



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

The News & Observer

How are Lenovo Center renovations progressing? Centennial Authority gives update

By: Chip Alexander

The Centennial Authority held its monthly board meeting Thursday and the news on the Lenovo Center renovations and enhancements were all positive.

There have been no show-stoppers, no snags. Everything is on budget and on schedule for the \$300 million project, authority chairman Philip Isley said.

"Everything is good," Isley said after the meeting, which was held at N.C. State's Park Alumni Center. "We're doing exactly what you should be doing in a renovation."

All the seats were removed in the arena's lower bowl — "That's wild," Isley said, smiling — and are being replaced, section by section.

"It looks like mushrooms popping up," authority executive director Jeff Merritt said.

Reducing the number of aisles in the lower bowl also will give it a new look while increasing the arena's seating capacity.

The arena is in the midst of being shut down for eight weeks, with the first event in the refurbished building set for Sept. 15 and the Rod Wave: Don't Look Down tour stop.

"The seats are coming back and we feel confident for Sept. 15, when the first event will be there," Isley said. "You might see some dry wall and excuse-my-dust type of items in the arena. But it should be open and bigger and better."

For those wondering how work has been going at Lenovo here's the lower bowl minus the seats. New ones going in. Photo from Centennial Authority. pic.twitter.com/jnPm3dY52c

— Chip Alexander (@ice_chip) August 6, 2026

The Carolina Hurricanes, coming off their Stanley Cup championship, will play a home preseason game in the arena on Tuesday, Sept. 22.

The Canes announced Wednesday that all season tickets for the 2026-27 season at Lenovo Center had been sold, with a limited number of individual tickets still to be available.

Carolina averaged 18,373 fans per home game last season and were one of 13 NHL teams to notch 100% in capacity. The Canes have sold out 168 consecutive regular-season and playoff games.

Hurricanes president Brian Fork was at Thursday's authority meeting and was given a hand when Isley noted Fork's name now was etched on the Stanley Cup.

Isley announced longtime authority general counsel Clyde Holt would be retiring and a new in-house counsel hired. Holt has advised the authority since it was created.

Several authority members are planning a celebration of life service at the arena for former chairman Steve Stroud, who died July 11. A date has not been set.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

SPORTSNET™

NHL off-season grades: Metropolitan Division

By: Emily Sadler

School's still out, but for NHL clubs, it's report card season.

As we enter August, the focus starts to shift to the campaign ahead. But before it does, we're looking back on the summer so far and the transactions made by each franchise. While we won't really know how these moves pan out until players are back on the ice, these off-season dealings give us a glimpse of what to expect.

With that in mind, we're looking at each division and assigning a grade to every club's off-season so far. Today, we've got the Metropolitan — home of the Stanley Cup champs — under the spotlight.

(Teams listed alphabetically.)

Key arrivals: N/A

Key departures: Frederik Andersen, G

Grade: C

The newly crowned Stanley Cup champs ushered in the off-season on a celebratory note, and with plenty of cap space to build on a winning roster. While the parties persist, though, very little has happened in terms of front-office activity. That's not necessarily a bad thing, considering just how finely tuned a machine this roster is and how locked-up the core remains for the next five years. It is, however, more than a bit surprising for a club that always seems to be in on the biggest names on the trade and free-agency market. Perhaps it was the lack of star power among this year's crop; perhaps the brain trust is saving its scheming for a splashier name? That RFA Alexander Nikishin remains unsigned raises a few questions, too.

Credit the club for its attempt to sign veteran John Carlson upon acquiring the rearguard's rights on the cusp of free agency, though not being able to close the deal surely stings a little. So, too, does losing Frederik Andersen. Turning the crease over to Brandon Bussi doesn't feel like a big risk, considering his season output and Cup Final heroics in relief of the veteran netminder, but it's a risk all the same whenever you flip the starter's slot to the new(ish) guy — even if he does have a shiny new championship ring.

Key arrivals: Valeri Nichushkin, F; Ryan Lomberg, F

Key departures: Boone Jenner, F; Mason Marchment, F

Grade: B

With all the talk of Zach Werenski's rumoured discontent, combined with trade chatter swirling around Kirill Marchenko earlier this summer, it felt like Columbus was about to take a significant step backwards in their hunt for playoff relevance.

But here we are, six weeks later, the air cleared between Werenski and Columbus management while Marchenko, too, remains with the club (at least for now).

More victories: The acquisition of Valeri Nichushkin (without sending roster players to Colorado in return), and signing Ryan Lomberg. Is that enough to push the Blue Jackets into contention? That's hard to say, especially taking into account the loss of captain Boone Jenner and forward Mason Marchment. But relative to the what-ifs that surrounded this team at summer's start, this off-season feels like a win.

Key arrivals: Evan Rodrigues, F; Jesper Boqvist, F; Anthony Mantha, F; David Rittich, G

Key departures: Jacob Markstrom, G

Grade: B+

GM Sunny Mehta went bargain-hunting in his first summer at the helm of his hometown team, putting his stamp on the Devils early on.

It started on the trade market, first landing a solid draft-capital return for Simon Nemec, then sending Jacob Markstrom to Florida for a pair of proven winners in Evan Rodrigues and Jesper Boqvist plus a prospect. His biggest wins came while negotiating contracts. Inking Nico Hischier to a sub-\$12 million AAV for five more years is pretty clutch, and bringing in Anthony Mantha, fresh off a massive bounce-back campaign in Pittsburgh, on a two-year, \$9.5-million deal is a tidy bit of business.

