



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 9, 2026

The News & Observer

When will Seth Jarvis return? Canes forward moves closer to lineup after surgery

Chip Alexander

Seth Jarvis is back -- almost.

The Carolina Hurricanes forward, who had offseason shoulder surgery, missed the first four games of the season and has been limited to practicing in a yellow no-contact jersey. That changed Thursday as the winger donned a regular white jersey in the morning skate before the game against the Vancouver Canucks at Lenovo Center.

The video player is currently playing an ad.

"It's probably the biggest step I've had so far, being able to take contact now," Jarvis said. "It's just a matter of getting comfortable, making sure it's ready to go. Easing into contact is probably the biggest step right now."

Jarvis led the Canes with 32 goals last season, in 71 games, despite playing with an injured, often painful shoulder. He played in all 19 playoff games in the Canes' run to the Stanley Cup, finishing with four goals and 11 points.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Thursday that Jarvis being out of the yellow was a "good sign."

"There's a timeline and we're following that," he said. "He's feeling good so we'll keep it going."

Brind'Amour did not say when he expected Jarvis back in the lineup. After facing the Canucks, the Canes play a back-to-back on the road at Chicago and Philadelphia over the weekend before returning for a home game Tuesday against the Washington Capitals.

In the Canes' 2-1-1 start this season, Jarvis has been replaced on Sebastian Aho's line with wingers Eric Robinson and then Will Carrier. Aho is off to a great start: four goals and seven assists.

Hard to sit and watch

Jarvis conceded it has been hard for him to sit and watch.

"A ton," he said. "I missed going on the road together, and I'm not around as much. It's been tough to watch, but they've been doing good."

Not being with the team the past two games -- at Philadelphia and Montreal -- and viewing the game has offered another challenge, Jarvis joked.

"Commercials come on and all of a sudden I'm on TikTok and not focusing as much," he said



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Stankoven's first career hat trick fuels Hurricanes' 7-2 romp over Canucks

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes lost the first two home games of the season for the first time under coach Rod Brind'Amour.

They made sure it wasn't going to be three straight.

Carolina scored three times in the first 10 minutes, Logan Stankoven had his first career hat trick, and Andrei Svechnikov scored twice on the power play as the Hurricanes cruised to a 7-2 win over the visiting Canucks on Thursday at Lenovo Center.

"We weren't at our best in the first two games," Stankoven said, "and I think the last few games and tonight showed that we were getting better and better."

Stankoven had a night of firsts.

Last postseason's breakout player scored a natural hat trick, with one of the goals being his first NHL shorthanded point, and his third goal was the 100th point of his career.

"Hat tricks are hard to come by, and I don't think I've had one since junior hockey, so it was nice to see that one go in," Stankoven said.

In his last 32 regular season and playoff games, Stankoven has 22 goals.

"That's impressive," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We know he's very talented too. We've talked about him a lot, and I think his willingness to just keep getting better, trying to get better, work ethic — can't say enough good things about him, so it's not surprising."

The Hurricanes' power play scored on all three of its chances and is 7 of 24 (29.2%) through five games — with Svechnikov getting the first two against the Canucks.

"It gives you lots of confidence," Svechnikov, who has three goals and three assists in the season's first five games, said of his start to the season. "Just right away from the start, trying to play hard and play my game. Hopefully it's going to be staying that way."

The Canucks, who had split their first four games coming into the night despite low expectations, were overmatched and overwhelmed early.

Carolina needed just 78 seconds to take the lead, scoring first when Sean Walker's point shot was redirected off the

post by William Carrier. K'Andre Miller jumped on the loose puck and scored past Kevin Lankinen (12 saves, pulled after the second period) for his first goal of the season.

The assist was one of a career-best four Walker had in the game.

"He's got an offensive flair," Brind'Amour said of Walker. "He can make plays, so it's not surprising that he was involved in all those goals tonight."

Svechnikov then scored twice in 2:14 on the power play, lifting a backhand over a sprawling Lankinen at 7:11 and finishing off a Jackson Blake pass at the side of the net for his third goal of the year. Blake, filling in for the injured Seth Jarvis on the first power play unit, had two assists with the man advantage.

"When you're an elite, skilled player, you can play anywhere," Brind'Amour said of Blake. "Especially those opportunities where you get a little more room. Those kind of players can really make things happen, and clearly he has been."

After Mark Jankowski scored for the second straight game at 3:20 of the middle frame, Stankoven scored twice on special teams and completed the hat trick in the third.

First, he finished off a Walker pass on a shorthanded 2-on-1 at 13:13 to extend the lead to 5-1. Taylor Hall then set up his next two, first with a spinning pass on the power play that set up a shot in the slot at 19:02 of the second and then a dish as Stankoven split two Vancouver defenders for the hat trick goal.

"Just a great play by Hall'sy," Stankoven said. "It was a fun night overall."

Pyotr Kochetkov picked up his second win in as many starts to begin the season, stopping 18 of 20 shots. Jake DeBrusk scored both Canucks' goals in the loss.

Notes: The Hurricanes won 19 of 44 faceoffs (43.2%), with Jordan Staal winning 12 of 20. ... Hall, Stankoven and Blake were not on the ice for a shot on goal against at 5-on-5. ... Jesperi Kotkaniemi assisted on Jankowski's goal, his first point since Jan. 31. ... Nicolas Deslauriers and Juuso Valimaki were healthy scratches for Carolina.



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Canes Crush Canucks For Third Straight Win

Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, N.C. - Logan Stankoven's first career hat trick spearheaded a dominant showing for the Carolina Hurricanes, who routed the Vancouver Canucks 7-2 at Lenovo Center on Thursday.

After hot starts fueled a pair of wins on the road, the Canes were once again on their toes to kick off Thursday's affair. K'Andre Miller got the party started 78 seconds in, depositing a rebound from the left circle. Carolina's sizzling power play took over from there, as Andrei Svechnikov went back-to-back on the man advantage with goals just 2:14 apart.

Cruising through the first period with a 3-0 lead, the Canes wasted little time tacking on more in the middle frame as Mark Jankowski took the advantage to four at 3:20. Vancouver attempted to interject themselves in the contest with their first goal, but Carolina's offense was far from complete.

A natural hat trick from Stankoven, who struck in three different ways, followed. Including shorthanded and power-play goals before the end of the second stanza, an even-strength tally in the third served as his 100th point in the league and capped his special night.

Another late goal from Vancouver closed out the evening, but at the final horn, it was another victory for Pyotr Kochetkov, who stopped 18 out of 20.

VAN at CAR | Recap

Stats & Standouts

Logan Stankoven's first career hat trick came via a shorthanded goal, a power-play goal, and an even-strength goal. He is the fourth player in franchise history to achieve this feat, joining Sebastian Aho (2x - 1/13/19 & 12/7/19), Erik Cole (11/23/02) and Sandis Ozolins (3/4/01).

Stankoven's triple marked the NHL's 15th natural hat trick on record involving an even-strength, power-play and shorthanded goal. The only other player with one over the last five seasons was Bo Horvat (Oct. 16, 2025).

Thursday's effort also lifted Stankoven to 100 points in his career.

Sean Walker notched his first career four-point night (4A). He had previously reached the three-point plateau once in his career (5/5/21 with LAK).

Andrei Svechnikov lit the lamp for the second straight game with his first multi-goal effort of the season, extending his point streak to four games (3G, 3A).

Sebastian Aho also boosted his point streak to four consecutive contests (4G, 4A) with an assist. His eight points are tied for the fourth most in team history (since relocation), trailing only himself (10 pts, 2018-19), Ray Whitney (10 pts, 2005-06) and Andrei Svechnikov (9 pts, 2021-22).

Jackson Blake picked up a pair of helpers to extend his point streak to four games (5A).

Taylor Hall tacked on two assists as well, marking his second consecutive multi-point performance.

Mark Jankowski now has goals in back-to-back games.

Thanks to K'Andre Miller's first of the season at 1:18, the Hurricanes have tallied within the first three minutes in each of their last three games (also Taylor Hall; 2:25 on Oct. 6 & Sebastian Aho; 0:10 on Oct. 3). Those three goals under that criteria this season lead the League.

Carolina's power play went a perfect 3-for-3 against the Canucks. The win marked the fourth straight game in which the team has scored on the power play, notching multiple such tallies in two of those tilts. The Canes' seven man-advantage markers rank second in the league behind Utah (8) at the time of publishing.

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour crediting his team for a third consecutive victory...

"We've played a great team game here the last little stretch. We got rewarded for it tonight. Tonight was kind of a weird game, that way. Once it kind of gets out of hand a little, both teams are not really sticking to the way you want to do it, but I like the way we've played here the last few games."

Logan Stankoven after his memorable night...

"It feels awesome. Just preparation and work that I've done over the summers (shows). Each year I try and come back and be a bit better version of myself. I think goal-scoring and finishing are something that's not easy to do in this league, so I'm going to try and continue to work on that. (There were) some great plays by my linemates as well. It was a fun night."

Andrei Svechnikov talking about having his goal-scoring going early this season...



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"It gives you lots of confidence, right away, from the start. (I'm) trying to play hard and play my game. Hopefully, it'll be staying that way."

Sean Walker on the team getting back to its game recently...

"I think you're seeing every game we're getting closer and closer back to our style of play and how we wanted to be starting the year, but obviously it wasn't like that. These last

couple of games have been more Hurricanes hockey, and when we're doing that, we're really hard to play against."

What's Next?

The Canes will travel to Chicago on Friday, where they'll begin a weekend back-to-back set on Saturday against the Blackhawks.



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Injury Report: Jarvis Sheds 'No-Contact' Sweater

Peter Dewar

"It's probably the biggest step I've had so far... now it's just a matter of getting comfortable."

RALEIGH, N.C. - Carolina Hurricanes forward Seth Jarvis hit another milestone on his road to recovery from offseason shoulder surgery on Thursday, practicing in a standard sweater for the first time this season after previously operating in a yellow "no-contact" jersey.

Head Coach Rod Brind'Amour called it another of several "good signs," noting that the team continues to follow the timeline and process laid out by the medical staff. Jarvis' return to game action remains a little ways ahead of him, but clearing the no-contact hurdle is a notable achievement.

"Yeah, it's probably the biggest step I've had so far, getting out of that (yellow jersey), being able to take contact now," said Jarvis. "So now it's just a matter of getting comfortable, making sure it's ready to go."

As for "getting comfortable," the 24-year-old says his repaired joint is holding up well through the first three weeks of practice.

"There's not much that really bothers it anymore, which is nice. Just easing into contact is the kind of the biggest step right now," he reviewed.

After leading the team in goals last season (32), Jarvis' absence left a hole at the top of the Canes' lineup to start the season. But his usual linemates Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov are doing their best to shoulder the load, leading the team with seven and four points, respectively.

"I think they've been aggressive. I think they've done a really good job of not really playing on the perimeter and being a little bit more direct with their offense," said Jarvis of Aho and Svechnikov. "I think shooting has been a big part, especially

for Fishy. I think he can sometimes defer a little too much. He has a really good shot. So seeing him score, and Svechy get one last game, everyone knows he could score, so we know it's coming."

While six of their combined 11 points have come via the power play, at 5-on-5, that duo has found success while working alongside Eric Robinson and William Carrier, two players Jarvis is quick to credit for the line's hot start through four games.

"When it's Robbie, Robbie's done a great job with his speed, and with Cares, I think he opens up a little bit more ice for those guys to make plays and to get time to shoot the puck," he praised. "So it's been working really well. It's fun to watch."

Fun to watch that crew may be, but having to catch the action from press row or on television still weighs on Jarvis.

"Oh, a ton," he said when asked how much he's missed playing while watching his team from afar. "I miss going on the road with the guys. I'm not around them as much, which kind of sucks. It's been tough to watch, but they've been doing good, so I'm just happy we're having success."

That said, Jarvis remains an important figure in the locker room whether he's playing or not.

"We're on the ice a lot, but we're together a lot more when we're not on the ice. He's just a real good character and lovable guy, and a great player," said Brind'Amour. "But he's a good person. We love having him around."



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Stankoven scores first hat trick, Hurricanes cruise past Canucks

Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Logan Stankoven scored the first hat trick of his NHL career, and the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Vancouver Canucks 7-2 at Lenovo Center on Thursday.

Stankoven became the fourth player in franchise history with an even-strength, power-play and short-handed goal in a game. He joined Sebastian Aho (Dec. 7 and Jan. 13, 2019), Erik Cole (Nov. 23, 2002) and Sandis Ozolinsh (March 4, 2001).

"I think a lot of it is confidence and preparation as well. It's a hard league, and you're not going to be able to score every night," Stankoven said. "Some great plays from my linemates as well, so a fun night."

Since March 31 of last season, including the Stanley Cup Playoffs, Stankoven has 22 goals in 32 games.

"That's impressive," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We know he's a very talented kid; we talk about him a lot. "(It's) his willingness to keep getting better, his work ethic. I can't say enough good things about him. This is not surprising."

Andrei Svechnikov scored back-to-back power-play goals in the first period, and Sean Walker had four assists for the Hurricanes (3-1-1), who have won three in a row. Jackson Blake, Shayne Gostisbehere and Taylor Hall each had two assists. Pyotr Kochetkov made 18 saves.

Jake DeBrusk scored twice for the Canucks (2-3-0), who began a six-game road trip.

Kevin Lankinen stopped 12 of 18 shots in two periods before being replaced to start the third period by Leevi Merilainen, who made 15 saves.

"Obviously, it's a huge momentum shift giving up three goals in the first 10 minutes," Vancouver coach Manny Malhotra said. "But they showed exactly why they are the reigning (Stanley Cup) champs. They punish you at every turn if you leave the door open a little."

K'Andre Miller gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 1:18 of the first period. After William Carrier redirected Walker's shot off the right post and crossbar, Miller scored on the rebound from the left face-off circle.

Carolina made it 2-0 with a power-play goal at 7:11.

Lankinen stopped Gostisbehere's one-timer, but Svechnikov grabbed the rebound below the left circle and went forehand-backhand over Lankinen's glove.

"As soon as I got that puck, I kind of wanted to shoot it right away," Svechnikov said. "But I see (Lankinen) slides down so much and I just tried the backhand. It gives you lots of confidence right away from the start, trying to play hard and play my game."

Svechnikov scored again on the power play at 9:25 for a 3-0 lead when he jammed puck in at the right post off a cross-ice pass from Blake.

"We say it a lot every year, we need him on the score sheet," Brind'Amour said. "He impacts the game in a lot of different ways, but obviously when you score, it takes a lot of stress off the whole group. That's what kind of happened tonight."

After Jesperi Kotkaniemi held the puck in at the blue line, he fed the puck to Mark Jankowski at the bottom of the right circle, where he lifted a shot to the short side to make it 4-0 at 3:20 of the second period.

DeBrusk cut the deficit to 4-1 at 4:03, kicking the puck from his left skate to his stick before roofing the puck over a sprawling Kochetkov.

Stankoven made it 5-1 while short-handed at 13:13. Walker slipped a pass through Vancouver defenseman Filip Hronek to Stankoven, who drove the net and scored top shelf.

"I want to be a more versatile player, and I think getting the opportunity to penalty kill now is awesome," Stankoven said. "I'm still learning and trying to grow and just try to be a sponge. It's nice to be out there in different situations and cash in."

Stankoven increased the lead to 6-1 with a power-play goal when he roofed a shot off a no-look backhand pass from Hall at 19:02. Stankoven then completed the natural hat trick on a wrist shot from between the circles to give Carolina a 7-1 lead at 11:36 of the third period.

