



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 16, 2026

## The News & Observer

### In a new role, with the same joy, Rod Brind'Amour celebrates another Canes title

By: Justin Pelletier

A throng of Carolina Hurricanes (Shopping Cart IconShop Canes Fan Gear) skaters gathered around head coach Rod Brind'Amour in the aftermath of the team's Game 6 win over Vegas in the Stanley Cup Final.

With each player having had a chance to hoist the cup, kiss it, and pass it to a teammate, finally, it was Brind'Amour's turn.

Goalie Pyotr Kochetkov did the honors, searching Brind'Amour out among the cacophony of cameras and confetti, handing it to him at about the red line, near the player benches.

Brind'Amour held the trophy for a moment, then tossed it in the air like it was a playful, 34.5-pound toddler. He caught it with the same care, cradling it, hugging it, as if it had been 20 years since he'd done so.

"That was just a little bear hug. I don't know," Brind'Amour said, letting out a laugh at the postgame news conference. "I wasn't sure I was going to raise it over my head because that's more of a player thing, but I had no choice."

It had been 20 years, almost to the day, since he'd last held Lord Stanley's Cup in a setting like this. And, truly, he had no choice.

Gladly waiting his turn

In 2006, then the captain of the Hurricanes' first Stanley Cup-winning team, Brind'Amour's excitement in the moment of celebration eschewed NHL protocol. Instead of waiting for NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman to pass him the Cup, Brind'Amour grabbed it off the table and shimmied and shook on the ice, exuberantly hoisting it over his head, unknowingly creating an enduring, iconic image.

This year, it was Canes captain Jordan Staal who first touched the trophy. He did wait for Bettman to hand it over. Brind'Amour was No. 25 in line. And, he said, that's the way it should be.

"You don't even know what you're thinking at that point," Brind'Amour said on the ice as the celebration continued around him. "It's more seeing all the players look at ya, and how happy they are for me. But it's just, it's the other way around, you know. I just want this for them, and they felt it."

"This is why this is the most special trophy in the world, because ... how you have to acquire it, what goes into it, and what it means to everyone, because they know all the sacrifice everybody has put in, and you see it pouring out of everybody. It's the greatest feeling in the world."

Which is why, again, he had no choice, striking a pose similar to his spontaneous 2006 moment, soaking in yet another iconic moment on championship ice.

An historic accomplishment

Brind'Amour is the fourth person in NHL history to win the Stanley Cup with the same franchise as captain and head coach, joining Hockey Hall of Famers Toe Blake (Montreal Canadiens), Hap Day (Toronto Maple Leafs) and Cooney Weiland (Boston Bruins), all of whom did so decades ago.

He's the 14th individual to win as a coach and player for any team.

"The luckiest part of this whole thing is that we hired him, and he literally is the most important part of it all," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon told members of the media while he, too, circulated among the postgame chaos. "You can't do anything without the players, but I think everybody knows he gives you an advantage every day."

Brind'Amour, as usual, reflected that praise back at Dundon, who hired the longtime assistant to be the team's head coach prior to the 2018-19 season. All Brind'Amour has done since then is guide the Canes to eight consecutive NHL postseasons, four Eastern Conference Finals — and oh yeah, a Stanley Cup title.

"I've got to give him a lot of credit for this whole thing," Brind'Amour said of Dundon. "No. 1, he gave me an opportunity. Without him, I'm not sitting here. I just know it. So, I've got to give him credit there. Then, his commitment to try to build a winner is there."

"He went out and got us players that we needed, and here we are."

From one captain to another

None more important, Brind'Amour often says, than Staal, who embodies the same qualities that his coach exhibited in his career, and particularly in 2006.

"I've been saying this forever, I don't know where we'd be without him," Brind'Amour said of Staal. "I put him out there every night against the best player, every night every shift, and we're winning all the time. Yeah, we didn't win it all until now, but we were right there every year, and it's because of a guy like that."

And, it's because of a coach like Brind'Amour — who in 26 years since his trade from Philadelphia has carved an indelible legacy in the Carolina sports landscape — that the Hurricanes have a chance to extend their run of excellence.

He is the unassuming, unwitting face of the birth — and rebirth — of hockey in Raleigh. The city and the state have adopted him as one of their own, and he, in turn, shepherds the team and the organization accordingly — even the latest addition, a 34.5-pound, 134-year-old toddler named Stanley.

"It takes everyone," Brind'Amour said. "And we are a family. It's a cliché, but I'm telling ya, this is what we have here. We built something really special, and it's been there for a long time. It just never quite was able to crack through, and finally we did here."



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## The Athletic

### Inside Carolina's Stanley Cup celebration: An unlikely hero, brotherly love and a 'storybook' ending

By: Michael Russo, Chris Johnston

LAS VEGAS — After the Carolina Hurricanes finished off a march to the Stanley Cup that was as clinical as it was cathartic, the emotions started bubbling over as soon as Jordan Staal wrapped his big paws around its silver edges.

The Hurricanes captain let out a guttural roar while thrusting it into the air, culminating a 17-year wait for him that included 14 seasons with Carolina. The first teammate Staal skated towards hadn't even been in uniform for Sunday's series-clinching 3-0 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights.

Instead Frederik Andersen had found himself "nervously shaking" in the dressing room for three and a half games while watching Brandon Bussi come in to close out the series in his place. Andersen had tweaked his knee during a Game 2 win over Vegas and was pulled during the second intermission of Game 3. But everything he contributed during the 12-1 run that got the Hurricanes to the final, not to mention the years of blood and tears spent before it, wasn't forgotten.

"He's been grinding the longest," Staal said. "He got us going in the playoffs. ... Figured he'd be a great start (to give the Cup to first).

"I wanted to win that thing so bad, but I wanted to win so much more for everyone else in that room, and how much they deserved it, and how hard they've all worked, and it just gives me chills that we were able to pull it off for each other."

How Carolina built the Hurricanes to win the Stanley Cup

Sean Gentile and Jayne Orenstein

Andersen had no idea it was coming.

The 36-year-old Dane had been riding an emotional roller coaster in recent weeks, starting with the death of his longtime agent and close friend Claude Lemieux on May 28, to reaching his first Stanley Cup Final, to getting injured in the middle of this series.

Finally, as he looked skyward with the Cup over his head, he could exhale.

"I've always heard people say it's heavier than you think, but it didn't feel too bad," said Andersen. "It felt good. It felt right."

He was unsure whether he was dreaming.

His journey to this heartfelt celebration mirrored that of an organization that took 20 years to get back to the NHL's summit. Once upon a time, Andersen was a seventh-round draft pick by Carolina in 2010, but chose not to sign with the team and re-entered the draft. He went to Anaheim in 2012,

established himself as a NHL regular and got traded to Toronto for five seasons before he signed with the Hurricanes as a free agent in 2021.

He continued to be tested by blood clots and a knee surgery, but even after watching the Cup clincher in workout gear, he could take heart in knowing that there would be no championship parade in Raleigh this spring without him.

Staal made sure that wasn't forgotten by singling Andersen out for the first Cup pass.

"I mean, it means we're a group that we appreciate everyone here and what we've been through," said Andersen. "And I think that speaks to that."

Staal was first. Andersen was second.

And their coach, their former 2006 Stanley Cup-winning captain, the beloved Rod Brind'Amour, received it last.

When Brind'Amour finally got his hands back on the Cup for the first time in 20 years, he playfully tossed it in the air and gave it a bear hug. Someone who spends less time in the gym would likely have botched that maneuver.

Not Rod.

"You don't even know what you're thinking at that point," he said. "This is why this is the most special trophy in the world. No. 1, how you have to acquire it, what goes into it, and then what it means to everyone because they know. They know all of the sacrifice that everybody has put in and you just see it pouring out of everybody."

"It's the greatest thing in the world."

Brandon Bussi and his fiancée, Mary Raclawski, are interviewed postgame by NHL Network's Jason Demers and Cory Schneider. Michael Russo / The Athletic

Bussi, the unexpected hero

As Mary Raclawski stared at her fiancé, tears came to her eyes.

A week ago, nobody could have envisioned Bussi would become a Stanley Cup hero — not even Raclawski, his biggest supporter.

Undrafted, Bussi was thrust into action when Andersen got hurt earlier in the series, then started Games 4, 5 and 6 and won them all, including becoming the third goaltender in NHL history and first since 1937 to record a Stanley Cup-clinching shutout during their first NHL season.

"Oh my gosh. I'm so emotional right now," said Raclawski, who will marry Bussi next month, in an interview with The



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Athletic. "I can't even comprehend what is happening. It's been such a long road here for him, and he's never given up, never doubted himself. And I'm just ... I can't believe we're standing here today celebrating him and his team. I'm so proud of all of them."

Bussi shared the ice with his proud parents, Lisa and Robert, who hustled to Las Vegas from the East Coast when they found out he was starting in Game 4. Family and friends on the ice appropriately wore hats labeled with what has been Bussi's longtime motto, "HOUSE MONEY," a Vegas term that works so well for him. These hats are available for purchase, with all proceeds going to The Autism Society of North Carolina and Pucks for Autism.

"It's something that he's not only played by but lived by, and it's betting on yourself, knowing that you're exactly where you're supposed to be in that moment, and you've earned the right to be where you are, and just be confident," Raclawski said. "And I mean, they killed it tonight."

"He amazes me every single day. He's taught me so much. He's been very even-keeled throughout this whole process, and I cannot wait to celebrate, because we haven't really celebrated throughout this whole season, because it's always on to the next. So I just have no words. I am so excited, and these guys deserve this so much, and they work so hard for this, and their families have sacrificed so much, and it's a blessing."

Back in October, the Florida Panthers placed Bussi on waivers. He and Raclawski were driving two separate cars from South Florida to Charlotte, N.C., because he thought he was being sent to Florida's AHL affiliate.

On the road for 10 hours, Bussi got a call from his agent telling him he was claimed by Carolina. Bussi called his fiancée and told her they needed to pull over. They stopped at a gas station.

"Our entire lives changed from that point on," Raclawski said.

"The next thing you know, the following day I'm in Raleigh and I'm on the opening-night roster," Bussi said.

And now he's a Stanley Cup champion.

"It still hasn't hit me just yet," Bussi said, still on the ice more than an hour after that clock hit zero. "I'm losing my voice and I really need to pee."

"It's kind of funny that this has happened again 20 years later," said Eric Staal, left, who was the Canes' leading scorer when they won their first Cup in 2006. Michael Russo / The Athletic

The Staals' brotherly love

The Zamboni entrance opened. Eric, Marc and Jared Staal sprinted to their brother Jordan. Fired up, the four brothers embraced wildly.

Eric Staal is a Canes legend. Twenty years ago, he was their leading scorer when they won their first Cup. His No. 12 hangs from the rafters at Lenovo Center. He fired up the home crowd by sounding the siren in advance of Game 1.

"There's a lot of people that have grown up and been around the Carolinas, where they don't really know the team without a Staal on it," Eric Staal said. "So it's kind of funny that this

has happened again 20 years later, and obviously Jordan at the front of it, it's super, super unbelievable. Like it really is.

"It's just kind of one of those storybook kind of things. And he was a horse. He was unreal the whole playoff, and the whole year, and the whole last however many years he's been there. He's just grinded from Day One, and he deserves it."

Eric was traded to the Rangers 10 years ago. Jordan could have left, had he wanted.

But after becoming the oldest player in history to win the Conn Smythe Trophy, Jordan is "happy I stuck around."

"I wanted to do it with him," Staal told The Athletic. "That was the plan. And to have everyone here, all my brothers supporting me, it's amazing. And they are a massive reason why I'm standing here today. It's my brothers, my wife, my kids, and my parents, and all my support systems. And Eric's a massive part of that. He believed in me right from the start, and I wanted to do it with him. It didn't work out, but I'm glad we pulled it out."

Marc Staal played 17 years in the NHL, but he never won the Cup in his two trips to the final.

"It's been a long road for all of us," he said. "I mean, we've all been blessed to play a very long time, and then for him to be able to do this at where he's at in his career, and how much he's invested into this team, to watch him do it, it's very special, obviously, for all of us."

Jackson Blake could not contain his emotions when his dad, Jason, grabbed him. Michael Russo / The Athletic

A father-son bear hug

Jason Blake couldn't wait to embrace his son Jackson, who scored Carolina's second goal Sunday night.

Jackson Blake's stellar goal helps Carolina capture Stanley Cup title

Jason played 13 years in the NHL and never got out of the first round. So to see his 22-year-old son achieve this milestone in just his second season had Jason bawling on the ice.

"It's a dream come true, man," Jason Blake told The Athletic. "I played in this league for a long time. To be able to do what he did, and the magnitude he did it is some of the most special times in my life. You always want your kids to be better than you, and what he's done throughout the playoffs and throughout the year, and just as a man, he's just an unbelievable kid. He's the kindest human being I've ever met. I couldn't be more proud of him."

Jackson couldn't hold it together when his dad grabbed him.

"You know, he's been there for me my whole life, on and off the ice, and to see him just let loose, honestly, I didn't think I was gonna cry or anything, but it's so emotional, because this is why you grind, this is why you have those summer workouts, this is why you play the game," Jackson said. "It's been a really long year, honestly. It's June 14th — it's long. But it's so worth it, and to have moments like that, and to do it for my family, and do it for these guys, it's awesome."

Blake was part of a line with Taylor Hall and Logan Stankoven that combined for 25 goals and 55 points in 19 playoff games.



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"It's a testament to their line, and it's a testament to Rod, to be honest with you, to put trust in those guys," Jason Blake said. "Jackson and Logan are very young players, and obviously I played against Hall back in the day. He's the veteran on the line, and the way that he's carried himself through that line, and did everything that he could to help these kids out, and they played most of the year together, I couldn't be more proud, more happy. Everything in my life, I mean, this is like the epitome of everything right now."

Jackson had the Cup given to him by fellow Minnesotan Mikey Reilly.

"That's what you dream of," Jackson said. "When I saw it before Game 1, I was like, 'I want to win that thing so bad,' because I've never really seen it in person, honestly. To finally do it, and to lift it and give it a kiss, it's storybook."

"It's worth it. I don't care if we have training camp in a week. It's worth it."

Ehlers forgiven by his pops

On the same ice surface where Lars Eller became the first Danish-born Stanley Cup champion by scoring the winning goal for the Washington Capitals in 2018, countryman Nikolaj Ehlers made sure he and Andersen became the next Danes to win the Cup by icing this final. He intercepted a pass in the neutral zone and hit the empty net at 18:52 before looking into the stands with a look of bewilderment on his face.

That touched off a celebration that would eventually spill onto the Las Vegas Strip. It was a moment Ehlers will never forget.

"It was insane," he said. "You know, 3-0 with (1:08) left, that should do it. I turned the corner and I was celebrating as hard as I could. I look up and I see my parents, my sister, my brother and my nephew up there and I kind of stopped."

Almost an hour later, Ehlers still had tears in his eyes.

He was among multiple Hurricanes who took up the family business, and pushed the dream further than his father, Heinz, the first Dane ever drafted by a NHL team. Heinz Ehlers never made it in North America after being drafted 188th overall by the New York Rangers in 1984, but he's been an ever-present figure in Nikolaj's career — so much so that he had joked he was afraid to see his dad after Game 5, when he took two delay-of-game penalties by accidentally clearing the puck over the glass.

"He didn't watch the last three minutes of the last game so I think it means a lot," said Ehlers. "He's usually not like that. He leaves when I don't play well, but he was nervous. My dad has been playing since he was three years old and started coaching when he was 38, and he's still coaching. So hockey is his life as well. It's our whole family's life."

A special journey for Hall

Taylor Hall traveled a long road from being called to the draft stage with the first overall pick in 2010 by the Edmonton Oilers to being crowned a champion. The 34-year-old is on his seventh team and sits 11 games shy of 1,000 — making the gesture from teammate Sebastian Aho during the Cup pass line even sweeter.

Andersen attempted to hand the trophy to Aho in the third spot, only to see him step aside and send Hall out instead.

"Yeah, he's the best," Hall said. "Those guys are amazing. The guys that have been here for seven, eight years, that really built this and put a lot of work in to make this a great place to play. And I'm so happy for those guys. They did the work that allowed someone like me to come in and be successful, and I'm so happy for them."

Taylor Hall explains what makes Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour so great

Michael Russo

Aho didn't have an explanation for the gesture. He said his instincts took over in the moment and he went with them.

It didn't go unnoticed by his father, Harri, a former defenseman in the Finnish pro league who now serves as the general manager of SaiPa.

"Yeah, that shows something," said Harri Aho. "He's humble. He's very quiet, hard-working and competitive. A nice person."

The kind of guy you win with.

Just like Hall, who led the Hurricanes in scoring in the playoffs with 19 points. Why did this work?

"I think the way we play was a good fit," he said. "We skate a lot, we skate hard, we put pressure on teams, you know, we're always at the front of our skates, and just the group. I mean, everyone says they have a tight-knit group, but it really is that way here. It's amazing, just being at dinner last night with the guys, it's just special, it's so cool, and we'll always be linked together."

"I couldn't ask for a better group of guys to share it with," Seth Jarvis said of his childhood friends. Michael Russo / The Athletic

Jarvis parties with his pals

Seth Jarvis' friends are well-known at this point.

His childhood friends from Winnipeg trekked to the 4 Nations Face-Off in Montreal and Boston and traveled all the way to Milan for the Olympics. So naturally they became famous during this final going between Raleigh and Vegas.

Jarvis, sitting on the ice along the boards in a pile of confetti, talked with reporters as his buddies partied by his side.

"I'm not the only Stanley Cup champion here," Jarvis said. "All these guys are. They've been through everything with me. To enjoy this moment with them, I couldn't ask for a better group of guys to share it with."

Buddy Bryan Hanna added, "Congratulations to us? Congratulations to him. We wouldn't miss this for the world."

Like Hall, Jarvis said of him and his teammates, "Now we're champions forever. When you get the Cup up there (over his head), it's weightless. Everything pours out. It's the most incredible feeling in the world."

A special time for Miller

After Carolina's Eastern Conference final win over the Montreal Canadiens, K'Andre Miller gave us one of the most memorable moments of the postseason. Cameras captured him on the bench at Lenovo Center, cradling his newborn, Kashton, and basking in the glow.



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Kashton didn't make the trip to Las Vegas, but he was still on Miller's mind.

"He's back in Carolina right now, and he gets to see Daddy in a few days," Miller said. "He's been awesome. I can't wait to get back home to Minnesota and get to celebrate with him and hopefully see if he fits in the Cup."

Tulsky cool as a cucumber

After the game, Brind'Amour raved about some of the additions over the past few years.

Eric Tulsky has spent the past two years methodically reshaping Carolina's roster, turning organizational depth and draft capital into immediate impact. His acquisition of Miller, the addition of Bussi and the signing of Ehlers came after he landed both Hall and Stankoven last season and made the Hurricanes roster younger, deeper and more skilled than the one he inherited.

"We did what worked for us," said Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky, who will soon turn his attention to next season. Michael Russo / The Athletic

"It's a long and winding road," the Hurricanes' shockingly cool, calm and very much collected general manager said on the ice ... not exactly looking like a man that just reached the pinnacle. "Never thought I would end up here. Still don't really understand how it happened, but thrilled to be here.

"I think every team is different. It's hard to copy what anyone else does. We did what worked for us and it brought us where we wanted to be."

Tulsky vows he won't be in the office Monday morning, but it won't take long for him to turn his attention to next season.

"We're always trying to make the team better, no matter how good we are," he said. "We're going to exit this year, having had an incredible year, and starting tomorrow, the question will be, 'How will we make the team better?'"



