



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 31, 2020

## THE ATHLETIC

### Make the haters furious: New Year's resolutions for each of the Hurricanes

By Sara Civian

In an NHL season where things are bound to be different, at least one of the differences is sort of oddly satisfying: Training camp starts with the new year.

As you're vowing to get back in the gym again and the people in Rod Brind'Amour's life are probably urging him to take more rest days, the Hurricanes will be back on the ice attempting to get into midseason form as quickly as possible. There's never been a better time for some new-year-new-season resolutions.

As a disclaimer, I'm only handing out resolutions for those who are definitely making the NHL roster. The resolution for everyone else is "make the NHL."

#### Forwards

**Andrei Svechnikov:** Give the people what they want: an intra-division lacrosse goal power struggle.

But actually, my only resolution for Svechnikov is to make a fool of those at the NHL Network who left him out of their most recent Top 20 wingers list.

It shouldn't be that hard.

**Sebastian Aho:** Three words: Score goals fast. Aho has a history of self-admitted slow starts, but his 15-game point streaks a few months down the line are just as predictable. It always works itself out, and Aho's game isn't purely about scoring goals. But he does tend to pace the play of the whole team, so with a shortened season that will need to manifest in quick production.

**Teuvo Teravainen:** I would say shoot more and he would say no, and that's what I appreciate about him. So keep passing.

**Nino Niederreiter:** Considering Niederreiter is the most superstitious Hurricane, I won't curse him with a specific resolution. I will encourage him to pray to whatever hockey gods he was praying to immediately post-trade.

**Vincent Trocheck:** Pop off against your former team. Now that the Hurricanes play the Panthers eight times this regular season, I'm expecting eight Trocheck hat tricks. Just kidding, but I'm excited to see what happens when someone has to play the team they previously spent their whole career on eight times.

**Martin Necas:** Eat your Wheaties. The one thing holding Necas back from Brind'Amour's circle of playing time trust is play/strength away from the puck. Obviously Necas has been working on it for years, and with natural skill like his, this is something that just needs to come with experience. But when it all clicks for him, watch out.

**Ryan Dzingel:** Make the coaching staff regret their 2020 postseason decisions. Dzingel had a solid return to play training camp, but the team was carrying a slew of equal-caliber forwards after the Morgan Geekie Game and elected to sit Dzingel for the play-in round. He didn't do anything crazy

against the Bruins when he got back in the lineup, but none of the Canes did. I do wonder if things would've been different if Dzingel got a shot off the bat, though. He should go into this season looking to remove the What If's.

**Jordan Staal:** Play to your strengths. Now that the likes of Trocheck and Jesper Fast have joined the Canes, it's never been easier for Staal to sort of take a deep breath and do what he was made to do. He's been wearing many hats his entire Canes career, and he's never once complained about it. The Canes are now in a position where he can assume his natural role of checking center without filling in where others have lacked.

**Jesper Fast:** Don't try to be something you're not. Obviously I'm not accusing Fast, whom I've never even met, of doing this. But you know how it is when a team makes a trade and expectations for the return are off the charts. In reality, Fast already fits in perfectly where he needs to as a hard-working third-liner alongside Staal. The Canes signed him for who he already is.

**Warren Foegele:** Believe in yourself. As corny and cliché as this one is, we've all seen flashes of brilliance from Foegele that seem to surprise him as much as they surprise us. It's time for him to believe he belongs in an NHL top-six and to prove he's worth a multi-year extension.

**Jordan Martinook:** The NHL has long been criticized for lack of player marketing, so it's time for Martinook to step up and get a cough drop sponsorship. Free idea: He could scream "Mista Svechnikov" in the Ricola voice. Whatever brand he chooses to represent, he's going to need something to keep his voice in commission as he keeps the Canes fired up without fans.

**Brock McGinn:** Find a new Central Division opponent you love beating more than you love beating the Caps.

**Morgan Geekie:** Roll with the post-historical achievement "slump." Geekie's NHL debut and first few games were so unreal that the only way to go is down — and that's perfectly fine. The Canes have long kept an eye on him for his potential at center, and they just considered it a fun bonus that he immediately made an impact on the scoresheet. You should expect him to have the same ups and downs as any promising rookie, regardless of his current status as the points-per-game leader in NHL history.

#### Defensemen

**Dougie Hamilton:** Don't let the pressure get to you. A huge year approaches for Hamilton. There will be constant contract speculation (some completely out of left field), a pressure to live up to what would've been a career year, and getting back into the groove after injury-related setbacks. Hamilton seems to be at his best when he's having fun, so trying to channel that with everything else going on will be crucial.

**Jacob Slavin:** Post more videos of your family.



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The people demand it.

Brady Skjei: Play every game like it's a 2020 play-in game against your former team, the New York Rangers.

Brett Pesce: Get your dad back on Twitter.

Jake Gardiner: Make the haters furious.

Haydn Fleury: Smile more. While I'm a firm believer that you should never tell someone what facial expression to make, Fleury's goal at the start of the 2019-20 season was to "smile less," ergo play with more snarl to stick in the NHL lineup. So in 2020-21, I urge Fleury to smile more. First of all, he

accomplished his goal; second of all, we'll take all the smiles we can these days.

Goalies

Petr Mrazek: More hats.

Y'all remember 15 long years ago at the start of last season when Mrazek had custom Czech hats made for the Canes?

Think of it like this: If the Canes roll up to 2021-22 training camp in new Czech hats, it means Mrazek played well enough in 2020-21 to earn an extension.

James Reimer: Just don't regress.



## Tweetmail No. 246: Roster, Contracts & Trophies

by Michael Smith

Hello and welcome to Tweetmail, a regular feature on Hurricanes.com in which I answer your Twitter questions, which are mostly about the Carolina Hurricanes. It's a mailbox of tweets. It's Tweetmail. Maybe you learn something, and maybe we have some fun, too.

Let's get to it.

I think the Canes didn't carry a full roster (23) most of season last year because Rod wanted players playing. Does that change this year with everything going on? Any time you want to leak the Stadium Series Jerseys you are more than welcome to post them. Happy New Year. - @HHandorf

Happy New Year to you, Howie, and to all of you who support this team, visit this website, interact with us on social media, read these words or listen to our podcast. Here's to a better, brighter 2021.

You'll have to wait a bit on the Stadium Series jerseys, unfortunately. There's still not even a logo or an opponent or even a date now. In time, though.

The Canes, certainly in recent memory, have not been a team to carry the maximum of 23 players on their active roster. One of the major reasons for this is because the organization, head coach Rod Brind'Amour included, doesn't want players sitting around as healthy extras for too long; you would rather those players see regular game action, whether in the NHL or AHL. That, like everything else this season, isn't necessarily going to be the case.

The active roster limit for 2020-21 will remain 23 players, but to help combat an emergency situation in which COVID-19 forces a number of players out of the lineup, teams will assemble a "taxi squad," a collection of 4-6 players who will practice and could travel with the team, as needed. Also among the roster stipulations for the upcoming season is carrying and traveling with a third goaltender, whether he is on the active roster or the taxi squad. In the Canes' case, this is likely to be Alex Nedeljkovic, who the team might as well carry

on its active roster given Nedeljkovic's one-way salary and need for waivers in order to be assigned to the taxi squad or the AHL.

With Nedeljkovic in mind, you're looking at 21 players on the active roster. An extra forward and a seventh defenseman would equal 23, and I could see the team going this route. With the way the schedule is compacted this season, you're going to need contributions from everyone, and I wouldn't be surprised to see some form of regular rotation within the lineup.

As for how the Canes fill out their taxi squad, let's save that for next week. I've got some ideas.

Any update on Dougie/Svech? - @AndyElliott1999

The update on contract extensions for Andrei Svechnikov and/or Dougie Hamilton is that there is no update, for now.

Here's the latest from Canes President and General Manager Don Waddell: "We've spoken to the representation for both players and told them that obviously we have an interest," he said. "I do believe talks will continue here in the next little while, but no update. No negotiations have started as of yet."

Do you think the NHL will award the Campbell and Wales Trophies since there aren't Western and Eastern Conferences this year? - @gk10098

It's a great question, and we don't yet have clarification from the league on their plans for these playoff trophies.

Here's the conundrum. The Prince of Wales Trophy is awarded to the winner of the Eastern Conference Final, and the Clarence S. Campbell Bowl is awarded to the winner of the Western Conference Final. There is no discernable Eastern or Western Conference, though, with temporary realignment for the 2020-21 season; the North Division traverses Canada, and the Central Division, which the Canes will be a part of, includes a smattering of teams from both Conferences. The first two rounds of the Stanley Cup Playoffs,



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in addition to the entirety of the 56-game regular season, will feature intradivisional play, so only one team from the geographic West is guaranteed to be represented amongst the final four in the postseason.

The simple answer is to, however random it might be, designate the trophies for the semifinal series, regardless of who could win what. Would it be weird to see the Carolina Hurricanes take a photo with the Clarence S. Campbell Bowl? Sure, but the 2020-21 season in itself is going to be weird and strange and unique, and what truly matters is the trophy at the end.

For kicks, TV's Mike Maniscalco and I broached this topic of discussion on the latest episode of CanesCast (37-minute mark). I say embrace the weird. Let's hand out some medals or something.

Do you think that any Caniacs will be able to be in the stands this year? - @Browntruck1980

It's my hope that we'll see some fans in the stands at PNC Arena if not by the end of the regular season, then perhaps in time for the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Whether we get to that point depends among many deciding factors. The status of the vaccine, the first doses of which are now being administered to the most at-risk populations, is among these factors. How many people will be vaccinated in the next 3-4 months? Will community spread be curbed, and will case numbers dip? All numbers to watch.

In the meantime, stay safe. Wear a mask. Stay physically distant. There's a light at the end of the tunnel, and we'll get there.

Ultimately, the question of fans at PNC Arena is probably one we'll have to circle back to in a few months, but for now, I'll be optimistic because we could all use a little hope.

Ad logos have been discussed, but from what I have seen they will be replacing team logos on the helmets. What happens to the new 3-D logo on the Canes' white helmet? - @flive22

The 2020-21 season is going to be different in many ways, including some emerging sponsorship opportunities. One of those is featuring a corporate partner on the sides of player helmets. And you're right, Bill. These decals replace team logos or wordmarks that are typically found in these spots, meaning that 3-D raised logo introduced in the Canes' white uniform set is no more, for now.

Are you sure you checked Seth Jarvis' driver's license? He seems young. - @coryfogg

He's old enough.

Old enough for what?

To ... party.

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More questions and more answers coming your way in 2021!

If you have a question you'd like answered or if you, like McLovin, technically don't have a first name, you can find me on Twitter at @MSmithCanes, or you can drop me an email.



## Ranking NHL prospect pools: Top prospects, breakouts, pipeline status and more for all 31 teams in 2020-21

By Chris Peters

taking long hiatuses between competitive gameplay. That takes a toll on player development. But while it is a bit more difficult to do so than in normal years, we're ranking every pool and identifying each franchise's top 10 prospects, a potential breakout candidate for this season and those who might make an NHL-level impact in the next year.

I've broken down prospects for each club into three categories, noted in parentheses in the team prospect rankings:

- A prospects have a high likelihood of becoming NHL high-impact players (i.e. a top-six forward, top-four defenseman or long-term starting goaltender)
- B prospects have a higher likelihood of becoming NHL regulars and contributors.

- C prospects showcase the upside to make the NHL, but either need more development time or are more likely to fill out depth roles.

Systems are most often graded on the backs of their top three or four prospects, but I also place a good deal of value on the depth of systems. While there is often fluidity in these organizational rankings, with players graduating quickly and changing the face of the system sometimes dramatically on a year-to-year basis, this is how the NHL prospect pools stack up as we gear up for the 2020-21 season.

Note: To maintain prospect eligibility, a player must still have rookie status. Players who appeared in 26 or more NHL regular-season games last season are not eligible, nor are players with at least 50 career NHL contests. And players are only considered for prospect status if they are 25 or younger.

1. Los Angeles Kings

Top 10 Prospects



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PLAYER	TIER
1. Quinton Byfield, C	A
2. Alex Turcotte, C	A
3. Arthur Kaliyev, LW	A
4. Rasmus Kupari, C/W	A
5. Samuel Fagemo, LW	A
6. Gabriel Vilardi, C/W	A
7. Tobias Bjornfot, D	B
8. Tyler Madden, RW	B
9. Akil Thomas, C	B
10. Helge Grans, D	B

No team has stockpiled prospects in as great a number as the Kings. And adding a crown jewel in 2020 No. 2 overall pick Quinton Byfield took a great system and turned it into the class of the league.

