



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 9, 2021

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Here are the Hurricanes' new assistant GMs and director of hockey operations

By Jessica Giglio

The Carolina Hurricanes on Friday announced new assistant general managers and a new director of hockey operations.

Eric Tulsy, who's been with the Canes for six seasons and was once a team vice president, has been promoted to assistant general manager. According to the Hurricanes, Tulsy will "assist in all hockey-related matters, manage the team's pro scouting department, and oversee the team's hockey information department."

Darren Yorke, a former director of personnel for Carolina, has also been promoted to assistant general manager. He "will be

involved in all player personnel decisions, oversee amateur scouting and player development, and will continue to be responsible for the team's draft," according to the Canes. He's been with the Hurricanes for 11 seasons.

The Hurricanes named Aaron Schwartz its director of hockey operations. He will be responsible for "assisting in player contract negotiations, collective bargaining agreement/salary cap compliance, and other hockey-related matters."

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

Dallas Stars' team has coronavirus issues. How does it affect the Canes, others in NHL?

By Chip Alexander

The news swept through the NHL on Friday with the force of a slapshot to the head.

The Dallas Stars were shutting down their training facility, it was announced by the league. Six Dallas players and two staff members have tested positive for coronavirus, the NHL said. The team will not open the 2020-21 regular season any earlier than Jan. 19, the league's release said.

Later, the Columbus Blue Jackets announced that some of their players were being held out of a Friday practice because of COVID-19 protocols.

Such is the fear of everyone in the NHL: the virus striking a team. The league did not have any COVID-19 problems when 24 teams gathered at two bubble sites for the 2020 Return to Play postseason. But the fear was that in holding training camps for the 2020-21 season, and with the virus spiking in many parts of the U.S and Canada, there could be some outbreaks and clusters.

"It's bound to happen," Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Friday on a media call. "Every college hockey program has had it. Almost every team that's got going, every avenue, has had it or experienced it.

'You hope you don't. But it's certainly not unexpected.'

CANES ARE TAKING CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS

The Stars, Blue Jackets and Canes are members of the new Central Division this season. The Canes and Stars are not scheduled to play until a back-to-back set on Jan. 30-31 at PNC Arena, so the Stars' stoppage now might not affect those games.

But so much still remains unknown. The Canes made it through a rushed training camp in July in the Return to Play process without a coronavirus incident. There were none in the Toronto bubble during the 2020 playoffs as everyone

underwent COVID-19 testing each day and it was a secure, highly controlled environment.

The Canes are taking as many precautions as possible for training camp, which began this week. Brind'Amour noted that the coaches use different rooms off the ice, and there is a plan for such things as, say, the goalies being separated in the locker room area -- just in case.

The Denver Broncos had a COVID-19 outbreak among their quarterbacks during this NFL season. That was a lesson learned by those in the other pro leagues.

"There's a lot of discussion on what's the best way to do this," Brind'Amour said. "We're trying to make sure we're not in close contact. Everything is not perfect but it's the best you can do."

The Canes completed their fifth day of camp practice Friday at the Wake Competition Center. Their area of the training facility is restricted to team personnel only, with security officers in place. There is no contact between media members with any players or coaches, with all interviews held on Zoom.

"MASK!" IS YELLED AT TRAINING CAMP

Canes president and general manager Don Waddell said one constant at the training facility is the yelling of "Mask!" if anyone is spotted without their face-covering in place. There is a sense of vigilance and responsibility.

"We all know what we're facing on a daily basis," Waddell said on a media call. "We continue to talk with our players, our staff, around the team, about what's important and what we need to do. One person can bring down the whole team, so we've got to be all in this together.

"We all forget at times this is not a norm for us. I think watching out for each other and taking care of each other and being good teammates and being good friends is going to lead us to hopefully having a very successful season in staying healthy."



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The Canes begin their season Jan. 14 at Detroit and play their first four games on the road -- two at Detroit, two against Nashville. Ten of the first 16 games are away from Raleigh. That's a lot of early travel, a lot of moving in and out of hotels and going to different rinks. The coronavirus risk will be there.

"I'm sure there will be a hiccup throughout the year," team captain Jordan Staal said this week on a media call. "I think the staff and everyone here in the organization is making sure the players are aware of what we need to do and to understand if somebody gets it, you're going to hurt the team and it's going to be bad. The guys understand no one is immune to this thing."



Hamilton Eager to Begin New Season

Defenseman focused on hockey, hopes to sign a new contract with the Canes

by Michael Smith

In between most drills during a Carolina Hurricanes' practice, head coach Rod Brind'Amour will choose a player to take a breakaway shot on either goalie. If he scores, the goalies skate up and down the ice. If the goalie makes the save, the skaters sprint to the opposite side boards and back.

Dougie Hamilton was first up in Friday's training camp practice.

He gathered the puck at center ice, skated in on James Reimer and stickhandled before snapping off a quick shot that beat the Canes' netminder, forcing Reimer and Mrazek to skate up and down the ice.

Hamilton's goal was greeted by whoops and hollers and woos and stick tapping from his non-goalie teammates, who got a brief skating reprieve before the whistle blew to begin the next drill.

Hamilton is coming off a season in which he scored 14 goals and totaled 40 assists, both tops among Canes defensemen. Had his 2019-20 campaign not prematurely ended in January due to injury and subsequent surgery, he would have made his first career NHL All-Star Game appearance and likely would have eclipsed his career high of 18 goals set the season prior.

As it turned out, the 2020 calendar year was pretty frustrating for Hamilton. Go figure.

Hamilton returned to the ice with the Canes in Phase 3 training camp in July, but an undisclosed injury then forced him out of the lineup until the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

"It's been hard for me, maybe mentally more than anything right now," Hamilton said after rejoining Canes practice in the Toronto bubble in early August. "Maybe the hardest part through the whole thing is watching the games and not being able to be with the guys. Win or loss, you want to be there. It's hard to be on the outside and feel like you're not a part of it."

Not that there was much hockey anyway, but Hamilton played in just 12 of the Canes' 36 games in 2020, tallying five points (2g, 3a) in that stretch.

Now, he's raring to get going again, even if the 56-game 2020-21 schedule is going to be a mad sprint to the finish.

"None of us have really played too much hockey in the last however many months. Once we get going, we're going to be playing a lot," he said this week. "Hopefully we can get off to a good start and get into a rhythm."

On Sunday, Feb. 7, Hamilton will make his return to Columbus, where he suffered a broken fibula in his left leg nearly a year ago. He and the Canes will face the Blue Jackets, Metropolitan Division opponents turned Central Division opponents, eight times in the upcoming season. What will that be like?

"Eight games against Columbus," Hamilton smiled.

Hamilton, who NHL Network ranked as the seventh-best defenseman in the league, figures to be poised for another big season. Even despite only playing in 47 games in 2019-20, he ranked fourth on the Canes in points (40) and eighth among all NHL defensemen in goals (14). He was tracking for career numbers across the board (and was already a career-best plus-30) and could have had a strong case for Norris Trophy consideration (he still finished seventh in voting).

A big season could lead to a big payday, too. The 27-year-old blueliner will be an unrestricted free agent this summer, though he's made clear his desire to remain in Raleigh.

"I'd like to stay here, but I'm going to let my agent and Don (Waddell) talk," Hamilton said. "I just want to focus on hockey."

His head coach agrees.

"He's a big part of our team" Brind'Amour said. "Hopefully they come to some sort of agreement because we love him around here."

A possible contract extension is likely to dominate headlines off the ice for Hamilton this season. That's just how the business works. Until that gets settled, Hamilton's focus remains on the ice, where his play could garner even more attention. It's been a familiar site through the first week of



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camp. He's skating alongside Jaccob Slavin on the Canes' top defensive pair. He's quarterbacking the first power-play unit. He's smiling and cracking jokes and hanging around the rink long after the final whistle of practice.

And, of course, he's scoring goals like the one he netted in Friday's practice.

Canes Introduce PNC Bank as Official Helmet Branding Partner

One-color PNC logo will be featured on left and right sides of helmets in 2020-21 season

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes' helmets will have a new look to them for the 2020-21 season.

The team today introduced PNC Bank as its official helmet branding partner. A small decal featuring a one-color PNC logo will be positioned on the left and right sides of each of the four Canes' helmets during the upcoming season.

"We're working hard in practice right now, and we've been skating for a while. We've had a lot of time to prepare, and now we're trying to get the game-like feel back," he said. "Hopefully we can come out with some energy."

This exclusive partnership expands the long-standing relationship between the Canes and PNC Bank, who has also been the naming rights partner for the team's home venue, PNC Arena, since March 15, 2012.

Canes' team branding - the primary logo on the red and black helmets, the red-and-black alternate version of the primary logo on the white helmets and the Whalers logo on the green helmets - will be featured on the bottom left of the back of the helmets, opposite the NHL shield.

These helmets will make their in-game debut on Thursday, Jan. 14 in Detroit, when the puck drops on the Canes' 2020-21 season.



Aho, Vasilevskiy among NHL.com picks for Central Division preseason team

Writers also name Hedman, Point; fan vote underway

With the 2020-21 NHL season scheduled to start Jan. 13, fans are getting the chance to pick the top players in each of the four divisions through the 2020-21 NHL Preseason All-Division Team Fan Vote. Results will be announced Jan. 12 and 13.

Though the fans will have the ultimate say regarding the top players in the Scotia North Division, MassMutual East Division, Discover Central Division and Honda West Division, NHL.com writers have made their own picks using the same ballot the fans have.

Today, four NHL.com writers reveal their selections for the Central Division, which consists of the Carolina Hurricanes, Chicago Blackhawks, Columbus Blue Jackets, Dallas Stars, Detroit Red Wings, Florida Panthers, Nashville Predators and Tampa Bay Lightning.

Nicholas J. Cotsonika, columnist

Forward: Sebastian Aho, Carolina Hurricanes
Forward: Jonathan Huberdeau, Florida Panthers
Forward: Patrick Kane, Chicago Blackhawks
Defenseman: Victor Hedman, Tampa Bay Lightning
Defenseman: Roman Josi, Nashville Predators
Goalie: Andrei Vasilevskiy, Tampa Bay Lightning

The goalie pick was easy. Vasilevskiy is the top goalie in the NHL. He was a Vezina Trophy finalist each of the past three seasons and the winner in 2018-19. The defensemen were easy too. Josi is the reigning Norris Trophy winner. Hedman has been a Norris finalist four seasons in a row and won it in 2017-18. The forwards were harder because of the strong candidates I had to leave out, but Kane has accomplished so much in his NHL career and remains on top of his game. He scored 84 points (33 goals, 51 assists) last season, eighth in the NHL and most among anyone now in the Central. Huberdeau wasn't far behind with 78 points (23 goals, 55 assists). Aho's 38 goals were the most among anyone in this division.

Adam Kimelman, deputy managing editor

Forward: Sebastian Aho, Carolina Hurricanes
Forward: Aleksander Barkov, Florida Panthers
Forward: Brayden Point, Tampa Bay Lightning
Defenseman: Seth Jones, Columbus Blue Jackets
Defenseman: Roman Josi, Nashville Predators
Goalie: Andrei Vasilevskiy, Tampa Bay Lightning

Choosing two defensemen for this division was incredibly difficult, but the reason I opted for Jones is I believe he's the most underrated player in the NHL. Few players can control a game at each end of the ice like Jones, and I believe that if he wanted solely to focus on his offensive game, he could be the highest-scoring defenseman in the NHL. He plays the



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toughest minutes for the Blue Jackets every night. Five NHL defensemen last season averaged at least 20:00 per game at even strength (20:17 for Jones), and at least 2:00 per game on the power play (2:34) and on the penalty kill (2:25), and Josi was the only other one in the Central Division. Choosing the forwards wasn't easy either. Leaving off Kane was a tough call, but Point (33 points; 14 goals, 19 assists) was outstanding during the Stanley Cup Playoffs and is moving into his prime. Same for Aho. Barkov is an outstanding two-way player who I think will be closer this season to the player who scored 96 points (35 goals, 61 assists) in 82 games in 2018-19 than the one who scored 62 (20 goals, 42 assists) in 66 games last season.

