



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 29, 2020

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Hurricanes sign Seth Jarvis to three-year, entry-level contract

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes have signed center Seth Jarvis, their first-round pick in the 2020 NHL Entry Draft, to a three-year, entry-level contract, the team announced Monday.

“Seth is an extremely talented player with elite puck skills and scoring ability,” Canes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a statement. “He has a very bright future, and we are excited to watch him continue his development into an NHL player.”

Jarvis, 18, will be paid \$832,500 at the NHL level or \$80,000 at the American Hockey League level for all three seasons, the Canes said. He also receives a signing bonus of \$277,500.

The Canes made Jarvis the 13th overall pick of the 2020 draft. He had 42 goals and 56 assists in 58 games last season for the Portland Winterhawks of the Western Hockey League. The 5-10, 172-pound Jarvis ranked second in the WHL in points, third in goals and tied for fifth in assists. The Winnipeg native had a point in 45 of 58 games and 28 multi-point games.

Jarvis was awarded the 2019-20 Brad Hornung Trophy, given annually to the WHL’s most sportsmanlike player.

THE ATHLETIC

Should the Hurricanes’ taxi squad go for dependability or potential?

By Sara Civian

I don’t know if you’ve heard, but there’s less than a week until the Hurricanes take the ice for training camp Jan. 3. Now that the excitement of hockey coming back is sinking in, it’s time to think about the specifics and quirks of the 2020-21 season.

New divisions, 56 regular-season games and the creation of a “taxi squad” are the big three. In short, the four-to-six-man taxi squad will make it easier for NHL clubs to call up players during a pandemic. CapFriendly tweeted out a solid explanation of the details.

So, it’s a 23-man NHL roster with an \$81.5 million salary cap and then a max of 29 players if you include the taxi squad. The squad will travel and practice with the NHL team while being paid their full AHL salaries. But what if there are a lot of injuries or a COVID-19 outbreak including the taxi squad? Or what if an AHL player not on the squad starts tearing it up meriting a call-up, or the Hurricanes want to keep some of their best prospects down in the AHL to give them more experience?

It’s strict (for a reason), but there’s an option.

“There’s going to be a minimum of seven days quarantine with at least four negative tests before (AHL players can join the taxi squad),” general manager Don Waddell said during a press conference last week.

Now that we’ve got the rules down, which players make the most sense for the Hurricanes’ taxi squad?

(Author’s note: Luckily for Ryan Dzingel this isn’t an Uber squad.)

Jake Bean

Bean is at the perfect intersection for something like this. The 22-year-old defenseman has only appeared in two NHL games but didn’t look out of place, and after proving himself as one of the best defensemen in the AHL last season — even among the vets — he’s ready to take the next step if needed. The combination of confidence that he can handle an NHL role and less guilt about his development considering his past two seasons in the AHL make him an obvious passenger in the Taxi of Jerks.

Alex Nedeljkovic

The rules state that there must be at least one, traveling goalie on the taxi squad if a team chooses less than three on their NHL roster, so Nedeljkovic to the practice squad is obvious. The questions now become: 1. How will Nedeljkovic respond to this quasi-promotion? and 2. How will the Canes use him?

While it’s a pro for Nedeljkovic that the Canes can very easily toss him into the rotation, the 56-game schedule makes it more of a risk.

Clark Bishop

As much as some of us want to get all whimsical about who might get an opportunity at the NHL level with this new rule that sort of feels like a freebie, let’s be real: the NHL rarely gives away freebies. They aren’t even letting the AHL players in the taxi squad make NHL bank. The purpose of the taxi squad is to be able to call someone up when an NHL regular gets injured without going through a seven-day quarantine. Bishop is one of the best replacement centers in the league and head coach Rod Brind’Amour knows he can toss him anywhere in the bottom six with no stress.

Joakim Ryan



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The Canes are going case-by-case with their taxi squad picks, but if Ryan makes the cut you know they're going dependability over stacking the squad with risky potential — and it makes sense to go dependable with this. Ryan, a 27-year-old defenseman with NHL playoff experience, doesn't need time to develop in the AHL. And frankly, the Canes signed him for the luxury of not worrying about his development. They can — and probably will — plug him in if needed.

Drew Shore and/or Jeremy Bracco

If the Hurricanes choose either or both of these offseason forward signings for their OG taxi squad, you'll know they're going for insurance. Doing so makes more sense to me, and I suspect someone like Brind'Amour operates on the same thought process when you remember how hard it's been for

certain high-end prospects to earn his trust over more experienced options.

Ryan Suzuki and/or Joey Keane

This is the alternate reality of Shore and/or Bracco. Again, the Canes are going case-by-case, so it probably won't be all insurance or all high-end prospects, but it'll be interesting to see if the Canes pick either Suzuki or Keane for the taxi squad and what that says about both of them. I personally think both could use another season of pro development and it wouldn't serve Suzuki to spend a season in limbo. But knowing the OHL is, for lack of better phrasing, a mess right now — and knowing this is a shortened season, part of me says to heck with it. Where else is he going to get development?



Top storylines that shaped NHL in 2020

Lightning's Cup win, Ovechkin's 700th goal, Ayres' victory among those from memorable year

by Dan Rosen

The NHL has provided a host of memorable moments in 2020 despite being forced to persevere through the coronavirus pandemic.

After pausing its season on March 12, the NHL was able to come back on Aug. 1 and conduct the Stanley Cup Playoffs, culminating with the Tampa Bay Lightning winning their first championship since 2004. The NHL 2020 NHL Draft was held virtually before setting the stage for free agency and putting a plan in place to start the 2020-21 season.

Prior to the pandemic, there were outdoor games, historic events and achievements.

Here are 20 moments, games, events and news stories that defined the NHL in 2020:

1. Texas-sized Winter Classic

The year began with 85,630 fans jamming Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas on New Year's Day for the 2020 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic between the Dallas Stars and Nashville Predators.

The Stars scored three goals in the third period to defeat the Predators 4-2. It was the second-largest crowd to attend an NHL game behind the 105,491 at the 2014 Winter Classic at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The event featured live square dancing, pig races, jugglers, sword swallowers, bull riders and an actual Texas longhorn. Outside the stadium, spread across the Texas State

Fairgrounds, fans ate corn dogs and fried Oreos, rode on a Ferris wheel and played carnival games.

2. Women stars take over

The Elite Women's 3-on-3 presented by adidas at the 2020 NHL All-Star Skills presented by New Amsterdam Vodka at Enterprise Arena in St. Louis on Jan. 25 featured 10 of the best women's players from Canada against 10 of the best from the United States.

Canada won 2-1, but the meaning of the event was even more important; a celebration of how far the women's game has come and how skilled the players are. The two teams shared the accolades after the game, raising their sticks to salute an appreciative and chanting crowd.

3. Kings soar at Air Force Academy

For the second time in three years, the NHL held an outdoor game on campus of a U.S. service academy, this time the 2020 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game at Falcon Stadium at the U.S. Air Force Academy on Feb. 15.

A sellout crowd of 43,574 watched the Los Angeles Kings defeat the Colorado Avalanche 3-1 with forward Tyler Toffoli scoring all three goals for the first hat trick in an NHL outdoor game. It was the League's 30th outdoor game.

The field was staged as an airfield with the cadets sitting in the north end and an F-16 Thunderbird fighter in the south. Stealth fighters, F-16s and a KC-10 tanker flew overhead and members of the Air Force's Wings of Blue parachute team dropped into the stadium to deliver the game puck.

4. Ovechkin scores No. 700



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Alex Ovechkin became the eighth player in NHL history to score 700 goals when the Washington Capitals forward scored in a 3-2 loss to the New Jersey Devils at Prudential Center on Feb. 22.

Ovechkin joined Wayne Gretzky (894), Gordie Howe (801), Jaromir Jagr (766), Brett Hull (741), Marcel Dionne (731), Phil Esposito (717) and Mike Gartner (708) as the other players to reach the milestone.

5. Ayres becomes goalie folk hero

Hours after Ovechkin's achievement, David Ayres became the first emergency backup goalie in NHL history to be credited with a win when the 42-year-old made eight saves for the Carolina Hurricanes in a 6-3 win against the Toronto Maple Leafs at Scotiabank Arena.

Ayres drives the ice resurfacing machine at Mattamy Athletic Centre in Toronto and is a regular at Maple Leafs practices when an extra goalie is needed. But he found himself in an NHL game, entering at 11:19 of the second period after goalie Petr Mrazek sustained an upper-body injury; the Hurricanes had already lost goalie James Reimer to an injury earlier in the game.

6. NHL pauses season due to coronavirus

The NHL announced on March 12 it would pause the 2019-20 season indefinitely because of concerns surrounding the coronavirus. "Our goal is to resume play as soon as it is appropriate and prudent," Commissioner Gary Bettman said that day.

7. Return to Play Plan and CBA extension announced

The NHL Return to Play Plan, announced May 26, featured 24 teams, the top 12 from each conference based on points percentage, with the top four teams receiving byes into the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs and the remaining eight playing in the best-of-5 Stanley Cup Qualifiers.

The League announced two secure hubs for the games, Toronto for the Eastern Conference teams and Edmonton for the Western Conference. The conference finals and Stanley Cup Final would each be played in Edmonton.

On July 10, The NHL and NHL Players Association jointly announced agreements for the resumption of the 2019-20 season and a four-year extension to the current Collective Bargaining Agreement, through at least the 2025-26 season.

Training camps opened three days later.

8. NHL returns, Dumba kneels on historic night

The Hurricanes and New York Rangers dropped the puck at noon ET on Aug. 1 on a slate of five games spanning more than 13 hours to start the best-of-5 Stanley Cup Qualifiers.

The most impactful moment of the second opening day of the 2019-20 took place prior to the game between the Chicago Blackhawks and Edmonton Oilers at Rogers Arena.

