency of Stenberg's approach when he attacks with speed through the neutral zone. He identifies that his opponents have retreated off their blue line, out of respect for his pace, and fires a puck home from a high-danger position in Czechia's zone:

Players with elite offensive hockey sense recognize how plays are developing ahead of their opponents. They have the ability to support their group, work off the cycle, leverage their strength and make plays around the net.

This final sequence is from a Swedish League game this season, but I wanted to use it to show off his ability in this area. Notice how Stenberg comes into view on the far left side of the clip. He moves to support the play on the half wall, gets the puck and holds off a defender to walk to the crease area, and then dishes a back-door pass for a primary assist.

Why I believe Stenberg is still the No. 1 prospect in this class

Most of the discussion regarding who will be selected first overall at the draft has revolved around the top two prospects on my list: McKenna and Stenberg. But NHL clubs will certainly discuss the comparable upside of centre Caleb Malhotra, or right-shot defencemen Chase Reid, Keaton Verhoeff and Daxon Rudolph.

Is there a team that believes Prince George defenceman Carson Carels is the top player in the draft? What about Stenberg's teammate at the World Championship, centre Viggo Bjork?

I've written about all of these players in my rankings, and you can find the latest list here. I'll be releasing one more draft ranking after the combine, followed by a mock draft later on in June.

I fully appreciate the sentiment and upside surrounding all these other prospects, but Stenberg's body of work has convinced me that he is the top prospect in this draft cycle. His skill is undeniable and his overall approach to the game is noteworthy.

What I hope is that readers don't hear "all around player" or "strong defensive game" and then underestimate Stenberg's offensive upside. It's impossible to not appreciate the fact he produced 11G-22A playing in the SHL, Sweden's top pro league, for Frolunda this season. Even in terms of historical SHL production for draft eligible players, Stenberg has several noteworthy comparisons:

At the 2026 world juniors, Team Sweden walked away with the gold medal and Stenberg was their leading scorer with 4G-6A.

Some people will wonder about the fact Stenberg hasn't been deployed in a penalty-killing role, but I believe he is capable of being used in all situations if necessary. He's a complete player and a winger, but he might even give the team that drafts him something to think about when it comes to trying him out at the centre ice position eventually.

Time will tell.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.28.2026

1392515 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL's top UFAs of 2026: Latest rumours, reports

Luke Fox

We won't sugarcoat it, folks.

The NHL's 2026 free agent class has taken a Marty Supreme-like public beating since training camp opened.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Consider the long list of star talent who had the option of going to the highest bidder on Canada Day but instead elected to re-up with their current team. Connor McDavid, Kirill Kaprizov, Jack Eichel, Kyle Connor, Martin Necas, Artemi Panarin, Nick Schmaltz and Adrian Kempe all extended their stays. Same goes for reliable veteran defencemen like Mattias Ekholm, Mike Matheson, Ryan McDonagh and Cam Fowler. Starting goalies Filip Gustavsson, Anthony Stolarz, Jacob Markstrom, Brandon Bussi and Scott Wedgewood all chose not to stray from their crease.

Yet, even with most of the best players off the board, a bunch of established and emerging talent is still trending toward joblessness on July 1. Stanley Cup champions, team captains, starting goalies, top-four blueliners and game-breaking scorers may all be available to eager GMs.

And with the salary cap projected rising by another \$8.5 million — to \$104 million in 2026-27 — those spendthrift general managers should have even more budget to splash the pot on the next all-star to tread in open waters.

Here's a rundown and ranking of hockey's best impending unrestricted free agents with July 1 fast approaching, plus the latest buzz circulating about their future.

Make 'em pay, fellas.

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

Hockey fans already know the name, but this is not the blog. From Sportsnet, 32 Thoughts: The Podcast with NHL Insider Elliott Friedman and Kyle Bukauskas is a weekly deep dive into the biggest news and interviews from the hockey world.

Latest episode

Age on July 1: 30

Position: Right wing

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$4.75 million

The latest: The Buffalo Sabres find themselves in a fascinating predicament with one of Western New York's own.

By waiting to commit to his hometown squad, the heart-on-sleeve Tuch has done himself a great service financially, as several clubs are seeking dependable scorers capable of 36 goals and 70-plus points.