The Devils might've scored an A on our off-season report card, save for the pretty major question mark in the blue paint. With Markstrom gone, it's up to Jake Allen, Nico Daws, and David Rittich to man the crease, and that brings some concerns.

Key arrivals: Matias Maccelli, F

Key departures: Anders Lee, F

Grade: D

Matthew Schaefer's sensational rookie showing ushered in a new era on Long Island... only, you wouldn't know it, based on the off-season that followed. June and July should've featured a flurry of moves to build around the franchise defenceman, but it's now August and the only notable signing is a low-cost value deal for Matias Maccelli. Meanwhile, the club watched Anders Lee depart for Utah without bringing in a suitable replacement — both in terms of his offensive contributions and his leadership.

While there's plenty to like about this roster construction, it's hard not to look at this quiet summer and feel like it's a missed opportunity — especially while Schaefer remains on his rookie deal.

Key arrivals: Pavel Dorofeyev, F; Oliver Bjorkstrand, F; Sean Durzi, D; Marcus Pettersson, D; Joonas Korpi, G

Key departures: Vincent Trocheck, F

Grade: A



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

Eight years after Rangers leadership penned that infamous letter telling fans of the long rebuild to come, GM Chris Drury made it clear that this time would be different. This time, it's a retool, not a rebuild. And his actions since then have followed that line of thinking.

No move made that more clear than the sign-and-trade to acquire Pavel Dorofeyev from the Vegas Golden Knights. A pending RFA at the time of the trade, he cost New York a late first-round pick in the 2026 draft and a conditional first in 2028, but the seven-year commitment (at \$11 million per) is a big win. At 25, and with a killer finish, he fits the profile of the type of offensive punch these Rangers have been looking for. And a one-year deal for Oliver Bjorkstrand adds some solid complementary depth.

Drury also addressed his blue line with the return for Vincent Trocheck a week later, bringing in Sean Durzi in the deal with Utah and sending a conditional first-rounder to Vancouver for Marcus Pettersson. Insurance in net, in the form of Joonas Korpisalo, was a smart bit of business, too.

With a fortified blue line, a punch up front, and room for some of the young guys to step up, this is indeed a retooled Rangers roster — and one that should have the Blueshirts back in contention. With the first-rounders he spent, Drury is counting on it.

Key arrivals: Noel Acciari, F; Joseph Woll, G

Key departures: N/A

Grade: B-

You cannot deny that the Flyers made quite a splash this summer. Daniel Briere's off-season has so far been defined by his attempt to lure Leo Carlsson away from Anaheim — an offer sheet that still has the league reeling — but ultimately failed to land the big catch.

Did the offer sheet hurt the Flyers? No. Short of Briere surely earning the ire of a few execs, Philly moves on, as scheduled — a team newly in playoff territory and looking to build on that first step into contention.

Are the Flyers that will hit the ice in September better than the ones we saw in May? That's where this grade hinges. Briere is counting on his young core to grow together, and that much is clear based on his in-house off-season dealings.

Briere did some tidy business to keep franchise pillars like Jamie Drysdale, Trevor Zegras, Tyson Foerster, and Dan Vladar on fair extensions, and was smart to shore up the crease with the acquisition of Joseph Woll to back up Vladar. And while we should not overlook the acquisition of Noel Acciari to solidify the middle-six, the lack of new faces to fortify this burgeoning roster makes this summer feel a little lacklustre relative to expectations.

Key arrivals: Nick Robertson, Hendrix Lapierre

Key departures: Anthony Mantha, Noel Acciari, Stuart Skinner

Grade: B

Look at the Penguins' books beyond next season, and it's... well, it's sparse. For the second straight summer, GM Kyle Dubas has resisted doling out big, term-heavy contracts as he retools this roster and keeps his options open regarding when, exactly, he flips the page to start penning a new chapter in Pittsburgh.

Dubas' lack of splashy moves shouldn't be mistaken for a quiet summer, though. Re-signing franchise icon Evgeni Malkin set the tone, and sent a message that this core isn't done yet — and a series of savvy moves since have seen the GM strike a balance between complementing the veteran core while not mortgaging any future flexibility. Flipping a 2028 fourth-round pick to his old club in Toronto for Nick Robertson, then inking the young forward to an affordable two-year, \$6.5-million deal, is a perfect case-in-point of that strategy. (Hmm, perhaps he's trying to lure another Robertson brother to the Steel City...? Could be fun!) So, too, were decisions to take a flyer on Hendrix Lapierre, invest early in Egor Chinakhov after a breakout season and secure middle-six forward Tommy Novak. Goaltending is still a question mark, and it's hard not to see a few gaps on that blue line. More to come there?

Big decisions still loom, but Dubas has so far been wise to stay nimble in an ever-moving market.

Key arrivals: Alex Tuch, F; Jordan Kyrou, F; Boone Jenner, F; Vincent Desharnais, D.

Key departures: Hendrix Lapierre, F; Connor McMichael

Grade: A

Considering it started with a months-long wait to learn of Alex Ovechkin's future, this could've been an off-season defined by uncertainty. But July brought not a hint of indecision — the captain's back, and GM Chris Patrick's practically shouted from the rooftops his intention to propel this club back into the playoffs.

He needed offence, and he got it. He got some sandpaper, too.