Minnesota Wild defenseman Matt Dumba gave an impassioned speech vowing that the NHL and the Hockey Diversity Alliance would stand up for social justice and against racism, saying "hockey is a great game but it could be a whole lot greater, and it starts with all of us."

Players from the Oilers and Blackhawks surrounded Dumba, a Filipino-Canadian, as he spoke.

Dumba knelt during the Star-Spangled Banner, with Edmonton defenseman Darnell Nurse and Chicago goalie Malcolm Subban, each a Black Canadian, standing at his sides, their hands on his shoulders.

9. Lightning, Blue Jackets play marathon Game 1

The Lightning and Columbus Blue Jackets played for six hours and 13 minutes of real time, 150:27 of game time in the first game of the Eastern Conference First Round on Aug. 11.

Tampa Bay won 3-2 on a goal by forward Brayden Point at 90:27 of overtime. The quintuple-overtime game was the fourth longest in NHL history, and the longest each by the Lightning and Blue Jackets. It started at 3:09 p.m. ET and ended at 9:22.

Tampa Bay and Columbus combined for a playoff record 151 shots on goal.

10. Two-day protest by players against racism

Players from the eight teams remaining in the playoffs decided on Aug. 27 to not play for two days as a form of protest against systemic racism and police brutality. The NHL and NHLPA supported the players, postponed four games and resumed play Aug. 29.

11. Lindblom returns for Flyers

Oskar Lindblom was back in the Philadelphia Flyers lineup on Sept. 3 for the first time in almost eight months after being diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma; he had not played since Dec. 7, 2019 and had been undergoing treatment.

The forward played 17:30 and had three shot attempts, two hits and a block in the Flyers' 5-4 double-overtime win against the New York Islanders in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference Second Round.

Lindblom rang the bell signifying the end of his cancer treatments at Abramson Cancer Center at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia on July 2.

12. Three Game 7s in two days

The second round of the playoffs ended with some great theater when the Stars, Vegas Golden Knights and Islanders each advanced to the conference finals with Game 7 wins in a span of 27 hours on Sept. 4-5.

Dallas defeated Colorado 5-4 in overtime behind a hat trick by rookie forward Joel Kiviranta, who scored the tying goal at 16:30 of the third period and the winner at 7:24 of overtime.

Later that day, the Golden Knights allowed 14 shots on goal and defeated the Vancouver Canucks 3-0 to set up a Vegas-Dallas matchup in the Western Conference Final. Golden Knights goalie Robin Lehner had the shutout.

The following day, goalie Thomas Greiss made 16 saves and the Islanders advanced with a 4-0 win against the Flyers, earning the opportunity to face the Lightning in the Eastern Conference Final.

13. Awards night



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Unable to gather in person, the League honored the winners of some of the major awards with the 2020 NHL Awards presented by Las Vegas, a 30-minute show that aired on NBCSN, Sportsnet and TVA Sports on Sept. 21.

Oilers forward Leon Draisaitl became the first Germany-born player to win the Hart Trophy as NHL most valuable player and the Ted Lindsay Award as most outstanding player voted by the NHLPA. Draisaitl had already become the first Germany-born player to win the Art Ross Trophy as the top scorer in the League.

Roman Josi of the Predators won the Norris Trophy as the top defenseman in the NHL. He became the first Switzerland-born player to win a major NHL award and the first Nashville player to win the Norris.

Connor Hellebuyck became the first player in Winnipeg Jets history to win the Vezina Trophy as the top goalie in the League and Avalanche defenseman Cale Makar won the Calder Trophy as the NHL rookie of the year.

The League had previously announced the winners of the other major awards.

14. Stamkos plays, scores, sits

Steven Stamkos made his 2020 playoff debut in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final against Dallas on Sept. 23 after missing the Lightning's first 22 postseason games with a lower-body injury. The Tampa Bay captain made the most of his five shifts totaling 2:47 of ice time.

The forward scored on his first and only shot to give the Lightning a 2-0 lead at 6:58 of the first period. He did not return to the ice; his last shift ended with 6:18 remaining in the first. He sat on the bench for the duration of Tampa Bay's 5-2 win. It was his first game in 211 days; he had sustained a lower-body injury prior to the start of the opening of training camp in July.

15. Lightning win Stanley Cup

Stamkos was back on the ice to accept the Stanley Cup from Commissioner Bettman following the Lightning's 2-0 win against the Stars in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final on Sept. 28.

Tampa Bay became the first team in 95 years to win the Stanley Cup on neutral ice.

Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman won the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player of the playoffs, after scoring 22 points (10 goals, 12 assists) in 25 games.

Tampa Bay's clinching victory came 363 days after the regular season began, 201 days after the season paused and 65 days after players entered the secure zones in Edmonton and Toronto for the postseason.

16. Rangers select Lafreniere with No. 1 pick

New York won the Second Phase of the 2020 NHL Draft Lottery on Aug. 10 and cashed in nearly two months later, on Oct. 6, by selecting forward Alexis Lafreniere of Rimouski of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League with the No. 1 pick in the 2020 NHL Draft.

The draft was held virtually because of the pandemic and Lafreniere's draft party had to be limited to his parents, Nathalie and Hugo, and sister, Lori-Jane, because his hometown of Saint-Eustache, Quebec, was in a COVID-19 red zone.

17. "Who is Tim Stuetzle?"

Alex Trebek, the late longtime host of "Jeopardy!" announced the Ottawa Senators' first selection in the draft.

Trebek, who died on Nov. 8 from pancreatic cancer, joined the draft show and, of course, announced the pick by starting with a question, "Jeopardy!" style.

Answer: With the No. 3 pick in the 2020 NHL Draft, the Ottawa Senators selected this player.

Question: Who is Tim Stuetzle?

Trebek attended the University of Ottawa and is a recipient of the Order of Canada.

18. Free agency begins with a flurry of moves

The goalie market dominated NHL free agency when it opened on Oct. 9.

Jacob Markstrom signed a six-year contract with the Calgary Flames and the Canucks replaced him by signing Braden Holtby. The Capitals replaced Holtby with Henrik Lundqvist, who signed a one-year contract but announced on Dec. 17 that a heart condition will prevent him from playing this season.

Greiss (Detroit Red Wings), Corey Crawford (Devils) and Cam Talbot (Wild) found new homes, and Matt Murray signed with the Senators after they acquired him in a trade with the Penguins.

Two of the biggest free agents among skaters weren't signed until a few days after the market opened.

Forward Taylor Hall signed a one-year contract with the Buffalo Sabres on Oct. 11. The next day, defenseman Alex Pietrangolo signed a seven-year contract with the Golden Knights.

19. Emrick calls it a career

Mike "Doc" Emrick announced his retirement on Oct. 19 after a 47-year career in broadcasting professional hockey, including the past 15 as the lead play-by-play voice on NBC.

The 74-year-old leaves the game after working the Stanley Cup Final 22 times as well as 45 Game 7s, six Olympics, 14 NHL All-Star Games and 19 NHL outdoor games. He estimates he has called more than 3,750 professional and Olympic hockey games.

Emrick won the Foster Hewitt Award, presented by the Hockey Hall of Fame for outstanding contributions to hockey broadcasting, in 2008. He was inducted into the United States Hockey Hall of Fame in 2011.

20. NHL announces plan for 2020-21 season

The NHL and NHL Players' Association announced on Dec. 20 they had agreed to a 56-game season which would start on Jan. 13.



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The season has been delayed due to continuing concerns surrounding the coronavirus.

The agreement includes four realigned divisions for this season; the East, Central and West Divisions each have eight

U.S.-based teams and the North Division is made up entirely of the seven teams based in Canada.

Training camps will open Jan. 3, with the seven teams that didn't return to play last season allowed to start on Dec. 31.



NHL Power Rankings: Top 20 players of 2020

By Adam Gretz

In this week's NHL Power Rankings we are taking a look back at the top players from 2020.

A few important points to consider for this week's rankings.

- This is not a ranking of the best players going into the 2021 season, or an overall ranking of NHL players today, or a ranking of overall career accomplishments. It is exactly what it says — the top players from 2020.
- We are only taking into account what took place during the calendar year of 2020. So performances from Jan. 1, 2020 through the end of the playoffs

Who all makes the list?

To this week's NHL Power Rankings!

1. Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado Avalanche. MacKinnon had a great end to the regular season and looked like the single most dominant player in the bubble. His 25 postseason points were fourth best in the playoffs even though his team did not play beyond the Second Round. Every shift he looked like he was going to take over the game by himself. This is why he tops this week's NHL Power Rankings.
2. Victor Hedman, Tampa Bay Lightning. For all of the superstar talent the Lightning have at forward, Hedman is probably the most impactful player on the team. Dominant performance in the playoffs that saw him win the Stanley Cup and the Conn Smythe Trophy.
3. Andrei Vasilevskiy, Tampa Bay Lightning. It is almost unfair to put a goalie this good behind a team this good. Vasilevskiy played 49 games in 2020 (regular season and playoffs combined) and posted a 36-12-1 record to go with a .928 save percentage. He also played every single minute of hockey for Tampa in the bubble on their way to a Stanley Cup. He was the only goalie to play every minute for his team in the bubble. He did it for a Stanley Cup champion, and at a ridiculously high level.
4. Leon Draisaitl, Edmonton Oilers. Just a dominant offensive season that wrapped up with 48 points in 29 regular season games after January 1. That would be a 137-point over 82 games. He followed that up with a pair of three-point games

in the bubble, only to have the Oilers lose both games. I can't hold that against him. He did his part.

5. Connor McDavid, Edmonton Oilers. Injury limited him to just 22 regular season games after the new year, but he was still one of the most dominant offensive players in the league.

6. Nikita Kucherov, Tampa Bay Lightning. Another magnificent year that was capped off by being the top scorer in the postseason.

7. Miro Heiskanen, Dallas Stars. If the Stars had won the Stanley Cup he probably would have been the Conn Smythe winner to cap off a remarkable postseason performance. The Norris Trophy is in his future.