The Sabres have Jeff Skinner's buyout charge (\$6.44 million) and RFA Zach Benson's raise set to eat cap space but can ill afford to let talent walk out the door. Not to mention Tuch's intangible value to the dressing room, culture, and community. (He's also held up as proof that the Eichel trade wasn't entirely a waste.)

And yet, Tuch's most productive seasons may well be in the rearview and his next deal is going to be a whopper.

The player's asking price should begin with eight digits, but Buffalo's initial offer reportedly began with an 8 on an AAV. The Sabres aren't willing to go that far yet. Talks cooled during Buffalo's thrilling playoff run, but mutual interest on a long-term commitment remains.

Jarmo Kekalainen said on March 6 that he's "not concerned at all" and is hopeful to lock in an extension before July 1. The GM doubled down at the May exit meeting, telling Tuch he wants to keep him in blue and gold.

As the best forward standing, Tuch might fetch more than, say, Kempe's \$10.625 million if his sole objective is to maximize his money. But something special is brewing in Buffalo these days.

The sides will dig into negotiations in early June. This one could slide either way.

"I have no idea. I wish I could tell you the future," said Tuch, who expressed his love for the city and his team, and who also understands his market value. "I'm going to do whatever is best for myself and my family.

"I don't know how the talks are going to proceed. I don't know what they are going to say. I don't know the future. But my main priority is my family."

Another wrinkle here is that Buffalo, like Winnipeg, has been reluctant to incentivize with juicy signing bonuses. If they want to keep the player, the Sabres may have to bend that policy. The Jets did for Connor.

Age on July 1: 29

Position: Defence

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$4.55 million

The latest: In the trade everyone saw coming, Andersson was dealt from rebuilding Calgary to go-for-it Vegas in January. Curiously, though, the move did not come with a contract extension in place.

Talented, minute-munching, edgy, right-shot defencemen with leadership skills are too rare in this league, so Andersson's value is high.

The suspected holdup here is that the spendy Golden Knights are very much challenged by budget. GM Kelly McCrimmon has \$4.6 million in cap space for 2026-27, and that's without Andersson — or offer-sheet candidate Pavel Dorofeyev — on the books.

Most believe Vegas and Andersson intend to extend, but some roster surgery would be necessary. Looming over this situation is the uncertainty of fellow right-shot Alex Pietrangolo's future.

The blueline stalwart is on LTIR this season but has one more year on his deal at \$8.8 million.

"You look at this lineup, and this is a real contender," Andersson said after settling in Vegas. "And that's what I wanted to go to."

Should something go sideways here, Andersson would have suitors aplenty on July 1. The Boston Bruins and Toronto Maple Leafs are just two teams that were poking around for a trade earlier.

Age on July 1: 30

Position: Defence

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$975,000

The latest: The timing of the Tampa Bay Lightning defenceman's offensive breakout couldn't be better, what with the salary cap spiking and right-shot blueliners at a premium.

What a story.

The undrafted Raddysh was the most productive of all pending 2026 UFAs, racking up 70 points from the back end, with a plus-21 and six game-winning goals to boot.

The Toronto native's career year has been bolstered by increased usage on the power play and five-on-five, as he is averaging nearly 23 minutes per night.

"He's just playing with a lot of confidence, a lot of swag, and it's paying off," coach Jon Cooper told reporters. "His shot, it's lethal."

The Lightning will explore extending Raddysh, who has never earned so much as a \$1 million salary and could be looking for a deal nearing that of partner J.J. Moser's four-year pact at \$6.75 million. A figure that large likely prices him out.

"The type of season he just had was not on the radar for us," GM Julien BriseBois told reporters at locker cleanout. "He stepped up big time when we need him to this year."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Tampa has a projected \$12.3 million in 2026-27 cap space and must make decisions on UFA forwards Oliver Bjorkstrand and Corey Perry, keeping in mind that MVP Nikita Kucherov (UFA 2027) is eligible to sign a monster extension as early as July 1.

"I'm very thankful for everything Tampa's given me. They gave me a shot to play in the NHL," a noncommittal Raddysch said on May 5, when he was asked about re-signing. "I've been here the past four years, and I can't say anything bad about this organization."

