



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Carolina Hurricanes announce roster, schedule for training camp

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday announced their preseason training camp schedule and roster, and initially will have 34 skaters and four goalies in camp.

The team will conduct physicals and hold a team meeting on Sunday, then will hold the first on-ice practices on Monday at the Wake Competition Center facility in Morrisville.

Forward Seth Jarvis, the Canes' first-round pick in the 2020 NHL Draft, will be among those at the camp. Jarvis recently signed his entry-level contract with the Hurricanes, as did forward Jamieson Rees, who also is on the camp roster.

Because of COVID-19 protocols, the practices will not be open to the public.

The Canes open the season Jan. 14 against the Detroit Red Wings.

Canes season starts soon, but fans have fewer ways to watch. Here are the options.

By Brooke Cain and Alex Andrejev

When the Carolina Hurricanes NHL season starts on Jan. 14, local hockey fans will have fewer ways to watch the games.

Fox Regional Sports Networks, which include Fox Sports South and Fox Sports Carolinas, have long broadcast the Hurricanes' NHL games, as well as the Charlotte Hornets' NBA games and Atlanta Braves' MLB games on Fox Sports Southeast.

But Fox RSNs are no longer available on popular streaming services like Sling, Hulu Live TV, YouTube TV and FuboTV, because of lapsed contracts with Sinclair Broadcast Group, which acquired 21 Fox RSNs from Disney in 2019.

With the COVID-19 pandemic keeping fans out of the stands for home games, that leaves fans with only one streaming option, or going back to cable or satellite.

So if you're a cord-cutter intent on sticking to streaming, AT&T TV NOW is currently your only option.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FOX RSNs?

YouTube TV and Sinclair argued over their contract for most of 2020, making the breakup official in late summer.

In October, negotiations broke down with Hulu Live TV, meaning Fox RSNs were off of the two largest streaming services in the country. Smaller streaming services Sling and FuboTV also ended contracts with Sinclair in 2020.

It's always possible that Sinclair and the streaming services will work things out, but in early December, Sinclair also announced it intends to rebrand its Fox RSNs under the Bally name (Bally, as in Bally Casinos), with the goal of offering a "direct-to-consumer" product. Of course, that hasn't happened yet, and no timetable for that has been announced.

(Incidentally, Sinclair reported an estimated \$4.2 billion impairment loss during the third quarter of 2020, attributing the loss in part to YouTube TV and Hulu Live TV dropping the Fox RSNs.)

HOW TO WATCH FOX SPORTS SOUTH, FOX SPORTS CAROLINAS

In the meantime, local fans will have to make some decisions about what they're willing to do to watch Hurricanes, Hornets and Braves games.

The current options are Spectrum on cable, AT&T TV (a cable-internet hybrid), AT&T TV NOW streaming service or DirecTV satellite.

Fans can also check which providers carry their local Fox RSN by ZIP code here.

Below are more details about each available option.

WATCH FOX REGIONAL SPORTS NETWORKS ON CABLE

- If you don't mind subscribing to traditional cable, you can get the Fox RSNs on Spectrum, which is owned by Charter. Prices vary depending on where you live, almost down to your ZIP code, and depending on which package you choose. No contract is required.

- There's also AT&T TV, which is an internet-connected TV service that takes the place of U-Verse. This is a sort of hybrid of cable and streaming — it doesn't require a fiber cable hookup, but it does require a special Google Android-powered box that connects to broadband internet. AT&T TV requires a two-year contract.

WATCH FOX REGIONAL SPORTS NETWORKS ON SATELLITE

DirecTV satellite service, owned by AT&T, still has the Fox RSNs. Dish Network does not.

Again, with DirecTV, a two-year contract is required.

WATCH FOX REGIONAL SPORTS NETWORKS ON STREAMING

AT&T TV NOW is AT&T's live streaming service (it used to be called DirecTV Now). This service currently still has Fox RSNs.



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There are several pricing plans, but expect to pay around \$65 per month, and \$80 per month for the Max package that includes RSNs. There's no long-term contract commitment.

THE ATHLETIC

Carolina Hurricanes 2020-21 season preview

By Dom Luszczyszyn

Two years ago around this time, many were still arguing about the Hurricanes and whether the team could ever live up to their expectations. From that point on, there weren't many doubts as the team went on a streak hotter than a summer heatwave. In the second half of 2018-19 they were truly one of the best teams in hockey and parlayed that to a conference finals berth. It was there that they learned what it really took to be a true contender, losing all four games to Boston.

That part is still a work in progress as the following season saw the team once again finish just under a 100-point pace and once again lose to the Boston Bruins — this time in the first round, with one more win than the year prior.

The big question going into this season is whether the Hurricanes can take the next step and establish themselves as a bonafide contender. The Hurricanes are a good team, but can they be a great team? I think the answer is yes, and this is the year they prove it.

The Projection

Generally speaking, a contender is a team that is a true-talent 100-point team or better. There are a number of teams who reach that level every season, but it takes a bit more for that to be considered the expectation for a team, rather than a good season. Before this season there are eight teams projected to finish with 68 points or more on average, a 100-point pace, and Carolina is one of them. With a projection of 69.3 points, the Hurricanes play at a 100-point pace in about 61 percent of simulations.

The chart above shows a lot of blue and not a lot of red, the true makings of a great team. It's not completely pristine with some simulations ending poorly, but the Hurricanes find themselves in a very good spot here. The playoffs are extremely likely at 82 percent.

This team is looking for more though of course and while their chances of winning a round are under 50 percent, that's true of every team but five. It's a product of playoff uncertainty more than anything and the Hurricanes look to be slight favorites in the opening round. In terms of going the distance, Carolina's chances are just over five percent which is another barometer for being a contender. It's the same chance the team has at being the league's top team during the regular season too.

Even the top seed in the division isn't out of the question and that possibility became even likelier with Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov being out for the season. The fact the Lightning still have full control over the division without their best player is probably frustrating to others, but if there's any team in this division that can knock them down a peg, it's Carolina.

The Hurricanes may not possess the same insane level of depth as Tampa Bay, but their lineup from top to bottom looks strong in its own right. More importantly though is they have young, elite pieces that can potentially hang with the Central Division's top team — now that one of them is out anyways.

The Roster

By GSVA, Carolina has four skaters projected to perform at an elite level next season: Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov and Teuvo Teravainen up front, and Dougie Hamilton on the back-end. Only two other teams, Boston and Colorado, can say the same thing with Tampa Bay missing the mark only because of Kucherov's injury. It's absolutely incredible company to be in and speaks volumes about the high-end core Carolina has assembled.

Of all those players it's Hamilton who rates the highest and it's no secret this model adores him. Only Victor Hedman is projected to have a higher GSVA next season among defensemen, a very lofty bar that is sure to raise some eyebrows among skeptics of his game. It was those same skeptics that suggested he couldn't be a true No. 1 defenseman, citing all the previous coaches who wouldn't use him in that role. He proved them wrong last season when he did just that with what was looking like a Norris-calibre season. His high GSVA rating suggests that season was no fluke.

That's because what he did last season wasn't all that different from years prior, he just played more and had the percentages line up much better than usual. In each of the three seasons before last, teams posted 56, 57, and 58 percent expected goal rates with Hamilton on the ice — all in tough minutes. Last season he was at 58 percent again. No defenseman has consistently driven a team's chance share more than Hamilton over the past four seasons, not in the minutes he plays. Last year was the first year the results lined up in a meaningful way where Carolina had 64 percent of the goals with Hamilton on the ice.