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## Hurricanes win Game 6, claim second Stanley Cup title

By: Cory Lavalette

LAS VEGAS — The Carolina Hurricanes are back on top of the NHL.

Twenty years after winning the franchise's only Stanley Cup, the Hurricanes defeated the Golden Knights 3-0 in Sunday's Game 6 in Las Vegas to win the series four games to two and bring a championship back to Raleigh.

"I think it was our time," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We were not going to be denied."

Carolina did it with a familiar formula.

The Hurricanes' second line of Logan Stankoven centering Taylor Hall and Jackson Blake scored in the first and second periods to stake the visiting team to a 2-0 lead entering the third period. Then with Carter Hart (20 saves) on the bench for an extra attacker, Nikolaj Ehlers scored into an empty net with 68 seconds left to start the celebration.

Carolina then locked it down in the final two periods, and Brandon Bussi — starting just the third playoff game of his career, all wins — earned a 22-save shutout.

"I didn't let it hit me until the clock hit zero, and then there was a whole lot of yelling, and I don't really know — kind of blacked out there for about a minute," Bussi said. "So I can't wait to look back and kind of take in the whole moment again."

Taylor Hall got the Hurricanes out to an early 1-0 lead, which would be all Carolina needed on the memorable night.

After Carolina broke up a Vegas zone entry at its blue line, Jaccob Slavin fired a pass to Hall, who had gotten behind the Golden Knights defense. Hall came up the left wing and snapped a shot to the far side that was over Hart's pad and under his glove for the game's first goal at 3:47.

The Hurricanes held onto their lead thanks to Bussi, who made two big stops in the final minutes of a disjointed opening frame that included four penalties.

Carolina doubled its lead with under seven minutes left in the second period.

Jackson Blake got in on the forecheck against Vegas defenseman Noah Hanifin to force multiple turnovers. Logan

Stankoven then set Blake up for a one-timer that beat Hart at 13:31 of the middle frame.

It was the latest — and last time this season — that Carolina's second line took over a game.

"They're competitors, they're dogs," Hall said of his linemates who are both a decade his junior. "They provided me with such a spark when we got on the line halfway through the year. I can't say enough good things about them."

The Hurricanes went 13-3 during their run, outscoring their four opponents — Ottawa, Philadelphia, Montreal and Vegas — 66-39 during the postseason, and the contributions came from throughout the lineup.

Offseason additions Ehlers and K'Andre Miller lived up to their big contracts, becoming key cogs in a roster that got deeper and harder to stop with each year. With the Cup final series tied two games apiece, Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho — players who have been coached by Brind'Amour since coming into the league — elevated to combine for three goals and set the stage for Sunday.

From undrafted players like Sean Walker and Jalen Chatfield to well-traveled veterans like Hall and Frederik Andersen, Carolina was built on depth rather than stars, a philosophy the team was criticized for in past years but now is undeniable.

Carolina added more talent with each successive run, but Brind'Amour and Staal pointed to the family atmosphere that was cultivated over the past eight seasons, one installed by the coach and carried out by the captain.

"I wanted to win that thing so bad, but I wanted to win so much more for everyone else in that room, and how much they deserved it, and how hard they've all worked," Staal said. "And it just gives me chills that we were able to pull it off for each other, and family was a big reason."

Notes: Staal won 14 of 22 faceoffs and became the first player to finish the Cup final at better than 70% on draws. ... Sean Walker led all NHL defensemen with 68 hits in the playoffs. ... Forwards Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Nicolas Deslauriers, and defenseman Mike Reilly were healthy scratches for Carolina, as was goalie Frederik Andersen.



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## Carolina Hurricanes Win 2026 Stanley Cup Final

By: Peter Dewar

Franchise claims second league title with six-game victory over Vegas

LAS VEGAS - The Carolina Hurricanes are 2026 Stanley Cup Champions!

With Sunday's 3-0 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 6 of the 2026 Stanley Cup Final, the Canes claimed Lord Stanley's chalice for the second time in franchise history. Carolina concludes the postseason with a record of 16-3.

Jordan Staal was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy, annually presented to the "most valuable player for his team in the playoffs."

Time To Celebrate...

Mark your calendar, the Championship Celebration presented by Spectrum will be held on Saturday, June 20 at 11 a.m. in Downtown Raleigh.

Additional details will be published here as they become available.

How They Won The Cup...

Round 1 | CAR def. OTT 4-0

The Canes never trailed in a game against the Senators, riding fantastic goaltending from Frederik Andersen and the suddenly scorching Logan Stankoven — who scored in all four games — to a clean sweep in Round 1. [READ FULL ROUND 1 RECAP](#)

Round 2 | CAR def. PHI 4-0

Carolina broke out the brooms once more against the Flyers to become the fifth team in NHL history to start a postseason 8-0. Stankoven's line with Taylor Hall and Jackson Blake remained the offensive catalysts, while Frederik Andersen again stood tall. [READ FULL ROUND 2 RECAP](#)

Eastern Conference Final | CAR def. MTL 4-1

After a Game 1 hiccup humbled the Hurricanes, Rod Brind'Amour's crew responded with four straight wins over the talented Canadiens to reach their third Stanley Cup Final. The series win was highlighted by overtime tallies from Nikolaj Ehlers and Andrei Svechnikov in Games 2 and 3, as well as comfortable 4-0 and 6-1 victories in Games 4 and 5. [READ FULL ECF RECAP](#)

Stanley Cup Final | CAR def. VGK 4-2

Back-and-forth battles highlighted the early going, with multi-goal leads evaporating in each of the first four games as the two clubs traded victories. After a late goal helped Vegas draw first blood in Game 1, Carolina responded with a multi-goal comeback and eventual OT victory in Game 2. More theatrics followed in Sin City; the Canes' historic four-goal third period came up short in double overtime in Game 3, but the team managed to hold off its foe amid a Vegas comeback in Game 4 to even the series.

Having played "Hurricane Hockey" out west, the Canes returned to home ice and hit the ground running to take their first series lead in Game 5. One win away from the cup, Carolina took the fight to Vegas in Game 6. Three goals and a 22-save Brandon Bussi shutout later, they stood alone atop the NHL mountain as champions forever.

## Recap: Canes Vanquish Vegas To Claim Stanley Cup

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

"To do it with this group of guys... there's not enough words to describe how good it feels."

LAS VEGAS - The Carolina Hurricanes won their second Stanley Cup on Sunday, shutting out the Vegas Golden Knights 3-0 in Game 6 of the 2026 Stanley Cup Final.

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

It took two shots and fewer than four minutes for the Canes to pick up where they left off three nights earlier. Following a

Jacob Slavin zone-entry denial, the trusty blueliner sent Taylor Hall in alone with a stretch pass, which the winger buried past Carter Hart's glove for a quick 1-0 lead.

After weathering a late-period pushback from the Golden Knights as the first 20 minutes wrapped up, Carolina eventually doubled its lead in the middle frame. Some dogged forechecking from Jackson Blake kicked off a run of pressure that brought the puck back to him before wiring a one-timer from the slot past Carter Hart.



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A desperate Vegas club worked furiously to save its season in the third period, but once again, Brandon Bussi stood tall. Finishing with a sparkling 22-save shutout, the first-year netminder backstopped his third straight win as Nikolaj Ehlers found the empty net in the closing minutes of action.

As the horn sounded, gloves, helmets and sticks flew into the air in celebration. Canes captain Jordan Staal was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP and was the first to lift the cup, as is tradition.

### Stats & Standouts

The Hurricanes (16-3 in 19 GP) had the second-fewest losses by a Stanley Cup winner since 1987 (when all four rounds went best-of-seven) behind the 1988 Oilers (16-2 in 18 GP).

Jackson Blake posted a goal and an assist to become the first player in franchise history to record seven multi-point games in a single postseason, breaking a tie with Matt Cullen (6 in 2006).

Blake is just the third player in franchise history to record 20 points in a single postseason, joining Eric Staal (28 in 2006) and Cory Stillman (26 in 2006).

At 22 years old, Blake is the youngest player with a multi-point outing in a potential Stanley Cup-clinching game since Drew Doughty and Dwight King each potted 0-2—2 for the Kings during Game 6 of the 2012 Stanley Cup Final at the same age as Blake.

Taylor Hall notched his 11th road point of the playoffs (4-7—11 in 9 road GP) to set a new franchise benchmark for the most in one playoff year, surpassing Cory Stillman (4-6—10 in 2006; 11 road GP) and Ron Francis (4-6—10 in 2002; 12 road GP).

Hall also became the fourth No. 1 pick to score a Stanley Cup-clinching goal alongside Patrick Kane (2010 w/ CHI), Bobby Smith (1986 w/ MTL) and Guy Lafleur (1976 w/ MTL).

Jacob Slavin recorded his 13th career point in a potential series-clinching game (1-12—13). His 12 assists in that scenario are a new club benchmark, breaking a tie with Seth Jarvis (4-11-15).

Slavin is the second American to win the Stanley Cup and an Olympic gold medal in the same season and first since Ken Morrow of the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" team.

Brandon Bussi posted the ninth Stanley Cup-clinching shutout in the past 50 years and first since Andrei Vasilevskiy did so in consecutive years (2021 TBL & 2020 TBL). The others in that span were by Matt Murray (2017 PIT), Corey Crawford (2015 CHI), Tim Thomas (2011 BOS), Martin Brodeur (2003 NJD), Patrick Roy (1996 COL) and Tom Barrasso (1991 PIT).

Bussi joins Bernie Parent (2x; 1975 PHI & 1974 PHI) as the second undrafted goaltender to record a Stanley Cup-clinching shutout (among goaltenders to debut after the first NHL Draft in 1963).

He is also the third goaltender in NHL history, and first in nearly 90 years, to record a Stanley Cup-clinching shutout during their first NHL season (no NHL GP in prior seasons), joining Earl Robertson (Game 5 of 1937 SCF w/ DET) and Andy Aitkenhead (Game 4 of 1933 SCF w/ NYR).

Rod Brind'Amour became the fourth individual in NHL history to captain a Stanley Cup winner and then lead that club to another championship as head coach. He joined Toe Blake with the Canadiens (2 as captain, 8 as coach), Hap Day with the Maple Leafs (1 as captain, 5 as coach) and Cooney Weiland with the Bruins (1 as captain, 1 as coach).

### They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour on Jordan Staal's Conn Smythe-winning performance...

"It's kind of an unbelievable ending to a great story. I'm so proud of him and I'm proud that he was able to do that in front of the whole hockey world. Everyone got to see what I've known forever: what kind of player he is, and leader. We're not hoisting that without him. It's just not even close. But I'm glad for him. I've seen this guy grind it out for 14 years and never waver. It doesn't always work out, as you know, but it's nice to see the good guys get one."

Jordan Staal on going 17 years between Stanley Cup Championships...

"I learned a lot about perseverance and trusting God and all those things. It's life, and it's been such a grind. I've just been grinding with these guys for so long, just trying to break through, trying to break through, keeping at it, and my goodness, we pulled it off. I can't describe it."

Logan Stankoven on what went into getting to the pinnacle...

"I think it's the work you do, you know, maybe away from the rink in the offseason, the summer. It all adds up, and everyone does their part. And I think when you're together, and the culture we have, the group we have, everyone gets along. There's, you know, no one that thinks they're better than one another. We all treat each other the same and with respect. So, just so cool to get this done, and be out here with everyone."

Jordan Staal on keeping the belief that the Canes could win the Cup...

"Sticking with it. Some guys just jumped ship, but I believe in this organization. I believe in everyone in it, from Roddy and Tom taking over, all the way through. It's such an amazing feeling to build something like that and to be a part of that and then pull it off, I can't imagine anything better."

Seth Jarvis on capturing the Cup...

"It's the greatest moment of my career, (the) greatest moment of my life. You can't top this. To do it with this group of guys, after everything we've been through, how close we've been the last couple of years, to finally get through and win this thing, there's not enough words to describe how good it feels."

Andrei Svechnikov on what it means to see years of effort pay off...

"Just special. I feel like I can't really realize this right now, but while I'm gonna have a couple of beers, I probably will realize it... I love everyone who's been around me, my parents, my girlfriend, my brother, everyone, and it's just special. My teammates, the staff, we've got such an unbelievable organization."



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Jacob Slavin on being able to bring a championship to Carolina...

"It's so special. I love the Raleigh area, love the community there. The fans are passionate, as you can tell, a lot of them made the trip out here for this. I love it. I couldn't be happier for the organization, the crowd, the city."

"As a player, I really wanted it for myself. ... Now, sitting back behind, watching it all, it was about wanting it for these guys."

Rod Brind'Amour feels like a "proud dad" watching the Hurricanes win it all [pic.twitter.com/0x5NBqyTRG](https://pic.twitter.com/0x5NBqyTRG)

— SportsCenter (@SportsCenter) June 15, 2026

What's Next?

The Canes will now celebrate the summer with Lord Stanley.

A championship celebration presented by Spectrum will take place on Saturday, June 20, starting at 11 a.m.

More information will be shared with fans soon.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Hall wins Stanley Cup in 16th NHL season after finding fit with Hurricanes

By: Derek Van Diest

34-year-old forward has played for 7 teams since being No. 1 draft pick by Oilers in 2010

LAS VEGAS -- Taylor Hall savored a moment Sunday that was a long time coming.

Among family and teammates on the ice after Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final at T-Mobile Arena, the Carolina Hurricanes forward reflected on his long journey to a championship.

"I'm speechless. I'm tired and I'm speechless," Hall said shortly after his victory lap with the Cup following a 3-0 victory against the Vegas Golden Knights. "It has been a journey, but that's life and that's the beautiful part of it -- you just never know what turn is going to be the one that provides a memorable experience like this.

"I'm so happy. I'm so grateful that I was able to come here and fit in. I'm just thrilled."

The 34-year-old won the Cup in his first full season with Carolina after being part of the three-team trade with the Colorado Avalanche and Chicago Blackhawks on Jan. 24, 2025, that also sent forward Mikko Rantanen to the Hurricanes. Rantanen only played 13 games with Carolina before being traded to the Dallas Stars, but Hall found a home.

His goal at 3:47 of the first period in Game 6 gave the Hurricanes a lead they would not relinquish; they shut out the Golden Knights to close out the best-of-7 series and win their first championship since 2006. Hall finished the postseason with 19 points (seven goals, 12 assists) in 19 games, a plus-14 rating and was second in voting by the Professional Hockey Writers Association behind Carolina captain Jordan Staal for the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP.

"Winning with these guys is amazing; it's just a really special group," Hall said. "It's a group that allows players like myself to come in and have success. What they've done for the last seven or eight years here is amazing.

"I'm proud of the way I contributed, but it's easy here. We know how we need to play, and (Sunday) was a prime example of that. We were dialed in and I'm just a part of the process, but I was definitely happy that I was able to raise my game in the playoffs."

Taylor Hall on winning the Stanley Cup

The No. 1 pick by the Edmonton Oilers at the 2010 NHL Draft, it took Hall nine seasons just to play in the Stanley Cup Playoffs. He was the cornerstone of a rebuild that never came to fruition during his tenure with the Oilers, and he was traded to the New Jersey Devils a season after Edmonton selected center Connor McDavid with the No. 1 pick in the 2015 NHL Draft.

Hall enjoyed his best individual season with New Jersey, winning the Hart Trophy as NHL MVP in 2017-18 when he had 93 points (39 goals, 54 assists) in 76 games and led the Devils to the postseason. His time with them was short-lived, however; Hall was traded to the Arizona Coyotes during the 2019-20 season and has also since played for the Buffalo Sabres, Boston Bruins and the Blackhawks.

But he helped the Hurricanes (53-22-7) finish first in the Eastern Conference during the 2025-26 regular season, when he had 48 points (18 goals, 30 assists) in 80 games. His line with Logan Stankoven and Jackson Blake was Carolina's most consistent through the first three rounds of the playoffs, and each contributed to the win Sunday with Blake making it 2-0 at 13:31 of the second period after a feed from Stankoven.

Hall had three points (two goals, one assist) in the Cup Final.

"He was unbelievable all playoffs long, and for him to be able to score (Sunday) and to score the game-winner for us is so special," Blake said. "And that's just what he did all year for us. He's been through a lot in his career, a lot of ups and downs, and no one is more deserving than that guy for sure. He deserves it, and those are the guys you play for."

Stankoven said, "He was incredible (Sunday) and through the whole playoffs. But (Sunday) you could see he was so hungry and he was skating great, driving the play. He had a great read on his goal, and it was a great shot. I'm very happy for him. He's had a lot of individual success, but he wanted to be a Stanley Cup winner, and it was great to see him hoist the Cup."

It was a moment that for a while looked as though it would never happen for Hall, not until the trade to Carolina and a chance to play for coach Rod Brind'Amour. His 48 points during the regular season were the most he had since 2021-22 with the Bruins (61; 20 goals, 41 assists).

"It's a great story; we have a bunch of these guys that grinded it out," Brind'Amour said. "Him coming over with the pedigree he had, it could have been easy for him to say, 'I'm not doing this,' but it was the opposite. It was, 'How do I contribute to getting this?'"



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"He kind of got better as a player. You just watch him now, and I don't know that he could have played any better. He was a real special player, another great addition, and I know he's a big part of what we've just done here."

His teammates felt the same way, especially when you consider Hall was the third player to hold the Cup on Sunday. Staal handed it to goalie Frederik Andersen, who then gave it to Hall at the urging of center Sebastian Aho.

"Every time you see someone lift the Cup, you see all the emotions and are so happy for that guy, and Taylor especially," Carolina forward Mark Jankowski said. "It's such a great career for him. He's done so many great things, and for him to be able to be a huge part of us lifting this Cup is really special."

Hall said it began to sink in that he was going to be a Stanley Cup champion in his 16th season after Nikolaj Ehlers sealed it with an empty-net goal with 1:08 remaining in the third period.

"With a minute left, I think that's when you really start thinking about it, but all day you're thinking about the possibility of doing this. It's amazing," Hall said. "It's unreal. You dream of this stuff."

"I'm proud of myself, but there are a lot of people that helped me along the way, including the coaching staff here. Everyone chipped in."

### Top 10 moments of Stanley Cup Final included Staal's heroics, Brind'Amour's toss

By: Dan Rosen

37-year-old captain winning Conn Smythe Trophy, coach celebration cap Hurricanes' run to championship

LAS VEGAS -- The Carolina Hurricanes will forever cherish these 13 days in June.

From the opening face-off of Game 1 on June 2 to the last second ticking off the clock followed by sticks and gloves and helmets flying everywhere Sunday, the Hurricanes made memories and history in a Stanley Cup Final never to be forgotten.

Carolina won its second Stanley Cup championship and first since 2006 by defeating the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2 in the best-of-7 series, winning the last three games by a combined 12-5, including 3-0 in Game 6.

Here are the top 10 moments of the Stanley Cup Final, including a bonus at the end:

Hertl's game-winner, Pavelski appreciation

Game 1 alone is one of the best moments of the Cup Final. The Hurricanes led 2-0 until the Golden Knights stormed back to take a 3-2 lead. It went to 3-3, then 4-3 Vegas, then 4-4, and finally Tomas Hertl's goal at 16:36 of the third period was enough to give the Golden Knights a 5-4 win.

But maybe the best moment of the night came not long after he scored. Hertl was in the postgame press conference, where he was asked multiple times about the 29-game goal drought he had until finally scoring in Game 4 of the Western Conference Second Round against the Anaheim Ducks on May 10.