Tracey Myers, staff writer

Forward: Sebastian Aho, Carolina Hurricanes
Forward: Patrick Kane, Chicago Blackhawks
Forward: Brayden Point, Tampa Bay Lightning
Defenseman: Victor Hedman, Tampa Bay Lightning
Defenseman: Miro Heiskanen, Dallas Stars
Goalie: Andrei Vasilevskiy, Tampa Bay Lightning

There were many defensemen to choose from, but I went with the youth movement in selecting Heiskanen. I've heard many a coach say it takes a few years for defensemen to mature and truly be ready for the NHL. Clearly no one said that to Heiskanen, who at 21 has the poise and presence of a veteran, was third on the Stars with 35 points (eight goals, 27 assists) in 68 games last season and led them in ice time per game (23:46). But Heiskanen saved his best for the

postseason, when he led NHL defensemen and was third among all skaters with 26 points (six goals, 20 assists) in 27 games. Hedman, who won the Conn Smythe Trophy voted as MVP of the playoffs, was an easy decision. Same goes for Vasilevskiy. Aho is so fun to watch, as is Point. As for Kane, every season I go in thinking, "OK, his production is going to start to diminish, right?" Every season he proves me wrong. Enough said.

Rob Reese, fantasy editor

Forward: Aleksander Barkov, Florida Panthers
Forward: Patrick Kane, Chicago Blackhawks
Forward: Brayden Point, Tampa Bay Lightning
Defenseman: Dougie Hamilton, Carolina Hurricanes
Defenseman: Roman Josi, Nashville Predators
Goalie: Andrei Vasilevskiy, Tampa Bay Lightning

The selection that stands out here is Hamilton. Why did I choose him over a top defenseman like Hedman? Hamilton scored 40 points (14 goals, 26 assists) in 47 games last season before sustaining a lower-body injury Jan. 16 and missing the rest of the regular season. He was tied for second with Josi among NHL defensemen in goals at the time and on pace for an NHL career-high 70 points for an 82-game season. Hamilton's trajectory continues to point upwards with young forwards Aho and Andrei Svechnikov progressing, and Carolina's outlook in the division should make Hamilton a Norris Trophy finalist this season.



Former part-time data wiz now an assistant GM for Canes

By Mark Armstrong

RALEIGH, N.C. (WTVD) -- Eric Tulsy began with the Carolina Hurricanes working in the shadows as a part timer back in 2014. That's when analytics was really just getting a foothold in the NHL. Today he was given the title of Assistant General Manager, a testament to the value he's brought to the team.

"We make a point of calling it the hockey information department instead of hockey analytics," Tulsy said Friday. "Ultimately, everything is information, right, whether it's information about what somebody saw when they're watching a game or what data we have recorded."

Tulsy is smarter than you (and me). With a physics and chemistry degree from Harvard, a doctorate from Berkeley and 12 years working in nanotechnology on his resume, you don't have to take my word for it either. For the last seven years, that intellect has been laser-focused on making the Hurricanes a smarter, more efficient and better hockey team.

"The department's job is to get any information we can and make it available to anyone who needs it. So whether that's coaches or scouts or development staff or management."

So why hockey, you might be wondering. Why would a man with 13 patents to his name dedicate himself to a game? The answer is both simple and complex.

"I think timing was a part of it, that it just happened to be sort of an interesting puzzle that was the right amount of challenge for it to be something I could get into," he said. "As far as why it's stuck, of course, I love the game. I've had a lot of fun. There's a lot of interesting work to be done."

There's also the challenge of knowing that there's still so much he doesn't know. While the science of hockey has advanced by leaps and bounds it is still in its infancy.

"I think we've stepped off the sidewalk, but there is a lot of road in front of us," Tulsy said. "Hockey is a complicated game."



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A look at who the Hurricanes will face off against in new Central Division

by: Michael Prunka

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – There's a lot of uncertainty in sports — and in general, really — because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One thing we do know is that hockey comes back on Jan. 13 and the 2021 NHL season is going to be a different one.

Each team will play in a division with six or seven other clubs. They'll play exclusively in their division with the top-four finishers in each qualifying for the playoffs at the end of the 56-game season.

The Carolina Hurricanes were drawn into a realigned Central Division that will have them playing a few teams much more than they're used to. They're well acquainted with the Columbus Blue Jackets, who also move from last year's Metropolitan Division. They've also played former Atlantic Division opponents in Tampa Bay, Detroit, and Florida thrice each.

The other three teams in the Central — Chicago, Dallas, and Nashville — have been playing in the Western Conference, so they're used to only meeting twice a year.

So, how have the 'Canes been doing against their opponents they'll face eight times each in this new division? Let's take a look at each ahead of Thursday's puck drop in Detroit.

Chicago Blackhawks

Carolina and Chicago met twice last season. Petr Mrazek picked up a shutout in a 4-0 win in Raleigh on Oct. 26, 2019, before the 'Canes went on to win 4-2 in Chicago on Nov. 19, 2019. Nino Niederreiter, who has largely struggled to produce consistently since arriving in Carolina, had a goal and an assist in each of those meetings.

The Blackhawks go into this season with a group of centers depleted by injuries. Veteran Jonathan Toews will be out indefinitely due to an undisclosed illness. Kirby Dach, Chicago's third-overall pick in 2019, will miss at least four months following surgery on a broken wrist. That may mean former Hurricane Lucas Wallmark will be asked to fill a greater role than the fourth-line center job he often had in Carolina.

Chicago goes into this season with a largely unproven goaltender corps after parting ways with longtime netminder Corey Crawford in the offseason. Malcolm Subban and Collin Delia are tabbed to compete for the starter job. Subban has never started more than 20 games in a season while Delia made 16 starts for the Blackhawks last season in his sophomore campaign.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Columbus will be Carolina's most familiar foe in this division. The two met three times last season and seven times in the past two years. Columbus won the last four regular-season contests in the series and five of the last seven.

It's not as bad as it sounds, though. All three of those losses to the Blue Jackets last year were by one goal, including one in overtime.

Columbus boasts one of the best defensive pairings in the NHL in Zach Werenski and Seth Jones. Backstopping the defense, the Blue Jackets have an effective goalie tandem in Joonas Korpisalo and Elvis Merzlikins. The former dazzled in the early stages of the playoffs when he made 85 saves in a 5OT loss to eventual champion Tampa Bay in the first round of the playoffs. Merzlikins, meanwhile, made 31 starts in his first season, posting a 13-9-8 record with a .923 save percentage and 2.35 goals-against average. One of those wins was a 32-save performance against the 'Canes.

Up front, Columbus has a talented group of youngsters surrounded by reliable veterans. Pierre-Luc Dubois, a 22-year-old center, broke onto the scene with 61 points in 2018-19. He about matched that pace with 49 points in 70 games last year and was a point-per-game in the playoffs last season. Winger Oliver Bjorkstrand, 25, goes into this season with back-to-back 20-goal campaigns under his belt.

Columbus also made two significant additions in the form of veteran center Mikko Koivu and Max Domi. The latter, obtained in a trade with Montreal, eclipsed the 70-point mark with the Canadiens just two years ago.

Dallas Stars

Carolina squared off with the Western Conference Champions twice last season and lost by a 4-1 mark each time. The Stars' guns were on full display in their win in Dallas on Feb. 11, 2020. Jamie Benn had a hat trick, although he technically only put two pucks in the net. He was awarded the third goal after being hauled down while on a breakaway against an empty net. Denis Gurianov scored the fourth as part of a breakout season that saw him finish with 20 goals.

Roope Hintz, another young forward, scored a goal and assisted on two others in Dallas' win in Carolina on Feb. 25, 2020. One-time Carolina goalie Anton Khudobin made 40 stops in that win.

Khudobin went into the playoffs last season as the Stars' backup, but ended up backstopping them to a Stanley Cup Final appearance after an injury to Ben Bishop. He's likely to begin the season as the starter for the same reason.

On defense, Dallas has 28-year-old John Klingberg in his prime while Miro Heiskanen emerged as a player who could contend for a Norris Trophy one year. Offensively, the Stars will be without Tyler Seguin to start the season, but still have the one-two punch of Hintz and Joe Pavelski down the middle.

Detroit Red Wings

If there is any team Carolina is thankful to be playing more this season, it has to be the Red Wings. Sebastian Aho scored a pair of goals as the Hurricanes pounded Detroit 5-2 on March



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10, 2020 — the team's final game before the COVID-19 pause.

Before that, James Reimer recorded a shutout on Nov. 24, 2020, and Sebastian Aho scored twice in a 7-3 beatdown.

The Red Wings were objectively terrible last season as they won just 17 games. They aren't expected to be much better this season but did make some offseason moves that should translate to some improvement. Corey Perry is someone who could add much-needed scoring past their first line. Vladislav Namestnikov is someone who is lauded for being a two-way workhorse.

Defensively, the Red Wings will hope 23-year-old Filip Hronek will take another step in his development. And while he may or may not play in Detroit this season, 19-year-old Moritz Seider is excelling while on loan in the Swedish Hockey League.

Florida Panthers

The Hurricanes have had some good fortune against Florida in recent years. They're 7-2 against the Panthers over the past three seasons.

Carolina, with one of the deeper defensive units in the NHL, looks like a good bet to continue that run of dominance against the Panthers. They lost Mike Hoffman and Evgenii Dadonov in the offseason. They were Florida's leading goal scorers and combined for 54 tallies. Jonathan Huberdeau and Aleksander Barkov have their work cut out to offset the impact of those departures.

Defensively, Florida finished 26th in the NHL last season in goals against. They added some toughness on the backend in the form of Radko Gudas but will need better team play in their own end and a resurgence from veteran goalie Sergei Bobrovsky if they hope to stave off all of Carolina's offensive weapons.

Nashville Predators

Carolina and Nashville split their two meetings last season with the Predators winning 3-0 in Raleigh and the 'Canes picking up a 4-1 win in Nashville.

But the series hadn't been kind to the Predators before that. Before their shutout win at PNC Arena on Nov. 29, 2019, the last time Nashville beat the 'Canes in the regular season was Jan. 2, 2016. Carolina had a six-game winning streak over a Predators team that, in that span, made a Stanley Cup Final.

All smile, Canes' Pesce back from injury and ready to resume shut-down role

by: Todd Gibson

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – The smile on Brett Pesce's face at practice is a stark contrast to how he felt in late February when a shoulder injury knocked the elite defender out for the remainder of the season.

"It's not a good feeling," said Pesce of not being able to participate in last year's playoffs. "You want to be out there battling with your teammates."

The Carolina Hurricanes defenseman said missing the playoffs took a toll on him.

Nashville is traditionally strong on defense. The Predators finished in the middle of the pack last season in goals-against but were top three in the two seasons prior. Roman Josi won the Norris Trophy for best defenseman in the league last season. Juuse Saros finished the season with a .914 save percentage and 2.70 goals-against average. He's been progressively taking over as the starter, but the duo of him and 38-year-old Pekka Rinne couldn't be formidable if the latter can regain his form a bit after his save percentage dipped below .900 last year.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Nothing like saving the best for last, huh? This realignment means the 'Canes will face off against the reigning Stanley Cup Champion Lightning eight times this season.

Attitude goes a long way. Head coach Rod Brind'Amour will surely be looking at Tampa Bay on his schedule as eight chances for his team to measure up against the best of the best. The Lightning can almost score at will. They finished the regular season first in the league in scoring. Defensively, there's still room for improvement — which can be a bit scary — as they finished 10th in goals against and had the 14th-ranked penalty kill.

However, the offensive juggernaut in Tampa Bay will be without leading scorer Nikita Kucherov. He will miss the regular season after undergoing hip surgery. Even so, Steven Stamkos is healthy after missing all but a few shifts during the playoffs. Tampa also has Brayden Point upfront and Victor Hedman on the blue line. Backstopping all of it is a Vezina Trophy winner in Andrei Vasilevskiy.

Carolina vs. Tampa Bay is going to be appointment viewing this season for 'Canes fans. Not only will the Lightning be the stiffest competition in the Central Division, but the meetings between the two have made for exciting games in recent seasons. Jaccob Slavin scored the overtime winner after the 'Canes gave up three goals in the first period on Oct. 6, 2019. Carolina went on to ride a three-goal first period to a 3-2 win on Nov. 20, 2019 before dropping the final meeting of the campaign.

The 'Canes, still largely a young group, have grown into a team that can compete regularly with contenders like the Lightning. Last season's two wins are a vast improvement from having lost 5-of-6 against Tampa over the previous two seasons.

"Missing the playoffs kind of took a toll on me even more so I would say because you have the opportunity to compete for a Stanley Cup which is why everyone plays the game."

No one was shocked when Pesce went down with the injury. He had hurt the same right shoulder a few years ago but decided to rehab and play on instead of opting for surgery.

The timing of the second injury, though, couldn't have been worse.



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The Canes were able to overcome it and make the postseason, but Pesce's absence was really felt during the playoffs.

"I can't say enough about it," said Canes head coach Rod Brind'Amour. "If you don't have it, you really notice it."

He's kind of one of those guys when you have him in you don't notice it. He's kind of one of those guys when you have him in

maybe you take for granted a little bit because he does such a good job of what he does."

Now 100 percent healthy, Pesce is once again ready to anchor the Canes second-line defense, a reason to smile if there ever was one.