Most important for Hamilton's perception were those results manifesting on the defensive side of the puck. Most would at least admit he's an offensive force where he's heavily involved in the attack and an incredible goal scorer, but would then be quick to dismiss it for some defensive shortcoming. That may have been the case in the past — and he more than made it up for it by being one of the league's best drivers of offense — but it wasn't the case last season. No Carolina defender was on for fewer expected or actual goals against per 60 than Hamilton. Shaky defense was always the knock on Hamilton, deserved or not, but those qualms were silenced last year. It was enough to get Hamilton a regular role on the penalty kill, one where the team allowed the fewest chances of any defender (but also the most goals, to be fair).



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The most important role he earned though was one he's been inexplicably denied for the majority of his career: a job on the top power-play unit. I'm still not sure how he was passed over for the likes of Justin Faulk and TJ Brodie in years past, but that mistake was finally corrected and the Hurricanes feasted as a result. With Hamilton on the ice they generated nearly 10 expected goals per 60, and almost scored as many. The latter was the third most for a defender while the former led every defenseman by one full goal. It led to the team having the fourth-best goals-per-60 on the power play. There are some who might suggest that's on the forwards, but those people would be forgetting that Hamilton actually started the season on the second unit, a unit so good it eventually became the top unit.

With that being said, Hamilton having the second-highest GSVA doesn't necessarily mean he's the league's second-best defenseman. It means he's the second most valuable based on this particular measurement, one which heavily leans on what happens when a player is on the ice. When that player is Hamilton, it's a lot of good things for a long stretch of time. He gets copious amount of credit, even if he may not be fully deserving of it all.

That's an important caveat for Hamilton whose usage is only slightly above average. That's not because he doesn't play tough minutes against the opposing team's best, but because he gets a lot of help from his teammates. At five-on-five he often gets to play with the team's best forwards and exclusively with the team's other best defenseman, Jaccob Slavin. He doesn't quite make the elite tier, but he's extremely close at 1.9 wins. The duo form the second-best pair in hockey, just behind Nashville's top duo of Roman Josi and Ryan Ellis.

Slavin is the type of defenseman that can do everything well, one that can fit into any role. He contributes a lot on offense, he plays all situations, he moves the puck well, and he's a calming presence on defense. That's a rare breed and is what has some believing he's the driving force on Carolina's back-end, allowing Hamilton to do what he does best. I can see the argument for it with Slavin having the steadier reputation, but based on regressed outputs, players have generally performed better with Hamilton at both ends of the ice in each of the last two seasons. That doesn't mean the observers are necessarily wrong, it could also mean there's something that's not currently being captured, or simply a difference in philosophy over what's valuable.

As for that top forward line, it has the potential to be something really special for Carolina, the team's own version of the Perfection Line. Putting a team's three best forwards together can sometimes be a risky gambit that will see the team's depth suffer, but there are times when it's too hard to resist. Carolina has one of those situations where the trio has teased some tantalizingly strong results together. In 286 minutes last year, the trio had a 57 percent expected goals rate together and were even more dangerous at finishing which led to 4.6 goals-per-60 and a 65 percent goal rate. That carried over to the playoffs where the line was absolutely dominant with an even better 62.5 percent expected goals rate while outscoring opponents 5-0. There should be little doubt about this being a top-five line in hockey.

So who's driving the bus here? All three have their merits which is what makes the line so effective, but it likely comes down to either Aho or Svechnikov. Both players come out looking exceptional in transition last season as the primary puck carriers, while Teravainen looked more like a passenger. He had a below-average controlled entry rate, preferring to dump-and-chase, which feels like an odd choice for a skilled winger. In zone, they all shoot and pass the puck equal amounts, but it's Teravainen getting all the assist credit, gaining a reputation as the playmaker of the line as a result. I'm not so sure that's right as he mostly just gets the benefit of passing the puck to two scorers — Aho and Svechnikov don't get that same benefit. Svechnikov actually had more high danger passes per 60 than Teravainen last season, and in 2018-19 Aho was miles ahead in that category. With that in mind, it feels likely that both Aho's and Svechnikov's high individual expected goals rate isn't something explicitly driven by Teravainen's playmaking ability. They can create chances on their own too, something Teravainen isn't as adept at. To his credit though, he does have the best defensive results of the three by a considerable degree and that brings his value closer in line.

When it's all said and done though, it'll likely be Svechnikov who blossoms as the go-to guy. That shouldn't be a huge surprise given he was a No. 2 pick, but the results of his first two seasons are already quite promising. Mainly, it's his ability to drive scoring chances with Carolina earning 3.52 expected goals per 60 over the last two seasons with Svechnikov on the ice. That's 0.14 more than the next closest player, Mark Stone. With just an average conversion rate, that kind of output would be top 10 by actual goals, sandwiched between David Pastrnak and John Tavares. By expected goals, no player since 2007-08 has been on the ice for more offense over a two-year span than Svechnikov. He's elite and only getting better. He also scored two goals by lifting the puck with his stick, lacrosse style, and to be honest the ability to pull that off should be worth another extra win.

It's an incredible starting five only bested by, again, Boston and Colorado. The rest of the group looks kind of unimpressive for a contender though. That's always the worry with putting all your eggs in one basket, but the overwhelming advantage driven from that top five should more than make up for the overwhelming depth. The bottom three lines and two pairs rank 22nd in the league and come with a lot of question marks. If those answers end up on the positive end of things, the Hurricanes will be in a very good position come playoff time.

The biggest question of all is whether Vincent Trocheck can return to being a legitimate, high-end second-line center. He certainly used to be at that level, grading out above two wins of value, but has fallen quickly over the last two seasons. To his credit, Trocheck did score 1.87 points-per-60 last season at five-on-five, but the on-ice results have been very troubling over the last few seasons. He's been out-chanced and out-scored in each of the last three seasons with a lot of issues on the defensive side of the puck where a bad defensive team consistently allows more chances and goals with Trocheck on the ice.

When that happens in three straight seasons, it's natural to question the player's utility, but with Trocheck there's a



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chance the issues are outside of his control. His decline coincides with Florida's infamous expansion draft debacle, one that saw Trocheck lose consistent linemate Reilly Smith. Since then, Trocheck has been a man on his own island with a revolving door of linemates on either side.

There hasn't been any consistency and it's likely difficult to find a groove under those conditions. To his credit, he's still been excellent at carrying the puck out of the defensive zone and into the offensive zone, and is a strong presence in the offensive zone. Without much help though, all that is lost, and it's clear the Hurricanes felt his value could be salvaged. Maybe he really is a trainwreck in his own zone, but it seems he does enough otherwise to be useful. A bounce-back feels likely here and I like that he pushes Jordan Staal to the third line. That's probably a better fit for him considering his defensive utility as a play-driver, but complete inability to drive actual goals on offense.

Where I'm much more concerned is on the second pair with the team's other big acquisition last season, Brady Skjei. He grades out below replacement level which is especially bad news because he's signed for four more years at \$5.3 million. Earlier in the offseason I had his deal listed as one of the league's worst contracts and somehow the Rangers turned him into a first-round pick. Skjei used to be a lot more useful, but his defensive performance has only gotten worse since his rookie season and his expected goals rate has dropped every year. It's difficult to ignore that he gets scored on more often than his expected rate nearly every season with last year being his worst. There might be a real reason for that beyond bad luck and it stems from his breakouts.

Last year with New York, Skjei averaged nine controlled exits per 60, but also 7.5 failed exits per 60. He's league average at getting the puck out, but near the bottom of the league in terms of risk factor. He has a tendency of turning it over and that leads to more time being spent defending, something he's also not very strong at.