The Los Angeles system is forward heavy, with the vast majority of their best prospects being natural centers. Not all of them will be playing center at the next level, but if you're going to be heavy at one position, that's certainly not a bad area to focus.

In addition to Byfield, the team has five other A-rated prospects and 10 B-rated prospects, both coming in as high-water marks for our entire ranking. Eight Kings prospects are in our most recent top 100, as well. The only thing the system is lacking is a bonafide No. 1 goalie prospect, but they do have some intriguing players in Lukas Parik and Jacob Ingham, among a few others who could develop.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Alex Turcotte  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Tobias Bjornfot, Kale Clague, Mikey Anderson, Gabriel Vilardi, Jaret Anderson-Dolan

### 2. New York Rangers

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Alexis Lafreniere, LW	A
2. Igor Shesterkin, G	A
3. Nils Lundkvist, D	A
4. Vitali Kravtsov, RW	A

PLAYER	TIER
5. K'Andre Miller, D	B
6. Braden Schneider, D	B
7. Morgan Barron, C	B
8. Zac Jones, D	B
9. Karl Henriksson, C	B
10. Matt Robertson, D	B

Landing the No. 1 pick in the 2020 draft supercharged a prospect pool that was dealing with some high-profile prospect graduations, including Kaapo Kakko and Adam Fox. Alexis Lafreniere joins the fray as the No. 1 prospect in hockey and one of the most complete wings to enter the league immediately following his draft in some years.

On top of adding a new No. 1 prospect, the Rangers can also still consider Igor Shesterkin a prospect, and he very well could be a Calder Trophy favorite this year given his brief audition last season. He's the No. 2 goaltending prospect in hockey behind the recently-drafted Yaroslav Askarov and is a foundational piece for the Rangers going forward. So, too, should be Vitali Kravtsov, who has been lighting up the KHL on loan this season. Meanwhile, the Rangers still have to get Nils Lundkvist under contract after he put together one of the greatest U20 seasons by a defenseman in SHL history in 2019-20.

With a great high end of the pool, the Rangers also boast pool depth with a number of players who should figure into their near future. That's especially true on the blue line, as the club can look to K'Andre Miller, Braden Schneider, Zach Jones and Matt Robertson.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Brett Berard  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Alexis Lafreniere, Igor Shesterkin, Morgan Barron

### 3. Ottawa Senators

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Tim Stuetzle, LW	A
2. Jake Sanderson, D	A
3. Josh Norris, C	A
4. Alex Formenton, RW	A
5. Logan Brown, C	B
6. Shane Pinto, C	B



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PLAYER	TIER
7. Jacob Bernard-Docker, D	B
8. Ridly Greig, C	B
9. Roby Jarventie, LW	B
10. Lassi Thomson, D	B

The Senators have multiple players at every position that they should be able to count on very soon for their roster. The addition of another foundational winger in Tim Stuetzle and potential future top-pairing defenseman Jake Sanderson in the 2020 draft moved the Sens into an even stronger position for their future. Both of those players look like key building blocks who can be added to a mix that already includes Brady Tkachuk and Thomas Chabot.

The Senators have put together a reliable AHL pipeline that is showing their players how to excel before reaching the NHL level. Top prospects Josh Norris, Alex Formenton and Logan Brown took big steps with the Belleville Senators last year. That goes a long way toward supplementing a roster that needs an influx of speed and skill.

Ottawa addressed a need at goaltending through a trade for Matt Murray, which covers one of the holes in their prospect system, though both Filip Gustavsson and Mads Sogaard look like they can continue to develop over time. Other than that, there aren't many holes in a system that looked good on paper and has only gotten better over the last year of development.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Shane Pinto  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Tim Stuetzle, Josh Norris, Alex Formenton, Logan Brown, Joey Daccord

#### 4. Minnesota Wild

##### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Kirill Kaprizov, LW	A
2. Marco Rossi, C	A
3. Matt Boldy, LW	A
4. Calen Addison, D	A
5. Adam Beckman, C/W	B
6. Alexander Khovanov, C	B
7. Marat Khusnutdinov, C	B
8. Kaapo Kahkonen, G	C

PLAYER	TIER
9. Nico Sturm, C	C
10. Hunter Jones, G	C

Over the last two drafts in particular, the Wild have significantly improved a prospect pool that was pretty shallow. It didn't hurt that they've had Kirill Kaprizov developing into a KHL star over the last five years since he was drafted. Now Kaprizov is in North America, and the Wild get to see first hand what he can do at the NHL level.

The additions of Marco Rossi and Matt Boldy via the draft, and Calen Addison via trade -- along with continued improvement in their own development system with the AHL's Iowa Wild -- has pushed this system forward. The Wild have players at all positions who should figure into the NHL plans within the next few years. So the team has both depth and high-end talent, which goes a long way to replenishing an NHL roster that has become more and more vanilla these last few seasons.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Matt Boldy  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Kirill Kaprizov, Kaapo Kahkonen, Nico Sturm, Louie Belpedio

#### 5. Detroit Red Wings

##### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Lucas Raymond, RW	A
2. Moritz Seider, D	A
3. Joe Veleno, C	B
4. Jonatan Berggren, LW	B
5. William Wallinder, D	B
6. Jared McIsaac, D	B
7. Albert Johansson, D	B
8. Theodor Niederbach, C	B
9. Robert Mastro Simone, C/W	C
10. Antti Tuomisto, D	C

The Red Wings' system strength leans heavily on the quality of their last two top picks. Lucas Raymond is a foundational winger who could become a game-changing prospect for the rebuilding Red Wings, and Moritz Seider is a cornerstone defenseman who looks every bit ready to become a No. 1 in the very near future. Those are the only two A-rated prospects



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in the system, but they're such key pieces for the future that they can easily carry this system into the top five.

On top of them, however, there are a lot of second-tier prospects who looked poised to develop into important pieces for the franchise. In recent years, the Red Wings have added a number of quality pieces through the draft outside of the first round. Jonatan Berggren, Jared McCaig, William Wallinder and Albert Johansson all have notable upside. Joe Veleno is a late first-rounder who continues to develop nicely and likely could become a staple of Detroit's middle six.

Detroit has pretty nice balance in the system, though it still lacks a true No. 1 goaltending prospect. That's not to say that some of the goaltenders in the system can't develop into one, as there are a number of players with solid upside, including Filip Larsson and Jan Bednar. But they're going to require patience.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Albert Johansson  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Yevgeni Svechnikov

### 6. New Jersey Devils

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Alexander Holtz, RW	A
2. Ty Smith, D	A
3. Dawson Mercer, C	A
4. Nolan Foote, LW	B
5. Kevin Bahl, D	B
6. Shakir Mukhamadullin, D	B
7. Janne Kuokkanen, C/W	B
8. Reilly Walsh, D	C
9. Nick Merkley, C/W	C
10. Arseni Gritsyuk, D	C

You have to give new GM Tom Fitzgerald credit for addressing some organizational needs in trades and compiling draft picks. It helped replenish a system that saw No. 1 pick Jack Hughes graduate last season. Alexander Holtz is the new No. 1 prospect in the system and could one day be on the receiving end of Hughes' playmaking ability.

In the 2020 draft, the Devils added Dawson Mercer, a do-everything kind of player who can slot into a variety of roles down the line, and defenseman Shakir Mukhamadullin, who is a bit more of a project but one worth taking a flier on. There's also potential top-four defenseman Ty Smith, a 2018 first-rounder.

Trades brought in key players who are going to help as soon as next season. Nolan Foote came over in the Blake Coleman trade, Kevin Bahl was a key piece added along with Nick Merkley in the Taylor Hall deal, and Janne Kuokkanen came over in the Hurricanes' risky move for Sami Vatanen. All of those players are trending toward NHL regulars.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Shakir Mukhamadullin  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Janne Kuokkanen, Nick Merkley, Nolan Foote

### 7. Florida Panthers

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Grigori Denisenko, LW	A
2. Anton Lundell, C	A
3. Spencer Knight, G	A
4. Owen Tippett, RW	A
5. Serron Noel, RW	B
6. Eetu Luotsarainen, C	B
7. John Ludvig, D	B
8. Ty Smilanic, C	C
9. Emil Heineman, LW	C
10. Aleksii Heponiemi, C/W	C

The Panthers have managed to keep a lofty position in prospect rankings based mostly on the top end of their pool. There's not much depth in this group, but the top prospects are of a particular quality as the Panthers placed four players inside our top 50 prospects, with Grigori Denisenko and Anton Lundell boasting lofty positions in the top 25. Meanwhile, the club boasts one of the best goaltending prospects in the world in Spencer Knight, which is a chip many teams wish they could have in their back pocket.

While the system as a whole is not deep, the next tier of player in their system has improved. Some of that is due to the most recent draft and a few trades. Among intriguing prospects in the second tier of the Panthers' system are Ty Smilanic and Emil Heineman, both midround picks in the 2020 draft. Eetu Luotsarainen and Chase Priskie were added via trade and could help the team in the nearer term.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Ty Smilanic  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Grigori Denisenko, Owen Tippett, Eetu Luotsarainen

### 8. Anaheim Ducks

#### Top 10 Prospects



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PLAYER	TIER
1. Trevor Zegras, C/W	A
2. Jamie Drysdale, D	A
3. Jacob Perreault, RW	B
4. Isac Lundestrom, C	B
5. Brayden Tracey, C	B
6. Lukas Dostal, G	B
7. Sam Colangelo, C/W	C
8. Benoit-Olivier Groulx, C	C
9. Antoine Morand, C	C
10. Henry Thrun, D	C

If you've watched the World Juniors at all, you've seen the wizardry of Trevor Zegras. The skill and offensive know-how is at an elite level, which could make him a game-breaker at the next level as the Ducks add to a younger core of players. Meanwhile, Jamie Drysdale appears to have the makings of a top-pairing defenseman. That's two massive pieces for any team.

The Ducks have a second tier of prospects that should contribute in the near future, with first-rounders Isac Lundestrom, Brayden Tracey and Jacob Perreault all looking to have the upside to help. I'm also especially intrigued by goaltender Lukas Dostal, who has put together a few incredible seasons playing in Finland and has shown upside to be a potential starter one day. The Ducks still have a ways to go, but their system is loading up and getting better on an annual basis.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Josh Mahura  
 Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Trevor Zegras, Isac Lundestrom, Antoine Morand, Josh Mahura

9. Colorado Avalanche

Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Bowen Byram, D	A
2. Alex Newhook, C	A
3. Justin Barron, D	B
4. Conor Timmins, D	B
5. Martin Kaut, RW	B

PLAYER	TIER
6. Shane Bowers, C	B
7. Justus Annunen, G	B
8. Daniil Zhuravlyov, D	C
9. Nikolai Kovalenko, RW	C
10. Alex Beaucage, LW	C

The Avs don't have much need for a top prospect system right now, but that's the icing on the cake for one of the league's best teams. They can take their time and let their players develop until they're ready to step into a contending team. The hard part about that? The Avs should have multiple players ready before there's a spot available for them.

Bowen Byram looks like he could be the long-term No. 2 behind Cale Makar, while Alex Newhook is looking more and more like a future No. 1 or No. 2 center. The next tier of players includes several who could contribute as early as this season, with Conor Timmins, Shane Bowers and Martin Kaut looking to be the most ready in that department.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Justin Barron  
 Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Bowen Byram, Conor Timmins, Martin Kaut, Shane Bowers, Logan O'Connor

10. Buffalo Sabres

Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Dylan Cozens, C	A
2. Jack Quinn, LW	A
3. John-Jason Peterka, LW	B
4. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, G	B
5. Arttu Ruotsalainen, C	B
6. Ryan Johnson, D	B
7. Will Borgen, D	C
8. Oskari Laaksonen, D	C
9. Mattias Samuelsson, D	C
10. Jacob Bryson, D	C

The Sabres have built a system more steadily, but the next wave of talent is coming. Dylan Cozens in particular should be coming to the NHL soon, as he has taken big steps over the last year in his overall development and gotten stronger. He's



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going to be a major difference-maker sooner rather than later for Buffalo.