BriseBois said he has been in contact with Raddysch's agent, Craig Oster, throughout the season, "sharing concepts and ideas," and will revisit talks soon.

Should Raddysch hit the open market, expect his hometown Maple Leafs, the Bruins, and Flyers to be just a few of several teams with interest.

Age on July 1: 36

Position: Defence

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$8 million

The latest: We're wading into tricky territory here, because there is a chance some of the aging but effective stars on this list could opt for retirement instead of another contract.

"No, that's not a thought," said Carlson, who is still logging excellent, top-pair minutes.

While it was difficult to imagine the Stanley Cup champ and one of the best D-men of his era in anything but a Capitals sweater, Washington didn't rush to re-sign Carlson and then shipped him to Anaheim in a trade deadline stunner.

The idea of Carlson circling back and re-upping in D.C. has been floated, but Ducks GM Pat Verbeek gave up a first- and third-round pick for the stud right shot. He'd rather Carlson not be a pure rental.

As of mid-May, no numbers had been exchanged on a fresh extension. Carlson described his time in Anaheim as a thrill, but he'll consider what's best for his wife and family. Rumours have suggested a potential return east.

"That's the part of it that I don't have answers for right now," Carlson said (via The Athletic). "I certainly loved it here. There's a lot of moving parts to that to properly answer the question. But, yeah, I've loved my time. It's a special place here for sure, with some extraordinary talent and a really bright future. That certainly is attractive to anyone, not just myself."

The way Carlson performed in Anaheim's encouraging two-round playoff run, we don't see a pay cut coming yet.

Does a two-year deal, perhaps with performance bonuses, keep him in Orange County?

Age on July 1: 32

Position: Defence

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$8 million

The latest: Outside of the recently locked-in Jackson LaCombe, the future of the Anaheim Ducks' blue line is wide open.

Trouba joins Carlson and captain Radko Gudas in the category of rugged, mid-30s, right-shot defencemen without a deal in place for 2026-27. GM Verbeek also has three pending RFAs — righty Ian Moore and lefties Pavel Mintyukov and Olen Zellweger — at the position.

Trouba has fit in nicely in Orange County since his messy December 2024 divorce from the Rangers and logged big minutes into the playoffs alongside LaCombe.

"This year the step he took is pretty impressive. He'd be a great guy to play with for years to come," Trouba said in May. "That doesn't necessarily mean that's going to be a partner if you're here. Things change, obviously. Whoever gets the opportunity to play (with) him is in a very good spot."

Trouba said extension talks with Verbeek around trade deadline "didn't get very far."

Ever patient, Verbeek described Trouba as a "quality" player but notes the Ducks have "a lot of quality players in our system."

The executive's plan was to play out the season, evaluate Trouba, then decide on roster changes.

"At some point, I got to look to see how we can improve the team," Verbeek told reporters, following elimination. "It's obvious we're not quite good enough to get to the third round, so we've got some more work to do. But I think there's going to be certain things. There'll be maturity amongst our younger guys; they got another year under their belt. Can expect another step from them and just kind of keep growing it."

Age on July 1: 31

Position: Right wing / Left wing

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$2.5 million

The latest: If you can make sense of Mantha's goal totals over the past eight seasons — 24, 25, 16, 15, 9, 11, 23, 4, 33 — perhaps you should be the one negotiating his next contract.

Dubas bought low on the power forward and was rewarded with a healthy contributor who registered a career-high 64 points and became the Penguins' Masterton nominee.

Mantha hired a mental coach, avoided injury, and took full advantage of a more prominent role under coach Dan Muse.

"It's confidence, the trust level from the team, teammates, coaches, my work I put in mentally, physically," Mantha said (via NHL.com). "Good things are happening."

Considering the player's history of injury and inconsistency, we may hesitate to give Mantha a long-term deal, but he's positioned himself to be a major attraction on July 1.

One buyer-beware note: Mantha's ridiculous 21.7 shooting percentage this season dwarfs his career average of 13.8.

"For a guy his size, he's been moving lately, you know?" Muse said. "He's just able to be a real threat, whether it's off the rush or in zone. He's shown he can play either wing. He's a guy who's shown that he can kind of move in and play with some different guys and adapt pretty quickly. And so, that's a credit to him."

Dubas met with Mantha about the forward's future and told reporters that Mantha was "clear with his plans."