Hurricanes announce front office changes

The Canes announced two promotions and an addition in their front office.

By Andrew Schnittker

The Hurricanes announced a number of changes to their hockey operations department Friday, with Eric Tulsky and Darren Yorke both promoted to assistant general managers and Aaron Schwartz brought in as the new Director of Hockey Operations.

The team also announced its official helmet ad sponsor for the season, and it's not exactly a surprise:

Let's take a deeper look at the Hurricanes' new hires and what their positions entail:

Aaron Schwartz

As director of hockey operations, Schwartz will work on player contract negotiations (a role previously held by Paul Krepelka, who took an assistant GM job with the Panthers this offseason), CBA and salary cap management and more.

Schwartz played five seasons of professional hockey and has previously worked as an agent, and in hockey operations roles with the Montreal Canadiens and Washington Capitals.

"Obviously [Schwartz] played some in the minor hockey league, was an agent more recently," said Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell. "I think it's important, as you mentioned with Paul, it's a whole different side of the table when you're on the team side vs. the agent side. There's a lot more rules and regulations you have to follow. We want to make sure we do that. I think it's a nice benefit for Aaron for sure. When we interviewed Aaron and we all talked to him, I think we all came across thinking that there will be learning experiences but he's got some of the background of what has to happen in negotiating players' contracts."

Schwartz won't exactly ease into his new role, as the Hurricanes have two pivotal contract negotiations looming with Andrei Svechnikov and Dougie Hamilton.

Eric Tulsky

Tulsky, coming into his seventh year with the Hurricanes after previously serving as the vice president of hockey management and strategy, will take on an increased role in

pro scouting as well as running the hockey information department.

"We talk a lot about having a collaborative front office," Tulsky said. "It's not easy to do that and get a lot of people's input without having things well organized and well structured. So a lot of what Darren and I are aiming to do is help make sure all of these different groups are well integrated with each other and have all the information they need."

Tulsky began publishing hockey statistical analysis in 2011, and has continued his work in analytics throughout that time. Waddell said there's nothing the Hurricanes do that involves analytics, particularly in their decision-making on players.

For Tulsky, the most important part of his department is making sure everyone in the organization has all the different information they need to make decisions, analytics or otherwise.

"Ultimately, everything is information, whether it's information about what somebody saw when they were watching a game, or what data we have recorded by the people sitting in the box for the NHL and recording stats," Tulsky said. "It's all just different kinds of information. And our group's job is to help organize information and make it available to people, and also do some research into what you can do with it and how it can be used. That research is the part of the group that I would call analytics."

For Tulsky, though huge strides have been made in the types of statistics and information available in recent years, he knows there's still more to come in the future.

"I think we've stepped off the sidewalk, but there's a lot of road in front of us," Tulsky said. "Hockey's a complicated game. The data that we had up until now is all basically just individual events. As we get into a world where we're tracking where every player is at all times, there's a lot more you can learn about what people are doing individually and how it impacts results, so there's only going to be more that we can say as that information becomes more available and we have a longer history with it."

Darren Yorke

This is Yorke's 12th season with Carolina, and he previously served as the director of player personnel. He'll be involved



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with all player personnel decisions, as well as take charge of amateur scouting, player development and the draft.

Yorke will have his work cut out for him this season with many prospects in a key stage of their development. With the whole hockey world turned upside down by COVID-19, the arena of player development is no different. There's uncertainty about the CHL season, and the Hurricanes will have some prospects playing around the globe, with their new AHL affiliate in Chicago and on the team's NHL taxi squad.

Communication will be key in making the right decisions for development.

"When there's uncertainty, knowing who and when you need to communicate something is imperative," Yorke said. "So I think dealing with the year that we're all dealing with, it's going to make us better. So the biggest thing is having the structure in place, and some of these conversations have happened last March in terms of what we need to do and how we need to do it based off the assumptions we knew then. That allows us to make the plan moving forward."

Hurricanes Top 25 Under 25 #1: Sebastian Aho

The final piece of our top 25 under 25 series, Sebastian Aho has already become a superstar in Raleigh, and he's just getting started.

By Alec_Sawyer

Over the past few weeks, we've been counting down the top 25 under 25 in the Carolina Hurricanes' organization. Finally we've reached No. 1, and it really shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone: it's Sebastian Aho.

Aho is a superstar for the Hurricanes, a player quickly climbing up the NHL ranks as one of the best while still being just 23 years old. In his four-year NHL career, he has a top-10 finish in Hart Trophy voting (as well as a top-10 Calder finish his rookie year) and he's just getting started.

Aho was a steal for the Canes back in the 2015 draft, a second-round selection who has out-performed the vast majority of guys picked ahead of him. He made his NHL debut in the Canes' first game of the 2016-17 season, playing all 82 games of his rookie year. That season, he had 49 points as a teenager.

Aho has followed his exceptional rookie season up with more of the same, setting a career high with 83 points in 2018-19 and a career best mark of 38 goals when the season ended early in 2019-20.

Since the beginning of the 2016-17 season, Aho is 30th in the NHL with 263 points. Among guys still under 25-years old, Aho ranks sixth behind Conor McDavid, David Pastrnak, Mitch Marner, Auston Matthews and Jack Eichel. That's some pretty good company.

For the Canes, Aho has been everything they could have ever asked for and more. He burst onto the scene and immediately started scoring, and he's only gotten better. He made the move to center after two years, and his numbers only went up.

One new wrinkle for the Hurricanes' farm system this year will be sharing their AHL affiliate, the Chicago Wolves, with the Nashville Predators' organization, following Nashville's affiliate in Milwaukee opting out of the AHL season.

Waddell said the team did not have enough players who qualified to play in the AHL to fill out a full roster under contract, so finding the right partner both to fill the team and share expenses made sense.

For Yorke, there's another side of it from a player development standpoint.

"For anyone that has kids, you always talk about that student to teacher ratio," Yorke said. "It's a unique situation we're in. This gives us a lot higher ratio of players to cope with. So it allows our staff to spend some more one-on-one time teaching the players and working on the little details that they need to make it to the NHL."

He offers it all. He's as skilled a player as the Canes have, and his ability to finish in front of the net is remarkable. See below.

Apart from that, Aho is blazing fast and can skate with the best of them. Time after time it's Aho's ability to cut through defense and flat-out fly that creates opportunities for the Canes.

He can pass the puck, too. He had 53 assists in 2018-19. His pace was down quite a bit in 2019-20, but his goal scoring was at an all-time high and there's only so many assists to go around when you're playing on a line with Teuvo Teravainen.

Simply put, Aho is becoming an NHL superstar. He was an All-Star in 2019. He's been firmly planted on league leaderboards over the past couple seasons, finishing tied for sixth in goals this past season.

He's been the best player on a Hurricanes team that has made the postseason two years in a row, and he's been the cornerstone of a Carolina rebuild that is now fully flourishing.

His potential and ceiling is off the charts. There's no reason to believe that Aho won't be a perennial All-Star moving forward, someone who will be a staple in the NHL's top-10 goal scorers and could have a season or two where he's in a legitimate conversation for the Hart.

As far as where he stands with the Hurricanes, there are a lot of franchise records that Aho could chase down. Aho was on pace to finish the 2019-20 season with 46 goals, which would have broken Eric Staal's team record of 45 in a season (since the Canes moved to Raleigh).

If you take a look across the NHL, there aren't many teams who have a top 25 under 25 list as impressive as the Hurricanes. Carolina is set for the future, while competing in the present, and Aho is as much a part of that as anyone.

Aho has done so much during his time with the Canes, that it's really hard to believe that he is still just 23.



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Looking at the New Division: Wingers

The start of the 2021 NHL season will bring a new division for the Canes. Let's take a look at what each team in the newly minted Central Division brings to the table on the wings.

By Alec_Sawyer

As everyone is well aware of at this point, the unique 2021 NHL season will bring a new division for the Carolina Hurricanes.

The Canes only have one normal Metropolitan Division mate, the Columbus Blue Jackets, coming with them to the newly formed Discover Central Division, as the fresh season will bring a lot of games against teams Carolina isn't that familiar with.

Thursday we took a look at all the centers in the division, so now it's time to take a quick glance at all the wingers playing alongside those centers.

For the Canes, Teuvo Teravainen and Andrei Svechnikov highlight a group of wingers that also features up-and-comer Martin Necas, Warren Foegele, Ryan Dzingel, Brock McGinn, Nino Niederreiter, newly acquired Jesper Fast and more.

So, here's a quick glance at who the rest of the Central Division has holding down the wings:

Chicago Blackhawks

1. Patrick Kane (33-51-84)
2. Dominik Kubalik (30-16-46)
3. Alex DeBrincat (18-27-45)
4. Mattias Janmark (6-15-21)
5. Ryan Carpenter (3-12-15)
6. Andrew Shaw (3-7-10)
7. Matthew Highmore (2-4-6)
8. Brandon Pirri (0-2-2)

**Alex Nylander (10-16-26)

The Blackhawks' group of wingers is pretty top heavy, obviously led by Kane. Along with Kane, Kubalik and DeBrincat are strong players, with Kubalik coming on as a rookie last season and DeBrincat looking to bounce back from a somewhat down season in 2019-20.

The big addition for Chicago is Janmark, who had eight points in 26 playoff games for the Dallas Stars last year en route to the Stanley Cup Final. The rest of the wingers for Chicago are a bit underwhelming, a group that could see some fluctuation with some other prospects potentially playing roles for the NHL squad this year.

For the Blackhawks, it's the loss of Nylander that will hurt. The 22-year-old former first-round pick of Buffalo scored 10 goals in his first season in Chicago last year, but a knee injury is likely to sideline him for the season.

Columbus Blue Jackets

1. Oliver Bjorkstrand (21-15-36)

2. Nick Foligno (10-21-31)
3. Cam Atkinson (12-14-26)
4. Boone Jenner (11-3-24)
5. Mikhail Grigorenko (10-13-23)
6. Emil Bernstrom (10-10-20)
7. Alexandre Texier (6-7-13)
8. Eric Robinson (7-5-12)
9. Liam Foudy (0-1-1)

**Gustav Nyquist (15-27-42)

The one Central Division team that the Hurricanes are very familiar with, the Blue Jackets' wingers are led by longtime Columbus stalwarts Bjorkstrand, Foligno and Atkinson. Those guys the Canes know well, and it's a veteran group that Columbus will be able to lean on in an unusual season.

Grigorenko joins the ranks from Colorado, the most notable addition, and there's quite a few guys competing for the final couple spots (including former Canes Nathan Gerbe). The biggest loss for Columbus comes in the form of Nyquist, the team's second-leading scorer a year ago, who is recovering from a shoulder surgery. Nyquist could be back by the end of the season, but it won't be before April.

Dallas Stars

1. Jamie Benn (19-20-39)
2. Alexander Radulov (15-19-34)
3. Denis Gurianov (20-9-29)
4. Blake Comeau (8-8-16)
5. Andrew Cogliano (3-11-14)
6. Justin Dowling (3-3-6)
7. Nicholas Caamano (1-1-2)
8. Joel Kiviranta (1-0-1)
9. Joel L'Esperance (1-0-1)
10. Jason Robertson (0-1-1)

Both teams that participated in the 2020 Stanley Cup Final are in the Canes' new division, including the defending Western Conference champs. Benn and Radulov lead the charge for the Stars' winger corps, with a number of talented and promising players coming in behind.

There are a couple key losses in this group for Dallas, mainly Corey Perry and Mattias Janmark. There's some star power and goals in this group, mainly led by Benn, and it's a rather unfamiliar one for the Hurricanes.

Detroit Red Wings

1. Tyler Bertuzzi (21-27-48)
2. Anthony Mantha (16-22-38)
3. Vladislav Namestnikov (17-14-31)



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4. Darren Helm (9-7-16)
5. Filip Zadina (8-7-15)
6. Bobby Ryan (5-3-8)
7. Adam Erne (2-3-5)
8. Sam Gagner (1-0-1)
9. Evgeny Svechnikov (0-0-0)

There's not too much question as to who the Central Division's bottom feeder is going to be, and it's Detroit. The Red Wings' top line actually isn't that bad, with Dylan Larkin centering Bertuzzi and Mantha. There's quite a bit of talent there, and Detroit should definitely get some goals from that unit.

Namestnikov and Ryan are interesting additions, with the former arguably among Detroit's top five players. Honestly, the most intriguing thing about this group from a Canes point of view is Svechnikov, the brother of Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov. The Detroit Svechnikov did suffer an injury in camp, but there should still be plenty of opportunities for the brothers to square off this season.