After that, the next tier has plenty of intrigue, with a couple of high-end goal scorers in Jack Quinn and John-Jason Peterka. Those two are a little further away from contributing but have shown they can put pucks in nets. And Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen has shown he can stop them. Having spent part of last season on the shelf recovering from hip surgery, this season should be one where he stabilizes and starts working toward the NHL more steadily.

The Sabres have players in all positions, with a lot of defensemen who look like they can eventually fill some depth spots around Rasmus Dahlin down the line. This system may not be as exciting as some other rebuilding teams, but it has players who will help the big club soon.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: John-Jason Peterka  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Dylan Cozens, Arttu Ruotsalainen, Will Borgen

### 11. Carolina Hurricanes

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Seth Jarvis, C/W	A
2. Ryan Suzuki, C	A
3. Jake Bean, D	B
4. Morgan Geekie, C/W	B
5. Jamison Rees, C/W	B
6. Vasili Ponomaryov, C	B
7. Dominik Bokk, RW	B
8. Noel Gunler, RW	B
9. Patrik Puistola, LW	C
10. Joey Keane, D	C

The Hurricanes have a prospect system that is predicated on depth. They managed to use their surplus last season to work trades and find players who could help them. That led to jettisoning a few quality pieces, with Julien Gauthier being the biggest loss. But even with those trades, the Hurricanes maintained a strong pool that got stronger at the 2020 draft.

The Canes have had the benefit of developing a lot of their talent right under their noses in Charlotte but will be using the Chicago Wolves as their new farm team. A different logo, but a similar approach should help the Canes keep their NHL roster on its toes and their prospects prepared when their names are called.

There's a whole bunch of skill waiting in the wings, with Seth Jarvis, Ryan Suzuki, Morgan Geekie, Vasili Ponomaryov, Dominik Bokk, Noel Gunler and Patrik Puistola bringing high-end talent to the table. The surplus of talent outside of the NHL roster is a weapon for this team to use going forward.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Noel Gunler  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Jake Bean, Morgan Geekie, Joey Keane, Alex Nedeljkovic

### 12. Toronto Maple Leafs

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Nick Robertson, LW	A
2. Rodion Amirov, LW	A
3. Timothy Liljegren, D	B
4. Filip Hallander, C	B
5. Topi Niemela, D	B
6. Roni Hirvonen, C	B
7. Semyon Der-Argunchintsev, C	C
8. Mikhail Abramov, C	C
9. Nick Abruzzese, C	C
10. Filip Kral, D	C

The Maple Leafs have built a system that puts a premium on skill over all. Second-round find in Nick Robertson had 55 goals in the OHL last season and got a few games in the bubble with Toronto. Meanwhile, the club picked up Rodion Amirov, who has taken a step forward in the KHL and looks like he could be a high-end playmaker down the line.

Beyond that, the Maple Leafs have a lot of players trending up. Patience is going to be required for a lot of the system, though players like Timothy Liljegren and Filip Hallander will give the Leafs some minutes very soon.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Topi Niemela  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Timothy Liljegren, Nick Robertson

### 13. Montreal Canadiens

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Cole Caufield, RW	A
2. Alexander Romanov, D	A



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PLAYER	TIER
3. Kaiden Guhle, D	A
4. Cayden Primeau, G	B
5. Mattias Norlinder, D	B
6. Jesse Ylonen, RW	B
7. Jordan Harris, D	B
8. Jan Mysak, C	C
9. Jayden Struble, D	C
10. Joel Teasdale, LW	C

The Habs have a very interesting prospect system. They have some super high-end talents, especially in gifted goal-scorer Cole Caufield and two-way defenseman Alexander Romanov, the latter of which is in North America and ready to play for Montreal. The club also got another highly-mobile blueliner in Kaiden Guhle at the 2020 draft and have a more dynamic offensive-defenseman type in Mattias Norlinder. One of the real wild cards in the group is Cayden Primeau, who has the makings of a potential starting goaltender down the line.

Jan Mysak and Jayden Struble are intriguing prospects, too. They have a lot of the physical tools and skills to be big-time players once they put more of their game together.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Jordan Harris  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Alexander Romanov

### 14. Edmonton Oilers

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Evan Bouchard, D	A
2. Philip Broberg, D	A
3. Dylan Holloway, C	A
4. Raphael Lavoie, C/W	B
5. Tyler Benson, LW	B
6. Dmitri Samourukov, D	C
7. Ryan McLeod, C	C
8. Cooper Marody, C	C
9. Kirill Maximov, RW	C

PLAYER	TIER
10. Carter Savoie, C/W	C

The Oilers don't have a ton of depth in their prospect pool, but they do have two potential top-four defensemen and a middle-six center that will solidify things down the middle. Evan Bouchard is ready to make the jump to the NHL with his poise and hockey sense, while Philip Broberg is at least a year away from being able to make an impact but should once he arrives. And 2020 draftee Dylan Holloway already looks like he has taken a step in his draft-plus-one season.

Down the line, there's not a ton of excitement, though Raphael Lavoie and Tyler Benson have the ability to make plays and earn spots down the line. Dmitri Samorukov will need some time to find his pro legs, but he has potential, as well.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Carter Savoie  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Evan Bouchard, Tyler Benson, Cooper Marody

### 15. Philadelphia Flyers

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Morgan Frost, C	A
2. Cam York, D	A
3. Yegor Zamula, D	B
4. Bobby Brink, RW	B
5. Tyson Foerster, C/W	B
6. Emil Andrae, D	B
7. Tanner Laczynski, C/W	C
8. German Rubstov, C	C
9. Ronnie Attard, D	C
10. Wyattte Wylie, D	C

The Flyers always have balance in their system. Even with recent graduations of Joel Farabee and Carter Hart, the system has solid depth.

Morgan Frost is the most likely to make the jump this season, but further down the line, both Cam York and Yegor Zamula could be moving into prominent roles on the Flyers' blue line. Add in some skilled players like Bobby Brink and Tyson Foerster, and you've got some scoring depth for the future.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Bobby Brink  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Morgan Frost

### 16. Nashville Predators



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### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Yaroslav Askarov, G	A
2. Phil Tomasino, LW	A
3. Eeli Tolvanen, RW	B
4. Egor Afanasyev, LW	B
5. Semyon Chistyakov, D	B
6. David Farrance, D	B
7. Luke Evangelista, RW	C
8. Jeremie Davies, D	C
9. Connor Ingram, G	C
10. Patrick Harper, C/W	C

Having the No. 1 goaltending prospect in the NHL is going to go a long way for your system. Yaroslav Askarov is still a few years away from tending the Preds' crease, but he looks to be the absolute real deal when it comes to goalie prospects. Goalies who look like No. 1s at his age are rare but typically can be a little risky. I've been watching him a lot over the last three years, and I'm a big-time believer in what he can do.

After that, Philip Tomasino is a really fun player to watch with a good work ethic and skating ability. He has surpassed Eeli Tolvanen on the depth chart, but Tolvanen took a good solid step forward in the AHL last season and should compete for a spot.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Patrick Harper  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Eeli Tolvanen, Jeremie Davies

### 17. Vegas Golden Knights

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Peyton Krebs, C	A
2. Brendan Brisson, C/W	B
3. Lucas Elvenes, LW	B
4. Jack Dugan, RW	B
5. Ivan Morozov, C	B
6. Zach Whitecloud, D	B

PLAYER	TIER
7. Kaedan Korczak, D	B
8. Lukas Cormier, D	C
9. Peter DiLiberatore, D	C
10. Layton Ahac, D	C

The Golden Knights' prospect system is still reaping the benefits of their first ever draft, as Lucas Elvenes and Jack Dugan are late-round picks who have developed into potential contributors. While they're a little further down on the list, that's just a great view of how well Vegas started themselves off in the prospect department.

On the top end, Peyton Krebs has recovered nicely from his pre-draft Achilles injury and didn't miss a beat. The Golden Knights also added a bonafide sniper in Brendan Brisson, who they can let develop at the college level for a few more years. Then there's the highly-skilled Ivan Morozov, who is having a great season in the KHL right now, and pretty nice depth on the blue line, starting with Zach Whitecloud.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Ivan Morozov  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Zach Whitecloud, Peyton Krebs

### 18. Arizona Coyotes

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Barrett Hayton, C	A
2. Victor Soderstrom, D	A
3. Jan Jenik, C/W	B
4. Matias Maccelli, LW	B
5. Michael Callahan, D	B
6. Ty Emberson, D	C
7. Tyler Steenbergen, C/W	C
8. John Farinacci, C	C
9. Brayden Burke, C/W	C
10. Ivan Prosvetov, G	C

The Coyotes have a tremendous top two in their system, but things thin out pretty quickly. The next tier has two top-100 prospects in Jan Jenik and Matias Maccelli, who had breakout seasons last season and have looked good early in 2020-21. The system rides heavily on the laurels of Barrett



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Hayton, who sat for most of last season but looked great at the World Juniors and in bursts with the Coyotes.

Arizona's system got no help at the most recent NHL draft, where they relinquished the rights to their first pick and had traded away others. It's going to be a while before the Coyotes can recover from the suspected graduations of Hayton and Victor Soderstrom.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Michael Callahan  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Barrett Hayton

### 19. Vancouver Canucks

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Vasily Podkolzin, RW	A
2. Nils Hoglander, LW	A
3. Jack Rathbone, D	B
4. Kole Lind, RW	B
5. Olli Juolevi, D	B
6. Joni Jurmo, D	B
7. Brogan Rafferty, D	C
8. Will Lockwood, C/W	C
9. Jett Woo, D	C
10. Aidan McDonough, LW	C

The Canucks graduated a lot of great young players over the last few years, and it's starting to catch up to their prospect system. Vasily Podkolzin will keep the team waiting a bit longer as he finishes out his KHL contract, but players like Jack Rathbone, Kole Lind and Brogan Rafferty should be challenging for spots in camp. Vancouver has to hope that Olli Juolevi can stay healthy and take another step, too, while others like Will Lockwood and Jett Woo establish themselves within the organization during their first pro seasons.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Linus Karlsson  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Jack Rathbone, Kole Lind, Brogan Rafferty

### 20. Columbus Blue Jackets

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Kirill Marchenko, LW	A
2. Liam Foudy, C/W	A

PLAYER	TIER
3. Yegor Chinakhov, RW	B
4. Dimitri Voronkov, LW	B
5. Veini Vehvilainen, G	C
6. Daniil Tarasov, G	C
7. Andrew Peeke, D	C
8. Samuel Knazko, D	C
9. Trey Fix-Wolansky, C	C
10. Kole Sherwood, RW	C

The Jackets don't have a deep pool, but they have some fun talent up top. Kirill Marchenko has been popping off in the KHL this season and showcases a great mix of skill and power that will serve him well at the next level. And Liam Foudy showed last season that he can hang with NHL talent due to his elite speed.

The Blue Jackets surprised everyone when they went off the board to land Yegor Chinakhov in the first round in the 2020 draft. It was risky, but Chinakhov has looked good for the most part in the KHL this season. Columbus also has some especially talented goaltending prospects outside of the two guys they have at the NHL level. Both Veini Vehvilainen and Daniil Tarasov appear to be future NHL goaltenders, even if they might be longer-term No. 2 options.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Trey Fix-Wolansky  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Liam Foudy, Andrew Peeke, Kole Sherwood

### 21. Dallas Stars

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Thomas Harley, D	A
2. Ty Dellandrea, C	B
3. Mavrik Bourque, C/W	B
4. Jason Robertson, RW	B
5. Jake Oettinger, G	B
6. Joel Kiviranta, LW	C
7. Riley Damiani, C	C
8. Nick Caamano, RW	C



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PLAYER	TIER
9. Joel L'Esperance, C/W	C
10. Joseph Cecconi, D	C

The Stars had some high-profile graduations last year. For one, Denis Gurianov broke out as a rookie and had a great performance during the Stanley Cup playoff run. There should be more reinforcements soon, with Ty Dellandrea likely to take a step and contribute here and there this season.

The Stars also have some high-upside players with No. 1 prospect Thomas Harley and Riley Damiani, who will be a first-year pro in 2020-21. They also appear to have a potential No. 1 goalie down in the line in Jake Oettinger.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Mavrik Bourque  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Ty Dellandrea, Joel Kiviranta, Nick Caamano

### 22. Chicago Blackhawks

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Lukas Reichel, LW	A
2. Ian Mitchell, D	B
3. Nicolas Beaudin, D	B
4. Drew Comness, G	B
5. Philipp Kurashev, C/W	C
6. Pius Suter, C/W	C
7. Evan Barratt, C/W	C
8. Wyatt Kaiser, D	C
9. Andrei Altybarmakyan, RW	C
10. Michal Teplý, LW	C

The Blackhawks had several high-profile graduates out of the prospect ranks, including Alex Nylander, Adam Boqvist, Matthew Highmore and Kirby Dach, who is now injured and unlikely to play much of this season.