Eight years at \$10.5 million is a hefty price for top UFA Alex Tuch, but one worth paying for a team driven to make the most of Ovechkin's final season(s). If he doesn't slot in as a setup man for Ovi, try Jordan Kyrou — trading for the former Blues forward feels like a massive win, as does landing former Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner. Fold them into a mix that has seen some youth rise up the ranks the last two seasons, and you've got a retooled team that is suddenly one of the most intriguing in the East.

LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article316791744.html>
<https://www.sportsnet.ca/nhl/article/nhl-off-season-grades-metropolitan-division/>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

SportScan

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

1397927 Carolina Hurricanes

News Observer LOADED: 08.07.2026

How are Lenovo Center renovations progressing? Centennial Authority gives update

1397958 Websites

Chip Alexander

4-4 minutes 06/08/2026

Raleigh

The Centennial Authority held its monthly board meeting Thursday and the news on the Lenovo Center renovations and enhancements were all positive.

There have been no show-stoppers, no snags. Everything is on budget and on schedule for the \$300 million project, authority chairman Philip Isley said.

"Everything is good," Isley said after the meeting, which was held at N.C. State's Park Alumni Center. "We're doing exactly what you should be doing in a renovation."

All the seats were removed in the arena's lower bowl — "That's wild," Isley said, smiling — and are being replaced, section by section.

"It looks like mushrooms popping up," authority executive director Jeff Merritt said.

Reducing the number of aisles in the lower bowl also will give it a new look while increasing the arena's seating capacity.

The arena is in the midst of being shut down for eight weeks, with the first event in the refurbished building set for Sept. 15 and the Rod Wave: Don't Look Down tour stop.

"The seats are coming back and we feel confident for Sept. 15, when the first event will be there," Isley said. "You might see some dry wall and excuse-my-dust type of items in the arena. But it should be open and bigger and better."

The Carolina Hurricanes, coming off their Stanley Cup championship, will play a home preseason game in the arena on Tuesday, Sept. 22.

The Canes announced Wednesday that all season tickets for the 2026-27 season at Lenovo Center had been sold, with a limited number of individual tickets still to be available.

Carolina averaged 18,373 fans per home game last season and were one of 13 NHL teams to notch 100% in capacity. The Canes have sold out 168 consecutive regular-season and playoff games.

Hurricanes president Brian Fork was at Thursday's authority meeting and was given a hand when Isley noted Fork's name now was etched on the Stanley Cup.

Isley announced longtime authority general counsel Clyde Holt would be retiring and a new in-house counsel hired. Holt has advised the authority since it was created.

Several authority members are planning a celebration of life service at the arena for former chairman Steve Stroud, who died July 11. A date has not been set.

The Athletic / The big takeaways from our massive NHL fan survey

By James Mirtle

Aug. 6, 2026

Greetings from right in the dead of summer: early August, aka the heart of the NHL's offseason. Consider this your weekly hockey fix as we await rookie camps in, oh, about five weeks.

Survey Says

Your takes on burning NHL questions

All season, you've heard from our writers, reading several thousand of our hockey stories. And you heard from the players, coaches and NHL executives who often drive the news cycle in the sport.

But this week, we took a step back to hear from you, the fans, to gauge your perspective on the league, the sport and where everything stands as we head into 2026-27. The first two surveys with your responses — on the state of the game and predictions for the coming year — were released today by our guy Harman Dayal. Part 3 goes up tomorrow.

The one thing that stood out to me reading the results initially was that the majority of the more than 20,000 respondents were downright bullish on the NHL, with nearly 80 percent marking "hopeful" or "enthusiastic" when asked, "Which of the following best describes your feelings about the current overall state of the NHL?"

And only 22 percent of fans gave Gary Bettman a negative grade for the job he's done as commissioner overall, which feels like a relatively recent development. (Maybe I'm wrong, but the annual "Booing of the Bettman" at the Stanley Cup Final and draft seems to be tamer of late.)

As for the prediction side of things, well, the other thing you're all clearly bullish on is the Florida Panthers, who were picked as the most improved team, the most likely to return to the playoffs and the second-most likely to win the Stanley Cup.

You must really love that the Tkachuk podcast will be in person this season, I guess.

Meanwhile, three Canadian teams received the most votes for most unlikely to win a Cup in the next decade — try to guess which three before clicking — and fans were pretty heavily split when it came to the question of whether the league should pursue expansion.

There's a lot more to dig into, such as gambling in hockey, the Department of Player Safety and changes fans would like to see. And if you missed the window to cast a fan survey ballot, you've got another chance to make your voice heard: Polling opened this morning for our annual front-office confidence survey. Vote here.

Thanks for writing a few stories for us this time around.

🔗 MirTrivia Question



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

My next section is about the NHL's "mushy middle," so let's tee that up with a question for you about the ultimate mushy-middle team.

Over the past decade, this club has the league's 17th-best record (.561 points percentage) but has won just 11 playoff games and didn't select in the top five in the draft once in that span. What team is it?

Hint: This franchise also hasn't had a top-three pick — ever.

Answer at the bottom.

NHL's Most Mediocre Teams

I guess we're not giving Harman any days off in August, because he's been busy lately. The other piece he wrote this week that caught my eye was his examination of the seven teams most "in danger of getting stuck in the mushy middle."

Historically, being "mid" — yes, I'm up on my slang, fellow kids — is no-man's land in the NHL, as you either want to be contending or rebuilding with the intention to contend. That's certainly changed in recent seasons, as a lot of GMs (and their owners) are fearful of getting bogged down into an interminable cycle of stink if they go the teardown route. (Never go full Buffalo?)