8. Brayden Point, Tampa Bay Lightning. The Tampa pipeline just keeps churning out stars. He not only had big numbers, he also scored a series-clinching goal in overtime, ended a five overtime game, and set up another series clinching goal.

9. Mika Zibanejad, New York Rangers. Zibanejad was incredible for the Rangers during the season, and closed out the regular season with an insane run starting on January 1 that saw him score 25 goals and record 44 points in 31 games. Do not expect him to score on 20 percent of his shots again, but he has been a top-line player in New York for three years now.

10. Artemi Panarin, New York Rangers. Panarin's first season in New York produced one of the finest offensive seasons in franchise history.

11. Elias Pettersson, Vancouver Canucks. Pettersson is one of the young emerging superstars in the league and is going to help put Vancouver back on the NHL map. Must-see player every game.

12. David Pastrnak, Boston Bruins. The 2019 portion of his season was better than the 2020 portion, but that does not mean the latter part was not also great. He tied Alex Ovechkin for the goal scoring crown this season. He might win it outright this season.

13. Auston Matthews, Toronto Maple Leafs. He scored 22 goals in 34 games (regular season and playoffs) after January 1 (a 53-goal pace over 82 games) and posted dominant



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possession numbers. Not his fault the Maple Leafs flamed out again.

14. Sidney Crosby, Pittsburgh Penguins. He is still able to put the Penguins on his back and carry them. He was also one of the few bright spots for them in the bubble.

15. Sebastian Aho, Carolina Hurricanes. A magnificent two-way player, and he was sensational in the playoffs for the Hurricanes.

16. Shea Theodore, Vegas Golden Knights. He does not usually get mentioned among the league's elite defensemen, but he played like one in 2020 and was one of the best players in the bubble.

17. Anton Khudobin, Dallas Stars. What a journey his career has been. Always a strong backup, Khudobin took advantage of his opportunity in Dallas this year and ran with it, helping to carry the Stars to the Cup Final. He had a .922 save percentage in 39 games in 2020.

18. Evgeni Malkin, Pittsburgh Penguins. He knew he needed to have a bounce-back season, and he did. The playoff

showing in the bubble, like the rest of his Penguins teammates, was rough though.

19. Alex Ovechkin, Washington Capitals. Still the last player you want to see on the ice when your team is shorthanded. He played 35 games after January 1 (regular season and playoffs) and scored 28 goals, including No. 700. That is insane.

20. Jonathan Toews, Chicago Blackhawks. Toews has bounced back offensively the past two seasons, and he had an especially strong finish in 2020. He was one of the driving forces behind their play-in round upset win over Edmonton.

Just missing the NHL Power Rankings cut

Patrick Kane (Chicago Blackhawks), Roman Josi (Nashville Predators), J.T. Miller (Vancouver Canucks), Jack Eichel (Buffalo Sabres), Quinn Hughes (Vancouver Canucks), Mikko Rantanen (Colorado Avalanche), Kyle Connor (Winnipeg Jets), Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (Edmonton Oilers), Cale Makar (Colorado Avalanche), Andrei Svechnikov (Carolina Hurricanes)



Hurricanes sign Jarvis to ELC

The 2020 13th overall pick inked his three-year deal Monday.

By Andrew Schnittker

The Hurricanes took care of business with one of their top prospects Monday, signing 2020 first rounder (13th overall) Seth Jarvis to a three-year, entry-level contract.

The deal will pay Jarvis \$832,500 per season at the NHL level and \$80,000 at the AHL level, though, per the NHL's transfer agreement, as a player drafted out of the CHL, Jarvis won't be

eligible to play in the AHL until 2022. He'll receive of signing bonus of \$277,500.

Jarvis is the second prospect from the Hurricanes' 2020 class to sign his ELC; second rounder Vasily Ponomarev did so in October.

The Hurricanes open training camp Sunday ahead of the 2021 NHL regular season. With only a short camp to ramp up for the season, it remains to be seen if prospects such as Jarvis will be invited.

Carolina Hurricanes top 25 under 25 #10: Alex Nedeljkovic

The Hurricanes' top goalie prospect squeaks in to the top 10 going in to his most pivotal year yet.

By Cody Hagan

At one point the Carolina Hurricanes had hoped Alex Nedeljkovic would be the goalie of the future for the organization and that he would one day take over the reigns for Cam Ward in net. As we all know, that hasn't exactly happened for the former second-round pick has been stuck in the AHL since 2016. Despite having done basically everything he can do in hockey's second best league, there still remains no clear path for him for make it in the NHL with the Hurricanes.

Nedeljkovic has shown flashes of greatness during his time in juniors and the AHL. In 2018-2019, he led the Checkers to their first ever Calder Cup trophy, posting a 34-14-1 record with a 2.26 GAA and .916 SV%. He was named the Aldege "Baz" Bastien Memorial Award winner as the AHL's most

outstanding goaltender for the 18-19 season. Nedeljkovic also won his first NHL start for the Hurricanes that year when he defeated the Vancouver Canucks on Jan. 23, 2019.

His success in the 18-19 season earned him a two-year contract extension with the second year being one-way. When both Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney tested free agency during the summer of 2019, many speculated the Hurricanes would only sign one goalie and let Nedeljkovic be the back up. Then the Canes re-signed Mrazek and traded for James Reimer, effectively sealing Nedeljkovic's fate in the AHL for at least one more season.

2019-2020 was not as friendly for Nedeljkovic as the year before had been. The magic of the Calder Cup run wore off and he posted a 16-10-2 record with a 2.49 GAA and .906 save percentage, splitting time with Anton Forsberg as the starter in Charlotte.



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Then, late in the season, both Mrazek and Reimer got hurt, paving the way for both Forsberg and Nedeljkovic to be recalled. It was a perfect opportunity for Nedeljkovic to come in show the coaching staff his NHL abilities did not go so well as he went just 1-2-1 with a 3.05 GAA and .887 SV%. While this certainly wasn't all on Nedeljkovic as the entire team was riddled with injuries, his performance did little to give the Hurricanes' staff and fans a reason to believe he was the goalie of the future.

The 2020-21 season may be the final make-it-or-break-it season for Nedeljkovic as he is on a one-way contract and will likely travel with the Hurricanes as a member of their taxi

Breaking down the Hurricanes' 2021 schedule

With the 2021 NHL schedule finally announced, we broke down the hardest, easiest and most important stretches of the Carolina Hurricanes' upcoming season.

By Alec_Sawyer

With the 56-game 2021 NHL schedule now out, the Hurricanes know who they'll play and when they'll play in a regular season that can't start soon enough.

Things will be quite different for the Hurricanes, and every NHL team, as Carolina joins a new division missing some traditional foes like the Capitals, Penguins, Islanders and Flyers. In this new division, the Hurricanes will face off with three teams from the Western Conference and only one team coming along from the Metropolitan Division (Columbus).

To make things even weirder, Carolina will only play games against the seven other teams in this new Central Division. The Canes schedule, like every NHL team's, features eight games (four home and four away) against every team in their newly formed division.

Another wrinkle in things will be the way games are played, as the schedule is almost entirely made up of two-game miniseries in one location against the same team.

With all that in mind, here's a few key stretches for the Hurricanes to look out for:

Hardest Stretch

April 15-April 27

4/15 — vs. Nashville

4/17 — vs. Nashville

4/19 — at Tampa Bay

4/20 — at Tampa Bay

4/22 — at Florida

4/24 — at Florida

4/26 — at Dallas

4/27 — at Dallas

When looking at the Canes' 2021 schedule, the first thing you're going to look for when circling out the hardest games

squad. If there was ever a time for him to impress the coaching staff and force them to play him, it will be this season. He will still be an RFA after the season so the Hurricanes will remain in control of how they want to play out the next few years for Nedeljkovic, but with other goalies coming up the pipeline, it may be getting close to a breaking point with their top goalie prospect.

Can Nedeljkovic break through like Haydn Fleury has finally done and go on to be the next Cam Ward or is he simply another lifelong AHL guy like Justin Peters? That is the question that still remains to be answered and that answer may be coming sooner rather than later at this point.

are going to be those against the defending Stanley Cup champions, the Tampa Bay Lightning.

This really hard stretch late in the season features two of the Canes' four road games against the Lightning, which also happens to make up one of just five back-to-backs on Carolina's entire schedule.

On top of that, the Canes will have to travel to Dallas the next week for a road back-to-back against the team that the Lightning took down in the Stanley Cup Finals this past year.

Everything about this eight-game stretch is hard. The six-game road trip at the end of it is tied for Carolina's longest of the season, and it again features back-to-back against the two best teams in the division. Add onto that that this stretch starts with two games against Nashville, arguably the third-best team in the division (not including the Canes), and it makes it even harder.

And that's not to overlook Florida, who could be right in the mix of things fighting for the third spot in the division or a wildcard spot this late in the season.

The hard stretches will include games against the Lightning, Stars and Predators, which this stretch does. The easier stretches will include games against Detroit, Chicago and Columbus, which this stretch does not.

Easiest Stretch

March 14-March 25

3/14 — at Detroit

3/16 — at Detroit

3/18 — vs. Columbus

3/20 — vs. Columbus

3/22 — at Columbus

3/25 — at Columbus

The Hurricanes don't have a ton of stretches on the schedule that jump out as easy, so this six-game swing featuring games against Detroit and Columbus probably fits the bill of easiest stretch (even with four games coming on the road).

The Canes have two long homestands, but both feature four games against a combination of Tampa Bay, Dallas and Nashville. The Chicago games on the Canes' schedule are all



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paired up with games against the Lightning or Stars, and a lot of the Detroit games also fall before or after tough matchups.

So, this six-game stretch presents itself as maybe the easiest. It's the only six-game stretch on the entire schedule that doesn't feature a matchup with Tampa Bay, Dallas or Nashville.