Hertl brought up an unexpected phone call he received from his former San Jose Sharks teammate Joe Pavelski on May 9. Hertl said he and Pavelski talked for about 30 minutes and it helped him. He scored the next night to break the drought and continued to score after.

Pavelski, reached by NHL.com the morning after Game 1, deflected credit back to Hertl, his teammate from 2013-19, but it's clear the phone call and communication they had through text messages after made a huge difference.

It was a touching moment that showcased the bond teammates in this league can have years after playing together, and what one phone call can do for a player who just needs a pick-me-up.

VGK@CAR, SCF, Gm 1: Hertl beats Andersen with snap shot late in game

Jarvis in OT, Maniscalco and Tracy

Game 2 was just as bonkers as Game 1, only this time it was the Golden Knights going ahead 2-0, Carolina coming back to take a 3-2 lead, Vegas tying it late in the third (Mark Stone at 18:39), and finally Seth Jarvis scoring on the power play at 3:56 of overtime to give the Hurricanes a 4-3 lead, evening the series 1-1.

The game also featured John Tortorella's unsuccessful coach's challenge for goalie interference at 15:00 of the third that led to Jordan Staal's go-ahead power-play goal at 15:25.

But maybe the best moment of the night, at least off the ice, happened in Carolina's radio booth with broadcasters Mike Maniscalco and Tripp Tracy.

It was a terrific idea by the Hurricanes to put a camera on those two in the broadcast booth. It led to some viral moments throughout the playoffs with Tracy celebrating goals by shoving Maniscalco, who is a bigger man.

Well, when Jarvis scored, Maniscalco delivered a reverse hit that sent Tracy falling backward into a chair, his headset flying off into his hands, and then the two of them embracing before Tracy called it "maybe the most famous one-timer in Hurricanes' history."

The hits got harder as the series continued.

McNabb's return

It did not look good for Brayden McNabb in Game 2. He took a Nikolaj Ehlers' 87.3 MPH slap shot right off his face at 10:52 of the first period. He had to leave the game immediately. He didn't return. He reportedly went to the hospital.



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It seemed impossible for him to play Game 3 two nights later in Las Vegas, but there was McNabb on the ice for Game 3, wearing a full cage to protect the facial injuries he sustained. The Golden Knights defenseman played 35:47 and finished plus-3 with two assists, including setting up Shea Theodore's double-overtime winner.

But that was only part of a historic night in the Cup Final.

CAR@VGK, SCF, Gm 3: Theodore banks 2OT winner off the end boards

The rest of Game 3

Mitch Marner made history by scoring the fastest hat trick in Stanley Cup Final history with three consecutive goals in a 6:10 span of the second period to give Vegas a 4-0 lead, breaking Maurice Richard's 69-year-old record of three goals in 6:21.

Marner also had an assist on Herti's power-play goal 16 seconds before he scored his first, making him the first NHL player with four points in a period in Stanley Cup Final history.

He had a chance at a fourth straight goal with a short-handed penalty shot at 4:04 of the third period, but Brandon Bussi, who relieved Frederik Andersen to start the period, made the save.

CAR@VGK, SCF, Gm 3: Marner takes over in 2nd with natural hat trick

The switch to Bussi to start the third period might go down as the biggest shift of the series even though the Hurricanes did not win Game 3.

They came close, though.

Not long after Bussi's save on Marner, Jordan Martinook, Taylor Hall and Staal scored in a 39-second span, the fastest three goals in Stanley Cup Final history, breaking a 72-year-old record set by the Montreal Canadiens (three goals in 56 seconds in Game 2 of the 1954 Final), to cut Vegas' lead to 4-3.

Andrei Svechnikov scored the game-tying power-play goal with 1:42 remaining and the Hurricanes became second team in Stanley Cup Final history to erase a four-goal deficit in a game. The New York Rangers did it in Game 1 of the 1972 Final against the Boston Bruins.

Theodore won it for Vegas at 5:38 of the second overtime, but that was its last big moment.

CAR@VGK, SCF, Gm 3: Hurricanes score fastest 3 goals in Stanley Cup Final history

Staal's Game 4 winner and celebration

A red-hot Staal scored one of his most impressive goals ever at 6:32 of the third period in Game 4 to give Carolina a 4-3 lead. The Hurricanes won 5-3 to tie the series 2-2.

Jarvis had the puck and got in alone off a Vegas turnover, but goalie Carter Hart stopped him with a blocker save at 6:24.

Jarvis won the puck back behind the goal line and promptly turned it over. Vegas had a chance to clear it, but McNabb flubbed a pass and put the puck right to Ehlers in the left face-off circle. He one-touched a pass to Staal, who spun to

his backhand as the puck crossed the slot. He stumbled and started to fall, but as he did he still managed to backhand the puck into the net before flopping on his stomach.

Staal saw the puck go in and immediately started to pump his fists while still lying face down on the ice. It was his second goal of the game and fifth of the series.

It was not his last.

CAR@VGK, SCF, Gm 4: Staal takes lead with his second goal of night

Tears for all Bussis

After making 18 saves in Game 4, his first start in the Stanley Cup Playoffs, Bussi was being interviewed on Sportsnet by Kyle Bukauskas, who asked him about his parents, Rob and Lisa, and his fiancée, Mary, being at the game.

As he was asking the question, Bussi was shown a video of his parents celebrating his win in the stands at T-Mobile Arena. They were tearing up as they embraced. And Bussi started to tear up too when he watched the clip live on Sportsnet.

"Oh, that's pretty special," he said. "They're the reason why I'm able to do what I do right now. Their sacrifice means everything. Yeah, they're the best."

Rob and Lisa sprinted to get to Las Vegas when they found out that their son was starting Game 4. They flew from New York, where they live, on the day of the game and made it for the 5 p.m. local start time.

It was not only worth the trip, but the reaction said everything about what it means to them.

"I can't believe you guys just did that to me on TV," Bussi said, still emotional.

"They're the reason I'm able to do what I'm doing right now. Their sacrifice means everything. And yeah, they're the best." ❤️

Brandon Bussi gets emotional speaking about his family in his interview with @sportsnetkyle following his first win in the Stanley Cup Playoffs [pic.twitter.com/zsPpEdTk2k](https://twitter.com/zsPpEdTk2k)

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) June 10, 2026

'Fishy' smells a big goal

Sebastian Aho, affectionately known to his teammates as "Fishy," waited until just the right time to score his first goal of the series.

Aho, the Hurricanes center, scored at 17:51 of the second period in Game 5 by taking a pass from Sean Walker off his skates to his stick and depositing the puck into the back of the net to give Carolina a 3-1 lead.

It turned into the game-winning goal in a 4-2 victory that put the Hurricanes ahead 3-2 in the series.

The goal was Aho's first in six games and second in 14, but it couldn't have been bigger at the time for the Hurricanes, who less than six minutes earlier took the lead on Svechnikov's first of two power-play goals in the game.

Aho had been getting a lot of questions about why it was a struggle for him to score in the series, how he was feeling, if



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he was confident, etc. etc. That goal answered those questions and, most importantly, was a signature moment in the Hurricanes' biggest win of the season to that point.

VGK@CAR, SCF, Gm 5: Aho finishes a remarkable play for a 3-1 lead

Bussi's sitting down save on Hertl

The Hurricanes were ahead 2-0 and trying with everything they had to close out Game 6 and win the Stanley Cup. The Golden Knights were pushing, pressing to get a little bit closer as the seconds bled off the clock in the third period.

And with less than three minutes remaining and Hart on the bench for the extra skater, Bussi made a save on Theodore's 43-foot wrist shot from a touch inside the point at 17:35.

But that wasn't it.

The rebound came to right into the slot, right to Hertl's stick. Bussi was in a sitting position now and still gathered himself in time to stop Hertl's point-blank shot off the rebound at 17:36, preserving a 2-0 lead that became a much more secure 3-0 lead 76 seconds later.

They were the last two saves Bussi made in his 22-save Cup-clinching shutout.

CAR@VGK, SCF, Gm 6: Bussi blanks Golden Knights, wins Stanley Cup with Hurricanes

Staal wins Conn Smythe, accepts Stanley Cup to cap historic Final

Staal made history in this Cup Final in more ways than one.

He tied the NHL record for the longest goal streak in a Cup Final at five games and became the first player in 70 years to score at least one goal in each of the first five games.

He became the second captain in the past 105 years to score at least six goals in the Cup Final, joining Wayne Gretzky, who had seven in five games with the Edmonton Oilers in 1985.

Then, after Game 6, although he didn't score, Staal officially became the oldest player to win the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player to his team in the playoffs. At 37 years and 277 days old, he topped Tim Thomas (2011, Boston Bruins) by 216 days.

On top of that, Staal also became the first player to go at least 17 years between Stanley Cup championships. He won it the first time with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2009.

Staal accepted the Conn Smythe Trophy and the Stanley Cup from NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman.



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## Hall-Stankoven-Blake line a big reason Carolina won the Stanley Cup | AP News

By: Stephen Whyno

Logan Stankoven was 7 years old and Jackson Blake on the verge of his seventh birthday when Taylor Hall was the No. 1 pick in the 2010 NHL draft.

Fast-forward more than a decade and a half later, and the "Kids and the Hall" line was a huge reason the Carolina Hurricanes won the Stanley Cup.

"Great all playoffs, all year," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Their game really hasn't changed for months."

Offsetting power-play struggles through the first three rounds and sagging production from the top line of Seth Jarvis, Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov for much of the playoffs, Hall, Stankoven and Blake combined for 29 of the Hurricanes' 66 goals in their title run.

That included the two scored on Carter Hart in Game 6 against Vegas to close out the final.

"Those two just work so hard," Blake said. "They make it a whole lot easier on me to play out there, for sure. They were unbelievable all playoffs long, and it was so fun and to cap it off with this is very special."

Hall had what will go down as the Game 6 winner, completing at 18 seasons the longest stretch between getting picked first and winning the Cup. The 34-year-old winger who was NHL MVP in 2017-18 while playing for New Jersey thrived as a role player with Carolina, his seventh team in the league.

"You never know what kind of turn your life's going to take," said Hall, who joined Carolina from Chicago as part of a three-team trade in January 2025 and signed an extension a few months later. "I got fortunate coming here. A special group to do it with. They allowed me, personally, just to come in and have success and that says a lot."

In that same deal, the Hurricanes got big winger Mikko Rantanen from Colorado. He lasted just 13 games with them before getting flipped to Dallas.

The centerpiece of that return was Stankoven, who was most of the way through his first season with the Stars.

"I didn't see it coming," Stankoven said. "It was tough at first just to kind of swallow it and realize that I was getting shipped out."

Stankoven became the center Carolina needed and led the team in playoff goals with 11. Blake assisted on Hall's goal and scored the second one Sunday night, showing up big as the youngest player to lift the Cup this time.

"I have no words right now," the 22-year-old Blake said. "I'm out of breath. But this is the greatest feeling I've ever had in my life. It's unbelievable. And to do it with these guys, my family here and everyone here supporting us, it's unbelievable."

It all worked because Stankoven was able to fill the void in the middle that had prevented the Hurricanes from getting over the hump.

Hall became the muscle. Blake was the distributor. Stankoven turned out to be the finisher, while also creating the offense at even strength.

"It's what you dream of as a kid is to obviously, one, win a Stanley Cup, but you want to be a difference-maker in the NHL," the 23-year-old Stankoven said. "I know that I'm not a finished product. I still have work to put in, and I'm still a young guy. I just want to keep working at my game and just being a sponge."

While the Stars are more than happy to have Rantanen in his prime, Stankoven made the best of the move 15 months ago. Last summer, he signed a \$48 million contract through 2034 and already looks to be worth every penny.

"Everything kind of happens for a reason," Stankoven said. "Dallas got their player, and I just want to become the best version of myself here in Carolina."



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## How the Hurricanes' jock-nerd alliance won the Stanley Cup - ESPN

By: Greg Wyshynski

LAS VEGAS -- When Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour lifted the Stanley Cup on Sunday night, he said hello to an old friend.

It had been 20 years since Brind'Amour became the first Hurricanes player to ever touch the Stanley Cup, having captained Carolina to the 2006 championship as a 34-year-old in his 17th NHL season.

He waited 15 seasons to win it while wearing a suit behind their bench: Brind'Amour is just the seventh person in NHL history to lift the Stanley Cup as a player and a head coach for the same team, and the first since 1956. He's just the 14th person to win the Cup as a player and a coach for any team.

Across the ice in Las Vegas, amid the hugs and tears from players and their families, general manager Eric Tulskey was a Stanley Cup champion for the first time, an unfathomable scenario for him 20 years ago.

When Brind'Amour lifted the Cup in 2006, Tulskey was analyzing the synthesis of cadmium-free nanocrystals for clinical applications as a scientist for a nanotech company in Washington state. He never conceived of a career in the NHL, what with all those cadmium-free nanocrystals to analyze.

"It is still wild to me that I ended up here. I don't know how that happened," Tulskey said. "Never thought I'd have this opportunity. But the coach and the players have brought us here."

Brind'Amour and Tulskey are truly the NHL's odd couple. A hockey lifer in his 35th season as a player and coach, and someone whose journey to the league started in the comments section of a hockey blog. A legendary fitness freak nicknamed "Rod the Bod," who can still outlift his players, and an advanced analytics wizard who doesn't return a search result in the internet hockey database.

Rousing locker room speeches and unemotional analysis of players. The Selke Trophy winner and the nanotech scientist.

In the crassest terms: The jock and the nerd.

"It feels like they're yin and yang, right?" forward Jordan Martinook said with a laugh. "But when people get married, what do they usually say? Opposites attract. Maybe that's what we needed. The opposite guys. And then they create magic."

One doesn't lift the Cup without the other this season. It took Brind'Amour's motivation, attention to detail and heart-to-heart relationship with his players. It took Tulskey's brilliant asset management, audacious acquisitions and the humility

to pivot from a rare failure. It took them both listening to and trusting the other, despite their disparate backgrounds.

It took all of that for the Hurricanes to win the Stanley Cup.

"I do think they balance each other out quite well, and that's the best part about it. Tulskey is great with numbers. Roddy's been here coaching, and had been here playing," Hurricanes forward Seth Jarvis said.

"Now, no disrespect to Eric, but I do think Roddy could snap him in half if he wanted to. I'm not saying he would. But he could."

TULSKY AND BRIND'AMOUR don't agree on everything, but there's a collaborative spirit and mutual respect that's inherent to their relationship. They're aligned on what kinds of players they want to play a system that produces all the play-driving analytics Tulskey seeks and all the old-school blunt-force hockey that Brind'Amour wants to see.

In the end, the guy making the trades and the guy designing the plays share one important philosophy that has driven Carolina to their first championship in 20 years.

"Rod has the team playing very aggressive on the ice. We want to be aggressive off the ice, too," the general manager said.

Tulskey grew up a sports fan in Philadelphia. He'd watch Mike Schmidt and the Phillies at The Vet and still lets an occasional "Go Birds!" slip out during NFL season. His Flyers fandom is dormant, which is a necessity when working for another NHL team -- one that, incidentally, swept Philadelphia out of the playoffs this season.

But the Flyers are an essential part of Tulskey's extremely unusual origin story.

Those around the Hurricanes use the word "genius" to describe him, without irony. He holds a B.A. in chemistry and physics from Harvard, as well as a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley. He conducted a two-year, post-doctoral study at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C., where he worked on the synthesis of novel colloidal nanoparticles.

Tulskey spent about a dozen years in the tech industry. He was a scientist at a biotech firm called Life Technologies in the Pacific Northwest, and later moved to the Bay Area to apply nanoscience to solar cells. His favorite bit of nanotechnical research involved making rocks small enough where they begin to emit light. You might know them better as the quantum dots in your QLED TVs.

At last count, Tulskey holds 27 U.S. patents, some that have been applied to items that are "on or are going to market soon," he said in 2024.



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It was during Tulskey's time in the Bay Area, around 2010, when he discovered Broad Street Hockey, a blog covering the Flyers. Like many blogs at the time, it sought to counterbalance mainstream coverage with data-driven analysis. This was the entry point into hockey that Tulskey didn't even know existed.

He began commenting on blog posts as "Eric T.," whose takes were smarter than your average troll. Tulskey had developed a program that would scrape shots on goal data from NHL game reports and began using that analysis online.

"These were the early days in the field, when there was a lot that still needed to be fleshed out," he told the Philadelphia Inquirer in May. "Pretty quickly, I found myself starting to want to answer some of those questions."

Also pretty quickly, "Eric T." moved from the comments section to staff blogger for Broad Street Hockey, quickly earning a reputation in that community as a visionary analyst. Yahoo Sports called him "hockey stat nerd elite." Eventually, he'd create a general hockey site called NHL Numbers, and would present at the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference in 2013 on "Using Zone Entry Data to Separate Offensive, Neutral, and Defensive Zone Performance."

From Tulskey's presentation: "The team's shot differential -- which has been shown to be a strong predictor of wins -- is determined almost entirely in the much less-heralded neutral zone. Neutral zone success involves more than getting extra zone entries; since carrying the puck across the blue line generates more than twice as many shots, scoring chances, and goals as dumping the puck in, gaining the zone with possession is a major driver of success."

Sound a bit like the philosophy of a certain newly crowned Stanley Cup champion?

Tulskey was hired by the Hurricanes as a long-distance consultant in 2014, while he was still living in the Bay Area. Three years later, he was manager of hockey analytics. One year after that, he was VP of hockey management and strategy. Two years after that, in 2020, he was promoted to assistant general manager under Don Waddell.

It wasn't a path that the nanotech scientist was intending for his life to take. But suddenly, Tulskey was part of a wave of hockey numbers guys who were getting hired by NHL teams.

John Chayka became the NHL's youngest general manager at 26 in 2016, when the Arizona Coyotes hired him as GM. The Toronto Maple Leafs made 32-year-old Kyle Dubas their GM in 2018, after he built out an impressive analytics department. (The Leafs, incidentally, just hired Chayka as their GM last month.) Tyler Dellow, now the assistant GM under Tulskey in Carolina, was an analytics consultant with Edmonton before being hired as the senior VP of hockey strategy and analytics for the New Jersey Devils in 2019.

(Tulskey and Dellow share an origin story: Before his NHL career, Dellow was a lawyer better known online as "Mudcrutch," running a combative hockey blog called mc79hockey. You might remember him as the guy who deciphered redacted information in emails sent by NHL VP of hockey operations Colin Campbell during a 2010 scandal.)

It seemed like it was only a matter of where and when Tulskey would get his chance to be an NHL general manager. He interviewed with the Chicago Blackhawks and the Pittsburgh Penguins. But in 2024, an unexpected opportunity popped up: Waddell resigned in Carolina, leaving before the last year of his contract to take over hockey operations for the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Many were surprised that Tulskey wasn't immediately elevated to succeed Waddell, but owner Tom Dundon wanted more time to evaluate his options. Less than a month later, the obvious thing became obvious: Eric Tulskey -- Ph.D. in chemistry, nanotechnology expert, former hockey blogger -- was named the GM of the Carolina Hurricanes.

"When Don left, we weren't really sure which way they were going to go. Were they going to go in-house?" Martinook recalled. "When Don was here, we didn't really see Eric all that much. Obviously, we heard about him -- and there were other teams asking about him. But I think he's done an incredible job setting up our team for success."

Jarvis couldn't recall his immediate reaction when Tulskey was formally hired, but he did know something about him.

"I knew he was extremely smart," he said. "And that's hard to find in hockey sometimes."

Especially when it comes to being smart enough to pivot from managerial mistakes. Tulskey made a significant one in 2025. How he recovered from it helped turn the Hurricanes into Stanley Cup champions.

IN HIS FIRST summer as GM, Tulskey talked to all 31 of his counterparts about trade possibilities. His conversation with the Colorado Avalanche produced a fascinating name: star winger Mikko Rantanen, the sixth-leading scorer in the NHL over the previous three seasons, who would be an unrestricted free agent at the end of the 2024-25 season.

One of the reasons the Hurricanes had been unable to break through to play for the Stanley Cup was simply not getting a critical goal at a critical time in the postseason. Entering this postseason, the Hurricanes ranked eighth in playoff scoring (minimum 50 games) since Brind'Amour took over in 2018-19 with 2.89 goals per game -- much lower than their average in the regular season (3.22) during that span.

Their goal-scoring didn't show up in later rounds. In 13 previous games in the conference finals, the Hurricanes averaged 1.61 goals in series losses to the Boston Bruins (2019) and Florida Panthers (2023, 2025).

Tulskey and Waddell sought to remedy that with a blockbuster trade at the 2024 deadline, acquiring Stanley Cup champion Jake Guentzel from the Pittsburgh Penguins, a player with 34 goals in 58 playoff games. He scored four goals in 11 playoff games for Carolina before they bowed out to the New York Rangers in the second round. Tulskey and Dundon tried to bring Guentzel back after the season, but the unrestricted free agent signed with the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Had Guentzel stayed, perhaps Tulskey never would have traded for Rantanen. But he didn't sign, so Carolina still had the need for an impact playoff scorer and skilled offensive star again last season. They were in talks with the Vancouver Canucks, reportedly seeking to acquire center J.T. Miller. But on Jan. 24, 2025, the Hurricanes and Avalanche made the Mikko Rantanen trade.



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One of Tulskey's mantras is "we're not afraid of risks," and the Rantanen trade was a major one, as Rantanen was eligible to become a free agent that summer. "Carolina will look stupid if they lose in the first round and he walks away to another team," an agent told ESPN at the time.

But Rantanen wouldn't appear in a playoff game for the Hurricanes. He would play only 13 regular-season games, amassing six points. Tulskey and Dundon felt they could convince Rantanen to sign an extension after he joined their team, with a huge contract offer and some Finnish countrymen on the roster, such as Sebastian Aho. They were stunned when Rantanen said he didn't want to play in Raleigh after so many of their players had committed long-term there, from Jarvis to star defenseman Jaccob Slavin.

A less-confident front office might have doubled down on Rantanen, retaining him for a run at the Cup despite knowing that he'd leave after the season. But Tulskey trusted that if the team ran through all the possibilities, their methodology would produce a viable solution.

So they went into the lab and cooked up a second Rantanen trade, sending him to the Dallas Stars, with whom he signed an eight-year contract.

"There's lots of opportunities to make the team better. The deadline is one that people focus on because it's the middle of the season and it's the one closest to the playoffs. But we did a lot of work in the offseason to make the team better," Tulskey said during the Stanley Cup Final. "I feel like we've taken some real steps this year as a result."

Consider everything that resulted from those two trades for Carolina:

Winger Taylor Hall, who was second on the team in playoff points (19). He was acquired from Chicago as the Blackhawks ate part of Rantanen's salary during the initial trade. His physicality, offense and antagonism have been essential parts of this Cup run.

Center Logan Stankoven, the centerpiece of their trade with Dallas, was their leading goal scorer in the playoffs (11). The 23-year-old center combined with Hall and winger Jackson Blake to form perhaps the 2026 playoffs' best line combination.

Defenseman K'Andre Miller was acquired in July 2025 from the Rangers for top defensive prospect Scott Morrow and the 2026 first-round pick acquired from Dallas for Rantanen. His transformation on the Carolina blue line has been revelatory.

Finally, by not signing Guentzel or Rantanen or winger Martin Necas -- who was shipped to Colorado and inked an eight-year contract with a \$11.5 million annual cap hit with the Avalanche -- the Hurricanes had the financial flexibility to win the hand of former Winnipeg Jets winger Nikolaj Ehlers as a free agent last summer (six years, \$51 million), despite a heavy courtship from the Washington Capitals. That gave the Canes that skilled offensive difference maker in the playoffs they desired. He had eight goals and 10 assists in 18 games, including nine points in the six games of the Stanley Cup Final -- and the Cup-clinching empty-net goal in Game 6.

It was quite a first season at the helm for Tulskey.

Before this season, he sat down with a local television reporter who asked him whether there was "a confidence" that comes with one completed season as a GM.

Tulskey chuckled. "I mean, honestly, I don't think I lack for confidence in anything I do," he replied.

That includes being one of the faces of the franchise this season, from on-camera interviews to a pre-playoff home game ritual in which Tulskey -- in a suit and tie -- visits the tailgating fans in the Lenovo Center parking lot for conversations and photo opportunities.

"The perception that I am somebody who knows how to use a spreadsheet and doesn't know how to talk to people, I think that is probably not what you come away thinking when you get to know me," he told The Athletic last year.

Brind'Amour has gotten to know Tulskey more over the past two years. Before the Hurricanes' conference finals series against Montreal, I asked the coach what he appreciated most about Tulskey ... and he immediately thanked me for the question.

"You haven't heard my answer yet," Brind'Amour deadpanned, to laughter.

The coach then acknowledged they come from very different worlds.

"I think what impresses me the most is his willingness to understand the world that I'm in. The world that we eat, breathe during our whole life and to try to really grasp that," the coach said. "I think that's been the biggest thing for me. He's always asking questions to get a true understanding of why we think this way."

BRIND'AMOUR WAS RAISED in Campbell River, British Columbia. The legend of "Rod The Bod" was born in his basement.

His dad was a pipefitter, getting up at 5:45 a.m. every day to "do a job he didn't like," Brind'Amour said. When his father would leave, Rod would roll out of bed and head down to the basement to use an old set of weights they had in the house. That's where both his physique and his work ethic were born.

Every Hurricanes player has a story about getting to their facilities early and finding their coach has already been crushing the weight room, including in the offseason.

"I stay here every summer. We usually were starting at 8 a.m. and he's in there already, grinding," defenseman Jalen Chatfield said.

"It's almost like a cliché thing at this point. You see him working out. You see him walk around, how muscular he still is. It's pretty impressive," defenseman Sean Walker said. "He makes you want to stay on your toes and make sure you're in tip-top shape."

Chatfield said it's a novelty to have a coach with that type of physique. "I'm sure everybody knows even when he played, he was jacked," he said. "I've seen the [photo] with his shirt off."

Chatfield is talking about one of the most iconic offseason Stanley Cup celebration photos of all time, right up there with Sidney Crosby sleeping next to it. In 2006, Brind'Amour brought the Cup back to Campbell River. He took the Cup on



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a nature hike and posed "tarps off" with it, muscles bulging next to a roaring river, gripping the chalice with two hands while wearing black shorts and sandals.

It's one of the images that launched Brind'Amour's nickname in hockey circles. Incidentally, Hurricanes players uniformly say they have never called him "Rod The Bod" to his face.

"I'd be too scared. He's a little intimidating," Blake said.

They're also not looking to challenge their coach on the weight bench.

"No chance. You're going to lose that one," center Mark Jankowski said.

Brind'Amour played in the NHL for 20 seasons after being drafted ninth by the St. Louis Blues in 1988. He played one season at Michigan State before joining the Blues in the 1988-89 playoffs for five games. The Blues traded him to the Flyers in 1991, where he spent nine successful seasons, back when Tulsy was a nascent sports fan in Philadelphia.

Brind'Amour joined the Hurricanes in a 2000 trade that brought big center Keith Primeau to the Flyers. He has been synonymous with Carolina ever since.

There are few people in the NHL who can claim influence over a franchise's success like Brind'Amour can with the Hurricanes. Maybe Mario Lemieux with the Penguins, where he won two Cups as a player and three more as an owner. Or Joe Sakic, a two-time Cup winner as an Avalanche player who built a third Cup winner as general manager.

The case for Brind'Amour: Since the Hurricanes moved to Carolina from Hartford in 1997, they have won 104 playoff games, including Game 6 against Vegas on Sunday. Brind'Amour has been involved in 102 of them -- 63 as the coach and 39 as a player -- and now has two Stanley Cup wins.

His No. 17 hangs from the rafters in Raleigh, having been retired in 2011.

"This organization means a lot to me. It's my home. It's the place where I feel comfortable and I want to make it special again."

That was Brind'Amour in 2018, before his first season as Hurricanes coach. Coach Paul Maurice, who would later win two Stanley Cups with the Florida Panthers, brought Brind'Amour on as an assistant coach with the Canes in 2011. He worked under Kirk Muller and Bill Peters before being promoted to head coach in Dundon's first year as owner, after Carolina had missed the playoffs for nine straight seasons.

"Everything I think about the way the world should be, how people should treat other people, how they should lead, this man does it," Dundon said when announcing Brind'Amour as the franchise's 14th coach. "He's probably the best asset we had here."

That proved to be true. Since Brind'Amour took over in 2018, the Hurricanes are second only to Colorado (.665) in regular-season points percentage, at .659. Carolina made at least the second round of the playoffs in seven of his eight years behind the bench, and made the Eastern Conference finals four times before breaking through to win the Stanley Cup

this season. He won the Jack Adams Award as NHL coach of the year in 2021.

Brind'Amour became a coveted coach during his tenure with the Hurricanes, perhaps no more so than in 2024, when he was in the final year of his deal. Luke DeCock of the Raleigh News & Observer wrote, "Confidants say he has become unsure about his future in Carolina, according to sources familiar with those conversations." Dundon rejected that and said a deal was "all but done."

In May 2024, Brind'Amour signed a long-term extension. "We hope to keep him a Hurricane for life," Waddell said.

Dundon and Brind'Amour have had an intriguing relationship. At the time of Brind'Amour's hiring, there was some concern that Dundon -- a maverick new NHL owner, who has since disrupted the NBA as the owner of the Portland Trail Blazers -- would meddle too much with the on-ice product. It was something of which Brind'Amour was cognizant.

"Tom's going to want to be involved in everything. He's going to be down in the coach's office every day that he's around. And that's OK. We talked about it. I get this is how it's going to work," Brind'Amour told ESPN in 2018. "I'm just going to have to show him why [we shouldn't] do what he wants to do. He wants to put a guy in and play him here, and everyone knows it's not the best decision, I gotta show him why. I gotta let him know, and then he's fine."

That level of communication has been key for the Hurricanes, especially during the Tulsy/Brind'Amour era.

"Rod, Tulsy and Tom Dundon are the head honchos. They make the end decisions. But together, they're able to figure out what the best team going forward on the ice is. They're not too proud to say, 'You're wrong,' and they're not too proud to say, 'OK, tell me why,'" said Justin Williams, a three-time Stanley Cup champion who is now a senior adviser to Tulsy.

"I think one of the best things about our organization is that nobody takes themselves too seriously. There's not one person who says, 'You're absolutely wrong, you don't know what you're talking about,' even though it might be a different idea. Everyone is confident in how a team should be built and what we need as a team. But you're not too proud to listen to other people's opinions. That's what our organization is about."

The only thing that rivals Brind'Amour's communication is his motivation.

BEFORE EVERY GAME, Brind'Amour walks into the Hurricanes' locker room, does a short video tutorial and then becomes a motivational speaker. Walker sits in his stall, marveling not only at his coach's delivery, but that no two speeches are ever the same.

"I don't know if I've been around someone who can just pop off with a different motivational speech every night. They make you ready to run through a brick wall for your teammates and your brothers," Walker said.

Stanley Cup Final hero Jordan Staal has been with the Hurricanes since 2012 and has been their captain since 2019. He happily conceded the pregame oratory responsibilities to Brind'Amour.



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"He's much better than I am, that's for sure," Staal said.  
"He's a great motivator obviously, and just true to his word.  
We all want it so bad and you can tell he wants it for us too."

Brind'Amour does put some pressure on himself to say the right thing before the game -- even if the results don't follow.

"I have to prepare. I don't like winging it too much," he said.  
"Sometimes I have the best [speeches] and we don't play that great."

When Brind'Amour decided to become a coach, he admittedly thought it was going to be an easier life in hockey than as a player. Imagine his surprise when he found out his workload had practically doubled, thanks to the time commitments of running a team.

"Not that I didn't respect the coaches, but I just thought you get the best players out there and go play. Open the door, let us go," he said. "And then I got behind there and I realized, 'Oh, wait, there's a lot of work.'"

Every postseason can present unexpected challenges. But during this run to the Stanley Cup, Brind'Amour was faced with a situation that no NHL coach had to navigate for 107 years.

The Hurricanes' sweep of Philadelphia combined with Montreal needing seven games to dispatch Buffalo meant that Carolina had 11 full days off between series, the longest gap in the Stanley Cup playoffs since 1919.

"It was a challenge to stay sharp," he said. "Knowing we're going to have so much time, you don't want to give them too much, because the playoffs are a mental drain. It's every night. Sometimes you're just like, 'Holy mackerel.' To get away from that is good, but you also don't want to get too far away from it, because then you get out of the [hamster] wheel, so to speak."

Brind'Amour already had a plan. He gave the players a few days off the ice -- a nice benefit for Walker and Miller, who both welcomed babies into their lives during the playoffs. They had plenty of video work, and then, when the time was right, rigorous on-ice sessions to keep them sharp.

After a rusty Game 1 that saw Montreal hand the Hurricanes their first loss of the postseason, Carolina's fresh legs and

clear heads led to four straight wins and the first Eastern Conference title in Brind'Amour's coaching career.

"This is where we thought we should be for a long time. It's been a long road, and I was thrilled for the guys to have this opportunity," Brind'Amour said.

"A lot of years, a lot of pain," Martinook said. "For Roddy to have the scar tissue that we all have too, I'm happy for him as much as I'm happy for all of us."

There are different ways for coaches to motivate players, some more laudable than others. Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere said Brind'Amour's no-frills approach to his players led them to success.

"He doesn't care about mind games. You always know where you stand with Roddy. And if you put your best foot forward, work hard and do what you're told, he's going to like you," he said.

But beyond that, he'll care about you. And your teammates. And your family.

"Roddy's a great human being. He cares so much about our families and what's going on," Gostisbehere said. "After wins, we all bring our kids in. He always says the same thing, every time: 'This is what it's all about.'"

As the Hurricanes and their families celebrated on the Vegas ice, so did their coach, whose 20-year wait between Stanley Cups ended with the knowledge that all that scar tissue he accumulated as a coach was worth it. And so did their general manager, whose unprecedented journey to running an NHL team ended with his name forever etched on its most hallowed artifact.

"Eric pulled all the strings the right way. The guys that we have in the locker room, we love each other. We care for each other," goalie Brandon Bussi said. "And Rod is like family. He's the reason everyone just enjoys each other. Then we go out there and we play our game freely."

This was their team. This was their championship.

The Carolina Hurricanes' yin and yang, creating perfect harmony.



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## How the oft-dismissed Hurricanes became an undeniable champion

By: Justin Bourne

For years the Carolina Hurricanes have been respected, but mostly hand-waved away as a serious Stanley Cup threat. But their dominant 2025-26 Stanley Cup victory casts a different light on the success the team had in the seasons prior. Some were starting to frame them as a regular season team not built for playoff hockey, despite repeatedly winning in the playoffs.

It's been a run.

Over the past six seasons, they've won the division outright four times, finishing second the other two. They've played in 16 playoff series, winning a round every year and 10 total which has included three trips to the Conference Final. Only Colorado has done better in the regular season over this span:

And they're tied with Florida for most wins in the playoffs over that time, too:

It's unimpeachable now, of course, but it's crazy to reflect on the Hurricanes have been talked about despite their impressive track record.

The list of reasons traditionalists in the hockey world have given for giving up on them has been long, if you recall.

The first came with skepticism about Tom Dundon, an owner who some said was too involved, too cheap, or sometimes both. "Too" anything goes out the window when you win the Cup, and he's shown himself to be progressive and driven, and the Canes families were there to see the Cup win happen in Vegas thanks to the team chartering them a flight.

You can be eccentric if the eccentricities lead to results.

Skepticism came when Dundon hired Eric Tulsky as his team's general manager, a move which I've seen rebuked by several established hockey people. He works hand-in-hand with another analytics pro in Tyler Dellow, both of whom use numbers as just one of their tools to make decisions. "Analytics as an important tool" seems to make people particularly upset, but it's not just what has helped them find good players, it's what's encouraged them to continue on the same path despite falling short of their ultimate goal in the past.

Rod Brind'Amour's skating-intensive, man-on-man defending asks a lot from players, which brought skepticism. You heard people say the players were going to be too worn out to play like that over four rounds, but the Canes had the great skaters to make it work. It's that marriage of coaching philosophy and commensurate roster which worked so well.

For a while the way Carolina lost in recent conference finals (two sweeps and a five-gamer prior to this year) was used to make it seem like they hadn't played their way to that spot in the playoffs fairly, or that they weren't even in the games that they lost those years. Brind'Amour caught flak for calling the

games in the Florida sweep "close" despite the fact that they objectively were.

Carolina has had trouble landing and keeping superstars, as we saw when Jake Guentzel and Mikko Rantanen didn't stick around. But prioritizing how you spend your cap space is at the root of important organizational decisions, and they didn't fall all over themselves by throwing their pocketbook at a player who wasn't all in. They found more efficient ways to spend that money.

They were skeptical about the ratio of "cost to value" they were going to get from Martin Necas in the playoffs, so they sought to upgrade as he moved towards the end of his contract. They made a huge move to land Rantanen, who we now know chose not to stay. But like the red paperclip trading game, they brought back a haul for the big forward, and targeted an under-appreciated young talent in Logan Stankoven, who nearly won the Conn Smythe Trophy at five-foot-eight and 23 years old. The Canes won the Cup, and still have four first-rounders over the next three summers, thanks in part to the foresight in the second Rantanen trade.

We heard they weren't big enough, or experienced enough, that their goaltending wasn't good enough, and that you can't win without a superstar.

But then they were big enough, and experienced enough, they got the third-best save percentage in the post-season (.918), and they did, in fact, win without a superstar.

All the while they bought into Brind'Amour's leadership and the tremendous culture he creates. They've been efficient at the fringes, and they ground four opponents to dust without anyone on the team earning \$10 million. Brind'Amour deserves a ridiculous amount of credit for how they win.

As Carolina got close and fought to get it across the finish line these past few years, it's clear they needed every small addition they made.

They forced the Rangers' hand with the threat of an offer sheet and two draft picks to acquire K'Andre Miller, who they then signed for eight years. They signed Nikolaj Ehlers to a deal that's already a win even if he never plays another game of it. And Jackson Blake, who just scored 53 points at age 22, was signed for just over \$5 million a year until 2034. His 20 points in 19 playoff games look pretty good, too.

The undrafted Brandon Bussi stepped in and brought it home.

Separate from the additions, the play of some of their veterans deserves a nod. Obviously Jordan Staal was the heart of the team through the playoffs and won the Conn Smythe, but Taylor Hall was in that conversation too. And then there's Jaccob Slavin. He was handling 23:31 per game against top opponents while racking up zero penalty minutes and somehow was still a plus-player to top it off. That



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should've earned him more Conn Smythe votes than the one he got.

Of course, the Canes needed every break they could get, as do all Cup champs, and they got that with the fact that they stayed healthy. But part of the reason they stayed healthy is to their own credit: they polished off opponents quickly so as to play as few games as possible, and to get that rest.

I am curious now, as someone who went to school for psychology, how the rest of the league handles the Canes' success. There's something called "belief perseverance" in the field, which refers to the tendency of some people to cling to initial beliefs even after evidence of those beliefs has been proven entirely false.

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Will the Canes still have vocal doubters?

In what's supposed to be a copycat league, those who've dismissed this team aren't going to like this result, because it's not so easy to copy. You can't just go sign big players and say "Florida was big so they win." You can't just sign a guy who's won and say "he's a culture guy."

Because Carolina's success comes first from the culture created by Brind'Amour, who's not going to coach someone else's team any time soon. It comes from a front office that prioritizes play-driving forwards on efficient contracts, long defencemen who can skate and move the puck, and heart and soul depth guys who can still get around the ice and make some plays.

"Copying" Carolina means building a complete team, establishing buy-in, and taking multiple runs into the playoffs over and over until one year the cards get dealt in your favour.

Carolina went the long way, the hard way, the smart way, and that's why it scares so many around the league. There's no shortcut here for anyone looking for a quick fix.



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## Patience, guts and a little luck: How the Hurricanes stayed the course and got rewarded with a Stanley Cup

By: Austin Nivison

The eighth time was the charm. The Carolina Hurricanes endured seven consecutive seasons of playoff heartbreak, but they stayed the course and were finally rewarded with the Stanley Cup on Sunday night.

Rod Brind'Amour took over as coach of the Hurricanes in 2018 and immediately took them from sixth place in their own division to the Eastern Conference Final. Carolina didn't know it at the time, but that would become the ceiling -- one the team would hit its head on repeatedly over the next six years.

The Hurricanes did a lot of winning in the first seven years of Brind'Amour's tenure. They just never did enough, at least not at the right time of year. Carolina failed to advance past the first round once (in the COVID bubble playoffs) but could never break through to the Stanley Cup Final.

Hurricanes postseason results since 2018-19

Season    Playoff result

2018-19

L, conference final (Bruins)

2019-20

L, first round (Bruins)

2020-21

L, second round (Lightning)

2021-22

L, second round (Rangers)

2022-23

L, conference final (Panthers)

2023-24

L, second round (Rangers)

2024-25

L, conference final (Panthers)

2025-26

W, Stanley Cup Final

Over the years, those playoff shortcomings led to widespread skepticism from outsiders. Maybe Brind'Amour's offensive system, which generates a high quantity of low-danger shots, wasn't a recipe for success in the playoffs. Perhaps Carolina's lack of true star power held the team back against the elite teams in the Eastern Conference.

In fact, those doubts didn't exist solely among fans and media. Even Brind'Amour admitted to second-guessing himself over the last eight years.

"Listen, you always have doubt," Brind'Amour said in his postgame press conference. "It creeps in. It creeps in all the time. I felt like this team could've done this many, many times. But something would just go off the rails a little."

Instead of letting doubt and frustration get the better of them, the Hurricanes remained poised and stayed the course. They knew they had the ingredients for a winning formula. Carolina just needed patience, guts and a little luck to get across the finish line.

Patience with the core, coach

Five players -- Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal, Jordan Martinook, Jaccob Slavin and Andrei Svechnikov -- have been on the roster for every season under Brind'Amour. Other pieces have come and gone, but that quintet remained to build the culture that manifests itself on the ice every night.

At some point over the last eight seasons, when regular-season wins were plentiful, but the Stanley Cup seemed impossible to capture, the Hurricanes could've made sweeping changes to that core, which doesn't look as formidable as those of other championship contenders on paper.

Aho is a great two-way center, but he didn't always look like the No. 1 option on a true Stanley Cup contender. Peers like Aleksander Barkov and Brayden Point got the best of him in the playoffs. For seven years, Andrei Svechnikov was a productive player, but he didn't live up to the expectations that come with being the No. 2 overall pick in the NHL Draft. Too often, the scoring touch he displayed in the regular season vanished when it mattered most.

Staal and Martinook are veteran forecheckers in a league that's getting increasingly younger. Martinook has never tallied more than 36 points in a single season. Staal has never scored more than 38 points under Brind'Amour. Carolina could have looked outside the organization for upgrades, but Brind'Amour and the front office knew what they had.

"My first acquisition was Jordan Martinook," Brind'Amour said. "I remember having lunch with him, and I was like, 'Hey, we're trying to build something. The kind of player you are, your personality, that's what we're building around here.' Same thing with Jordan (Staal). Every day, it's the same. He just brings people into the fight. Even Sebastian Aho, sitting beside Jordan every day and watching what he does. That's the power of leadership. I'm really happy for those guys."

That patience was also extended to Brind'Amour himself. In today's NHL, general managers and owners have quick



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triggers and little time for repeated playoff failures. It was this time a year ago that the Dallas Stars fired Peter DeBoer on the heels of his third consecutive Western Conference Final appearance.

Being a franchise legend certainly brought Brind'Amour some goodwill, but his positive impact on the team was evident, and the Hurricanes chose to stick with him even as playoff defeats piled up. That was the right call because Carolina probably isn't celebrating its second Cup in team history without Brind'Amour behind the bench.

Other organizations may have taken a sledgehammer to the core or made a coaching change over the last eight seasons, but Carolina took the more patient route. A couple more key players, like Seth Jarvis, became part of the core, but players who helped build the culture in Raleigh were very rarely subtracted.

Stanley Cup Final: Carolina Hurricanes v Vegas Golden Knights - Game Six

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour lifts the Stanley Cup after the Hurricanes' Game 6 win over Vegas. Getty Images

Guts to swing from the heels

On March 7, 2024, the Hurricanes acquired Jake Guentzel from the Pittsburgh Penguins in a splashy move at the trade deadline. It seemed as though Carolina had found the missing piece to its championship puzzle. As one of the most skilled offensive players in the NHL, Guentzel was exactly what the Canes needed to exorcise their playoff demons.

Over the next four months, the Hurricanes lost in the second round of the playoffs, and Guentzel signed with the Tampa Bay Lightning after the two couldn't reach terms on a new contract. The Canes had given up assets to land the biggest fish on the trade market and lost him for next to nothing.

Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsky, then the assistant general manager, had a front-row seat for that big whiff. But it didn't make him more hesitant to swing after his promotion the following season. It just made him wiser.

Less than a year after Carolina traded for Guentzel, on Jan. 24, 2025, the team traded its most dynamic playmaker in an attempt to land another bona fide superstar. Martin Necas went to the Colorado Avalanche, and Mikko Rantanen made his way to Raleigh in a three-way deal that also brought eventual playoff hero Taylor Hall to the Canes as an add-on.

Unfortunately for Tulsky and the Canes, it was déjà vu as that move didn't go as planned either. Guentzel's 28-game stint with Carolina looked like an eternity next to Rantanen, who played all of 13 games with the Hurricanes before another trade sent him to the Dallas Stars.

It looked as though the Hurricanes had swung and missed again, except this time it cost them one of their best young players. Ultimately, it turned out to be one of the most shrewd moves in recent memory.

When Tulsky realized that Rantanen, a pending free agent, was unlikely to sign a long-term deal in Carolina, he was determined to avoid a repeat of the Guentzel saga. Instead of rolling the dice with Rantanen in the playoffs, Tulsky traded him to Dallas in exchange for promising but unproven forward Logan Stankoven and a pair of conditional first-round picks.

Just over a year later, Stankoven posted 16 playoff points while serving as a key cog in the Hurricanes' championship team. Meanwhile, Rantanen watched the final three rounds of the postseason from home after a disappointing first-round performance.

Between Necas and Rantanen, Tulsky traded away two lethal offensive threats in short order. It took guts -- more than most other general managers have -- but it was a stroke of genius.

Stankoven looks like the newest member of Carolina's core, and the first-round picks Tulsky received from Dallas gave him the freedom to swing for the fences again. Last summer, the Hurricanes used one of those picks to acquire defenseman K'Andre Miller from the Hurricanes to bolster their blue line.

All Miller did in the playoffs was dominate every time he was on the ice. Brind'Amour described him as a "monster" following Game 6, and that was an apt description. Miller posted a 59.6% expected goals shared and a plus-10 goal differential at five-on-five, per Natural Stat Trick, and he's under contract at a reasonable cap hit for the next seven seasons.

A bit of luck

If someone told me on Oct. 1 that Brandon Bussi would backstop the Hurricanes to a Stanley Cup in 2026, my first response would have been, "Who?"

My second response would have been, "You realize he's a minor-league goalie for the Panthers, right?"

Finally, my third response would have been, "No, they won't."

Yet, there was Bussi, tossing off his blocker and glove to greet his Carolina teammates with hugs on the ice at T-Mobile Arena after shutting out the Golden Knights in Game 6. Just the third first-year goaltender in NHL history to post a shutout in a Cup-clinching game, Bussi is a Hurricanes legend after just 43 games at the NHL level.

After years of toiling away in the AHL, Bussi finally made his NHL debut on Oct. 14, when he was too old to qualify for rookie status. Bussi's story is as improbable as they come, and Brind'Amour recognized that while also crediting Bussi for making the absolute most of his opportunity in 2025-26.

"Sometimes you get lucky in sports," Brind'Amour said. "You do have to have that. It was a lucky pick-up that just happened at the right time, and here you go. But that's also the story of people who take care of the opportunity. It didn't just happen. He had to make it happen."

Bussi's story is the most obvious example of luck greeting Carolina at just the right time, but there are others. Slavin and young forward Jackson Blake were both selected after pick No. 100 in their respective drafts. The Hurricanes' scouting department deserves a lot of credit there, but look at the hit rate of triple-digit picks in the NHL Draft and tell me there wasn't some degree of luck involved there as well.

After years of dealing with significant injuries in the postseason, the Hurricanes were relatively healthy in 2026. Rolling through the first three rounds in 13 games certainly played a role in that good health, but all it takes is one awkward hit or one shot block in between pads for a player's



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postseason to end abruptly. Just ask the Colorado Avalanche. Carolina avoided all those landmines this spring with 16 skaters playing in all 19 games and two more playing in at least 17.

Every Stanley Cup champion gets a bit of luck along the way, but that doesn't diminish the achievement. The

Hurricanes saw an opportunity to hang another banner, and they weren't going to let it slip away this time.

"I think it was our time," Brind'Amour said. "We weren't going to be denied."



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**SB NATION**  
**CANES COUNTRY**

## Carolina Wins Stanley Cup: Hurricanes 3, Golden Knights 0

By: Bob Wage

The Carolina Hurricanes put on a clinic as they defeated the Las Vegas Golden Knights, 3-0 on Sunday night to win the 2026 Stanley Cup Championship.

The Hurricanes had a dominating playoff season as they finished with a 16-3 record.

Taylor Hall started things off this night much like he did throughout the postseason as he got a step on the defense and rifled in a shot past Vegas goaltender Carter Hart to make it 1-0, just three minutes and change into the game.

In the second period, the Canes started to impose their will and held the Knights to just three shots on goal. The "junkyard dawg" second line of Hall, Stankoven, and Blake went to work and held the puck in the Vegas zone for quite some time until Stankoven found Blake who had a slightly deflected shot go in to make it, 2-0.

Jackson Blake led the team in scoring these playoffs with 20 points, (7G 13A) with Hall right behind him at 19 points, (7G 12A).

The score remained that way as team defense and some timely goaltending by Brandon Bussi held back the Golden Knights until Nikolaj Ehlers scored an empty-netter to seal the deal.

Jordan Staal won the Conn Smythe and the 37 year old was the oldest winner ever of the MVP award. Staal led the group

in so many ways but one important stat was that he scored goals in five straight games in the Final, tying an all-time record.

There are countless stories of how different players contributed in their own ways. Jaccob Slavin, K'Andre Miller, Sean Walker, and the rest of the team were all special but we will go into more detail about them later.

There will be endless interviews, pictures, and articles to see and read now from all over. We will try to do our best to do our part here.

It was the first time the Golden Knights were shutout this postseason.

The Victory Parade is scheduled for Saturday in downtown Raleigh. More details about that later.

Here are a few things of interest I found online.

Aagin, I could do this all night but I need to publish this now.

I want to thank all the Canes Country writers, members, and readers for a great year. A big thank you to the members who would leave news and updates in the comments. It has been a record breaking season as far as comments and page hits. We will try to keep it up through what will be a busy and short offseason!

Thank you all!



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## Red Alert: Carolina Hurricanes capture the Stanley Cup

By: Brennan Weiss

Hurricanes center Jordan Staal high-fives fans while walking out onto the ice before the second period of the game against the Columbus Blue Jackets in the Lenovo Center on Thursday, April 2, 2026. Carolina defeated Columbus 5-1.

Hurricanes center Jordan Staal high-fives fans while walking out onto the ice before the second period of the game against the Columbus Blue Jackets in the Lenovo Center on Thursday, April 2, 2026. Carolina defeated Columbus 5-1.

Nine years of postseason drought. Eight years under head coach Rod Brind'Amour. Seven disappointing playoff exits. The price to return the most historic trophy in sports, the Stanley Cup, to Raleigh.

Only needing one win to secure the hardware, the Hurricanes wrestled control of what had at first looked like a competitive series, shutting out the Golden Knights 3-0. Carolina's touted defense showed up while Vegas shrank in the spotlight.

Captain and center Jordan Staal led the Canes' physical play in the Final, scoring six goals and posting a historic 68.0% face-off percentage. For his efforts, the 37-year-old was named playoff MVP, making him the oldest Conn Smythe trophy winner in the league's history.

"It's an unbelievable ending to a great story," Brind'Amour said. "I've talked about him enough but I'm so proud of him ... I've seen this guy grind it out for 14 years and never waiver"

Defenseman Jaccob Slavin, another long-time Hurricane, headlined the defensive effort, shutting down multiple goal-scoring opportunities and standing as an impassable wall at the blue line.

"He was remarkable tonight," Staal said. "He stopped like four or five grade-A [chances], and it was nonstop. It was every shift really. He was a massive reason why it stayed at zero."

On any occasion the defense failed, goaltender Brandon Bussi had a save ready. He didn't have the best control of his rebounds, but he seemed to occupy every space in the crease at once.

Standing strong on a breakaway, spinning around to grab a puck that bounced off his back, jumping around for a flurry of point-blank saves. All for a 22-save shutout every bit worth the praise that Carolina fans have been heaping onto him in his rookie season.

"Every start that he's had for us has been like that ... no stress, making saves, from day one that he showed up," Brind'Amour said. "Sometimes you get lucky in sports ...

That was a lucky waiver pickup that just happened at the right time, and here we are."

Bussi joined the team off waivers this season before going on to post the best record by a goaltender through their first 25 games. He didn't get the start at first in the playoffs, but he was ready when his number was called for the last four games.

"[It's a] good story about people that take advantage of opportunity," Brind'Amour said. "It didn't just happen, he had to make it happen, and he certainly did."

On the attacking end, the Hurricanes' talent shined. Winger Taylor Hall opened the scoring on a breakaway with a snipe from the left faceoff circle. It was a shot that belongs to a highly-skilled player. The kind of player who might not be expected to do the dirty work day in and day out. But not Hall, who bought into the Hurricanes culture in his first full season with the team.

"It's a great story, we got a bunch of these guys that have grinded it out," Brind'Amour said. "Him coming over with the pedigree he had, it could've been easy to just be like 'I'm not doing this,' but it was the opposite."

Up and down the roster, Carolina has talented players that have flown under the league's radar. Some of that can be attributed to the Hurricanes' owner, Tom Dundon, who became the majority shareholder in 2018 shortly before appointing Rod Brind'Amour as head coach.

"I gotta give him a lot of credit for this whole thing," Brind'Amour said. "Number one, he gave me an opportunity ... and then you know, his commitment to trying to build a winner is there ... He went out and got us players we needed, and here we are."

Many of those players have been the difference for Carolina this year. The surprise success of Bussi, the veteran presences of Hall and winger Nikolaj Ehlers, center Logan Stankoven's 16 playoff points. All part of the vision that Brind'Amour has been building toward for almost a decade.

"I remember the day that my first acquisition was [winger] Jordan Martinook," Brind'Amour said. "I remember grabbing him, had lunch with him, and I'm like 'Hey we're gonna try to build something, we need the kind of player you are, the personality.'"

If the Stanley Cup was the goal, then Brind'Amour has built something.

Brind'Amour won the Stanley Cup for the Hurricanes as a player 20 years ago, and now he's taken another group of players to that cherished moment.

"It was for the group, like I wanted them to feel what it's like and I wanted it so bad for them," Brind'Amour said. "To



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watch them finally get it ... just to see the look on their face,  
it's worth, it's priceless ... I'll never forget that."

20 years with a long road in between. From almost a decade  
of missed playoffs to three heartbreaking conference finals  
losses, no one would say it was easy. But all of that is history  
as the Stanley Cup comes home to Raleigh.



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## The Hockey News

### Jordan Staal Takes Home The Conn Smythe As Playoff MVP

By: Ryan Henkel

From record-breaking faceoff dominance to a historic goal-scoring streak, the 37-year-old captain silenced elite opponents and fueled Carolina's first championship run in two decades with a legendary performance.

The Carolina Hurricanes are Stanley Cup Champions once again for the first time in 20 years and a big part of it is due to the work done by captain Jordan Staal.

The 37-year-old veteran centerman has always been the heartbeat of the Canes, but he took everything to another level this postseason and as such, he was properly awarded the honor of winning the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP.

Staal, who's the oldest player ever to earn the honor, was one of the most impactful players in the Stanley Cup Final.

The captain tied the record for longest goal streak to start a Final, scoring in each of the first five games of the series, and also became the oldest player to score at least six goals in a Stanley Cup Final.

Staal's six tallies also set a franchise record for goals in any series and his seven points in the Final were over half his total playoff production (8g, 12pts)

Even beyond the production though, Staal's value to the team was paramount.

As the shutdown centerman, Staal went toe-to-toe with some of the league's best and basically eliminated everyone he was matched up against.

Staal was out there for every situation: PK (where he led one of the NHL's best ever postseason penalty kills at 91.5%), PP (which went 31.6% in the Final), empty net situations, you name it, he was out there dominating.

He also was a monster in the faceoff dot as well, going 56.8% all postseason and a staggering 68% in the Final alone, the best marker in NHL history.

"It's an unbelievable ending to a great story," said Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour. "I'm just so proud of him and I'm proud that he was able to do that in front of the whole hockey world. Everyone got to see now what I've known forever. Not only what kind of player he is, but the leader he is too. We're not hoisting the Cup without him. It's just not even close. I'm glad for him, because I've seen this guy grind it out for 14 years and never waiver. It doesn't always work out, as we know, but it's nice to see the good guys get one."

"I'm happy I stuck around," Staal said. "I believed in the culture, I believed in what we were trying to build in Carolina. It's just an amazing feeling to be able to build something like [the Stanley Cup] and to top it all off with this. It's an absolute dream come true."

### The Carolina Hurricanes Are The 2026 Stanley Cup Champions

By: Ryan Henkel

After eight years of postseason heartbreak, Carolina shattered the "choker" narrative with a dominant 16-3 playoff run, proving a unified constellation of stars can outshine any superstar.

It had been 20 years since the organization's last taste of glory.

Eight straight years of heartbreak as a team good enough to win it all, yet one that just kept faltering before the final heat.

There were times where, even this year, things felt daunting. That the ultimate goal was going to be too far out of reach.

Yet the Carolina Hurricanes have once again surmounted the final summit.

With a 3-0 win in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final, the Hurricanes etched their names into history as the 2026 Stanley Cup Champions, capturing the organizations second ever championship.

From the drop of the puck, it was a full team effort to grind out the win, much like it had been all postseason, and in the end, Carolina just wanted it more.

The win will also finally silence the ridiculous critiques that have been following the team for years.

Despite being consistently one of the league's top teams, with seven straight postseason appearances and three conference final berths, their inability to make it to the Stanley Cup Final was seen by many as failure.

It was said that they weren't a good enough team, that their system and players weren't capable of making it all the way, that they were a team of chokers.

They've now shattered those narratives.

The Hurricanes didn't just win the Stanley Cup, they dominated en route on a historic 16-3 record.

There were no passengers on the bus either, as no one player carried the load for the Hurricanes.



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They say you need gamebreakers, but the Hurricanes didn't need a superstar.

All they needed was everyone pulling on the same rope.

And while there may not be a superstar in Carolina, the team was already a constellation: A team filled with stars.

And while those stars may not be the brightest ones in the sky, together, they've outshone everyone else.

"They've really grinded it out and did it the right way and taken a lot of flak, you know?," said Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour "Unduly for getting this far and not making it past it. I don't think that was right because they played as hard as they could. It wasn't ever like, 'Oh, they didn't do enough.' No. They gave it everything they had and that's all you can ask. We got better this year. We added some pieces that have made us better to get us to this point, but like I said, as a coach, you watch these guys every day. There's nobody luckier than me with these guys and the way that they approach their business on a daily basis, not just now. For eight years... actually, it's been longer because I was an assistant coach here for a long time with these guys and I've

seen them grow into great players, but unbelievable people. Real happy for them."

It's also a reward for the city and the fanbase that stuck by the team even in the bleakest of times.

When Carolina struggled to even fill the building during their nearly decade long playoff drought, there were still those loyal who came out and supported the team regardless.

This win is as much a championship for them as it is for the team.

"It's special because they've grinded it out with us," said Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour. "Night in, night out, supporting us, loud, enthusiastic. They're behind us. Playing on a 'small market' team, it is a community feel. We're in it with them and you kind of get that sense. I'm happy for them that they have a team like we are that they can be proud of. Because we're their team and I think they can be proud of the way we play."

Celebrate this one Caniacs.

You, and they, deserved this.

### LINKS

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SportScan

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

1394039 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes touch down as champs to jubilant homecoming in the Triangle

Esther Frances8-10 minutes 16/06/2026

Under an elegant spray of water cannons from two adjacent fire trucks, the Carolina Hurricanes landed back in the Triangle as Stanley Cup champions.

The Canes defeated the Vegas Golden Knights on Sunday, cementing their place in history and securing the highly coveted Stanley Cup. While the team won in Las Vegas, hometown fans at watch parties all throughout the Triangle celebrated the achievement.

A plane carrying the Carolina Hurricanes team is greeted by a water salute after arriving at Raleigh-Durham International Airport on Monday, June 15, 2026.

A plane carrying the Carolina Hurricanes team is greeted by a water salute after arriving at Raleigh-Durham International Airport on Monday, June 15, 2026. Kaitlin McKeown kmckeown@newsobserver.com

On Monday, before the Canes' arrival, hundreds of fans of all ages lined up alongside a barricade facing the general aviation terminal at Raleigh-Durham International Airport. Some were set up with lawn chairs and umbrellas to block the sun. Others brought flags, signs and rally towels to applaud the players as they returned.

The Canes previously lifted the trophy in 2006.

Water from the fire trucks created a rainbow before players stepped off the airplane and immediately boarded two buses. The buses drove by the row of cheering fans and several players including forward Nicolas Deslauriers leaned out of the roof emergency exits, pumping their fists in celebration.

Dedicated fans await Canes arrival

Although the Canes plane was not scheduled to land until around 7 p.m., longtime fan Suzanne Hagen secured her spot three hours earlier.

Hagen — a 23-year season ticket holder — said she stood up for the entirety of the Canes' winning game in 2006 when they last delivered the Stanley Cup to Raleigh.

On Sunday, she said, "I was at home in my La-Z-Boy [recliner] with my big screen TV, my own refrigerator, free parking, and free drinks."

"I've known they were gonna do this since the beginning of the season," she said. "I said, 'This is the year. This is the year.' And here we are."

A few cars driving by the patient Caniacs gave three distinct honks of the horn, to which the fans responded, "Let's go Canes!"

Jeremy Thomas leaned up against the barricade and chatted with other Canes fans in nearly the same place he stood in 2006. Back then, he said, there was a much smaller crowd.

"Obviously, hockey's taken off a lot more in the area, but everybody was super excited," he said. "We're just happy to share the moment with the boys."

Thomas, a season ticket holder for 15 years, said his journey feels much like Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour's — "he's done it, but he wants it for the boys."

Brind'Amour became a Stanley Cup champion in 2006 as a Hurricanes player.

"So many of them put so much effort, and we've all been through the pain and the suffering," he said. "So, to finally come through on the other side feels really good."

Sisters Dana and Sara Shaut came prepared with chairs, dinner and sparkly pants. They not only brought their own poster, but came with extra supplies for other fans who wanted to make one too.

The Shauts said loving the Canes is a family affair. The two split season tickets with their parents and rotate — the sisters take weekday games while their parents go on the weekends.

"We've met plenty of the players at different events, and they're great people," Dana Shaut said. " ... It means a lot to me because it means a lot to them."

Sara Shaut said the team's championship win "feels like they're finally getting their due, especially with the last eight years."

The Canes have an eight-year streak of making it into the playoffs but had not been able to make it past the Eastern Conference Final.

"We knew they could get here," Sara Shaut said. "I'm finally glad to see them actually get to [the Stanley Cup Final] and then actually ... get it in the same go."

Dana Shaut said the players showed off their humble sides in postgame interviews when they cited how the win was a team effort.

Sara Shaut said they've watched the team build year after year.

"They are finally getting the recognition I think they deserve from not just the fans that already support them, but the other teams," she said.

The sign the sisters brought read, "Same time next year?"

News Observer LOADED: 06.16.2026

1394040 Carolina Hurricanes

Looking to commemorate the Canes Stanley Cup win? We've got you covered.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Thad Ogburn 3-4 minutes 15/06/2026

The Carolina Hurricanes are Stanley Cup champions again, and fans across the Triangle are looking for ways to celebrate this achievement and remember this special team.

Our journalists have been covering the historic playoff run for weeks, and we have many exclusive stories and photos of this journey and championship at [newsobserver.com](http://newsobserver.com).

But we also know there is huge demand for commemorative front pages, special editions and keepsakes, too. We've got you covered.

Be on the lookout for:

**Tuesday:** The print edition will include a commemorative "Perfect Storm!" front page with a celebratory image of Canes captain Jordan Staal. Find it at participating Triangle retailers — including Publix, Harris Teeter, Food Lion and Lowe's Foods — while supplies last.

**Friday:** The print editions of The News & Observer and The Herald-Sun will include a commemorative edition front page and a 12-page special section about the Canes' winning season, with expanded coverage, poster pages, game and player highlights, and championship moments. Subscribers will get it with their print and digital replica editions. Others will be available for purchase at the above participating Triangle retailers while supplies last.

**Sunday:** The print editions will include special news coverage of the Triangle's growth as a pro-sports area, along with additional photos.

**Monday:** The print editions will have coverage and photos of Saturday's Canes championship parade and festivities.

Carolina Hurricanes Stanley Cup collector's book and poster

A special hardcover collector's book with exclusive photos and stories of the championship season is now available to order online at [Canes.ChampsBook.com](http://Canes.ChampsBook.com). Books are expected to ship at the end of August.

Collectible championship posters and framed front pages will be available for order at [Canes.FrontPagePoster.com](http://Canes.FrontPagePoster.com)

Thanks for your support of The News & Observer and, of course, of the championship Canes!

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Profile Image of Thad Ogburn

The News & Observer

919-829-8987

Thad Ogburn is The News & Observer's Managing Editor. A North Carolina native, he's held a variety of editing and leadership roles across the newsroom for the past 35 years. He led The N&O's joint coverage with The Charlotte Observer of the aftermath of Hurricane Helene in North Carolina -- a 2025 Pulitzer Prize finalist for Breaking News Coverage.

News Observer LOADED: 06.16.2026

1394041 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes Stanley Cup merch is nearly gone at Lenovo Center, but fans lined up anyway

Faith Wardwell 4-5 minutes 15/06/2026

A Carolina Pro Shop employee cracked the door open to the Lenovo Center's team store on Monday morning bearing some bad news for the crowd outside.

"There's not a lot left," he told the line of dozens of Hurricanes fans who'd been waiting under the hot June sun. "But we still have hats."

The line didn't budge.

"That's ok," one fan replied. "It's about being here."

Just 12 hours earlier, thousands of fans had packed the stands of the Lenovo Center to watch the Carolina Hurricanes make history in Las Vegas with their first Stanley Cup Championship win in 20 years. On Monday morning, many of those same fans returned to get a piece of that history — no matter how small.

"It's not about the stuff, it's about the memories," said Durham resident Dan Jukic.

The line-up of more than 50 Carolina fans had trailed outside the Lenovo Center merch shop before doors even opened at 10 a.m. And as Caniacs trickled in through the morning, the line always seemed to replenish, gaining about a dozen more fans every half-hour.

Jukic headed to the Carolina Pro Shop on Monday morning with the sole mission of picking up some "Tarps Off" merch he had ordered earlier in the series.

But when he arrived, he instead found what he described as a "party" assembled in front of the stadium, with fans still relishing their team's big win while waiting to buy whatever merch they could get their hands on.

In the spirit of the moment, Jukic said he spent about \$1,000 on his pre-ordered merch and a stack of 10 Stanley Cup hats — a price tag he says is well worth the expense to be a part of the defining moment in Canes history.

"Being able to drive down here and hang out with people from across the Triangle — that's priceless," he said.

Where to buy Carolina Hurricanes Stanley Cup merch

Upon arriving to the team store Monday morning, fans were told Stanley Cup T-shirts had sold out before the store even opened that morning, thanks to purchases after the game Sunday night. But the store promised fans they were anticipating another shipment in the coming days.

Some fans found Stanley Cup merch at other sports shops in the Triangle like Dick's Sporting Goods. Others settled for whatever they could find at the Lenovo Center pro shop, spending hundreds of dollars on hats, flags, general Canes clothing items and other Stanley Cup tchotchkes as keepsakes from the series.

"They came out earlier and said they only had hats left," said Raleigh resident Teia Poulin. "But I'm so happy to just have a hat."

Cary resident TJ Abbott said she made the trip in hopes of buying a Stanley Cup T-shirt. But despite the depleted stock, she didn't leave empty-handed, purchasing a haul of hats, playoff sweatshirts, and a Game 6 puck totaling about \$400 — which included her 20% discount as a season ticket holder.

But to Abbott, that's a small price to memorialize the Hurricanes' feat of finally securing the championship title they'd spent two decades vying for.

"It's hard to put into words," she said, choking back tears. "I was here when we won in '06. And it's awesome."

Carly Goodman walked out of the pro shop Monday with a haul of hats, sweatshirts, pucks and flags, putting to good use the \$450 she had



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initially allotted for tickets to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final in case the series stretched even further. But since the Hurricanes clinched their Stanley Cup win in six games, she said she decided to put the fund to good use.

"I got all the things," she said. "I have to create a shrine."

Goodman said the overwhelming support from fans this season has proved to the NHL and hockey fans everywhere that Raleigh is "different," with the fan base's staunch loyalty on display through the tumultuous Stanley Cup series.

The line of fans waiting for their Stanley Cup merch stretched behind her as she spoke, growing longer by the minute.

"We love the Canes," she said. "That's what Raleigh is all about."

News Observer LOADED: 06.16.2026

1394042 Carolina Hurricanes

Want to welcome the Stanley Cup champions home? RDU shares rules for fans

Esther Frances3-3 minutes 15/06/2026

Want to catch a glimpse of the 2026 Stanley Cup champions as they return home to the Triangle? Here's how you can.

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Vegas Golden Knights on Sunday, delivering to Raleigh the top title and trophy the NHL has to offer.

The team is flying back to Raleigh on Monday and are scheduled to land at Raleigh-Durham International Airport around 7 p.m.

A spokesperson for RDU told The News & Observer that while there is no official gathering for fans due to limited space, those who do come to the airport "must remain in public areas, such as paid parking lots."

"Visitors are reminded not to gather along roadways and to keep traffic moving so airport operations are not blocked or disrupted," according to RDU.

The spokesperson also said people traveling through RDU this evening should allow extra time for travel, and that there may be heavier traffic than usual.

"RDU is excited to welcome the Carolina Hurricanes back to the Triangle after their Stanley Cup victory last night," the statement said. "We encourage Canes fans to celebrate with the team this Saturday at the Stanley Cup Championship Parade in downtown Raleigh."

This story was originally

Published June 15, 2026 at 1:34 PM.

Profile Image of Esther Frances

Esther Frances

The News & Observer

Esther Frances covers politics, the state legislature and lobbying for The News & Observer.

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1394043 Carolina Hurricanes

Here's a list of free food giveaways to celebrate the Canes' Stanley Cup win

Kimberly Tutuska2-2 minutes 15/06/2026

A number of local and chain restaurants are offering free giveaways to celebrate the Carolina Hurricanes winning the Stanley Cup.

This story will be updated as we learn of more giveaways. Share any we missed with ask@newsobserver.com.

Free food in the Triangle

Dunkin': Two Raleigh locations (3817 Western Blvd. or 3209 S. Wilmington St.) will offer \$5 Dunkin' gift cards while supplies last on Saturday, June 20 and Sunday, June 21 to fans wearing local hockey apparel or hometown pride gear, according to Alliance Marketing Partners. One per customer.

Grasshopper Farms: The Knightdale farm and country store will fill any 30-40 oz. tumbler (of any brand) with four scoops of ice cream for \$10. Limit one per person, from Monday, June 15 to Saturday, June 20. Grasshopper Farms is located at 8004 Poole Rd. in Knightdale.

Stuf'd Donuts + Drinks: Get a free Hurricanes doughnut with any espresso drink purchase on Monday, June 15, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Stuf'd is located at 300 N. Main St. in Holly Springs.

Profile Image of Kimberly Cataudella Tutuska

The News & Observer

919-419-6630

Kimberly Tutuska (she/her) is the editor of North Carolina's service journalism team.

News Observer LOADED: 06.16.2026

1394044 Carolina Hurricanes

When will the Stanley Cup come to Raleigh? How can you see it?

Anna Roman4-5 minutes 15/06/2026

The Stanley Cup will most likely be at the championship celebration at 11 a.m. June 20.

Every Carolina Hurricanes player and staff member will receive 24 hours with the Cup.

The Stanley Cup weighs 34.5 pounds and is 35.25 inches tall, per the Hockey Hall of Fame.

The Carolina Hurricanes return to Raleigh and North Carolina as Stanley Cup Final champions, securing the Stanley Cup for the first time in 20 years.

It's only the second win for the hockey franchise, something some long-time fans have dreamt about the last Canes win in 2006.

But when will Carolina Hurricane fans be able to see the Stanley Cup?

Details about post-championship celebrations and traditions are below. This article will be updated as more information becomes available.

The best chance to see the cup will likely be during the championship celebration and parade at 11 a.m. Saturday, June 20, in downtown Raleigh, The News & Observer previously reported.



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Throughout the summer, every Carolina Hurricanes players and staff member will get 24 hours with the cup, a tradition that began in 1995, according to the NHL. While many people bring the cup to their hometowns, there is a chance players or staff members may have the cup around town.

The Carolina Hurricanes have not responded to questions about other events or chances to see the cup as of 1 p.m. Monday.

Can you touch the Stanley Cup?

Many current or aspiring NHL players refuse to touch the cup believing they'll be cursed to never win a championship if they touch the cup before winning, according to the NHL. While some fans follow the same tradition, fans have been allowed to touch the Stanley Cup.

The Stanley Cup has a bodyguard, known as The Keeper of the Cup, and is often seen holding the cup with white gloves.

However, it is tradition that only those who have won the Stanley Cup can hoist it over their head, according to the NHL.

Who hoisted the Stanley Cup for the Hurricanes?

Captain Jordan Staal first hoisted the Stanley Cup during the post-game celebration on the ice, passing it goalie Frederik Andersen. The 13-year NHL veteran started in the first 16 games before Brandon Bussi was brought in during Game 3 between the Knights and Canes, The News & Observer previously reported.

Who won the Conn Smythe Trophy?

Long-time captain Jordan Staal was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy as the NHL playoff MVP, the oldest player to win that trophy.

How heavy is the Stanley Cup?

The Stanley Cup, made of silver and nickel alloy, weighs 34.5 pounds and nearly 3 feet tall at 35.25 inches, according to the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Profile Image of Anna Roman

The News & Observer

919-829-4807

Anna Roman is a service journalism reporter for the News & Observer. She has previously covered city government, crime and business for newspapers across North Carolina and received many North Carolina Press Association awards, including first place for investigative reporting.

News Observer LOADED: 06.16.2026

1394045 Carolina Hurricanes

What's next for Hurricanes' owner? 'Our expectations will be a little like this'

Chip Alexander8-10 minutes 15/06/2026

Tom Dundon had never owned a major league sports team, but knew people in Dallas who did.

Mark Cuban, for one. He was owner of the Dallas Mavericks and seemed to have fun with it, even if he was a bit outspoken and controversial at times.

Dundon had the money; he's a billionaire. He had the interest. Peter Karmanos was looking to sell his majority interest in the Carolina Hurricanes. Why not an NHL team?

That was in 2018. Dundon became the new Hurricanes owner and began shaking things up all through the organization, asking questions, making changes.

His goal: win a Stanley Cup.

The Hurricanes did that Sunday in Las Vegas, vanquishing the Vegas Golden Knights 3-0 to close out the Stanley Cup Final in six games for the franchise's second Cup. And there was Dundon on the ice among all the players and their families, with the look of a very happy, satisfied man.

The first thing Dundon did as owner was promote Rod Brind'Amour to head coach. He didn't pay him a lot by NHL standards, but gave the Canes' former captain the chance to be the head guy.

"I've got to give him a lot of credit for this whole thing," Brind'Amour said Sunday. "Number one, he gave me the opportunity, I wouldn't be sitting here without that. His commitment to trying to build a winner was there. He went out and got us the players and here we are."

Dundon, in turn, has no doubt that he made the right choice, the right decision in turning over the team to Brind'Amour, who had been an assistant coach, but never a head coach.

"I can't conceive of success without him," Dundon said Sunday. "He is literally the most important thing we have in Carolina. He was proud of the Hurricanes when nobody else was. The reason I hired him was he loved the Hurricanes."

"Now he keeps it every day in a way that I know I can be proud and not have to worry. Nobody has to worry about how we're going to play and if we're going to have a chance to win and how he's going to treat people. So we're very lucky."

Dundon quickly realized that to be a Stanley Cup contender, a team needed to spend to the NHL's salary cap. He wanted to put money into the talent on the ice, even if it meant cutting back on other things, which bruised some feelings along the way.

When Eric Tulsky was named Canes general manager, he was given approval by the boss to "swing for the fences" and pursue high-price talent such as Jake Guentzel of the Pittsburgh Penguins or Mikko Rantanen from the Colorado Avalanche.

Neither played for Canes for long, but the deals surrounding Rantanen allowed the Canes to bring in Logan Stankoven and Taylor Hall. Who knew that they'd wind up on a line together with Jackson Blake — Stankoven at center — and become a driving force in the push for the Cup?

Dundon, who has a Type-A personality, has always been one to get antsy and edgy when watching his team play, and especially on the road. He said his stress level did not abate Sunday until Nikolaj Ehlers' empty net goal gave the Canes a 3-0 lead with 1:08 left in regulation.

"It's a miserable thing," Dundon said. "Until that empty-netter goes in, I can't have any joy."

"That was about the first time I had true happiness in a couple of months, just worrying about the results. We've been there for a while, we just didn't get the results. I think we've had teams good enough to win for a while."

And what about next season? How about an encore, he was asked, bringing another grin.

"I think the team will be pretty similar next year," he said. "Our expectations will be a little like this."

The 2026 Stanley Cup Champion Carolina Hurricanes, pose for a team photo following their 3-0 victory over Vegas in Game 6 on Sunday, June 14, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.



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The 2026 Stanley Cup Champion Carolina Hurricanes, pose for a team photo following their 3-0 victory over Vegas in Game 6 on Sunday, June 14, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett  
rwillett@newsobserver.com

Dundon has a lot on his plate, which he enjoys. Once the sports franchise neophyte, and considered something of a maverick, he now owns the Hurricanes and the NBA's Portland Trailblazers. He wants to be a part of the effort to bring Major League Baseball to the Triangle.

Dundon is spearheading the building of an entertainment district outside the Lenovo Center, a development that could cost \$3 billion or more.

Carolina Hurricanes fans celebrate the team's Stanley Cup victory over the Vegas Golden Knights during a watch party outside the Lenovo Center on Sunday, June 14, 2026, in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes fans celebrate the team's Stanley Cup victory over the Vegas Golden Knights during a watch party outside the Lenovo Center on Sunday, June 14, 2026, in Raleigh, N.C. Kaitlin McKeown  
kmckeown@newsobserver.com

When Dundon first took over the Hurricanes, home attendance was weak. Winning games helped. Becoming a perennial playoff team helped even more, and the team now sells out its games. Dundon also pushed for achieved another goal of hosting an outdoor game to N.C. State's Carter-Finley Stadium, and it was hugely successful.

"The big thing is when you win, everybody likes each other and that's all I wanted," Dundon said. "I wanted a team you could be proud of and count on every day."

This story was originally

Published June 15, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

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

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1394046 Carolina Hurricanes

A 'surreal' night with 'a cherry on top' for Canes fans who have waited for years

Faith Wardwell, Esther Frances, Josh Shaffer, Jane Winik Sartwell15-19 minutes 15/06/2026

The Lenovo Center erupted in cheers as the video board showed Brandon Bussi hoist the Stanley Cup above his shoulders from the ice in Las Vegas.

Trey and Brady Sanders said when they heard Bussi was suiting up as the team's starting goalie again for Game 6, they knew they could breathe easy.

"It was the cherry on top," Brady Sanders said.

It's been a long road for the father and son since they joined the Hurricanes fanbase in 2000, with only one Stanley Cup win to show for the past two decades.

A family united around love of the Canes

For one Raleigh family, a Carolina Hurricanes Stanley Cup marks a new chapter in family history.

In 2006, David Thome was sitting with his kids on the couch when the Carolina Hurricanes won the Stanley Cup. They cheered ecstatically — though they don't even remember it now. They were then four and six years old.

The next year, Thome took his kids, then five and seven, to a Canes game, a match they won 8-2 against the Islanders. They sat in nosebleed seats. His kids have been devout fans ever since.

His daughter Anna is a Hurricanes season ticket holder — a luxury she springs for even with her job as a schoolteacher, Thome said.

Tonight, Anna is watching from inside Lenovo while his son watches from outside. Thome himself is watching from Red Hat Amphitheater.

Thome said this win is "just so exciting" for his Thome family.

"This is a Brind'Amour team," he said.

— Jane Winik Sartwell

Victory for an NC State fan

Miles Luginbuhl, a 19-year-old NC State superfan, isn't used to winning championships, he said. That's what makes this moment even more special.

"This is just great," he said, from his seat next to his mother, Sarah, at Red Hat Amphitheater on Sunday night.

— Jane Winik Sartwell

A 'surreal' moment in an unwashed jersey

Tim Smith stood at the fringes of a crowd outside the Lenovo Center wearing a red Hurricanes jersey that he hadn't washed since 2002. He hadn't touched the jersey because he didn't want to rub off the luck that had gotten the Hurricanes inches away from a championship title before they fell to the Detroit Red Wings in the series.

"It's still got nacho cheese stains," Smith said.

For Smith and his wife Kim, the Hurricanes are a part of their story. The pair were gifted tickets to a game for their third date about 30 years ago and sat right behind the glass. They fell in love — with each other and the team.

Now, Smith said he's in disbelief seeing the team he's loved for decades be crowned the Stanley Cup Champions.

"It's surreal," he said.

— Faith Wardwell

'The icing on the cake'

When Jen and Phillip Ragain moved to Raleigh from Houston three years ago, they were in search of a sports community. They found the Hurricanes. They feel like they couldn't have been more lucky.

"We already knew we would love Raleigh," Jen said. "But this is the icing on the cake — the good icing, I mean."

They watched Sunday night from Red Hat, while their son, 17, looked on from a seat at Lenovo, she said. She hopes that the world will see what a great sports town Raleigh is, and that one day Major League Baseball might take notice.

— Jane Winik Sartwell

An early Monday meeting seems unlikely



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Strangers bumped fists and embraced on Glenwood Avenue. Fans leaned out of car windows while stopped at traffic lights and screamed themselves red-faced slapping five with whoever walked past.

As she walked to her car, one fan spoke into her phone, "Let's cancel it. Nobody is going to be there at 9 tomorrow. Everybody's celebrating."

— Josh Shaffer

Published June 15, 2026 at 1:07 AM.

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1394047 Carolina Hurricanes

At long last, Hurricanes' core group's effort is validated with a Stanley Cup

Justin Pelletier 7-9 minutes 15/06/2026

Only in professional sports can 14 years feel like a lifetime.

Such was the feeling for Jaccob Slavin, the longest tenured Hurricanes skater on this 2026 Stanley Cup Champion team after Jordan Staal.

Staal — who had already won a Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh — has been with the Hurricanes for 14 years, as well, after a trade in 2012.

Sebastian Aho's "forever" was more like 11 years.

Those three players remain on the Hurricanes' roster from the "before" times — before Tom Dundon assumed ownership of the team; before Rod Brind'Amour was named the head coach.

Add in Jordan Martinook and Andrei Svechnikov, who joined the Canes the same season as Brind'Amour, and that core five has been through a lot with this franchise.

And they're not shy about reminiscing, especially in the aftermath of an historic win.

"It's been a long wait, a lot of disappointment, a lot of all kinds of feelings not being able to go all the way," Aho said frankly as the minutes ticked from Sunday night into Monday morning. "Honestly, the wait and the work is all worth it. It's unbelievable."

Slavin, ever pensive and thoughtful in his answers, paused his family celebration as his children bounced along around the ice with him.

"Each season brings its own story, right?" Slavin said, taking a moment to consider his answer. "We definitely had close calls, close calls, close calls, and now to finally get over that hump and be here, and get the job done, it's hard, but at the same time, it's awesome."

Other than Staal, Slavin has put in the most time with the Hurricanes of any player. He remembers well playing in front of half-empty arenas, and playing only 82 games a year before watching the playoffs from home.

"It's been a long time coming," Staal said. "The first couple years, we couldn't make playoffs, couldn't fill the stands, and now we're here, and we got the Cup, we got the job done. There's so many amazing people in our organization that got it to be at this point."

One of those people within the organization that's had plenty to do with its championship rise is general manager Eric Tulsy, who began with the Canes in ... 2014. He ascended from part-time analytics consultant to general manager over 10 years, and his fingerprints are all over this team's constitution.

"It's been a long time coming," Tulsy said Sunday. "This team has been built the right way for a long time, and just gotten better and better year after year and we finally got where we wanted to be."

Martinook, often called a "glue" player, or a "heart-and-soul" player by his teammates and coaches, came to Carolina from an Arizona organization that struggled to achieve success in the postseason. All Carolina has done since Martinook arrived is make the playoffs — and make deep runs — only to fall just shy of the ultimate goal — a Stanley Cup championship.

"We're over the hump now, right?" Martinook said, a wide smile gleaming through months of beard growth.

"It just shows sometimes, you've got to fail to succeed," Martinook added. "Obviously we wish we would have won it more, but it doesn't matter, we won it this year, and that's all that matters."

The trick to the Canes' ultimate success, of course, was blending the Canes' core and the team's newcomers, a job tasked to Brind'Amour. Under his tutelage, the Hurricanes finally reached the top — together.

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour embraces left wing Taylor Hall (71) during the celebration following a 3-0 victory over Vegas in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Sunday, June 14, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, N

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour embraces left wing Taylor Hall (71) during the celebration following a 3-0 victory over Vegas in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Sunday, June 14, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, N Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

"It takes everyone," Brind'Amour said. "And we are a family. It's a cliché, but I'm telling you, this is what we have here. We built something really special, and it's been there for a long time. It just never quite was able to crack through, and finally we did here."

The next question — after the team celebrates, of course — is whether the Canes can add to the string of recent repeat Stanley Cup champions, add to the legacy this team — this core group — has established in Raleigh.

"Once you get a taste, and it hasn't really even sunk in yet and I haven't even tasted it yet," Martinook said. "We're going to celebrate our (butts) off and then regroup."

Even Tulsy, who is always saying the team is "always looking to get better," had an addendum to his reply Sunday:

"This is a hell of a team, it just is," Tulsy said. "We're always looking to get better, but it's an incredible team where it is now."

This story was originally

Published June 15, 2026 at 7:00 AM.

Profile Image of Justin Pelletier

Justin Pelletier

The News & Observer

Justin is a 25-year veteran sports journalist with stops in Lewiston, Maine (Sun Journal), and Boston (Boston Herald). A proud husband, and father of twin girls, Pelletier is a Boston University graduate and member of the esteemed Jack Falla sportswriting mafia. He has earned dozens of state and national sportswriting and editing awards covering preps, colleges and professional leagues.

News Observer LOADED: 06.16.2026

1394048 Carolina Hurricanes



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Life comes full circle as Jordan Staal wins a Stanley Cup with Hurricanes

Chip Alexander 8-10 minutes 15/06/2026

When he first won the Stanley Cup, Jordan Staal was just 20, single, the big kid from Thunder Bay, Ontario, who had two older brothers playing in the NHL.

His oldest brother, Eric, also had a Cup ring, winning with the Carolina Hurricanes in 2006.

A first-round draft choice by the Pittsburgh Penguins that year, the second overall pick, Jordan Staal soon had Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin as his teammates. Three years later, he had his ring and envisioned more to follow. Why not?

And then he was traded. To the Hurricanes. It was announced in Pittsburgh, where the 2012 draft was being held and quickly overshadowed anything that happened there.

It came on his wedding day in June, in Thunder Bay, surrounded by Crosby, Malkin and a host of other Pens teammates.

Life changed for Jordan Staal. It would be challenging, but also enriching. Flash forward.

There he was Sunday night in Las Vegas. On Staal's right side in the interview room at T-Mobile Arena was the Conn Smythe Trophy, given to the Stanley Cup playoffs MVP. That belonged to him, and at 37 he was the oldest to win it. On his left were his three young children, all playing and smiling while their dad talked about the championship.

Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal (11) accepts the Stanley Cup, after defeating the Vegas Golden Knights 3-0 in Game 6, on Sunday, June 14, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal (11) accepts the Stanley Cup, after defeating the Vegas Golden Knights 3-0 in Game 6, on Sunday, June 14, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

The Stanley Cup? Staal, the captain, was the first to raise it Sunday after the Canes polished off the Vegas Golden Knights, finishing off the Cup Final with a 3-0 victory in Game 6 at T-Mobile Arena.

"It's just been amazing to be able to build something like this," Staal said.

A plan that went awry

After the trade to Carolina, which left then-Pens coach Dan Bylsma blinking back tears talking about losing his big center, Jordan Staal wanted to join Eric in bringing a second title to the Hurricanes. That didn't happen. Eric Staal later was traded, but Jordan soldiered on.

"The plan was to do it together," Staal said. "It didn't work out, but that's life, sometimes."

Again, things changed. Tom Dundon became the team owner. Rod Brind'Amour became the head coach. After Justin Williams retired, Jordan Staal was named the new team captain, just as Eric had been.

Brind'Amour leaned on him, heavily. His postgame hug with Staal spoke volumes.

"I'm happy I stuck around," Staal said. "I believed in the culture, believed in what we were trying to build in Carolina. It's an amazing feeling to build something and then top it off with something like this."

Staal topped it off by scoring six goals in the series. He was a constant presence in front of the Vegas net and goalie Carter Hart, to the point Vegas coach John Tortorella said Staal was killing the Golden Knights.

"To come out and do what he did in the Stanley Cup Final, you can't put into words what he means to this team," forward Jordan Martinook said. "He's been through the lows here and now he's lifting it above his head."

And like Bylsma in 2012, Brind'Amour seemed almost at the point of tearing up Sunday talking about him, what he has meant to this team, this organization.

"I've been saying this forever, I don't know where we'd be without him," Brind'Amour said. "I put him out there every night against the best player, every night every shift, and we're winning all the time. Yeah, we didn't win it all until now, but we were right there every year, and it's because of a guy like that."

"I'm glad for him. I've seen him grind it out for 14 years, and never waver. It doesn't always work out, as we know. But it's nice to see the good guys get one."

Staal, and the core, get their Cup

And not just Staal. Brind'Amour also meant players such as Jacob Slavin, Sebastian Aho and Jordan Martinook. They've been a part of the team's core leadership group for years, for their head coach. For them, the Cup was a first, and after a long fight to get it.

And there's forward Taylor Hall, a former No. 1 overall pick, who is with his seventh NHL team. And goalie Frederik Andersen, who played well but also suffered through the team's playoff disappointments but was a vital part of the Canes getting to the Cup Final this year.

"I wanted to win that thing so bad, but I wanted to win so much more for everybody else in that room and how they deserved it and how hard we worked," he said. "It gives me chills now we pulled it off."

Andersen started the first 16 games before Brind'Amour brought in Brandon Bussi in the third period of Game 3. Brind'Amour said Sunday that was Andersen was "not at 100 percent" during the Cup Final and Andersen said he suffered a slight injury in Game 2.

After lifting the Cup first, Staal next handed it to Andersen, at 36 an NHL veteran of 13 years.

"Obviously he's been grinding the longest, and he got us going in the playoffs," Staal said. "I figured he'd be a great start."

Staal set the tone that ended with the ultimate victory

With the interview session ending, one of Staal's daughters raised her hand to ask a question, then pulled the mic over to the end of the podium.

"We're going to go back to the first game, why did you punch that guy?" Abigail said.

Staal smiled, but he knew. In the first playoff game, against the Ottawa Senators, Staal was challenged to a fight by Sens captain Brady Tkachuk after the opening faceoff. Staal obliged, and won. The tone for the playoffs was set.

Staal smiled Sunday, saying, "I'll answer that later."

Tkachuk and everyone else in the Canes' way already knew the answer: Staal and the Hurricanes were ready for every challenge on their way to the Stanley Cup.

This story was originally

Published June 15, 2026 at 6:45 AM.

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

In more than 40 years at The N&O, Chip Alexander has covered the N.C. State, UNC, Duke and East Carolina beats, and now is in his 15th season on the Carolina Hurricanes beat. Alexander, who has won numerous writing awards at the state and national level, covered the



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Hurricanes' move to North Carolina in 1997 and was a part of The N&O's coverage of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup run.

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1394049 Carolina Hurricanes

Inside Carolina's Stanley Cup celebration: An unlikely hero, brotherly love and a 'storybook' ending

Michael Russo, Chris Johnston 17-21 minutes 15/06/2026

**LAS VEGAS** — After the Carolina Hurricanes finished off a march to the Stanley Cup that was as clinical as it was cathartic, the emotions started bubbling over as soon as Jordan Staal wrapped his big paws around its silver edges.

The Hurricanes captain let out a guttural roar while thrusting it into the air, culminating a 17-year wait for him that included 14 seasons with Carolina. The first teammate Staal skated towards hadn't even been in uniform for Sunday's series-clinching 3-0 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights.

Instead Frederik Andersen had found himself "nervously shaking" in the dressing room for three and a half games while watching Brandon Bussi come in to close out the series in his place. Andersen had tweaked his knee during a Game 2 win over Vegas and was pulled during the second intermission of Game 3. But everything he contributed during the 12-1 run that got the Hurricanes to the final, not to mention the years of blood and tears spent before it, wasn't forgotten.

"He's been grinding the longest," Staal said. "He got us going in the playoffs. ... Figured he'd be a great start (to give the Cup to first).

"I wanted to win that thing so bad, but I wanted to win so much more for everyone else in that room, and how much they deserved it, and how hard they've all worked, and it just gives me chills that we were able to pull it off for each other."

Andersen had no idea it was coming.

The 36-year-old Dane had been riding an emotional roller coaster in recent weeks, starting with the death of his longtime agent and close friend Claude Lemieux on May 28, to reaching his first Stanley Cup Final, to getting injured in the middle of this series.

Finally, as he looked skyward with the Cup over his head, he could exhale.

"I've always heard people say it's heavier than you think, but it didn't feel too bad," said Andersen. "It felt good. It felt right."

He was unsure whether he was dreaming.

His journey to this heartfelt celebration mirrored that of an organization that took 20 years to get back to the NHL's summit. Once upon a time, Andersen was a seventh-round draft pick by Carolina in 2010, but chose not to sign with the team and re-entered the draft. He went to Anaheim in 2012, established himself as a NHL regular and got traded to Toronto for five seasons before he signed with the Hurricanes as a free agent in 2021.

He continued to be tested by blood clots and a knee surgery, but even after watching the Cup clincher in workout gear, he could take heart in knowing that there would be no championship parade in Raleigh this spring without him.

Staal made sure that wasn't forgotten by singling Andersen out for the first Cup pass.

"I mean, it means we're a group that we appreciate everyone here and what we've been through," said Andersen. "And I think that speaks to that."

Staal was first. Andersen was second.

And their coach, their former 2006 Stanley Cup-winning captain, the beloved Rod Brind'Amour, received it last.

When Brind'Amour finally got his hands back on the Cup for the first time in 20 years, he playfully tossed it in the air and gave it a bear hug. Someone who spends less time in the gym would likely have botched that maneuver.

Not Rod.

"You don't even know what you're thinking at that point," he said. "This is why this is the most special trophy in the world. No. 1, how you have to acquire it, what goes into it, and then what it means to everyone because they know. They know all of the sacrifice that everybody has put in and you just see it pouring out of everybody.

"It's the greatest thing in the world."

Brandon Bussi and his fiancée, Mary Raclawski, are interviewed postgame by NHL Network's Jason Demers and Cory Schneider. (Michael Russo / The Athletic)

Bussi, the unexpected hero

As Mary Raclawski stared at her fiancé, tears came to her eyes.

A week ago, nobody could have envisioned Bussi would become a Stanley Cup hero — not even Raclawski, his biggest supporter.

Undrafted, Bussi was thrust into action when Andersen got hurt earlier in the series, then started Games 4, 5 and 6 and won them all, including becoming the third goaltender in NHL history and first since 1937 to record a Stanley Cup-clinching shutout during their first NHL season.

"Oh my gosh. I'm so emotional right now," said Raclawski, who will marry Bussi next month, in an interview with The Athletic. "I can't even comprehend what is happening. It's been such a long road here for him, and he's never given up, never doubted himself. And I'm just ... I can't believe we're standing here today celebrating him and his team. I'm so proud of all of them."

Bussi shared the ice with his proud parents, Lisa and Robert, who hustled to Las Vegas from the East Coast when they found out he was starting in Game 4. Family and friends on the ice appropriately wore hats labeled with what has been Bussi's longtime motto, "HOUSE MONEY," a Vegas term that works so well for him. These hats are available for purchase, with all proceeds going to The Autism Society of North Carolina and Pucks for Autism.

"It's something that he's not only played by but lived by, and it's betting on yourself, knowing that you're exactly where you're supposed to be in that moment, and you've earned the right to be where you are, and just be confident," Raclawski said. "And I mean, they killed it tonight.

"He amazes me every single day. He's taught me so much. He's been very even-keeled throughout this whole process, and I cannot wait to celebrate, because we haven't really celebrated throughout this whole season, because it's always on to the next. So I just have no words. I am so excited, and these guys deserve this so much, and they work so hard for this, and their families have sacrificed so much, and it's a blessing."

Back in October, the Florida Panthers placed Bussi on waivers. He and Raclawski were driving two separate cars from South Florida to Charlotte, N.C., because he thought he was being sent to Florida's AHL affiliate.



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On the road for 10 hours, Bussi got a call from his agent telling him he was claimed by Carolina. Bussi called his fiancée and told her they needed to pull over. They stopped at a gas station.

"Our entire lives changed from that point on," Raclawski said.

"The next thing you know, the following day I'm in Raleigh and I'm on the opening-night roster," Bussi said.

And now he's a Stanley Cup champion.

"It still hasn't hit me just yet," Bussi said, still on the ice more than an hour after that clock hit zero. "I'm losing my voice and I really need to pee."

"It's kind of funny that this has happened again 20 years later," said Eric Staal, left, who was the Canes' leading scorer when they won their first Cup in 2006. (Michael Russo / The Athletic)

The Staals' brotherly love

The Zamboni entrance opened. Eric, Marc and Jared Staal sprinted to their brother Jordan. Fired up, the four brothers embraced wildly.

Eric Staal is a Canes legend. Twenty years ago, he was their leading scorer when they won their first Cup. His No. 12 hangs from the rafters at Lenovo Center. He fired up the home crowd by sounding the siren in advance of Game 1.

"There's a lot of people that have grown up and been around the Carolinas, where they don't really know the team without a Staal on it," Eric Staal said. "So it's kind of funny that this has happened again 20 years later, and obviously Jordan at the front of it, it's super, super unbelievable. Like it really is."

"It's just kind of one of those storybook kind of things. And he was a horse. He was unreal the whole playoff, and the whole year, and the whole last however many years he's been there. He's just grinded from Day One, and he deserves it."

What a moment for the Staal family □ [pic.twitter.com/WzO7chpPRm](https://pic.twitter.com/WzO7chpPRm)

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) June 15, 2026

Eric was traded to the Rangers 10 years ago. Jordan could have left, had he wanted.

But after becoming the oldest player in history to win the Conn Smythe Trophy, Jordan is "happy I stuck around."

"I wanted to do it with him," Staal told The Athletic. "That was the plan. And to have everyone here, all my brothers supporting me, it's amazing. And they are a massive reason why I'm standing here today. It's my brothers, my wife, my kids, and my parents, and all my support systems. And Eric's a massive part of that. He believed in me right from the start, and I wanted to do it with him. It didn't work out, but I'm glad we pulled it out."

Marc Staal played 17 years in the NHL, but he never won the Cup in his two trips to the final.

"It's been a long road for all of us," he said. "I mean, we've all been blessed to play a very long time, and then for him to be able to do this at where he's at in his career, and how much he's invested into this team, to watch him do it, it's very special, obviously, for all of us."

Jackson Blake could not contain his emotions when his dad, Jason, grabbed him. (Michael Russo / The Athletic)

A father-son bear hug

Jason Blake couldn't wait to embrace his son Jackson, who scored Carolina's second goal Sunday night.

Jason played 13 years in the NHL and never got out of the first round. So to see his 22-year-old son achieve this milestone in just his second season had Jason bawling on the ice.

"It's a dream come true, man," Jason Blake told The Athletic. "I played in this league for a long time. To be able to do what he did, and the magnitude he did it is some of the most special times in my life. You always want your kids to be better than you, and what he's done throughout the playoffs and throughout the year, and just as a man, he's just an unbelievable kid. He's the kindest human being I've ever met. I couldn't be more proud of him."

Jackson couldn't hold it together when his dad grabbed him.

"You know, he's been there for me my whole life, on and off the ice, and to see him just let loose, honestly, I didn't think I was gonna cry or anything, but it's so emotional, because this is why you grind, this is why you have those summer workouts, this is why you play the game," Jackson said. "It's been a really long year, honestly. It's June 14th — it's long. But it's so worth it, and to have moments like that, and to do it for my family, and do it for these guys, it's awesome."

Blake was part of a line with Taylor Hall and Logan Stankoven that combined for 25 goals and 55 points in 19 playoff games.

"It's a testament to their line, and it's a testament to Rod, to be honest with you, to put trust in those guys," Jason Blake said. "Jackson and Logan are very young players, and obviously I played against Hall back in the day. He's the veteran on the line, and the way that he's carried himself through that line, and did everything that he could to help these kids out, and they played most of the year together, I couldn't be more proud, more happy. Everything in my life, I mean, this is like the epitome of everything right now."

Jackson had the Cup given to him by fellow Minnesotan Mikey Reilly.

"That's what you dream of," Jackson said. "When I saw it before Game 1, I was like, 'I want to win that thing so bad,' because I've never really seen it in person, honestly. To finally do it, and to lift it and give it a kiss, it's storybook."

"It's worth it. I don't care if we have training camp in a week. It's worth it."

Ehlers forgiven by his pops

On the same ice surface where Lars Eller became the first Danish-born Stanley Cup champion by scoring the winning goal for the Washington Capitals in 2018, countryman Nikolaj Ehlers made sure he and Andersen became the next Danes to win the Cup by icing this final. He intercepted a pass in the neutral zone and hit the empty net at 18:52 before looking into the stands with a look of bewilderment on his face.

That touched off a celebration that would eventually spill onto the Las Vegas Strip. It was a moment Ehlers will never forget.

"It was insane," he said. "You know, 3-0 with (1:08) left, that should do it. I turned the corner and I was celebrating as hard as I could. I look up and I see my parents, my sister, my brother and my nephew up there and I kind of stopped."

Almost an hour later, Ehlers still had tears in his eyes.

He was among multiple Hurricanes who took up the family business, and pushed the dream further than his father, Heinz, the first Dane ever drafted by a NHL team. Heinz Ehlers never made it in North America after being drafted 188th overall by the New York Rangers in 1984, but he's been an ever-present figure in Nikolaj's career — so much so that he had joked he was afraid to see his dad after Game 5, when he took two delay-of-game penalties by accidentally clearing the puck over the glass.

"He didn't watch the last three minutes of the last game so I think it means a lot," said Ehlers. "He's usually not like that. He leaves when I



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don't play well, but he was nervous. My dad has been playing since he was three years old and started coaching when he was 38, and he's still coaching. So hockey is his life as well. It's our whole family's life."

A special journey for Hall

Taylor Hall traveled a long road from being called to the draft stage with the first overall pick in 2010 by the Edmonton Oilers to being crowned a champion. The 34-year-old is on his seventh team and sits 11 games shy of 1,000 — making the gesture from teammate Sebastian Aho during the Cup pass line even sweeter.

Andersen attempted to hand the trophy to Aho in the third spot, only to see him step aside and send Hall out instead.

"Yeah, he's the best," Hall said. "Those guys are amazing. The guys that have been here for seven, eight years, that really built this and put a lot of work in to make this a great place to play. And I'm so happy for those guys. They did the work that allowed someone like me to come in and be successful, and I'm so happy for them."

Aho didn't have an explanation for the gesture. He said his instincts took over in the moment and he went with them.

It didn't go unnoticed by his father, Harri, a former defenseman in the Finnish pro league who now serves as the general manager of SaiPa.

"Yeah, that shows something," said Harri Aho. "He's humble. He's very quiet, hard-working and competitive. A nice person."

The kind of guy you win with.

Just like Hall, who led the Hurricanes in scoring in the playoffs with 19 points. Why did this work?

"I think the way we play was a good fit," he said. "We skate a lot, we skate hard, we put pressure on teams, you know, we're always at the front of our skates, and just the group. I mean, everyone says they have a tight-knit group, but it really is that way here. It's amazing, just being at dinner last night with the guys, it's just special, it's so cool, and we'll always be linked together."

"I couldn't ask for a better group of guys to share it with," Seth Jarvis said of his childhood friends. (Michael Russo / The Athletic)

Jarvis parties with his pals

Seth Jarvis' friends are well-known at this point.

His childhood friends from Winnipeg trekked to the 4 Nations Face-Off in Montreal and Boston and traveled all the way to Milan for the Olympics. So naturally they became famous during this final going between Raleigh and Vegas.

Jarvis, sitting on the ice along the boards in a pile of confetti, talked with reporters as his buddies partied by his side.

"I'm not the only Stanley Cup champion here," Jarvis said. "All these guys are. They've been through everything with me. To enjoy this moment with them, I couldn't ask for a better group of guys to share it with."

Buddy Bryan Hanna added, "Congratulations to us? Congratulations to him. We wouldn't miss this for the world."

Like Hall, Jarvis said of him and his teammates, "Now we're champions forever. When you get the Cup up there (over his head), it's weightless. Everything pours out. It's the most incredible feeling in the world."

A special time for Miller

After Carolina's Eastern Conference final win over the Montreal Canadiens, K'Andre Miller gave us one of the most memorable moments of the postseason. Cameras captured him on the bench at Lenovo Center, cradling his newborn, Kashton, and basking in the glow.

Kashton didn't make the trip to Las Vegas, but he was still on Miller's mind.

"He's back in Carolina right now, and he gets to see Daddy in a few days," Miller said. "He's been awesome. I can't wait to get back home to Minnesota and get to celebrate with him and hopefully see if he fits in the Cup."

Tulsky cool as a cucumber

After the game, Brind'Amour raved about some of the additions over the past few years.

Eric Tulsky has spent the past two years methodically reshaping Carolina's roster, turning organizational depth and draft capital into immediate impact. His acquisition of Miller, the addition of Bussi and the signing of Ehlers came after he landed both Hall and Stankoven last season and made the Hurricanes roster younger, deeper and more skilled than the one he inherited.

"We did what worked for us," said Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky, who will soon turn his attention to next season. (Michael Russo / The Athletic)

"It's a long and winding road," the Hurricanes' shockingly cool, calm and very much collected general manager said on the ice ... not exactly looking like a man that just reached the pinnacle. "Never thought I would end up here. Still don't really understand how it happened, but thrilled to be here.

"I think every team is different. It's hard to copy what anyone else does. We did what worked for us and it brought us where we wanted to be."

Tulsky vows he won't be in the office Monday morning, but it won't take long for him to turn his attention to next season.

"We're always trying to make the team better, no matter how good we are," he said. "We're going to exit this year, having had an incredible year, and starting tomorrow, the question will be, 'How will we make the team better?'"

— Sean Gentile contributed to this report.

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1394050 Carolina Hurricanes

Rod Brind'Amour leads the Hurricanes to a Stanley Cup — this time from behind the bench

Pierre LeBrun10-13 minutes 15/06/2026

LAS VEGAS — Jordan Martinook sought out someone in particular as the Carolina Hurricanes' Stanley Cup celebrations began.

"I was the first guy to give him a hug," Martinook said as his teammates and family rejoiced all over the T-Mobile Arena ice surface Sunday night. "He's been in my corner since I got here. He's the reason I've stuck around as long as I have. There's times I didn't know if I was going to stay and then he gets on the phone and tells me, 'You can't leave.' I couldn't imagine not being on this team. And the fact we got it done, he's the best coach I've ever had. I'm so happy for him."

Toe Blake with Montreal, Hap Day with Toronto and Cooney Weiland with Boston are the only other people in NHL history to both captain and coach the same organization to a Stanley Cup.

Welcome to that elite club, Rod Brind'Amour.

"It's still awesome, it's just as awesome," Brind'Amour said at his postgame news conference, a Stanley Cup champions scarf draped



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around his neck. "But as a player it was a little different, because I had dreamt of winning the Cup my whole life so that was like a piano had come off my back. This time around, I wanted it for the group. I wanted them to feel what it's like. I wanted it so bad for them.

"To watch them finally get it, and when I was grabbing (the Cup), just to see the look on their faces, it's priceless, because you knew how happy they were for me. It was the other way around for me. I'll never forget that."

To a player, the Hurricanes all credit one person especially for their Stanley Cup dreams coming true Sunday night after a 3-0 win in Game 6 ended the series with the Vegas Golden Knights.

"I can't say enough," Carolina winger Seth Jarvis, tears of joy filling his eyes during the celebrations, said of his head coach. "He's lived it as a player, he's been through it, he's lifted it, and now to lift it as a coach, we have the utmost respect for him. Everything he says goes. He's a big reason why we won."

That compiled knowledge as a star player, as a captain, and then as a coach — it's all built up to how Brind'Amour approaches his craft today.

"He's played before, so he understands the feel of a team and looking across the room and looking in everyone's eyes and understanding that they need to bring it, and you need to bring it for them," said Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal. "He understands that. The motivation to run through a wall for him is there."

A coach's first Stanley Cup is often a long journey, as we saw with Paul Maurice two years ago. Maurice's Florida Panthers beat Brind'Amour's Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference final last year as well as in 2023. Maurice passed on the baton as Cup champion coach Sunday night with great respect for his Carolina counterpart, whom he coached on a Carolina team that went to the 2002 Stanley Cup Final.

"Rod has excelled at developing an identity game, and having the Hurricanes be very consistent over the years playing that exact game," the two-time Cup champion coach told The Athletic via text message Sunday. "Good for him."

Peter Laviolette coached Brind'Amour as captain on that 2006 Stanley Cup championship team. He is not surprised at the captain turned coach and the success that followed.

"I think Roddy has done an amazing job as coach of putting a winning culture forward and establishing such a high standard of play over the last 6-8 years with Carolina," Laviolette told The Athletic via text message. "While there has been some level of success, it hadn't reached ultimate success ... until now! Championships are hard to win. Based on such an incredibly steady body of work year after year, the Carolina Hurricanes, and Rod, are so deserving to be 2026 Stanley Cup champions."

It was Don Waddell as then-GM in Carolina who had the wisdom to name Brind'Amour as head coach in May 2018. He had zero doubt Brind'Amour was ready for that promotion after seven years as an assistant coach.

"Rod is always totally prepared," Waddell told The Athletic via text message. "Guys love to play for him because he cares and doesn't ask to do anything that he didn't do as a player. He respects his players and the feeling is mutual."

It is rare for coaches to last this long with one team in the modern era.

"One of the words that I love to describe Rod is respect," said top Carolina defenseman Jacob Slavin. "He respects us, he respects the game. He respects what it takes to be an NHL player. He had an unbelievable career, so for guys coming into our team, they get a guy who's real, who is real with them, who will treat them well. But he's also going to let them know what's demanded and expected of them. I think

what keeps him successful is one, his work ethic, but two, just how real he is."

Former Hurricanes star Eric Staal, who won a Cup as Brind'Amour's teammate in 2006, spoke to that honesty.

"He's a genuine, honest, hard-working, good guy," Eric Staal said as his brother Jordan's team celebrated around him on the ice. "If you're a good person, and you're honest, I'm sure there are a lot of guys that aren't gonna like what he's gonna say, but he's gonna be upfront and honest, and he's gonna push these guys to a level that he obviously has. I am not surprised at all."

Those seven years as assistant coach were an important apprenticeship, Brind'Amour said, preparing him for becoming head coach.

"I've always tried to be myself, I think that's the key," Brind'Amour said when asked what he's learned the most in the last eight years. "And I knew that coming in. I had an advantage because I had been with the guys for seven years, so it wasn't like I was coming into a new situation. It was just, I could finally basically use my voice, you know? Assistant coach is different, you're following what the other lead is.

"But I knew what was in the room. (Staal) was just waiting to get the reins, so to speak. That was an advantage for me. Because a lot of times a new coach comes in and it takes a while to figure out who does what and who fits. Like, some guys don't fit. You have that advantage when you're there for a long time. That's where I got fortunate starting that way. And we were able to get off to get a real good start."

They've made the playoffs every single year with Brind'Amour as head coach, taking multiple swings at it, and finally that frustration of petering out in the conference finals is over. They're Stanley Cup champions. And Brind'Amour is the biggest reason why.

Staal is a deserving Conn Smythe Trophy winner as playoff MVP. But the mere fact it was so difficult to pick among so many different players on the roster speaks to the team's depth and getting contributions from everywhere. And that they don't have a true superstar player leading the way.

Mind you, that superstar in many ways is their head coach. He's the face of the franchise. He's the pulse of the team.

"Roddy is a head down, loyal, matter of fact, 100 percent all in leader and it's been that way since I met him over 20 years ago," Justin Williams, who played with and then under Brind'Amour, told The Athletic via text message. "Once he sets his mind on something he knows no other way than to fully embrace the challenges that lie ahead."

"There isn't a name or face that exemplifies what it means to be a Hurricane more than Roddy. He and the Hurricanes logo are synonymous with each other and I have no doubt that when he retires from the game, a statue will stand outside the arena as a symbol of his commitment, longevity and passion to the city. He, along with Tom Dundon, the city, players and staff have made Raleigh a destination that players want to come and be a part of."

Brind'Amour could have left a few years ago when his contract was up. There were some big-market teams willing to throw money over fist at him. But his loyalty to the Hurricanes and the community he's called home for so long, that matters too much to him.

"I have a certain way to coach and I don't think I can do it anywhere else," Brind'Amour said Sunday night. "We have a lot of talk in our room about caring. That's not phony. This has been my home forever, my kids have been raised in Raleigh, I played for the team, it's just — I've been very lucky. I don't know how many coaches anywhere kind of have that."

"We know coaching has a shelf life. I get it. But certainly not this year (laughing). But it's a special bond I get to have with my guys, just



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because I've been here so long and some of them have been here so long. That's special."

His longevity behind the same bench has allowed for the kind of consistency coaches aspire to.

"Rod has done an incredible job with his group," Team USA Olympic champion head coach Mike Sullivan told The Athletic via text message. "He has inspired them to stay the course and they clearly have bought in to the game plan he has put forth for them. They have established a clear identity as an organization. Rod deserves a lot of credit for his influence on that process."

Added New York Islanders head coach Peter DeBoer via text message to The Athletic: "Rod's belief in how the game should be played has been unwavering despite disappointments along the way. Coaches everywhere love to see that get rewarded."

It was unwavering in some part because Brind'Amour's relationship with his captain is perhaps as strong as any in the NHL. His vision for how the team should play has always been backed by Staal.

"It's been a fun ride," Staal said of having Brind'Amour as head coach for the last eight years. "From Day 1, he stepped and right away was like, 'We're raising this bar, we're raising this standard.' He demanded that right away. And anyone that wasn't going to go with it, and wasn't moving the way we were all moving, you know, he made moves."

"He's continued to grow and grow and he continues to try and get better every single day," the Carolina captain continued on the evolution of their head coach. "He's a massive reason why we're sitting here today."

Of that, there is no doubt.

"I can't conceive of success without him," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said while the team celebrated on the ice around him. "I think he is literally the most important thing we have in Carolina. He was proud of the Hurricanes when nobody else was. One of the reasons I hired him is he loved the Hurricanes. He keeps it every day in a way that I know I can be proud and I never have to worry, nobody has to worry about how we're going to play, if we're going to have a chance to win, how we're going to treat people. We're very lucky."

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