It's gotten to the point that, frankly, a ton of the NHL is mid, and it's hard to pick out just seven teams that could get mired in the mush pit.

Harman's choices for this exercise were, in no particular order: Los Angeles, Seattle, Winnipeg, the Rangers, Toronto, Detroit and Columbus. I can't quibble with those picks all that much, as it is difficult to envision any of them becoming a top-six team in the league in the coming years.

Harman also offers up four honorable mentions — Nashville, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Boston — bringing us to 11 teams, or 34 percent of the league, as part of this midsummer midness exercise. And I think you can go even further, too.

Anaheim, for one, could certainly get stuck there now that it's shed some talent and will be paying Leo Carlsson \$18 million. The Islanders have a lot of positive momentum given just how amazing a rookie season Matthew Schaefer had, but they have an older roster and a lot of work to do to be better than average after a meh season. And we'll see if the Flyers, who still have a ton of cap space and some interesting young pieces coming, are ready to take another step after looking overwhelmed in the playoffs against Carolina.

But it seems like we're almost better off asking "Who's not mid?" right now. The defending champion Hurricanes qualify, given their decisive 16-3 stomp through the league in the playoffs and the fact that they'll return almost their entire roster. Old standbys Colorado, Edmonton, Dallas, Vegas, Tampa, Florida and maybe new-money contenders Buffalo, Minnesota or Montreal could be a step above the rest, too.

Everyone else? Well, there's a lot of mid.

OK, I promise I'm done saying that word for a while. Sorry for the bad aura and being a bit sus. Guess it's time to work on my newsletter rizz.

Coast to Coast

📺 This is the story of how Sean Avery has successfully transitioned from his past of annoying Martin Brodeur (and everyone else in the NHL) to now annoying Matt Damon on one of the biggest movies in history.

📻 Is hockey on the radio dying out? Aaron Portzline investigates after the Blue Jackets became the latest team to abandon their broadcast in favor of a simulcast.

🔧 Canadiens prospect LJ Mooney wasn't taken until the 113th pick in the fourth round of the 2025 draft, but he has impressed at the University of Minnesota. Has Montreal found another hidden gem?

📋 The Leafs have continued to turn over basically their entire staff, with trainer-to-the-stars Andy O'Brien the latest to join Toronto.

✅ How about some very early World Juniors roster projections after the summer showcase wrapped up earlier this week? Scott Wheeler, Corey Pronman and Max Bultman have you covered.

🔗 "The Athletic Hockey Show" How To Fix episodes feature two teams in similar spots this week: the Rangers and Blues, with beat writers Vince

Mercogliano, Peter Baugh and Jeremy Rutherford. Plus, a new prospect series episode recaps the summer showcase and discusses the Hlinka Gretzky Cup.

MirTrivia Answer

Other teams have had less playoff success over the past 10 years, with the Kings, Sabres, Devils, Kraken, Blackhawks, Coyotes/Mammoth and Red Wings all posting eight or fewer postseason wins.

But the answer to our trivia question today is the Calgary Flames, a team that has consistently refused to rebuild and as a result lived in the NHL's mediocre middle for a long, long time. This season marks a turning point for the organization, however, as it takes a necessary step back. Now, the Flames look to make their first top-three pick in the franchise's 46 years in Calgary, just in time for their new arena to open in the fall of 2027.

Hopefully they have some lottery ball luck. They'll need it.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.07.2026

1397959 Websites

The Athletic / How confident are you in each NHL team's front office? Have your say in our annual fan survey

By Dom Luszczyzyn

Aug. 6, 2026

It's that time of year again. Over the past decade, I've conducted an annual survey asking fans to rate their confidence in each NHL team's front office. Over the next week, I'll be collecting your answers for this year's version.

This type of story would be impossible without the fans. Your input is valued here above all else. The wisdom of the crowd is an underrated tool. In this case, it can collectively gauge the temperature of each team's management group based on the most important demographic: The fans who spend their hard-earned money. This is a chance for your voice to be heard.

Each management group will be rated on a scale of 1-5 in six categories, based on how confident respondents are in a team's ability in each area. Recency bias will be rampant here, and that's a good thing as this is a "what have you done for me lately?" business, but do try to keep a team's past in mind when evaluating. For teams under new management, try to strike a balance between the previous regime and the new staff, as often, the front office hasn't completely turned over.

Here's what goes into each category:

Roster building: How the front office has managed its roster, looking in general terms at the players on the roster and whether they form the right building blocks for the team's goal of contending, whether in the present or future.

Cap management: How the front office has managed the team's finances, about the efficiency of money spent (are there a lot of bad contracts on the books?), cap space, future flexibility and general dollar worth. **Bottom line:** If a team is or isn't spending money, are they doing so wisely?

Drafting and developing: How the front office has managed its farm, from draft day to the big leagues, relative to its draft pick capital. Is the team making smart selections and are those players meeting their potential after the draft? In other words: Is the team doing a good job graduating players from the minors to the majors?

Trading: How the front office has managed the trade block. Mainly, whether management made the right calls in trading assets and whether they're generally on the right or wrong side of a deal.

Free agency: How the front office has managed a period generally synonymous with mistakes and how it has navigated the minefield of free agency. Does the team generally give out reasonable deals, or is it prone to overpaying and overcommitting to players it shouldn't?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

Vision: How the front office communicates its plan, both implicitly and explicitly. Vision is mostly an abstract concept, one that boils down to whether a team's plan to build a Stanley Cup contender is evident in its decision-making and whether its plans for the future appear sound.