Columbus is by no means a bad team, so four straight games against the Blue Jackets will be tough, but still. Add three games to the beginning of this stretch and you get a home game against Detroit and two home games vs. the Predators. Add four games at the end of this six-game stretch, and you have to face the Lightning twice at home but then end with two games in Chicago.

The Canes' also have a homestand late in the year that features a six-game stretch with two against Florida, two against Detroit and two against Nashville, the other stretch that may have a claim to the Canes' easiest of the season.

There's also a four-game stretch at home late in the year that features a game against Detroit, one against Columbus and two against Chicago. That's definitely the easiest four games on the schedule, but a little short to define as a "stretch" of the season.

Most Important Stretch

April 3-April 17

4/3 — vs Dallas

4/4 — vs Dallas

4/6 — vs Florida

4/8 — vs Florida

4/10 — vs Detroit

4/12 — vs Detroit

4/15 — vs Nashville

4/17 — vs Nashville

This eight-game homestretch late in the season for the Canes could be what makes or breaks the regular season.

With obviously nothing certain, it does feel likely that Tampa Bay will probably win the Central Division, so let's give them that for now.

Behind the Lightning however, things open up a little bit. While Dallas is probably the most likely second-place finisher, the division really does seem wide open for Dallas, Carolina, Nashville, Florida and Columbus to be fighting for the two and three spots.

So this homestand for the Canes, the longest of the season, will be crucial. The Hurricanes will play host to three of those teams, Dallas, Florida and Nashville, while also getting two highly likely wins against the Red Wings.

If the Hurricanes can do well during this homestand, it could go a very long way in determining whether or not Carolina can get the two or three spot in the Central Division.



Carolina Hurricanes prepared to start NHL season in 2021

Amid heightened pandemic concerns, pro hockey is a go for early January

By Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – The National Hockey League (NHL) announced on Sunday that the league's teams will open their training camps for the 2020-21 season on Jan. 3, 2021 and that regular season games will begin on Jan. 13th.

For the Carolina Hurricanes, that means putting in hard work for about eight practices and quickly embarking on a new season according to head coach Rod Brind'Amour.

"It's gonna be a quick training camp," captain Jordan Staal said during a media call with his coach and GM Don Waddell on Monday.

"With the shortened season, every game is gonna be that much more heightened (in importance), so it's just gonna be one of those things that everyone be prepared right away. Our group's gotta jell quickly and find a way to get hot early and continue to stay hot because with a short season, you've gotta string together some games if we wanna make that push to playoffs."

In the NHL's agreement with the National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA), all 31 teams will play a 2020-21 regular-season schedule of 56 games that begins Jan. 13th and concludes on May 8.

As part of the agreement, the Stanley Cup Playoffs would feature 16 teams in the traditional best-of-seven, four-round format and conclude around mid-July.

"That's why they workout in the offseason, that's why they're trainin' hard, and they have been – ready to go," Brind'Amour added.

"We don't have that regular training camp, that time. It's very similar to after 'the pause'. We had those few months off and we had about the same (time to prepare)...It's not tip-toe in – the games count right from the start. Like Jordo said, we can't have a bad start. There's not enough runway to catch up."

SOPs still to come

Despite beginning during a period of heightened concern as the global coronavirus pandemic continues to result in increased positive cases in both the United States and Canada, the league will provide health and safety protocols,



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transition rules and a critical dates calendar in addition to the full 2020-21 schedule in the coming days.

The NHLPA and the NHL pointed out in their release that they intend to be flexible and adaptable in their approach during the coming weeks to ensure compliance with directives from both local and national governmental and health authorities focusing on the health and safety of the players, other game-related personnel.

The priority will continue to be focused on the health and safety of fans and players and club, league, NHLPA, and arena personnel.

"The National Hockey League looks forward to the opening of our 2020-21 season, especially since the Return to Play in 2019-20 was so successful in crowning a Stanley Cup champion," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman was quoted in the league's release.

"While we are well aware of the challenges ahead, as was the case last spring and summer, we are continuing to prioritize the health and safety of our participants and the communities in which we live and play.

"The players are pleased to have finalized agreements for the upcoming season, which will be unique but also very exciting for the fans and players alike," Don Fehr, NHLPA Executive Director noted.

"During these troubled times, we hope that NHL games will provide fans with some much needed entertainment as the players return to the ice."

Waddell echoed the league and PA's sentiments.

"We need to play," Waddell said.

"To go out of sight for a year, probably doesn't make a whole lot of sense. We are who we are – the NHL. I think we need to be in front of them. Our fans deserve that. They miss that, they're callin' all the time. They want us to be playing, so I think that's an important factor you have to look at."

Playing on the fly

As a result of the ongoing closure of the U.S.-Canada border, the league and the players also sought to minimize team travel as much as possible and shifted to realignment to exclusively intradivisional play.

It is anticipated that teams will play games in their home arenas while understanding that most arenas will not, at least in the initial part of the season, be able to host fans.

Depending on prevailing conditions both in local markets and across North America, games in one or more "neutral site" venues per division will be played if and as necessary.

The Hurricanes will compete in the Central Division, along with the Chicago Blackhawks, Columbus Blue Jackets, Dallas Stars, Detroit Red Wings, Florida Panthers, Nashville Predators and Tampa Bay Lightning.

A different grouping than their Metropolitan Division list of opponents in recent years.

"We haven't played some of those teams much," Brind'Amour pointed out.

"It might be a breath of fresh air for some of our guys to kind of create some more rivalry with other teams."

Each team in the East, Central and West divisions will play every other team in its division eight times while each team in the North Division, comprised of the league's Canadian-based teams, will play every other team in its division nine or 10 times.

The top four teams in each division will qualify for the Stanley Cup Playoffs, with intradivisional play in the first two rounds (#1 vs. #4; #2 vs. #3).

The four teams that advance to the semifinal round would be seeded by their regular season points total, with the No. 1 seed playing the No. 4 seed in one series and the No. 2 and No. 3 seeds meeting in the other.

"We're happy we're getting going, we're playing some hockey, and we're excited at being back," Staal said.

"Whoever we're lining up against, we're just excited to play some hockey."

Notables: Formal training camps will begin on Jan. 3. The Hurricanes plan to use their new training facility at the Wake Competition Center for a majority of training camp time...There will be no preseason games...The seven teams that did not participate in the 2019-20 Return to Play will be permitted to open their training camps as early as Dec. 31...There will be no outdoor game planned for Raleigh this year according to Waddell. "Economically, it doesn't make sense"...The plan following this season is to return to a "normal" hockey calendar for the 2021-22 (regular season beginning in October).

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article248128555.html>

<https://theathletic.com/2287042/2020/12/29/how-could-the-hurricanes-pick-their-2020-21-nhl-taxi-squad/>

<https://www.nhl.com/news/nhl-top-storylines-moments-of-2020/c-319888896>

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<https://www.canescountry.com/2020/12/28/22203066/hurricanes-sign-jarvis-to-elc>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2020/12/28/22201924/carolina-hurricanes-top-25-under-25-10-alex-nedeljkovic-carolina-hurricanes-goalie-prospect-nhl-wins>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2020/12/28/22202521/breaking-down-the-hurricanes-2021-schedule>

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SportScan

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

1197415 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes sign Seth Jarvis to three-year, entry-level contract

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

DECEMBER 28, 2020 12:31 PM

The Carolina Hurricanes have signed center Seth Jarvis, their first-round pick in the 2020 NHL Entry Draft, to a three-year, entry-level contract, the team announced Monday.

"Seth is an extremely talented player with elite puck skills and scoring ability," Canes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a statement. "He has a very bright future, and we are excited to watch him continue his development into an NHL player."

Jarvis, 18, will be paid \$832,500 at the NHL level or \$80,000 at the American Hockey League level for all three seasons, the Canes said. He also receives a signing bonus of \$277,500.

The Canes made Jarvis the 13th overall pick of the 2020 draft. He had 42 goals and 56 assists in 58 games last season for the Portland Winterhawks of the Western Hockey League. The 5-10, 172-pound Jarvis ranked second in the WHL in points, third in goals and tied for fifth in assists. The Winnipeg native had a point in 45 of 58 games and 28 multi-point games.

Jarvis was awarded the 2019-20 Brad Hornung Trophy, given annually to the WHL's most sportsmanlike player.

News Observer LOADED: 12.29.2020

1197486 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / What Canadiens signing Corey Perry says about team's depth in 2021

Eric Engels December 28, 2020, 2:20 PM

MONTREAL -- You have to think Corey Perry could've taken a smidgen more than the league minimum to play just about anywhere. Coming off a run to the Stanley Cup Final with the Dallas Stars, over which he scored five goals and nine points in 27 games and fully lived up to his reputation of being about as fun to face as a mallet with blades, few teams would blink at bringing in a six-foot-three Cup winner with over 1000 games of experience as a depth option.

That Perry chose to sign a one-year, \$750,000 contract with the Montreal Canadiens on Monday certainly says something about the stagnation of the salary cap butchering the market possibilities for lower-priority free

agents, but it says much more about how far the team has come since the 2019-20 season was paused back in March.

Perry's older at 35 -- a battle-hardened, bruised-but-not-broken type who can only be interested in one thing at this stage of his career. And after earning over \$85 million since he was drafted 28th overall by the Anaheim Mighty Ducks -- as they were known -- in 2003, it ain't the money.

This is about the Cup, which Perry must believe he can win with the Canadiens.

"I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

And maybe that's to do with what they showed in the Toronto bubble in August -- beating the Pittsburgh Penguins in four games of the play-in round before giving the Philadelphia Flyers a legitimate scare in a six-game loss in the first round of the playoffs.

Or maybe it's about everything that's happened since.

The Canadiens have become bigger, meaner and far more seasoned. They've added scoring, grit and size with Tyler Toffoli and Josh Anderson, defensive depth, grit and size with Joel Edmundson and Alexander Romanov, and a 30-year-old backup goaltender coming off the best season of his career in Jake Allen.

Michael Frolik, a cagey vet of 850 games, signed on last week.

That's four Stanley Cup winners (Toffoli, Edmundson, Allen and Frolik) coming to a team that previously had none.

And now it's five with Perry.

"At 750K? I like it," said a Western Conference executive we touched base with just minutes after the news dropped on Monday. "I really like it."

For the Canadiens, it's a no-brainer.

Remaining Time -1:20

How many goals will Tyler Toffoli score this season? | Over/Under Canadiens Edition

They wanted Wayne Simmonds, a 32-year-old with a near identical playing profile to Perry; a player who's dropped off considerably from the one who consistently topped 25 goals but one who still brings size, edge, character and depth scoring. Bergevin even confirmed they offered Simmonds more money than the \$1.5 million he took to sign with the Toronto Maple Leafs on Oct. 9.

You have to think the Montreal GM is thrilled to land Perry, a one-time 50 goal scorer and Hart Trophy winner, for less than half the price.

The Western Conference executive we spoke with said he should be.

"I would take Corey Perry before I'd take Wayne Simmonds," he started. "He's obviously not the player he used to be -- neither of them are -- but he's good on the walls and getting pucks out, and with the way Montreal plays, he's going to be a good fit.

"He was outstanding in the playoffs. He's not a guy that's going to carry from one end to the other, but once he's in the zone, he's a useful guy. He's a good defensive player, too, so you're not worried that you're going



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to get scored on. He's also coming from Dallas's system, so he'll be polished that way."

Will Perry be an everyday player for the Canadiens? Maybe not.

Perhaps the more pertinent question is: Does he even need to be one?

Last year's Canadiens would've needed to use the Peterborough, Ont., native in their top-nine. This edition can afford to rest him on the second night of back-to-backs knowing that the fresher they keep him, the better he'll be when it matters most.

Bergevin has secured the type of depth the Canadiens need in order to believe they'll be playing when it matters most. It's the type of depth you need in any season, but especially in one where his team is in a 56-game sprint to the playoffs and playing exclusively against six other teams in an uber-competitive division.

Remaining Time -2:34

On Anderson's goal total and Kotkaniemi's ice-time | Over/Under Canadiens Edition

You're going to need quality players rotating in and out at the bottom end of your lineup; quality players who can step up in case of injuries or a COVID-19 rash; quality players who can handle the playoff-style games this season is going to feature. The Canadiens suddenly have two more of them than they did at this time last week.

Prior to Perry and Frolik signing, you could've penciled two potential 20 goals scorers in Paul Byron and Joel Armia onto their fourth line. They're players who could move up the lineup when injuries hit but players that could also rotate out for Perry or Frolik on any given night if the team is fully healthy.

"Perry's a gamer," said the executive. "He'll want to play every night."

The Canadiens wouldn't have looked his way if that wasn't the case. It's that competitiveness they're buying.

And Perry wouldn't have signed with the Canadiens if they were still a team that could guarantee him a spot his play no longer merits.

The expectations are aligned, and they're much higher than they have been in the make-the-playoffs-and-see-what-happens era of the Canadiens.

They've gone from habitually not spending anywhere close to the cap over the last three years to surpassing it by over a million dollars coming into this one -- a problem that doesn't really require a corresponding move to solve, at least not beyond placing Jordan Weal, Xavier Ouellet and any other combination of players on their four-to-six-man taxi squad.

"We have a team that should make the playoffs, I can tell you that," said Canadiens owner Geoff Molson in an interview with Sportsnet towards the end of October. "And I think the team and the organization and the fans would be extremely disappointed if we didn't. I think we've gotten to the point where we can. So, with that in mind, it would be disappointing if we didn't."

When Molson made those comments, the Canadiens looked like a team that could do some damage if/when they get there. They are even more so now with Perry in the fold.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.29.2020

1197487 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks Training Camp Preview: Does Holtby or Demko start in net?

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER -- Three years to get a lot better, three days to get a little worse.

The lustre from the Canucks' surprising summer playoff run, when they won two series during their first Stanley Cup tournament appearance in five years, was largely dulled by the opening weekend of National Hockey League free agency in October.

Losing starting goalie Jacob Markstrom, veteran defenceman and leader Christopher Tanev, and first-line winger Tyler Toffoli to Canadian rivals reframed the conversation about the team's short-term future.

Vancouver appeared to take a step back after steady improvement under coach Travis Green. The question: How far back? In some predictions, the Canucks are listed as low as sixth in the seven-team Canadian division.

But the regression, including in goal, may not be as significant as some think. Former Cup winner Braden Holtby and excellent prospect Thatcher Demko will form a goaltending tandem under crease guru Ian Clark, and the addition of defenceman Nate Schmidt from Vegas gives Vancouver its best top four on defence since the Canucks' 2011 Stanley Cup Finals team was dismantled.

But the Canucks' greatest assets -- and reason for hope this season -- remain brilliant young players Elias Pettersson and Quinn Hughes, and both of them should be even better in 2021. With Schmidt on the top blue line pairing and Holtby-Demko capable of providing at least league-average goaltending, Pettersson and Hughes are good enough to make up this season whatever the Canucks lost from last season.

Green has training camp to audition replacements for Toffoli and must fill out his defence with prospects. But nobody on the Canucks is expecting a step back.

Available Cap Space: -\$1.5 million

GM: Jim Benning

Head Coach: Travis Green

Assistants: Nolan Baumgartner, Newell Brown, Ian Clark, Jason King, Darryl Seward, Chris Higgins

Unsigned players: None

*I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

Who's your starter?

GM Benning moved quickly to sign Holtby when it was clear the Canucks couldn't match the Calgary Flames' \$36-million offer to Markstrom. The former Vezina Trophy winner had a dismal final season in Washington, posting a career-low save percentage of .897. Holtby admitted afterwards that he allowed his uncertain future with the Capitals to affect his play, and believes he can bounce back. Obviously, so do the Canucks.

The ideals of goaltending coach Ian Clark, whose counsel has helped every netminder he has worked with in Vancouver get better, closely align with Holtby's former goalie coach, Mitch Korn. And it's hard to believe that Holtby, at only 31, is already beyond repair while still carrying a career save rate of .916.

Demko, meanwhile, has been groomed to become an NHL starter since he was drafted in 2014 during Benning's first summer with the Canucks. After a solid if unspectacular first full season in the NHL, in which he posted a .905 save percentage, Demko converted a lot of non-believers with a fantastic playoff cameo in September when the 25-year-old stopped 128 of 130 shots to carry the Canucks to Game 7 against the Golden Knights. He did this under immense pressure after Markstrom was injured for the second time that season.



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Demko sacrificed an off-season at home in the San Diego sunshine to train in Vancouver and be ready for his big opportunity. It feels unwise to bet against him.

Whether it is Holtby-Demko or Demko-Holtby, the Canucks will need both goalies during this condensed season -- a 56-game sprint through Canada.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.29.2020

1197488 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames Training Camp Preview: Who will play alongside Gaudreau and Monahan?

Eric Francis

When the Calgary Flames officially open training camp it will be 136 days since the team's latest playoff meltdown.

With the team's core intact following an off-season in which the goalie position received the only shakeup, the Flames will get to work on their latest attempt to answer the biggest question looming over the group: can this team get over the sizeable playoff hump that has plagued the franchise since 2004?

That question obviously can't be answered until the spring, but to follow are the three biggest questions the coaching staff hopes to have answered in camp.

Current Cap Space: \$223,334

GM: Brad Treliving

Head coach: Geoff Ward

Assistants: Ryan Huska, Martin Gelinas, Ray Edwards

Unsigned players: None

*I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

1. Who will play down the middle?

There threatens to be a significant logjam of capable centres who could be jockeying for position in camp after Geoff Ward revealed in the fall he'd like to try both Elias Lindholm and Sam Bennett up the middle.

Lindholm is considered to be the Flames most complete forward and has played plenty of centre over the years. However, his chemistry with Sean Monahan and Johnny Gaudreau over the last two years in Calgary made it hard to move him from their right side. After another ineffective playoff next to them it's time he moved.

Bennett was drafted at centre but hadn't been able to prove his worth there until the summer when his latest playoff heroics came with him up the middle.

What is hard to fathom is both of them proving good enough to unseat one of Monahan, Mikael Backlund or Derek Ryan, especially since the latter is the perfect fourth line pivot.

Flexibility and depth are two of the Flames' biggest strengths up front, as almost every forward can play multiple positions. Even if Lindholm and/or Bennett seem to prove worthy of starting the season at centre, it's a good bet they'll also see time on the wing moving forward in a 56-game sprint bound to include endless injuries and roster moves.

Let the battle begin.

Remaining Time -2:01

Why Flames still have tons of confidence in Rittich as their backup

2. Who will run the Flames' powerplay?

Mark Giordano has done an admirable job doing this for years, helping him win the Norris Trophy two seasons back. However, at age 37 the Flames would like to ease the burden on the man who annually eats more minutes than anyone on the roster.

In that vein the Flames acquired Erik Gustafsson at last season's trade deadline to run the top power-play unit in the playoffs. The Swedish puck mover did so admirably, but is gone now, leaving Giordano and his likely partner, Rasmus Andersson, to battle for the top special teams gig.

The Flames deploy just one defenceman per unit, making it likely the two will simply alternate.

TJ Brodie had long played significant power play minutes, but with his departure to Toronto Andersson is the next man up by virtue of his poise, puck-moving ability and a cannon of a shot.

Don't be surprised if Noah Hanifin also opens the year with the odd power play assignment.

By year's end many expect future blue line boss Juuso Valimaki may just prove capable enough to earn some power play time.

Remaining Time -1:25

Are Flames betting lines (+650) too low in the Canadian division?