Chicago did do some patch work at the 2020 draft, adding a needed dose of skill to the system with Lukas Reichel. The Blackhawks also landed their new top goalie prospect in Drew Comness in the second round. Ian Mitchell and Nicolas Beaudin should compete for spots as early this season, and Chicago signed European free agents Pius Suter and Matej Chalupa, who could contribute very soon. The team is in a bit of a soft rebuild right now and is going to need to build up a lot

more to supplement the young talent it already has at the NHL level.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Wyatt Kaiser  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Ian Mitchell, Nicolas Beaudin, Pius Suter

### 23. Calgary Flames

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Connor Zary, C	A
2. Juuso Valimaki, D	B
3. Jakob Pelletier, RW	B
4. Emilio Pettersen, C/W	B
5. Jeremie Poirier, D	B
6. Dmitri Zavgorodniy, C/W	B
7. Yan Kuznetsov, D	C
8. Dustin Wolf, G	C
9. Eetu Tuulola, RW	C
10. Ilya Nikolayev, C	C

Not too long ago, the Flames had one of the weaker prospect pools in the league. But they have managed to build it back up slowly but surely over the last few drafts. Juuso Valimaki was expected to be a prospect graduate by now, but he missed all of last season with an injury. The uncertainty that comes after a lost year of development knocked him down the rankings, but make no mistake -- he has a chance to be a big part of Calgary's blue line as soon as this season.

The Flames also added a strong piece to their future in Connor Zary, who has skill and versatility. Versatility can also be found in Jakob Pelletier, who put up big numbers in the QMJHL last season. There's also Emilio Pettersen and Dmitri Zavgorodniy, who bring a ton of skill to the table. There's not great depth, but there's a core of players the team should be looking to take steps toward the NHL roster over the next few years.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Martin Pospisil  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Juuso Valimaki, Emilio Pettersen

### 24. New York Islanders

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Ilya Sorokin, G	A



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PLAYER	TIER
2. Oliver Wahlstrom, RW	B
3. Simon Holmstrom, C	B
4. Ruslan Iskhakov, C	B
5. Robin Salo, D	B
6. Kieffer Bellows, RW	C
7. Cole Coskey, RW	C
8. Otto Koivula, C/W	C
9. Reece Newkirk, C	C
10. Jacob Pivonka, C	C

The Islanders don't have a ton of high, high-end pieces after the graduation of Noah Dobson, but they do have a potential long-term No. 1 goalie in Russian sensation Ilya Sorokin. He's in North America and likely will get a year of understudy duty before starting the transition to becoming this team's No. 1.

The Isles' system has a lot of players in it that we're waiting to see take a step. Oliver Wahlstrom has been building back up his game after underwhelming in two seasons after his draft. Kieffer Bellows is another whose promise hasn't quite been lived up to yet. There's still time for both of those natural snipers. A few bright spots on the rise include Robin Salo and Cole Coskey, as well as Reece Newkirk.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Reece Newkirk  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Ilya Sorokin, Oliver Wahlstrom, Simon Holmstrom

### 25. San Jose Sharks

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Ryan Merkley, D	B
2. Thomas Bordeleau, C	B
3. John Leonard, LW	B
4. Ozzy Wiesblatt, C	B
5. Jonathan Dahlen, C/W	B
6. Ivan Checkhovich, LW	B
7. Daniil Guschin, RW	C
8. Sasha Chmelevski, C	C

PLAYER	TIER
9. Artemi Kniazev, D	C
10. Brandon Coe, RW	C

The Sharks have a tough system to read. There is not one bonafide star in the group, but there's enough talent in there to see some help on the way for the Sharks. Ryan Merkley is by far the most intriguing, with exceptional passing abilities and offensive sense and at least some improvement in his defensive game last season. Where he goes next in his career will be particularly interesting to watch.

San Jose has a bunch of higher-end skill players in its group, which is why there's reason to be optimistic about how this system is trending. Recent draftee Thomas Bordeleau has looked awesome in the early-goings of this season, and John Leonard took a huge step forward in college hockey last season before turning pro. Most recent first-round pick Ozzy Wiesblatt was trending up before the season was halted. Meanwhile, if Jonathan Dahlen wants to give North America another shot, he has been dominant in Sweden's second pro division and looks ready for a new challenge.

So even though the top end is not at the level of many other teams' elites, the sum of this system's parts is moving in the right direction.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Jonathan Dahlen  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: John Leonard, Ryan Merkley

### 26. Washington Capitals

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Connor McMichael, C	A
2. Hendrix Lapierre, C	B
3. Martin Fehevary, D	B
4. Alexander Alexeyev, D	B
5. Brett Leason, C/W	C
6. Alexi Protas, C/W	C
7. Martin Hugo Has, D	C
8. Vitek Vanecek, G	C
9. Bobby Nardella, D	C
10. Lucas Johansen, D	C

The Caps have had some big-time drafts over the last two years, and that helps a great deal. Connor McMichael is far



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and away the top prospect in the group, but there's a lot of upside in Hendrix Lapierre, the team's 2020 first-rounder.

On the blue line, Washington has two players who don't look all that far away: Martin Fehevary and Alexander Alexeyev offer strong defending and adequate puck-moving. Martin Hugo Has is another intriguing project who could round out into a strong two-way blueliner. There's not much depth yet, but this is an improved system.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Bobby Nardella  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Connor McMichael, Martin Fehevary

### 27. Winnipeg Jets

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Cole Perfetti, C/W	A
2. Ville Heinola, D	B
3. Dylan Samberg, D	B
4. David Gustafsson, C	B
5. Mikhail Berdin, G	B
6. Kristian Vesalainen, LW	B
7. Declan Chisholm, D	C
8. Logan Stanley, D	C
9. Henri Nikkanen, C	C
10. Daniel Torgersson, C/W	C

The Jets had a gift fall in their laps when Cole Perfetti dropped to the No. 10 pick. He's an elite playmaking talent who should fit into Winnipeg's group within a year or two. That's a real boost to a system that had grown a little stale after years of graduating super high-end players.

Ville Heinola started last season in the NHL and didn't have a great year after he went back to Finland. But he has started the 2020-21 season on fire in Liiga. The Jets' blue line needs a lot of help and should get some from Dylan Samberg, who had a brilliant NCAA career. Meanwhile, the Jets may have a future No. 2 for Connor Hellebuyck in Mikhail Berdin, who played well in the AHL last season and did very well in the KHL to start this season.

There are pieces ... just not a ton of them right now. But if there's one thing that Winnipeg has reliably done since being relocated from Atlanta, it's drafting well.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Kristian Vesalainen  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Dylan Samberg, David Gustafsson, Mikhail Berdin

### 28. St. Louis Blues

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Scott Perunovich, D	A
2. Klim Kostin, RW	B
3. Joel Hofer, G	B
4. Jake Neighbours, C/W	B
5. Nikita Alexandrov, C	B
6. Alexei Toropchenko, C/W	C
7. Dylan Peterson, C	C
8. Hugh McGing, C/W	C
9. Tanner Kaspick, C	C
10. Ville Husso, G	C

The Blues don't have much in their system at the moment, especially after the graduation of Jordan Kyrou. What they do have, however, are some good developmental players.

On the blue line, Hobey Baker winner Scott Perunovich just got better and better over a three-year NCAA career, where he went from good to special in short order. The Blues are also still waiting on Klim Kostin to take that next step as a potential power forward, and he still looks like he can get there. Joel Hofer and Ville Husso are a pair of quality goaltending prospects, and recent first-round winger Jake Neighbours looks like a great stylistic fit for what the Blues do.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Klim Kostin  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Scott Perunovich, Klim Kostin, Ville Husso

### 29. Tampa Bay Lightning

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Alex Barre-Boulet, LW	B
2. Cal Foote, D	B
3. Hugo Alnefelt, G	B
4. Maxim Groshev, LW	C
5. Taylor Raddysh, RW	C
6. Sammy Walker, C	C



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PLAYER	TIER
7. Cole Guttman, C	C
8. Cole Koepke, C	C
9. Maxim Cajkovic, RW	C
10. Gage Goncalves, C	C

The defending Stanley Cup champs don't have a lot of star power after trading some prospects away and not having first-round picks to replenish things. That won't matter much to the team yet, as they look to keep their Stanley Cup window open -- but they will need cheap players on entry-level deals to help them navigate a murky salary cap situation.

That help could come as soon as this season, with Alex Barre-Boulet and Cal Foote each performing at a high level in the AHL and appearing ready to take the next step. After that, there's a lot of uncertainty in the system, but the Lightning have high-upside players in Hugo Alnefelt, Maxim Cajkovic, Maxim Groshev and a trio of intriguing college players in Sammy Walker, Cole Koepke and Cole Guttman.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Cole Guttman  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Alex Barre-Boulet, Cal Foote

### 30. Boston Bruins

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Jack Studnicka, RW	A
2. John Beecher, C	B
3. Jeremy Swayman, G	B
4. Daniel Vladar, G	B
5. Urho Vaakanainen, D	C
6. Trent Frederic, C	C
7. Jack Ahcan, D	C
8. Jakub Lauko, C	C
9. Jakub Zboril, D	C
10. Kyle Keyser, G	C

The Bruins have a shallow pool that didn't have much of a chance to get much better in the 2020 draft. There is some real promise, though. Jack Studnicka is a speedy forward who should see NHL time this season and will likely be a long-term forward in the middle six for Boston.

Another position of strength for the team is in net. Jeremy Swayman broke out for the University of Maine last season, Daniel Vladar was among the best goalies in the AHL last season, and Kyle Keyser is coming out of his first professional season. There's some real intrigue in the pipeline that may need to be called upon in the next few years.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Jack Ahcan  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Jack Studnicka, Daniel Vladar, Trent Frederic

### 31. Pittsburgh Penguins

#### Top 10 Prospects

PLAYER	TIER
1. Samuel Poulin, C/W	A
2. Nathan Legare, RW	B
3. Joel Blomqvist, G	C
4. Pierre-Olivier Joseph, D	C
5. Calle Clange, G	C
6. Sam Miletic, LW	C
7. Valtteri Puustinen, RW	C
8. John Gruden, C	C
9. Jordy Bellerive, C	C
10. Drew O'Connor, LW	C

After trading picks and prospects yet again, the Penguins' cupboard is even barer than it was this time last year. The good news is Samuel Poulin had a tremendous draft-plus-one season and showcased what he could look like at the next level. He should be knocking on the door for a spot soon.

Outside of him, however, there aren't a ton of sure things. The Penguins drafted two goalies with their first two picks in 2020, and they should help down the line. But this system has needs all over the place.

Breakout candidate for 2020-21: Nathan Legare  
Potential NHL impact in 2020-21: Pierre-Olivier Joseph, Sam Miletic, Samuel Poulin



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## Hurricanes sign Rees to entry-level contract, AHL start date announced

For the second day in a row, the Hurricanes have locked in one of their prospects.

By Andrew Schnittker

Another day, another Hurricanes prospect signed. The team announced today that it signed Jamieson Rees, a 2019 second-round pick, to his three-year, entry-level contract.

The deal will pay Rees, the 44th overall pick in his draft, \$700,000 at the NHL level in 2020-21, \$750,000 in 2021-22 and \$832,500. It will pay him \$70,000 at the AHL level each year, with a signing bonus of \$277,500.

Per the NHL/CHL agreement, Rees won't be eligible to play in the AHL for another year. Last season with the Sarnia Sting of the OHL, he posted 18 goals and 61 points in 39 games. For more on Rees, check out our recent profile as part of our top 25 under 25 series here.

In more prospect news, while details are still being worked out, there will indeed be an AHL regular season in 2021, with a Feb. 6 puck drop:

Carolina will begin its new affiliation with the Chicago Wolves this season. Canes Country will have more details on the AHL season as they become available.

## Carolina Hurricanes top 25 under 25 #8: Warren Foegele

The first player in our top 25 under 25 series with significant NHL experience, Warren Foegele has become a regular for the Canes over the past two seasons.