Florida Panthers

1. Jonathan Huberdeau (23-55-78)
2. Anthony Duclair (23-17-40)
3. Frank Vatrano (16-18-34)
4. Brett Connolly (19-14-33)
5. Patric Hornqvist (17-15-32)
6. Vinnie Hinostroza (5-17-22)
7. Aleksi Saarela (2-2-4)
8. Owen Tippett (prospect)
9. Grigori Denisenko (prospect)

The wingers group for the Panthers looks a little different this year, with a lot of new additions to the fold. Duclair, Hornqvist and Hinostroza join from other teams, while guys like Saarela, Tippett and Denisenko could look to get an extended NHL shot on the bottom end of things.

There's quite a bit of talent here, led of course by Huberdeau. He's been one of the cornerstones of the franchise for a long time, and was on pace for 93 points in 2019-20 after setting a career high with 92 in 2018-19. Add Duclair to the mix, and there's some good players on Florida's top two lines.

Nashville Predators

1. Filip Forsberg (21-27-48)

2. Calle Jarnkrok (15-19-34)
3. Luke Kunin (15-16-31)
4. Rocco Grimaldi (10-21-31)
5. Mikael Granlund (17-13-30)
6. Viktor Arvidsson (15-13-28)
7. Nick Cousins (10-15-25)
8. Colton Sissons (9-6-15)

Nashville has a forward group that has played together quite a bit, something that could prove beneficial with a shortened camp. While Kunin and Cousins get added to the mix, filling things out for Nashville, the rest of this group was with the Predators last year.

Forsberg obviously has a lot of talent at the top, but this is an interesting team. Like Nashville as a whole, there's a lot to work with here, it's a matter of whether the team can reach its talent and potential.

Tampa Bay Lightning

1. Steven Stamkos (29-37-66)
2. Alex Killorn (26-23-49)
3. Ondrej Palat (17-24-41)
4. Tyler Johnson (14-17-31)
5. Pat Maroon (9-14-23)
6. Mathieu Joseph (4-3-7)
7. Barclay Goodrow (0-2-2)
8. Blake Coleman (0-1-1)
9. Alexander Volkov (0-1-1)

**Nikita Kucherov (33-52-85)

The thing that jumps out when looking at the defending Stanley Cup champions' group of wingers heading into the 2021 season is Kucherov, or the lack thereof. Kucherov, one of the NHL's top talents, had hip surgery and will miss the regular season, a huge blow to Tampa Bay's title defense.

Still, the Lightning has a pretty strong group of wingers at the top. Stamkos, Killorn, Palat and Johnson are all pretty good players, and the depth isn't bad either. Tampa Bay is among the favorites to win the Stanley Cup this year, and certainly is probably the favorite to finish atop the Central Division.

This group of wingers, among many other reasons, is part of why the expectations are high once again for the Lightning.



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Wolves add Nashville affiliation for 2020-21

The Chicago Wolves announced Thursday they have reached an agreement with the National Hockey League's Nashville Predators and Carolina Hurricanes on a partnership for the 2020-21 American Hockey League season.

The Milwaukee Admirals, Nashville's long-time AHL affiliate, announced Monday it will not participate in the upcoming season slated to begin Feb. 5. The Wolves' one-year affiliation with Nashville allows the Predators to loan Chicago players who normally would suit up for Milwaukee. The Wolves entered a three-year partnership with Carolina on Sept. 10, 2020.

"We have great admiration and respect for (Nashville president of hockey operations and general manager) David Poile and Milwaukee owner Harris Turer," said Wolves owner and chairman Don Levin. "The Admirals can't play this year for reasons beyond their control, so we want to help people we respect and who are our partners. We're going to combine the best available players from both sides and have a really good team."

"This season presents a unique situation, with NHL teams having taxi squads and some AHL teams opting out," said Carolina president and general manager Don Waddell. "We were able to come to an agreement with the Predators and Wolves that we believe benefits everyone involved. The Wolves have been great partners and we're thankful for their willingness to work out this agreement."

Since the Wolves were founded in 1994, they have faced Milwaukee more than any other organization. The teams located just 80 miles apart have played 279 regular-season games and met in six postseason series over the last 26 years.

The Wolves coaching staff, led by new head coach Ryan Warsofsky, will handle coaching duties. The team will play home games this season at the Chicago Wolves training facility at Triphahn Ice Arena in Hoffman Estates, where the Wolves are establishing strict COVID-19 protocols to maximize everyone's health and safety. Fans will not be permitted to attend games until the Illinois Department of Public Health deems it safe to do so.

TODAY'S LINKS

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SportScan

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

1198283 Carolina Hurricanes

Dallas Stars' team has coronavirus issues. How does it affect the Canes, others in NHL?

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

JANUARY 08, 2021 03:43 PM,

The news swept through the NHL on Friday with the force of a slapshot to the head.

The Dallas Stars were shutting down their training facility, it was announced by the league. Six Dallas players and two staff members have tested positive for coronavirus, the NHL said. The team will not open the 2020-21 regular season any earlier than Jan. 19, the league's release said.

Later, the Columbus Blue Jackets announced that some of their players were being held out of a Friday practice because of COVID-19 protocols.

Such is the fear of everyone in the NHL: the virus striking a team. The league did not have any COVID-19 problems when 24 teams gathered at two bubble sites for the 2020 Return to Play postseason. But the fear was that in holding training camps for the 2020-21 season, and with the virus spiking in many parts of the U.S and Canada, there could be some outbreaks and clusters.

"It's bound to happen," Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Friday on a media call. "Every college hockey program has had it. Almost every team that's got going, every avenue, has had it or experienced it.

"You hope you don't. But it's certainly not unexpected."

CANES ARE TAKING CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS

The Stars, Blue Jackets and Canes are members of the new Central Division this season. The Canes and Stars are not scheduled to play until a back-to-back set on Jan. 30-31 at PNC Arena, so the Stars' stoppage now might not affect those games.

But so much still remains unknown. The Canes made it through a rushed training camp in July in the Return to Play process without a coronavirus incident. There were none in the Toronto bubble during the 2020 playoffs as everyone underwent COVID-19 testing each day and it was a secure, highly controlled environment.

The Canes are taking as many precautions as possible for training camp, which began this week. Brind'Amour noted that the coaches use different rooms off the ice, and there is a plan for such things as, say, the goalies being separated in the locker room area -- just in case.

The Denver Broncos had a COVID-19 outbreak among their quarterbacks during this NFL season. That was a lesson learned by those in the other pro leagues.

"There's a lot of discussion on what's the best way to do this," Brind'Amour said. "We're trying to make sure we're not in close contact. Everything is not perfect but it's the best you can do."

The Canes completed their fifth day of camp practice Friday at the Wake Competition Center. Their area of the training facility is restricted to team personnel only, with security officers in place. There is no contact between media members with any players or coaches, with all interviews held on Zoom.

"MASK!" IS YELLED AT TRAINING CAMP

Canes president and general manager Don Waddell said one constant at the training facility is the yelling of "Mask!" if anyone is spotted without their face-covering in place. There is a sense of vigilance and responsibility.

"We all know what we're facing on a daily basis," Waddell said on a media call. "We continue to talk with our players, our staff, around the team, about what's important and what we need to do. One person can bring down the whole team, so we've got to be all in this together.

"We all forget at times this is not a norm for us. I think watching out for each other and taking care of each other and being good teammates and being good friends is going to lead us to hopefully having a very successful season in staying healthy."

The Canes begin their season Jan. 14 at Detroit and play their first four games on the road -- two at Detroit, two against Nashville. Ten of the first 16 games are away from Raleigh. That's a lot of early travel, a lot of moving in and out of hotels and going to different rinks. The coronavirus risk will be there.

"I'm sure there will be a hiccup throughout the year," team captain Jordan Staal said this week on a media call. "I think the staff and everyone here in the organization is making sure the players are aware of what we need to do and to understand if somebody gets it, you're going to hurt the team and it's going to be bad. The guys understand no one is immune to this thing."

Herald-Sun LOADED: 01.09.2021

1198284 Carolina Hurricanes

Here are the Hurricanes' new assistant GMs and director of hockey operations

BY JESSACA GIGLIO

JANUARY 08, 2021 01:47 PM

The Carolina Hurricanes on Friday announced new assistant general managers and a new director of hockey operations.

Eric Tulsy, who's been with the Canes for six seasons and was once a team vice president, has been promoted to assistant general manager. According to the Hurricanes, Tulsy will "assist in all hockey-related matters, manage the team's pro scouting department, and oversee the team's hockey information department."



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Darren Yorke, a former director of personnel for Carolina, has also been promoted to assistant general manager. He "will be involved in all player personnel decisions, oversee amateur scouting and player development, and will continue to be responsible for the team's draft," according to the Canes. He's been with the Hurricanes for 11 seasons.

The Hurricanes named Aaron Schwartz its director of hockey operations. He will be responsible for "assisting in player contract negotiations, collective bargaining agreement/salary cap compliance, and other hockey-related matters."

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

Herald-Sun LOADED: 01.09.2021

1198285 Carolina Hurricanes

'You get tough when you get beat down': Q&A with Canes prospect Jack LaFontaine

By Sara Civian Jan 8, 2021

The Hurricanes picked goaltender Jack LaFontaine in the third round of the 2016 draft, and yes, he was big and athletic, but it was starting to seem like a reach.

His two seasons at Michigan, a team that was actively seeking a goalie at the time, might've made LaFontaine just call it a career. He posted a goals-against average of 3.33 in just eleven appearances with the Wolverines in 2016-17, then a 3.51 in 11 games in 2017-18.

But seeking a fresh start, LaFontaine left Michigan and signed with the BCHL's Penticton Vees, and things started to improve. On paper, he ended with a .923 save percentage and 2.19 GAA in 45 starts, earning the BCHL's goaltender of the year honor.

Now, he's finds himself with a 9-0-0 record and a 1.00 GAA, serving as the starting goalie on the best college hockey team in the nation. But he touts himself as a hard worker who happens to be good at hockey. And if you talk to him for 45 seconds, you're reminded that change isn't bad just because it's scary. And sometimes years of hard work presents itself as luck.

Obviously you've had an interesting path. Can you walk me through it from your own perspective?

Oh gosh, you got the whole day? Obviously it's been quite the journey, starting off in Michigan as a true freshman, learning a lot there as a hockey player and as a person. Then landing myself in Penticton back to juniors and it was a blast there — I had a lot of fun. And then I just got very lucky with the opportunity that arose in Minnesota with Mat Robson signing an NHL deal. It was a long journey and obviously it's a little bit anti-climatic to wrap it up in two or three sentences, but I've met a lot of cool people every step of the way and I had a lot of people supporting me. It was well worth it to get to the point I am at today, and I'd like to think it's only beginning at this stage in my life.

Did you ever have any doubts in the moment, making the moves that you did?

Oh yeah, 100 percent. And it's one thing to have doubts when you're in the net, but it's another thing when you're making massive career and life changes. Leaving Michigan, for me, wasn't just a hockey decision — it was a life decision. I was going to be dropping out of school, leaving some of my best friends, I had a girlfriend at the time. It was a lifestyle change. I don't think there was as much doubt as there was just hesitation of change. My life was going to change, I was going to lose

some things that I love and thought I couldn't live with out. Its scary, and I was scared at that time. But I was very fortunate to have a lot of people in my corner thrust me into certain positions that were uncomfortable at the time, but it all made me stronger as a human being. I guess the interesting thing about being mentally tough is that you can't be mentally tough when things are going well, you get tough when you get beat down a little. That's what happened to me, I guess. I learned to be tougher and rise above it.

Do you think all the places you've been give you a unique perspective?

Oh, no, yeah. (Author's note: In Canadian and Minnesotan, this phrase means an enthusiastic yes.) Absolutely. I think that's something I actually bring to this team — there's a lot of Minnesota guys, a lot of freshmen, a lot of superstars. I think I kinda bring that other perspective of playing out anyone's worst nightmare — and I lived through it to see the light of day. I feel like I can be a soundboard for anyone else on this team who is going through something. But to be quite honest with you, I think I've learned more from my teammates than they've ever learned from me. The great thing about hockey is it doesn't matter how old you are or what position you play, you're always learning in this sport.

OK, what's going on with Minnesota right now?

I just think we have a great dressing room dynamic, our coaching staff is unbelievable. It's just such a joy to come to the rink every day, it just puts a smile on my face. We talked about it today, we don't play like a 10-0-0 team. What we mean by that is we take it one game at a time, we're on a path to get better each game, we're a very determined and motivated team and I think that starts with the culture coach (Bob) Motzko is breeding here. I can't stress enough just how great of a team this is, as far as human beings in the locker room. Great people, the coaching staff is filled with such phenomenal people and it goes down the line, I could give you other people (Author's note: He listed many people). ... Everyone around this hockey team are just good people, and I'm a big believer that if you surround yourself with good people, good things happen. I think we got a lot of good people and it just so happens we're not that bad of a hockey team.