3. Who will play alongside Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan?

If indeed Lindholm moves to the middle, the Flames' long-time power couple will be in need of a complimentary piece. It says here the job is custom made for Sam Bennett, who could potentially share faceoff duties with Monahan, like Lindholm used to.

However, another strong possibility is Canada's former World Junior team captain Dillon Dube, who many believe will thrive following his breakout in last year's playoffs. Dube can line up on either wing and can play many different roles, as he proved on the third line last summer when he crashed, banged and scored on the team's third unit alongside Milan Lucic and Bennett.

Newcomers Josh Leivo and Dominik Simon are also candidates for a look as Leivo has exhibited some scoring touch the last two seasons, and the word out of Pittsburgh is that Sidney Crosby raved about having Simon retrieve pucks on his top line.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.29.2020

1197489 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Senators' Stepan provides steadying influence for inexperienced core

Wayne Scanlan December 28, 2020, 3:56 PM

While there is no perfect time to get traded, Derek Stepan deserves consideration for being dealt during one of the most complicated times of his life.

Living in Arizona, Stepan and his wife, Stephanie, are expecting their third child in early January, and found out on Boxing Day that they were involved in a cross-border trade to the Ottawa Senators during a pandemic.



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"I thought my first trade was a whirlwind — this one kind of lapped it a couple of times," said Stepan in a Monday Zoom call hosted by the Senators.

Stepan, 30, was first traded from the New York Rangers to the Arizona Coyotes in 2017.

"I'd be lying if I said it wasn't stressful, but as the dust settles here, we're starting to cross off things on the list," added Stepan.

"There were some moments of stress and obviously my wife is pregnant — right at the end — so she has had an emotional roller coaster. But we're getting there, seeing light at the end of the tunnel."

On the hockey side, Stepan said he is "super pumped," and will be ready to begin his protocols and indoctrination with the Senators as soon as his new child is born and settled.

"I'm as jacked up as I can be," to join the Senators, Stepan said.

Remaining Time -0:57

Why trade to Senators is 'big moment' in Stepan's career

Stepan's trade was part of a series of moves by the revamped Senators just days before training camp opens on Thursday.

In what can only be described as a post-Christmas shopping spree the Senators:

- Acquired the veteran centre Stepan from Arizona;
- Signed ace forward prospect Tim Stuetzle to a three-year entry-level deal;
- Added two Stanley Cup winners from Tampa Bay in defenceman Braydon Coburn and forward Cedric Paquette. The Senators also picked up a 2022 second-round pick in that deal.

For Stepan, in the last year of a \$6.5 million US contract (including a \$3 million signing bonus paid by Arizona), Ottawa gave up a second-round draft pick (originally belonging to Columbus) in 2021.

The native of Hastings, Minn., will wear No. 15 with the Senators, his number with the bantam Hastings Raiders back in the day.

Stepan said he wasn't shocked by the trade news, as rumours began circulating a week ago.

*I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

Meanwhile, in the other trade, the Senators took advantage of Tampa Bay's salary cap issues.

Ottawa provided salary cap relief by taking on \$3.35 million US in contracts from Paquette and Coburn and sent to Tampa goaltender Anders Nilsson, still recovering from post-concussion syndrome, and the contract of forward Marian Gaborik who is on long-term injured reserve. Neither is expected to play this season.

With the moves, the Senators projected cap hit jumps to \$70.5M from just under \$69 million.

In a nutshell, the Senators added strong forward depth in Stepan and Paquette, plus solidified their defence with Coburn, who didn't play a ton for the Stanley Cup champs last season but will be a nice addition to a blue line that is led by Thomas Chabot.

While it's expected that young centres like Josh Norris and Logan Brown will get an opportunity this season, Ottawa was thin on experience down the middle. Stepan will be a steadying influence on Norris, Colin White and Brown, and be a complement to a younger veteran in Chris Tierney. Likely, he will have rookie Stuetzle on his left side.

Stepan has already had conversations with several of his new teammates, including Brady Tkachuk. He sees potential for an offensive attack.

"I like playing with a younger group," said Stepan, whose affable personality comes across in interviews. "I like to teach them. I really feel at this point in my career I'm ready to get back to that production I was at early in my career."

31 Thoughts: The Podcast

Jeff Marek and Elliott Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

It has been a busy off-season for general manager Pierre Dorion, who previously acquired the services of goaltender Matt Murray, forwards Evgenii Dadonov, Alex Galchenyuk and Austin Watson, plus defencemen Erik Gudbranson and Josh Brown.

"Derek's acquisition provides us with important stability at centre heading into the season," Dorion said, after the trade with Arizona. "He plays a 200-foot game and has proven to be a reliable special teams player throughout his career. His addition to our lineup will also represent a valuable leadership presence within our group."

Though Stepan's offensive numbers declined in the last couple of years with the Coyotes from his consistent 50-plus points days with the New York Rangers, he will have some skilled forwards to work in Ottawa, including Tkachuk, Dadonov and Stuetzle.

Paquette, 27, who brought forechecking energy to the Lightning, contributed seven goals and 18 points over 61 games in a checking role last season.

With Paquette, Tkachuk, Stuetzle, Connor Brown, Watson, Nick Paul etc. the Senators will be hard on the puck in the offensive zone and should track well in the neutral zone.

Coburn, 35, played just 40 games for Tampa in 2019-20, contributing four points. He averaged 14:03 of ice time.

Pending UFAs give the Senators options

The beauty of the acquisitions by Dorion is that he didn't take on any term. Paquette, Coburn and Stepan are all pending unrestricted free agents and could easily be flipped at the trade deadline if that makes sense at the time.

In fact, Ottawa will have other pending free agents in Gudbranson and Mike Reilly on defence and Artem Anisimov and Galchenyuk at forward.

If the Senators are not in the North Division playoff race they will have plenty of trading chips.

Excitement over Stuetzle

The signing of Stuetzle ends any concern the fan base might have had over the 18-year-old forward getting his release from Mannheim of the German League and joining Ottawa this season.

Stuetzle, who dazzled at times in undermanned Germany's lopsided defeat at the hands of Canada at the World Junior Hockey Championships, will travel to Ottawa from Edmonton as soon as the round-robin ends.

"Tim possesses an exceptional blend of both speed and skill and a playmaking ability that our fans are going to enjoy watching for several years to come," Dorion said. "He's a dynamic forward who we expect to become a key piece of our roster as we continue trending towards icing an eventual elite-level team."

Stuetzle, drafted third overall by Ottawa in October, broke his hand at training camp in Mannheim and required surgery on Oct. 15. He has clearly recovered, as evidenced by the 26 minutes of ice time he had against Finland at the world juniors.

"It's an unbelievable feeling and I can't wait to get started with them," Stuetzle said in a TV interview from Edmonton. "I hope I can make the team as fast as possible."



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For a teenager, Stuetzle plays with enormous confidence and gumption. He is not likely to be intimidated by the NHL, and will be even less so having the likes of Tkachuk, Watson, Paquette and Gudbranson in a lineup that should be robust and difficult to play against.

At least, that is the plan.

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TSN.CA / 'Relentless' Holloway will play through pain at World Juniors

Edmonton Oilers' first-round pick Dylan Holloway was a full participant at Monday's practice after sitting out Sunday's game with an upper-body injury, but the gritty forward remains an important piece of Canada's attack and will be ready for Tuesday's game against the Swiss, Mark Masters writes.

By Mark Masters

TSN Hockey Reporter Mark Masters reports on the World Junior Hockey Championship. Team Canada practised inside the Edmonton bubble on Monday ahead of Tuesday's game against Switzerland.

After sitting out Sunday's game with an upper-body injury, University of Wisconsin forward Dylan Holloway returned to the ice for Team Canada's practice.

"It was a little sore, but definitely something I can push through," Holloway said. "If it was a medal game or something towards the end of the tournament I'd definitely be playing [against Slovakia], but it was better to take the night to make sure it doesn't get too bad. It felt good today, a little sore, but I'll be ready to go tomorrow."

Holloway was a full participant in practice.

"Talked to the doc and asked if he wanted Dylan to have a different coloured jersey and the answer was 'No,'" noted head coach Andre Tourigny.

In the hours leading up to puck drop on Sunday, Holloway was preparing to suit up.

"To be completely honest, I thought I was playing," the Oilers' first rounder said. "I got to the rink and was expecting to go and the doctor said it was in my best interests to not play and I trust the decision."

Braden Schneider (@NYRangers) gets ejected from the game and given a five-minute major penalty for this hit to the head of a German forward. pic.twitter.com/4kx1V5bmss

— J.D. Burke (@JDylanBurke) December 26, 2020

Holloway sustained the injury in the first period of Canada's game against Germany on Saturday when Braden Schneider levelled Jan-Luca Schumacher with a high hit. A reeling Schumacher bumped into Holloway.

"I was just coming back through the middle there and Schneider laid the body and it wasn't much but for some reason it tweaked my upper body," Holloway said. "I was able to play the rest of the game, but after the game it was super painful."

Holloway, who scored in both his NCAA games this season, is an important piece of Canada's attack.

"His pursuit of the puck is relentless, to say the least," observed Tourigny. "When you watch the game you see Dylan everywhere. He's on the forecheck. He's on the back track. He's in every battle. He's

supporting his teammates. He is relentless. He's everywhere and creates a ton of room for his teammates."

Button's World Junior Player Profile: Holloway's versatility sets him apart

TSN Director of Scouting Craig Button gives his take on Oilers prospect Dylan Holloway ahead of the World Juniors, explaining that the forward will provide a skill and power element regardless of where he plays.

On Monday, Holloway was moved onto Canada's top line alongside Connor McMichael and Dylan Cozens.

"Mikes is a good finisher, reads the play well, and with Cuzzy and Holo they have a lot of speed and they retrieve pucks," Tourigny explained. "And Cuzzy is a good playmaker so I think that could be a good combo and they're good on both sides of the puck so that line can play against elite players."