Really, it all boils down to the decision-making process and whether you believe teams are making good choices in each category.

There are two ways to do this: Rate your favorite team's front office and, for the more ambitious, rate every (or as many as you can) team. The final results will be a blend of both — a mix of the fanbase's perspective and a general public opinion about how the team operates.

The final results will be available next week, and the links to each respective survey are below. In both surveys, you can leave a comment elaborating on your opinion of your favorite team's front office. The best and most concise comments will be included in the final story.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.07.2026

1397960 Websites

The Athletic / The NHL's future, according to 20,000 fans: Cup picks, expansion and biggest winners

By Harman Dayal

Aug. 6, 2026

Welcome to part two of The Athletic's NHL fan survey, which gathered feedback from 20,000 respondents. In part one, we covered the state of the NHL, Gary Bettman and the always-contentious no-state-taxes debate. In this installment, we're diving into the future of the NHL, with on-ice predictions, league expansion, and outdoor games. Tomorrow, more on the fan experience, including viewing habits and attendance.

Without further ado, let's dig in.

Who's the better power play QB: Quinn Hughes or Lane Hutson?

Scott Wheeler, Max Bultman and more

Which NHL team improved most this offseason?

There were three clear favorites, each earning between 20 and 24 percent of votes.

The Panthers stunned the hockey world in June when they pulled off a blockbuster trade for Brady Tkachuk. Acquiring Tkachuk undoubtedly gives Florida the scariest forward core in the NHL. It's an embarrassment of riches with Aleksander Barkov returning, Brady and Matthew Tkachuk, Sam Reinhart, Sam Bennett, Brad Marchand, Carter Verhaeghe, Anton Lundell and Eetu Luostarinen. A big unknown, though, is whether newcomer Jacob Markström can be the No. 1 goaltender the franchise needs. Florida's goaltending was a letdown last year, and while Markström has a high pedigree, he's coming off a tough season in New Jersey.

San Jose was extremely busy, even if one or two of the contracts it signed were questionable. Mason Marchment and Ivar Stenberg will bolster the wings, while Michael Kesselring, Jacob Trouba and Darnell Nurse will add much-needed talent to a blue line that was woeful last year.

The Capitals were very aggressive, adding Jordan Kyrou, Alex Tuch, Boone Jenner and Vincent Desharnais.

Which 2026 non-playoff team are you most certain will make the playoffs in 2027?

The same three teams from the last question were popular answers again. Florida ran away with this one, earning 45 percent of the votes. San Jose got plenty of love as well; the Sharks' playoff case is legitimate not only because of their young, emerging talent, but because they play in the weakest division in the NHL.

After Washington, the Maple Leafs garnered some votes, too.

Here are your opinions on the league's biggest hot-button issues, off-ice debates and what needs to change next.

Which team will win the Stanley Cup in 2027?

It was fun to look back at a similar question we posed in 2023, when we asked fans to pick one team that they're most confident will win a Cup before 2030. The Hurricanes led the way, and sure enough, they made good on that prediction this year (just ignore the fact that New Jersey was No. 2).

This question is slightly different because it's only asking about next season, and 10 teams garnered at least 450 votes. The Avalanche were by far the most dominant team in the NHL last year until the Vegas Golden Knights stunningly swept them in the Western Conference final.

It's also no surprise to see Florida back as the East's favorite considering their splashy offseason, Barkov's return and their historical success against the Hurricanes in the playoffs.

Carolina, Minnesota and Edmonton rounded out the top five.

Which team are you most confident will NOT win a Stanley Cup before 2036?

Three Canadian teams finished at the top, combining for 38 percent of all votes. Vancouver was the most popular answer, which makes sense. There's some optimism locally with new management led by the Sedins and Ryan Johnson finally committing to a proper rebuild, but it's almost certainly going to be a long, painful process with how little elite talent the Canucks have on the roster and in the prospect pipeline.

Columbus was the only American team that got more than 10 percent of the votes. The Blue Jackets have legitimate talent on their roster, but they're in danger of being stuck in the mediocre middle.

I was surprised that the Kings weren't a more popular answer, considering how entrenched they seem in that middle; L.A. received only 1.7 percent of the vote.

While some of these teams may have notably good or bad immediate futures, it's hard to see a medium-term path toward contention.

Are you in favor of NHL expansion to 34 teams?

This almost exactly mirrors our results from 2024, when 63.3 percent of fans voted against expansion. Some factors that may have contributed to this include concerns about talent dilution, skepticism that certain expansion markets can succeed, and the simple fact that only one team can win the Cup every year, so expanding the league further diminishes their favorite team's chances of winning a championship.

However, it feels like expansion is inevitable; Vegas and Seattle have been very successful financially, and it's extremely profitable for NHL owners, plus players will always support it because it creates more roster spots/jobs.

Which potential expansion cities would you most like to see get a new franchise?

Quebec City dominated this one. NHL players sung a different tune, though, as Houston was the clear favorite in our anonymous player poll. The difference is understandable from players' perspective — the taxes, weather and media pressure would all be more favorable in Houston.

It makes sense why a lot of fans are so fond of Quebec City because it's a passionate market and would reignite such a cool rivalry with the Canadiens, but it's doubtful that the NHL will consider it anytime soon. It's a smaller market, the lack of corporate sponsors is a worry, and the league is probably searching to expand into U.S. markets where they can create new fans rather than go to traditional hockey markets that are already tuned into the NHL and contributing to league revenue in some capacity.

Should the NHL adopt an in-season tournament?

This one was extremely lopsided. Only about one in every six fans supported the idea of an NBA-like midseason tournament, likely because most view the idea as a gimmick.

There have been 45 outdoor NHL games since the 2003-04 season. What's one outside-the-box location you'd like to see a game played?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

There were a lot of fun, creative responses to this one. Over 1,500 responses mentioned Alaska in some form, which made it the most popular answer.

"Somewhere in Alaska, make it a postcard even if there would be no fans. COVID outdoor game (at Lake Tahoe) was (an) awesome setting, but the ice was an issue."

"Redo 'Mystery, Alaska'," said one of many responses that referenced the 1999 hockey movie.

There, of course, would be logistical challenges because Alaska is far from the closest NHL city and it's unknown how many fans they'd draw, which matters to a league that's always going to care about revenue from gate receipts for a marquee outdoor game.

Lake Louise, Alta., an iconic tourist site, was very popular. There was also lots of interest in an outdoor stadium game in either Sweden or Finland.

Central Park in New York City, along with Hawaii, Quebec City, Beaver Stadium at Penn State, Mexico City, and the White House lawn all got some interest, as well.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.07.2026

1397961 Websites

The Athletic / Gary Bettman, gambling and taxes: What 20,000 NHL fans really think

By Harman Dayal

Aug. 6, 2026

It hasn't even been two months since the Carolina Hurricanes lifted the Stanley Cup to conclude an epic 2025-26 season, yet it already feels like an eternity ago.

A wild NHL offseason proves how quickly the league is changing — we've seen several blockbuster trades, franchise players requesting out, the largest offer sheet in NHL history and a completely reset market for player contracts amid the skyrocketing salary cap.

Is the NHL in a good or bad place? More than 20,000 readers participated in our NHL fan survey. The results are categorized into three areas: the game's direction, the league's future on and off the ice, and the fan experience. We begin with how participants responded to questions about the state of the sport in 2026 — covering gambling, commissioner Gary Bettman and the hot-button no-state-taxes debate.

Can the Sedins change the Canucks' culture?

Sean Gentile and Thomas Drance

Which of the following best describes your feelings about the current overall state of the NHL?

Big picture, the NHL appears to be in a very healthy place. We know that the league is doing well financially based on how meteorically the salary cap, which is tied to revenue, is rising, but the product is also clearly resonating with fans.

A vast majority of fans — 78.6 percent — are either "enthusiastic" or "hopeful" about the overall state of the NHL. The game has never been faster and more skilled; historic teenagers Macklin Celebrini and Matthew Schaefer have breathed new life into the sport, and scoring is way higher than it was 10-15 years ago. Games are tight, leads are almost never safe, and there's good parity and healthy turnover in terms of the teams that make the playoffs each year.

Is the NHL perfect? Definitely not (more on that later). But the macro, 50,000-foot view is mostly positive because of how entertaining the on-ice product is.

We're diving into the future of the NHL, with on-ice predictions, league expansion and outdoor games.

Next year will be Gary Bettman's 34th season as NHL commissioner. That's a long time, but how would you rate the job he has done overall as NHL commissioner?

The boos won't ever stop for him at the NHL Draft, but the rating for Bettman's work as league commissioner is more favorable than you might have expected.

Nearly 40 percent of respondents rated his work as a 3, which is neutral, but the bigger surprise is that twice as many fans scored him at a 4 rather than a 2. In fact, only 22.3 percent of fans rated him below a 3. In other words, while the Bettman dissenters are loud and still a meaningfully large population, most fans believe he's done a fine or better job.

That satisfaction makes some sense: The on-ice product is excellent, the new CBA was negotiated without any hiccups or disputes, the game's casual audience is growing with the massively successful 4 Nations tournament and NHLers' return to the Olympics, and the league is in a very strong position financially.

Is betting on hockey a regular part of your fan experience?

Despite the proliferation of gambling advertisements in almost everything that's associated with the game, the overwhelming majority of fans do not regularly bet. It was very one-sided, with over 12 non-gamblers for every gambler among our audience.

With the prevalence of gambling in hockey, are you worried about the integrity of the game?

Most fans shared at least some concern about how the prevalence of gambling could affect the integrity of the game. And it makes sense considering the NBA's earth-shattering scandal, where current and former players were arrested on suspicion of gambling-related offenses. The MLB saw two players arrested last summer for alleged fixing. The NFL recently suspended an Arizona Cardinals executive for violating the league's gambling policy. The NHL hasn't been immune either, as Shane Pinto was suspended for 41 games in the 2023-24 season for "activities related to sports wagering," although the league clarified there was no evidence that Pinto was betting on NHL games.

Are teams with no state income taxes gaining an unfair advantage?

The majority of fans believe teams such as Florida, Vegas, Tampa Bay and Dallas gain an unfair edge because they don't have state income taxes. That's consistent with our 2024 survey, in which only 14.7 percent of respondents viewed it as an overblown issue. The debate and differing views start, however, when we discuss how much of an advantage it truly is and whether the league needs to do anything about it.

Is the no state income taxes issue something that needs to be addressed by the league?

This is where the results get fascinating. Back in 2024, 42.9 percent of voters thought the advantage was large enough that it warranted some intervention from the league to even the playing field. However, a nearly equal 41.5 percent voted that while these teams have an edge, it's not significant enough to warrant potentially complex changes.

Two years later, the appetite for change continues to gradually increase. More than half — 54 percent — of voters said they'd like the league to do something to solve the no-state-taxes issue, with only 26 percent arguing against changes. With that said, the NHL doesn't seem to believe it's an unfair advantage, and the next CBA won't be negotiated for a few more years anyway.

The Department of Player Safety...

Fans across the board seem mostly unhappy with the league's Department of Player Safety, with 64 percent voting that its decisions are inconsistent, and an additional 16 percent saying it "mostly gets it wrong."

This especially became a hot-button issue a few months ago, when Radko Gudas hit Auston Matthews with a brutal knee-on-knee. That hit ended Matthews' season, but, controversially, Gudas was suspended for only five games. That drew sharp criticism from Matthews' agent, Judd Moldaver, and even Connor McDavid opined that there's a lot of frustration with the process from the player side.

What can the NHL do to better market its stars?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

The biggest theme here revolved around encouraging players to be less buttoned up and show their personalities more.

"Tell their stories outside of the game," wrote one fan. "More access."

"Put them in commercials that don't have horrible dialogue, get them on talk shows, promote rivalries, allow them to actually speak and not basically force all of them to give canned answers," wrote another. "But to do that, the NHL needs to create an environment where individuality (and) actual opinions (are encouraged) and every little word won't be picked apart by the media and blown to the extreme. We get canned answers because players don't want to rock the boat or deal with the fallout. So all we get is boring, robotic interactions, which don't sell star players one bit."

Personality is clearly the key to marketing stars better, but it's tricky to solve because hockey's culture is very team-first and drawing attention to yourself as an individual can sometimes be misconstrued.

There are clearly more behind-the-scenes videos that teams are producing and docuseries-style content through Amazon's "Faceoff: Inside the NHL" series, but the NHL lags far behind the other sports in player-created content. Soccer superstar Erling Haaland has become one of the most likable athletes on the planet because of his candid, humorous social media content, and NBA stars such as Giannis Antetokounmpo make their own YouTube videos, but there isn't as much of that happening in the NHL.

It's also fair to wonder if hockey players are just less interesting personalities on average than their peers in other sports.

"It's not the NHL's fault," one fan wrote. "Hockey players are humble, and that's what we love about them."

If you were commissioner for a day, what is one change you would immediately make?

Changing the playoff format back to a No. 1 through No. 8 conference seeding was by far the most popular answer here, as it was mentioned over 2,500 times. Most players prefer this over the divisional format as well, so it's a bit strange that the league has dug its heels in on this matter.

Altering the points system to a 3-2-1 style, where three points are awarded for a regulation win, two points for an overtime or shootout win and one point for an OT or shootout loss, was the second most commonly proposed rule change.

Addressing the consistency of officiating was a recurring theme, as well.

"Call the rulebook more closely, no makeup calls, no bias against younger players," said one voter. Others added that the officiating standard changes from the regular season to the playoffs, and that time remaining in the game seems to have too much influence on calls, with refs more reluctant to call penalties late in third periods of close games.

Hundreds of people called for the salary cap to be tweaked to address the state income tax disparity.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.07.2026

1397962 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL off-season grades: Pacific Division

Ryan Dixon

School's still out, but for NHL clubs, it's report card season.

As we enter August, the focus starts to shift to the campaign ahead. But before it does, we're looking back on the summer and the transactions made by each franchise. Although we won't really know how these moves pan out until players are back on the ice, these off-season dealings give us a glimpse of what to expect.

With that in mind, we're examining each division and assigning a grade to every club's off-season. Having already tackled the Metropolitan, Atlantic and Central, we close out the exercise with a peek at the Pacific.

(Teams are listed alphabetically)

Anaheim Ducks

Key arrivals: A.J. Greer, W; Nick Jensen, D; Jeff Malott, D

Key departures: Mason McTavish, C; John Carlson, D; Jacob Trouba, D; Radko Gudas, D; Olen Zellweger, D

Grade: C-

This has not been a banner off-season for Anaheim. The vibes were high coming off a second-round showing in the team's first playoff appearance since 2018 — and, on balance, the arrow is still pointing up for the Ducks — but top centre Leo Carlsson inked an offer sheet with the Philadelphia Flyers and second-line centre Mason McTavish was dealt to the St. Louis Blues for two 2026 draft selections who won't be helping the club any time soon.

Obviously the true disaster would have been Carlsson leaving — Anaheim matched Philly's offer of \$90 million for five years — but the stud centre's \$18-million AAV is surely not what GM Pat Verbeek had in mind for his books, and it feels like this could have all been avoided with some proactive negotiating in 2025.

Instead, the Ducks are looking at new contracts for RFA Cutter Gauthier and, eventually, Beckett Sennecke and wondering how the Carlsson precedent will impact those dealings.

Nothing debilitating walked out the door in free agency, but losing three veteran righties in Trouba, Gudas and Carlson still creates some uncertainty on the blueline.

Anaheim is still in great shape overall, but this has not been a summer to remember.

Calgary Flames

Key arrivals: Simon Nemec, D; Jacob Middleton, D

Key departures: Blake Coleman, W; Olli Maata, D

Grade: A-

Flames fans know they're still in for some long seasons, but it's surely exciting to see the team enter a phase where it is doing more than selling off pieces. The move to acquire Nemec from the New Jersey Devils — and subsequently ink him to a new five-year pact — represents a moment of real excitement, as the Flames welcome in a second-overall pick (from 2022) who, at 22 years old, could be ready to make a meaningful leap forward in his new home.