By Alec\_Sawyer

We've been counting down the top 25 under 25 in the Carolina Hurricanes organization, and at number 8, Warren Foegele is the first player we've come to that has significant NHL experience.

Foegele has been a regular for the Canes each of the last two seasons, playing 77 games with 15 points in his rookie year of 2018-19 before taking another step forward last year with 30 points in 68 games in his sophomore campaign.

Foegele, a third-round pick back in 2014 (the Canes' third pick of that draft behind Haydn Fleury and Alex Nedeljkovic), made his NHL debut on March 26, 2018 against the Ottawa Senators. In that debut, one of two games he played for the Canes during the 2017-18 season, Foegele had a goal and an assist.

Since then, Foegele has solidified his place in the Hurricanes' lineup, missing just five regular season games for Carolina over the last two years. In 2019-20, Foegele finished seventh on the Canes with 30 points and ninth among the forwards in average time on ice.

He's also had some pretty big moments in his career to date, including a pretty great stretch of games during the Canes' run

to the Eastern Conference Finals in 2019. In those playoffs, Foegele had nine points in 15 games, including a three-point performance against the Washington Capitals in game three of that series. In game four, Foegele put the Canes on top 1-0 just 17 seconds into the game.

Overall, Foegele has been a really solid depth piece for the Hurricanes so far in his NHL career. He's had a CF% of better than 50 in each of his two full seasons in the NHL, and the Canes' have had a better expected goals for mark than expected goals against mark when Foegel has been on the ice over the past two years.

Last month the Canes and Foegele agreed to terms to avoid arbitration, as Foegele signed a one-year, \$2.15 million contract with the Canes to stay in Raleigh. Foegele has one more arbitration-eligible restricted free agency year ahead of him following the 2020-21 season.

Foegele was a third-round pick who made his way up to the NHL in four years and has contributed well during his time with the Canes. He's not the flashiest or best of players by any means, but he's been a good guy to have around as Carolina has gone from rebuilding to contending.

The ceiling for Foegele isn't super high and certainly doesn't compare to those of some guys coming up later on this list, but he's shown over the past two seasons that he's an NHL-caliber player that is likely in the league to stay.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 31, 2020

## TriangleSportsNetwork

### Koutroumpis – Looking forward to an NHL season like no other in 2021

Division realignment, updated pandemic protocols, retro jerseys, and rule updates

By Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – Who's ready for some NHL hockey?

I am because unlike the Return to Play that was the hiccup release to finish the 2019-2020 season, this season's slate of games will take place in teams' home arenas.

I know, I know – 'how can you think about this so positively?' – there's a pandemic that continues to rage on with the hardship and sorrow that has wrought residual illness and death upon millions globally.

If your degrees of separation from the coronavirus hasn't yet been cut down to one, you are very fortunate.

VERY fortunate.

What are you doing?

So why is there joy in anticipating a new NHL season?

Because for many, the Covid-19 blues, restlessness – [insert any other descriptor for loss of patience] – have firmly set in.

The everyday routine of sheltering and maneuvering cautiously in and around individual and familial bubbles is ready to burst, if it hasn't already.

No, fans will not be able to attend any games in Raleigh – PNC Arena is off limits for practices and games as announced by the team on Wednesday.

Limited media credentials for game coverage will also be available, so you'll have to more accurately calibrate your local on-site coverage via television and radio, social media and website sources.

So, as a result, all 31 teams, via their owners and the league, in agreement with the players, struck a deal to play the season out in a modified manner.

The moral questioning and criticism of that decision as being unsafe for the players and coaches, league, arena, and support personnel, and their families, has and will churn throughout the season.

The NHL's success in completing last season's playoffs in 'bubbles' set up in Toronto and Edmonton provided the impetus to have confidence in enacting now practiced and established protocols while relevant localized ones have been set to follow and hopefully not endanger the health of all involved at local sites.

Looking at the schedule

The NHL's 868-game regular-season schedule – 56 games per team – will begin Jan. 13 and end by May 8th.

With the shortened schedule – playing 26 less games than previous seasons, the Carolina Hurricanes will face five teams

more often than they have in the past due to a divisional realignment.

It's not a bad thing to give the eyes a different look – at least for this historic season anyway.

Did you know 2020-21 marks the first regular season in league history in which teams will play four consecutive games against one opponent?

Playing division opponents in multiple sets of two games where possible and up to four times, double back-to-backs – yes four straight games – the Hurricanes will face the Columbus Blue Jackets in their 'really get to know/hate each other' series Mar. 18-25 – two at home and two away.

Representing games 29-32, consider that playoff implications-type hockey coming at you on a screen near you.

Personally, I will be glad to watch more matchups against the likes of Chicago, Detroit, and Dallas, among the others.

The style of play these teams presents a slightly different juice to the mix in the reformed Central Division.

I'm an old-school admirer of the Original Six, so seeing the Blackhawks and Red Wings sweaters never gets old with me.

'What about the playoffs?', you ask.

Let's take it one game at a time for now.

Going retro is a thing now?

Giving all every fanbase something to get excited about, the NHL continues history making, as the upcoming season marks the first time in league history that all 31 teams will participate in a league-wide alternate jersey rotation.

Hail the Whale!

Carolina fans have already reacclimated with the team's original charter organization precursor, the Hartford Whalers for the past few seasons.

The nostalgic ode to franchise history, Hartford Whalers Night has already spawned the spread of green amongst red and white, and black.

Mix in some grey for 2020-21, and the team's fashion palette tones down a little, but still pops.

When the designs were released, adidas described the process as a "two-year-long process to mine each team's jersey archive and team colors, remixing them to create something new and never seen before."

Their answer was flipping the colors.

Simple enough, I guess – even if it took that long to figure out.

Not sure if there will be enough stimulus money left, but a personal choice if adding to your game wear inventory is possible this year.



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By the way, if you are big into proudly wearing the Whale, please read up on the team's history and the team's place in the history of the game too.

Don't just wear it – live it.

There are a lot of cool nuggets buried there, including YouTube clips of iconic and now-departed play-by-play man Jon Forslund establishing the tone and pace of broadcasting back then that all in the Triangle eventually came to know as synonymous to the Hurricanes.

Did you see that?

It wouldn't be a normal start to the NHL season without a rule change to clarify and confuse players and coaches as well as those watching and covering the game.

This year, Rule 83.1 Offside was the lucky focus of attention with a subtle, but important clarification on what the status of a player's skate is in relation to contact with the leading plane of the blue line into the attacking zone.

Beginning in the 2020-21 regular season, a player's skate will not have to be in contact with the blue line in order to be on-side.

Here's the exact wording that will be listed in the rule book:

"A player is on-side when either of his skates are in contact with the blue line, or on his own side of the line, at the instant the puck completely crosses the leading edge of the blue line. On his own side of the line shall be defined by a "plane" of the blue line which shall extend from the leading edge of the blue line upwards. If a player's skate has yet to break the "plane" prior to the puck crossing the leading edge, he is deemed to be on-side for the purpose of the off-side rule."

Don't worry, unless you've taken officiating certification rules tests and know how to peruse through the book's legalese and terminology like I had to 'back in the day', here is a helpful video explanation:

Drop the puck!

Hurricanes training camp starts Jan. 3, so we'll all get reacquainted then – on social media.

In the meantime, arrange that viewing calendar and charge up your smart phones, tablets, and get your streaming and apps ready.

As the folks at Sportsnet say, "It's on!"

## **TODAY'S LINKS**

<https://theathletic.com/2293292/2020/12/31/carolina-hurricanes-new-years-resolutions-2021/>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/tweetmail-number-246-roster-contract-extensions-trophies/c-319906908>

[https://www.espn.com/nhl/insider/story/\\_/id/30619753/ranking-nhl-prospect-pools-top-prospects-breakouts-pipeline-status-more-all-31-teams-2020-21](https://www.espn.com/nhl/insider/story/_/id/30619753/ranking-nhl-prospect-pools-top-prospects-breakouts-pipeline-status-more-all-31-teams-2020-21)

<https://www.canescountry.com/2020/12/30/22206888/carolina-hurricanes-don-waddell-jamieson-rees-entry-level-contract>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2020/12/30/22205706/carolina-hurricanes-top-25-under-25-8-warren-foegele>

<http://trianglesportsnet.com/carolina-hockey-network/koutroumpis-looking-forward-to-an-nhl-season-like-no-other-in-2021/>



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 31, 2020

## SportScan

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

1181350 Websites

The Athletic / Q&A with NHL's Bill Daly on schedule flexibility, vaccines and more

By Pierre LeBrun Dec 30, 2020 23

When we last heard from NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly on Dec. 23, he stated he was hopeful based on the correspondence he got from the Canadian provinces that it was all systems go for the seven Canadian NHL franchises to drop the puck.

In an interview Wednesday with The Athletic, he reiterated that Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver were all set for the season, both with the clearance to open camp at home over the next week and to play games once the season begins Jan. 13.

"Yes on both counts," Daly said over the phone. "We had subsequent confirmation after my statement to you on the 23rd. We have the thumbs up, the clubs have the thumbs up. We think we put into place very, very comprehensive protocols that will keep people as safe as we can keep them. And we're looking forward to operating in our seven Canadian markets."

So the Senators, as one of the seven non-playoff teams last summer, indeed open camp Thursday (the other Canadian teams open Jan. 3).

"Yes," Daly said.

Here's more from our interview with the NHL deputy commissioner:

On comparing the challenges and work involved in putting together the return to play last summer compared to organizing an entire season this time around:

I think they were similar in some respect. We were dealing with some of the same issues in both instances. But we were also dealing with different issues. We knew from the start in terms of the return to play last summer that we were going to utilize kind of a bubble philosophy and what that would entail if we built protocols around that model. And here, while we certainly continue to create flexibility to the extent we need it, by collapsing to more hub cities than bubbles, I think we knew fairly on here that it was our clubs' preference that if we could possibly do it, we should be creating an environment where they could be playing in their home buildings. I do think that presented different challenges for us and the Players' Association in terms of developing health and safety protocols, what that looks like; and quite frankly what a hub city model might look like and how it differs from a bubble city model. And it does differ. So, there's a whole different set of health and safety protocols, a lot of the same ground obviously is covered in both, but the fact that we were employing a different model made it a little bit different. We also were dealing with a different road ahead, right? We were able to design an end of season schedule and scenario last summer whereas this year we're dealing with how do you put on a season that has some competitive integrity, what do the playoffs look like, how do you do the playoffs and the like. Which again created some different challenges. Just time-wise, we're dealing with a 56-game schedule, roughly a five-month period, and

a normal playoffs, which is a lot different than what we were looking at last summer. So, similar issues, but also different issues.

As it stands right now, and we know things can change quickly, but it's only San Jose that stands to not open at home out of the 31 clubs?

As of currently, yes, that's correct.

I've watched a lot of NFL football this year, I know you guys have paid close attention to it and also to European hockey leagues. I do think the NFL for the most part has done a pretty good job navigating all the hurdles that were thrown at them, there were many postponements. But in the Saints-Broncos game Denver had to play without any quarterbacks. How do you feel that will be managed with the NHL as far as what a roster looks like if a team is hit hard (by COVID-19) and so on?

I do think it's an important issue and it's an important consideration and something we're going to have to deal with — hopefully not — but I assume during the course of the season we're going to have those issues to consider. And competitive integrity of the games is important to us. It is something we're going to have to think long and hard about, and work with the Players' Association on, and come up with solutions, or sometimes there are no solutions, but the best options possible given the circumstances. But you know, that's not dissimilar to a lot of the things we've talked about over the last nine months. (NHL commissioner) Gary (Bettman) likes to remain as flexible and nimble as possible, and he likes to avoid making hard and fast decisions on hypothetical scenarios that haven't occurred yet. So I think we're going to take the same approach to the issues of what happens in the event we have some people test positive and what that looks like. That strategy has paid dividends to this point and I expect it will continue to pay dividends. We're comfortable with that approach.

We've seen NFL teams shut down club facilities for a few days to avoid an outbreak, again is that a feel thing for you as to how aggressive the NHL will be in monitoring that when it comes to NHL clubs?