How would you describe your style of play to someone who has never seen you play before?

I'd say I put in the work, some saves are going to be pretty, some are going to be ugly. But I'm going to whatever it takes to keep that puck out of the net. I use this line too much, but I've never been the biggest goalie, I've never been the most talented goalie, but I've always been the hardest working and I've always been the most competitive. That's been a staple in my game since the age of 8. So, that's just my genetic make-up and my upbringing.

What's one thing you wish you could tell your younger self?

Never give up. I mean, there are a lot of dark days. There are a lot of tough games. Tough conversations. I would just tell my younger self to never give up, and to keep that goal of playing Division I hockey in the back of your mind. Here I am as a 23-year-old, and it's the most rewarding thing in the whole damn world. I'm probably the luckiest 23-year-old on the planet right now.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.09.2021

1198406 Websites

The Athletic / NHL helmet ads ranked, from worst to worse

Sean Gentile

Jan 8, 2021



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 9, 2021

Initially, it seemed stupid to have any real opinion about the NHL's helmet advertisements.

Part of that was a function of Pandemic Brain; the NHL will save a reported \$90 million or so in revenue otherwise lost to empty arenas by getting creative through one lens and desperate through another. Gotta do what you gotta do. We've seen it more than enough elsewhere, and we've got more than enough other things to be mad about. Leagues taking obvious paths toward ensuring their health (and the ongoing employment of their people, regardless of the alternatives) isn't high on the list. It shouldn't be, at least.

Plus, plenty of others had beaten them to the uniform ad punch, including the NBA and AHL. You may not have stopped noticing stuff like the Lakers jerseys doubling as billboards for an e-commerce platform, but the odds are good that you got used to it. Those jerseys are also, of course, billboards for the Lakers.

Advertising shapes markets and ideologies, and convinces us to buy things we need and things we don't, and helps create the demand that keeps many of us employed and insured. That's the game. Round and round we go. Yay!

So, no — helmet stickers aren't worth getting truly upset over. Not functionally, at least. They're necessary on some levels, unavoidable on others and inoffensive on most of the rest.

But the marketing of them? The roll-out? That's where the whole deal gets very, very weird and very, very dumb.

The Devils were first — and they were very pleased with themselves. Eleven minutes later, the Capitals released a hype video touting a team-up with a credit card company that a) owns the naming rights to their arena and b) sued its customers "far more than any other bank," according to a 2015 ProPublica analysis. With minimal tweaks, it could play before a banner raising. Deeply bizarre, and borderline dystopian. You need to watch this.

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THE WASHINGTON CAPITALS HAVE ANNOUNCED CAPITAL ONE AS THE TEAM'S SEASON-LONG OFFICIAL HELMET ENTITLEMENT PARTNER WITH THE PLACEMENT OF THE COMPANY'S BRANDING ON THE TEAM'S HELMET.

FULL DETAILS: [HTTPS://T.CO/CWGASNDSAF](https://t.co/cwgasndsaf)
[PIC.TWITTER.COM/FWUQ2XA5R](https://t.co/fwuq2xa5r)

— WASHINGTON CAPITALS (@CAPITALS) DECEMBER 22, 2020

Congratulations on living long enough to witness history. I wasn't around for the moon landing, but my folks tell me this is similar enough.

Beyond the phrase "historic moment," which we've heard, the release also widely introduced a newer one, seen a little more typically in stock-car racing: "entitlement partner." It's not an ad. It's different. You may think it's a sticker on a helmet; you are mistaken. You are a fool. A rube.

A few more teams pumped their helmet stickers entitlement partnerships in the ensuing days, content to linger in the margins of history textbooks as mere runners-up to the Devils and Caps. They didn't get any less annoying. They did use the same bit of semantics to get around saying what they actually are. On one hand, it's endlessly weird to see this stuff get spotlight treatment. On the other, it's advertising. That's the point.

And now, as training camps open across North America in all their crossed-finger glory, we're riding the second wave, and the conceit is the same: This is a big deal. Something to celebrate. Something to be excited over. Absolutely, positively not sweaty make-whole attempts for corporate partners who might be trying to bail on name-and-title contracts. That added veneer of phoniness, it would seem, was my personal line. I now have an opinion on helmet decals. They are bad.

They are necessary because we know owners are not wont to pay for losses from their own pockets. They will not threaten the overall nature of

North American sports uniforms, because team logos are the most important brand to build. I'm happy that folks who'd otherwise lose their jobs will not. I'm relieved that the NHL is trying to recoup revenue and keep more money in player salaries. The same logic applies to the division sponsorship; if the choice behind Door No. 2 is a revenue crater, fine.

The stickers are, however, bad still, if only because of the through-line of contempt in their announcements. It's an okay-doke designed to make you care about book-keeping, and it sort of sucks.

Anyway, here are the 14 we've seen, ranked. It's a combo of public service and exposure therapy, so you can get accustomed to the whole deal and hopefully stop paying attention to them. It's also free attention to a stupid, quasi-necessary bit of brand synergy — but if you want an omelet, you've got to crack some eggs.

15. Pittsburgh Penguins: "Everyone loves helmet decals, a lovely way to make up for lost revenue. *5 seconds later* We regret to inform you that the helmet decal is gigantic and blue." Last place.

OUR FRIENDS AT @PPG WILL BE THE FIRST-EVER HELMET ENTITLEMENT PARTNER FOR THE UPCOMING HOCKEY SEASON.

FULL DETAILS ON OUR NEW *paint buckets*:
[HTTPS://T.CO/BUUSLJRJRH2S](https://t.co/buusljrjrh2s) [PIC.TWITTER.COM/SOVEDCMW6E](https://t.co/sovedcmw6e)

— PITTSBURGH PENGUINS (@PENGUINS) JANUARY 4, 2021

15. Florida Panthers: The added shamelessness of saying "no company cared enough to go all-in" is endearing. Last place.

THE @FLPANTHERS ARE THE FIRST TEAM WITH TWO DIFFERENT HELMET SPONSORS, AS ANNOUNCED TODAY. HOW IT WILL LOOK: [PIC.TWITTER.COM/6NIWO2VAKQ](https://t.co/6niwo2vakq)

— ELLIOTTE FRIEDMAN (@FRIEDGEHNIC) DECEMBER 23, 2020

15. Arizona Coyotes: Same. Tied for last.

THE ARIZONA #COYOTES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE 2021 #NHL HELMET ADS TRACKER AS WELL AS SOME INFORMATION ON THE NEW YORK RANGERS.

POST: [HTTPS://T.CO/DDEVXJV4LT](https://t.co/ddevxjv4lt)
[PIC.TWITTER.COM/CPEVGF3VUW](https://t.co/cpevgf3vuw)

— CHRIS CREAMER'S SPORTSLOGOS.NET (@SPORTSLOGOSNET) JANUARY 6, 2021

15: In this video, Nick Foligno has to say that putting stickers on a helmet is more exciting than playing hockey. Tied for last.

OFFICIAL: THE #CBJ ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE ADDITION OF @NATIONWIDE AND @OHIOHEALTH ON OUR HELMETS THIS SEASON!

DETAILS 🍀 [HTTPS://T.CO/WQZCG2QLA](https://t.co/wqzcg2qla)
[PIC.TWITTER.COM/NTCWIRSSCG](https://t.co/ntcwirsscg)

— COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS (@BLUEJACKETS NHL) JANUARY 4, 2021

15. Detroit Red Wings: Go University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Tied for last.

UWM NAMED EXCLUSIVE MORTGAGE PARTNER OF #REDWINGS & LITTLE CAESARS ARENA; WILL FEATURE BRANDING ON RED WINGS' PLAYER HELMETS, ALONG WITH ON-ICE LOGOS, IN-ARENA SIGNAGE, AND EXTENSIVE DIGITAL BRANDING.

MORE » [HTTPS://T.CO/FARPKDVJH7](https://t.co/farpkdvjh7)
[PIC.TWITTER.COM/S4YLU8EEDA](https://t.co/s4ylu8eeda)

— DETROIT RED WINGS (@DETROITREDWINGS) JANUARY 4, 2021

15. Nashville Predators: Commitment to all-gold everything, destroyed. Tied for last.



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@UNIWATCH @PHILHECKEN THE NASHVILLE PREDATORS HAVE BRIDGESTONE AS THEIR HELMET SPONSOR
PIC.TWITTER.COM/IF7VQVVL0G

— JAKOB FOX (@JAKOBLFOX) JANUARY 5, 2021

15. Minnesota Wild: Oh look, another arena sponsor.

THE #MNWILD AND @XCELENERGYWI JOINTLY TODAY ANNOUNCED THAT THE NATIONAL LEADER IN CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION WILL BE THE TEAM'S FIRST-EVER HELMET ENTITLEMENT PARTNER. PIC.TWITTER.COM/RMITKFF1AS

— MINNESOTA WILD PR (@MNWILDPR) JANUARY 8, 2021

15. Montreal Canadiens: Every player is named Bell. Tied for last.

GOOD LOOK AT THE CANADIENS' NEW HELMET AD.
PIC.TWITTER.COM/DUE79OXAJZ

— PAUL LUKAS (@UNIWATCH) JANUARY 6, 2021

15. Winnipeg Jets: Every player is named Bell. Tied for last.

#NHLJETS OPTING TO GO WITH 'BELL' AS THE TEAM'S SPONSOR ON THE PRIME HELMET REAL ESTATE.

📷: WINNIPEG JETS PIC.TWITTER.COM/ERIKLYZIWY

— CARTER BROOKS (@CBROOKSIE84) JANUARY 1, 2021

15. Edmonton Oilers: The John Muckler memorial is nice, at least. Tied for last.

A LOOK AT THE HELMET DECALS TO HONOUR #OILERS LEGEND JOHN MUCKLER AFTER NEWS OF HIS PASSING YESTERDAY.

❤️💙 PIC.TWITTER.COM/4HMDN3UP7H

— EDMONTON OILERS (@EDMONTONOILERS) JANUARY 5, 2021

15. Calgary Flames: 🤔🤔🤔. Tied for last



WE'RE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE @SCOTIABANK IS OUR OFFICIAL HELMET SPONSOR FOR THE SEASON! WE'LL HAVE MORE EXCITING NEWS FROM OUR FRIENDS AT SCOTIA ON AN UPCOMING COMMUNITY INITIATIVE NEXT WEEK!
PIC.TWITTER.COM/DPHWH3GDXF

— CALGARY FLAMES (@NHLFLAMES) JANUARY 4, 2021

15. Toronto Maple Leafs: Red pairs well with the Maple Leafs' two other colors. Tied for last.

WITH THE OFFICIAL START OF TRAINING CAMP, WE PROUDLY ANNOUNCE SCOTIABANK AS THE TEAM'S HELMET PARTNER FOR THE 2020-21 SEASON.

THANK YOU @SCOTIABANK FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE MAPLE LEAFS AND HOCKEY IN CANADA.
PIC.TWITTER.COM/UZTNGLUAFS

— TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS (@MAPLELEAFS) JANUARY 4, 2021

15. Dallas Stars: American telecommunications should be a public utility. Tied for last.

OUR 2021 #NHL HELMET AD TRACKER HAS BEEN UPDATED WITH OUR FIRST PHOTOS OF THE DALLAS STARS AND THE AT&T LOGO THAT THEY'LL BE WEARING.

FULL TRACKER HERE: [HTTPS://T.CO/DDEVXJV4LT](https://t.co/DDEVXJV4LT)
PIC.TWITTER.COM/P8XNYUXESW

— CHRIS CREAMER'S SPORTSLOGOS.NET (@SPORTSLOGOSNET) JANUARY 5, 2021

15. New Jersey Devils: Good use of royalty-free music in the hype video. Tied for last.

WE'RE PROUD TO BE THE FIRST @NHL CLUB TO HAVE BRAND PLACEMENT ON OUR HELMETS.

PROUD TO ROCK WITH @PRUDENTIAL, HOME AND AWAY.
PIC.TWITTER.COM/E1WHZ1ZG33

— NEW JERSEY DEVILS (@NJDEVILS) DECEMBER 22, 2020

15. Washington Capitals: Ironically, the least noticeable of them all. Tied for last.

THE @CAPITALONE HELMET WILL BE WORN FOR HOME AND AWAY GAMES, AS WELL AS DURING PLAYOFFS AND PRACTICES THROUGHOUT THE SEASON. THE 2.25" X 3.75" CAPITAL ONE DECAL WILL BE POSITIONED ON THE LEFT AND RIGHT SIDES OF THE HELMET.
[HTTPS://T.CO/CW GASNDSAF](https://t.co/cwgasndsaf)

— WASHINGTON CAPITALS (@CAPITALS) DECEMBER 22, 2020

The Athletic LOADED: 01.09.2021

1198407 Websites

The Athletic / Ranking the top 20 Calder Trophy candidates for the 2021 NHL season

Scott Wheeler

Jan 8, 2021

A new NHL season is less than a week away (isn't that something?). The unique circumstances of this season — namely, the pandemic — are going to give increased opportunities to young players vying to play their first NHL games, and to others vying to use their summer playoff bubble experiences as launchpads to full-time roles.