That doesn't bode well for his partner Brett Pesce who went through similar problems with Joel Edmundson last season. He didn't break the puck out as much, but he was just as much of a risk with an even worse success to failure ratio. Playing with Edmundson tanked Pesce's numbers down to a 51 percent expected goals rate, a major step down from the year prior where he was at 57 percent. Most of it was on the defensive side of the puck and though he himself saw some slight drops in his transition stats, it's more likely to be the fault of his partner given his previous reputation for sterling defense. On the zone exit side, Pesce had to take on a bigger workload than the season prior and given that consideration he did well. Carolina still needs Pesce to bounce back to his former value (which wasn't far off from Slavin's), but that'll be difficult to do while dragging another anchor around.

Really, it should be Jake Gardiner next to Pesce and it wouldn't surprise me to see him bounce back after his own nightmare season. In his last three seasons with Toronto, Gardiner had very high goal percentages every year from 59 percent in 2016-17 to 56 percent the year after to a career-high of 62 percent in his final season. In each year that was driven by a strong expected goals rate, playing with the team's talented group of forwards, and getting good goaltending behind him. Last year his goals percentage imploded to 40

percent and I have a hard time believing that was on him when his expected rate remained decent at 52 percent. To go from three straight seasons of .930 goaltending behind you to a .901 is bad luck, plain and simple. Getting six percent shooting the other way probably isn't on him either.

Gardiner is known for making some costly turnovers, yes, but his successful and failed exit rate was completely average last season and not that different from a year prior. He definitely wasn't as good defensively as he was before (he was coming off a major injury), but it wasn't nearly to the degree his on-ice results suggested. If Gardiner gets back to playing the way he used to, the Hurricanes could have the makings of a very strong pair with Pesce and the duo seem like they would complement each other well. Skjei is what people think Gardiner is, and I can't see why his very risky style would be more deserving to be trusted on the second pair.

Aside from last year's deadline additions, there are still a lot of questions to be answered from the returning players.

Nino Niederreiter is a big one as he had a major drop-off last season. His expected goals rate looks fine, but he struggled to generate his own chances and was a complete passenger in transition. His defensive impact is still there though, so he should see a mutually beneficial partnership with Trocheck. Martin Necas is currently slotted on the fourth line, but it wouldn't at all be a surprise to see him get some time in the top six with that line. The speedy winger was very highly touted going into last season and has a lot of offensive flair — he scored 1.9 points-per-60 at five-on-five — but his defensive game still needs some work. He already looks like an elite zone entry machine though and his further progression would really help Carolina's depth look much more formidable.

And then of course there's the goaltending which ... actually doesn't look that bad. The Hurricanes get a lot of flak for their tandem of Petr Mrazek and James Reimer, but they performed admirably under tough circumstances. Carolina plays a fast-paced game and that can leave the goaltending hanging at times. While most see the 17th-ranked .903 team save percentage, what they're missing is the tandem allowed 0.15 fewer goals against per 60 than expected last year. Believe it or not, that was the sixth-best mark in the league last season. Mrazek ranked 22nd in goals saved with three while Reimer was actually fifth at 7.5, a nice bounce-back after an awful season a year prior. That's Mrazek's second straight season being above average, which leads to his high grade.

If the team can tighten up a little defensively, the goaltending will look a lot stronger — but they do appear to be doing their job based on public metrics. The tandem ranks seventh in the league, putting Carolina in the top 10 at every position. There are only two other teams that can say the same: Colorado and Vegas (the goalie model likes Andrei Vasilevskiy a lot more after recent tune-ups, but still not enough to place Tampa Bay's goaltending in the top 10). Again, Carolina is in impressive company.

I'm not sure if this is the Hurricanes' year just yet — but you can start seeing a world where it very well can be. They have the makings of a super line and a super pair. Their goaltending is decent. And though there are questions with the depth, there's a lot of potential for positive answers that would further elevate Carolina's stock.



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Hurricanes stock used to never live up to the lofty expectations placed on it every year. After two straight seasons of delivering, it's time to believe in this group. They're the real

deal and this feels like the year they arrive as bonafide contenders.



Gunler, Canes Prospects Make Early Impact in World Juniors

Gunler led Sweden with four goals, five points in preliminary round

by Michael Smith

The preliminary round of the 2021 IIHF World Junior Championship is complete, and all four Carolina Hurricanes prospects are moving on to the quarterfinals after strong showings in the first four games of the tournament.

With its high-octane offense, Team Canada won all four of its games to finish atop Group A, while Team USA finished ahead of Russia and Sweden in Group B.

"It's more the little things that the development coaches have talked with these athletes about; it's not always the production," said Canes Director of Player Personnel Darren Yorke. "We like to see growth from these players. The pace and competition of these games is higher than their average elite game. For them to continue to show the little things at this level is great."

Noel Gunler (Sweden): 4 goals, 1 assist (5 points) in 4 games

Given his offensive on-puck talents and what figured to be an elevated role on Team Sweden, I pegged Gunler, the Canes' third-ranked prospect according to Elite Prospects, as a potential breakout star in the tournament.

"They're going to need his offensive game to really shine through," Yorke said before the tournament. "I think Noel is probably going to use the previous years when he might have thought he deserved to be there but couldn't make the team as motivation. I think this is going to be a coming out party for him."

And sure enough, it was.

Gunler was an offensive force for Sweden, leading the team with four goals, which ranked tied for third-most among all skaters in the preliminary round. He also added an assist for a team-leading total of five points in four games.

"His shot is elite. He can get it off quick and change the angle of release. It just explodes off his stick," Yorke said. "For him, getting those opportunities to score are great."

In the waning minutes of Sweden's first tournament game, Gunler hopped onto the ice, took a pass in stride and snapped off a rocket of a shot from the top of the right circle.

He followed that up with a pair of goals in Sweden's 4-0 win over Austria. His first of the game was nearly a carbon copy

of his first of the tournament. He dusted the puck off at the left circle before releasing a laser quick shot that was in and out of the back of the net in an instant.

Gunler's second of the night against Austria was just as lethal. In transition, he accepted a nice behind-the-back feed from Simon Holmstrom and roofed a shot glove-side high.

His fourth of the tournament didn't have the same panache as the first three, but they count all the same - and this one was perhaps his most important. With just a minute left in regulation, Gunler got to the front of the net and redirected a shot off his shin pad to tie the game at three. Russia, though, then snapped Sweden's incredible 54-game preliminary round winning streak in overtime.

Gunler's offensive production has been just one facet of his game that has stood out so far in the tournament.

"The complete side of his game is there, as well," Yorke said. "He's playing in a big role, and he's got to be able to play the 200-foot game and play well without the puck. I think he's shown that."

Ryan Suzuki (Canada): 2 goals, 1 assist (3 points) in 4 games

Team Canada's high-powered offense blitzed through the preliminary round with 33 goals in four games, twice posting double digits in wins over Germany and Switzerland.

Suzuki joined the fun with a goal in each of those two games and finished with three points in the preliminary round, while also demonstrating a heavier element in his skillset.

"His game has evolved in this tournament. He's playing as physical as I've ever seen him play," Yorke said. "That's great. The role he's playing in, they want him to play a little more of a heavier game."

Suzuki was in the right place at the right time against Germany, netting his first of the tournament off a turnover behind the net, one of seven goals Team Canada scored in the second period alone.

Suzuki's second goal of the tournament came when he followed up his own rebound. Though he didn't get all of the bouncing puck, it was just enough to slip it past the outstretched left leg of goaltender Noah Patenaude, putting Team Canada up 4-0 over the Swiss.

"When he gets thrown on the second unit power play, he runs it like a pro. It's so calm when he gets the puck. He sees the



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ice," Yorke said. "You're seeing more of a complete style game from Ryan in this tournament."