Yeah, I think we have some guidance in there (in the protocols), it's almost like a medical decision, it's almost like a fitness to play decision on a particular player, we are really at the end of the day deferring to the medical experts to tell us whether we are enhancing risk by pursuing a certain course of action. We've seen it over the offseason with offseason conditioning or last summer in training camp where we went through periods where some clubs shut down their facilities for a number of days and made sure the problem wasn't bigger than it looked like it could have been. And then re-opened. Will we face that situation again? I certainly would hope not, but it would be unrealistic to think it's not a distinct possibility. Again, we'll deal with those situations as they arise.

You talked about flexibility, I found it interesting that in the document that first went out to clubs, July 15 was indicated as the last possible date for the Cup Final, but in the document that went out publicly a few days later, it was July 9. Can I assume that basically it's one in the same in the sense that it really depends on how many makeup games you need to play at the end of the regular season? Is that the easiest way to put it? In terms of maybe delaying the playoffs.

Yes, the date we ultimately put in the release (July 9) is the date we're proceeding on with the schedule perfectly in place. July 15 is more an outside date and even that could probably slip a couple of days if it needed to. So we'll see where we are as we go along during the course of the season. We'll see if we have to re-schedule some games, whether



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they can be re-scheduled in the context of the existing schedule or whether they have to be re-scheduled outside the context of the existing schedule. So there's a lot of wild cards. But yeah, the two different dates certainly reflect that flexibility at the end of the season.

I asked this question to (NHLPA head) Don Fehr last week, about vaccination and whenever it became available to the general public and therefore the players, how does the league feel about players getting vaccinated as far as the education of it? Keeping in mind that you can't force it, how important will it be when it's available to emphasize it with players?

My expectation would be at this time, particularly, would be advocating for wide-spread vaccination throughout our sport. Provided nothing happens between now and then that would indicate otherwise, I think it's kind of the safest course. ... Having said that, it's not something we felt like was necessarily timely to deal with in the course of our return to play scenario, because I don't think we'll be fortunate enough to have that issue in the short-term, but I think both we and the Players' Association feel like we're aligned in wanting to utilize our public platform to advocate for best practices, and hygiene, and taking care of yourself, and washing your hands, and using your masks and ultimately perhaps as well utilizing vaccine. I think we're aligned with the other sports leagues in the United States and will probably be pursuing initiatives jointly with the other professional sports leagues here, we've been approached already about that possibility. And we're certainly interested in doing that. But I think we'll be doing that separately in Canada as well. I think it's important that we do have a platform, we do have a voice, it has the ability to be louder than other voices and if we can use that voice in a positive way, for the good, for public health and safety, we should do it. I think we and the Players' Association are both aligned on that.

Well, and between the world getting vaccinated over the next year and the NHL ending the Cup Final by mid-July, I know the commissioner was quoted in one of the releases talking about the importance of getting back on a normal cycle come the fall for the 2021-22 season?

Yes, for sure. We're looking forward to this season, I think it'll be unique and exciting. I think a lot of the elements of the divisional alignment and the schedule and how it works, are going to be fun. So looking forward to the drop of the puck, for sure.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.31.2020

1181351 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Even at 43, there's no surprise Zdeno Chara has more to give

Chris Johnston@reporterchris December 30, 2020, 7:39 PM

Out of the grey winter's sky fell a bomb.

"Zdeno Chara has signed with the Washington Capitals."

For real?

So unique are the man's talents, so indistinguishable was he from the bedrock of the Boston Bruins, that even in this age of salary caps and free-flowing player movement it seemed slightly implausible.

That's not logical thinking, of course, not at the precipice of a season where Joe Thornton is a Maple Leaf, Mikko Koivu is a Blue Jacket and Alex Pietrangolo is a Golden Knight. Not in a time where Henrik Lundqvist would have been standing in the Capitals crease absent the shocking discovery of an ailment that requires open-heart surgery.

But how you felt when you first heard Wednesday afternoon's Chara news says something about the towering defenceman and his immense standing in Boston.

Incredibly, he played parts of eight NHL seasons in Long Island and Ottawa before even arriving in Boston as a free agent in July 2006. The Senators chose to keep Wade Redden over Chara that summer and almost immediately came to regret it.

There has never been a player quite like 'Big Z' in the history of the league.

So large at six-foot-nine, 250 pounds, that he has special dispensation to carry a stick a few inches longer than the NHL-mandated maximum and so unmatched in the ways he can use it.

In his peak years, Chara was as feared as any of his peers and rarely ever had to throw a punch. He produced points, killed penalties and was a matchup nightmare for anyone trying to come down the left side of the ice. He gained a reputation as being a fierce competitor in opposing dressing rooms and played a massive role in changing the culture inside the home one at TD Garden.

Chara was the consummate Bruin for 14 seasons, wearing the captain's 'C' for each of the 1,173 regular-season and playoff games he appeared in for the organization. That included the Stanley Cup victory in 2011 and two other trips to the final, the most recent of which in 2019 featured a spine-tingling standing ovation before Game 5 when Chara played despite suffering a broken jaw.

No wonder his Instagram sendoff was so heartfelt and included the line "I will always be a Bruin. I will always love Boston."

No wonder so many former teammates rushed to fill their own feeds with tributes. Tom Brady, who left New England for Tampa this season, even commented on Chara's post by saying "Best of luck to you Zee" and tagged it with a couple '100' and 'heart' emojis.

Fourteen years is a long time in life. It's an eternity in pro sports.

As for why business ultimately forced a separation that few saw coming, well, that's a story we've seen play out time and again. The summer's return-to-play was not particularly kind to Chara's game and the organization felt it was time for him to step aside and make way for others behind him. But even at age 43, Chara did not share that view.

There doesn't seem to be any bad feelings about the way things went down -- Chara said he respected the Bruins' decision -- but it's worth noting that he's ended up with a rival in the realigned East Division and the teams are scheduled to meet eight times in the next four months.

Chara's arrival in Washington set off a wave of excitement. The Capitals have a new coach in Peter Laviolette, plus all the familiar offensive weapons, and are trying to win another championship before their window of contention slams shut. It's the ideal destination for someone in Chara's skates.

Big Zee, welcome to D.C.! My guest bedroom is available#ALLCAPS <https://t.co/ypN2TLyJ9d>

— Peter Bondra (@PeterBondra12) December 30, 2020

And it's telling that more than half of the teams in the league inquired about his services while he remained unsigned deep into December. Chara is joining the Capitals on a contract paying him \$795,000 and even if there are questions about his foot speed and doubts about how many minutes he can handle it's difficult to imagine him not delivering excess value.

We're talking about a fitness fanatic famous for biking Tour de France stages and climbing Mount Kilimanjaro during the off-season. A player who has been dragging teammates into the battle for more than two decades and skated with a broken jaw 18 months ago.



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A guy who very easily could have done the safe thing and retired when he found out the Bruins were moving in another direction and instead chose to play on.

Viewed in totality, the surprise wasn't so much that Chara is coming back for another NHL season. It's that the Bruins are choosing to let him finish a Hall of Fame career somewhere else.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.31.2020

1181352 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 3 bold Edmonton Oilers predictions for 2021

Mark Spector@sportsnetspec December 30, 2020, 1:46 PM

EDMONTON — Bold moves.

Oh boy, you've heard about those before in Oil Country.

That old Craig MacTavish chestnut — "We have to do some bold things" — boomeranged pretty hard when the Oilers failed to make the playoffs in either of his seasons as the team's GM. But the following bold predictions, well, there is no way they could fall as flat as that, right?

We bring you three bold predictions, Edmonton Oilers edition:

1. Neither Connor McDavid nor Leon Draisaitl will win the Art Ross

This is the season that McDavid and Draisaitl switch focus a bit.

Last season, Draisaitl won the Art Ross Trophy (and the Hart), while McDavid finished second in league scoring. The year before, McDavid was second, Draisaitl fourth. The two seasons before that McDavid won the Art Ross each time.

But after winning three of the past four scoring titles, and having one official playoff appearance to show for it, we sense a change is in the wind when it comes to priorities among the Oilers leadership group.

"From a team standpoint we've always talked about keeping goals out of our own net. This year ... it is of the utmost importance that we do it right off the bat. That's a goal of mine," defenceman Darnell Nurse told us earlier this month.

Will that be everyone's goal? Or just his?

After that four-game, embarrassing loss to Chicago in the Qualifying Round, it sounds like it will be everyone's goal.

"(I can't) make a definitive answer for each and every person," Nurse said. "But I do think that the taste was bad enough in everyone's mouth that it will definitely be a goal of everyone's."

Look, McDavid and Draisaitl could preside over a substantial fall in goals allowed by Edmonton and still vie for the Art Ross Trophy. That's how elite they are as offensive players. But that's why this is a bold prediction.

The two Oilers offensive leaders will still be among the top five NHL scorers, but will rise to a new challenge of leading a better defensive team. Last season, Draisaitl and McDavid finished a combined minus-13. This season, that changes.

2. Ken Holland will acquire a goalie

Holland telegraphed his opinion of his goaltending tandem when he went hard after Jacob Markstrom at the trade deadline, only to watch the big Swede choose Calgary in free agency. Holland's Plan B — Tyson Barrie, Kyle Turris, Dominik Kahun — looks like a pretty strong fallback position, but what those acquisitions did not do is help a goaltending tandem that the GM himself was not satisfied with.

Holland will watch his team for a couple of months, then find a fix.

Mikko Koskinen is a decent netminder who had a .917 save percentage last season. But his M.O. is that he can only be as good as he was last season if he plays roughly half the games. With two years left at \$4.5 million per, Koskinen isn't going anywhere.

Mike Smith turns 39 in March, and is on a one-year deal with a base salary of \$1.5 million. If there is an upgrade to be found, it will be here.

Our bold prediction: Before the trade deadline, Holland moves Smith and a sweetener for a goalie who will become the No. 1 for a playoff run.

3. In round 2, Smith fights in his own weight class

Last season, Smith coaxed a game Cam Talbot out to centre ice at the Saddledome for the most intriguing scrap of the NHL season. That fight was a metaphor for the fact that the Battle of Alberta had returned in earnest, and if there is one thing for a hockey fan to really hate about this pandemic it's that it robbed us of what was destined to be a first-round meeting between Edmonton and Calgary — their first playoff matchup in 30 years.

But that fight was also a mismatch, with Smith (six-foot-five, 220 pounds) winning a decisive decision over the six-foot-three, 196-pound Talbot.

This season, the Flames' new gardien is six-foot-six, 206-pound Jacob Markstrom, and he is every bit as fiery as Smith. We predict that after some Matthew Tkachuk/Zack Kassian shenanigans, Markstrom will seek revenge on behalf of Flames crease jockeys, dropping the mitts with Smith during one of the many meetings between the two Alberta teams this season.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.31.2020

1181353 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Senators Training Camp Preview: Can Stuetzle make seamless transition to NHL?

Wayne Scanlan December 30, 2020, 12:10 PM

At a time when they are usually taking stock of their mid-season performance, the Ottawa Senators will be heading to training camp on New Year's Eve day.

This will be the first official function of the team since it played its last game — way back on March 11, 2020.

A lot has changed since that time. Veterans have left and veterans have been acquired by trade and via free agency.

Some things haven't changed. Namely, the same management group and coaching staff will be in place, looking for the next big thing to come out of their rebuild.

A large group of prospects will continue to push for jobs — and the fruits of the 2020 draft, where the Senators selected six players in the first two rounds, will be felt for years to come. However, wanting to protect his prospects during an abbreviated season, GM Pierre Dorion has brought in veterans at all positions.

Cap space: \$12,502,501

General manager: Pierre Dorion

Head coach: D.J. Smith

Assistants: Jack Capuano (associate coach), Davis Payne, Bob Jones, Pierre Groulx (goalie coach), Mike King (video)



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Unsigned players: the Senators have no players left to sign

Here is a look at the three big questions facing the Senators as they prepare to open camp.

31 Thoughts: The Podcast

Jeff Marek and Elliotte 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.

Is Stuetzle ready for primetime?

For a hard-working, high-end prospect, Tim Stuetzle is as easy-going as they come. Yet, this is not an easy, or ordinary, transition into the NHL. Even his contract-signing with Ottawa was virtual, from the world juniors tournament in Edmonton.

Due to the pandemic, Stuetzle wasn't able to take part in the usual developmental camp that would have helped him to get comfortable in the organization, meet his peers and settle in around the Canadian Tire Centre. Instead, he was drafted in a virtual event in October, third overall, and then rejoined his Mannheim Eagles team in Germany, where the C/LW promptly broke his hand in a flukey training camp collision. The 18-year-old (19 in January), shrugged that off, and jumped on a plane for Edmonton to be part of the 2021 World Junior Championship, only to have nine players on his German team test positive for COVID-19.