There are a few reasons for that. One reason is that many leagues have been paused or cancelled, so there are young players with nowhere to play after the world juniors. Another is expanded roster sizes and the tax squads, allowing teams the option to practice additional players without the salary cap implications. The third reason is that these young players are now a few months older than they would have been for the usual September camps, meaning they're stronger in many cases, and they're almost all coming from the world juniors which helped them get into game-shape.

For the third year in a row, this is my ranking of the top 20 Calder Trophy candidates (as well as other young players to potentially keep an eye on) for the upcoming season.

This ranking is different from my annual top 50 drafted prospects ranking, last released in October, in that its focus is on projecting the players' roles and production for this season. My typical evaluations are strictly my own assessment of a player's talent and upside, paying very little mind to the trajectory, the context of their team, minutes, and everything else. Because I'm predicting for an award (or if you plan on using this for fantasy or betting purposes), there has to be a greater emphasis on the here and now rather than the future, with attention paid to a player's ability to put up counting stats and stay in the lineup.

As a result, the criteria for inclusion here also differ. I typically don't use the Calder Trophy's definition of a rookie as my own because I think it spreads to include players who are too old, but this must obviously focus on the award's rules. That means that the player must not have played more than 25 games in any preceding NHL season and he must be under 27 years old to be eligible here, which is a pretty wide swath. That



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means that a player like Kirill Kaprizov and a goalie like Ilya Sorokin, who will not be in my upcoming 2021 prospect pool rankings, are included here.

The Ranking

1. Alexis Lafrenière, LW, 19 (New York Rangers — 1st overall, 2020)

Lafrenière just had an extremely long offseason to get his ankle fully healthy and his body fully ready for the NHL. Add in that he was already a physically-advanced player for his age and that he's going to play his first NHL game a few months after his 19th birthday, instead of his 18th birthday, and I don't see any reason why he can't be an impact player from Day 1. Lafrenière's biggest challenge is going to be a roster one. He's a natural left-wing and he's not going to change positions, which means he's going to play behind Artemi Panarin and Chris Kreider (it sounds like he'll start with Filip Chytil and Julien Gauthier, which is a line that has a little bit of everything). His power-play time will ultimately dictate whether his season is more of a "Calder conversation" season or a "Calder winner" season. But I think Lafrenière's floor is a good season and his ceiling is a great one, whereas most rookies have a "sent back to junior after a five-game audition" floor and a good season as their ceiling.

2. Igor Shesterkin, G, 24 (New York Rangers — 118th overall, 2014)

In the absence of Henrik Lundkvist, Igor Shesterkin should become the Rangers' No. 1 goalie this year. It may not happen immediately, given Alexander Georgiev's experience and the way the NHL's condensed 56-game schedule will force teams to use both of their goalies, but he's ready. Goalies rarely win the Calder, with just three winning since 2000 (Evgeni Nabokov, Andrew Raycroft and Steve Mason), and none winning since 2009. I was in the minority when I had both Elvis Merzlikins and Mackenzie Blackwood on my PHWA ballot for the Calder last year. But I really believe Shesterkin's one of those goalies who's capable of challenging for a save percentage above .920 as one of the 10-best goalies in the league. I really believe that. And that's a season that would place him atop the ballot in this field of prospects. He sits lower than No. 1 if only because his position is just so much harder to safely project, even with his track record in Russia and stellar early showings in the NHL late last season.

3. Kirill Kaprizov, LW, 23 (Minnesota Wild — 135th overall, 2015)

Kaprizov's going to play in the top-six in Minnesota from the start, he's going to be on the power play from the start, and he has already been the most dangerous offensive player in the world's second-best pro league. All of those things bode well for his odds at the 35-40 point season that is likely going to be required for a rookie to enter the Calder Trophy conversation across 56 games. You can take the fact he's playing on the Wild in two different ways, too. You can look at their lack of talent up front and wonder whether that will make life hard on him as a first-year player who has to deal with tough matchups. Or you can look at it as an opening that will facilitate a more prominent role than many of his first-year peers, especially considering his age. I think the latter is a bigger benefit to a Calder run than the former, honestly. The former may keep a player who's capable of posting big numbers on a good team away from those big numbers, but you don't have to have a point per game season to win the Calder most years either. You need minutes, touches, opportunity and enough skill to take advantage of those things. Kaprizov checks those boxes.

4. Ilya Sorokin, G, 25 (New York Islanders — 78th overall, 2014)

There has been a lot of attention paid to this brilliant generation of Russian goalies that have started to find NHL success. But I think because Shesterkin, Georgiev and Ilya Samsonov all made the jump earlier than Sorokin, it's almost as if he has been overshadowed — at least until this point. I don't think he should be, though. I've said from the start that I think Sorokin has a chance to be the best of the bunch. The question is how long it will take him to get to that point, and whether there's enough runway this season for him to win a strong majority of the starts over the more established goalie in Semyon Varlamov.

5. Tim Stuetzle, LW, 18 (Ottawa Senators — 3rd overall, 2020)

Stuetzle has an opportunity with the still-rebuilding Senators. They're trying to take a step forward this year, and that has come with some depth additions (Derek Stepan, Evgeni Dadonov, Alex Galchenyuk, etc.) which will limit the growth of other young players within the organization but they've made it clear he's immune to that — and for good reason. I think there are going to be some bumps in the road for Stuetzle on a Senators team that projects to finish last in the North Division but just the fact they're planning on using his talent on the second-line bodes well for his odds for a good rookie season.

6. Dylan Cozens, C/RW, 19 (Buffalo Sabres — 7th overall, 2019)

It's wise not to read into a world juniors performance too much, but Cozens delivered a clear message: I'm ready. Now it sounds like he'll get an opportunity to play in the top-nine and on the second power-play unit as a first-year player. There are a small number of rookies who get that kind of opportunity and he's got enough skill to capitalize and be a contributor from the start. I don't think his skill set is so high-end that he's going to become a star player right away, but it's definitely not hard to imagine him making an impact and being a nice addition to their forward group at right-wing, which should also help him use his speed off the puck and soften some of his defensive responsibilities.

7. Gabe Vilardi, C, 21 (Los Angeles Kings — 11th overall, 2017)

Loyal readers know that I'm a big Gabe Vilardi guy. Projecting some of the Kings prospects forward this year is a tricky proposition (where do Quinton Byfield and Alex Turcotte and the rest fit in on a crowded team that can't play all of them?). Vilardi, though, is a lock. He's going to be on the team. Probably as their third-line centre and maybe even as their second-line centre at times. His strong showing at the tail end of last season solidified that role. And while I'm not convinced he's going to maintain his 0.7 points per game pace of late last season, I think he's capable of keeping it more or less in that range, which is enough to enter the Calder conversation. That team is one Anze Kopitar injury away from needing him to be the guy down the middle, too.

8. Jack Studnicka, C/RW, 21 (Boston Bruins — 53rd overall, 2017)

All I had to see were the words "Jack Studnicka has practiced on the first line with Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand" and that was enough to push him up this list into the top 10 (where he would have not otherwise ranked in a more depth role). Now, there's no guarantee that sticks or is more than camp experimentation, but this is the point in the list where you move from rankings based on talent to rankings based on opportunity and Studnicka may get one of the best opportunities in the league. If he can take advantage, an excellent season will be the result. I could pick up a few points playing with those two.

9. Josh Norris, C, 21 (Ottawa Senators — 19th overall, 2017)

Norris is another player who's counting stats are going to benefit greatly from the role he's likely to play as a top-nine centre in Ottawa this year. They like him a lot there and it wouldn't surprise me if gets some time with players like Brady Tkachuk, Stuetzle, and Dadonov throughout the year. And if he doesn't, they've started to build enough depth there that linemates like Drake Batherson or Connor Brown aren't bad outcomes for a rookie. How the Senators use Norris relative to established centres like Chris Tierney, Colin White and Derek Stepan will dictate his success though, because he's not so talented that he's going to carry a third line with Calder-level production. He's going to excel with talent throughout. Whether they give it to him from the start will be telling of the kind of season he might be able to have, though.

10. Ian Mitchell, RHD, 21 (Chicago Blackhawks — 57th overall, 2017)

He's really good, people. I've been trying to say it. It can be harder for defencemen to work their way into the Calder conversation than forwards, especially ones who aren't the obvious, point-producing stars that the entire hockey world knows is coming. He's not Cale Makar, or Quinn Hughes, or Rasmus Dahlin. He's not a lock for power-play time on a roster that has Adam Boqvist and Duncan Keith, either, and that's a



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huge determining factor in the outputs needed to enter the Calder conversation (he could get PP2 reps). But regardless of his power-play usage or not, he's still good, he's going to play, and he's going to make things happen offensively. The Blackhawks need more of that, not less.

(David Kirouac/Icon Sportswire)

11. Alexander Romanov, LHD, 20 (Montreal Canadiens — 38th overall, 2018)

Romanov's going to play a regular shift, which is half the battle. He wouldn't have come over when he had a job in the KHL if he weren't going to play. It sounds like he may even run the Canadiens' second power play. So both of those things are positives. With his skating, he's going to help the Canadiens in transition too — especially if he can be given more of a leash to carry the puck than he had with CSKA.

12. Trevor Zegras, C/W, 19 (Anaheim Ducks — 9th overall, 2019)

With Zegras, this conversation starts and ends with whether he makes the team. If he makes it and this is a weekly power ranking (it's not), he immediately slides up a few spots. If he doesn't, well, he falls. As a write this, one thing is clear: He's going to be given an opportunity. But most of the players on this list are locks to make their teams already. Zegras isn't, at least not in an every-game capacity. So he gets the highest-ranking among the 'what ifs' because if he makes it, and plays in the kind of role that suits his skill set, then he'll be in the top six and on the top power play.

13. Bowen Byram, LHD, 19 (Colorado Avalanche — 4th overall, 2019)

Byram deserves a prominent role. If I were certain he'd get it, he'd be a heck of a lot higher here than he is. But the reality is the Avalanche have options and nothing is guaranteed to first-year players when the team they're trying to carve out a regular shift on is trying to win a division — and a Stanley Cup. He's going to get an audition. There's no doubt about that. If he grabs it and runs with it, which I think is the more likely outcome, then he's got a chance to play his way into the Calder mix. But if he struggles, the Avalanche may not be as willing or able to stick with him through it as some of the other teams will be with their prospects.

14. Quinton Byfield, C, 18 (Los Angeles Kings — 2nd overall, 2020)

I wouldn't bet Byfield's Calder Trophy line with any of the major bookies, most of whom have him somewhere around the top five. I think he's more of a long shot than that and by all accounts, it sounds like the Kings are prepared to take things slow with their "close" group of prospects. But he's also one of the only prospects at this stage in the list who is capable of getting a handful of games, doing something special with them, and then potentially forcing his team's hand to become a full-time player.

15. Owen Tippett, LW/RW, 21 (Florida Panthers — 10th overall, 2017)

Three years after Tippett surprised everyone and earned a seven-game NHL stint out of his first camp, it looks like he's going to make the jump full-time (or close to full-time). He ranks lower than the three players ahead of him on this list who aren't necessarily going to get that same opportunity, if only because there's an enigmatic quality to Tippett's game that makes his projection a little volatile. If he can carve out a role on the second power-play (likely) and play inside the top-nine at even-strength (less likely) rather than in a rotating role on the fourth line, things could get interesting.

16. Grigori Denisenko, LW/RW, 20 (Florida Panthers — 15th overall, 2018)

The Panthers like him. Most scouts like him. I like him. But I don't quite like him enough. There could be some growing pains in his game as he adjusts to an NHL role and the Panthers eventually come to terms with the fact he's probably not going to be a star in his prime, even if he's going to be a good player. We'll see. He's going to get some looks and the raw skill is there. I've never been particularly fond of the way he deploys that skill.

17. Marco Rossi, C, 19 (Minnesota Wild — 9th overall, 2020)

If you're subscribed to The Athletic you probably know by now where I stand on Rossi. He's going to be really, really good. I think he's ready to play in the NHL tomorrow. But the Wild are going to have to take some time to come to their own determinations and that delays the inevitable, which is a dominant NHL career as a two-way anchor inside their top-six. It may also take Rossi some time to get back into a rhythm. Between his contraction of COVID in Switzerland and his difficult world junior tournament, it's been a challenging couple of months for him.