"We got to our game early and got some goals, and that helps a lot," Walker said. "But I think the most important thing is we stuck to our game the whole night. We didn't really stray away from it. Special teams were great all night."



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DeBrusk scored his second goal from the bottom of the right circle for the 7-2 final at 13:04.

"It's kind of hard to feel good during that type of game," DeBrusk said. "But it's nice to see it go in. I've had tough starts my entire career, but I don't feel very good right now."

NOTES: Stankoven scored the NHL's 15th natural hat trick on record involving an even-strength, power-play and short-

handed goal. The only other player with one over the last five seasons was Bo Horvat (Oct. 16, 2025). ... Walker set a career high for points in a game with four. ... Blake has five assists in a four-game point streak. ... The Hurricanes were 3-for-3 on the power play. The Canucks were 0-for-4. ... DeBrusk returned to the lineup after missing two games with an illness.



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Stankoven has natural hat trick as Hurricanes beat Canucks 7-2

Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Logan Stankoven had a natural hat trick for his first career three-goal game, and the Stanley Cup champion Carolina Hurricanes won at home in their third try this season, 7-2 over the Vancouver Canucks on Thursday night.

Stankoven scored twice in the second period and again in the third to extend Carolina's lead from 4-1 to 7-1. His goals came short-handed, on a power play and at even strength, giving him 100 career points. He secured the hat trick with 8:24 remaining.

Andrei Svechnikov had two first-period goals on power plays and K'Andre Miller and Mark Jankowski also scored for the Hurricanes, who have a three-game winning streak. Walker had four assists, while Shayne Gostisbehere, Jackson Blake and Taylor Hall added two assists apiece. Pyotr Kochetkov made 18 saves.

Jake DeBrusk scored both goals for the Canucks in their first stop of a six-game trip. Elias Pettersson had two assists. Vancouver goalie Kevin Lankinen stopped 12 of 18 shots in two periods before Leevi Merilainen played the third, making 14 saves.

The Hurricanes never led in either of their first two home games last week before posting three goals in the opening 10 minutes Thursday.

Svechnikov's goals came less than 2 1/2 minutes apart. Stankoven notched his first career short-handed goal before his power-play goal capped the second-period scoring.

Walker had never had more than two assists in a game in his career.

The Carolina Hurricanes now face a new challenge: playing as reigning Stanley Cup champion

Taylor Hall scores 2 as Hurricanes beat Canadiens 6-4 in Montreal's home opener

Tuch scores twice in his first game for Washington, helping the Capitals beat the Hurricanes 5-2

Up next

Canucks: At New Jersey on Saturday.

Hurricanes: At Chicago on Saturday night.



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Hurricanes try to keep win streak alive, visit the Blackhawks

The Associated Press

Carolina Hurricanes (3-1-1, in the Metropolitan Division) vs. Chicago Blackhawks (1-4, in the Central Division)

Chicago; Saturday, 7 p.m. EDT

BOTTOM LINE: The Carolina Hurricanes aim to keep their three-game win streak alive when they visit the Chicago Blackhawks.

Chicago has a 1-4 record overall and a 1-0-0 record on its home ice. The Blackhawks are eighth in NHL play serving 11.0 penalty minutes per game.

Carolina is 3-1-1 overall and 2-0-0 on the road. The Hurricanes rank fifth in NHL play with 18 total goals (averaging 3.6 per game).

The matchup Saturday is the first meeting of the season between the two teams.

INJURIES: Blackhawks: Andrew Mangiapane: out (lower-body), Teuvo Teravainen: day to day (undisclosed), Ryan Ellis: out for season (back), Connor Bedard: out (shoulder).

Hurricanes: Seth Jarvis: out (shoulder).



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'It Was A Fun Night': Logan Stankoven, Andrei Svechnikov, Sean Walker, Rod Brind'Amour On Goal Scoring Bonanza

Ryan Henkel

The Carolina Hurricanes smashed the Vancouver Canucks Thursday night, defeating them 7-2 at Lenovo Center for the team's first home win of the season.

Logan Stankoven led the way with a hat trick and Andrei Svechnikov also had a two-goal outing.

After the game, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour along with Stankoven, Svechnikov and Sean Walker spoke with the media. Here's what they had to say:

On Logan Stankoven's production since late March: It's impressive. We know he's very talented too. We've talked about him a lot, and I think he has his willingness to just keep getting better, trying to get better, work ethic. Can't say enough good things about him, so it's not surprising.

On Andrei Svechnikov: We say it a lot every year. We need him on the score sheet. He impacts the game in a lot of different ways, but, obviously, when you score, it just takes a lot of stress off the whole group. So that was what kind of happened tonight. He was big early, and that's kind of what put the game, not away, but gave us, certainly, a good lead.

On Stankoven being able to quickly contribute on the PK: He's a good hockey player. I think we've talked about his willingness to do whatever you ask him to do. He wants to do it because that makes him a better hockey player. He's a great Hurricane.

On getting a win at home: We've got to win at home. We want to make sure it's a place that we have a good advantage. I didn't not like our first two games. I thought we were OK. We played really tough opponents. But yeah, we've got to reward the fans that come out and watch us play.

On Sean Walker and him perhaps being overlooked: It's tough when you've got to play in a grouping that we have. It's just natural it might get overlooked a little bit. We don't overlook him. We know his value. He's got an offensive flair. He can make plays, so it's not surprising that he was involved in all those goals tonight. You're right, he gets overlooked a little bit, but not by us.

On if it's difficult for a player to seamlessly jump into a new power play unit like Jackson Blake has: Not really when you're an elite, skilled player. Then you can play anywhere. Especially those opportunities where you get a little more room. Those kind of players can really make things happen, and clearly he has been.

On if Jordan Staal was okay after not playing much of the third: I didn't want to play him too much just for those reasons at the end. Hate when that happens, but, trust me, I'm trying to avoid that as much as possible.

On if the team has stepped up from the start of the year: Yeah, we've played a great team game here the last little last stretch and got rewarded for it tonight. Tonight was kind of a weird game in that way. Once it kind of gets out of hand a little, both teams are not really sticking to the way you want

to do it. But like I said, I've liked the way we've played here in the last few games.

On Pyotr Kochetkov's play: Solid. He made some good saves. He didn't have a ton of chances against, but when he did, there were some big saves. And he handled the puck really well tonight for the most part. So good job by him.

Logan Stankoven

On his first professional hat trick: It feels awesome. I think it's just the preparation and work I've done over the summers. Each year I try to come back and just be a bit more of a better version of myself. I think goal scoring and finishing is something that's not easy to do in this league, so I'm going to continue to try and work on that. Some great plays by my linemates as well, so it was a fun night.

On being a consistent goal scorer: I think a lot of it is just confidence and preparation as well, but I think it's a hard league and you're not going to be able to score every night. There's a lot of good teams in this league. There's no slouches. So I think it's just confidence and sticking to my little details that I do. Eventually the chances will come if all three of the linemates are working toward the same goal.

On what was going through his mind when he scored that third goal: Obviously very excited. Hat tricks are hard to come by and I don't think I've had one since junior hockey, so it was nice to see that one go in. Just a great play by Hallsy. It was a fun night overall.

On scoring in three different situations (shorthanded, power play and even strength): I want to be a more versatile player and I think being able to get the opportunity to penalty kill now is awesome. I'm still learning and trying to grow and just try to be a sponge because there's so much you can learn whether it's watching video or just going through reps in practice. It's nice to be out there in different situations and cash in.

On going from his goal droughts last year to now: I think it's just growth as a player and as a person. It's the little things you do away from the rink. Taking care of your body and making sure you're getting enough rest because it is a long year. I think it was tough sledding up until the Olympic break there and then we kind of started to roll and our line got better and better. That's what we want to do again this year.

On giving the home fans something to cheer about: It's great when you can win at home. These people pay hard earned money to come out and cheer us on and support us and so we just want to give it our all and leave it all out there for them.

On if the team has fully shaken off the rust: I think so. I think maybe it was just the shorter preseason, I'm not going to make any excuses. We weren't at our best in the first two games and I think the last few games and tonight showed that we were getting better and better. It's nice to see everyone contributing and everything's kind of flowing. It's great to see.

On reaching 100 NHL points: I didn't really realize it until a couple of days ago. Then I was like, 'Oh wow. I'm pretty



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close,' Honestly, it didn't even key in tonight when I scored the third one that that was 100, but it's awesome. Hopefully a lot more to come.

On if we can now expect more hat tricks from him after getting the first out of the way: I hope so. Like I said, you don't focus on the big picture. It's just one shift at a time and focusing on details, being good in my own zone and I think with the skill that our line has, if we're all on the same page, things will eventually open up for us.

Andrei Svechnikov

On the power play carrying over its success from last season: Definitely confidence, you know. I think we just kind of know the spots where everyone is going to be. Obviously great preparation from the coaches this morning. We did what they asked and scored three or four goals. I don't know. I don't remember.

On Jackson Blake integrating seamlessly into the top power play unit: Blakey, he moves the puck very well. He sees the ice very well. So it's a very easy fit.

On his teammates passes: Big passes. I just kind of had to be there with my stick and that's what I was doing there.

On if he was competing with Logan Stankoven for the hat trick: No, that's his first one. So happy for him. Just so happy. I remember scoring my first one, that was a special day for me. I wasn't able to fall asleep that night and so that's going to be him. So excited for him.

On his first goal: As soon as I got that puck, I wanted to shoot right away, but I saw that he slid down so much. Just tried the backhand and yeah.

On having a hot start to the year: It gives you lots of confidence. Just right away from the start, trying to play hard and play my game. Hopefully it's going to be staying that way.

Sean Walker

On his four-point game: I don't know if I've ever had one before. Maybe early in my career. But yeah, I got some lucky bounces tonight, a lot of guys making really nice plays, and I'm just happy to be a part of it.

On his shorthanded 2-on-1 pass to Logan Stankoven: I knew we had a two-on-one, and honestly, I was going to shoot, but once I saw the D kind of coming at me, I thought if I could get it over Stank, he'd basically have a little breakaway. So I just

kind of tried to find the hole there, and it squeaked through, and Stank made a great play to score the goal.

On noticing the momentum from a fast start: Yeah, for sure. Obviously we got to our game early there and got some goals, and that helps a lot. But I think the most important thing was that we stuck with our game the whole night. We didn't really stray away from it, and special teams were great all night. That's something we'll be looking forward to keep going the rest of the year.

On having a three-game winning streak after losing the first two: It was great. I think you're seeing every game we're getting closer and closer back to our style of play and how we wanted to be starting the year, but obviously it wasn't like that. These last couple games have been more Hurricanes hockey, and when we do that, we're really hard to play against.

On giving the fans a win at home: Obviously the first two were not the way you want to have it after the year we did last year. But it's a long year and we got back to our game and hopefully we'll have many more nights like that.

On believing in the team identity: I think just, again, that narrative of the Cup hangover and stuff is going to be around all year. Maybe those first couple games weren't our best, but I think you're seeing us get back to our game, and we can dominate teams when we do that night in, night out. So I look forward to doing that the rest of the year.

On Logan Stankoven's hat trick: It's great. Stank works his ass off every night, and he's a guy that deserves to get rewarded. So it was awesome, his first hat trick. I'm pretty surprised. I thought he would have one already. A really cool night, special for him, happy to be on the ice for some of his goals.

On having to play goalie after Pyotr Kochetkov's adventure out of the net: A little oopsie moment there, some miscommunication. But you know, Koochie's one of the best puckhandling goalies we have, so he gets a free pass if he's going to do that once in a while, that's OK. I just kind of tried to help him out there, and I'm glad it hit me and didn't go in the net.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Logan Stankoven nets a Hat Trick as Hurricanes Dominate Canucks 7-2

Al Hood

Logan Stankoven scored a Natural Hat Trick that started with a beautiful shorthanded goal, his team scored three times on the Power Play, and the Carolina Hurricanes started the Vancouver Canucks' East Coast Roadtrip with a thorough 7-2 demolition.

Like their last game against Montreal, the Hurricanes got off to a quick start thanks to K'Andre Miller and the Sebastian Aho line. The game was just one minute in when Andrei Svechnikov went behind the net, which drew three Canucks to try and dislodge the puck. Instead, Svechnikov was able to whip the puck over to Aho, who quickly passed to the blue line where Sean Walker took a shot that did everything but go in, including graze William Carrier. The puck bounced to the waiting stick of Miller who slammed it home to give Carolina a 1-0 lead just 1:18 into the game.

Because of the way the puck moved neither Aho nor Svechnikov were credited with an assist on the opening goal, but the tone had been set and it continued just a few minutes later. On their first Power Play of the night, Carolina kept it in the zone, leading to a pass out the Quarterback Shayne Gostisbehere. He lasered a perfect pass to Svechnikov in front of the net, and he was able to patiently get the puck in thanks to a nifty move by Kevin Lankinen to give Carolina a quick 2-0 lead.

Svechnikov would shortly make the Canes 2-2 on their first period power plays. It was a pretty simple tic-tac-toe play right off a face off win. The puck found its way to Gostisbehere, who passed it back to the dot to Jackson Blake. While gathering, Svechnikov went toward the goal all alone and Blake feathered a perfect pass to him that he was able to stuff in and give the Canes a 3-0 lead.

While the Power Play was on point, so was the Penalty Kill as the Canes killed off both penalties they received in the first, one of which carried over into the second. Pyotr Kochetkov didn't face a ton of work in the first, only having to stop four shots.

The Canes continued their strong play in the second, first by finishing the penalty kill and then working hard to keep the puck in the zone for their fourth goal. Jesperi Kotkanen made perhaps his best play of the season in batting the puck

back into the offensive zone right at the blue line. The puck found Mark Jankowski all alone in front of the net, and he took the time to wait out Lankinen before roofing a shot right past him.

The shutout though was short-lived as Vancouver got their first of the game thanks to Jake DeBrusk gathering a Jonathan Lekkerimäki rebound that Kochetkov was unable to gather. He went to the ice to make the stop, but the puck bounced over to DeBrusk who was able to get it the goalie. Vancouver then seemed to be grabbing some momentum as they earned their third Power Play of the night. But a minute in, Sean Walker was able to get the puck behind the net and get it over to Aho. Aho held it as two Canucks tried to dislodge it, then fed a streaking Walker who was joined on the rush by Logan Stankoven. Walker fed a perfect pass by Filip Hronek over to Stankoven, and Stankoven easily finished to give Carolina a 5-1 lead on their first short handed goal of the season.

The Canes then continued their perfect night on the Power Play as in the waning seconds of the second period Stankoven was able to take a great feed from Taylor Hall that took a small deflection off of Victor Mancini first. In what was a theme, Stankoven roofed his shot past Lankinen to give Carolina a 6-1 lead at the second intermission.

Stankoven would complete his hat trick in the third thanks to continued strong play by his line. The play started with Stankoven keeping the puck inside the offensive zone. He got it back below the line to Hall, and then worked his way all alone in front of the net. Hall fed him a perfect pass that Hall blasted past Leevi Meriläinen, who had come in for Lankinen to start the third.

DeBrusk would score again a few minutes later leading to the final 7-2 score.

With one credited assist, Aho kept his point streak going at five games, while Blake and Hall joined Svechnikov with two points on the night.

The Hurricanes head back out on the road for a weekend back-to-back that'll see them play in Chicago Saturday before returning to Philadelphia on Sunday—finishing their trips to the City of Brotherly Love for the regular season.



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SportScan

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

1402288 Carolina Hurricanes

When will Seth Jarvis return? Canes forward moves closer to lineup after surgery

Chip Alexander

Seth Jarvis is back -- almost.