Despite those setbacks, Stuetzle has performed with aplomb at the world juniors, carrying his team on his broad shoulders, even though the Germans are at a massive competitive disadvantage. Stuetzle has been physical (no injury concern so far), assertive with the puck and dominant against his peer group, using his speed and size to advantage.

He says he can't wait to arrive in Ottawa, and fans here can't wait to see him, even if it can't be live at the rink for a while.

After a week of quarantine, which will no doubt include training, Stuetzle will quickly transition to the Senators' camp. After all of this, the kid is expected to make the team and be a productive player. It's a lot to ask. But Stuetzle seems up for the challenge, and after the depth additions Ottawa made at forward recently, including Derek Stepan and Cedric Paquette, he will have a lot of veteran support. Expect Stuetzle to start the season at left wing, perhaps with Stepan as his centre.

Can the defence hold up?

Let's not tar this group with the same brush that painted those awful goals-against numbers from the past three seasons. Not yet. There have been a lot of changes over that time. Gone from last year alone are Dylan DeMelo, Mark Borowiecki and Ron Hainsey. In their place are the likes of Erik Gudbranson, Josh Brown and now Braydon Coburn.

How the pairings shakeout will be sorted out in camp, but Christian Wolanin, who missed most of last season with a shoulder injury, and Erik Brannstrom, 21, who had a good year in Belleville, will be given serious looks. Franchise defenceman Thomas Chabot plus Mike Reilly and Nikita Zaitsev are back.

The recent addition of Coburn means the Senators have six NHL veterans on the blueline, with Brannstrom, Wolanin and Artem Zub trying to break through. It sets up well to have younger players, or a struggling vet, on the AHL/taxi squad ready to jump in as needed.

While Matt Murray, 26, should be an upgrade in goal from 39-year-old mainstay Craig Anderson, Murray will need some help from his blue line if Ottawa is going to improve on its 3.4 goals per game allowed last season, second-worst in the NHL. This new corps is going to have to find chemistry in a hurry. How the defence meshes with the man in the mesh will go a long way to dictating whether or not the Senators can surprise some people in the Great White North Division.

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Who backs up Murray? Plus, the backup needs a backup

Along with just about everything else, the goaltending rotation has changed for 2021. As a defence against the compressed schedule, plus insurance against the coronavirus and travel restrictions, teams will carry three goaltenders. What will that mean for the Senators? Sorting it out will be a major camp exercise.

The first part is easy. Murray will play the bulk of the games. On paper, at least, Marcus Hogberg will back him up. Anders Nilsson, who had been dealing with post-concussion syndrome, just got dealt to Tampa and will be on the Lightning's LTIR.

With 11 back-to-back games on their schedule, the second-most in the North Division, the Senators will likely use two goalies to give Murray a break and to keep each netminder sharp. Who knows if the AHL will start on time in early February. Until then, Ottawa is the best place for veteran goalies. Vying for a spot in the three-man system will be Joey Daccord and Filip Gustavsson — the AHL Belleville tandem last season. The Senators thought enough of Daccord to sign him a three-year contract, the third year of which is one-way (2022-23). That works in his favour.

What might help Gustavsson is the fact he had been playing, and playing well, in Europe prior to leaving in early December for Ottawa to quarantine before the Senators' camp. With Sodertalje SK of the SHL, Gustavsson had a record of 11-7-0 with a 2.30 goals-against and .919 save percentage.

The goalie troika could play out any number of ways, but the advantage goes to the backup who can show well early, and make the most of his practice and camp time to be ready when called upon. With 56 regular season games in 113 days, there is no downtime. No time to regroup.

Head coach D.J. Smith and goalie coach Pierre Groulx are going to look to the backups that have the confidence of the coaching staff and players.

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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs Training Camp Preview: Can Robertson make the cut?

Luke Fox@lukefoxjokeboxDecember 30, 2020, 10:16 AM

An all-Canadian North Division in which they should slot in as the house favourites.

A big-budget, superstar-loaded squad that has had four cracks at the post-season and come up empty every time.

And an overhauled blueline and leadership corps that makes for the best, deepest and most balanced Toronto Maple Leafs roster — on paper, that is — of this century.

When training camp opens in January, the intrigue around this Cup-dreaming group will be as heavy as the collective disappointment and hope they'll carry into this sprint of a 2020-21 campaign.

"The pressure is truly a privilege. When there's pressure, that means there's great opportunity. And you're a part of something that people care about," head coach Sheldon Keefe said.

"It's a fresh start with a fresh training camp. Fresh team, if you will, because there are significant changes and a chance to really get to work with what I'd like our team to be about — to win."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Current salary cap space: \$0

GM: Kyle Dubas

Head coach: Sheldon Keefe

Assistant coaches: Dave Hakstol, Manny Malhotra, Paul MacLean

Unsigned players: None

1. How good does Joe Thornton and the new guys look? And where the heck will they all fit?

Freeing salary in the Kasperii Kapanen and Andreas Johnsson trades, Dubas treated free agency like Cyber Monday, bargain-hunting with strategic vengeance.

The list of new Maple Leafs arriving at training camp under the belief they can secure an opening-night spot is as long as it is intriguing: Wayne Simmonds, Joe Thornton, Jimmy Vesey, Travis Boyd, Alexander Barabanov, Joey Anderson, T.J. Brodie, Zach Bogosian, Mikko Lehtonen, Aaron Dell... did we forget anyone?

Toss in the hearty group of players already fighting at the fringes — Nicholas Robertson, Pierre Engvall, Egor Korshkov, Nic Petan, Kenny Agostino, Adam Brooks, Denis Malgin, Rasmus Sandin, Travis Dermott, Timothy Liljegren — and Toronto will be better equipped than most to fill their expanded taxi squad for the shortened season.

Dubas overloaded the bottom half of Keefe's lineup options with the purpose of ratcheting up internal competition and making everyone feel a little less comfortable. Urgency is the word of the day.

With so many potential combinations, Keefe's early line combinations will be fascinating. As will the conditioning of last-chance leaders like Thornton and Simmonds, both re-energized but coming off subpar performances.

Does Thornton simply seize Alexander Kerfoot's spot as third-line centre? Does his elite playmaking earn him some reps in the top-six, perhaps on the left flank? Or does the oldest forward in a speedy league tumble to the fourth line?

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2. Can Nick Robertson make the cut?

The day miracle baby Robertson entered the world, Boston Bruins star Thornton was already heading into his fifth NHL training camp.

Now the players will be showing up for the same audition, one striving to prove he's got enough, the other that he's not lost too much.

The much-hyped Robertson made his NHL debut in the bubble playoffs — with literally no fanfare but metaphorically tons of it — and (fun fact) scored the team's last 5-on-5 goal.

Eager to stake his minutes amongst a crowded forward group that has added six new bodies with more NHL experience than he, Robertson remained in Toronto over the off-season to train four times per week at Ford Performance Centre.

"Quick, elusive, taking it to the net, not afraid to shoot it," Mitch Marner said of the pre-camp game of Robertson. "He hasn't gone back home since the season ended. He stayed here in Canada so he wouldn't have to quarantine when he came back. As soon as the rink opened back up, I believe he was the first guy here, working on showing that he wants to be here, which is amazing."

If the rookie's internal drive and the fact he has nothing left to prove at the OHL level (55 goals in 48 games, thank you) give him an edge, his waiver-exempt status on a cap-crunched roster does not.

The 19-year-old looks every bit the steal of the 2019 draft's second round, and it would be foolish to discount such a motivated kid outright, but Robertson will have to win his way into the opening night lineup. Otherwise, he'll be a helluva taxi squad option.

Remaining Time -2:21

Robertson doing everything possible to make Maple Leafs on opening night

3. What tweaks get made to the special teams?

Sixteen months have passed and much has changed since the Leafs last opened a regular-season training camp. Significant roster tweaks from the net on out, a new head coach and three new assistant coaches.

Surely all that jostling of personnel will result in some fresh 5-on-4 and 4-on-5 strategies.

For three seasons running, Toronto's penalty killing has gotten worse, finishing a disappointing 21st overall (77.7 per cent) in 2019-20.

Safe to say, bruised defenceman Bogosian will play a prominent role in helping to reverse this trend. But who else? Does Vesey create extra value for himself here? Does Engvall use the PK as his path into the lineup? Do the Maple Leafs realize the value of using a centreman on the top penalty killing unit?

As for the Leafs' vaunted \$45-million top power-play unit, we're curious to see how aggressively Malhotra — taking over for Paul McFarland — makes his stamp during his first foray as a bench coach.

KHL Defenceman of the Year Lehtonen was imported, in part, to quarterback the second unit. But how does Toronto maximize Thornton's vision and Simmonds' net presence here? Do the Fab 5 get broken up for different looks? Is there room for Robertson to get his wicked shot off here?

Stay tuned.

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TSN.CA / Inside Byfield's breakthrough and why the best is yet to come

By Mark Masters

TSN Hockey Reporter Mark Masters reports on the World Junior Hockey Championship. Team Canada practised at the Downtown Community Arena inside the Edmonton bubble on Wednesday.

Quinton Byfield posted just two assists in his first nine games at the World Juniors. On Tuesday, the Sudbury Wolves centre exploded for six points, including two goals, as Canada blanked Switzerland 10-0.

"We're all real happy to see him have a night like that," said alternate captain Dylan Cozens. "We needed him to step up and he did. I think that's just the start for him and he'll keep getting better from here on out. He will keep improving and take his game to the next level. We know that's just a glimpse of what he can do."

Those words were enough to make the big man blush.

"That's a lot to ask, but I'm definitely feeling good about my game now and got the monkey off my back and there's a lot more to come," Byfield vowed.

Byfield threw the metaphorical monkey off his back at the bench after scoring his first goal against the Swiss.



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"When either Connor McMichael or I score we always give a smile to each other and I think he said something about the monkey and I threw it off," Byfield said. "Finally."

In the wake of the game, Byfield described the breakthrough as a relief. Last year, he started in a top-six role in Ostrava and finished as the 13th forward. This year, he admittedly started slow at the selection camp in mid-November while adjusting to the 10-plus pounds of muscle he put on during the pandemic pause.

Head coach Andre Tourigny pushed him to be better early on, but also applauded the Newmarket, Ont., native for being coachable and improving his puck management.

"He's a more mature man than last year," said Tourigny, an assistant coach a year ago. "He's easier to coach. When I say, 'Easier to coach,' I mean it's easier for him to make adjustments. Last year, at 17-years-old, at some point it can be a tough situation, but this year, even though he's the youngest guy on the team, he's real easy to coach."

Byfield was the second overall pick by the Los Angeles Kings in October's National Hockey League draft and has a dynamic blend of size, speed and soft hands. But that combination also comes with added pressure to produce.

"Definitely wears on you a little bit, but not too much," he said. "I knew it was going to come. I was playing the right way and playing how they wanted us to play. I was still feeling good about my game."

'He was a dominant force': Byfield puts on a show with six-point night

After recording six points in Canada's blowout win against Switzerland, Bob McKenzie and Craig Button join James Duthie to discuss Quinton Byfield's dazzling breakout performance at the World Juniors, and explain how Canada was able to fix its power play against the Swiss.

Byfield sat down with TSN on Wednesday to go over all six of his points and share some insight on his game.

First point - Primary assist on an even-strength goal by Phil Tomasino

"I miss a check there, which isn't good (smile), but try and get on the back-check and [Jack] Quinn strips a guy and I hear Tommy calling for it coming from the bench and I know he's hot so I threw him the puck."

On the broadcast, TSN analyst Ray Ferraro applauded the way Byfield delivered the puck into Tomasino's wheelhouse.

"I knew he was coming from the bench on a little bit of a weird angle so I made not too hard of a pass and gave him the opportunity to shoot without stick handling. He didn't have to dust it off and could get a quick release off and it fooled the goalie."

Even though he missed the check at the start of the sequence, Byfield's ability to be a disruptor on the forecheck has made him an even more dangerous player.

"It's gotten a lot better. Instead of just reaching for the stick and doing stick lifts to grab the puck I'm being more physical and that creates more turnovers and allows the second guy to come in and support the puck."