McMichael and Cozens played together in three of the four intra-squad scrimmages during selection camp and Cozens played with Holloway and Alex Newhook on Boxing Day.

"I love playing with Mikes," Cozens said. "I think we gelled real well. With Holloway, I think we had some really good chemistry in the game against Germany. He's such a hard worker. He gets the pucks and makes real good plays."

Newhook moves into the slot McMichael had previously occupied between Cole Perfetti and Peyton Krebs.

"Newy and Krebsie will bring a lot of speed around Perf and Perf is a good playmaker so the pace of those two guys can open some ice for Perf," Tourigny said.

The coach likes the way his team has played defensively, but is still looking for some chemistry to develop up front. Monday's practice focused on execution, transition and puck movement.

"We want to be really fast in our neutral-zone transition and in O-zone we need to have a quick-strike mentality," Tourigny said. "We're looking for the perfect play and we have to simplify. It's more about playing fast, playing quick and having a quick-strike mentality instead of slowing down and looking for a second or third option. We need to play with more speed offensively and it's not just skating but thinking and attacking with a lot of quickness."

Canada passes Slovakia test but improvements will be needed moving forward

On the heels of an offensive explosion against Germany, Canada's follow-up contest against Slovakia was a lot closer than everyone expected. James Duthie, Craig Button and Bob McKenzie explain what areas of Canada's game allowed it to come out on top in such a tightly played game.

Canada took its team picture before practice on Monday and Hockey Canada manager of communications Spencer Sharkey was front and centre in full equipment and wearing the sweater of injured captain Kirby Dach. Through the power of photoshop Dach will be added to the image later, but the fact remains the Chicago Blackhawks centre is no longer in the Edmonton bubble so others must fill the void.

On Sunday it was Cozens, the workhorse from Whitehorse, who stepped up in a big way. With a stingy Slovakia team hanging close with Canada, it was Cozens who settled things down with his words and actions.

"He was composed," observed Tourigny. "He was calm. He was in control. He was assertive. So, all of that radiated on his teammates. The way he was talking to his teammates, you could see the composure and there was no panic."



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Alternate captains Bowen Byram and Cozens are taking turns wearing the 'C' during the tournament in order to comply with IIHF rules that say someone must be designated in that role each game. Cozens, known for his blazing speed, didn't let the weight of the letter slow him down one bit.

"It's really easy to get away from the game and get in your own head when you're in a game like that," said defenceman Jamie Drysdale. "Cuz is showing leadership on the bench and making sure we all stay cool and we're doing the right things and when he follows through and makes a nice play in the defensive zone and turns it into the second goal, it's really nice to see that out of your leaders. He's a really special player and person on our team."

GOAL!

Phil Tomasino receives a great pass by Cozens, and makes no mistake! [ca#WorldJuniors pic.twitter.com/Pktp2V484g](#)

— Caitlin Berry (@caitlinsports) December 28, 2020

More poise and calmness will be required on Tuesday against the Swiss.

"They will play a similar type of game as the Slovaks," said Tourigny. "They will collapse the middle. They will defend with a lot of pride. They will give it all ... tighten up the middle and block shots and will be five in the slot and we need to learn to play against that style."

Cozens is one of six returning players on Team Canada and learned a lot from the adversity endured last year en route to a gold medal in Ostrava, Czech Republic. A year ago, Canada was thrashed 6-0 by Russia in their second game of the preliminary round, the most lopsided loss in the country's history at the event, and captain Barrett Hayton was embroiled in controversy after failing to remove his helmet during the Russian anthem.

Late in the semifinal win over Finland, Hayton sustained a shoulder injury.

"Hayton gets his shoulder separated and he's dealing with lots of stuff in the media already, lots of hate coming at him and all that, but he just stayed calm, stayed positive," Cozens recalled. "He's hurt and we didn't think he'd come back and play, but he grinded it out for us and that was the biggest thing I took from that."

Composed Cozens leading Canada on and off the ice

Team Canada is a perfect 2-0 through two games at the 2021 World Juniors after wins over Germany and Slovakia. With captain Kirby Dach out for the tournament with a wrist injury, Dylan Cozens has worn the 'C' for the Canadians and, as head coach André Tourigny says, his leadership has been felt on and off the ice. Mark Masters has more.

The last two players on the ice at every Team USA practice are forwards and close friends Cole Caufield and Trevor Zegras.

"That's just kind of been a thing since our 17-year-old year together," Zegras explained. "We've just always kind of ended up sticking around on the ice together shooting pucks or flipping it to each other or just stupid stuff. We always love to be out there when practice is over and trying new things and being creative."

At the end of a recent workout the pair flipped pucks high in the air before trying to deflect them into a bucket.

Cole Caufield and Trevor Zegras were the last ones on the ice at Team USA practice because they don't leave until they tip the last puck into a bucket [🤔🤔 pic.twitter.com/3ba6Oe3xnT](#)

— TSN (@TSN_Sports) December 25, 2020

In warmups they also have their own special routine as they squirt water down their uniforms.

"Just a fun way to get going," Caufield said. "We usually get the trainers involved too, but that didn't happen last game so we'll get back to that."

Zegras adds, "One of the first games we were doing it by ourselves and we said, 'You know what, might as well help each other out here.'"

The pair have similar personalities and hit it off right away at the USA Hockey National Development Team Program.

"We're just two loose guys," said Caufield, "but also two competitors so that's something we clicked on early on."

In a joint interview with TSN on Monday, the pair were asked to share something about the other guy that isn't obvious.

"He's got these crazy Uggs," said Caufield with a laugh.

"They're Birkenstock slippers," Zegras interjects. "They're pretty fuzzy. They're nice. A Christmas present from my mom. He's got a cute dog named Olive and she's awesome."

"Yeah, shout out to Olive," Caufield says.

The pair are all smiles off the ice and all business once the puck drops. Zegras, an Anaheim Ducks' first rounder, leads Team USA with five points in two games so far. Caufield has one assist, but is expected to be a top producer after racking up 12 points in 10 games at Wisconsin to start the season.

"He's a lot stronger," Zegras pointed out. "The time off helped him a lot. He's definitely quicker and hard on pucks. I mean, I think he might've had 20 shots yesterday which may be a record of some sort. His game away from the puck is better than anything I've ever seen. He's always finding those pockets and always getting open so it's a real treat playing with him."

Caufield, for the record, had six shots in a win over Austria on Saturday and is up to a team-high 11 at the tournament. He also scored a couple goals in a pre-tournament game against Finland.

Cole Caufield scores a RIDICULOUS backhand goal for his second goal in the same shift [@us pic.twitter.com/DlPfav9uU8](#)

— TSN (@TSN_Sports) December 23, 2020

Zegras gained 15 pounds during the pandemic pause and Caufield is noticing the added strength on the ice.

"You can tell, he's good in the corners and being heavy over pucks," the Montreal Canadiens' first rounder noted. "He's really not getting pushed off anything now and his confidence is pretty high."

Zegras and Caufield are two of the eight returning players on Team USA, who are looking for redemption after a quarterfinal loss last year in Ostrava. It wasn't the only bitter defeat they've shared.

"U18s was tough for a lot of us," said Zegras. "Pretty much the core group from that team is here and all the pressure that was on us to win that tournament, I still think that's what we're all thinking about and it'd be awesome to win here."

Team USA lost in a shootout against Russia in the semifinals at the 2019 under-18 World Championship and finished third despite getting a MVP performance from Caufield.

Now, they get one last chance to win the ultimate prize in junior hockey.

"It would mean everything," said Caufield. "It's something our group has wanted for a long time and this is another opportunity that we don't want to pass up."

Jake Sanderson is playing in his first World Juniors, but is feeling very much at home in Edmonton where his dad, Geoff Sanderson, wrapped up his NHL career with the Oilers in 2007-08.



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"I got a lot of family here," said Sanderson. "When I was younger we used to come up here a lot for family reunions and at Christmas time we'd come up here with the family."

Ottawa's fifth overall pick in October's draft agreed to play a little word-association game with TSN on Monday.

What's the first thing that pops in his head when he thinks of ...

Caufied's shot? "In the net."

University of North Dakota? "Hockey."

Ottawa Senators? "I guess, me."

Thomas Chabot? "Skilled."

Geoff Sanderson? "Fast."

World Juniors? "Lifetime experience."

Zegras? "Skilled."

2021 USA World Junior team? "Gold."

Your hometown of Whitefish, Montana? "The lake."

Jake Sanderson? "Hockey."

Third overall pick Tim Stuetzle signed an entry-level contract with the Senators on Sunday.

"An unbelievable feeling," he said. "I can't wait to join the team and meet all the guys. They are very young. We have a very young team. Right now, I think I can learn a lot from everybody ... it's going to be an unbelievable experience and I hope I can make the team as fast as possible."

Stuetzle noted that Brady Tkachuk and Chabot already reached out via text to congratulate him.

The contract helped Team Germany's captain turn the page on Saturday's 16-2 beatdown at the hands of Team Canada. The Germans were playing on consecutive days and dressed just 14 skaters due to positive COVID tests, but Stuetzle doesn't blame Canada for running up the score.

"You can't be frustrated with Canada," Stuetzle said. "They played a very good game. They want to score as much as they can and I would do the same, totally, so I can't say anything bad about it. I was not happy with the performance. You can lose to Canada, but you can't lose that way. I hate to lose and especially to give up so many goals, it's unacceptable, in my opinion."

Stuetzle has high expectations for his team in the rest of the preliminary round.

"Everyone's positive," he insisted. "I really think we can win. There's no other goal but to win those two games."

'Unbelievable feeling': Stuetzle 'can't wait' to join young Sens

Third overall pick Tim Stuetzle signed an entry-level contract with the Ottawa Senators on Sunday. "An unbelievable feeling," Team Germany's captain said before practice inside the Edmonton bubble. "I can't wait to get started with them." Stuetzle already received congratulatory texts from Brady Tkachuk and Thomas Chabot and is looking forward to joining Ottawa's young core after the World Juniors.