Vasiliy Ponomarev (Russia): 2 goals (2 points) in 4 games

Ponomarev finished the preliminary round tied for the team lead in goals with two, both scored in Russia's opening game against Team USA. Though he was quiet on the scoresheet in the three games that followed, he's been noticeable on the ice.

"I honestly think that line has been one of the most consistent lines in the tournament," Yorke said. "It seems like every time they're on the ice something happens, and it's not always from an offensive standpoint but on the defensive side, as well. Vasiliy has been on the puck. He's puck-hounding on the forecheck and hounding it on the backcheck."

Ponomarev recorded his first goal of the tournament by getting to the front of the net for a redirection.

His second goal showcased his quick release, as he was the beneficiary of a Team USA turnover, which he then wristed past goaltender Spencer Knight en route to Russia's 5-3 win over the Americans.

"He's really showing that complete game and the complete player he is," Yorke said. "He's creating offense on his own

and for his teammates. He's really shown a lot of different layers and the Swiss Army Knife type of player he is."

Zion Nybeck (Sweden): 1 assist (1 point) in 4 games

Though Nybeck averaged just over 11 minutes of ice time per game in the preliminary round, he was still able to make a positive impression for the Swedes, and that's exactly what Yorke and the Canes hoped to see.

"Everyone wants to see production out of players ... but from a developmental standpoint, you watch how he's playing and creating when he gets the puck," Yorke said. "He's able to provide energy in lesser minutes. When guys are thrown into a different role, how do they adapt? With Zion, I think he's shown he can still have an impact on the game."

Nybeck notched one assist in the preliminary round, which came in the first game of the tournament, a 7-1 victory over the Czech Republic. After an extended, cycling shift in the Czech zone, the puck popped up to the point, where Nybeck swung it across the blue line, recording the secondary helper on Oscar Bjerselius' tally.

"Even though some of the passes he's made haven't been converted into goals, we're happy that he's able to see those situations and complete those passes under pressure and in a higher paced game than the junior levels," Yorke said. "That side of his game is translating."



Hurricanes announce training camp schedule, roster

The Hurricanes will begin on-ice work ahead of the 2021 regular season on Monday, Jan. 4.

By Andrew Schnittker

With the start of the 2021 NHL regular season just around the corner, we now know the full details for the Hurricanes' preseason training camp, which starts next week. Things will kick off Sunday with physicals/testing and a team meeting.

On Monday, on-ice practices will start at the team's new practice facility at the Wake Competition Center, where all of camp will be held. The team's roster will be split up into two groups, C1 and C2. Most days of camp, group C2 will practice at 9:30 a.m., followed by C1 at 11 a.m. All practices are closed to the public.

The Hurricanes will be off on Saturday, Jan. 9, and will hold a full team practice on Wednesday, Jan. 13, presumably after final roster cuts are made.

The training camp roster includes all of the usual suspects at the NHL level, as well as some of the team's prospects (the

four players currently playing at the World Junior Championship, Ryan Suzuki, Vasily Ponomarev, Noel Gunler and Zion Nybeck are not listed).

Forwards: Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, Andrei Svechnikov, Jordan Staal, Vincent Trocheck, Brock McGinn, Martin Necas, Nino Niederreiter, Ryan Dzingel, Jesper Fast, Warren Foegele, Morgan Geekie, Jordan Martinook, Jeremy Bracco, David Cotton, Jason Cotton, Seth Jarvis, Steven Lorentz, Stelio Mattheos, Max McCormick, Jamieson Rees, Sheldon Rempal, Drew Shore, Spencer Smallman

Defensemen: Jaccob Slavin, Dougie Hamilton, Brett Pesce, Jake Gardiner, Brady Skjei, Haydn Fleury, Jake Bean, Gustav Forsling, Joey Keane, Joakim Ryan

Goalies: Petr Mrazek, James Reimer, Alex Nedeljkovic, Antoine Bibeau

The Hurricanes will begin the 2021 regular season at the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday, Jan. 14. Stay tuned to Canes Country for full coverage of the team's training camp.



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Carolina Hurricanes top 25 under 25 #7: Ryan Suzuki

The Canes' 2019 first rounder could be ready to make an impact sooner than later if his development continues.

By Andrew Schnittker

It's been quite the journey for Ryan Suzuki since being drafted late in the 2019 first round by the Hurricanes. After a strong season (25 goals, 75 points) with the Barrie Colts in his draft year, Suzuki returned to the OHL for year three.

He again started well with Barrie, but was sidelined by a scary eye injury in early November that kept him out for over a month. Barrie's journey and recovery, and the impact of the injury, was chronicled well by Scott Burnside of The Athletic (\$). As Burnside notes, Suzuki's vision in the injured eye is imperfect, with a center blind spot, but he still has the peripheral vision needed to play at a high level.

Not long after his return to the lineup in Barrie, Suzuki's roller coaster season continued, as he found himself on a new team, traded to the Saginaw Spirit at the trade deadline.

Suzuki took off in 23 games with the Spirit, scoring 13 goals and 35 points (an increase from 1.09 points per game with Barrie to 1.52). Suzuki posted nearly an assist per game with

Saginaw, showing the playmaking prowess that led to his first-round selection.

Suzuki cracked a loaded roster for Team Canada at this year's World Junior Championship and is off to a strong start to the tournament, with two goals and an assist in three games. In the video below, he shows strong instincts to hunt down a loose puck off a net-mouth scramble and snap it home.

With the OHL season set to begin in February, Suzuki is most likely to spend another season in Saginaw (he's not yet eligible for the AHL). He'll turn 20 in May, so could make the jump to start his pro career, most likely in Chicago with the Wolves, next season.

As Kevin chronicled in his prospects roundup before the draft, Suzuki has the ability to play well and win battles off the puck, but his best attribute is his ability to make plays and set up his teammates for scoring opportunities.

Suzuki projects as an NHL top-six forward, and, as long as his development continues uninterrupted this year, he could be ready to make an impact sooner than later.

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The Athletic / All the details of NHL's outdoor games at Lake Tahoe

Scott Burnside

Jan 1, 2021

The NHL, looking to add some pizzazz to a truncated 2021 season that will be played without fans in many markets, is planning to play two outdoor games in the picturesque setting of Lake Tahoe, Nevada.

The NHL is hoping to build its own rink on a section of the golf course at Edgewood Tahoe Resort on the shores of Lake Tahoe in Stateline,

Nevada, with the Colorado Avalanche and Vegas Golden Knights playing on Feb. 20, and the Boston Bruins and Philadelphia Flyers playing on Feb. 21, The Athletic has confirmed.

The news was first reported by Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman.

The resort has its own skating facility but the NHL's plans are to build its own rink in the area of the golf course's 16th, 17th and 18th holes.

No fans would be in attendance, and the idea is that the game presentation would highlight the aesthetics of playing outdoors in a pristine, mountain setting.

Plans remain fluid for the event but with the traditional New Year's Day Winter Classic long ago scuttled by the COVID-19 pandemic, this would be an opportunity for the NHL to create an in-season marquee event that could help generate additional revenues through sponsorships and



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advertisements during a season when revenues are going to substantially reduced.

NBC, the league's national rights holder in the United States, has included both games on its schedule of games that will be broadcast on NBC. The Feb. 20 game is the only Saturday game on the main NBC network until mid-April when they begin a regular schedule of Saturday games.

NHL officials have been looking at possible venues for such an event since the summer's return to play playoff tournaments were being held in bubble settings in Toronto and Edmonton. At one point, there was discussion of having two outdoor events, one in Canada and one in the United States. Lake Louise, Alberta, was on the map earlier and there was some discussion about Canmore, Alberta, as well as a number of mountainous areas in the western United States, like Utah and the Grand Teton area in Wyoming, east of Idaho. Logistics, including being able to build and maintain two NHL-style rinks in different locations in different countries, have at this point have reduced this idea to a four-team event in Nevada.