Quinton Byfield to Phillip Tomasino. 1-0 Canada

@TSN\_Sports pic.twitter.com/plld8suGHV

— /Cam Robinson/ (@Hockey\_Robinson) December 29, 2020

Second point - Secondary assist on an even-strength goal by Jakob Pelletier

"I saw the defender coming at me, but then he kind of backed up and wasn't coming fully at me. I looked at his skates and saw he was turning the other way and I knew I had the middle to cut in and I saw [Connor] Zary coming off the bench and him and Pelts were going to the net pretty hard and I think it was just the right play to give them the puck and the rest happened from there."

#Flames prospect Jakob Pelletier buries the rebound after a nifty play by #GoKingsGo Quinton Byfield

3-0 CA

@TSN\_Sports pic.twitter.com/k2hvePSGaN

— WJC BUBBLE (@WJCBubble) December 30, 2020

Third point - Primary assist on power-play goal by Ryan Suzuki

"Me and Zukes were working them low for a little bit and then really opening them up. He put a nice shot down low and I tried to put in the rebound and tried kicking it to myself, but kind of messed up and Zukes was in the right spot and buried it nicely."

What's the key to being a good net-front guy on the power play?

"Being able to get in the goalie's eyes and goalie's presence is definitely huge and then puck recoveries when the flank is shooting and the D is shooting and getting your stick on as much as you can and always being an option and being open for a tip or shot pass. There's a lot to do down there."

Ryan Suzuki (CAR) grabs his second of the tournament. That's assist #3 for Byfield on the day

@TSN\_Sports pic.twitter.com/5ULedVd2ky

— /Cam Robinson/ (@Hockey\_Robinson) December 30, 2020

Fourth point - Power-play goal off a Jamie Drysdale point shot

"It was a really good shot by Drysie. He noticed I was kind of alone in front and he put a perfect shot there and I was lucky to get my stick on it. I was a little shocked, almost, you know, because I haven't scored in a while. I think that was my first goal since February so you're still super excited, but you have to respect your opponent and respect the score and tried to keep it as humble as I could there."

Quinton Byfield (@LAKings) is having himself a game, with the deflection goal to make it 6-0.

Jamie Drysdale (@AnaheimDucks) and Ryan Suzuki (@Canes) with the assists.

@TSN\_Sports #WorldJuniors pic.twitter.com/V57WOb05TC

— EP Rinkside (@EPRinkside) December 30, 2020

Fifth point - Even-strength goal off a pass from Quinn

"Me and Quinner were a little late on the back check there. We were early on the forecheck, but trying to get on the back check. Pelletier makes a good play there and gets the puck up to Quinner. Then a great pass by Quinner, a little saucer pass over the stick. I was trying to go far side along the ice and it worked out going far side, but not along the ice."

Quinton Byfield (@LAKings) gets his fifth point of the game with this goal.

Assists to Jakob Pelletier (@NHLFlames) and Jack Quinn (@BuffaloSabres).

@TSN\_Sports #WorldJuniors pic.twitter.com/unyXUZ2zaz

— EP Rinkside (@EPRinkside) December 30, 2020

Sixth point - Primary assist on even-strength goal by Pelletier

"It started off with a won draw and then Pelts makes a good play along the wall on the far side with the D pinching down and then I drive the net there. Quinner doesn't get a shot off but creates a jam in the corner and we win the battle there and Pelts throws it to the net and I stripped it off the Swiss guy and got the puck to Pelts and I knew he was going to bury that one."

Jakob Pelletier (@NHLFlames) gets his second goal of the game.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Quinton Byfield (@LAKings) gets his sixth point of the night with the assist.

(📷: @TSN\_Sports) #WorldJuniors pic.twitter.com/SoWLEucV1S

— EP Rinkside (@EPRinkside) December 30, 2020

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Byfield is actually the second Canadian player to notch a six-point night at this year's World Juniors. Cozens accomplished the feat with three goals and three assists in the opener against Germany. The Lethbridge centre was asked where he improved the most during the lengthy off-season.

"Moving the puck up the ice," the Buffalo Sabres' first rounder said, "just skating with it and having the confidence on zone entries and creating offence in the zone, creating offence from nothing."

How do you create offence from nothing?

"Sometimes it's just beating a guy, you know, spinning off him in the O-zone and creating a lane to the net or a passing lane," Cozens said. "That's the biggest thing is just kind of beating a guy one-on-one and taking it to the net."

Cozens had nine points in seven games last year in his first World Juniors and is even more confident this time around.

"I do feel stronger and faster and bigger in every aspect of my game," he said. "I'm happy with a lot of the work I've put in this off-season and it's starting to pay off."

Cozens has exchanged texts with Sabres forward Sam Reinhart, a World Junior gold medallist in 2015, throughout the tournament.

"When I got to [Sabres] camp, you know, he was a great leader for me right away and kind of took me under his wing," Cozens said. "I got to meet him at the draft and he's a guy I kept in touch with a bit and he's been with Team Canada at the World Juniors and knows what it's like."

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.

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After three games at World Juniors and four games as a group overall, Tourigny feels Team Canada is starting to get in a groove.

"We have more chemistry," the coach observed. "We have less hesitation in our game. We have more structure. We have more confidence. We know more who we are. We're a hard forechecking team who has the ability to counterattack really quickly with a quick strike. We have big bodies who can get on the forecheck and create a lot of turnovers. Our D skates really well and can kill plays in the neutral zone. So, we know better who we are than a week ago."

What's the identity of this year's Team Canada?

"We're very relentless," said defenceman Kaiden Guhle. "We're big. We're fast. Our forecheck is very tough to play against. We're very resilient, very relentless. We're a big, fast team that makes it tough for the other team and we're trying to build on that every game."

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Maple Leafs prospects Mikko Kokkonen, Roni Hirvonen and Topi Niemela spoke with TSN about the improvements they've made this season, the direction they've received from Toronto's player development staff and how Team Finland matches up against Canada.

The following is a transcript of the interview.

TSN: Where do you feel your game has improved the most this season?

Hirvonen, a forward with Assat: "I've improved my all-around game and my skating. I've gotten more scoring chances this season because I have more speed in my game and that's the biggest thing."

Niemela, a defenceman with Kärpät: "I have improved my defensive game. I've watched videos and improved also my shot."

Kokkonen, a defenceman with Jukurit: "I have improved my defensive game and the most important thing that I have to improve is my offensive game right now."

TSN: How are you working on that?

Kokkonen: "I have watched lots of videos with [director of player development] Stéphane Robidas and our own staff and I have learned so much."

TSN: What's been the message from the Leafs to you this season?

Hirvonen: "We talk about small things in my game like how to get more open in the offensive zone and how to get more pucks."

Niemela: "I have to get stronger. I have to play faster and play defence more."

Kokkonen: "I have to be better in the offensive zone and, of course, my skating has to be better if I want to play in the NHL. I have worked a lot on that so I'm on my way."

TSN: How do you think Finland matches up against Canada?

Kokkonen: "We have a really good team right now. We are, like, really all-around team. We have offensive guys and guys to PK and we can play every situation really good."

Hirvonen: "We are a good all-around team with good defensive players and everyone has played in the Liiga one or two years so we're really good and we'll minimize their scoring chances and score a few goals and I think that way we can win."

Niemela: "They have a good team, but we have also. It'll be a tough game but I think we're going to beat them."

Finnish Leafs prospects on improving their game and facing Canada

Maple Leafs prospects Mikko Kokkonen, Roni Hirvonen and Topi Niemela spoke with TSN about the improvements they've made this season, the message they've received from Toronto's player development department and how Team Finland matches up against Canada ahead of their New Year's Eve showdown at the World Juniors.

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In the weeks leading up to selection camp, goalie coach Jason LaBarbera sent video clips of Carter Hart, Mikey DiPietro and Joel Hofer playing at the World Juniors to the group of five netminders looking to secure Canada's starting job.

"Devon Levi wanted more," said LaBarbera. "He wanted full games. He wanted the full gold-medal game from last year. He's trying to get better and learn every day."

That approach allowed Levi to stand out immediately at the camp even though he was stuck in a cohort quarantine with two other NCAA players during the first week and didn't play a game until the third of four intra-squad scrimmages.

"I really liked where he was at and he's just done nothing but trend in the right direction," LaBarbera said. "I like his demeanour and how he approaches things."

LaBarbera admits that it's "pretty wild" that a kid who hasn't played any major junior or NCAA games has won Canada's No. 1 job at the World Juniors. The Northeastern University freshman also wasn't invited to Canada's summer virtual camp.



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So, what separated him from the pack?

"His edge work is elite," said LaBarbera. "When you watch him in games, practice, goalie drills, his ability to hold his edges and be able to move but also be able to change directions and grab his edges and get where he needs to go is elite. It's a big reason why Florida drafted him and a big reason why he's played at a high level here."

There's still areas that need to improve. A good chunk of Wednesday's practice, for example, was focused on puck handling.

"Just getting on the same page with our D," said LaBarbera. "We haven't had a lot of practice time to work on those things. In a normal season you're on the same page and the calls are dialed in and the sharpness of that stuff. You want to make sure everyone is on the same page. The more you can be clean with those things the easier it is for everybody."

LaBarbera on Levi: 'He's done nothing but trend in the right direction'

Team Canada's goaltending coach Jason LaBarbera has nothing but high praises for the 19-year-old goalie from Quebec. LaBarbera also tells Mark Masters how Devon Levi is just the third goalie in the last 40 years of Canadian junior teams to not come from one of the country's three major junior leagues.

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Lines at Canada's practice on Wednesday:

Forwards

Holloway - McMichael - Cozens

Perfetti - Newhook - Krebs

Quinn- Byfield - Pelletier

Mercer - Suzuki - Tomasino

Zary

Defencemen

Byram - Drysdale

Harley - Schneider

Guhle - Barron

Korczak (R) - Spence

Goaltenders

Levi

Garand

Gauthier

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TSN.CA / Former World Juniors captain Dube cheering on Canada from Calgary

By Salim Valji

Two years after winning gold as Team Canada's captain at the 2018 World Juniors in Buffalo, Calgary Flames forward Dillon Dube is now one of the team's biggest fans as he gets ready to embark on his third National Hockey League season.

The 22-year-old -- along with his Flames teammates - have been following closely as Canada has gotten off to a perfect start inside the Edmonton bubble.-

"I've watched all the games," he said in an interview with TSN on Wednesday.

"It's a little different watching this year. They're dominant. The games are a little lopsided right now."

The 2017 Canadian World Junior squad, led by Thomas Chabot and Mathew Barzal, lost the gold-medal game to the United States in a heartbreaking 5-4 shootout. Dube contributed three assists in seven games. The following year, Dube had five points in seven games as he captained Canada to a 3-1 victory over Sweden to win the country's 17th gold medal.

"At the tournament, you felt like you were in your own little world," he said.

"It didn't really feel like the World Juniors. You kind of block out all the attention. In the moment, it was a pretty cool experience. Now, it's that thing that we gather around the TV with the family during the holidays and are able to watch and be proud to be Canadian. It's pretty special to be a part of it and now to be a fan of it."

Two members of this year's Team Canada, Jakob Pelletier and Connor Zary, are recent Flames' first-round draft picks and could be Dube's NHL teammates in the coming years. Pelletier scored twice and Zary had an assist in Canada's 10-0 victory over Switzerland on Tuesday. The two have combined for five points in six games thus far.

"To see them succeed at this and do really well and playing together is pretty cool for Flames fans to see," Dube said. "To have two guys on the team is pretty special and it means a lot. I'm rooting for them...I know everyone on our team is really rooting for them to do well and so far, they've been playing great together. They've been playing the right way. It's exciting to watch them develop."

With a Flames roster that includes defenceman Juuso Valimaki, who captained Finland at the 2018 World Juniors, Dube hinted that there could be more than just bragging rights on the line come Thursday's New Year's Eve tilt when the two countries face each other.

"Really excited for that matchup," Dube said.

"We have a couple of bets on that with the Finns that we got here right now, so I'm really rooting for them. I think this test will really see what they're made of and I think they're ready for it."

As a seasoned veteran of 14 World Juniors games with two medals, Dube had some simple advice for the players on Team Canada in their quest for back-to-back golds.

"I think just stay in the moment," he said.

"You can't get too high or low...stay even-grounded. It's going to be a lot of emotion. There's so much riding on it. I think Canada always feels a ton of pressure throughout it. So I think if they can just come together and take that on themselves, I think they'll be fine."

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