Lines at Monday's Team Canada practice:

Forwards

Holloway - McMichael - Cozens

Perfetti - Newhook - Krebs

Quinn - Byfield - Pelletier

Mercer - Suzuki - Tomasino

Zary

Defence

Byram - Drysdale

Harley - Schneider

Guhle - Barron

Korczak (R) - Spence

Goalies

Levi starts on Tuesday

Garand

Gauthier

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TSN.CA / Senators hoping Stepan rediscovers his offence in Ottawa

The Ottawa Senators acquired centre Derek Stepan from the Arizona Coyotes on Saturday in exchange for a 2021 second-round pick. Reading between the lines, it's clear the organization is concerned about failing to insulate their younger players, opting to burn a future asset in order to bring a capable middle-six centre into the fold, Travis Yost writes.

By Travis Yost

The Ottawa Senators acquired centre Derek Stepan from the Arizona Coyotes on Saturday in exchange for a 2021 second-round pick.

The move is meant to bolster a shallow centre position – currently filled by the likes of Colin White, Chris Tierney, Josh Norris, and Logan Brown – on Ottawa's active roster for the upcoming season. Stepan's presence will block at least one Senators prospect, but it is hard to believe that wasn't by design.

Reading between the lines, it's clear the organization is concerned about failing to insulate their younger players, opting to burn a future asset in order to bring a capable middle-six centre into the fold.

From a salary cap perspective, it's hard not to like this deal for the Senators. Stepan's \$6-million average annual value contract expires at the end of this season, which means his acquisition won't block out Ottawa prospects long term. Stepan could even play himself into an extension on merit – some of these Senators prospects will inevitably flame out, and opportunities for productive veterans to grab roster spots are going to be there for the taking.

Alternatively, if Ottawa sees an opportunity to move Stepan at the trade deadline to a contender, they will likely be able to recoup the second-round pick or something similar in value.

Perhaps most importantly for Ottawa, Stepan's cap liability is much higher than his cash liability. The Senators will only pay his base salary of \$2-million over the course of the season thanks to pre-paid signing bonuses.

From a hockey perspective, his value is less clear. Stepan has had a fantastic career, but he been a shell of his former self since being traded to the Coyotes in June of 2017. Most of Stepan's regression has come



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on the offensive side of the ice, where his individual rate scoring and on-ice scoring have cratered:

Years ago on Broadway, Stepan was part of a blistering offence that generated dangerous attacking sequences at will – particularly off the rush. Speedy wingers always seemed to complement Stepan's game the best. Players like Marian Gaborik, Carl Hagelin, and Chris Kreider were frequent recipients of Stepan's passing and playmaking ability, and for a few seasons the Rangers housed one of the more dangerous lines in the league.

But Stepan's offensive production has slowed. The Coyotes never quite seemed to figure out the right mix of forwards to play alongside Stepan, trying Clayton Keller, Vinnie Hinostroza, Lawson Crouse, Phil Kessel, and Richard Panik to varying degrees of success.

From a teammate quality perspective, it's certainly been a step down from his heyday in New York. But it's also a more realistic scenario of the type of forward quality Stepan will likely be playing with in Ottawa.

One thing that has become obvious about Stepan's offensive struggles: his line has had a difficult time getting into the dangerous scoring areas of the ice. If you look at where Arizona generated shots with Stepan on the ice last year, you will notice the low and high slot are basically void of activity. Their offence tends to come from the circles and the perimeter, and scoring diminishes as a result:

Bringing it back to Ottawa's lineup, it does raise the question as to whether a winger like Brady Tkachuk – one of the few proven commodities the Senators have, and one of the only players who has shown himself capable at creating offence from in tight – is best suited to play with Stepan.

There is only one Tkachuk to go around, but we have already seen what Stepan looks like when he doesn't have speed options or interior playmakers on his wing – it's third- and fourth-line offensive production for a forward with top-six intentions. Irrespective of whether or not the Senators decide to keep Stepan around longer-term, they will need more than that from a player of his calibre.

To that end, it's now up to head coach D.J. Smith to find the right mix of teammates for his new 30-year-old centre.

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USA TODAY / Capitals goalie Henrik Lundqvist to undergo open heart surgery

Chris Bumbaca

The heart condition that will cause Washington Capitals goaltender Henrik Lundqvist to miss the 2020-21 NHL season will also force him to undergo open heart surgery, he revealed Monday.

"Last 3 weeks my focus has shifted from training camp and the upcoming season to my health and what I can and can't do," Lundqvist wrote in a social media message.

The open heart surgery will include aortic valve replacement, aortic root and ascending aortic replacement, Lundqvist said. He did not offer a timetable for when the procedures would take place.

"We all have our mountains to climb," he added. "Staying positive here and set on the road to recovery."

Lundqvist, 38, had spent the last 15 seasons with the New York Rangers, who bought out the final year of his contract at the end of last season. A

free agent, Lundqvist signed a one-year deal with the division foe Capitals in October before announcing earlier this month he would be unable to play this season, which begins Jan. 13.

Lundqvist, the 2012 Vezina trophy winner, has appeared in more than 1,000 career games, including playoffs. He has a career 2.43 goals-against average and .918 save percentage in the regular season and a 2.30 GAA and .921 mark in the postseason.

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USA TODAY / Opinion: Arizona high school on Navajo reservation clings to mascot tradition, but pro sports can send message

Greg Moore

Editor's note: First in a series looking at the debate surrounding some high school mascots as Washington's NFL team and others have announced changes in 2020.

PHOENIX – There's a stubborn outlier in the debate over Indian mascots: the Red Mesa Redskins of the Navajo Nation community of Teec Nos Pos.

The small school, about 25 miles southwest of Four Corners, is gaining more and more attention for using a racial slur against its own people as diversity advocates make slow but steady progress toward eliminating stereotypical representations of Native people in the world of sports.

"I guess with some generations, they see that the mascot is a depiction of our fierce bravery and their way of survival," said Charlene Tso, a Navajo Nation Council delegate and graduate of Red Mesa High.

She and other Red Mesa leaders have fielded questions from the USA TODAY Network, The Associated Press and The Washington Post in recent years. And it's hard to imagine the point of view held by many of Tso's constituents leading the conversation for much longer.

It opens a real opportunity for professional sports franchises in Atlanta, Chicago and Kansas City to pick up where Cleveland baseball and Washington football franchises left off and accelerate the process of ending a boorish — and frankly, embarrassing — practice of naming teams after Indigenous people.

'Mascots are a racist epithet'

There are about 1,900 schools across the U.S. that still use Indian mascots, according to the National Congress of American Indians. The organization considers that a sharp reduction from previous decades. About 2,000 Indian references have been eliminated since 1985, including about 30 schools that have dropped the same racist name that the Washington NFL team once had and Red Mesa High still uses.

There's been a sharp change in tone among Navajo leadership, as well.

Four years ago, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly attended an NFL game in Glendale, Arizona, wearing a Washington NFL team hat with the former mascot name and logo.

This summer, when the Washington franchise announced that it would stop using the name after nearly 90 years, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez issued this statement: "For generations, this team name and logo has misrepresented the true history and events that define the term 'redskins.' History tells us that the term 'redskins' derived from bounty hunters, which identified Indigenous people by the color of their skin. We must continue to work together to correct these issues. One of



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those remedies is to cease the use of disparaging terms and logos among all teams and organizations.”

That would suit the Native American Journalists Association just fine.

“NAJA has been involved in the mascot debate almost as long as we have been an organization. And NAJA was founded in 1983,” Bryan Pollard, associate director of NAJA, said. “Our position has always been that mascots are a racist epithet and harmful to native people.”

Washington’s former team name holds a special place of shame, he said.

“There’s no getting around the origin of the term and that fact that there’s a direct linkage to the genocide that was happening on this continent.”

But, he said, every last one of these mascots — Apaches, Braves, Red Raiders, Savages and Warriors among them — is a problem.

“This is harmful messaging that gets indoctrinated into society, and it all needs to go,” he said.

‘Many intense conflicts’

He cited a study, “The Psychosocial Effects of Native American Mascots,” posted to his organization’s website. It involved researchers from the University of Michigan and Harvard, and it provides context that’s often missing from this debate.

“Across the nation, there continue to be many intense conflicts over these mascots. Most conflicts focus on differences in opinion, rather than the effects of these mascots,” the 2020 review states.

There are scores of problems affecting Native communities, including discrimination in education such as facing “racial slurs, stereotyping, microassaults and culturally insensitive, delegitimizing and assimilative school policies and practices (e.g., discrimination in disciplinary practices; problematic academic labeling and tracking that assumes Native families and students are deficient.”)

Finding after finding in the study published in *Race and Ethnicity in Education* showed exposure to Native logos and mascots made things worse.

People who cling to their traditional school names have long said they believe the mascots indicate positive traits.

“In the gymnasium, we have the mascot on a horse,” Tso said, speaking for her Red Mesa constituents. “As a source of pride and symbolism, he does raise his spear. That gesture there does say that we are strong, we are resilient, and we are going to face whatever battle or challenges that may come. . . . That gives us strength and positivity and hope. And I think that’s the reason some of us, the communities, cannot relate to the controversial opinion.”

But this argument fails to consider the harm of cultural appropriation.

There’s a case to be made that neither of the logos Red Mesa uses accurately reflect Navajo traditions.

If that’s so, then they’re no better than anyone else who reduces people to stereotypes because they’re mocking others not themselves.

Washington’s football team already has done the right thing. And sometime before Opening Day 2022, Cleveland’s baseball team will, too.

This is a perfect opportunity for the NHL, NFL and MLB to make a joint move, dropping the names Blackhawks, Braves and Chiefs, in unison.

It would send a powerful message to the 1,900 high schools and colleges around the nation who either don’t know or don’t care how much harm they’re doing.

Even if it’s to their own people.

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