



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

The News & Observer

Why 'Moneyball' analytics, tactical spending work for the Carolina Hurricanes

By: Justin Pelletier

For years, the Carolina Hurricanes were cheap — in a bad way.

Following the Canes' appearance in the NHL's 2009 Eastern Conference Final, the team began pinching pennies, maintaining a low-budget, internal ceiling that saw the team rank consistently among the league's bottom third in cash spending with respect to the salary cap.

By 2017-18, the NHL salary cap had risen to \$75 million. The Canes spent less than \$62 million — and they never sniffed the playoffs during that stretch.

Then, Tom Dundon purchased the team.

After another season of minimal spending on players — and a first playoff appearance in 10 years despite that lower payroll in Rod Brind'Amour's first year as head coach — the Canes jumped from a bottom-three-spender into the league's top 10 payroll teams.

Since then, the Hurricanes have spent to or nearly to the cap line in each season, but that increase hasn't been frivolous.

Now, the Canes are cheap — in a good way.

Carolina, with Eric Tulsky leading the way first in the analytics department and now as the team's general manager, has calculatedly spent its money on not just talent, but the right talent.

Think Billy Beane and Moneyball, but with an owner willing to spend money; a confluence of analytical tactics with an old-school desire to assemble a hard-nosed, tough-to-play-against roster.

A post-Stanley Cup victory analysis outlined how the Canes won last season, leaning heavily into the team's roster construction and salary cap manipulation as the primary reasoning.

The Canes general manager Eric Tulsky raises the Cup after the Hurricanes' 3-0 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights to win the Stanley Cup at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nev., Sunday, June 14, 2026.

The Canes general manager Eric Tulsky raises the Cup after the Hurricanes' 3-0 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights to win the Stanley Cup at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nev., Sunday, June 14, 2026. Ethan Hyman
ehyman@newsobserver.com

"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," Tulsky told the News & Observer on the ice at T-Mobile Center in Las Vegas, as the team celebrated all around him.

A recent study that analyzed player salaries and their value relative to individual and team point production agreed. The Casino Guru USA effort "identified the league's most overpaid and most valuable players through analysis of 2026/27 salary cap hits and 2025-26 Point Shares (PS), assigning each one a final score out of 100."

The Hurricanes overall roster graded out at 41/100 — best in the NHL — and the Canes' Sean Walker is the team's best value player, posting a PS of 5.8 and a cap hit of \$3.6 million. Walker had 9 goals and 22 assists for 31 points in 2025-26 regular season, and was a steadying force on the blue line in the playoffs, recording a plus-11 with three assists in 19 games.

Casino Guru USA's methodology

According to Casino Guru USA, in August 2026, the company gathered the following metrics on every NHL player:

2026/27 cap totals, sourced from Spotrac — players with a cap hit of less than \$3 million were excluded

2025/26 Point Shares (PS) sourced from Hockey Reference — PS is the one metric that spans every position, ensuring a fair cross-position comparison

Cost per PS — cap hit divided by PS, to demonstrate a simple cross-position check on what each point cost

Players who appeared in fewer than 49 games of the 2025-26 season, or a goaltender who appeared in fewer than 33 games, were not included in the final rankings, as well as players with no 2025-26 PS. Additional statistics on performance were sourced from Hockey Alchemy, ESPN, and StatMuse.

What this means for the Hurricanes — and Alexander Nikishin

In short, it's quantifying with real numbers what many have suspected all along: Tulsky, Brind'Amour, and, credit where credit is due, former GM Don Waddell, knew what they were doing with Dundon's money.

And they still do.

The biggest brouhaha so far this offseason for the Canes has been the status of restricted free agent Alexander Nikishin, a defender who last season was named to the NHL's All-Rookie team after an 11-goal, 22-assist regular season.

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Alexander Nikishin (21) leaves the ice with goalie Frederik Andersen (31) following their 6-1 victory over Montreal, clinching the Eastern Conference Finals, on Friday, May 29, 2026 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Alexander Nikishin (21) leaves the ice with goalie Frederik Andersen (31) following their 6-1 victory over Montreal, clinching the Eastern Conference Finals, on Friday, May 29, 2026 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett
rwillett@newsobserver.com

Nikishin also appeared to draw the ire of the Canes' coaching staff with some suspect play in his own end at times. His average ice time dropped from more than 18 minutes per game in the regular season, to fewer than 15 minutes per game in the playoffs. He also only put up one assist in 17 playoff games.

But the young Russian has also been vocal — through his agent — in his salary demands, reportedly seeking a new deal, with term, at around \$8 million per season. This has led to speculation — smoke with a hint of flame — that the Hurricanes are shopping the raw but obviously talented defenseman.

True to the Hurricanes' established fiscally responsible identity, there is no way the team will make Nikishin its highest paid defenseman. K'Andre Miller holds that distinction at \$7.5 million per season. All-World defender Jaccob Slavin makes a team-friendly \$6.396 million per season.

Canes' salary cap mastery

And Slavin's deal resembles a lot of the Canes' deals, particularly among the forward group. Thirteen of the Hurricanes' 14 rostered forwards in the Stanley Cup Final, five of the seven defensemen and two of the three goalies were already under contract for 2026-27. That's a far larger percentage of players returning than most Cup-winning teams face in the offseason following a title run, and it's mostly because Tulskey chose not to complete a major trade at last year's deadline. No expiring contracts allows for continuity.

But it's not just that they have the players locked up. The players who are locked up are on longer term, team-friendly contracts — like Slavin's — as the NHL salary cap continues to incrementally climb. For 2026-27, the cap ceiling jumped to \$104 million from \$95.5 million, allowing for the expansion of player salaries as league revenue increases.

Half of the league's 32 teams have at least one player making more than one-tenth of the team's total salary allowance, more than \$10 million.

The Canes are not one of them, though they are spending to the cap limit. Sebastian Aho is Carolina's highest paid player at \$9.75 million, followed by Nikolaj Ehlers at \$8.5 million, and Andrei Svechnikov at \$7.75 million.

Carolina Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulskey addresses media after first round of NHL draft on June 26, 2026, in Morrisville NC.

Carolina Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulskey addresses media after first round of NHL draft on June 26, 2026, in Morrisville NC. Chip Alexander

Aho is locked into that salary until 2032, Ehlers through 2031, Svechnikov through 2029, even as the cap rises, allowing the Canes more room under the cap to sign other players that fit their system, including younger players like Jackson Blake and Logan Stankoven and Seth Jarvis.

Each of those players are also on deals with Carolina through at least 2032, creating a pack of five forwards and two defenders — K'Andre Miller and Jaccob Slavin — who are contracted to spend the next five or six seasons in Raleigh.

With 20 players under contract through 2027, and 15 through 2028, the Hurricanes are in no hurry to "rebuild."

But, "no hurry" doesn't mean "standing still," as Dundon made perfectly clear as the champagne flowed on June 14:

"We've been working for next year for a long time," Dundon quipped amid the postgame festivities.

That work continued this summer, and continues as the preseason approaches more quickly for the Canes than for any other NHL team, after their late playoff run just two months ago.

Are the Canes done making moves? Maybe, but probably not, given Nikishin's situation. And while we don't know the final outcome there, we can say with certainty how the team will arrive at its decision: analytically, calculatedly, and free of frivolity.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

The Hockey News

Meet The Carolina Hurricanes New Goaltender Tandem

By: Ryan Henkel

With Frederik Andersen gone, breakout sensation Brandon Bussi and a returning Pyotr Kochetkov battle for the crease. Can this high-upside duo sustain Carolina's championship pedigree?

The 2026-27 season is just a month away and for the first time in four years, the Carolina Hurricanes will don't have a certified starter in net.

With the departure of Frederik Andersen, the Hurricanes now have just two netminders left under contract in Brandon Bussi and Pyotr Kochetkov, neither of which are a surefire bet to take over the net.

More than likely the Hurricanes will go with a 1A/1B split between their two goalies as has been traditionally seen with the way the team treats goaltending, but the question would then be who will be getting the tougher games and eventually the playoff starts.