Restrictions to entering Canada, including those coming from the United States, forced the NHL to create an all-Canadian division for the 56-game schedule that is set to begin on Jan. 13.

Some teams had looked at holding their own outdoor games this season, which would have allowed greater numbers of fans in attendance than in indoor arenas, but several sources familiar with the dynamics felt the cost to construct and maintain such outdoor rinks over a long period of time would be prohibitive, making it unlikely outdoor games will be held in individual markets.

As The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun reported, teams who expressed an interest in this outdoor possibility included Los Angeles (later in the season), Boston, Carolina, Nashville, Florida and Dallas. It would cost more than \$1 million to set up and operate a semi-permanent ice rink, which is what would be required to host multiple games over a longer period of time than the usual outdoor games put on by the NHL. And there could be additional costs to repair the field after the game and from weather extremes like snow, heavy wind and rain,

The Athletic LOADED: 01.02.2021

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL planning two outdoor games at Lake Tahoe for 2021 season

I am hearing that this is the approximate location.

Elliott Friedman

January 1, 2021, 9:00 AM

When the NHL on NBC broadcast schedule was released last week, one game stood out as an oddity: Colorado at Vegas on Feb. 20. It is the network's lone Saturday telecast before April 17.

The next day, there's a Philadelphia-Boston matchup that's also a bit strange. For the Bruins, it's their only game in six days; for the Flyers it's their only one in five. In the travel-friendly East Division, that's unusual.

There is a logical explanation.

According to multiple sources, the NHL is beginning its Mystery, Alaska experiment, with four teams as part of a unique two-game, two-day "Outdoor Weekend" showcase at Lake Tahoe. Edgewood Tahoe Resort, home of the popular celebrity golf tournament, is hosting these games, which will be played around the 16th, 17th and 18th holes.

It sounds dynamite, and I'm curious to see it. (Although, it feels wrong that Joe Pavelski will not be playing. He finished third at the 2018 golf event.)

The NHL, searching for something different in a season where fan involvement will be extremely limited, scouted several locations for a scenic event. Right after the Edmonton bubble, there was a trip to Lake Louise, AB — but signage limits on government property nixed that. Another option was Park City, Utah.

Fans will not be in attendance, with the number of people limited to about 400 — basically the teams' travelling parties and whoever is needed to work. It will give television different opportunities to broadcast the games, such as drone cameras.

It is, at this point, a one-year project, but if it works, the NHL may consider making off-beat, "natural wilderness," picturesque locations a regular occurrence. Whatever the case, this has a chance to be a special look in a challenging season.

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers face big questions in net with Smith, Koskinen battling aging curve

Mark Spector

January 1, 2021, 9:52 AM

EDMONTON — So, let's talk about age.

You've got two players, aged 38 and 32. Doesn't matter what sport we're playing.

OK, we're not playing golf, and we're not curling.

A new season is on the horizon, and the two aging players are both being counted on to improve. Because when the big games arrived last season, they were not good enough as a pair, or as individuals.

So, we come to the question: What would be the chance that those two athletes — again, any sport — will improve their level of play at their respective ages?

That's the question that Edmonton Oilers general manager Ken Holland answered for us when he walked into the recent free agent deadline in hot pursuit of Jacob Markstrom. If he thought returning the tandem of Mikko Koskinen (32), and Mike Smith, who turns 39 in March, was a good idea, he wouldn't have been plotting to offer Markstrom a long-term deal, right?

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We all know how that pursuit ended, leaving Markstrom in a Calgary Flames uniform — and Oilers fans wondering how a goaltending tandem that was average at best last year is supposed to improve this season.

Koskinen is the one who gets the most heat, after receiving that three-year, \$13.5 million deal that still has two years to run. But for the 34 starts he gave the Oilers last season, he was fine. His .917 save percentage was 12th among goalies who played over 30 games, and only Connor Hellebuyck (.922) and Markstrom (.918) gave Canadian teams better starting numbers than Koskinen.



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The problem with "The Three Metres of Koskinen," as the Finns call the six-foot-seven netminder, is that he is not a 60-game goalie. In a normal season, Koskinen is a 45-game goalie who requires a backup that can give a team the other 37 starts.

That's where the Oilers' situation gets murky, with Smith celebrating his 39th birthday on March 22 — well before the playoffs are set to begin.

Age is just a number, you say? Well, so is .902, Smith's save percentage last season. And .900, Smith's save percentage over the past two seasons.

Smith is, in many ways, the alpha dog that this Oilers team requires: a leader who hates to lose and whose physically intimidating presence goes a long way in an NHL room. Eventually they drop the puck, however, and he steps into the one position that can make or break a team. And as the birth certificate indicates his shift from 38 to 39, it reminds us of a tried but true sports cliché:

Father Time is undefeated.

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.

French researchers looked at 11,200 performances among track athletes, swimmers and chess grand masters. They found that for each set of athletes there came an age where they began to experience an irreversible decline in their abilities.

For swimmers, the age was 21. For grand masters, it was 31.4. The mean age for setting a track world record is 26.1.

Of course there are outliers in the goalie ranks, greats like Martin Brodeur or Carey Price, whose 30s game still translates. But neither Smith nor Koskinen can be included in any bracket that contains hockey's greats. With respect, the two Oilers goalies are not in that echelon of netminder.

So what echelon are they in?

There were 28 goalies who played at age 31 and up last season, though one of those was David Ayres, the 42-year-old practice goalie who beat the Maple Leafs for Carolina. (And it must be noted that the Dallas Stars rode a pair of 33-year-olds — Ben Bishop in the regular season and Anton Khudobin in the playoffs — to a berth in the Stanley Cup Final.)

Among those 28 goalies, only seven posted a save percentage higher than .915: Koskinen and Corey Crawford (.917 apiece), Cam Talbot and Jaroslav Halak (.919), Bishop (.920), Tuukka Rask (.929) and Khudobin (.930).

Fifteen of the 28 had a save percentage of .907 or worse. For perspective, of the 52 goalies who played 25 games or more last season, Smith's .902 ranked him 42nd.

He'd have to improve to match his age in that category, which isn't a good sign.

Holland hasn't finished building in Edmonton, not by a long shot.

He'll need a goalie, maybe sooner than later.

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Sportsnet.ca / D.J. Smith pleased with player conditioning as Senators camp opens

Wayne Scanlan

January 1, 2021, 4:54 PM

In his first media availability on Day 2 of Ottawa's training camp, Senators head coach D.J. Smith said he couldn't be more pleased with the conditioning of his players.

Kudos to them, because the Senators haven't played a hockey game since March 11 and won't play another until Jan. 15 when this unusual NHL season begins. Smith was particularly impressed with the readiness of his veteran players.

"It is good to see and good for young guys to see what it takes to stay in the National Hockey League and continue to be competitive," Smith said, on a Zoom call with reporters Friday afternoon. "These guys have been away a long time and they've put the work in. They've come ready and they're some of the best conditioned guys at our camp at this point."

As an example, Smith cited forward Artem Anisimov for his strong play early in camp.

"You would think a player who's been around and is as good as Arty, might be rusty," Smith said. "And he has arguably been one of our best players. I'm really not disappointed with anyone. Our competitive level is where it's gotta be."

As for that supposed competitive advantage for players who had been participating in games in Europe in October and November? That has worn off, according to Smith.

"Unfortunately, for the guys who played in Europe, when they come over here, they have to quarantine," Smith says. "So the advantage you had kind of subsides when you sit there for 14 days."

With Ontario under strict lockdown, media are not allowed into the Canadian Tire Centre to watch training camp. For now, Smith is going to be our eyes and ears.

Here are some highlights of what he touched on during a wide-ranging interview session with media:

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.

Skate or perish in the Canadian division

Not surprisingly, the first two days of Ottawa's camp have focused on conditioning. Saturday will bring the first scrimmages and on Sunday, the focus is special teams. Monday is a scheduled day off.

Conditioning will be next to godliness for an Ottawa team that doesn't have the skill of a Toronto Maple Leafs or Edmonton Oilers in the newly formed North Division.

"One of the strengths we're going to have to have is to be able to skate with these teams," said Smith, a former Maple Leafs assistant. "You look at the Canadian division and the amount of talent, especially high-end talent -- if you can't skate with them you are going to be in trouble."

"So one of the things we are going to have to do is make sure our conditioning is at the level where we can skate all night."

With that in mind, the first phase of analysis by Smith and his staff will involve identifying which players are in the best shape.

"You have to be ultra competitive and in order to be that, you have to be in really good shape," Smith says. "So, the guys that check off the boxes as the best conditioned players we move to stage 2 and see what you do in the scrimmages, see what you do in the practices."



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For safety and health reasons, there won't be exhibition games this season.

AHL resumes factor in roster selection

"You're going to have to make a decision based on practice," Smith said. He added that for younger players, their performance in the AHL last season will be taken into account, as well as the input from Belleville Senators head coach Troy Mann.

"We're going to have to trust the coaches down there and their development. But to this point, all the young kids have looked great."

Head start helps

Ottawa was one of the seven teams allowed to open camp three days earlier than the franchises involved in play-in and playoff rounds this past summer and fall. Smith feels that is a help, especially for a team that has made as many personnel changes as the Senators.

"As you go through it day by day, you find things you haven't touched on and to have this (extra time) allows us to get the skating out of the way so we can get down to systems and special teams," Smith said. "They're so important when the season starts."

Advantage, Paul Maurice

Exhibition games are not only beneficial for young prospects, they also allow incoming veterans -- like Erik Gudbranson, Josh Brown, Evgenii Dadonov, Alex Galchenyuk, just to name a few -- a chance to apply a team's systems. This is Smith's second season as head coach, and he will be working with a very different roster from his first season.

"You can't touch everything. And you have so many new bodies. And with no exhibition games you've really got to use these practices to get your systems, and your faceoffs -- there's so many things that go into it," Smith says.

"And that's probably the advantage of having a coach that has been with his group for a while. Like Paul Maurice (with the Winnipeg Jets).

"Players know what to expect from him. They know a lot of things he does and they hit the ground running.

"We have so many new pieces. But as we continue this journey here and continue to get better, you are just going to plug pieces in. I always talk about the Boston Bruins and how they were good for a long time. No matter who they plugged in they kept chugging along. And that's what we're trying to be."

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Most rookies in great white north

With all the talk of Ottawa's prospects from Belleville not getting an opportunity because of the influx of veterans in the off-season, Smith would like everyone to appreciate just how young his team could be.

"I think we've done a good job, Pierre (Dorion, GM) has, of bringing in players that know the league and if our younger players are ready, they're going to play," Smith said. "Regardless of what happens, we are going to have the most rookies in the Canadian division. By far. Maybe more rookies on our team play this year than in the whole division combined.

"Younger players are going to play. That's not the issue. It's just when they're going to play and how much they're going to play."

Like Dorion, Smith wants to see the prospects earn their NHL spots, rather than have them be anointed before camp.

"When you make a young guy earn his spot, it gives you a better chance that kid is not going to go up and down, up and down," Smith says.

"Sometimes when you see a guy given a job, a lot of times it's overwhelming and 20 games in you're bringing a veteran in to do that job and the kid goes back to the AHL.

"If a young player outplays an older player and takes his job, the likelihood is he's ready."

Tapping into taxi squad

Smith fully expects to make good use of the expanded rosters this season, with as many as six players on a taxi squad.

"I think that is what has to happen," he says. "We have to have a 'next man up mentality.' For us to have success and take a step this year we have to do it with depth."

To outwork other teams in a compressed schedule, Smith plans on rotating different players in and out of the lineup.

"We're going to need fresh bodies," he said. "There's going to be back-to-backs. Guys will sit out and then come in and help.

"I don't want to rock guys' confidence, making them nervous every night (by being scratched). "But there are going to be some guys who come in and out and that's going to make us more competitive."

NHL group set after six, seven days

The Senators will likely break into two groups, with an NHL group and a so-called AHL group, after six or seven camp days. But players from that AHL group can rejoin the other at any time. Four players are not yet here, with recently acquired U.S.-based players Derek Stepan, Cedric Paquette and Braydon Coburn having to go through protocols before joining camp. And prospect Tim Stuetzle is still in Edmonton playing the world juniors.

Smith will not use any set line combinations until all the players are here, and hinted that his lines could vary during the season depending on whether his team is home or away.

Stepan can mentor young centres

Stuetzle will start the season at left wing, Smith confirmed. And the coach relishes his new depth at centre with the additions of Stepan from Arizona and Paquette from Tampa Bay.

"There is going to be a deeper battle at centre," said Smith, who plans to move centres to the wing as needed, as the Lightning so often did en route to winning the Stanley Cup.

Whether Stepan displaces any of the centre prospects, he will help them get better, Smith says.

"Stepan can protect young centres, whether it's Logan Brown or Josh Norris," Smith said. "He can play the hard minutes. He can play against the league's best."

Smith noted that in Toronto, Auston Matthews benefitted from playing behind Tyler Bozak and Nazim Kadri. It was similar for Bo Horvat behind Henrik Sedin.

"Stepan is going to help Norris or Brown," Smith said. "He can show them the way."

Stuetzle is 'special'

Like everyone else in hockey, Smith is enjoying watching Tim Stuetzle dazzle and dominate at the world juniors. But he will need time to adjust to the NHL.

"When you see a special player play, that's why you draft them first, second, third overall," Smith said of Ottawa's third overall pick in 2020. "They're franchise changers sometimes.

"When you watch that kid play against his peers, it's just incredible.



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"People watch that and expect him to do that right away (in the NHL) but these are the best defenders, the best players in the world. You're going to be out there against Auston Matthews and Bo Horvat and all these players on a nightly basis that have been through this grind.

"He's still going to have some growing pains. But as a finished product, Tim Stuetzle looks like one heck of a hockey player."

Brannstrom stays at left D

With six NHL starters on defence, the Senators don't have a lot of room for Erik Brannstrom to crack the roster as a regular, but Smith said there is no plan to have him shift to the right side. Brannstrom has said he is comfortable playing the right side, though he shoots left.

"We have a lot of depth on the right side at this point," Smith said.

"I think he's going to be a better left defenceman. I think he's able to make more plays on that side. And it's an unfortunate year with a short AHL season, or whatever happens, a lot of the younger guys aren't going to get the minutes they would have had -- whether you're playing in the America League or NHL, you're always playing.

"He's going to be a very good player when his chance comes. If it's right away, middle of the year or whatever it is, he's going to be a very good player."

Old school divisional rivals

Smith said the all-Canadian division, with teams playing a rival as many as nine or ten times in a single season, is going to fuel resentment. But in a good way.

"It really is like old school hockey when it comes to inter-divisional play. In our division (Atlantic) we might play the Maple Leafs in October and then not see them till January.

"Now you're going to play them maybe three times in a week. It's going to be really competitive.

"You're going to know guys' tendencies. And obviously it's going to come down to talent and ability but it's also going to come down to will and which team wants to play the hardest every night."

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Sportsnet.ca / 3 bold Vancouver Canucks predictions for 2021

Iain MacIntyre

January 1, 2021, 1:12 PM

VANCOUVER – None of the bold hockey predictions for 2020 included a once-in-a-century global pandemic that would not only shutter the NHL but pose an existential threat for all of us.

And if you predicted for the Vancouver Canucks that J.T. Miller would outscore Elias Pettersson, defenceman Quinn Hughes would lead all rookies in points and still not win the Calder Trophy, and that the team would not only make the Stanley Cup playoffs but win two rounds — in a summer bubble in Edmonton — your hot takes would have gotten you shamed off Twitter (if such a thing is possible).

We can guess and project and try to look ahead, but you never really know what's coming. That's what makes sports such fun and life so difficult.

The NHL is about to stage a 56-game season without fans; its bedrock Canadian franchises are grouped together in a historic North Division, and the Canucks could finish anywhere from first and last. Here are three bold predictions for 2021.

1. Brock Boeser will outscore Tyler Toffoli

Given the profile of these players and their NHL histories, this seems a lot more like a lock than a wild prediction.

But consider Boeser is coming off an injury-interrupted season that saw him go goal-less in his final 12 games before a 17-game playoff run that included just four goals and 11 points. Toffoli, meanwhile, was everybody's favorite new Canuck after he arrived from Los Angeles last February to replace the injured Boeser on the top line — promptly scoring six times in 10 games alongside Pettersson and Miller.

None of the free-agent departures from the Canucks in October seemed to distress the fan base as much as Toffoli, who signed a relatively modest four-year, \$17 million contract to play for the Montreal Canadiens.

Toffoli is a career 20-goal, 45-point player who does so much more than score that it's foolish to argue his exit is not a setback in Vancouver.

But let's remember a couple of things: Boeser has proven he is the better offensive player — even if his 200-foot game is still evolving — and most of the Canucks' success last season, including those playoff series wins against Minnesota and St. Louis, was achieved with Boeser and without Toffoli. And the Canucks were already 10th in the league in scoring before the Toffoli trade.

Toffoli isn't going to be playing with Pettersson and Miller this season. Boeser will be, and at age 23 he should be better than he was in 2020. If he stays healthy, Boeser is getting 30 goals and 70 points.

2. Braden Holtby could be one-and-done as a Canuck (meaning Thatcher Demko will start the season after, if not this one)

We expect a bounce-back season from Holtby who, comfortable with his new surroundings and goalie coach Ian Clark, should be closer this year to his .916 career save percentage than the uncharacteristic .897 he posted last season in Washington.

Ironically, this makes the 31-year-old goaltender less likely to stay in Vancouver for the second and final year of the contract he signed this past off-season. That deal came without any trade or movement restrictions -- key obstacles during the team's failed negotiations to retain starting goalie Jacob Markstrom, who eventually got in Calgary both the money and protection he was looking for.

Remaining Time -1:19

Holtby has skills and pedigree to rediscover his game in Vancouver

There is finally a date for the Seattle Kraken expansion draft — July 21, 2021 — and if Holtby plays as well as he and the Canucks expect before then, he will be an ideal candidate to move down Interstate 5. Think about it: Holtby is a great teammate, proven winner, likes the Pacific Northwest and, when back in form, his \$4.3 million cap hit will be an attractive, portable bargaining chip for an expansion team.

The reason Canucks general manager Jim Benning was unwilling to grant expansion immunity to Markstrom is the presence of Demko, who isn't going anywhere.

3. Josh Leivo is the ex-Canuck the team will miss the most

There was always a financial inevitability to the Canucks losing Markstrom and defenceman Chris Tanev if those players were able to leverage full market value elsewhere during the NHL recession. The team actually upgraded from Tanev by acquiring Nate Schmidt from the Vegas Golden Knights, and as long as goalie guru Clark works a little magic with Holtby and Demko, the downgrade in goal for Vancouver should not be fatal.



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The Canucks mishandled negotiations for third-pairing defencemen Troy Stecher. But he was a 15-minute player for coach Travis Green, and the Canucks should be able to replace him internally. We have already mentioned that, at least offensively, Boeser will minimize the loss of Toffoli on the top line. But Leivo, who followed Markstrom and Tanev to the Flames, would have been a prime candidate to move into the vacant right wing spot in the top six.

As it is, the enigmatic Jake Virtanen appears to have the best chance of getting promoted to Bo Horvat's wing on the second line, or even beside Pettersson on the top unit if Green chooses to play Boeser with Horvat and Tanner Pearson. But candidates for the job are so thin that even six-goal scorer Loui Eriksson will be considered (if he's not in the press box) and it's not impossible that raw rookie Nils Hoglander is rushed into a prime role.

Leivo, who had seven goals and 19 points in 36 games before his season ended last December with a shattered knee, could have filled the void with his savvy and heavy two-way game, especially since playing with Horvat comes with difficult matchup minutes.

But Leivo, his feelings hurt by the offer of a substantial pay cut from last season's \$1.5 million salary, chose to leave Vancouver for Calgary on a one-year, \$875,000 contract that was a paltry \$50,000 more the Canucks were offering. The opportunity Green would have given Leivo was worth exponentially more than that.

Leivo might have scored 20 goals this season had he stayed. Both he and the Canucks may regret he didn't.

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Newhook "probably 50-50" to play vs. Czechs

Team Canada centre Alex Newhook missed practice and is "probably 50-50" to play in Saturday's quarterfinal against the Czech Republic, per head coach Andre Tourigny. "If it was [Friday] he would not play, but we'll see [Saturday]," Tourigny said. Mark Masters has more from the Edmonton bubble.

Mark Masters

Team Canada practiced inside the Edmonton bubble on Friday.

Team Canada centre Alex Newhook missed practice and is "probably 50-50" to play in Saturday's quarterfinal against the Czech Republic, per head coach Andre Tourigny.

"If it was [Friday] he would not play, but we'll see [Saturday]," Tourigny said.

The Boston College product left Thursday's game against Finland late in the first period after a shoulder-to-shoulder check by Eemil Viro.

Connor Zary, who started the game as the 13th forward, moved up to take Newhook's spot alongside Cole Perfetti and Peyton Krebs and the Calgary Flames first rounder remained on that line at Friday's practice.

"Z has been really good," Tourigny said. "He had been put in a tough situation. When you're not playing a regular shift it's tough to stay in the game and every time I put him out there he did a really good job [Thursday] and the game before so he earned it."

It's been an emotional couple of days for Zary who signed an entry-level contract with the Flames only hours before puck drop on Thursday. That piece of unfinished business had been on his mind during the World Juniors.

"Honestly, that gives you a little bit of a second wind," the Kamloops Blazers centre said, "a little bit of adrenaline knowing that's over with and that can be out of your head."

Canada's Newhook a game-time decision, Zary ready to fill in if needed

Alex Newhook did not practice with Team Canada after colliding with Finnish defenceman Eemil Viro on Thursday. Head coach Andre Tourigny says Newhook is a game-time decision for their quarter-final against the Czech Republic. Connor Zary filled in for Newhook at practice and is ready for his number to be called if needed.

Zary, who picked up an assist in the 4-1 win over Finland, credits Blazers co-owner Shane Doan for helping him be ready for this promotion.

"I was on the phone with Shane Doan the other night and he said he's been through this a lot of times and on different occasions with Team Canada. He said, 'No matter what you do, you got to keep telling yourself you're going to be ready. You got to write things down and remember those things and those little things are the things you're going to do when the opportunity arises. That is something I took to heart ... and when that chance did happen I was ready for it.'"

Zary's teammate and close friend Daylan Kuefler lived with Doan for a year, which is how he got to know the retired NHLer, who represented Canada at the 2004 World Cup, 2006 Olympics and several World Championships.

One day after watching his team throttle the Finns, Tourigny identified at least one area that can be improved.

"The big thing is the box out in our zone," the coach observed. "We were not hard in our box outs so in the third period they had a few deflections and rebound situations. They [did] not get the right bounce, but it could've been dangerous."

Tourigny warned against complacency as Canada prepares to play the Czech Republic, who finished fourth in Group B and got blown out by the Swedes (7-1) and Americans (7-0).

"People don't give enough credit to the Czechs," Tourigny insisted. "They're a really good five-on-five team so we need to make sure we are humble and go into that game knowing it will be a tough match."

The coach pointed out that most of the Czech line-up has a positive plus-minus rating despite some of the lopsided scores. And the Czechs already pulled off one big upset in this tournament by shutting out Russia 2-0.

"The Czechs did us a favour by beating the Russians," Tourigny said. "They showed us how good they can be. There's no way we'll take them lightly."

Although Canada has looked really good so far in outscoring opponents 33-4 in the preliminary round, the pressure of an elimination situation is going to be a new sensation for this group.

"You play Finland and you want to win, but it's not do or die," Tourigny said. "Now, we need to get down to business and make sure we're focused on the task, urgent with the task and patient with the outcome and not focusing on stuff we cannot control."

If Canada gets its forecheck game going against the Czechs on Saturday then they should be in great shape. All four of Canada's lines were coming in waves at the Finns.

"They're getting in really quick," observed defenceman Thomas Harley. "They're not giving them a chance to set up or turn around and even look. They are forcing rims and finishing their hits, which makes it a whole lot



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easier in the third period because those D don't want to go back and get pucks any more."

"We came out and played our best game so far," said Canada's leading scorer Dylan Cozens. "Reloading on pucks is our biggest thing. They'd move it up the wall and we'd have our high guy reload and create turnovers and then we'd go back at them and get good changes in the offensive zone and get fresh legs out and just keep dominating them by cycling the puck."

Tourigny described Team Canada's forecheck as "beautiful" and praised his players for keeping their shifts short so they could maintain the pressure most of the night.

"When you have that depth you have to exploit that depth," Tourigny said. "You have to play with a pace where you push the game."

The coach noted that when you're playing at that level it can only be sustained for 30-40 seconds and not 40-50 seconds.

"The energy was phenomenal," Tourigny noted.

Team Canada riding wave of momentum into quarter-final showdown with Czechs

After outscoring the opposition 33-4 in the preliminary round, Team Canada is riding a wave of momentum into the knockout stage at the World Juniors. The stacked lineup featuring 19 first-round picks is living up to the sky-high expectations even without injured captain Kirby Dach, and as Mark Masters reports, the only team that may be able to beat them is themselves.

Jan Mysak lets out a laugh when asked what he thinks about Team Canada.

"They're pretty good," the Czech captain said. "It's going to be a tough game. I know that. Every player on that team is really good. We have to be a very tough team. We want to beat them. We'll see. Nothing is impossible."

Mysak, a forward who played for Hamilton in the Ontario Hockey League last season, said the Czechs will look to replicate their performance against Russia.

"We played as a team," he noted. "We played hard. We played together. We blocked a lot of shots and our goalie [Lukas Parik] had a good game so that's going to be key points."

Mysak scored two goals and added an assist in the four preliminary round games. What's it look like when he's at his best?

"I lead the team," he said.

With the OHL still on pause, Mysak is playing in the top Czech league for his hometown team Litvinov and has received advice on how to be a good leader from general manager and coach Jiri Slegr.

The Canadiens second round pick in October's draft has also been texting with Tomas Plekanec throughout the tournament. The best advice from the long-time Hab?

"When I asked him how he made the NHL, he told me he did everything they told him."

Czech captain Mysak knows the dangers Canada presents, says his team is excited for quarters

Czech Republic captain Jan Mysak admits it will be tough to play against a team like Canada and knows that his team will have to play tough and as a unit to pull off the upset. The Canadiens 2020 draft pick said the mood in the Czech camp is good and they are excited for the challenge in the quarter-finals.

If you attend a Team Canada practice, you're going to notice Jakob Pelletier. The Val d'Or Foreurs winger is, of course, a talented player, but he is also a loud one. Pelletier will often be heard yelling out something after nice plays or even just at the start of a drill. It sounds like, "Yi! Yi! Yi!"

"I'm kind of like the guy who wakes up in the morning and is on," Pelletier explained. "I kind of love to scream and to talk and, not disturb people, but to be a morning sunshine."

Pelletier said the yell is something he thought up during the selection camp in Red Deer, Alta.

"He's an amazing guy," said Krebs. "He brings a lot of energy to the group. I think every time I talk to the guy I laugh a little bit just because he's got good jokes. He's a beauty and he's a big part of our team and a lot of guys look up to him."

Pelletier is an emotional guy on the ice and after banking a puck in off Dylan Holloway on Thursday night he kissed the Oilers first rounder on the helmet while on the bench.

"I'm a touch-able guy," Pelletier said with a laugh. "I like to hug people and be close to them and it was kind of in the moment. A lot of joy."

Canada had to work hard for this one! Dylan Holloway is credited with the goal pic.twitter.com/51dsEeSXPX

— TSN (@TSN_Sports) January 1, 2021

Bowen Byram has incredible offensive instincts and the ability to make jaw-dropping plays. And while the Vancouver Giants defenceman does have three assists so far at the World Juniors, it has been the well-rounded nature of his game that's been most notable.

"I don't need to be wowing anybody or anything like that," he said of his performance. "I just got to play solid at both ends of the rink and contribute offensively when I can. I feel like I'm doing that."

The Colorado Avalanche prospect, who posted 52 points in 50 Western Hockey League outings last season, seems to control the game whenever he's on the ice and that's why Tourigny is playing him more than anyone else. Byram leads the team in ice time (21:06 per game) and is tied with partner Jamie Drysdale for the tournament lead with a plus-13 rating.

"I want to make the NHL this year and I think that's how you do it," he said. "So, just trying to make sure I have good habits, being underneath the puck, making a good first pass, moving the puck quickly and trying to play a detailed two-way game."

Lines at Canada's 20-minute practice on Friday:

Holloway - McMichael - Cozens

Perfetti - Zary - Krebs

Quinn - Byfield - Pelletier

Mercer - Suzuki - Tomasino

Byram - Drysdale

Harley - Schneider

Guhle - Barron

Korczak (R) - Spence

Levi

Garand

Gauthier



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Injured: Kirby Dach (wrist, out for the tournament), Alex Newhook (upper body, day-to-day)

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USA TODAY / Reports: NHL planning two outdoor games at Lake Tahoe for 2021 season

Jimmy Hascup

While the NHL's standard slate of outdoor games in 2021 was postponed, the league is planning to host two of them at Lake Tahoe this season, according to multiple reports.

The matchups will feature the Colorado Avalanche and Vegas Golden Knights on Feb. 20 and the Philadelphia Flyers and Boston Bruins on Feb. 21 at the Edgewood Tahoe Resort in Stateline, Nevada, according to Sportsnet and The Athletic. Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman reported the event will be played around the 16th, 17th and 18th holes and will max out at "about 400" team personnel and event workers without fans. NBC included those matchups and dates on its broadcast schedule.

The 56-game NHL season is set to start Jan. 13.

According to The Athletic, the scheduled Jan. 1 Winter Classic game at Minnesota's Target Field between the Wild and St. Louis Blues will take place next year. The 2021 Stadium Series game on Feb. 20 at Carter-Finley Stadium with the Carolina Hurricanes was postponed with no new date announced.

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