The Carolina Hurricanes forward, who had offseason shoulder surgery, missed the first four games of the season and has been limited to practicing in a yellow no-contact jersey. That changed Thursday as the winger donned a regular white jersey in the morning skate before the game against the Vancouver Canucks at Lenovo Center.

"It's probably the biggest step I've had so far, being able to take contact now," Jarvis said. "It's just a matter of getting comfortable, making sure it's ready to go. Easing into contact is probably the biggest step right now.

Jarvis led the Canes with 32 goals last season, in 71 games, despite playing with an injured, often painful shoulder. He played in all 19 playoff games in the Canes' run to the Stanley Cup, finishing with four goals and 11 points.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Thursday that Jarvis being out of the yellow was a "good sign."

"There's a timeline and we're following that," he said. "He's feeling good so we'll keep it going."

Brind'Amour did not say when he expected Jarvis back in the lineup. After facing the Canucks, the Canes play a back-to-back on the road at Chicago and Philadelphia over the weekend before returning for a home game Tuesday against the Washington Capitals.

In the Canes' 2-1-1 start this season, Jarvis has been replaced on Sebastian Aho's line with wingers Eric Robinson and then Will Carrier. Aho is off to a great start: four goals and seven assists.

Hard to sit and watch

Jarvis conceded it has been hard for him to sit and watch.

"A ton," he said. "I missed going on the road together, and I'm not around as much. It's been tough to watch, but they've been doing good."

Not being with the team the past two games -- at Philadelphia and Montreal -- and viewing the game has offered another challenge, Jarvis joked.

"Commercials come on and all of a sudden I'm on TikTok and not focusing as much," he said

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1402289 Carolina Hurricanes

Stankoven's first career hat trick fuels Hurricanes' 7-2 romp over Canucks

Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes lost the first two home games of the season for the first time under coach Rod Brind'Amour.

They made sure it wasn't going to be three straight.

Carolina scored three times in the first 10 minutes, Logan Stankoven had his first career hat trick, and Andrei Svechnikov scored twice on the power play as the Hurricanes cruised to a 7-2 win over the visiting Canucks on Thursday at Lenovo Center.

"We weren't at our best in the first two games," Stankoven said, "and I think the last few games and tonight showed that we were getting better and better."

Stankoven had a night of firsts.

Last postseason's breakout player scored a natural hat trick, with one of the goals being his first NHL shorthanded point, and his third goal was the 100th point of his career.

"Hat tricks are hard to come by, and I don't think I've had one since junior hockey, so it was nice to see that one go in," Stankoven said.

In his last 32 regular season and playoff games, Stankoven has 22 goals.

"That's impressive," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We know he's very talented too. We've talked about him a lot, and I think his willingness to just keep getting better, trying to get better, work ethic — can't say enough good things about him, so it's not surprising."

The Hurricanes' power play scored on all three of its chances and is 7 of 24 (29.2%) through five games — with Svechnikov getting the first two against the Canucks.

"It gives you lots of confidence," Svechnikov, who has three goals and three assists in the season's first five games, said of his start to the season. "Just right away from the start, trying to play hard and play my game. Hopefully it's going to be staying that way."

The Canucks, who had split their first four games coming into the night despite low expectations, were overmatched and overwhelmed early.

Carolina needed just 78 seconds to take the lead, scoring first when Sean Walker's point shot was redirected off the post by William Carrier. K'Andre Miller jumped on the loose puck and scored past Kevin Lankinen (12 saves, pulled after the second period) for his first goal of the season.

The assist was one of a career-best four Walker had in the game.

"He's got an offensive flair," Brind'Amour said of Walker. "He can make plays, so it's not surprising that he was involved in all those goals tonight."

Svechnikov then scored twice in 2:14 on the power play, lifting a backhand over a sprawling Lankinen at 7:11 and finishing off a Jackson Blake pass at the side of the net for his third goal of the year. Blake, filling in for the injured Seth Jarvis on the first power play unit, had two assists with the man advantage.

"When you're an elite, skilled player, you can play anywhere," Brind'Amour said of Blake. "Especially those opportunities where you get a little more room. Those kind of players can really make things happen, and clearly he has been."

After Mark Jankowski scored for the second straight game at 3:20 of the middle frame, Stankoven scored twice on special teams and completed the hat trick in the third.

First, he finished off a Walker pass on a shorthanded 2-on-1 at 13:13 to extend the lead to 5-1. Taylor Hall then set up his next two, first with a spinning pass on the power play that set up a shot in the slot at 19:02 of

the second and then a dish as Stankoven split two Vancouver defenders for the hat trick goal.

"Just a great play by Hallsy," Stankoven said. "It was a fun night overall."

Pyotr Kochetkov picked up his second win in as many starts to begin the season, stopping 18 of 20 shots. Jake DeBrusk scored both Canucks' goals in the loss.

Notes: The Hurricanes won 19 of 44 faceoffs (43.2%), with Jordan Staal winning 12 of 20. ... Hall, Stankoven and Blake were not on the ice for a shot on goal against at 5-on-5. ... Jesperi Kotkaniemi assisted on Jankowski's goal, his first point since Jan. 31. ... Nicolas Deslauriers and Juuso Valimaki were healthy scratches for Carolina.

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1402290 Chicago Blackhawks

Chicago Blackhawks remain winless on the road after 4-1 loss to New York Islanders

Scott Charles

NEW YORK — Bo Horvat scored twice and the New York Islanders beat the Chicago Blackhawks 4-1 on Thursday night.

Ilya Sorokin made 22 saves as the Islanders won for the second time in three games. Emil Heineman and Anthony Duclair also scored for the Islanders, and defenseman Logan Stanley had two assists.

Frank Nazar scored for the Blackhawks, who lost for the fourth time in five games to begin the season and fell to 0-4-0 on the road. Arvid Söderblom finished with 15 saves.

Column: Chicago Blackhawks need to develop Kevin Korchinski, but how can they do that if he's not on the ice?

Horvat opened the scoring with a power-play goal in the final minute of the first period. Matthew Schaefer fired a slap shot from the point, and the Islanders captain buried the rebound.

Heineman wired a wrist shot past Söderblom 6:44 into the second to double the lead.

Stanley found Duclair alone near the back post at 9:38 for his first goal of the season, making it 3-0.

Nazar spoiled Sorokin's shutout bid with 2:32 remaining in the third.

Horvat added his second goal of the game into an empty net with 1:33 left to complete the scoring.

Islanders defenseman Alexander Romanov, who left Tuesday night's 5-2 loss to the New York Rangers, will miss the rest of the regular season with a torn ACL in his right knee.

Up next

Blackhawks: vs. Carolina Hurricanes on Saturday.

Islanders: vs. Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 10.09.2026



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1402409 Websites

The Athletic / Why these 7 NHL players could make or break their team's season

By Harman Dayal

Every team enters a new season with at least a couple of players seen as wild cards or X-factors. It's hard to predict exactly what those players' performance will look like — it could realistically swing either way — but their role and impact matter enough that they could single-handedly tilt their team's chances of success, for better or worse.

Some of these names are pretty well-known. This could be a superstar under pressure to bounce back like Auston Matthews or Jack Hughes, young guns like Quinton Byfield and Brandt Clarke who desperately need to break out, big-name offseason acquisitions that need to fit perfectly like William Eklund, Pavel Dorofeyev or JJ Peterka, or various starting goaltenders around the NHL.

In this piece, I wanted to explore some less obvious players who could make or break their team's success in 2026-27. That means we're excluding anybody who'd be considered one of the five best players on their team (so no Roope Hintz, Elias Pettersson, etc.), rookies (Gavin McKenna, Porter Martone, etc.), new summer additions (Bowen Byram, Darren Raddysh, etc.) and goaltenders. We also won't include anyone from this season's breakout candidates list, which is why we don't analyze Tristan Luneau here.

Without further ado, let's dive into some second-wave players who will be important X-factors for their respective teams.

Why haven't the Red Wings signed Simon Edvinsson?

Max Bultman and Mark Lazerus

Kent Johnson, Columbus Blue Jackets

The Blue Jackets are under tremendous pressure to snap their six-year playoff drought, especially with Zach Werenski's uncertain future looming large. To get over that hump, Columbus needs to revive its offense. In 2024-25, the Blue Jackets were one of the league's most dynamic, exciting offensive teams, ranking eighth-best in the NHL for goals scored per game. Last season, they regressed to 19th in goals scored, including a brutal final 20 games that cost them a playoff spot when they mustered only 2.55 goals per game (29th).

Johnson will be one of the most important factors for the team reaching its offensive ceiling. The No. 5 pick from 2021 is an exceptionally gifted player with lightning-quick hands and elite offensive creativity. He has the raw talent to be a star, but inconsistency and a scrawny frame have plagued him. Johnson broke out with 57 points in 68 games in 2024-25 (a 70-point pace prorated over 84 games), but crashed hard down to only 22 points in 76 games last season.

From Day 1 of training camp, Rick Bowness has committed to giving Johnson an extended opportunity on the first line, which is huge because he only averaged 13:14 per game last season. It was earned in part by Johnson packing on significant muscle this past summer.

If Johnson fires on all cylinders, it could also fuel breakouts for linemates Adam Fantilli and Matthew Knies. Fantilli and Knies are talented, physically impressive scorers, but they're both shoot-first creators — neither is a natural playmaker. Johnson's elite puck-carrying (ranked in the 95th percentile for zone entries last season) and distribution are key to getting the most productive versions of Knies and Fantilli. If Johnson can't seize that opportunity, the Blue Jackets don't really have an internal replacement for his creativity and speed.

Fortunately, they've looked terrific together so far. Johnson and Knies already have multiple points for the season, and as a trio, they've controlled 61 percent of scoring chances and are up 3-1 in goals at five-on-five.

Chris Tanev, Toronto Maple Leafs

When dissecting the biggest reasons the Leafs collapsed last year, people outside Toronto often forget about Tanev. And even with all the splashy acquisitions GM John Chayka has made, the shutdown right-shot defenseman remains one of the team's most important players for 2026-27.

In 2024-25, when the Leafs won the Atlantic Division, Tanev was arguably the Leafs' most important defenseman. According to HockeyStats' model, no blueliner in the NHL had a stronger impact on his team's even-strength defense that season. He and Jake McCabe handled the toughest defensive matchups on the team, yet they decisively came out on top, driving over 56 percent of high-danger chances and 62 percent of goals.

NHL Defensive WAR Leaders 2024-25

1

Chris Tanev

1.91

2

Mikey Anderson

1.72

3

Adam Pelech

1.61

4

Jacob Slavin

1.35

5

Vladislav Gavrikov

1.30

Data courtesy HockeyStats

Tanev suited up for only 11 games last season because of injuries, and the Leafs' entire defensive structure subsequently crumbled as they allowed more five-on-five shots against than any other team in the NHL. It's tricky to forecast whether he'll be able to stay healthy and still perform like an elite shutdown wizard because he turns 37 in December and his long-term injury history is extensive.

Between 2016 and 2019, for example, Tanev averaged just 50 games per season in Vancouver. He plays a physically punishing style because of his heavy shot-blocking and the number of big hits he takes from forecheckers when breaking pucks out.

If Tanev can deliver rock-solid top-four play, even if it's just for 60 games or so, it'll be a huge boost to the Leafs' blue line. But if he's unavailable for long stretches, Toronto's back end may not be able to overcome the loss, especially since Tanev isn't just elite defensively. His ability to move the puck is critical; he ranked in the 92nd percentile for defensive-zone retrievals and 81st percentile for zone exits in 2024-25. If you subtract that from the Leafs' lineup, their back end could struggle to break the puck out of the zone, even with Raddysh's arrival.

Danila Yurov, Minnesota Wild

The Wild are loaded with game-breaking talent on defense and the wings, but they can't be considered a truly elite team until they find a second top-six center to pair with Joel Eriksson Ek. Whether he emerges as the internal answer or as a premium asset to help land a top-six center via the trade market, much of that hope rests on Yurov.

Yurov, the No. 24 pick in 2022, was quietly impressive as a rookie last season. He's wise beyond his years defensively with a responsible, positionally sound game, and he chipped in with a respectable 27 points in 73 games. Now, the big question is whether he has enough offensive juice to keep up with Kirill Kaprizov in a prime top-six role, the way Marco Rossi did before being included in the Quinn Hughes trade. Yurov will also need to improve his face-offs, as he was a dreadful 39.2 percent in the dot last season.



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So far, he's held his own playing on an all-Russian line with Kaprizov and Max Shabanov. Yurov isn't very flashy, but he's a smooth skater and makes smart, high-percentage decisions with the puck because of his IQ and vision. Below is an example from the second game of the season, where he makes a clever trailer pass to Shabanov to set up a scoring chance that rings off the post.

Yurov chance

Harman Dayal

If Yurov breaks out, it'd be gold for the Wild, whether they keep him or eventually use him as the centerpiece to land a bigger fish. But if he stagnates, it'll stress the team's already-vulnerable center depth and further weaken the team's overall scoring depth, which is in a dicey spot after the offseason departures of Mats Zuccarello, Marcus Johansson and Vladimir Tarasenko.

Nils Lundkvist, Dallas Stars

In 2022, the Stars acquired Lundkvist from the New York Rangers in exchange for a 2023 first-round pick. For a while, the trade looked like a potential flop. Lundkvist struggled to find consistency, and former head coach Peter DeBoer never came around to trusting him defensively. He could move the puck decently, but he kept losing physical battles while defending down low and in front of the net, and his secondary offense was practically nonexistent. That lack of trust was especially noticeable in the playoffs; in 2023-24, for example, when the Stars made the Western Conference Final, Lundkvist averaged a measly 4:28 across 12 games.

Lundkvist appeared to be stagnant, but last year's coaching change completely breathed new life into his game. The 26-year-old right-shot defenseman played the best hockey of his life, driving 52.7 percent of expected goals and 59 percent of actual goals, while ranking as the clear No. 4 in five-on-five ice time behind the big three of Miro Heiskanen, Esa Lindell and Thomas Harley. And for once, it finally seemed to translate to the playoffs too, as he looked sharp at the start of Round 1 against Minnesota.

Unfortunately, Lundkvist got hurt in Game 4, and losing his puck-moving prowess was a devastating blow to the Stars' right side. Injuries have become a recurring problem for Lundkvist, as he's yet to hit the 60-game mark in any of the last three seasons.

If Lundkvist stays healthy and builds on last season's mini-breakout, it would be a huge boost for Dallas' top four, especially because it would directly help Harley's game. Harley, who had a disappointing, up-and-down 2025-26 campaign, has posted significantly better underlying results when paired with Lundkvist.

Harley's results by partner 2025-26

Harley with Lundkvist

53.7%

+10

Harley without Lundkvist

47.5%

-7

However, if Lundkvist can't seize the second-pair role, Dallas will be left with a gaping hole on the right and probably won't get the best version of Harley, which is critical to the team finding a higher gear at even strength.

William Karlsson, Vegas Golden Knights

The Golden Knights are a completely different beast when Karlsson is in the lineup. Unfortunately, injuries have limited how often we've seen that, as Karlsson only appeared in 14 regular-season games in 2025-26 and 53 the year prior.

When he's available, Karlsson is an irreplaceable 2C. He's elite defensively, with an even-strength defensive impact ranking in the 93rd percentile of NHL forwards over the last three years according to HockeyStats' model. Karlsson has also developed into an elite faceoff man (winning over 55 percent of draws in four straight seasons) and a terrific penalty killer, which makes him incredibly useful late in games when defending leads.