Here's a look at the Hurricanes two goaltenders:

Brandon Bussi

2025-26 Stats:

31-6-2; 0.894 Sv%; 2.47 GAA; 2 SO

7.23 Goals Saved Above Average; 0.816 High Danger Save Percentage

One of the NHL's all-time best stories, Bussi is coming off of a storybook season that saw him breaking records and cementing himself as an everyday NHL goaltender en route to eventually helping the Canes win the Stanley Cup.

The 28-year-old netminder took the hockey world by storm after being initially claimed off of waivers right before the start of the season and after injuries gave him an opportunity, he never looked back.

Now the question is can he do it again?

The biggest skill a goaltender can have is consistency and for every hotshot rookie, there's almost always a sophomore slump waiting.

Playwire House Ad

Bussi isn't your everyday rookie though, given his age and maturity, but now everyone in the league knows about him. There's video on his tendencies and teams may be prepared for the unorthodox southpaw.

But can he now prove that he wasn't a flash in the pan? Only time will tell.

Pyotr Kochetkov

2025-26 Stats:

6-2-0; 0.899 Sv%; 2.33 GAA; 1 SO

2.62 GSAA; 0.756 HDSv%

Kochetkov has been in the Hurricanes' goaltending rotation for four seasons now, but after back-to-back years playing 40+ games, the Russian netminder played just nine games in 2025 due to a hip injury that eventually required surgery.

Kochetkov never played another game after that December surgery, although he was an option for the team and even dressed for the final four games of the Stanley Cup Final as a backup.

The 27-year-old netminder has shown flashes of potential throughout his career (His career record of 71-38-12 with a 0.904 Sv% and 11 shutouts is nothing to laugh at), but it's a lack of consistency that has held him back over the years.

Kochetkov is a very aggressive netminder who utilizes his athleticism to make saves and surprise opponents and it's a bit similar to the way Bussi plays as well.

Whether or not that's a blessing or a curse for the team and whether or not Kochetkov can take that next step in his NHL career will be one of the Hurricanes' biggest storylines to watch for this upcoming season.

LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article316925197.html>
<https://thehockeynews.com/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/latest-news/meet-the-carolina-hurricanes-new-goaltender-tandem>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

SportScan

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

1398587 Websites

The Athletic / Military-style workout under scrutiny after Arizona State hockey player's collapse

By Katie Strang and Adam Kilgore

Aug. 28, 2026

Arizona State hockey player Matthew Mayich was participating in a punishing military-style outdoor team workout when he collapsed Aug. 20 and was taken to a hospital, multiple sources briefed on the incident told The Athletic.

The Athletic spoke with multiple people briefed on the workout, which lasted approximately 60 minutes and was considered both atypical and extreme. Speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, they said it consisted of sprints, planks, push-ups and bear crawls with an emphasis on repeating instructions back to the instructor and keeping a correct count of each exercise. Players who failed to do either or lagged behind other groups were forced to complete extra sprints or exercises.

Athletes were instructed not to complain, which some interpreted as an order not to speak up if they were struggling. According to two sources, the instructor left the workout before the final activity — a run with a medicine ball the length of a football field and back — was completed.

The Athletic has confirmed the instructor as former military service member Tim Ziesel, a non-university employee who was first identified by The Arizona Republic.

Ziesel, 39, did not respond to numerous calls, text messages and an email with questions about his background, training, and objectives for the workout. When reached by The Republic, Ziesel declined to talk about the workout and referred the paper to ASU, saying he didn't know "the whole situation" and "wasn't tracking what all is going on with this."

Mayich, a 21-year-old defenseman and St. Louis Blues draft pick, remained hospitalized and in critical condition Thursday, a person close to the family confirmed. That person spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Responding to questions Thursday, Arizona State spokesperson Chris Fiscus said the school's athletic department has heat illness guidelines in place, informed by the National Athletic Trainers' Association, and institutional guidelines and requirements relating to the engagement of outside entities that interact with student-athletes. Fiscus declined to answer questions about who authorized the Aug. 20 workout and whether any coaches or trainers were present. He said the university is reviewing the circumstances around the workout.

Military-style workouts, often cited as team-building exercises designed to cultivate toughness, are controversial, with some coaches espousing their effectiveness and others cautioning against what they see as unnecessary risks. Multiple independent experts cited NCAA recommendations and widely established standards that discourage early-season conditioning in the heat to prevent harmful outcomes.

The inclusion of an outside instructor using military-style training — loosely defined as group conditioning led by a motivational figure focused on body-weight strengthening movements such as burpees, push-ups or crawls — raised red flags among multiple athlete safety experts.

"There's a number of previous cases that have shown athlete hospitalizations because of something like applying military-type tactics or training to an organized sports team that's in high school or college, which just is not appropriate or necessary," said Rebecca Stearns, COO of the Korey Stringer Institute at the University of Connecticut. "A lot of data points to the fact that in most of those cases, there was some sort of punishment involved in the activity. We know that punishment in the form of exercise is not a successful approach if you want your athletes to live."

Rod Walters, an athletic trainer and consultant focused on athlete safety, has seen a decline in the prevalence of military-style workouts among school athletic teams. Too many incidents have resulted in harm to athletes, independent investigations and negative publicity, he said.

"It's going the other way because of problems like that," Walters said. "If you're bringing somebody in to do a workout, you better be vetting that person and making sure they are science-based."

An instructor from outside the team brings enhanced risk because, for one, they don't know the individual players and what each can handle. The potential for danger grows if the instructor uses exercises outside the sport, which create unrealistic expectations for what the athletes can tolerate.

After returning from summer break in September 2024, the Tufts men's lacrosse team participated in a workout led in part by a third party with a background in Navy SEAL training. It consisted of burpees and other upper-body-focused exercises. Twenty-four of 61 players who performed the workout developed rhabdomyolysis, which includes symptoms such as extreme soreness and potential kidney failure. Nine were hospitalized.

Walters helped lead an independent investigation that found that the Navy SEAL who ran the Tufts workout had no credentials to lead group exercise and was not versed in the NCAA's guidelines for physical acclimation. The Tufts athletic department also had done little to no vetting of the SEAL or his workout plan, which did not mirror the movements associated with lacrosse.

"The Navy SEAL Workout was not exercise science-based, physiologically sport-specific or tailored to the individual sport of lacrosse," the report read.

A workout based on military training is not inherently dangerous. Jason Kuhn, a retired Navy SEAL who has worked with teams on leadership and conditioning, believes firmly in the value of applying military lessons to other aspects of society.

But, Kuhn said, those lessons must be applied appropriately. When he worked with teams, Kuhn asked coaches about players' condition and scaled workouts accordingly. He implored players to share any injuries — the objective was to become a better player, not prove toughness. After each drill, Kuhn provided a water break and a "heads-shoulders-knees-toes check" for pain. On hot days, he splashed water on players, which "adds to fun and the military-style theme," Kuhn said. "It's really just to keep their body cool."

"You want to push them just a little bit beyond their mental boundaries, but not so far that it's something dangerous," Kuhn said. "It's a completely different thing we're training for. In BUD/S (a SEAL qualification course), we're training for war, and we're making special operators. There's inherent risk that is acceptable with that that is not acceptable with training athletes."

Ziesel has a limited online footprint but has referenced serving in the Navy and Army, including in the Special Forces as a Green Beret. A



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

2009 Navy news release referenced him as a hospitalman and a National Naval Medical Center assistant command fitness leader.

In a 2024 podcast, Ziesel talked about growing up in a missionary family in Puerto Rico, South Africa and Guam and said he spent time in the military in Afghanistan, Eastern Europe and the Middle East before being called to attend seminary. He said that global upbringing and his military service shaped him as an adult:

"God's made me a protector at heart, to say the least."

The Aug. 20 training session took place on the first day of Arizona State's fall semester, the earliest NCAA rules allow hockey teams to start formal activities. NCAA guidelines warn against intense exercise early in the season.

"A lack of progression and sport-specificity in the volume, intensity, mode and duration of conditioning programs in transition periods has been noted as a primary factor in nontraumatic fatalities," the guidelines read.

Over the offseason, 18 new players joined the Sun Devils roster, including Mayich, a Stoney Creek, Ontario, native who transferred from Clarkson University in Potsdam, N.Y. The NCAA's guidelines on heat safety note that players like Mayich — new to a program, and therefore a new climate — could be particularly susceptible to risk.