18. Evan Bouchard, RHD, 21 (Edmonton Oilers — 10th overall, 2018)

Bouchard's the kind of prospect who may have to wait in the wings a little longer than his talent suggests he should, but when he arrives he's going to arrive. That's because everyone recognizes that in the prime of his career, he's going to be a PP1 guy. And between now and when he's ready to be that guy, it may be harder to find him minutes because he just doesn't look or play like a third-pairing guy. Bouchard is at his best when he's involved in the game. This year, I suspect, he's going to get to make a case for regular involvement. But the opening may not yet be there like it is for many of these other prospects.

19. Nils Hoglander, LW, 20 (Vancouver Canucks — 40th overall, 2019)

winks

I don't want to say I told ya so, but... he looks good, huh?

20. Peyton Krebs, C/LW, 19 (Vegas Golden Knights — 17th overall, 2019)

The world juniors complicated things for Krebs a little in that they meant he still hasn't actually participated in a start-of-season training camp (despite having actually spent a ton of time with the team in various capacities). But while he wasn't able to outright earn a spot, he gets a long shot mention here because I'm a huge fan of his game and he's the kind of player who could slide in if injuries happen and really stick.

Honourable mentions:

Liam Foudy, C/LW, 20 (Columbus Blue Jackets — 18th overall, 2018)

He's faster than everyone else and he can fill a depth role on any team just fine. Apparently, he's 10 pounds heavier, too. The question is, and always has been, whether he can be more than that. This year, though he may start a little further down the lineup, I think we're going to find out. I think it will probably be hard for him to play himself as far as, say, the half dozen players I'll strongly debate for my ballot when the year's over, but if things really start to click for him he'll offer the Blue Jackets something unique.

Eeli Tolvanen, RW/LW, 21 (Nashville Predators — 30th overall, 2017)

It's prove-it time for Tolvanen, who has the skill and needs to show it. The Predators made it clear to him this summer that if he could earn it, there was a top-six role there for him. But now it's go time, things are a little tighter, the roster has a few more bodies, and it's up to him to establish himself as a go-to offensive zone player on a team that sorely needs those. That he was on this list in each of the two prior instalments over the last two years should tell you something, though: The clock is ticking for him to truly make it. Until he does, I just wasn't prepared to include him higher on this list.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.09.2021

1198408 Websites

The Athletic / Helmet ads saving NHL for one season, but what happens next?

Sean Shapiro



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 9, 2021

Jan 8, 2021

Alternative revenue sources have been on the minds of NHL executives since the 2019-20 season was suspended in March by the COVID-19 pandemic.

And as the 2020-21 season starts next week, alternative revenue will literally be generated by the player's heads.

Well, the helmets at least.

On Dec. 20, the NHL gave teams permission to secure helmet partnerships for a sticker during the 2020-21 season. Two days later, the New Jersey Devils became the first team to announce a partnership, putting a Prudential advertisement on their helmets, followed by the Washington Capitals with Capital One and the Nashville Predators with Bridgestone.

As of Thursday, the helmet decal is known for 17 NHL teams, while most, if not all, are expected to have some helmet sticker partnership once the season starts on Jan. 13.

"All 31 (NHL teams) will have a partner if they choose," said Keith Wachtel, the NHL's chief business officer. "But there is no lack of interest among the 31 clubs and they will all have some sort of tie to the helmet if they want to."

NHL teams are hurting financially and facing the reality that the 2020-21 season will be played in front of limited, if any, fans depending on the market. Without fans buying tickets, the NHL is missing one of its vital revenue streams. Regular-season soldout games usually generate between \$1 million and \$2 million a game, depending on the organization.

And without fans, and without alternative revenue sources, the 2020-21 NHL season wouldn't be possible financially.

That's why the NHL initiated the helmet decal program for teams to generate revenue, and in many cases allowed teams to make up for inventory they couldn't deliver to sponsors on already existing contracts because of canceled games, a reduced number of games or games without fans in person.

As Wachtel said, the helmet decals aren't about revenue generation, but revenue retention.

"When we knew we weren't going to be opening doors to our fans, there are some opportunities that simply weren't there (for partners and sponsorship)," Devils president Jake Reynolds said. "This was a piece of inventory that came up and allowed us to close that gap of bridging some of those other assets that aren't coming to fruition."

In simple terms, having helmet advertising, in many cases, helped save NHL teams from having to send checks back to sponsors.

Reynolds wouldn't divulge numbers but said the helmet decal was a significant establishment to help the team financially. Capitals chief revenue officer Jim Van Stone said the helmet decals represent a value in seven figures for team partners.

NBA teams have sold jersey patches to advertisers since 2016. Those patches are reportedly worth \$2.5 to \$14 million per season for NBA teams.

Reynolds was with the Philadelphia 76ers, who fall under the same ownership as the Devils, when the NBA club was the first team to announce a jersey sponsorship with StubHub.

"Having been able to go through that experience (with the 76ers) was valuable," Reynolds said. "There were a lot of lessons and translations that we were able to take and bring forward to this (with the NHL team)."

Social media plays a crucial role in the valuation, according to Van Stone. For example, each time a photo of a Capitals player gets posted on social media it's another promotion for Capital One.

So the fact NHL teams are saving helmet space for their largest, most-invested partners isn't a surprise. When it comes to making everyone whole, those that spent the most — and will likely continue to spend the most in the future — move to the front of the line.

"We have a big deal with Capital One, they've been a partner of ours for a long time," Van Stone said. "So we had always talked that when an opportunity would arise, like the helmet entitlement, they wanted to be first to market."

"When you are talking about new assets and as significant as a uniform partner, a brand on a uniform, you have to go to your most significant partners," Predators chief revenue officer Chris Junghans said. "And in our case, you are talking about television, your naming rights, and maybe one other partner."

That's why Bridgestone got the sticker in Nashville, it also didn't hurt that the tire company is one of the NHL's largest league-wide partners and sponsors the Winter Classic.

These deals, as they've been set up now, are for this season only. The same goes for the NHL's sponsorship of divisional names, which were announced on Tuesday.

And that's the truth, for now. It's fair to ask what and how these helmet advertisements could evolve in the future.

At this point, it's a stop-gap solution for financial hardship. But many NHL teams internally have already recognized how it could be an additional source of revenue for the 2021-22 season and beyond.

NHL teams have been told this is a one-year thing that will be evaluated at the end of the season, but as one source said, "If it drives revenue, I don't see why Gary (Bettman) wouldn't make it a permanent thing."

The make-good setup of most deals also limited teams in terms of which sponsors they could work with. In theory a blank slate, without debts to pay back to companies, NHL teams could open more of a bidding competition for that space on the helmets.

"I'd like to see what could happen if a team was given four or five months to figure this out, not just a quick turnaround," one NHL team executive said. "You could get international sponsors involved and have a real push for revenue for teams."

It leads to another natural question, are ads on the actual jerseys next?

"That is one where I think it's going to be interesting to see how things play out," Reynolds said. "It would have to be a big decision for the league in the coming years. I can't give you a definitive answer on whether I think it'll happen or if it'll happen. But there is a way to do things and a way to do things the right way. And I think the way the NHL is kind of positioned this program and set this up, they understood how important that was and how sacred obviously the uniform is."

Another NHL executive pointed out there are already on-player advertisements, even if subtle. The jersey maker, now Adidas, gets prominent space on each jersey, while equipment companies pay to make sure their branded gear keeps that brand name in an NHL game and therefore on television screens.

If you ask, publicly no one seems to be willing to admit that jersey advertising is in the immediate future — "That's a question for Gary," is a common response. But privately, NHL teams and their executives see advertising patches, similar to the ones on NBA jerseys, as the next wave of potential revenue.

As one team executive said, "I would love to add to our inventory, and I think we can do that with a jersey patch without disrupting the integrity of the jersey."



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"Integrity of the jersey," is a statement that will certainly have varying definitions.

One thing that was repeated, multiple times, by proponents of jersey ads, was that NHL players wouldn't look like NASCAR drivers or their hockey contemporaries in Europe, where every piece of ice and jersey are for sale. The NBA model was the one referred to, while another source said, "I don't think we'd ever want to see what happens in soccer where the sponsor is bigger than the team crest on the front."

The Athletic LOADED: 01.09.2021

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The Athletic / Ranking NHL's best under-23 stars: Dahlin, Pettersson or Lafreniere at No. 1?

Corey Pronman

Jan 8, 2021

Editor's note: The original version of this story included two players not eligible based on the age criteria we used. Matthew Tkachuk and Filip Hronek were removed from the ranking, and we apologize to our readers.

In the three months since my last NHL prospect list, most major leagues have played games and we had a World Junior Championship tournament.

While we await the start of the NHL, AHL, WHL and OHL season, the presentation of this list has undergone some changes.

The 20-80 scouting scale, one I've long used from baseball, has been retired. It has been replaced by descriptive terms of where I think the attribute will fit in the NHL. Why did I do this? For one, I observed that I wasn't using a large part of the 20-80 scale, resulting in most grades being between 50-60. Second, I want to use a scale that precisely and clearly shows what I mean.

The new scale has seven levels: Poor, below-average, average, above-average, high-end, elite and special. When I say a player projects as an average skater, that means NHL average, which is praiseworthy. When I say a player has elite hands, that means he projects to be among the very best in the NHL. High-end IQ refers to the top third of the league.

I also removed individual writeups for each player. This may not be permanent, but given we just did individual writeups for almost all the ranked players a few months ago, I thought this would be beneficial to make the ranking more digestible to read. Players will be tiered and graded as usual, but the tiers will have collective writeups.

Finally, I removed the physical game grade and replaced it with compete level. The physical game grade was a blurred combination of size, strength and compete that I found too misleading.

Shots are still only graded if they are notably good or poor.

Tool grades are not perfectly correlated to ranking. Variables such as a player's production, size, age and league are incorporated into the evaluation.

Players are eligible if they were under 23 years of age as of Jan. 1, 2021. This resulted in players such as Auston Matthews and Charlie McAvoy aging out.

I want your feedback on these changes, whether you prefer the new or old format.

Tier 1: Elite NHL player

1. Rasmus Dahlin, D, Buffalo

April 13, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 205 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 2

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

2. Elias Pettersson, C, Vancouver

Nov. 12, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 176 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 3

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

Shot: High-end

3. Alexis Lafrenière, LW, New York Rangers

Oct. 11, 2001 | 6-foot-1 | 193 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 4

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Above-average

Shot: Above-average

This category includes two No. 1 picks and one player in Pettersson who would be the first pick if the 2017 NHL Draft was redone. I realize with Dahlin I'm sticking my neck out a tad given that he hasn't been a true top NHL player in his two seasons. I still think a defenseman with his size, skill and creativity, and with how he looked as a teenager in the league, he is going to become an elite player. Lafrenière hasn't played a game yet but he checks almost every box you look for in a top NHL player. We will see how it translates to the NHL, particularly his pace, but he has the looks of a cornerstone piece.

Tier 2: Elite/all-star bubble

4. Andrei Svechnikov, RW, Carolina

March 26, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 6

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

Shot: Above-average

5. Patrik Laine, RW, Winnipeg

April 19, 1998 | 6-foot-4 | 205 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 7

Skating: Poor

Puck Skills: High-end



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Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Below-average

Shot: Elite

6. Jack Hughes, C, New Jersey

May 14, 2001 | 5-foot-10 | 170 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 8

Skating: Elite

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

7. Kaapo Kakko, RW, New York Rangers

Feb. 13, 2001 | 6-foot-3 | 198 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 9

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

I may get push back on Hughes and Kakko still being rated this highly after tough rookie NHL seasons, particularly for Kakko. You have to balance what you saw in the NHL last season at 18, against the toolkits and what I've seen from the players historically, which are elite track records. I see an argument to slightly lower Hughes' and Kakko's stock, but not significantly until we see how the 2021 season goes.

Tier 3: NHL all-star

8. Quinn Hughes, D, Vancouver

Oct. 14, 1999 | 5-foot-10 | 170 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 11

Skating: Elite

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

9. Brady Tkachuk, LW, Ottawa

Sept. 16, 1999 | 6-foot-3 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 12

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: High-end

10. Quinton Byfield, C, Los Angeles

Aug. 19, 2002 | 6-foot-4 | 215 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 10

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

11. Cale Makar, D, Colorado

Oct. 30, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 187 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 13

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

12. Miro Heiskanen, D, Dallas

July 18, 1999 | 6-foot-1 | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 14

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

13. Tim Stuetzle, C, Ottawa

Jan. 15, 2002 | 6-foot-1 | 187 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 15

Skating: High-end

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

14. Trevor Zegras, C, Anaheim

March 20, 2001 | six-foot | 174 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 23

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Special

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

Calling four-fifths of these players projected stars is not much of a stretch as Heiskanen, Quinn Hughes and Tkachuk represented their teams as all-stars last season, and Makar arguably should have. Stuetzle was the third pick in the most recent draft and projects as a star No. 1 center for Ottawa. Tkachuk projects as one of the league's hardest to play against forwards who can put up points. Heiskanen is a mobile and extremely intelligent two-way defenseman, whereas Quinn Hughes and Makar are two of the most talented defensemen in the league.