Reading between the lines: This is the injury-prone veteran's best crack at term and money. Sounds like he'll capitalize on his impressive breakout somewhere else on July 1.

Age on July 1: 29

Position: Left wing

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$1.5 million

The latest: The late-blooming McMann never had quite the burst of offence in Toronto like the one he enjoyed in his 18 games with the Seattle Kraken: 10 goals, 14 points and a bump up this list.

The speedy middle-six winger said he would be open to re-signing with the Leafs, but lottery-bound Toronto balked at the type of long-term



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

contract extension he could command. That would be something in the ballpark of the five-year, \$28.75-million pact the San Jose Sharks gave to his nearest comparable, Kiefer Sherwood.

Seattle got a motivated winger in exchange for second- and fourth-round picks; McMann got a taste life in the Pacific Northwest.

"Someone who can play in our top nine. We look at Bobby as a player that brings speed to our lineup, gets pucks to the net, gets to the net, and I think can complement the rest of our group very well," Seattle GM Jason Botterill said.

"It's a situation of seeing how he fits in with our group and making sure that he likes Seattle, he likes his role here, and then we'll see where it goes in the off-season."

McMann told reporters at locker cleanout that no extension talks with Botterill had taken place yet and that his greatest priority in free agency is winning.

"Honestly, it just never happened. I think with how hectic the end of the season was, there was no..." McMann told reporters, before rephrasing. "Neither side was trying not to discuss it. I tried to stay out of it. There was a little bit of contact back and forth. Just like, 'We like having him here' kind of thing, is what I think we heard on my end. But then it was reciprocated, that I enjoyed being here, that I was enjoying the opportunity, but no real discussions were started."

The Kraken are in the middle of an organizational audit after parting ways with president Ron Francis, so individual player files will need to wait a bit.

Fans in Detroit, Columbus and Ottawa — among others — are already circling McMann as a UFA target if he doesn't stay in the Pacific.

Age on July 1: 33

Position: Centre

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$3.75 million

The latest: When Columbus's second-longest-serving captain switches agents to veteran Pat Morris weeks before free agency and plugged-in beat man Aaron Portzline publishes a column titled "Don't be surprised if Boone Jenner isn't back with Blue Jackets next season," the tea leaves tell us that Jenner is headed to market.

With Jenner's teammate, Charlie Coyle, and future Hall of Famer Evgeni Malkin re-upping with their respective clubs following elimination, Jenner could be the most attractive centre available in a weakening class featuring Jason Dickinson and Scott Laughton.

The middle-six veteran produced a respectable 38 points in 67 games while providing leadership and penalty-kill prowess. On a solid roster, he slots in at 3C.

Jenner's injury history is worth noting; he hasn't reached the 70 games played mark since 2020-21.

The \$36-million commitment GM Don Waddell made to Coyle, combined with the need for raises to RFAs Adam Fantilli and Jet Greaves, puts Jenner's 15-year run with the organization in doubt.

Jenner holds the Jackets' record for games played (808). As he seeks term and Columbus seeks culture change and youth, Game 809 now feels like a long shot.

Age on July 1: 27

Position: Goaltender

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$2.5 million

The latest: The 2026 UFA goaltending market is like Charlie Bucket's Grandpa Joe: thin and old.

The best option under age 30, far and away, is Skinner, whose inconsistencies have been well documented. (Sergei Bobrovsky and Frederik Andersen are a couple of wily vets looking for new deals.)

Still, workhorse goalies with a career save percentage safely above league average and back-to-back Cup Final appearances are hard to find.

Much like the Oilers, Skinner got off to a rough start. The Edmonton native was packaged and dealt to Pittsburgh in what most believe was a lateral move, at best, for the Oil.

Skinner had been rumoured as a flip candidate at the deadline remained a Penguin and registered a fourth consecutive season of 50-plus starts and 20-plus wins.

He already has 53 games of playoff experience under his belt and got the nod early in Round 1 for his new team before losing his net to Arturs Silovs.

If Dubas lets the veteran walk and goes with the young tandem of Silovs and Sergei Murashov next season, Skinner will have no problem finding employment elsewhere.

There is simply not enough supply for the demand for saves.

"I've got two kids that I'm taking care of and a wife to take care of," Skinner told TribLive.com in April. "I'm not too worried about what the contract's going to look like or anything like that."

Age on July 1: 34

Position: Left wing

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$5.5 million

The latest: The Kraken forward still has plenty of pop in his game and is one of the most dependable scorers on a roster desperate to return to the post-season in 2027, but he also battled multiple injuries in this contract campaign.

Heading into the season, Schwartz was just one of Botterill's important contributors on an expiring contract. Botterill is working down the list. He re-upped captain Jordan Eberle and traded Marchment away midseason.

Decisions still await on Schwartz, Eeli Tolvanen and Jamie Oleksiak.

Is McMann filling in for Schwartz temporarily or permanently?

File this one under wait-and-see. Schwartz shares the organization's frustration with missing the playoffs three years running.

"I love it here in Seattle. Really grateful and thankful that I got the opportunity to come here. I don't know what's going to happen going forward," Schwartz said at locker cleanout.

"I'm certainly interested in coming back here and helping this group, but we'll know more in the weeks going forward."

11. Mason Marchment

Age on July 1: 31

Position: Left wing

2025-26 salary cap hit: 4.5 million

The latest: Marchment has suited up for three NHL franchises over the past two seasons and a total of five since his 2019-20 debut. Now, the two-time 22-goal scorer has a chance to pick a sixth.

With impact forwards scarce and Marchment a gritty, 40-plus-point guy, expect multiple teams to be lining up offers, including the Penguins, whose GM regrets trading Marchment to Florida before his breakout.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 28, 2026

Columbus GM Don Waddell — who rented Marchment for 39 games and saw his effectiveness spike during the Blue Jackets' failed playoff push — has interest in re-signing the middle-six winger, naturally.

But Waddell already spent a wad (\$36 million) to retain fellow pending UFA Charlie Coyle and must save dollars for RFAs Adam Fantilli and Jet Greaves.

The undrafted, late-blooming player holds all the cards here.

Age on July 1: 40

Position: Left wing

2025-26 salary cap hit: \$9.5 million

The latest: The lone member of the 900-goal club may have just skated out his final season in the National Hockey League and — having now fulfilled his duties and crushed his records — could well take his talents to Moscow or hang 'em up entirely.

But we'd be remiss not to include the game's greatest goal scorer on the list, just in case he wants to re-up in D.C. and keep the ticker going to 1,000.

Noticeably slowing, Ovechkin's production and defensive usage dipped compared to 2024-25's chase year.

That he started a ridiculous 90.2 per cent of his shifts in the O-zone and essentially played the entirety of every Capitals power play is both hilarious and telling.

Ovechkin took the Carlson trade hard, and the retooling Caps missed the playoffs.

"I don't know if it's the end or not," Ovechkin said. "I'm still enjoy it. I'm still have fun. I'm still happy to be with the boys.

"It's just healthwise, you know? If I was 35 or 25, it's one thing. But when you're 40, you have to think for future."

GM Chris Patrick hasn't dived into extension talks with the face of his franchise yet. The Capitals would like to know the captain's intentions prior to June's draft, though.

"We're giving him some time here to get away from the season a little bit and think things through and talk to his family. And then he'll meet with both (president Brian MacLellan) and I, and we'll continue to support him in however his decision process plays out," Patrick said.

"We'll be able to have a plan with or without him. It's no different than really any offseason where you have some players that are expiring, and you can go down different paths depending on what happens with them. So, same thing with him, even though he's the greatest goal scorer of all time."

Our take: If Ovechkin wants to remain in the NHL, owner Ted Leonsis will make sure he remains a Capital. If not? Dynamo's ticket sales are about to spike.

More notable UFAs in 2026: Victor Olofsson, Sergei Bobrovsky, Boone Jenner, Eeli Tolvanen, Patrick Kane, Patrik Laine, Anders Lee, Oliver Bjorkstrand, Claude Giroux, Mats Zuccarello, Jamie Benn, Reilly Smith, Corey Perry, Jack Roslovic, Michael Bunting, Ilya Mikheyev, Cam Talbot, Frederik Andersen, Evander Kane, Brent Burns, Erik Hauula, Marcus Johansson, Mario Ferraro, A.J. Greer, Radko Gudas

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.28.2026