On the day Mayich collapsed, the temperature in Tempe was 86 degrees at 6:51 a.m. with 51 percent humidity and no wind, according to the Weather Underground website. Based on those conditions, the National Weather Service recommends 15 minutes of break for every hour of exercise.

Lt. Colonel David DeGroot, director of the Heat Center at Martin Army Community Hospital, has

Published numerous studies on the effects of heat on athletes. In an email, he said acclimation in the fall takes 10 to 14 days of exposure, and that more and longer rest in the shade reduces risks.

"Particularly for fall sports, with preseason practice during the late summer months, the lack of acclimation to the heat is the primary concern," DeGroot said.

The first workouts of a new season are also when athletes — especially athletes new to a team — are least likely to protect themselves, according to DeGroot. Their internal motivation to prove themselves or earn a role may cause them to push past a point their bodies can handle.

"Coaches, trainers, and athletes need to be aware of the role of motivation in exertional heat stroke," DeGroot said. "It is very challenging to mitigate the risk of excessive motivation, so coaches and trainers need to be prepared to recognize and react if a heat-related collapse occurs."

The Athletic spoke to three individuals with experience in athletic training and strength and conditioning for high-level athletes at the NHL and college level, and all agreed there is no performance-related reason for a hockey player to train in the heat.

Outdoor summer workouts, when many athletes are going through the "transition" period generally considered the riskiest, present a number of challenges, according to Dr. Stephen Paul, who previously served as University of Arizona's Director of Athletic Medicine.

"We don't do any outdoor practice without a full preseason evaluation, and we don't do any without the knowledge or practice of an EAP (Emergency Action Plan)," said Paul, who stressed that he did not have knowledge about the Arizona State incident and could not comment on that situation specifically.

Paul said the presence of medical personnel — normally an athletic trainer — would be required and the availability of a cold tub and rectal thermometer would be key, as would vigilant monitoring of whether players "drop down" in any capacity during a workout.

Exertional heat stroke can be fatal in up to a third of cases if untreated, DeGroot said. If cooled within 30 minutes of collapse, he said, the mortality rate falls to nearly zero. A cold tub is the best tool, but if that's unavailable, bed sheets soaked in ice water are useful. Some form of on-location cooling is considered essential.

Ideally, coaches and schools can follow precautions to avoid the worst-case scenario. The most basic save lives. When players gather for late-

summer practices to start a long season, coaches need to resist the temptation to test them immediately.

"The first day," Stearns said, "should never be the hardest workout."

The Athletic LOADED: 08.28.2026

1398588 Websites

The Athletic / NHL stars sound off on offseason moves, new coaches and franchise futures

By Max Bultman

Aug. 27, 2026

Hello hockey fans, Max Bultman here, filling in as the 2026 offseason reaches its final days. We know the season is close because we're finally hearing from the game's biggest stars, as the NHL's European Player Media Tour took place over the weekend. That offered a chance for some insight into the summer's biggest topics. Let's go.

Let's Hear It

Draisaitl backs Babcock

The Edmonton Oilers are set to be even more under the microscope than usual this season — quite a statement for a team that's been to two of the last three Stanley Cup finals, and quite a season to welcome in The Athletic's newest NHL beat writer, Janson Duench.

That's mostly because of the ticking Connor McDavid clock. The game's best player is chasing a championship while the franchise that drafted him 11 years ago works to prove it can surround him with enough help to win it. In pursuit of that goal, the Oilers made one of the most eye-raising moves of a very busy summer, hiring Mike Babcock as head coach, three years after he flamed out of an attempted NHL return in Columbus less than 90 days after being hired, and before his first season with the Blue Jackets even began.

Add in Babcock's history with Mitch Marner and Johan Franzen, and the sight of him getting another shot, this time trying to get two of the league's biggest stars over the hump, is a massive story to follow.

But speaking with The Athletic's Chris Johnston in Munich, one of those stars, Leon Draisaitl, explained how Babcock won over the team's leadership group with an honest meeting.

"It was pretty clear pretty quick that he could be our guy," Draisaitl told Johnston. "Just in what he sees, and his attitude towards us — you know, the leaders on the team that want to be coached and that want to be held accountable. I think it's just what was needed. We had some great meetings with him and then, yeah, it just kind of took off from there."

In some ways, the sentiment from Draisaitl and the Oilers' stars of wanting to be pushed harder and be held more accountable is impressive, perhaps admirable. But Babcock's history makes him a lightning rod, and it's fair to wonder if the Oilers are fully ready for everything that will come with the hire. A whole lot is riding on it.

Stützle, Seider speak

Speaking of German stars and their teams' newsy summers, young Atlantic Division foes Tim Stützle and Moritz Seider spoke to Johnston about the Senators' and Red Wings' biggest offseason topics.

Ottawa, of course, saw its captain, Brady Tkachuk, traded to Florida — a hit to the Senators' physical presence and scoring ability. But while Stützle is obviously aware of that, he wisely focused on turning the page and the new players Ottawa brought in, headlined by talented young winger William Eklund.

It looks as though the Senators could be in for a major identity shift from the punishing, pugnacious brand of hockey Tkachuk was so central to, to perhaps a faster brand led by Stützle and Eklund. But even after dealing their captain, the Sens still have an elite team defense, excellent young



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

centers and a path to remaining an upstart young team in the East. Fascinating franchise.

Meanwhile, Seider also tried not to dwell on a chaotic summer for his franchise — keyword tried, considering so much of the Red Wings' uncertainty remains unresolved. They still don't have a general manager — they're the only team without one — and Dylan Larkin's trade request twists in the wind in the interim.

The 25-year-old Seider turned his focus inward, talking about how he can keep improving after a top-five finish for the Norris Trophy last season: "There are a lot of question marks. The great thing about that is you can only control yourself." Here are his full answers.

Because of all the moving parts, Detroit's outlook is cloudier than the Senators' right now. But Seider is one thing the next general manager won't have to worry about at all in their first year.

More from Munich: NHL players' union boss Marty Walsh is bullish on the 2030 Olympics, and league deputy commissioner Bill Daly says the NHL is on track to award its 33rd franchise to Texas — either Houston or Austin — as soon as the end of the year. Giddy up.

Trivia Time

NHL captains aren't traded very often, especially if you exclude in-season deals like the Florida Panthers' 2025 deadline acquisition of Brad Marchand. But the Panthers will be hoping their Tkachuk deal goes just like another offseason trade from semi-recent history (think this millennium), in which a re-homed captain immediately won the Stanley Cup in his first year with his new team.

Who was that player?

Hint: He was the same age (26) as Tkachuk is now.

Answer at the bottom.

Crystal Ball

Who will rule in 2031?

After Corey Pronman rolled out his pipeline rankings last week, he added a new wrinkle: a projection of what the NHL standings could look like five years from now, when all those farm systems and young players are finally in the NHL.

That, of course, adds some weight back to the league's current heavyweights that may not have star-studded farm systems: Florida, Carolina, Tampa and Minnesota all still make the top 10 on this list, despite being in the bottom 10 of Pronman's pipeline rankings.

Still, the No. 1 team on both lists was the same: 2031 is shaping up to be a good time in San Jose.

A quick peek at the top five in the 2030-31 rankings:

San Jose Sharks

Montreal Canadiens

Utah Mammoth

Buffalo Sabres

Toronto Maple Leafs

Check out the full list to see where your team slots in.

Coast to Coast

Even More Coverage from Munich! Lukáš Dostál on Leo Carlsson's megadeal and its impact on the Ducks: "Money has to go somewhere ... I'm just so happy for Leo."

Missing Sean McIndoe? Get your fix here, where he digs into your wackiest ideas at the height of slow-news summer. I like the word/letter game.

While the Red Wings' GM search continues, the list of semi-urgent tasks for the eventual hire isn't getting any shorter.

Scary news out West, as Arizona State University is investigating the circumstances surrounding an outdoor workout that led to a men's

hockey player collapsing. Katie Strang and Jeremy Rutherford have more here.

Murat Ates and Jesse Granger dive into Connor Hellebuyck's strangely human NHL season in 2025-26, and what to expect from him going forward.

"The Athletic Hockey Show" Prospect Series spent the week exploring Corey Pronman's redrafts of 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025. Watch or listen here.

Trivia Answer

Who was the captain who was traded by his former team in the summer and then won the Cup in Year 1 in his new home?

That would be Mike Richards, who did it with the Los Angeles Kings after being acquired from the Philadelphia Flyers in June 2011.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.28.2026

1398589 Websites

The Athletic / NHLPA boss Marty Walsh on committing to the 2030 Olympics, hockey's international growth, more

By Chris Johnston

Aug. 27, 2026

MUNICH — Having already delivered on a critical part of his mandate by getting NHL players back to the Olympics earlier this year, Marty Walsh doesn't think it will be a big challenge to keep them there.

The NHL Players' Association's executive director believes the experience in Milan-Cortina was so overwhelmingly positive that it will force all stakeholders to make things work when it comes time to hammer out an official deal for the 2030 Games in the French Alps.

The NHLPA already has a formal commitment from the NHL on participation in the next Winter Olympics as part of their 2025 memorandum of understanding, although the clause in that agreement notes it is "subject to negotiation of terms acceptable to each of the NHL, NHLPA, and IIHF (and/or IOC)."

In the past, those negotiations have broken down. The NHL skipped the 2018 Olympics after sending players to the five preceding Games, then pulled out of 2022 over COVID-19 concerns. But Walsh doesn't think there's any danger of a similar step back this time around.

"I would be shocked if the IOC and the IIHF didn't understand that they need us in the Olympics, because the ratings were off the charts," he told The Athletic during the NHL/NHLPA European player media tour. "The president of the IOC (Kirsty Coventry) mentioned in a comment about 'The Olympics helps the NHL with ratings.' Yeah, but the NHL helped the Olympics with ratings. Let's not (kid) ourselves. I think 20-something million people watched the gold medal game."

The official number in the United States was 18.6 million average live viewers on NBC and Peacock. In Canada, 8.7 million were tuned in to CBC at the game's conclusion. And the U.S.-Canada men's final saw the puck dropped just after 8 a.m. ET, prompting NHL commissioner Gary Bettman to later say that the ratings "would've been twice as high" with an afternoon start in North America.

For Walsh, the larger point is that all stakeholders have too much to lose if they can't find agreement on the hospitality, ticketing, insurance and marketing details that go into the deal that formally delivers NHL players to the Olympics.

"We'll get there," he said. "I'm not worried about that. The agreement is not about players playing in the Olympics; the agreement is all the other stuff that goes with it. Like accommodations and all that stuff. I'm not worried about that."

Growing the game internationally and establishing a robust calendar of international events are big priorities for Walsh, and it's been one of the major successes during his tenure with the NHLPA.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

Before he was officially hired in February 2023, he'd heard from Connor McDavid and a few other high-profile players about the importance of returning to the Olympics. Because of that, Walsh said that topic was broached in his first conversation with Bettman after taking the job, and their continued discussions eventually paved the way to Milan.

Previous union leaders had sought to establish a regular schedule of international tournaments for their membership and fallen short of actually making it happen. Walsh is making serious inroads. The wildly successful 4 Nations Face-Off happened on his watch in February 2025, and the NHLPA is now co-planning a revived World Cup of Hockey tournament with the NHL, scheduled for February 2028.

"We came up with an idea, a schedule," Walsh said. "We didn't have enough time to do a World Cup in '24, so we did the 4 Nations — kind of a prelude into the Olympics and World Cup. So we had the 4 Nations, '26 we had the Olympics — obviously that went well — '28 we have the World Cup, and our intention is to be at the '30 Olympics."

Underpinning this new era of international hockey is a sense of harmony between the NHLPA and NHL. They've guaranteed labor peace through at least September 2030 with a new collective bargaining agreement taking effect next month, and the parties have established a stronger working relationship since Walsh was hired.

At one point during last week's media tour in Munich, Walsh huddled with NHLPA and NHL staff as well as a couple of European-based marketers who were on site. The league and union have made a commitment to bring regular-season games to Germany for the next three years, starting with the Chicago Blackhawks and Ottawa Senators playing Dec. 18 and 20 in Düsseldorf, and that's part of an increased focus on finding more inroads on a continent that produces roughly one-third of NHL players.

"I think you have real revenue opportunities, I think you have sponsorship opportunities and you have individual growth opportunities for players," Walsh said. "Your home country might be Germany, but I think there's opportunities for American and Canadian players as well. With social media, if you get more and more opportunities for broadcast TV here and getting games on TV, their personalities are going to come out. Some NBA players, like LeBron James, he'd walk down the street in Germany and they'd know who he is."

"We're going to do the same thing for hockey. We have Macklin Celebrini and guys coming up. Connor McDavid, the best hockey player. There's a lot of opportunities for players in the growth of the game."

These are heady times for the world's top hockey league.

A surging salary cap has sent the top salaries skyward after years of stagnation, and the new CBA brings with it some other significant changes for players. In exchange for giving the NHL an 84-game regular season, two more games than before, the NHLPA managed to eliminate fitness testing, shorten camps to just 13 days for players who appeared in 50 or more games the previous season and reduce the number of preseason games to four per team, with any player who has 100-plus NHL games limited to two.

They also eliminated the dress code, which Walsh sees as an important step for a league that needs to sell itself in new ways.

"We're investing more in Europe," said Walsh. "We're investing more in the world. We're up to 84 games. We're in the Olympics. We're in the World Cup. It's a different business than it was 20 years ago. So, it's growing and evolving and changing. I think that part of the growth to the game is also the exposure to fans about their favorite players. What they wear. What they like. What they eat. All of that stuff. There's more and more of that happening."

"You've seen the success of other leagues doing it, so if a player is comfortable with that, we support them to do that."

The Athletic LOADED: 08.28.2026

1398590 Websites

The Athletic / The final days of NHL Slow News Summer: Tackling readers' wackiest ideas

By Sean McIndoe

Aug. 27, 2026

We've made it to the end of Slow News Summer.

Well, almost. There are still a few weeks until the NHL is well and truly back. But my schedule for that period is mostly filled, with projections to make, long-shot award swings to miss, oddly specific predictions to miss even worse and a trusty bizarro-meter to fire up. It's going to get busy around these parts.

But not quite yet. For one more week, we're still firmly in the annual dead zone where nothing is happening, and no idea is too dumb. We started almost two months ago with a post about syllables, so the bar for nonsense has been set pretty high.

How do you beat something as pointless as arguing over how many syllables are in Cale Makar's name? By asking the readers, of course. So last week, that's what I did.

I've got one more week of Slow News Summer to fill, so: Give me your craziest idea that could actually work as a good post.

Roster-building, research, whatever... hit me with something that's so weird it would have never occurred to me.

And boy, did you ever come up with some ideas. Some really clever, original ideas. Were they good ideas? Not necessarily, but that's never stopped me before.

So today, we'll do this lightning-round style, with five of your best ideas for a Slow News Summer post. I'll take the first swing at each, then turn it over to you in the comments. It's late August; you don't have any work to do anyway.

What team can ice the best forward line whose players' last names start with letters spelling out their team abbreviation?

For instance, Edmonton (EDM) could be Eberle-Draisaitl-McDavid. Dallas (DAL) could be Duchene-Arnott-Lehtinen.

Bonus points if you can repeat with the defensive pair + goalie.

This one had me excited for roughly 15 minutes, before somebody jumped into the conversation and unceremoniously dropped what was pretty obviously the correct answer. More on that in a minute.

For me, the place to start here was pretty clearly with the Montreal Canadiens, who even give us the added advantage of having two plausible abbreviations, MON or MTL. But neither gives us access to Maurice Richard, Jean Beliveau, Doug Harvey or any of the great goaltenders. The best I was able to come up with for the Habs was something like Howie Morenz/Pierre Turgeon/Guy Lafleur up front with Andrei Markov/J.C. Tremblay/Bunny Laroque on the back end. That's not bad, but doesn't feel unbeatable.

The other teams that typically dominate our six-man roster games are also in trouble. The Pittsburgh Penguins can't use any of their mega-stars. Same with the Detroit Red Wings, Colorado Avalanche and New York Islanders. The Edmonton Oilers get a little feisty until you realize Greg de Vries is going to claim a blue-line spot. The Chicago Blackhawks and Philadelphia Flyers get tripped up by the Is, the Buffalo Sabres by the Us and the Calgary Flames by the Ys.

The Toronto Maple Leafs would have to use Igor Ozhiganov on a Team TOR defense, unless we try to get cute and go with a TML abbreviation instead. Then we can ice a John Tavares/Auston Matthews/Gary Leeman forward line backed by an Ian Turnbull/Gus Morton/Harry Lumley combo. That's good, but not good enough, and besides nobody uses TML.

That did seem to point to a strategy of avoiding vowels. I didn't get very far with TBL or CBJ. But the dam finally broke on the St. Louis Blues, where their history of briefly having star players near the peak of their powers paid off with Team STL combos of Brendan Shanahan/Keith Tkachuk/Chuck Lefley and Scott Stevens/Jean-Guy Talbot/Mike Liut (with the option to swap in longer-serving names like Brian Sutter or Alex Sten if you prefer loyalty). There are a couple of obvious weak spots, but only a couple, which made the Blues the best option I could come up with on my own.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

Best 11 man team – 1 goalie, 6 forwards, 4 D – from each franchise with one player from every bucket of games played...1-99, 100-109, 200-209, etc, with the last bucket being greater than 1000. (Not sure every team can fill all the buckets).

I like it. Let's assume you're getting credit in terms of "best" for the player's entire career, not just what they did for that particular team.

My immediate thought was back to the Blues, since they could use Martin Brodeur or Wayne Gretzky in the 0-99 category and build from there. (There's a reason they're the team that always dominates the \$200 game.) But they've never had a player get to 1,000 games with them, so they're out.

That actually makes the Blues an outlier; every other team that debuted before 1990 has at least one 1,000-game player. We do lose a few later teams, like the Florida Panthers and Columbus Blue Jackets. Other teams run into trouble elsewhere; the Ottawa Senators have three 1,000-plus players, but none in the 900s, while the Flyers don't have anyone in the 800s.

Still, we've got plenty to work with, even without dipping into the usual Original Six suspects. For example, I came up with this for the Islanders:

0-99: Roberto Luongo, G

100-199: Devon Toews, D

200-299: Pierre Turgeon, F

300-399: Zdeno Chara, D

400-499: Ed Westfall, D

500-599: Pat LaFontaine, F

600-699: John Tavares, F

700-799: Mike Bossy, F

800-899: Clarke Gillies, F

900-999: Anders Lee, F

1,000+: Denis Potvin, D

Not bad. And that's without using Matthew Schaefer in the 0-99 spot, even though he (very temporarily) qualifies. Islanders fans can feel free to swap him in for Luongo and use Billy Smith in the 600s to get rid of Tavares if they'd prefer.

The Devils might be even better:

0-99: Phil Housley, D

100-199: Jaromír Jágr, F

200-299: Ilya Kovalchuk, F

300-399: Brendan Shanahan, F

400-499: Pat Verbeek, F

500-599: Brian Rafalski, D

600-699: Scott Gomez, F

700-799: Bobby Holík, F

800-899: Scott Niedermayer, D

900-999: Scott Stevens, D

1000+: Martin Brodeur, G

And of course, the Penguins are just playing on easy mode, starting with a Sidney Crosby (1,000+), Mario Lemieux (900s), Jaromír Jágr (800s) trio that makes them pretty much unstoppable.

Still, I'd love to see some other teams. Let me know what you can come up with for your favorite team in the comments.

Not a bad idea by Bill here. Kid might have a future in the sportswriting game.

But while the idea itself is strong, we're going to immediately run into a problem: NHL 94 was the year we started to see ratings inflation creep into the series, meaning getting a full starting lineup under the 200-mark will be near impossible. According to NHL94.com, the lowest-rated player is Greg Smyth, who was stuck with a 29. Everyone else in the league is at least a 32, and only 27 players come in under 40. That means a six-man starting roster is just going to the very worst guys at each position. And even the five-man roster Bill is asking for, which presumably means no goalie, is going to be filled with bums.

Luckily, as longtime readers know, there's a solution here: NHLPA '93, which experts agree was better than NHL 94.

That game was ruthless with the ratings, infamously dropping a "1" overall on poor Shawn Chambers. That gives us plenty of space to search for bargains. In return for lowering our ratings pool by switching from 94 to 93, I'll up the degree of difficulty to a full six-man roster with a goalie. Using the NHLPA 93 archive, we should be able to build something.

Something good? No. Most of the players I was hoping would be bargains turned out to still be out of our price range. For example, Dominik Hašek is still a backup on the Blackhawks back then, but he's a 61 overall. John LeClair wasn't on the Flyers yet, but he was still a 60. Pavel Bure was already an 84 as a rookie. And despite being just one year into their careers, Detroit's Sergei Fedorov and Nicklas Lidström already have superstar ratings, because of East Coast bias.

But we can find some bargains if we dig deep enough. Working from the net out, we'll give our starter's job to Guy Hebert. The future Ducks star was the Blues' third-stringer back then, and was saddled with the worst rating for any goalie in the game at just 15 overall. We can also use the powers of hindsight to land another bargain in Quebec's Adam Foote, who'd just started what would be a 19-year career and was stuck with a 31. And we'll pair him with a real head-scratcher: Minnesota's Craig Ludwig, midway through a 17-year career and just a few years removed from a top-10 Norris finish but somehow just a 28 overall.

That leaves us with 126 points to spend up front, an average of 42 per forward. That's not enough to be able to afford much — typical 42s include Winnipeg's Danton Cole and Ottawa's Mark Freer, who you have definitely heard of — but we'll make it work. And we'll do it by starting with a solid glue guy in Quebec's Jamie Baker, an inspirational checking forward who played for nearly a decade and comes in at just 21 overall. And we'll add another defensive presence in the Hartford Whalers' Bobby Holík, who's still a decade away from getting \$45 million from the Rangers but will cost us just 48 points.

That leaves us with 57 points to spend, which gives us just enough space to squeeze in arguably the best bargain in the entire game: Buffalo's Dave Andreychuk, who already had over 300 goals to his credit at 28 years old and has a pair of 50-goal seasons in his immediate future, but comes in at just a 55 rating.

Forwards: Dave Andreychuk (55), Bobby Holík (48), Jamie Baker (21)

Defensemen: Adam Foote (31), Craig Ludwig (28)

Goalies: Guy Hebert (15)

That comes in at 198 points, leaving us two points to spare for a midseason pickup, as long as it's a Senators defenseman. Cap management, baby.

For this one, we're going to pivot to the "only get credit for what they did on your team" ruleset. And we'll start with the first team that came to mind: the Flames.

Obviously you've got the legendary Jarome Iginla as your starting point, since he was drafted by Dallas and then traded to Calgary before playing an NHL game. We can put Lanny McDonald and his 60-goal season on the other wing, with Doug Gilmour in between for a very strong forward line.

For the blue line, we're going to need to figure out what to do with undrafted players like Mark Giordano. They meet the technical standards of the rule, but I'm not sure they fit the spirit of the thing. So unless a player was first signed by another team, undrafted players don't count. (Sorry, Oilers fans who were banking on Wayne Gretzky.)

That hurts our Flames entry, although we can still find some decent value in Noah Hanifin and some better-than-you-think years from Phil Housley.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

And we're all set in goal with Miikka Kiprusoff. So our Flames look like this:

Forwards: Jarome Iginla, Doug Gilmour, Lanny McDonald

Defense: Noah Hanifin, Phil Housley

Goalie: Miikka Kiprusoff

That's pretty good. Let's try a few more teams, starting with the Flyers:

Forwards: Eric Lindros, John LeClair, Mark Recchi

Defense: Mark Howe, Éric Desjardins

Goalie: Bernie Parent

We said the Oilers couldn't use the undrafted Gretzky, but that doesn't mean the Los Angeles Kings can't claim him after trading for him.

Forwards: Wayne Gretzky, Marcel Dionne, Jeff Carter, but not Glen Murray (he knows what he did)

Defense: Jake Muzzin, Mattias Norström

Goalie: Rogie Vachon

And what the heck, let's try a Minnesota Wild entry...

Forwards: Zach Parise, Mats Zuccarello, Marcus Foligno

Defense: Jared Spurgeon, Ryan Suter

Goalie: Devan Dubnyk

That's a decent start, with plenty of meat left on the bone for the comments. I've left the Original Six for you to mine (but don't be cheap and use guys from before there was a draft at all). I'm assuming there's a fantastic Blues team to be found, starting with Brett Hull and Chris Pronger. Or you could make a Vegas Golden Knights entry that was just ... the Vegas Golden Knights. Let's see what you can come up with.

This may be too much research or already done, but at least it's also a dumb idea. Best Hockey Not-a-family. Best 6 man lineup of unrelated guys with the same last name.

The challenge here won't be so much finding the best possible team, but finding any teams at all. Let's start with the two obvious options:

Team Smith

Forwards: Hooley, Bobby, Sid

Defense: Steve, Rick

Goalie: Billy

And then ...

Team Jones

Forwards: Keith, David, Ryan

Defense: Seth, Randy

Goalie: Martin

Those teams are ... fine. They're OK. Team Smith has a few Hall of Famers at least. But surely we can do better, right?

Maybe not. My first thought was a Team Hall, where we could start with Glenn in goal and Taylor up front, but we can't find a second defenseman. Team Hall disappoints us, once again.

From there, it's a lot of near-misses. We'd have something if we could combine Teams Richard, Richards and Richardson, but that would feel cheap. Team Forsberg starts off with Peter and Filip and has Anton in net, but that's where the path ends. Same with Team Fleury, which offers Theo and Marc-André but ends after either Haydn or Cale. We can't find a goalie for Team Lemieux, Team Stevens or Team Savard.

I can at least get six players out of ...

Team Anderson

Forwards: Glenn, John, Josh

Defense: Tom, Russ

Goalie: Craig

That one has a Hall of Famer (Glenn) and a Hart Trophy winner (Tom), so it might be our best option so far.

Want more? Well, we're one letter off ...

Team Moore

Forwards: Dickie, Dominic, Trevor

Defense: John, Ian

Goalie: Robbie

Yeah, that's starting to feel a little desperate. This one's a bit better ...

Team Wilson

Forwards: Tom, Carey, Johnny

Defense: Doug, Behn

Goalie: Dunc

Solid, but again, not exactly an All-Star team. So let's leave this with your chance to beat me at my own game. Hit me up in the comments with your six-man team of unrelated players who share a surname.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.28.2026

1398591 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Five potential landing spots for Jets' Connor Hellebuyck

Emily Sadler

After a summer of speculation, Winnipeg Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck officially went public with his long-rumoured request to be traded.

In his statement, released Thursday via agent Ray Petkau, Hellebuyck said he first made the request to the team "several months ago" and expressed his desire to keep things quiet and respectful.

"With training camp approaching," he wrote, via Petkau, "I felt it was important to publicly confirm my request."

The NHL has seen some big-name goalies move to new markets this summer, including starters for the past two Stanley Cup champs. The Florida Panthers let Sergei Bobrovsky go in free agency, where he signed with Toronto, and traded for Jacob Markstrom from New Jersey in his place. Frederik Andersen, fresh off winning the Cup in Carolina, is now a member of the Edmonton Oilers.

Now, get ready for the biggest move of them all.

It's hard to imagine a more coveted netminder becoming available. Hellebuyck is a three-time Vezina Trophy winner, most recently earning the title in back-to-back seasons in 2023-24 and 2024-25. He won the William M. Jennings Trophy both of those years, too, and capped that '24-'25 campaign with the Hart Memorial Trophy as league MVP — an honour rarely bestowed on a netminder.

The 33-year-old shone on the international stage earlier this year as he backstopped Team USA to Olympic gold. That success, and his public honesty afterwards as he voiced his frustrations about not being able to win it all in Winnipeg, first fuelled speculation about his future.

Now, we know the netminder has played his last game as a Jet.

Hellebuyck is under contract through 2030-31, at \$8.5 million a year. That's the third-highest AAV for a goaltender league-wide (tied with Vancouver's Thatcher Demko) behind Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevskiy and Igor Shesterkin of the New York Rangers.

He has a full no-movement clause for one more season, putting him firmly in control here. Starting next year, that changes to a modified clause that states he must submit a 10-team approved trade list.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

So, where might the elite netminder be traded? Where could he fit best, in terms of opportunity to thrive — and, of course, to win? We've got a few ideas.

Had things gone differently around the draft, Hellebuyck would already be a Sabre. Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reported back in June that he believed Winnipeg and Buffalo had been talking about a deal — and that Hellebuyck "would have been willing to waive (his no-movement clause) to go to Buffalo."

Ultimately, no trade came to fruition, of course. (Imagine, for a second, if a proposed trade had gone through at the time — how different might this off-season have looked around the league?)

Just because conversations stalled then, doesn't mean they can't pick up again. Two months later, Hellebuyck-to-Buffalo still makes a ton of sense. There would be no better way to build on last season's success than bringing in a bona fide No. 1 netminder to backstop them into their new era of contention. Even though the club's by-committee approach to the crease was effective last year — between Alex Lyon (.907 save percentage in 36 appearances), Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (.910 SV% in 35 games) and Colten Ellis (.903 SV% in 16 games), the Sabres posted the third-best team save percentage league-wide (.900) — the opportunity to land a true star in Hellebuyck is a massive upgrade by any measure.

It makes sense for Hellebuyck, too. He'd be joining a passionate U.S. market relatively close to home for the Michigander, and a team on the rise. And he'd be playing behind a talented young blue line led by Rasmus Dahlin and featuring Owen Power and a Mattias Samuelsson fresh off a breakout year, as well as newcomers Olen Zellweger and Louis Crevier. There's tons more room for growth there — especially if GM Jarmo Kekalainen can plug in an elite netminder as the last line of defence.

With just over \$5 million in cap space right now, Kekalainen would have to clear up a little room to accommodate Hellebuyck. But the trade chips are there — the Sabres have a deep prospect pool, their own first-rounders the next three years, and could deal one of their trio of netminders back to Winnipeg, too, to play alongside Stuart Skinner.

Sunny Mehta pulled off some savvy signings this off-season, answering a lot of questions about the Devils' identity under the new GM. But one question he didn't really answer?

Goaltending.

While it's true that Jake Allen outperformed Jacob Markstrom last year (Allen posted a .904 save percentage in 37 games, compared to Markstrom's .883 through 44), which led at least in part to Markstrom's trade to Florida earlier this summer, it's unclear whether the Devils feel they've got a true No. 1 netminder this year. New Jersey ranked in the bottom half of team save percentage in 2025-26 (.889) and are currently set to embark on 2026-27 with a trio of Allen, Nico Daws, and David Rittich. While cost effective — the total payroll in the blue paint comes in at just under \$4 million — there's no sure thing there.

Like the Sabres, the Devils (currently with \$3.85 million in cap space) will need to do some minor number-crunching. New Jersey has four first-rounders in the next two years, so the capital is there to get a deal done if Winnipeg is looking to retool via the draft.

Do the Golden Knights have cap space to accommodate a new No. 1 goalie? No. But year after year, we've watched this team pull off big-money moves anyway.

It seems nothing will stop Vegas from being in the mix for pretty much every big-name free agent or trade target in the past — this is a team that gets deals done. So, onto the list they go!

No stranger to splashy off-season moves, the Golden Knights have also not been shy to make big changes in net. Their three trips to the Stanley Cup Final over the past nine years, including two such trips in the past three seasons, have all featured different No. 1 netminders.

But here's the thing: bringing in Hellebuyck makes no sense for Vegas if Adin Hill isn't part of the return, and that raises a lot of questions for both teams involved. Hill, 30, is signed at \$6.25 million annually through 2030-31 and has control here with a no-trade clause that allows him to submit a 10-team no-trade list. (That list narrows to eight teams next summer, and six in 2029-30.) Is Winnipeg on that list? Do the Jets believe Hill can bounce back to form after a down year? Does Vegas?

The only thing more enticing than joining the team that went all the way to the Cup Final last year? That'd be the team that won the whole thing.

Like Vegas, the Hurricanes are never shy to take a big swing. But unlike the Golden Knights, Carolina's desire to make a splash doesn't always see the same kind of results. This summer's attempt came when the club acquired defenceman John Carlson's rights, but the Hurricanes were unable to lock him up. It's been an otherwise quiet summer for the champs (minus all those celebrations, of course) and in fact the one big roster-altering move we did see was the departure of Frederik Andersen in free agency. While it's true that Brandon Bussi seamlessly slots in at No. 1 going forward after more than proving he can carry the load, it's also true that goalies like Hellebuyck don't become available too often...

And if the champs have in fact been saving up to make a splash to set up their run-it-back season... well, this would be quite something.

In terms of logistics, the Hurricanes are fascinating. They've got just under \$10 million in cap space heading into the season with a Cup-winning core locked securely in place for at least the next five years, and have four first-rounders in the next three years. Could unsigned RFA Alexander Nikishin factor in here? Also of note: Hellebuyck and Jaccob Slavin were two of the biggest factors in Team USA's Olympic success, it's not hard to imagine the goalie wishing to reunite with one of his most trusted rearguards.

The Sharks' big off-season saw them bring in some big rearguards in Jacob Trouba and Darnell Nurse. Might they wish to bring in the biggest name in goaltending to serve as the last line of defence?

While it's true that the Sharks appeared to have mostly solved all future goaltending questions when they acquired Yaroslav Askarov from the Predators in August 2024, it's also true that Askarov's play in San Jose hasn't always lived up to expectations. This is a team that's clearly looking to take the next step, but can only do so if the goaltending is there.

They've got cap space, draft assets, and a wealth of prospects that would likely entice the Jets.

A move to bring in Hellebuyck would declare to the league that the Sharks are looking to contend in a real way, and now. If Hellebuyck is willing to bet on the young club, that would be a ringing endorsement that they're ready.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.28.2026

1398592 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Stunning rash of early injuries not causing Oilers GM Bowman to panic

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — Among the many personality traits necessary to retain one's sanity as a National Hockey League general manager, a high panic threshold ranks right up there.

In Canada, a wise GM leaves that to the fan base. And here in Edmonton, that fan base is emoting over the Oilers' Wednesday news release that four players — Frederik Andersen, Matt Savoie, Mattias Janmark and fringe defenceman Alec Regula — will all miss training camp with various undisclosed injuries.

"No, it's not great when guys are hurt," allowed Oilers GM Stan Bowman, speaking over the phone Thursday from his home in the Chicago area. "But internally, we're not nearly as concerned or nervous about it as the fans or the media.

"We're not worried about this," he repeated. "This is part of the sport, and we'll work our way through it. And there's an opportunity, probably, for someone else to get a better look than they may otherwise would have."

First off, how bad are the (undisclosed) injuries to Andersen and Savoie?

"Matt's going to miss less time than Freddie. Also, Freddie's older. So we're probably not going to be pushing the envelope, trying to probably give him enough time," Bowman said. "Matt, I don't want to put a timeline



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

on it, but it's not like he's going to miss half a season or anything like that. It's going to be much less than that. Probably around the training camp, we'll have a better timeline on things.

"He is going to miss some time, but it's nothing that we're concerned about."

In a key season with a new coaching staff, the Oilers will open the season without their top line left winger in Savoie and their prized free agent signing in goal. Also missing will be Janmark, a plug-and-play veteran who kills penalties and fills a role not everyone wants to fill.

It's fair to debate how much hockey is left in a career grinder who has the ultimate respect of his teammates through four teams and 680 games. When a 33-year-old has surgery late in a season, but still can't play the next, well, history tells us the end may be near for this game Swede.

"He's been playing through a lot of pain. Honestly, he knows he played too long with it last year, waiting to see if he could stick it out," Bowman said. "He's dealing with a lot, and he's not ready to start the season. It is what it is."

Does this open the door for a PTO (professional tryout) or perhaps a deal like the one Bowman signed Jack Roslovic to roughly a year ago?

We'd say that an unsigned free agent left winger might view Edmonton more favourable today than two weeks ago, as might a Curtis Lazar-type, with Janmark out of the picture.

Bowman will keep his eyes open in that market, and with ample cap space, he'll also take calls as camps progress across the league, and perhaps a younger player pushes an older one out of a job.

But they'll start the replacement process internally, where players like Ike Howard and Josh Samanski smell opportunity.

"Howard's in that group, where we expect them to be on the team. Then there are guys like Samanski and Quinn Hutson (63 AHL points in 67 games last season). Then you've got maybe unknown guys that are a little bit older, like Eduards Tralmaks (29) and Aku Raty (25)," Bowman said. "Those guys are not young guys, but they're accomplished American League players who were always going to get a look. Now, maybe they'll get a different look."

On a team that has hired more than its fair share of head coaches over the years, but has a core of players that's been together for years now, 2026 training camp will have some freshness in Edmonton.

The last, disappointing season is behind them. For the first time in a few years, they've had a long, healing summer.

And in comes head coach Mike Babcock, whose reputation precedes him.

"Essentially, it's sort of like starting a new program here," Bowman said. "Babs is bringing a much different look, D.J. (assistant coach Smith) as well. We got some new players coming in. We've got some players that are hungry, whether it's redemption or to prove that they're better players than they showed, and they have a new coach to come in."

"There's reason for excitement because it's like they're coming in with a new guy who doesn't have a bad opinion of them. Doesn't have an opinion at all. It's like they really do get a fresh start."

Being healthy wouldn't hurt. But when you're Stan Bowman, it's no time to panic.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.28.2026

1398593 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Which teams can make biggest leap at 2028 World Cup of Hockey?

Ryan Dixon

After two consecutive feverish Februaries, we're getting a break from best-on-best international hockey.

But not a long one.

The 4 Nations Face-Off in 2025 and 2026 Winter Olympics — which featured NHLers for the first time since 2014 — reminded us all how intense high-level international hockey can be. And, roughly 16 months from now, we'll get another wonderful dose when the first World Cup of Hockey since 2016 takes place in February of 2028.

With a two-year gap between Team USA's gold medal showing at the '26 Games and the next big international event, we want to examine which teams are poised to make the biggest jump for the '28 World Cup.

This isn't a power ranking of the teams and we're not going to sketch out full rosters. But we will look at the lineups from six months ago in Italy and rank teams according to how much meaningful improvement they can make ahead of the WC. To do that, we'll consider injured players who missed the Olympics, where key players from last time will be in their career arcs by 2028 and, of course, who some of the newcomers could be for a given nation.

While nothing is yet written in stone, we know eight countries will compete at the 2028 WC and we expect them to be Canada, the United States, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Czechia, Slovakia and Germany.

With that in mind, let's rank those countries in terms of who could make a huge leap — for one reason or another — at the next massive international event.

1. Sweden

Key 2026 injury-related absences: Leo Carlsson, C; Jonas Brodin, D

New-guy candidates: Ivar Stenberg, W; Anton Frondell, C; Simon Edvinsson, D; Axel Sandin-Pellikka, D; William Eklund, W

Ready for a big role? Leo Carlsson, C; Jesper Wallstedt, G; Philip Broberg, D

This is really about the potential for Leo Carlsson — who missed the 2026 event completely — and Jesper Wallstedt — who didn't start a game for Sweden — to be among the very best in the world at their position by the 2027-28 season. Carlsson, you'll recall, carries the highest cap hit in the NHL into this coming season thanks to the five-year offer sheet he signed with the Philadelphia Flyers that was ultimately matched by the Anaheim Ducks. He's a huge, two-way centre with elite offensive abilities who will be 23 years old at the next WC.

Wallstedt, meanwhile, had a very strong rookie season this past year after years of being a heralded goalie prospect. He'll be 25 in February of 2028 and could essentially be at the height of his goalie powers.

Ivar Stenberg will only be 20 years old at the World Cup, so maybe it's a bit premature to ask him to be a difference-maker. Still, he's a very skilled, smart and competitive winger who was picked second overall in June for a reason.

While the Swedes have to be a little concerned with an aging forward core — the likes of William Nylander, Mika Zibanejad, Filip Forsberg, Adrian Kempe and Gabriel Landeskog will all be over 30 and, in some cases, well into their 30s by 2028 — having difference-makers like Carlson and Wallstedt at prime positions like centre and goalie will really move the needle for Sweden.

2. Canada

Key 2026 injury-related absences: Brayden Point, C; Anthony Cirelli, C

New-guy candidates: Matthew Schaefer, D; Connor Bedard, C; Wyatt Johnston, C; Evan Bouchard, D; Dylan Guenther, W; Adam Fantilli, C; Porter Martone, W; Joel Hofer, G; Noah Dobson, D; Owen Power, D; Will Cuyille, W; Gavin McKenna, W; Jet Greaves, G; Mackenzie Blackwood, G; Scott Wedgewood, G

Ready for a big role? Logan Thompson, G; Matthew Schaefer, D; Connor Bedard, C

Canada entered the tournament without Swiss Army Knife Brayden Point, played almost all of it without key defenceman Josh Morrissey and finished it without captain Sidney Crosby. Clearly, the Canadians will be hoping for better injury luck in 2028.

Can we all agree a 40-year-old Crosby will start on Canada's fourth line at the '28 WC and probably finish on one of the top two units?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

MacKlin Celebrini could be the unquestioned top player in the world by 2028, with Connor McDavid (31 in 2028) and Nathan MacKinnon (32) still only a hair behind.

The real game-changer for Canada, though, could be Schaefer's emergence on the blueline. With Cale Makar and Devon Toews — 29 and 33, respectively, at the start of the '28 WC — still likely to form one top pair, having Schaefer anchor a second duo could be huge for a Canadian crew that did not send A+ defence crews to the 4 Nations or Italy.

While there's clear potential for Canada to improve, it's worth pointing out that — for all the groaning about the goaltending situation — Jordan Binnington has been somewhere between very good and great when Canada needed him most the past two Februaries. Maybe, at 34, it'll be Binnington's job again. But there's certainly no guarantee he'll be as good as he has been in the past and there's still not a clear fantastic option emerging behind him.

3. Finland

Key 2026 injury-related absences: Aleksander Barkov, C; Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, G

New-guy candidates: Konsta Helenius, W; Julius Miettinen, C

Ready for a big role? Anton Lundell, C

Did any single team miss any one player more than Finland missed Aleksander Barkov at the 2026 Games? His presence alone at the World Cup will be a massive game-changer for the Finns, who might well have eliminated Canada in the semifinals in Italy had Barkov been in the lineup to protect the 2-0 lead Finland held on Canada halfway through the game.

The issue for Finland, though, is that there's not much coming through the pipeline that figures to make a huge difference by 2028.

Anton Lundell has almost taken the mantle from Barkov — his countryman and Panthers teammate — as the best-kept secret in the league. Maybe by 2028 — when he's 26 — he'll be a 65-point two-way force instead of the 45-point guy he is now.

4. United States

Key 2026 injury-related absences: Seth Jones, D

New-guy candidates: Jason Robertson, W; Lane Hutson, D; Logan Cooley, C; Adam Fox, D; Cole Caufield, W; Will Smith, W; Cutter Gauthier, W; Matthew Knies, W; Ryan Leonard, W; Shane Pinto, C

Ready for a big role? Jason Robertson, W; Logan Cooley, C; Jeremy Swayman, G

Before anybody freaks out about three teams being ahead of Team USA, let's remember that the Americans' need to improve is smaller than every other country's because they left Italy with gold. And remember, if we were power ranking the teams ahead of the WC, the U.S. would be no lower than 1A.

This really comes down to what happens with the likes of veteran forwards Vincent Trochek, Brock Nelson and J.T. Miller. Trochek, in particular, was a hugely important role player for Team USA at the Olympics. In theory, all three guys could be back — Nelson would be the oldest in 2028 at 36 — but might the Americans lean into the many skilled options available to them?

It'll be an interesting debate.

Connor Hellebuyck was obviously a massive part of the Americans' triumph, but if his game slips in the next year-and-a-half, Jeremy Swayman would be more than capable of providing top-flight goaltending.

5. Czechia

Key 2026 injury-related absences: Pavel Zacha, C

New-guy candidates: Jakub Dobes, G; Jiri Kulich, C; Adam Jiricek, D; Radim Mrka, D; Vaclav Nestrail, W; Eduard Sale, W

Ready for a big role? Jakub Dobes, G; Jiri Kulich, C

Goalie is probably the position Czechia is deepest at and, unfortunately for the Czechs, only one guy can man that spot at a time. We thought Lukas Dostal could be an X-factor at the '26 Games, but he never really found his A-game. Could that change by 2028, when he's 27 and potentially has more playoff experience with the Anaheim Ducks under his belt?

Speaking of the post-season, Jakub Dobes was one of the breakout stars of the 2026 Stanley Cup Playoffs, leading the Montreal Canadiens to an appearance in the Eastern Conference Final. If he builds on that momentum to become a legit stud No. 1 in the NHL, Czechia — a country that once rode an unbeatable goalie to gold when Dominik Hasek and Co. won the 1998 Olympics — could have some intriguing crease options by 2028.

Czechia's mega-stud wingers — David Pastrnak and Martin Necas — will be 31 and 29, respectively, at the World Cup, so they'll still be going strong as offence-drivers.

Czechia is the only country to earn a medal at each of the past four World Junior Championships, so talent is on the way.

6. Slovakia

Key 2026 injury-related absences: Samuel Honzek, W

New-guy candidates: Adam Gajan, G; Max Strbak, D; Adam Goljer, D; Michal Pradel, G

Ready for a big role? Simon Nemec, D; Dalibor Dvorsky, W

The Slovaks are coming, but maybe not until the 2030 Olympics. The country produced eight players selected in the 2026 draft, so talent is starting to rise through the ranks.

Of course, it was four years ago that Slovaks headlined the 2002 draft, when Juraj Slafkovsky went first overall to the Habs, right before the Devils snagged Simon Nemec at No. 2. Slafkovsky has already demonstrated he loves the international spotlight by coming up big for Slovakia at both the '22 and '26 Olympics. He could be one of the defining players on any team at the 2028 World Cup.

As for Nemec, he's going to get a new role and all kinds of opportunities in Calgary after the Flames acquired him earlier this summer from Jersey. Can he develop into a true top-pair guy by the '28 WC?

Adam Gajan was technically on the Slovakian roster in Italy, but didn't see action. The Blackhawks second-rounder will jump from college to the pro ranks in the fall, so let's see what he becomes in the next 18 months.

7. Switzerland

Key 2026 injury-related absences: Lian Bichsel, D

New-guy candidates: Leon Mugli, D

Ready for a big role? Lian Bichsel, D; Akira Schmid, G

Lian Bichsel may have been the only Swiss NHLer to miss the '26 Olympics completely, but Kevin Fiala — a top-scoring option on the team — was forced out of the event in the second round-robin game versus Canada with a gruesome leg injury. Making matters worse, the Swiss also lost Denis Malgin — a player with significant NHL experience — in the same contest for the rest of the tournament.

Those were two huge in-tournament losses for Switzerland, which was still painfully close to making the semifinals. Recall that the Swiss held a 2-0 lead over Finland with fewer than 10 minutes to go in their quarterfinal match and were clinging to a one-goal lead with just over a minute to play, but ultimately lost 3-2 in overtime.

Bichsel would — at six-foot-seven — quite literally be a huge addition for a defence corps that already boasts Roman Josi and J.J. Moser.

Leonardo Genoni (what a handle!) has been a stud in goal at international events for the Swiss, but it would be great if the only Swiss NHL puck-stopper — Akira Schmid — or a youngster like Ducks prospect Elijah Neuenschwander could take a meaningful step.

Switzerland is projected to be a very strong team in 2028, as is now standard for that nation. However, there aren't any high-level youngsters set to pop for the team in the next little while and Josi will be 37 at the WC, so it's tough to say the Swiss are primed to make a big leap forward.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 28, 2026

8. Germany

Key 2026 injury-related absences: None

New-guy candidates: Arno Tiefensee, G; Julian Lutz, D

Ready for a big role? JJ Peterka, W

Leon Draisaitl will still be one of the best forwards in the NHL in 2028 when he's 32 years old and Moritz Seider's status as one of the premier do-it-all defencemen on the planet will only be further cemented by the time he's 26 years old at the WC.

Throw in Tim Stutzle's incredible offensive ability and it's easy to see why Germany can put a scare into any team in the tournament. That said, the country doesn't have any prospects coming even near the tier of the players we just mentioned.

Peterka — who'll be 26 in 2028 — is obviously an established go-to guy for Germany already, but if he can find the 40-goal form some have predicted for him in a new home in Boston, it could help push the Germans further than they've been able to go previously at best-on-best events.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.28.2026