When Karlsson and Mitch Marner played together in the last playoffs, they drove a dominant 64.7 percent of expected goals and outscored opponents 11-3 over 158 minutes at five-on-five, per HockeyStats. When Marner didn't have Karlsson available, he drove a more modest 54.3 percent xG and had a minus-five goal differential.

Last season, when Karlsson was hurt, Vegas had to shift Marner to center at times because the team didn't have an adequate 2C replacement, especially since Tomáš Hertl's five-on-five game has slowed considerably. A healthy, productive version of Karlsson is critical to the Golden Knights' hopes of another deep playoff run next spring.

J.T. Miller, New York Rangers

The spotlight in New York will understandably be on Drury's splashy summer acquisitions (Pavel Dorofeyev, Marcus Pettersson and Sean Durzi) but to find sustainable success, the Rangers will need more from Miller.

Miller was a shadow of himself in 2025-26, hobbling through injuries and limited to just 53 points in 68 games. He produced only 1.58 points per 60 at five-on-five, which is a third-line rate, and his defensive play was questionable with New York outscored by 15 goals during his five-on-five shifts. With Vincent Trocheck gone, the Rangers are thinner down the middle and desperately need Miller to perform like a bona fide top-six center.

Miller's 2C spot is an especially high-leverage role because he's responsible for getting the most out of new linemate Dorofeyev at even strength. Dorofeyev is an elite shooter with 40-goal potential, but he isn't much of a play-driver — he ranked below the 50th percentile in contributing to zone exits, offensive entries with possession and nearly every passing metric last season.

Dorofeyev needs a top-notch playmaker to tee him up for chances, similar to what Mitch Marner did for him in over 600 five-on-five minutes together last season. At his best, Miller is an excellent passer who unlocks the most out of snipers like Dorofeyev — he's a huge reason Brock Boeser hit the 40-goal mark in 2023-24.

Miller's days as a 100-point player are probably past him, but New York doesn't need that version. The Rangers just need the Miller that moves his feet, never takes shifts off and can contribute more offensively at even strength. Hopefully a cleaner bill of health can spark that bounce-back.

Jordan Spence, Ottawa Senators

The Senators fleeced the Los Angeles Kings by acquiring Spence for just a 2025 third and a 2026 sixth in June 2025. Spence needed time to adjust early on (he was a healthy scratch for a couple of games last October) but found his groove and was an excellent top-four contributor by the end of last season. He parlayed that into a four-year, \$20 million contract extension this past summer.

However, with Ottawa's early injury woes, the pressure and responsibility on Spence are higher than ever. Artem Zub, Ottawa's usual top-pair RHD, is injured, and there's no concrete timeline for his return yet. Similar to Tanev, there are always going to be questions about Zub's durability given his lengthy injury history, meaning this could be a recurring issue. Worse, the Senators also lost No. 1 defenseman Jake Sanderson to injury in their season opener against the Leafs and starting goalie Linus Ullmark against the Bruins.

As a result, Spence and Thomas Chabot are the top pair keeping this blue line together. Spence has averaged 23:40 so far this season and looked terrific doing it, which is a key reason the team is off to a 2-1-0 start. The 25-year-old's smooth skating, efficient puck-moving and secondary offense are incredibly valuable, and he's become an analytical darling over the last couple of years. If he can sustain that impact while logging heavy minutes (which he did during the last 20 games or so last season), it'll go a long way toward the Senators staying in the playoff hunt despite early injuries.

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The Athletic / These NHL stars left millions on the table before the 2026 gold rush. Any regrets?

By Mark Lazerus

Brent Thompson's NHL career was over by the time his son Tage was born. But Brent Thompson's NHL dream lived on.

So, after appearing in just one game with the Phoenix Coyotes during the 1996-97 season — the last NHL game he'd ever play — and with Tage's birth barely a month away, Thompson packed up his life and soon moved his burgeoning family to Connecticut to ply his trade with the American Hockey League's Hartford Wolf Pack. Two years later, he was in Louisville. Two years after that, he was in Hershey, Pa. Then Loveland, Colo. Finally, he spent a season in Providence before hanging up his skates.

By that point, Tage Thompson was almost 8 years old. He was about to move to his seventh home.

"He wasn't fortunate enough to get one of those long-term deals," Tage Thompson said. "Just one to two years, so every year we were moving. It's a lot."

So when Buffalo Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams came to Thompson and offered him a seven-year contract extension worth a staggering \$50 million shortly before the 2022-23 season, Thompson jumped at it. He had taken seven years to entrench himself as an NHLer, and he had just exploded for 38 goals in his first full NHL season. It was time to cash in.

In the four years since he signed that extension, only five players in the NHL have scored more goals than Thompson's 162. This season, 141 players are making more money than he is.

Yet Thompson has no regrets. He said he feels "blessed" to be making as much money as he's making in a city he and his family have come to call home. He knew the flat-cap era was likely coming to a close and that the salary cap could start soaring any day. And he knew he had the talent to be an even bigger star; sure enough, he potted 47 goals the next season. So he knew a short-term deal could set him up for a much bigger payday a few years down the road.

But he also knew he was one injury away from losing everything.

"It's tough to gauge where the cap's going to go, and honestly, where your career's going to go, right?" Thompson said. "It's unpredictable. And when you're staring that much money in the face — you're talking life-changing money. So what's another million, 2 million a year? It's a lot, obviously. But you're not going to turn down something that locks you in for not only financial stability, but stability with your family, being in one place. ... Yeah, I think there are guys that wish they would have held out a little bit. Am I one of those guys? Yeah, obviously you would have liked to sign a big ticket and get as much money as humanly possible. But you're still talking about (a lot of money)."

Timing is everything. Thompson's teammate, 21-year-old Zach Benson, has never scored more than 13 goals in a season, yet he's now making half a million dollars more per season than Thompson. The skyrocketing cap — combined with Leo Carlsson's seismic \$18 million offer sheet this past summer — has dramatically changed the calculus of what exactly an NHL player is worth. Colorado Avalanche defenseman Cale Makar will be making a record \$20.4 million next season. Minnesota Wild defenseman Quinn Hughes might top that. San Jose Sharks forward Macklin Celebrini will be making \$18.8 million next season at age 21. Chicago Blackhawks forward Connor Bedard is making \$15 million a year at age 21.

It's not just superstars, either.

Anaheim Ducks defenseman Tristan Luneau just got a six-year deal worth \$7.2 million a year after only 14 NHL games. The Toronto Maple Leafs just traded for and signed Kirill Marchenko, who's never had a point-per-game season, to a deal worth \$12.5 million a year. Luke Evangelista (career high: 16 goals) is getting \$7.25 million from the New

Jersey Devils. Young players who have proven very little are getting paid the way borderline stars were just a handful of years ago — Chicago signed Frank Nazar (\$6.6 million) and Oliver Moore (\$4.25 million) almost preemptively. Buffalo just signed defenseman Louis Crevier for \$4 million before he even played a shift for the Sabres. Teams are giving out gobs of money now in the hopes it'll save them gobs more down the road.

As league revenues soar, so do salaries. It's fair to wonder if those who signed long-term deals in the past couple of years spent their summer with their jaws on the floor, nursing a nasty case of signer's remorse.

If I had only waited one more year.

If I had only signed a shorter-term deal.

But to hear those players tell it, nobody's really kicking themselves. After all, a rising tide lifts all boats. And eventually, it'll be their turn again.

"It's crazy, these deals are crazy," said Vancouver Canucks forward Brock Boeser, who's in the second year of a seven-year contract that carries a \$7.25 million cap hit per season. "Definitely didn't see that coming this summer. But it's good for the league. To see that the cap's going up and guys are getting paid is awesome. I don't have any regrets. I signed long-term on purpose. That's what I was looking for, and I did it, so I'm not going to sit here and whine about whatever."

For decades, security was the buzzword when it came to contract negotiations. Players craved term above all else — the certainty of knowing they'd be in a city for the long haul, of not having to uproot their families time and time again to move halfway across the continent.

But years after NBA players realized the benefit of betting on themselves and signing short-term deals — the ability to control your fate competitively and maximize your potential financially — the new generation of NHL talent is catching on. When Auston Matthews signed a five-year contract out of his entry-level deal, unlike the eight-year deal Connor McDavid had signed less than two years earlier, it seemed to herald a shift in players' thinking. But this summer was when the change really crystallized.

"All these agents and kids want to do the short-term deals and keep getting paid and paid," said Tampa Bay Lightning forward Jake Guentzel, who signed a seven-year deal worth \$9 million per season two summers ago. "There are a lot of kids coming into the league at a young age, and they want to maximize how much money you can make. (Your career) is not a forever thing. These kids know what they're doing."

That's the prevailing attitude among players who clearly left money on the table: Good for them. There's no bitterness in the thought, either.

"I think it's great," said Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson (\$6.54 million per season through 2031). "Hockey is probably one of the hardest sports on your body to play. Your longevity after the game — there's not many hockey players in their 60s and 70s that are like, 'Yeah, I feel good.' Make your money now. You're putting a lot on the line. Fans see it (and are thinking), 'Oh, they live an amazing life.' Yeah, but guys are going out and blocking shots with their face. They're fighting. It's a physical, physical game."

"Hockey players care a lot; they put a lot on the line. Other leagues are making a ton of money; hockey players should be making money. I'm proud of guys for signing big deals."

Who will win the 2026 NHL Rookie of the Year Award?

Boston Bruins forward David Pastrňák is one of those five players who have scored more goals than Thompson over the last four seasons. He's one of the game's premier players, a 61-goal scorer in 2022-23, and he's captain of an Original Six franchise. He's certainly not having any trouble paying the rent with his eight-year, \$90 million deal. But if he were to hit free agency now instead of in 2031, when he'll be 35 years old? If he had signed a four-year deal instead of an eight-year deal?

He might just have been the league's first \$20 million man instead of Makar.

When that was pointed out to him, he smiled and shrugged.

"That's the way the league is moving forward," Pastrňák said. "It was different five years ago, 10 years ago. It's good for the future NHLers. I looked at it the same way (when I was younger). Bobby Orr wasn't making the same money I'm making when he was playing. The world



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overall is just moving forward, so is hockey. ... The timing (for free agents this year and next) is great. If anybody could have predicted the future, I don't think there would have been guys signing eight-year deals. It's a little bit of luck where you are at a certain time when you are a free agent. I'm happy for those guys who are signing the big contracts. I hope everybody feels like that."

No team had better timing than the Montreal Canadiens — at least, from a management standpoint. The Habs have perhaps the cleanest cap sheet in the league, with Cole Caufield, Juraj Slafkovsky, Nick Suzuki, Ivan Demidov, Lane Hutson and Noah Dobson all locked up long term for less than \$10 million per player per season. Every one of those players would get far more on the open market, or if their contracts had come up next summer.

Caufield is coming off a 51-goal season and is in his prime at age 25. For him to be making just \$7.85 million a season for the next five seasons seems almost criminal. Really, from the players' standpoint, it seems like the Canadiens' whole rebuild happened at the worst possible time.

Ah, but some things are worth more than money. And Montreal might have the widest-open championship window in the league. Caufield said the team-first culture Montreal has built is "no joke," and the cap sheet is proof.

"There'll be time for (cashing in) to come," Caufield said. "But right now, it's probably the biggest five or six years of our careers based on what we've built. What's more important is winning and doing it with the group that you've done it with and built it up. That's what will make it that much sweeter."

That's the dilemma for the modern NHL player — looking out for No. 1, but not hamstringing your team. Nobody's criticizing Carlsson for signing the Philadelphia Flyers' eye-popping offer sheet — in fact, Carlsson joked that players have been thanking him all summer for raising the bar for high-end talent. But it certainly made Ducks general manager Pat Verbeek's job building a championship-caliber roster tougher.

Chris Kreider, who has scored at least 20 goals in 11 of the last 12 seasons, was a casualty of the Carlsson signing. His contract was terminated over the summer, with Montreal (naturally) scooping him up at a discounted \$2.15 million.

"That's the hard part," Carlsson said. "(With) the cap space going up in the future, you've got to think about that, too. Chris, he's leaving, but he was also really happy for me, as well, when I talked to him. It's a hard business; it's weird."

While there's pressure from fans on players to offer hometown discounts in the name of roster construction, there's always been a mostly unspoken pressure from other players to push salaries higher and higher. St. Louis Blues captain Robert Thomas, who's in his fourth year of an eight-year deal paying him just \$8.125 million per season, said his teammates frequently talk about "remembering what the guys before did (to) set up this next generation to get paid like that."

It's something even Sidney Crosby felt. The famously superstitious Pittsburgh Penguins megastar has been making \$8.7 million a year (representing his birthday and his jersey number) every year since 2008-09. That first season, he was making 15.3 percent of Pittsburgh's salary cap. This season, it's just 8.4 percent of the cap. Makar, by comparison, will be making 18 percent of Colorado's cap next season (but just 11.6 percent by the end of the contract, per CapWages' projections).

Yes, Crosby has made more than \$156 million in his career. But there's no denying he's left tens of millions on the table.

"I don't try to compare because now is different than then," Crosby said. "It's obviously been a pretty sudden change with the last few contracts, and with offer sheets and things like that. That changed a lot right there. ... You're aware of (the external pressure to push salaries higher), though. You're aware of the big picture and how contracts that are signed affect different guys and the market and all that stuff. It's in the back of your mind, but ultimately, guys have to do what's best for themselves and balance all that."

Do what's best for yourself and for your family, but also what's best for your team. It's not an easy equation. And in the new math of the NHL, it's hard to know for sure what is best for anybody. New York Islanders defenseman Matthew Schaefer will be eligible for an extension on July 1. Could he be the next \$20 million man? Should he be?

"Math was fun, but it's not what I'm good at," Schaefer said with a laugh. "The agents and stuff can worry about it."

Schaefer will be fine. He'll have no trouble paying his bills and going on nice vacations. His kids and his kids' kids and his kids' kids' kids will be set up for life. Whether you're an "underpaid" current star or an "overpaid" future star, we're talking about generational wealth.

"I don't really have signer's remorse," said Minnesota's Matt Boldy, one of the best values in the league at just \$7 million a season through 2030. "I signed that deal at 21 years old. Tell a 21-year-old that you're going to get \$49 million in seven years; it's kind of a hard one to say no to. It's easy to look back and have those thoughts, but if I sign a short-term deal and don't have the success I've had, it's a very different story."

In other words, a very different sort of remorse.

So, would every NHL star like to be cashing in right about now? Of course. Are they ragingly jealous of their peers getting, in some cases, more than twice as much? Or of their lessers making more than they do? Nah. These days, in the suddenly cash-flush NHL, there's plenty to go around. And their turn will come again.

"The way I look at it is, I'm living out my dream," said Ottawa Senators defenseman Jake Sanderson (\$8.05 million per season through 2032). "To even make money playing hockey, it's unreal."

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ESPN / Wysh List: NHL execs audit ESPN's top 100 player rankings - ESPN

Greg Wyshynski

"Why do you do this to yourselves?"

That was the first reaction from an NHL general manager as he perused the latest NHL Rank, the top 100 player list that publishes at the start of every season. It was a reaction that signaled some discontent with the ranking -- and he wasn't alone -- as well as a twinge of sympathy for the inevitable backlash that accompanies such an undertaking.

Here's the method to this madness: 15 individuals from the ESPN hockey family, from front-facing talents to ink-drenched scribes to analytics virtuosos, submitted their own ranking of the top 100 NHL players based on how well they're expected to perform in the 2026-27 regular season. Those ballots are combined to come up with a final Top 100.

So, in theory, this is a projection of greatness rather than a coronation for past efforts. Does that explain why Connor Hellebuyck, currently suspended by the Winnipeg Jets after a trade request, could be ranked 22nd if he's not even playing? Well, no, it doesn't, but then there are plenty of other questions for those who debated it this week.