Byfield moves down to this tier from Tier 2. It's an incremental change, but one I think is fair. He's an extremely talented player and works hard, he has been great in the OHL, but he has struggled to be a top player at the international level.

Zegras moves up to this tier following his MVP performance at the world juniors. His combination of skill and IQ is exceptional, and I see him becoming a critical part of Anaheim's rebuild. There is some concern he



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hasn't been an elite producer at the club level, but he's so gifted that you feel like it will come.

Tier 4: Bubble of NHL all-star and top of lineup player

15. Kirby Dach, C, Chicago

Jan. 21, 2001 | 6-foot-4 | 198 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 16

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

16. Pierre-Luc Dubois, C, Columbus

June 24, 1998 | 6-foot-3 | 207 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 18

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

17. Dylan Cozens, C, Buffalo

Feb. 9, 2001 | 6-foot-3 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 26

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

18. Robert Thomas, C, St. Louis

July 2, 1999 | six-foot | 187 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 20

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

19. Nico Hischier, C, New Jersey

Jan. 4, 1999 | 6-foot-1 | 174 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 21

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

20. Mikhail Sergachev, D, Tampa Bay

June 25, 1998 | 6-foot-3 | 216 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 22

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

21. Barrett Hayton, C, Arizona

June 9, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 25

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: High-end

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

22. Connor McMichael, C, Washington

Jan. 15, 2001 | six-foot | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 66

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: High-end

McMichael continues to climb up my lists the more I watch him. The skating for his size is a concern, but he's so skilled and smart, and he is a driver for good teams consistently. I think he will be a scorer in the NHL and an important player for Washington in a short amount of time.

Tier 5: Top-line forward, top-pair defenseman or good starting goaltender

Lucas Raymond (Courtesy of Frölunda Indians)

23. Lucas Raymond, RW, Detroit

March 28, 2002 | 5-foot-10 | 170 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 17

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Elite

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Above-average

24. Nick Suzuki, C, Montreal

Aug. 10, 1999 | 5-foot-11 | 183 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 27

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

25. Adam Fox, D, New York Rangers

Feb. 17, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 28

Skating: Average



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Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: High-end

Compete: Average

26. Moritz Seider, D, Detroit

April 6, 2001 | 6-foot-4 | 207 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 38

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

27. Arthur Kaliyev, RW, Los Angeles

June 26, 2001 | 6-foot-2 | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 57

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

Shot: High-end

28. Jamie Drysdale, D, Anaheim

April 8, 2002 | 5-foot-11 | 175 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 34

Skating: High-end

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

29. Cole Perfetti, C, Winnipeg

Jan. 1, 2002 | 5-foot-11 | 177 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 19

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

30. Martin Necas, RW, Carolina

Jan. 15, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 35

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Below-average

Shot: Above-average

31. Alexander Holtz, RW, New Jersey

Jan. 23, 2002 | six-foot | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 29

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: High-end

32. Jesperi Kotkaniemi, C, Montreal

July 6, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 33

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

33. Josh Norris, C, Ottawa

May 5, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 36

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

34. Samuel Girard, D, Colorado

May 12, 1998 | 5-foot-10 | 161 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 37

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Below-average

35. Alex Formenton, LW, Ottawa

Sept. 13, 1999 | 6-foot-3 | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 40

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

36. Joel Farabee, LW, Philadelphia

Feb. 25, 2000 | six-foot | 163 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 41

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Above-average

37. Drake Batherson, RW, Ottawa

April 27, 1998 | 6-foot-3 | 196 pounds



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Previous ranking: No. 42

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

38. Filip Chytil, C, New York Rangers

Sept. 5, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 203 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 44

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Below-average

Compete: Average

39. Jakob Chychrun, D, Arizona

March 31, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 209 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 45

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

Shot: Above-average

40. Bowen Byram, D, Colorado

June 13, 2001 | 6-foot-1 | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 31

Skating: High-end

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

Shot: Above-average

41. Grigori Denisenko, LW, Florida

June 24, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 43

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

Shot: Above-average

42. Matthew Boldy, LW, Minnesota

April 5, 2001 | 6-foot-2 | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 72

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

43. Jake Sanderson, D, Ottawa

July 8, 2002 | 6-foot-2 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 58

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

44. Yaroslav Askarov, G, Nashville

June 16, 2002 | 6-foot-3 | 176 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 46

Athleticism: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

45. Carter Hart, G, Philadelphia

Aug. 13, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 47

Athleticism: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

46. Alexander Romanov, D, Montreal

Jan. 6, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 48

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

47. Cole Caufield, RW, Montreal

Jan. 2, 2001 | 5-foot-7 | 163 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 49

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: High-end

Raymond moves down an inch for me. He's had a very good season between the SHL and Sweden's U20 team. He's been a useful player on a top SHL team and was one of Sweden's top forwards. I can't say he's blown the doors down at either level and there remain concerns about how his skating will translate to higher levels. But he's an offensive dynamo with the puck who competes at a high level. Another Detroit prospect, Seider, continues to move up my list after a fantastic season for a top team in the SHL. His puck-moving has been a lot better this season.

Boldy, after building on his great second half with a strong start at BC and a great world juniors, moves up to this tier, which is where I had him as a draft-eligible but nudged him down after his freshman season. He's a very entertaining and determined player to watch even if he lacks speed.

Sanderson also continues to build off the second half of his draft season with a strong first few college games and a great World Junior



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tournament, providing more evidence for what led to him being the No. 5 pick as a very well-rounded defender.

Kaliyev moves into this tier as he continues to show he can be a top performer wherever he goes because of his tremendous hockey sense and shot, and despite his game lacking speed and physicality. I think he's going to score a lot in the NHL.

I moved Perfetti down a nudge because of how he handled the faster pace of the U20 level, but I still saw a ton of skill and playmaking in his game and think he's a great player.

Tier 6: Bubble of top-line or pairing and second-line or pairing

48. Owen Tippett, RW, Florida

Feb. 16, 1999 | 6-foot-1 | 201 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 51

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

49. Kirill Marchenko, RW, Columbus

July 21, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 69

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

50. Clayton Keller, LW, Arizona

July 29, 1998 | 5-foot-10 | 170 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 54

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Below-average

Shot: Above-average

51. Samuel Fagemo, LW, Los Angeles

March 14, 2000 | six-foot | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 32

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

52. Adam Boqvist, D, Chicago

Aug. 15, 2000 | six-foot | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 55

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Below-average

Shot: Above-average

53. Victor Soderstrom, D, Arizona

Feb. 26, 2001 | six-foot | 196 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 56

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

54. Erik Brannstrom, D, Ottawa

Sept. 2, 1999 | 5-foot-10 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 59

Skating: High-end

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Below-average

55. Vasili Podkolzin, RW, Vancouver

June 24, 2001 | 6-foot-1 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 39

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

56. Dawson Mercer, C, New Jersey

Oct. 27, 2001 | six-foot | 180 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 65

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

57. Nils Lundkvist, D, New York Rangers

July 27, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 174 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 77

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

58. Nick Robertson, LW, Toronto

Sept. 11, 2001 | 5-foot-9 | 161 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 62

Skating: Below-average



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Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Above-average

Shot: High-end

59. Dillon Dube, LW, Calgary

July 20, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 183 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 63

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

60. Ty Smith, D, New Jersey

March 24, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 179 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 64

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

61. Thomas Harley, D, Dallas

Aug. 19, 2001 | 6-foot-3 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 67

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

62. Nolan Patrick, C, Philadelphia

Sept. 19, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 198 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 68

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

63. Cody Glass, C, Vegas

April 1, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 70

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Below-average

64. Filip Zadina, RW, Detroit

Nov. 27, 1999 | six-foot | 196 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 71

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: High-end

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

65. Morgan Frost, C, Philadelphia

May 14, 1999 | 5-foot-11 | 170 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 73

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Below-average

66. Noah Dobson, D, New York Islanders

Jan. 7, 2000 | 6-foot-4 | 183 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 74

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

67. Peyton Krebs, C, Vegas

Jan. 26, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 113

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Above-average

68. Seth Jarvis, C, Carolina

Feb. 1, 2002 | 5-foot-10 | 175 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 75

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: High-end

69. Jesper Bratt, RW, New Jersey

July 30, 1998 | 5-foot-10 | 174 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 79

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

70. Henri Jokiharju, D, Buffalo

June 17, 1999 | six-foot | 192 pounds



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Previous ranking: No. 80

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

71. Rasmus Sandin, D, Toronto

March 7, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 187 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 76

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

72. Ville Heinola, D, Winnipeg

March 2, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

73. Rodion Amirov, LW, Toronto

Oct. 2, 2001 | six-foot | 167 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 81

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

74. Jake Bean, D, Carolina

June 9, 1998 | 6-foot-1 | 187 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 78

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

75. Marco Rossi, C, Minnesota

Sept. 23, 2001 | 5-foot-9 | 183 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 50

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

76. Spencer Knight, G, Florida

April 19, 2001 | 6-foot-3 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 82

Athleticism: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

77. Hendrix Lapierre, C, Washington

Feb. 9, 2002 | six-foot | 179 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 83

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

Podkolzin moves down a bit as he continues to wait for a breakthrough versus men, albeit on a very strong KHL team. With his so-so skating and what I'm coming to realize is a lack of truly dynamic offensive ability, he might never pop at a high scoring level, but I still see enough skill and a workhorse, which I think will translate into a good NHL player.

Fagemo hasn't had the most productive season in the Allsvenskan as a 20-year-old, which isn't ideal, but he's still looked very good and shown all the tools I saw last season. I adjusted his slotting a little bit to account for his season.

Rossi is one that I'm sure to get strong feedback on. Given his size and lack of great speed, a big part of me ranking him a tier higher and No. 9 going into the draft was his great skill, compete level and production in the OHL. There's always a part of your brain when you rank an undersized junior player without elite speed highly that questions how does it translate to a better level, and his showing at the world juniors made those concerns more evident.

I've been a Heinola skeptic, so I'm sure the Jets fans will be lobbing "I told you so's" at me for this one. Between his great play in Liiga this season and his fantastic World Junior, I'm more sold on the player and have upgraded his hockey sense grade. The skating for his size is still a concern, but as he showed in NHL camp last season, he seems to find a way to translate to the higher levels because of how smart he is.

Krebs was excellent for Team Canada and built off the second half of his WHL season. He's a well-rounded player and will be a coach and fan-favorite because of his skill and compete level, even if he's not the fastest.

Tier 7: Second-line forward, second-pair defenseman or starting goaltender

78. Jesse Puljujarvi, RW, Edmonton

May 7, 1998 | 6-foot-4 | 201 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 84

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Below-average

Compete: Below-average

Shot: Above-average

79. Casey Mittelstadt, C, Buffalo

Nov. 22, 1998 | 6-foot-1 | 203 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 85

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Average



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Compete: Average

80. Jordan Kyrrou, RW, St. Louis

May 5, 1998 | six-foot | 174 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 86

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

81. Nicolas Hague, D, Vegas

Dec. 5, 1998 | 6-foot-6 | 214 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 87

Skating: Poor

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

82. Juuso Valimaki, D, Calgary

Oct. 6, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 205 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 112

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

83. Philip Broberg, D, Edmonton

June 25, 2001 | 6-foot-3 | 203 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 52

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Below-average

Compete: Average

84. Alex Newhook, C, Colorado

Jan. 28, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 53

Skating: High-end

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

85. Ryan Merkley, D, San Jose

Aug. 14, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 176 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 88

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: High-end

Compete: Below-average

86. Alex Turcotte, C, Los Angeles

Feb. 26, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 89

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

87. Sam Steel, C, Anaheim

Feb. 3, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 91

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

88. Maxime Comtois, LW, Anaheim

Jan. 8, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 207 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 92

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

89. Brett Howden, C, New York Rangers

March 29, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 93

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

90. Philip Tomasino, C, Nashville

July 28, 2001 | six-foot | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 118

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

91. Gabriel Vilardi, C, Los Angeles

Aug. 16, 1999 | 6-foot-3 | 201 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 95

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

92. