



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The News & Observer

Stephen Stroud, who helped bring Carolina Hurricanes to Raleigh, has died

By: Chip Alexander

Stephen Stroud, a prominent real-estate executive in the Triangle who was integral in building the Lenovo Center and bringing the Carolina Hurricanes to Raleigh, died Saturday.

Stroud, 83, attended N.C. State and was a longtime supporter of Wolfpack athletics, serving as president of the Wolfpack Club. He also was former chairman of the Centennial Authority, the appointed body that oversaw the building of the Lenovo Center – first known as the Raleigh Sports and Entertainment Arena – that opened in 1999 and continues to serve as the arena's landlord.

As authority chairman, Stroud worked with Peter Karmanos to bring his NHL team to Raleigh and give the area its first major-league franchise. Karmanos relocated the Hartford Whalers from Connecticut in 1997, rebranded the team the Carolina Hurricanes and helped fund the cost of building the arena.

Stroud, who began his real estate career in 1965, was the founder of Carolantic, a local commercial real-estate firm, and later merged NAI Carolantic Realty with NAI Tri Properties, a Raleigh firm, in 2020. He had a 50-year career

in real-estate development projects, including Highwoods, Cary's Crossroads and Brier Creek.

While always a fervent Wolfpack fan, Stroud, a Rutherford County native, said he quickly became a Hurricanes convert, often attending games and reveling in their run to their first Stanley Cup in 2006.

"The Hurricanes are a part of our area fabric," Stroud said in an N&O interview in 2019. "They've become a part of the sports passion here."

The Hurricanes recently won their second Stanley Cup championship, bringing a crowd of almost 200,000 to down Raleigh for a post-Cup celebration. The Canes hosted the area's first Cup Final games in 2002, when they were beaten by the Detroit Red Wings.

The Lenovo Center, which serves as the home floor of N.C. State men's basketball, has become a Raleigh landmark. The arena, which is undergoing a \$300 million enhancement, hosted the 2011 NHL All-Star Game and 2004 NHL Draft, and NCAA basketball regional play and has been an entertainment hub.

A street that allows access to the arena's parking lots is named E. Stephen Stroud Way.



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The Athletic

What can Alexander Nikishin offer as a trade target? The game, cost and suitors

By: Shayna Goldman

If Alexander Nikishin is actually available as a trade candidate this summer, a handful of teams should be kicking the tires.

The 24-year-old is still pretty unproven, with just 81 regular-season games and 21 playoff games under his belt. But he is a toolsy defenseman who brings size to a lineup and a Stanley Cup ring earned as a rookie, and that's worth a lot to some teams.

It may even be worth more to other teams than to the Carolina Hurricanes at this point.

But the big question every interested general manager has to ask is why the Hurricanes would be willing to move a once highly touted prospect so early in his NHL career. Considering some of the work general manager Eric Tulsky has done over the last couple of seasons, the follow-up should be whether there's a way to outsmart Carolina in this type of trade. Nikishin's RFA status and the price of his next contract add another layer to the conversation.

NHL offer sheets are just business

Sean Gentile and Sean McIndoe

Nikishin checks a lot of the boxes general managers look for in defensemen. He's big, at 6-foot-3, and knows how to use his size effectively. He can absorb a lot of contact and make life difficult for his opponents with his own hitting. Nikishin's reach helps him break up plays, too. Pair those two traits together, plus his overall gap control, and it can make for some aggressive defending at the blue line. Nikishin's zone entry defense helped limit scoring chances in transition, especially in the playoffs.

That playoff seasoning is obviously a part of the package. So many general managers actively look for players with a proven track record in that kind of environment. While Nikishin didn't play much in the 2025 postseason, he had a mainstay role in the Canes' run to the Stanley Cup this spring. He wasn't a game-breaker, but he was a pretty consistent part of the machine in a third-pair role, where he earned a 58 percent xG rate at five-on-five and broke even in scoring.

Add in his overall mobility, which is extremely important in a league that is only getting younger and faster, and a hard shot that he's more than willing to rip from the point, and there's some offensive potential. His draft pedigree and transition strength from the KHL may point toward some untapped potential, too.

The context of Nikishin's usage is important to get a more complete picture of his game and what comes next.

Carolina insulated Nikishin from playing against the opponents' best — even in the early goings of the season when the Canes were short-handed with Jacob Slavin sidelined. And that carried throughout the rest of the regular season and into the playoffs. Nikishin and Shayne Gostisbehere put up pretty sparkling postseason numbers, but were so sheltered thanks to Slavin and Jalen Chatfield doing a lot of the heavy lifting, and the second pair of K'Andre Miller and Sean Walker helping shoulder that burden.

And there are a few reasons for that usage. The first is the experience factor because Nikishin was a rookie. While he got a taste of NHL action last spring, he still had to adjust and adapt to this level of competition. His decision-making in his minutes also helps explain things. Sometimes Nikishin doesn't read situations perfectly and gets too narrowly focused on just one element of a developing play. Sometimes, he opts for the more aggressive play that pulls him out of position and leaves the scoring areas more exposed. The risk-reward of that style can open the Hurricanes up to more dangerous chances against, so he still has to prove he can take on more responsibility.

Top League Content

It's all pretty understandable for a rookie. But that has to be balanced against his age, because aging curves generally point to a defender's peak years coming between 25 and 27. Nikishin may be a little more raw at this point and behind the general curve because he made the leap to the NHL a bit later than some prospects. That probably wouldn't be much of a concern here because there can always be later bloomers if it weren't for his contract situation.

And that's why Chris Johnston has him in the top-10 of the latest trade board — Nikishin is reportedly looking for a contract in the \$8 million range. That's a huge leap for a player coming off their entry-level contract who hasn't proven to be worth it yet.

It makes sense in a rising-cap world, where the middle class has benefited a ton over the last couple of years. Just look at some of the signings from this summer alone. Jacob Trouba got \$8.3 million a year, on average, when he is a No. 4 at best, and that likely ticks down over the life of his contract with his age in mind. Rasmus Andersson's seven-year deal with an \$8.5 million cap may not age well, either.

It hasn't just been UFAs cashing in. Šimon Nemec hasn't proven a ton at this level yet, but he signed a five-year deal



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with a \$7.3 million AAV. Pavel Mintyukov leveraged himself into a \$7.2 million cap hit, too. So there's room for Nikishin to use those market trends in his favor. AFP Analytics originally projected a six-year contract carrying a \$6.4 million hit. He projects to be worth closer to \$7.9 million a year, on average, over that time.

Usually, there would be some room to meet in the middle because so many RFAs sign for below their market values. But some of this year's extensions have bucked that trend. It doesn't necessarily mean the Hurricanes will, though, with past tendencies in mind.

The Hurricanes have done two things really well over the years: Proactively sign cost-effective contracts that will age well, and rotate supporting players into the system to keep costs in check. There can be exceptions to that — Miller, for example, had all the tools to become a special player, but didn't look like a \$7.5 million defenseman when Carolina signed him last summer.

Maybe Nikishin's contract mirrors that, considering his skill set and potential.

But there's reason to have some pause on over-extending him too early. With any player, there is a range of outcomes for their trajectory moving forward. Based on the last year, the best-case scenario has Nikishin following in the footsteps of Noah Hanifin, Alec Martinez, Erik Johnson or even Brent Burns. But there is also some Patrick Wiercioch, Cody Franson and Braydon Coburn in his game. And if that's the path moving forward, it won't be a \$7-8 million caliber, even in a growing cap world.

So the best-case scenario for the Hurricanes may be a shorter-term bridge deal for Nikishin. That could give the player a chance to prove himself and maximize his earnings on his next contract. And it's a chance for Carolina's front office to assess just how well (or not) he fits within this system and start projecting if he can grow into a more meaningful role. The latter is important, considering how many defensemen are on the wrong side of 30: Slavin is 32, Walker is 31, Gostisbehere is 33, and Chatfield is 30. Gostisbehere and Chatfield are both UFAs next summer, too, so there's a path to Nikishin playing a bigger role in the future, whether it's more of a shutdown capacity, the next power-play quarterback or some combination of roles.

AFP Analytics' short-term projection comes in at two years, at \$3.7 million a season. But Nikishin should be worth closer

to \$7 million over the next two years, so maybe the sweet spot is something in the \$6 million range to give Carolina its best chance of getting surplus value.

And if Nikishin doesn't work out with the Hurricanes, there's a lot of leeway to flip a contract like that. Think of this as a similar situation to the Martin Necas one; there was a lot of buzz around a potential trade when he was an RFA. Carolina extended him to a bridge deal, let him come into the season hot, and traded him at maximum value. Maybe that's the play here if the Canes don't envision a long-term future with him in it. Whether the team trades him now or early in the year, it should be able to get a haul back. Nemec may be a couple years younger, but he brought back a great return of draft capital to New Jersey despite being unproven and unsigned.

But one thing for every general manager to consider is the chance of winning a trade against the Hurricanes. No team is infallible, including the Hurricanes, no matter how savvy they have been over the past couple of seasons. But this front office and Rod Brind'Amour's coaching staff have developed such a strong knack for evaluating defenders and maximizing them within the team's high-pressure system.

A decision around Nikishin may revolve more around his ability to fit within that versus his actual talent level. Not everyone is built to play the Canes' style, and some go on to excel elsewhere; Necas and Mikko Rantanen were good within it, but much better in different surroundings.

Maybe Nikishin could join that list. Maybe he'd make more sense on a team outside the player contender tier, with less riding on the next few years — teams such as the Maple Leafs, Jets, or Rangers, among others. The Penguins, Mammoth and Bruins could make sense as teams that need a little more help on the left. If the Kings can move out some contracts, Nikishin would help them get younger, too.

But maybe that doesn't happen, and it takes a pricey return and contract to figure it out. It wouldn't be the first time an up-and-coming defenseman was more valuable to the Hurricanes as a trade asset than an actual part of the team — think back to the Scott Morrow trade last summer.

Sometimes, the idea of a player's special skill set outpaces their actual level of play. The championship pedigree only clouds that even more. That's what any interested team has to sift through with Nikishin. The potential is there. It will just take a hefty price tag to figure it out — if the Hurricanes decide to move on from him.



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Carrier Brings Stanley Cup To Hometown Again After Hurricanes Win

By: Gabriel Duhamel / LNH.com Staff Writer

Carolina forward shows kids where he grew up 'anyone can win' trophy

NOTRE-DAME-DE-L'ÎLE-PERROT, Quebec -- When William Carrier was 6 years old, he asked his parents to put stickers featuring the logos of all 30 NHL teams on his bedroom ceiling, hoping that one day, one of them would draft him.

It was only fitting, then, that about 25 years later, the Quebec-born Carolina Hurricanes forward would kick off his day with the Stanley Cup in the company of other young dreamers.

Dozens of children lined up at Éperviers Park in L'Île-Perrot on Saturday to meet Carrier and, of course, see the trophy with their own eyes.

"I wanted to share this with the kids," Carrier said after a photo and autograph session that lasted over an hour. "I was lucky enough to see the Cup when I was younger, and it motivated me to win it. If I was able to motivate a few of them today, I'm happy.

"I wanted to show the kids that it's attainable and that anyone can win it."

Standing at the foot of the stage, André and Marlène Carrier couldn't help but reminisce about William's childhood. Both of Carrier's parents clearly remember those stickers, as well as the strains of "We Are the Champions" blasting from the speakers at the Pierrefonds arena whenever he won a tournament in his youth. They heard that famous Queen anthem again at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas last month.

"We realized there was a possibility of making it that far this year, but we had to take it one step at a time," André Carrier said. "We savored every moment, every game. At a certain point, we could see things were heading in the right direction. We were really happy."

André and Marlène also remember when William left the family home for Cape Breton at age 15 to play for the Screaming Eagles in the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League (QMJHL).

"To us, he was still just a 15-year-old kid. But for him, it was clear: he was going there," Marlène said. "We were there to

support and encourage him through the ups and downs. We've always stood by him."

"He was convinced that this was the path that would get him to the NHL the fastest," André added. "Two Stanley Cup wins later, I have to admit he made a good choice!"

As André points out, this marks William's second Stanley Cup victory of his career. He previously triumphed while playing for the Vegas Golden Knights in 2023. That summer, he brought the Stanley Cup to L'Île-Perrot for the first time.

The scene played out again on Saturday, but Carrier insists that this moment is just as special.

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"In fact, I'm enjoying the moment even more," he remarked. "The first time, you don't know what to expect; the day flies by in the blink of an eye. This year, I'm appreciating it more. I have fewer scheduled activities. I'm going to head home and enjoy it with my family and friends."

The Hurricanes won the Cup on June 14 following a six-game Stanley Cup Final against his former team, completing a 16-3 playoff run.

Carrier played a clear role on the team, skating on the fourth line alongside Eric Robinson and Mark Jankowski. He finished the playoffs with four assists and, notably, 91 hits (third in the NHL) over 19 Stanley Cup Playoff games.

"We stood out because of our work ethic," he said. "The team built an identity, and management brought in guys to build around that identity. Everyone on this team has a strong work ethic. They're probably already in the gym, just like me, getting ready for next season."

The Hurricanes kept their roster mostly intact this summer, aside from the departures of goaltender Frederik Andersen and defenseman Mike Reilly. Carrier and his teammates should therefore once again have their sights set on hockey's biggest prize in 2026–27.

"I'm happy to have my day with the Stanley Cup early in the summer. Tomorrow, I'll put this behind me and focus on the upcoming season," Carrier concluded before heading home in the backseat of a Ford Mustang with the Cup in his arms.

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TSN.CA / Pettersson gives teams plenty to ponder

Travis Yost

Intriguing buy-low candidate, or buyer beware? That's the question NHL front offices are wrestling with this summer as they evaluate Vancouver Canucks forward Elias Pettersson – a once promising player whose production has dramatically waned in recent years.

Pettersson's career arc has been nothing short of baffling. His two-year stretch from 2022-24 – in which he amassed 191 points, sandwiched between the likes of Toronto's Auston Matthews and Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby – earned himself a massive extension from the Canucks front office, who saw him as a long-term first-line centre and inked him to an eight-year, \$93-million deal.

But it's been a steady decline from Pettersson since that extension. It's never easy to watch a struggling player on a talent-poor team, but Pettersson's fall from an ultra-productive forward to one who managed just 51 points a season ago has been shocking.

At 27, Pettersson should be in his peak performance window. And now, the question is whether the Pettersson of yesteryear can be rediscovered on another team, or if he's already a declining player on a massive – and perhaps untradeable – contract.

The first discouraging sign for potential trade suitors is the counting numbers have slid in step with other benchmarks. His shot rates at both even strength and on the power play are down (the latter, considerably down), and expected goal rates have slid as well:

When you watch Pettersson on tape from his peak seasons to now, it's noticeable how much lighter he was on his skates back in 2022-24. Pettersson had an elite skating burst coupled with a quick release and was able to operate comfortably in tight spaces, as you would expect from a top-line centre.

Whether it's his previous knee injuries or something else altogether, it's evident he's lost some skating juice, and I wonder how much that's contributing to the reduced offensive shot volume (and, by extension, his scoring).

What also stands out from last season is the Canucks looked more or less like the same team with Pettersson on versus off the ice – marginally more dangerous on the attack, marginally more giving on the defensive side of the ice, which you can apportion to the quality of competition a top-six line typically faces.

If there's one legitimate defence of Pettersson (and what interested buyers may be looking at), it's dissecting how much of Pettersson's individual game has devolved versus the talent of those around him.

For example, last year's wingers were typically Jake DeBrusk and Evander Kane – nice players, but middle-six options at this point of their respective careers, and two guys who played at replacement-level quality in 2025-26. Add that to the loss of superstar blueliner Quinn Hughes mid-year, and you have a meaningful drop in teammate quality:

Yost4

It seems hard to believe a player who looked tremendous early in his career is not salvageable in some capacity, but even teams bullish on a bounce back have to wrestle with the reality that a bad bet here could be significantly costly – even with limited assets going out in a trade. Pettersson's sizable contract runs through the 2031-32 season. It's the sort of hit that can really challenge a team's cap dynamic, and it's why teams are being so measured in their approach right now.

Ultimately I think Pettersson's days in Vancouver are numbered. The hope in the Canucks front office, perhaps, is the rebound starts in Vancouver as soon as this season, and his contract (and improved play) become appetizing once more on the trade market.

With an expanding salary cap ceiling and better offensive production, Pettersson's contract gets upgraded from toxic to intriguing.

We'll see if anything shakes out this summer, or if his future may come into clearer picture at next year's trade deadline.

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