We knew Coleman, with a single year left on his contract, was headed out the door at some point before the 2027 trade deadline, and now that issue is done and dusted before camp even opens.

Calgary may not be on the upswing yet, but it's still fun to see some of the future pieces of a good team start to land in place.

Edmonton Oilers

Key arrivals: Frederik Andersen, G; Devon Levi, G; Ryan Shea, D; Shakir Mukhamadullin, D; Mathieu Joseph, W

Key departures: Darnell Nurse, D; Jack Roslovic, W/C

Grade: B-

The most significant development in Edmonton this off-season was likely moving off Nurse's \$9.25-million AAV without having to retain any salary in the trade with San Jose. That move offered the Oilers at least some cap flexibility as they try to bounce back from a first-round loss to the Anaheim Ducks.

As always, goaltending remains a hot topic in Edmonton, and the club is set to enter the year with a three-goalie setup. Usually that's one too many puckstoppers for all involved, but with Andersen's age (37 in October) and injury history, and Levi's lack of NHL experience (39 career games), it makes sense for the Oilers to hedge their bets, buck the standard approach and go with three guys.

The hope is obviously that one of them — likely Andersen — is fresh and sharp come April.

Los Angeles Kings



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026

Key arrivals: Mats Zuccarello, W; Erik Haula, C; Corey Perry, W

Key departures: Anze Kopitar, C; Jeff Malott, D

Grade: B-

In a sense, the Kings' real off-season move was acquiring Panarin in February and immediately inking him to a two-year extension. Panarin was set to become a UFA this summer, and L.A. was on the very short list of teams he would waive his trade protection to go to. We'll see how he does in his first full season in California.

Panarin turns 35 in October, so it's really saying something that two of L.A.'s notable summer signings are older than him. Zuccarello hits 39 in September, while 41-year-old Corey Perry — who spent most of last season with the Kings before being dealt to Tampa ahead of the trade deadline — will be the oldest forward to play in the NHL since Joe Thornton in 2021-22.

San Jose Sharks

Key Arrivals: Michael Kesselring, D; Jacob Trouba, D; Darnell Nurse, D

Key departures: William Eklund, W; Mario Ferraro, D

Grade: A-

If the off-season ended after the draft, the Sharks would have received an A+. Sending Eklund to Ottawa for the ninth-overall pick landed the Sharks big, right-shot defenceman Keaton Verhoeff in addition to stud Swedish winger Ivar Stenberg at No. 2. Verhoeff may not play in San Jose for some time yet, but adding those two pieces to the organization was a coup. Even before the draft began, GM Mike Grier acquired Kesselring from Buffalo — basically for the cost of moving down seven spots from No. 20 to No. 27 in the draft — and the six-foot-five, right-shot defenceman is a great bounce-back candidate after a lost year with the Sabres.

It's not that what happened after the draft was bad, but San Jose forked over more money to Trouba (\$8.25 million AAV for four years) than anyone anticipated and taking on Nurse's full hit also puts a squeeze on the books.

Still, both Trouba and Nurse bring some nasty San Jose needed, and it's all high-fives when you sign a franchise cornerstone like Macklin Celebrini to a record-setting new contract extension.

Seattle Kraken

Key arrivals: Mackie Samoskevich, W

Key departures: Jamie Oleksiak, D; Eeli Tolvanen, W; Jaden Schwartz, W

Grade: C-

Credit Seattle, it took its crack (sorry) by getting the Dallas Stars to sign off on sending Jason Robertson to the Pacific Northwest for the seventh-overall pick. The problem was, Robertson — an RFA at the time — wouldn't put pen to paper on the hefty offer (reportedly around \$15 million per season for eight years) the Kraken put forth.

As such, this squad is still in search of difference-making talent and — unless something changes — this will go down as another summer in which it couldn't land it.

Vancouver Canucks

Key arrivals: Jamie Oleksiak, D; Brendan Gallagher, W; Luke Schenn, D; Paul Cotter, W

Key departures: Marcus Pettersson, D; Teddy Blueger, C; Nils Hoglander, W

Grade: B

The mandate is clear in Vancouver, where the rebuilding Canucks emphasized acquiring veterans with strong work ethic and, ideally, some size. Gallagher may not bring the latter quality, but the hometown boy will be counted on to show the next generation what relentlessness looks like. On the back end, Oleksiak and Schenn will, at the very least, make Vancouver less fun to beat.

It's going to be a while before we get a go-time summer in B.C., but the Canucks — given where they are — played this off-season just fine.

Vegas Golden Knights

Key arrivals: Parker Wotherspoon, D; Victor Olofson, W

Key departures: Pavel Dorofeyev, W; Keegan Kolesar, W; Kaeden Korczak, D; Akira Schmid, G

Grade: C

We knew it would be tough for Vegas to fit a new deal for Dorofeyev under the salary cap and, sure enough, the Golden Knights — as they often do — took bold action and moved him to the Rangers at the draft.

Hard as it is to watch Dorofeyev's 37 goals leave, don't forget the Knights basically added Mitch Mamer for nothing in the summer of 2025. One year later, it was a big ask to make a move of similar magnitude.

As such, the Western Conference champs — under new coach Ryan Craig — will move forward with their veteran core and hope good health is all that's required for another deep run.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.07.2026



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 7, 2026