I spoke with several NHL executives about this year's ranking. They had questions of their own.

"Why is Alex Ovechkin ranked here? Like, at all?" one executive asked.

The Washington Capitals' captain was ranked No. 78.

"He barely skates anymore. Ovechkin being on this list is silly. What year is this?"

Oh, c'mon ... let the man retire with dignity!

Another NHL executive believed there was another glaring gaffe in the ranking: New York Islanders phenom Matthew Schaefer at No. 16. Last season's rookie of the year had 59 points in 82 games while skating 24:41 per night. That ice time ranked 14th among all defensemen, and many of those defensemen who skated more finished well behind the 19-year-old in this ranking.

"Not many young defensemen have that kind of impact, that early," they said.

Speaking of Schaefer: "So two of the top six defensemen in the NHL got cut by Hockey Canada? Because Colton Parayko, Travis Sanheim and Drew Doughty are nowhere to be found on this list, and they all played in the Olympics," pondered one NHL executive, in reference to Schaefer and Evan Bouchard of the Edmonton Oilers.

(For what it's worth, Doughty made last year's list at No. 54 while the others did not.)

A few other reactions to our player ranking from NHL front office suits:

Two execs believed that the voters had succumbed to the siren's song of scoring, rather than accounting for the actual sway players have over their team's fortunes. "I think you have some high rankings on players who have more points scored than actual impact," one GM said. Another team exec lamented: "Too many empty-calorie point guys that don't drive winning," while specifically calling out Montreal winger Cole Caufield (25th).

A few players were cited by multiple NHL executives as being undervalued in this ranking: New York Rangers defenseman Adam Fox (51), Vegas Golden Knights winger Mark Stone (73) and Tampa Bay Lightning winger Brandon Hagel (55). "Brandon Hagel is a superstar, and people don't realize it. Way too low," one executive said.

More than one exec noted that our ranking of the 100 best players didn't exactly honor the reigning Stanley Cup champions, the Carolina Hurricanes. Center Sebastian Aho (48) was the only Cane to crack the top 50, and he was down from 28th on last year's list. Jaccob Slavin (62),

Seth Jarvis (74), Andrei Svechnikov (84) and Nikolaj Ehlers (96) also made the cut. "Where's anyone from the best line from the reigning Cup winners?" one executive asked, referring to the trio of Taylor Hall, Logan Stankoven and Jackson Blake.

I'm not going to deny there are a few shots that missed the net on this list. Schaefer is way too high. So is Martin Necas of the Colorado Avalanche at 24th; he had a career year skating 82% of the time with Nathan MacKinnon -- a luxury not afforded to several wingers ranked behind him. Would I have Brandt Clarke ranked ahead of Shea Theodore? I would not. Would I have had Darren Raddysh on this list at all, let alone at No. 90? I also would not.

On the flippity flop, Leo Carlson (36th) and Stone should be much higher. I would have liked Florida defenseman Seth Jones somewhere on this list -- although perhaps the toxic stink cloud from his time with the Blackhawks still follows him in South Florida despite helping the Panthers to their second Stanley Cup win.

But here's my scorching hot take on this year's NHL Rank on ESPN. Prepare yourself. Maybe get a tall glass of milk to handle the ghost pepper sear of this take.

The NHL Rank list is overall pretty ... good?

Qualms and quibbles aside, the top of the list seems about right. Proper respect was given to emerging talents (Macklin Celebrini at No. 4 and Nick Suzuki at No. 19) and established stars (Sidney Crosby, hanging tough at No. 23). Heck, we even found a way to get Evgeni Malkin in at No. 100, so Pittsburgh fans can finally extinguish the torches they light whenever this ranking dropped without him in it.

During my conversations around the league about the list, I found out I wasn't alone.

"This looks absolutely fine to me. I've got nothing to criticize here," one NHL assistant general manager said.

An NHL veteran player who scanned the list agreed.

"I think everyone is actually where they should be," the player said when shown the top 100. "It's a nice list. No notes."

Based on my texts, my inbox and my mentions, everyone else had more than enough notes to share. Some even without profanity!

Jump ahead:

Winners, losers of the week

Favorite on-ice moment

Must-see games

Puck headlines

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Winner: Alex Ovechkin

Last season, Ovechkin explicitly didn't want a farewell tour because he felt his pursuit of Wayne Gretzky's record in 2024-25 overshadowed everything about the Capitals, including his teammates. But after deciding in the summer that this season would be his last in the NHL, Ovi decided to just put the issue to bed early, sparing his teammates from questions about his status for the next 80-plus games.

It also sets up the NHL for a one-of-a-kind farewell tour. Consider other recent transcendent stars. Wayne Gretzky didn't let his fate be known until there were just a few games left in the 1998-99 season. Mario Lemieux played until he couldn't. Jaromir Jagr was an afterthought on the Calgary Flames before spending the next decade in Kladno, Czechia. Ovechkin will visit 31 other teams for the final time, giving fans the chance to react to his last NHL days.

That includes what could be the emotional apex of his season on April 4 in Washington's home finale against Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and the Pittsburgh Penguins. If you don't have tickets and want to attend, prepare to sell a kidney.

play

0:47

Alex Ovechkin's sons introduce him in final home opener



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Loser: Brady Tkachuk

The Florida Panthers didn't have a regulation loss in their first four games (2-0-2). Their losses were on the roster. Aleksander Barkov's lower-body injury thankfully wasn't as bad as feared, but their best player is still on the shelf for about six weeks. Brad Marchand was helped off the ice Tuesday after collisions with the net and the boards in Los Angeles. As of this writing, his status was unknown, but it didn't look good.

Another point of concern through four games: Brady Tkachuk has put out more podcasts (two) than put up points (zero), despite leading the Panthers with 11 shots. Granted, the loss of Barkov in Game 2 affected him -- witness Sam Reinhart also sporting goose eggs on his stat line through four games -- but Tkachuk was acquired to help the Panthers through significant lineup losses like they had last season. Plus, he has had to watch his old friends in Ottawa thriving in his absence.

Tkachuk will be fine. But it's not the start he or the Panthers wanted statistically.

Winner: GQ covers hockey

It's always interesting to see how a writer who doesn't cover hockey processes our silly little sport. Nick Remsen of GQ profiled San Jose Sharks star Macklin Celebrini, and gave NHL fans some artful new descriptions of backhand shots ("[He] pushed the puck into the net with the convex side of his blade, body twisting with near balletic torque...") and routine goal celebrations ("He was so happy after ricocheting a puck into the net's far outer edge that he all but flung himself into the sideboards...").

Loser: GQ makes it weird

Given the "Heated Rivalry" and "Off Campus" phenomenon and the NHL's now shuttered "Hot For Hockey" experiment, it's not out of bounds to ask someone like Macklin about the para-social relationship between fans and players. Where things got weird in the Celebrini profile: Asking about the "fan fiction element" in his fandom. Given the content in some of those stories, that question felt invasive and put him in an awkward spot.

Celebrini understandably punted on the answer, which isn't something for which he should have to answer anyway. Besides, it's not as if fan fiction involving NHL players started with Macklin Celebrini.

Winner: Dylan Larkin drama

A few sources around the league I spoke with previously didn't believe we'd see Larkin wear a Detroit sweater again, but the now-former Red Wings captain returned to the lineup from injury Tuesday night, his first game since requesting a trade from Detroit. The fans booed him as they booed him on opening night when he was introduced in street clothes; Larkin responded with a goal and an assist to reignite the dormant Detroit offense.

There were some cheers interspersed with the boos when he was announced as the No. 1 star. After the game, Larkin said, "I'm just happy to be a hockey player today and go out and try to help the team win."

Give Larkin this credit: He has spoken to reporters. He has faced the fans. He wore a uniform that he has asked to no longer wear. How this all ends up is anyone's guess, but we're here for the soap opera: "As The Winged Wheel Turns."

play

0:16

Dylan Larkin gets booed at Wings home opener

Loser: No-trade clauses

The aftermath of Larkin's trade request was put into sharp relief last week when NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said the league is monitoring how players are using their no-movement and no-trade clauses. Larkin, then Detroit's captain, asked out with five years left on an eight-year contract, and limited the field of suitors to three teams with his no-trade clause.

Just like how the NHL enacted offside reviews because one player (Matt Duchene) was a country mile offside and the officials missed it, Larkin's trade request appears to have lit the fuse for this potentially contentious labor dispute.

What I can report: Bettman is speaking to players to get feedback on the way trade protection is currently being used and potential changes to the system down the line. It'll be fascinating to hear how they feel about Larkin's gambit.

Favorite on-ice moment

It's always fascinating to see what the league's preeminent agitators use for material. Ottawa forward Nick Cousins pantomiming the letter "C" and pointing to his chest as he taunts Dylan Larkin getting the captaincy stripped from him? Chef's kiss, especially if you want to add the subtext of having reminded Larkin that he's stuck in some kind of trade demand purgatory.

Must-see games coming up

Toronto Maple Leafs at Vegas Golden Knights

Thursday, 10 p.m. ET | ESPN+

The vibes are good for the Leafs. They're 2-2-0. Auston Matthews scored an overtime winner against Nashville in a game that saw No. 1 pick Gavin McKenna finally hit the scoresheet. But starting with this game against old pal Mitch Marner and the Golden Knights, we're going to learn about more about Toronto: The Leafs are at Colorado, at Utah and then get Buffalo at home.

Edmonton Oilers at San Jose Sharks

Saturday, 4 p.m. ET | ESPN+

Celebrini is day-to-day, and one hopes he's available for a showdown against Connor McDavid. But no matter his status: This is a four-point divisional game for the Sharks, and if they're going to be a playoff team then these are the games they need to win.

Colorado Avalanche at Dallas Stars

Tuesday, 8:30 p.m. ET | ESPN

The first meeting between the two best regular-season teams in the Central Division last season. Three of their four games in 2025-26 went to a shootout. An early test for both teams.

From your hockey friends at ESPN

Ryan Clark went to Houston to find out why that city believes it deserves an NHL expansion team more than Austin, Texas, does. Said Mayor John Whitmire on what the city will do to get a team: "We're not going to start selling dope out of an arena or anything. But if it's lawful, we'll pull that trigger."

Sean Allen looks at hits and blocks in fantasy hockey, and who could be the most valuable players this season to that end.

Kalan Hooks with a wild story out of New Jersey, as a youth hockey team owner is under fire after threatening to suspend the children on his under-10 hockey team after their parents created their own merchandise.

Finally, Rachel Kryshak has a deep dive into which NCAA teams have the most high-end talent. How did we end up with so many kids named "Ryker" playing hockey?

Jersey Foul

Maybe an unpopular opinion and I 100% understand the frustration and disappointment with Larkin leaving, but this is a brutal look fella, retire the jersey or pick a different fit. 😞 <https://t.co/JuS3vPv4cP>

— Sauce Hockey (@saucehockey) October 3, 2026

I appreciate the integration of Larkin's name into this Protest Jersey about his trade request. Much more impressive than just using the "L" and taping the word "LOSER" on the back or just covering the whole thing with the word "TRAITOR," which is what other fans decided to do.

Puck headlines

DATELINE: TEAM USA GROUP CHAT

One of the greatest bits of hockey lore going these days is the power of the U.S. men's Olympic team group chat, which has been credited with having players like Winnipeg Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck demand a trade to the U.S.



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Gold medalist Vincent Trocheck of the Utah Mammoth says he believes its power is overstated.

"I think people make it a bigger thing than it is," he told me this week. "Obviously, people want the headlines, but the whole Canada thing or guys wanting out of Canada that are from the U.S., I think it was more situational than it was anything else."

But is there a thriving group chat among the players?

"There's one from Team USA. But not, like, a trade talk one," he said. "It's been dormant for a little bit. It's sad. I might have to fire it back up."

DATELINE: CONNOR HELLEBUYCK

It was a bit surprising when Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff didn't rule out the possibility that Hellebuyck could remain with the team after going public with a trade demand.

But one former teammate of the star goaltender I spoke with actually didn't rule it out.

The thinking here: Hellebuyck will eventually grow frustrated with losing pay after having been suspended by the Jets, as it has been reported he'll lose around \$39,000 a day. But more than that, he's still on friendly terms with his teammates -- some of them neighbors -- who theoretically would welcome back the multitime Vezina Trophy winner if he decides to pull a Larkin and suit up again.

DATELINE: UTAH MAMMOTH

One sign the Mammoth are really starting to thrive in Salt Lake City? The lack of enemy fans in the stands. Team president Chris Armstrong told me that when Utah opened its season against the Blackhawks at home, there were very few Chicago fans in the building "in comparison to the inaugural season" in Salt Lake City.

"I feel like maybe that people are switching their allegiance to the Mammoth now," Armstrong said.

If they keep playing the way they're playing to start the season, who wouldn't?

ESPN LOADED: 10.09.2026



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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs still searching for chemistry after blowing three-goal lead

Luke Fox

TORONTO — The Toronto Maple Leafs gave Sergei Bobrovsky a giant cushion, but it was the goaltender who stole them a point against the reigning Western Conference champions.

Coming into cloudless Las Vegas hot off a multi-goal comeback win of their own, the Leafs needed all of eight minutes and 37 seconds to pump three pucks past a seemingly shaken Adin Hill. A dream start... for the Golden Knights.

"You always want to get down as early as possible," Vegas's Ivan Barbashev said, without irony, after the home side had all the time in the world to rally for a 4-3 shootout victory.

Truth be told, the Maple Leafs should count themselves lucky to have escaped the Fortress with a point, after Vegas flipped the tables late in the first period and dominated the second frame like Daniel Negreanu with the big stack.

Leafs coach Jim Hiller pointed to Mark Stone's full-blast slapshot goal late in the first as the turning point, and the Knights rode that spark into the second and third, outshooting their guests 21-8 and 11-4 in those periods, respectively.

"The second period, they came in waves at us. We didn't do the best job of handling it," veteran defenceman Chris Tanev said. "You can't let teams like that start feeling it and get back into the game after we have a 3-0 lead.

"We got off to a great start, and then I think we just stopped playing direct, turned some pucks over coming out of our end and in the neutral, and sort of fed their transition game. They're in Game (6) of the Cup Final last year for a reason. They're very well structured. It's amazing players. (Jack) Eichel can take over a game, and he had the puck a lot, especially in the second period."

Eichel also drew a penalty shot — and converted — as part of a lopsided 5-1 tally in penalties drawn by the Knights. And while Bobrovsky led an overworked PK that held the fort, Vegas drew 5-on-5 momentum from its zippy power-play.

And while, yes, Toronto ran into a resilient and well-oiled opponent, the Leafs defencemen are spending too much time running around their own end, and the coach is getting desperate for consistency in his top nine mix of forwards.

Gavin McKenna was tried out on Nick Paul's third line, and Hiller flipped William Nylander onto Auston Matthews' top unit mid-game, dropping Kirill Marchenko to John Tavares's second line as things unravelled.

"Just try to change the vibe a little bit at different times," Hiller explained of his latest top-six tweak. "Some players have been pretty consistent night after night. But as for three at the same time, we're still looking for that."

Such is the challenge of incorporating eight new forwards onto the roster over one crazy summer.

In all, Hiller used 10 different forward-line combinations at 5-on-5 Thursday. Only two of those combos won their minutes territorially.

Tack on an unkind whistle, and the Leafs were on their heels, needing Bobrovsky to make 40 saves to salvage their shootout point.

An egregious non-call late — Jeremy Lauzon's aggressive interference on Oliver Ekman-Larsson — coincided with the Leafs defenceman leaving the game hurt. (No update on Ekman-Larsson's health yet.)

"Oh, I think there could've been a call," Hiller said.

In truth, this game was both won by Vegas — and saved, by a leather-flashing Bobrovsky — in a wild Period 2.

"He got us a point. That's what great goalies do," Hiller said. "Listen, they could have got three or four, and the game's over."

"We want to get a win for him badly," Tanev said. "But we got to learn from what we did today and then get better."

Bobrovsky (0-2-1) is still searching his first win as a Maple Leaf. But he now has his first standout performance.

"They're a really good team, so it's a big point for us, and we just move on," Bobrovsky said. "We're gonna work on our game and keep building."

The Maple Leafs practice Friday in Vegas before flying to Denver to face the Avalanche Saturday night.

Fox's Fast Five

- You could get into T-Mobile Arena Thursday for as little as \$18.82. Sign of the times.

This was the first non-sellout home game in Golden Knights history (pandemic excluded).

Announced attendance was 15,977, which sounds generous. The rink's capacity is 17,367.

- File under: "Hey, I ran into your ex..."

Former Leafs goalie Dennis Hildeby was stellar in Thursday's Lightning debut, posting 34 saves and a .944 save percentage in a 3-2 win over the Wild. He was awarded Second Star.

- When Colton Sissons was honoured on the Jumbotron, the returning Knight alumnus didn't wave to the applauding crowd. He just winked.

Badass move.

- Victor Olofsson was essentially the Knights quick-fix replacement for the departing Pavel Dorofeyev — and at a cap hit \$9,361,670 cheaper.

The goal-a-game winger had posted at least a point in each of his first four outings for Vegas (4-1–5) before leaving Tuesday's win in Seattle with an undisclosed injury. He's out week-to-week.

"Definitely sucks," Mitch Marner said.

- One imagines the speedy, creative McKenna thriving in 3-on-3 action, with its abundance of space and lack of contact. He hasn't had a shift in either of Toronto's overtime periods.

"He'll get out there sooner or later. Trust me," Hiller said. "He's been called. If you ask him, I've probably called him three different times. But for whatever reasons, he hasn't been able to get out there yet."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 9, 2026

1402413 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks Takeaways: Effort, execution lacking in embarrassing loss

Iain MacIntyre

It's not the end of the road trip the Vancouver Canucks need, but the end of Murderer's Row.

Not only have the Canucks been one of the busier teams in the National Hockey League so far with five games in 10 nights, but opponents in four of those games have been to the Stanley Cup Final in the last two years.

So the measuring stick the rebuilding team has been forced to use at the start of the season has been dauntingly long, sharp-edged and unyielding.

Splitting two rollicking games against the Edmonton Oilers, Cup finalists in 2024 and 2025, was good for the Canucks. Losing 3-2 to 2026 runners-up the Vegas Golden Knights was honourable. Getting embarrassed 7-2 Thursday by the current champions, the Carolina Hurricanes, was neither.

After Vancouver Canucks coach Manny Malhotra emphasized that his team needed to play its own game and not focus on the Hurricanes' speedy, relentless press, they looked completely unprepared for the pressure as they fell behind 3-0 and managed just one shot on target in the first 17 ½ minutes.

Carolina led 4-0 and 7-1 and, unlike the second of the two shootouts with the Oilers when the Canucks turned a six-goal deficit into a 9-7 loss, there was no redeeming surge at the end by Vancouver.

The Hurricanes eviscerated the Canucks on special teams, going 3-for-3 on the power play and 4-for-4 on the penalty kill while also scoring a key shorthanded goal at 13:13 of the second period.

Well, already up 4-1, maybe the first of three goals by Logan Stankoven wasn't pivotal to the outcome. But Jake DeBrusk had just trimmed the deficit to three goals when the Canuck power play had a chance to make it two. Instead, Vancouver surrendered a two-on-one that Filip Hronek badly defended and it became 5-1.

The Canucks won't face any Stanley Cup favourites when they head to the New York area for three games in four nights starting Saturday against the New Jersey Devils. But that schedule certainly isn't easy. And looming at the end of Vancouver's six-game marathon are severe tests next week against another pair of recent Stanley Cup winners: the Florida Panthers and Tampa Bay Lightning.

Thursday was disappointing. Without better effort and execution from the Canucks, this trip could quickly become a sobering illustration of how much work ahead is required for the rebuild.

"We acknowledge we're going to have some rough nights," Malhotra explained to reporters post-game in Raleigh, N.C. "But on our part and the way we coach it, it's not going to be for lack of effort.

"We can't have guys that are just going to go away in these situations. It shows what type of character we have when we show the ability to push back and play our game despite the score. And that, unfortunately, wasn't the case tonight."

CHECK! MATE

Every coach talks about structure. But basic positional structure isn't much good if unaccompanied by defensive awareness and anticipation.

On several of the Hurricane goals, including on their power play, Canucks defenders were in position to make plays but simply didn't.

On Andrei Svechnikov's second power-play goal, which made it 3-0 just 9:25 into the first period, Hronek turned too slowly as the Hurricane went to the net, then failed to tie up his stick or stop Jackson Blake's centring pass through the crease.

On Stankoven's second goal, defenceman Victor Mancini was in position to take away the scorer's space, but hesitated to move higher in the slot and was checking no one as the puck went in to make it 6-1. And on the last Carolina goal, also by Stankoven, Aatu Raty turned over the puck and then failed, as did winger Arshdeep Bains, to quickly recognize the danger in the high slot, which Vancouver left open despite still having an advantage in numbers.

We understand these are early days for coach Malhotra's system. And players, especially younger ones, have lots to learn. But to be competitive, the Canucks must defend better than that. Like they did against the Golden Knights on Sunday.

SOME GOOD NEWS

Elias Pettersson continued his encouraging start for the Canucks as he tries to resurrect his status as an elite player. Pettersson drove a first line that generated both Vancouver goals (by DeBrusk) and won a head-to-head matchup against Conn Smythe-winner and perennial Selke Trophy candidate Jordan Staal.

Five-on-five shots were 5-1 for the Canucks in 7:01 of Pettersson-vs-Staal ice time, 25-8 for the Hurricanes without that matchup. The third member of the top line, rookie Jonathan Lekkerimaki, registered three shots, one assist, was plus-two and played his best game of the season so far.

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

Hockey fans already know the name, but this is not the blog. From Sportsnet, 32 Thoughts: The Podcast with NHL Insider Elliott Friedman and Kyle Bukauskas is a weekly deep dive into the biggest news and interviews from the hockey world.

Latest episode

LINEUP CHOICES

It makes sense that Malhotra manages over an 84-game schedule the workload of his bottom-of-the-lineup veterans, but scratching defenceman Luke Schenn, 36, and winger Brendan Gallagher, 34, for more speed in Mancini and Bains did not help the team in Carolina. Time will tell if it helped Schenn and Gallagher.

"The one common thread with any player that is a scratch is that they're going to be upset," Malhotra said before the game. "The guys want to play. They want to be in the lineup. So regardless of what reason you give them, there are going to be some feelings there, which is expected. (But) if you have a guy that's accepting of being out of the lineup and not really caring, then that's a whole other set of problems. So it's a good problem to have. The veteran guys, they're intelligent; they understand why it's happening. Again, they're not happy about it, but they understand it."

QUOTEBOOK

DeBrusk: "We talked a lot during training camp, and the last couple of days, what's expected of us. And obviously that wasn't good enough."

AND OTHER THINGS

Defenceman Zeev Buium picked up his first point since signing a \$75-million extension in September, moving the puck to the side of the net from the point on DeBrusk's second goal with 6:56 remaining. . . After scoring just four even-strength goals in 81 games last year (plus 19 on the power play), DeBrusk had two at five-on-five in his third game of the season after missing two due to illness. . . Canucks starter Kevin Lankinen allowed six goals on 18 shots before Malhotra replaced him for the third period with Leevi Merilainen, who stopped 14 of 15. . . Pettersson, DeBrusk and Lekkerimaki combined for half of Vancouver's 20 shots. . . Raty finished minus-two in his team-low 8:36 of ice time.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 9, 2026

1402414 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Winless Flames find silver lining with Castagna's debut

Eric Francis

CALGARY — Jonathan Castagna has a nickname, a souvenir puck and an NHL assist to his name after one game in the big leagues.

He also has a pretty good story about the first penalty he took.

Welcome to the NHL, George.

Yes, George. As in George Costanza, the neurotic Seinfeld character. Apparently, the 21-year-old Calgary Flames centre has never watched the show, which made the nickname even funnier to his new teammates.

"We call him George — you can probably understand why," chuckled coach Ryan Huska.

"When we first started calling him George he said he never watched Seinfeld, if you can believe that. But that is his nickname now."

Somewhere, Jerry Seinfeld is probably wondering what's the deal with a Flames rookie who has never seen his namesake.

Castagna, meanwhile, has bigger things to worry about than catching up on reruns. Like turning Thursday's NHL debut into the beginning of a career.

And on a night when the Flames lost 7-3 to the Colorado Avalanche, falling to 0-4, their rookie centre provided something the scoreboard couldn't: a reason to smile.

Forget the 23 goals Calgary has allowed while scoring just six through four games. Forget the defensive breakdowns and the mounting evidence that this season is going to require a healthy supply of patience.

For a few minutes Thursday, the story belonged to a kid taking his rookie lap, his mother crying in the owners' box, and a young man struggling to find words when he saw her reaction.

That's what this season — and the next handful — should be about.

Opportunity.

Castagna's father, Al, mother, Joyce, and girlfriend, Lexi, made the trip from Toronto to watch him take his first steps in the NHL. They saw him win his first faceoff against veteran Nicolas Roy on his opening shift, help set up Adam Klapka's spectacular toe-drag goal and collect his first NHL point. His reaction was priceless.

The puck he used to set up Klapka was wrapped in tape and presented to him.

"Yeah, that was crazy," Castagna said of the assist.

"Really happy that he did that. Obviously, I didn't have to do much for it, so to get that off my back is really cool. Kudos to him. That was unbelievable."

He also jumped early on a shift, costing his team a too-many-men penalty in the first period.

"I guess I just blacked out and didn't hear Husk say the other names, so completely on me," Castagna admitted.

"And I'm really glad they bailed me out for that."

George had himself a night.

But the moment that will stick with people came during his first-intermission interview with Sportsnet's Brendan Parker, when Castagna was shown his mother's tears as he circled the ice for his rookie lap.

He was nearly speechless.

"It was definitely hard to see," said the six-foot-2, 198-pound centre with Famiglia tattooed on the back of one of his sizeable biceps.

"I apologize for the lack of words there, but really grateful that they can make it out. Means a lot to me, and to share this moment with them, I'll never forget it."

Castagna was acquired from the Utah Mammoth in the MacKenzie Weegar trade after it became clear he wasn't going to sign there. Calgary offered a fresh start and a chance to play. The 21-year-old Cornell product earned his call-up from the Wranglers this week after scoring twice in his first AHL game of the season.

Voted the ECAC's best defensive player last season after posting the highest faceoff percentage in the NCAA, he has the size, defensive instincts and pedigree to make himself an interesting piece of Calgary's future.

Whether he becomes an everyday NHLer, never mind a pillar of the franchise, remains to be seen. One game doesn't make a career.

But getting the chance to find out is the point.

Castagna is the sixth young player to make his Flames debut since last season began, the fourth-most in the NHL over that span. Calgary now has six players under 23 in its lineup, including fellow call-up Aydar Suniev, who played alongside Castagna and Klapka.

Those opportunities came in part because the Flames sent veterans Connor Zary and Brayden Pachal down, opening roster spots for two more youngsters.

That's what a rebuild is supposed to look like: making room, giving prospects responsibility and finding out which ones can handle the next level.

"He did a really nice job on Klapka's goal, winning a wall battle," said Huska, who saw the young man go 3-for-6 in faceoffs through nine minutes of ice time.

"I thought he worked really hard when he was on the ice. I thought he handled himself well."

He also wanted the rookie to appreciate the challenge of playing against perhaps the NHL's best team, the Colorado Avalanche.

"You see some of the people they have, the way they play the game. That's what you aspire to be," Huska said.

The Avalanche certainly provided a sobering lesson. Calgary hung around for the first half of the game before the wheels came off.

But while the Flames search for their next generation of difference-makers, there will be nights when the stories of hope matter more than the final score.

"Before the game, everyone was telling me to soak it in," Castagna said.

"You can only do it once."

He's right.

The Flames may not know yet who their future pillars will be. Some are already in Calgary. Others are still playing junior, college or minor-league hockey, waiting for their turn.

On Thursday, George gave fans a glimpse of what those moments can look like.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 9, 2026

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Sportsnet.ca / Newhook line helps Canadiens restore balance despite loss

Eric Engels

They dominated at five-on-five, combining for a goal, owning a 91.58 per cent share of the expected goals, notching 13 shot attempts while only allowing three, and providing a template the rest of their Montreal Canadiens teammates followed in what should've been a 6-2 win rather than a 5-2 loss to the Nashville Predators.

No matter how much this one stung — and it stung enough for coach Martin St. Louis to express concern for his team's morale following its third consecutive loss — the performance these three players had in their first game together was a silver lining worth focusing on.

Because while precious points in the standings were lost on Thursday, this line was one valuable thing found.

"Hard to play against, knowing what we have to do each and every shift, creating momentum, energy," said Anderson of its identity. "I just thought we played a north-south hockey game tonight. It was really simple in our game, what we wanted to accomplish and achieve, and we were straightforward and direct."

They were just what the doctor ordered, really.

That recipe for the Canadiens was completely absent in the losses to the Pittsburgh Penguins and Carolina Hurricanes that directly preceded this game against the Predators, and much of that had to do with the lack of cohesion on each of their lines in those games.

The chemistry between Kreider, Nick Suzuki and Cole Caufield proved elusive since the start of training camp. Juraj Slafkovsky's connection with Ivan Demidov and Oliver Kapanen never had a proper chance of being rekindled, with Demidov most recently following Kapanen to the infirmary. And Newhook and Anderson appeared miscast in the different slots they were used in.

Until they ended up together with Kreider Thursday.

"It seemed like whenever they were on the ice, the other team didn't have much room if they had the puck and stuff," said St. Louis. "And we were able to forecheck really well, get pucks back and stuff."

There was value in seeing that happen, especially after we didn't see much of any of it through the 1-1-1 start the Canadiens got off to before losing this game.

What it should do is give St. Louis confidence he can roll Slafkovsky with Suzuki and Caufield — one of the most dominant lines in hockey over the last three seasons — without fearing he's making the Canadiens too top-heavy.

It also helps that Zachary Bolduc, Phillip Danault and Alexandre Texier are meshing well already.

St. Louis talked about the value they're providing in extending offensive possession, and that value was as evident in their production over the last two games as it was in the momentum they generated for the Canadiens to appear more like the team they're supposed to be this season.

Rolling those three out before Anderson, Newhook and Kreider Thursday led to the most dominant sequence of the season to date — a three-minute fire drill in Nashville's end in the middle of the second period — and provided some hope that this team could find the balance it lost when Demidov joined Kapanen on the sidelines.

Changes on defence St. Louis made were promising as well, even if the end result against Nashville was just as disappointing as it was against Pittsburgh and Carolina.

Separated from Mike Matheson and paired with Lane Hutson, Noah Dobson had a brilliant assist on Newhook's second-period goal to

punctuate a great individual performance. Adam Engstrom came in for Jayden Struble and stabilized the third pairing with Arber Xhekaj.

And the change St. Louis made in net was anything but problematic.

Jacob Fowler stepped in for Jakub Dobes and was only beat on three shots he had no chance on. And two other Nashville goals were scored into an empty net following Ryan O'Reilly's tip to make it 3-2 Predators with 3:16 to go.

The score would've been lopsided in the other direction had Juuse Saros not stood on his head in Nashville's net.

He was scored on early by Kreider, but that goal came off the board due to an offside challenge.

Newhook beat Saros once, but missed a golden opportunity to do it again in the third. And when Anderson met the media, he said he was still thinking about the breakaway shot he pushed off Saros' pad before the Predators got the lead.

"I think we were executing on what we were given," Anderson added. "I thought we just played a deep game as a line. I thought our whole team played a good game tonight. We wanted to do everything that we did out there. Obviously, the puck wasn't going in tonight."

But his line will get many chances to score if it keeps playing that way.

Their assembly was an important development for a team searching for its balance at this early stage of the season.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' Evan Bouchard proving critics wrong with hot start

Mark Spector

SAN JOSE — Dictionary.com defines the word narrative as, "A story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious."

The Cambridge online dictionary deviates from that somewhat, defining the word narrative as "A story or a description of a series of events; a particular way of explaining or understanding events."

The Oxford Dictionary says this: "The part of a novel that tells the story, rather than the dialogue; a way of explaining events to illustrate a set of aims or values."

For Evan Bouchard, the word has its own context altogether. His narrative states that he is lazy defensively, doesn't care enough in his own zone, and is prone to The Big Mistake.

While a five-bell giveaway for a goal against gets way more views and reaction than a silky retrieval, the 26-year-old is now reshaping that narrative early this season into something more flattering.

"He just makes the right play nearly every time. His poise with the puck is just second to none," Leon Draisaitl was saying after yet another three-point, plus-four game by Bouchard on Wednesday in Anaheim. "It's pretty funny how he's viewed around the league, in my eyes.

"But, people can continue to see it that way. We'll just gladly have him on the ice."

Out there, on the 200 by 85-foot NHL sheet, Bouchard is off to a career start to the young season. He has been on the ice for 11 goals for and just one against at even strength through the first four games. Bouchard has 11 points and he leads the entire NHL with six goals.

He controls the game like Sergei Zubov once did, and shoots the puck like Sheldon Souray.

But here is where the narrative still clicks in the wheels of Bouchard's bicycle.

The goals and assists are always part of the highlight package that folks watch on a Thursday, after hitting the sack right about the time Bouchard skated out for the second period the night before in California. The points are out there for everyone to see, but the plays that dispel the narrative that he is shaky and can not be depended on defensively, those are simply everyday plays.

Plays that will never qualify as a highlight.

And then, when the eventuality occurs, and a 25-minute defenceman turns a puck over, BAM! There's the highlight that every editor building every late-night hockey package grabs.

The smooth zone exits. The crisp passes that land on Connor McDavid's tape in stride, night after night after night. If you're not watching the game live, you don't realize how often they occur, and the volume of difficult plays that the chilled Bouchard makes so smoothly.

And we're not just talking about American news outlets that are already forcing their talent to pick award winners off of four games. Outlets that place Bouchard behind all the sexy No. 1 defencemen in hockey. We're talking about a guy like Mike Babcock, who is by all accounts one of the biggest hockey nerds in the game.

He watches more hockey than most, and even Babcock is recalibrating his opinion after spending a few weeks watching Bouchard hop the boards live and in person.

"Well, I didn't know he was this good, this talented," the new head coach said. "(That he) saw this many plays, moved the puck as good as he does. And in saying that, I've talked a lot to Bouch about it — he can be way better. He's got a growth opportunity here.

"There's no question he should be in running for the Norris every year. He's that good, and we've just got to get him to be a little more competitive defensively. He's already working towards that, and then he'll be right at the front of that group."

Will he? Really?

Can Bouchard ever change the narrative? Or does he have to move East and out of McDavid's shadow, to a New York, Montreal or Toronto?

"Bouch has an opportunity," reckons Babcock. "He's an elite player already, way better than people think. But he's way more competitive, and he's got great pride, and he wants to get better. When you got an elite brain, an elite skill, you're going to get better."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Sportsnet.ca / With top line rolling, Jets still searching for more depth scoring

Jeff Hamilton

WINNIPEG — Just four games into the season and Kyle Connor is already in mid-season form.

The Winnipeg Jets star winger is tied for second in the NHL with five goals, and his three markers on the power play are threatening the five he scored all last year. He also has a pair of assists, with his seven points putting him top-5 in the NHL.

Connor has helped bring out the best in new linemate Cole Perfetti, who sits right behind with three goals and six points. It took centre Mark Scheifele a few games to find the scoresheet, but his undeniable chemistry with Connor was on full display in Wednesday's win over the Colorado Avalanche, his night capped by setting up Connor's game-winner late in the third period.

Scheifele threaded a cross-ice pass through the slot to Connor, who fired a low shot under the blocker of Colorado's Mackenzie Blackwood. The goal secured the victory and the Jets' spot atop the Central Division at 3-0-1.

"That was pretty special. Not a lot of guys can make those kinds of plays," Jets head coach Scott Arniel said. "Your best players need to step up in those type of moments, and those two have done it a lot for us."

While fans are rightfully marvelling at Winnipeg's hot start and the stellar play from its top line, it's starting to feel a bit like a movie we've seen before.

It was just last season that a top-heavy Jets squad free-fell to seventh in the Central Division and 26th overall, missing the playoffs entirely. That collapse was only magnified by their Presidents' Trophy-winning campaign the year prior, which was built on a balanced attack and finding goals up and down the lineup.

Arniel has talked openly about his desire to return as a Stanley Cup contender. While that focuses mainly on improving team defence, the Jets also need a collective effort at the other end of the ice.

Right now, the top line is scoring at a pace that has masked other offensive deficiencies. But they've also executed in the offensive zone without sacrificing their defensive responsibilities.

There is no better example than the game-winner against Colorado, which started with sound defensive work in the Jets' end before transitioning through the neutral zone. Perfetti didn't get credited for an assist, but without his shoulder check on a defender right before Scheifele's pass, there might not have been enough space.

"The way the defensive structure looked when Colorado had possession below the dots in our zone, and how we gained possession of that puck and north it went," said assistant coach Davis Payne, who runs the forwards and power play. "That's the commitment that gives you a chance to let your skills sort of come through."

After years playing together, the chemistry between Connor and Scheifele is borderline telepathic. Connor called Scheifele's vision on the clincher against Colorado similar to possessing a "sixth sense."

Perfetti has been the main beneficiary, gaining more confidence with each game as he begins the first year of a five-year, US\$30-million extension signed over the summer. But earning an opportunity is much different than keeping one, which isn't always easy when playing with two players who demand the puck.

"Their skill takes over, and you just want to fit in and help them keep producing," said veteran Alex Iafallo, who has thrived playing on the top line. "Just trying to get them the puck and make good forechecking reads, neutral zone reads, because their speed also helps them get

through the neutral zone or stay in the O-zone. You're just trying to make small, little plays that help push it forward."

As the top line rounds into form, the other three lines are left playing catch-up.

Most notable is an inexperienced second unit consisting of 18-year-old centre Viggo Bjork flanked by rookie Isak Rosén and veteran Gabriel Vilardi. After requesting more responsibility during his exit meeting with management in April, Vilardi has been tasked with anchoring linemates with just a combined 60 games of NHL experience — four of which belong to Bjork, who was drafted eighth overall in June.

While the trio has generated some good looks around the net, they've yet to find the back of it. It hasn't cost the Jets in the standings yet, but the drop-off in play between the top two lines is becoming more and more noticeable.

Asking an 18-year-old to fill such an important role was always going to come with its share of growing pains. Finishing touch aside, there are reasons to believe a breakthrough is only a matter of time.

For now, the coaching staff isn't reaching for the panic button. Instead, they continue to preach patience.

"We're still really early on in the process," Payne said. "We've got young guys in there that are sort of learning how this thing works, and we've got a group of guys that are learning how to create success together. That sort of team commitment is really strong to this point, and we're going to continue to lean on all facets of our game."

Arniel has gone to the line blender a couple of times this season in hopes of creating a spark. He's kept the top unit mostly intact, but has shifted around the bottom-nine with some promising results.

Sensing his team needed a lift against Pittsburgh, Arniel plucked Iafallo from the fourth line to the third unit, and then swapped Rosén for Morgan Barron on the second trio. The newly created third line of Adam Lowry, Rosén and Iafallo went on to score twice in the third period before Perfetti netted the game-winner.

So far, none of these in-game changes have been made permanent. The Jets are still gaining valuable insight by testing different variations, and drastically overhauling the lines would contradict their message to stay patient.

Iafallo acutely understands the challenges of when a depth chart is constantly shuffled. Considered the club's Swiss Army knife, he also knows the value of chemistry.

"It's always changing, which can be tough, but I try to adapt to who I'm playing with," Iafallo said. "I've played with pretty much everybody in this room, so you understand where each guy is going to be. Timing is a big thing."

Banking points early has created a cushion for when the club's offence inevitably cools, or the Jets run into a hot goaltender. Improvement on the defensive game has built confidence in tight games, while the steady play from the new tandem of Stuart Skinner and Clay Stevenson has helped cover up defensive blemishes.

For Skinner, he's had a front-row seat to it all.

Having witnessed his team gut it out in four consecutive one-goal games, it's given him a greater appreciation for all the hard work that's been put in at both ends of the rink.

"It's been awesome," Skinner said. "Just the fashion that we're able to win games, that shows the character in this room. It shows a lot of character, but a lot of experience as well. It's been a lot of fun seeing how these guys battle every night."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL Power Rankings: One player from each team still waiting for a goal

Ryan Dixon

No goal-scorer wants to be stuck on a goose egg for long.

The start of every season brings another chance to experience the joy of that first one, the goal that gets you on the board and officially kicks off another year of (hopefully) filling the net.

But what happens when you go two, three or maybe even four games without finding the back of the net when that's supposed to be your calling card?

With more than a week of the 2026-27 campaign in the books, most stars have had at least once chance to throw their hands in the air and bask in the glow of a red light. Those who haven't, though, are surely tightening their grip with each passing shift that doesn't produce a tuck.

So, with the season in full swing and some crooked numbers being hung all over the league, we're using this week's Power Rankings to highlight one guy on all 32 teams still looking for that first strike.

1. Colorado Avalanche (2-1-0) Nazem Kadri wasn't repatriated by the A's to be a scoring star, but he's found the net in just three of 19 games (with four total goals) since being acquired from Calgary before the trade deadline last winter. He's 0-for-3 so far this season.

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

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Latest episode

2. Vegas Golden Knights (3-1-0) Ivan Barbashev has scored exactly 23 goals in each of the past two seasons, but somehow hasn't buried one this season despite playing with Jack Eichel (10 points already!) and Mark Stone.

3. Minnesota Wild (2-0-1) Matt Boldy made a huge leap to 42 goals last year (up from a previous career-best of 31) and many predicted an additional bump for him this season. Maybe once Boldy bags one he'll get a bunch.

4. Utah Mammoth (3-1-0) Logan Cooley has four points through four games, but none of them are tucks.

5. Washington Capitals (2-1-0) We now know this is officially Alex Ovechkin's last NHL season, so it will be interesting to see what his final goal total is. Right now, the game's all-time leading goal-getter is stuck on zero. More shockingly, Ovie has just three shots on goal through a trio of outings.

6. Carolina Hurricanes (2-1-1) It took Nikolaj Ehlers 12 games to get his first goal as a Cane last fall in his debut year with the club. We're not there yet, but four games into Year 2 he's still looking to get off the schneid.

7. Edmonton Oilers (3-0-1) The Oilers are the highest-scoring club in the league so far and they'd love to see sophomore Isaac Howard join the party.

8. Tampa Bay Lightning (2-1-0) Nobody on Tampa has more than one goal so far and centre Anthony Cirelli is still in search of his first.

9. Florida Panthers (2-0-2) Sam Reinhart has gone from 57 goals three seasons ago to 39 the next campaign to 29 last year. With Aleksander Barkov and Brad Marchand both sidelined, the Cats need Reinhart to get going.

10. Dallas Stars (1-2-0) Nobody needs to worry about Wyatt Johnston, but the young sniper — on the heels of a bust-out 45-goal showing — has just one assist through three games so far.

11. Winnipeg Jets (3-0-1) The Jets are off to a wonderful start despite the fact top centre Mark Scheifele has yet to hit the net.

12. Ottawa Senators (2-1-0) Dylan Cozens and Shane Pinto are each pegged to pot about 25 goals this season, so getting on the board would feel great for both centres.

13. Buffalo Sabres (2-1-0) The Sabres need a few guys to pitch in to replace the offence lost when Alex Tuch departed for the Caps. A healthy season from Josh Norris should result in some goals, but he's been skunked so far.

14. Anaheim Ducks (2-1-0) Jackson LaCombe probably wouldn't mind not having a goal yet if he wasn't also tied with A.J. Greer for a team-worst minus-4 mark on the season.

15. Montreal Canadiens (1-1-1) Alex Newhook scored at a 25-goal pace last season and, with Ivan Demidov injured for a couple weeks, the Habs will need guys like Newhook to step up.

16. New York Rangers (4-1-0) Goalie Igor Shesterkin has more goals than six other Rangers who've suited up for all five of the team's games, including Adam Fox. Give Fox a bit a break, though, as the dangerous defenceman has accumulated five apples.

17. Toronto Maple Leafs (2-2-0) Gavin McKenna got the monkey off his back earlier this week; when will fellow newcomer Darren Raddysh do the same?

18. Boston Bruins (2-2-0) It's surprising the B's are .500 out of the gate with three big boys — David Pastrnak, Morgan Geekie and Pavel Zacha — all still in search of their first tally.

19. San Jose Sharks (2-1-0) Many people see a breakout season for Michael Misa coming, so it would be great for him to snipe the first one and get the ball rolling.

20. Pittsburgh Penguins (2-2-0) Sidney Crosby had one goal through four games last October, then ripped off seven in seven. Maybe if Sid — who's played four games without a goal this fall — gets one in Game No. 5, he'll go on a similar run.

21. Columbus Blue Jackets (1-1-0) Columbus has played the fewest games in the league at two, so it's hard to get on anybody's case just yet. That said, you know first-year Jacket Valeri Nichushkin would love to get his first with Columbus.

22. Nashville Predators (1-1-1) Only three Preds — Steven Stamkos (three), Nils Hoglander (three) and Roman Josi (one) — have found the net so far. Basically, throw a dart at the Nashville roster and you'll hit a guy anxious to get that first one.

23. New York Islanders (1-2-0) Kyle Palmieri was limited to just 25 games last year, and you know the guy who's popped 30 twice in his career would love to get going and help the Isles attack this season.

24. Seattle Kraken (2-2-0) Seattle's 12 goals at five-on-five through four games is a nice surprise, though that's largely based on blasting the lowly Calgary Flames twice already this season. One guy who'd like to join the goal party is Brandon Montour, a defenceman capable of contributing more than 15 tallies in a good season.

25. St. Louis Blues (1-2-0) It's not that surprising to see playmaker Robert Thomas without a goal through three contests, but to see him without a point is another matter.

26. Detroit Red Wings (1-2-0) Lucas Raymond has yet to find the net, but — with both Dylan Larkin and Simon Edvinsson potentially getting moved — Red Wings fans have bigger fish to fry right now.

27. Los Angeles Kings (0-2-1) The Kings need 20-goal production from Mats Zuccarello, even if he is 39 years old.

28. New Jersey Devils (1-2-0) From captain Nico Hischier, to newcomer Anthony Mantha, to wingers Timo Meier and Jesper Bratt, a lot of Devils are gipping the stick right now.

29. Philadelphia Flyers (0-2-2) It's been a gruesome start for the Flyers and Travis Konecny is dash-4 with zero goals.



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30. Vancouver Canucks (2-2-0) The Canucks have shown real spirit out of the gate and you know Zeev Buium's mood would lift a little if he got his first tally after inking that massive contract extension in the summer.

31. Chicago Blackhawks (1-3-0) You can't expect the world from a rookie, but so far Roman Kantserov — who arrived with justifiable fanfare from the KHL — has yet to get that first NHL marker.

32. Calgary Flames (0-3-0) Ugh. The Flames have but three goals this year, so somebody — anybody! — is going to have to step up. Captain Mikael Backlund leads the team with nine shots, but none of them have gone in.

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Sportsnet.ca / Who could Red Wings target in potential Simon Edvinsson trade?

Ryan Dixon

If the Detroit Red Wings' most recent game reminded us of anything, it's that you never know which way a saga might swing.

Playing his first game of the season on Tuesday, Dylan Larkin not only turned jeers to cheers with a 1-1-2 performance in the Wings' 5-3 win over the Senators, he acted like the captain he used to be when he physically engaged Ottawa forward Ridly Greig after the latter hit Larkin's teammate Alex DeBrincat at centre ice.

He may desire change, but Larkin is playing hard where his skates are right now.

Of course, one pair of blades that remains vacant in the Red Wings dressing room is the large set belonging to six-foot-six defenceman Simon Edvinsson. While Larkin — who requested a move out of Michigan last spring — has returned to the fold (for now), Edvinsson — an unsigned RFA — is skating in his native Sweden while we all await the next move.

As noted, it's impossible to know what twists are around the corner and it's still conceivable Edvinsson and interim GM Shawn Horcoff reach an agreement to keep the 23-year-old in Detroit. That said, Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman reported on Saturday that, at this point, Edvinsson would prefer to land with a new team.

If we assume, for the moment, that Larkin and Edvinsson both will eventually be moved, it's worth contemplating how one trade could impact the other. From the time we first learned Larkin would like to be dealt, we've also been under the impression the Red Wings — if they were to deal Larkin — wanted a centre they could immediately put in the lineup in return.

Could an Edvinsson deal alter Horcoff's approach, though? If Detroit could land a centre for Edvinsson, would the organization then become more amenable to other trade packages for Larkin? There's even some recent notion the Wings — originally thought to be dead-set against any big step back — could embrace the idea that an organizational reset is required, something Sportsnet's Frank Seravalli mused about on Wednesday.

The best-laid plans already have gone off the rails in Detroit and the club must consider all options as it navigates these trying circumstances. With that in mind, let's highlight some up-and-coming centres the Wings could target in a deal involving Edvinsson.

Caleb Desnoyers, Utah Mammoth

The Mammoth, justifiably, are a team we wonder about any time a real needle-mover — young, old or in between — becomes available and earlier this week, Seravalli said on the Frankly Hockey show that Utah is interested in Edvinsson, who was taken sixth overall in 2021.

The Mammoth have been aggressive upgrading their team, adding veteran forwards Vincent Trocheck and Anders Lee over the summer as the squad attempts to build on making the playoffs last spring.

Of course, one of the first big swings the club took when it moved to Utah in 2024 was acquiring defenceman Mikhail Sergachev — currently day-to-day after taking a puck up high on Tuesday — from Tampa Bay. Add Edvinsson to a blue line that also includes promising up-and-comer Dmitri Simashev and veteran MacKenzie Weegar — acquired at the 2026 trade deadline — and you'd have one heck of a back end featuring lots of size and varied tool kits.

Desnoyers is a big chip to surrender, but the Mammoth have young stud Logan Cooley at the top of the centre chart. Given both Trocheck and Nick Schmaltz can also play in the middle — with Barrett Hayton a serviceable 3C — you could imagine GM Bill Armstrong biting down and giving up Desnoyers.

For Detroit, nabbing the No. 4 pick from the 2025 NHL Draft — a guy with great two-way potential who's beginning his pro journey in the AHL this fall — would provide a major building block down the middle.

Berkly Catton, Seattle Kraken

Seattle landed an exciting blue-line prospect in Chase Reid at the 2026 draft, but the back end remains a clear position of need. You could probably say the same thing about a few areas of the ice in Seattle, but the club does have a handful of centres who possess different degrees of potential.

Catton was the eighth-overall pick in 2024 and if he'd been on a clear upward trajectory since then, we're probably not having this conversation. Of course, there's still plenty of potential in the player, even though the 20-year-old hasn't exploded on the scene yet.

Catton, though not big, is a skilled player with a big motor. When you consider Seattle has centre Matty Beniers in the mix and playmaking pivot Jake O'Brien — the eighth pick in 2025 — beginning his pro career in the AHL this fall, the Kraken would be dealing from a relative position of strength. And don't forget about Shane Wright, a right-shot centre who still has middle-six appeal.

Who knows, maybe Wright would be a guy who piques Detroit's interest in a larger deal, too.

James Hagens, Boston Bruins

Hagens has had a nice start to his rookie year with two goals in four games for the Bruins. In a sense, it would be awfully tough to give up Hagens — the seventh-overall pick in 2025 — when the B's are looking for their next generation of offence.

That said, does anybody need to tell Boston what a gigantic defender who can do a little bit of everything can mean for a franchise?

OK, we're not saying Edvinsson would be the second coming of Zdeno Chara, but the potential for him to be an all-situations stud who plays 23 minutes regularly and 27 when it really counts is there. Boston has a right-shot stud in Charlie McAvoy, who turns 29 in December. How good would it be to know you have Edvinsson potentially anchoring another pair from the left side and ready to take over as the go-to workhorse when McAvoy turns the corner into his 30s.

The rub for Detroit is Hagens has played the wing during his short, six-game NHL career and there are some doubts as to whether the five-foot-11 American would thrive up the middle matching up with the best centres in the NHL.

Still, if he hits his offensive ceiling, does it really matter which position he's doing it from?

Dalibor Dvorsky, St. Louis Blues

The Blues made a big move to get Mason McTavish at the draft, then ended any speculation they would move on from Robert Thomas by making him captain before the season.

If Thomas and McTavish are entrenched as the club's top two centres for a long time, where does that leave Dvorsky? The 21-year-old was taken 10th overall in 2023 and, after netting 12 goals as a rookie last year, has already potted a pair in three outings this year.

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

32 Thoughts: The Podcast

Hockey fans already know the name, but this is not the blog. From Sportsnet, 32 Thoughts: The Podcast with NHL Insider Elliotte Friedman and Kyle Bukauskas is a weekly deep dive into the biggest news and interviews from the hockey world.

Latest episode

This would be about the Blues dealing from an area of strength — they also selected well-regarded centre Tynan Lawrence 11th overall in June — to bulk up somewhere else. St. Louis has some quality young pieces on the blueline — Philip Broberg and rookie righty Adam Jiricek among them — but adding Edvinsson would take things to a whole other level and likely add the player with the best career ahead of him.

Detroit would need to insulate Dvorsky while he develops, but the pedigree is there for him to become a good top-six C.



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Kent Johnson, Columbus Blue Jackets

Johnson has been in trade rumours for what feels like ages now and the Jackets certainly would need to sweeten the pot to get something over the line for Edvinsson. Still, the hands are there — Johnson scored 24 goals and 57 points in 68 contests two seasons ago — and if Columbus isn't his long-term home, somebody is going to give him another shot.

You wonder if he could follow the path of Trevor Zegras, another skilled — but not big — centre/winger who found his best self in his second NHL stop.

As for Columbus, Edvinsson would provide one heck of a contingency plan — and added flexibility — if the club is pushed into a spot where it must trade the reigning Norris Trophy winner, Zach Werenski.

As both the Wings and Jackets can attest to, finding the right deal for big-time players is no small task and you must explore every possible avenue before pulling the trigger.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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TSN.CA / McKenna set to start first NHL road game on Leafs third line

Mark Masters

The Maple Leafs skated at T-Mobile in Las Vegas on Thursday.

Gavin McKenna produced the first two points of his NHL career during Toronto's crazy comeback win over the Nashville Predators on Tuesday night. He assisted on a John Tavares goal in the second period before firing home his own goal.

But in the third period, the first overall pick in June's draft was dropped to the third line and McKenna continued to take reps beside Nick Paul and Colton Sissons on Thursday morning as the Leafs hit the ice at T-Mobile Arena.

"We finished the game that way in Toronto," explained coach Jim Hiller. "So that's really the impetus for the move. Just liked how we finished. Obviously it was a good night in the end so why change it."

Hiller often deployed the third line in a shutdown role during a four-game, season-opening homestand. The Leafs are opening a three-game trip on Thursday night, but Hiller insists the move has nothing to do with sheltering McKenna from tougher matchups.

"For me, trying to build off those guys' work ethic is going to be a key," McKenna said. "If we can do that and get on the forecheck, we'll create."

Paul has one assist through four games while Sissons has one goal.

"He has a lot of skill," Paul said of McKenna. "He's able to make a lot of room so I just try and do the same for him. Sis and I, we know our role of just [playing] hard, create battles, create loose pucks and get it to either Gavin or the point and get to the net, and just creating space. For us, we're just going to try and make as much space as possible. Biggest thing is not trying to play any way different."

Easton Cowan has taken McKenna's spot on the second line beside John Tavares and William Nylander.

"He started really strong, and then I probably haven't played him as much," Hiller acknowledged. "He probably deserved a little bit more ice time. So, we'll give him another crack. He'll get a little more tonight, probably with John and Willie. So, we'll see. We'll see where he takes it."

Cowan is tied for third in team scoring with three points, but is eighth in even-strength ice time (14:22) among the team's forwards.

"He has to be a forechecker," Hiller instructed. "He has to loosen some pucks up. I think we all have a vision for Easton. He's an offensive player, for sure, but I think he really can be a guy who provides a little grit on a line: forecheck, track, be above, and just be one of those all-around players. For him to be the most effective in the league, that's what he'll turn into."

Cowan, Tavares and Nylander played together down the stretch last season.

"Tremendously talented," Tavares said of the sophomore winger. "Just makes so many plays. He wants to be a driver. He wants to be someone who can drive play, make things happen, wants to be extremely competitive and hard to play against and loves the game."

Without prompting, Hiller brought up Tavares during Thursday's media session.

"The one thing I did want to make mention of, because I didn't after the game, I felt John Tavares had a really good game," Hiller said. "I just want to speak to his game. The last time out, I think he was 16 for 17 in the face-off [circle], which was very impressive coming off the night before where we lost some important faceoffs at the end of the game."

Tavares, who has long been among the faceoff leaders in the NHL, lost 13 of 20 draws in Saturday's 3-2 defeat to the Ottawa Senators.

Hiller had singled out Auston Matthews for praise following Tuesday's 5-4 win.

"But I really, really want to make the point, I might have missed a little bit just actually how good John was in that game and how important he was for us," Hiller said.

The 36-year-old centre scored his first goal of the season to start Toronto's rally from 3-0 down against the Predators.

"He was just really good both ways," Hiller said. "He made a lot of offensive plays. I didn't realize that. You go back through it, you can subtly watch and, in some of the plays he made, sometimes it's in the corner, and you don't see it. He was really good. He was very determined. When I see 16 out of 17 on the faceoffs, that tells me a guy came in very, very determined."

The Leafs started their first trip of the season with a team dinner on Wednesday night.

"I definitely tried some food that I'd never tried before last night and I didn't mind it at all," McKenna said.

Such as?

"Well, there was really good chicken parm there," the 18-year-old from Whitehorse said. "I've had chicken parm before, but the cheese was unreal, so that was a good touch."

McKenna's first career NHL road game is coming in a pretty cool spot.

"It's one of my favourite places to play, honestly," said Matthews of Vegas. "I asked him if he's ever been to Vegas before and he said he has, but he was 13 so I'm like, 'It's probably going to feel a little bit different now.'"

McKenna's previous trip to Las Vegas came when his family popped by during the summer following a tournament in Los Angeles.

"I remembered it being really hot," McKenna said with a grin.

The temperature often rises inside T-Mobile Arena during games.

"It's a great atmosphere, great place to come play," Matthews said. "We get a lot of support pretty much anywhere we go. But obviously when you come down here, it's always got a little extra edge to it with the strip and all the stuff that goes on in warm-ups and in the game, all that stuff. They make it really fun. It will be a cool experience for him."

Matthews scored two goals in his first career game in Vegas where showgirls line the glass in the visitors end during warm-ups.

"I've played in a lot of road games in my life before," McKenna stressed. "So, obviously, it's different at the NHL level, but nothing new. So I'm just going to try to look at it as another game and just try and have fun out there."

Because of the team dinner on Wednesday night, there was no opportunity for longtime Leafs to catch up with old teammate Mitch Marner.

"But saw him a good amount over the summer even though it was extremely short for him," said Tavares.

Marner led the playoffs in scoring last spring in helping the Golden Knights reach the Stanley Cup Final.

"He was just due," said Tavares. "I mean, he's just too good of a hockey player and impacts the game in so many different ways. He's just very unique, a really special player and the way he thinks the game with and without the puck is as good as any player in the league."

"Personally, as a friend, I was happy for him," Matthews said. "We still keep in touch a lot. He's a great, great person, great teammate and great friend. Personally, I was really happy for him. We stay in touch all the time so it will be nice to see him tonight."



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McKenna and Marner were among NHLers who skated together in Muskoka ahead of the NHL season.

"He's a special talent," said McKenna. "Super smart player, and just fun to watch. And then, yeah, getting to talk to him off the ice a little bit, he's a really cool dude. Yeah, he was a good guy to meet, and I'm looking forward to playing against him tonight."

Did the pair talk at all about what it's like to play in Toronto?

"Ah, no, we didn't," McKenna said. "We didn't talk about that a whole lot. It was more just summer talk. You know, what he's been up to, what I've been up to, and just getting to know each other. I don't think we want to get too deep into that stuff. You don't want to go into their personal life. So it was just getting to know him, and he was an awesome guy."

Look who these young fans bumped into! 🤔

Mitch Marner, Gavin McKenna, Jack Quinn, Ryan McLeod, Evan Bouchard, and Dylan Cozens were together in Muskoka, Ontario this week!

📷: IG/jaimesweetingoneill) pic.twitter.com/0n89UYLeyt

— NHL (@NHL) August 30, 2026

Sergei Bobrovsky was in the starter's net at the skate on Thursday. Since his Florida Panthers lost to the Knights in the 2023 Stanley Cup Final, Bobrovsky has won five straight games against Vegas.

During recent seasons, the Leafs often posted videos from inside the dressing room following wins as the coach addressed the team and the player-of-the-game belt was handed out.

The belt is still being handed out, but there's been no videos posted to the team's social media channels. TSN is told this is the result of an "organizational decision" to give the players, including many newcomers, more space to themselves in the immediate aftermath of games, which will allow chemistry to build organically.

The videos may return at times later in the year.

Lines at Leafs skate:

Marchenko - Matthews - Roslovic

Cowan - Tavares - Nylander

McKenna - Paul - Sissons

Duhaime - Blueger - Groulx

MacEwen

McCabe - Tanev

Rielly - Raddysh

Ekman-Larsson - Stecher

Blankenburg

Bobrovsky starts

Stolarz

Power play units at skate:

Raddysh

Mathews Marchenko Nylander

Tavares

Rielly

McKenna Paul Roslovic

Cowan

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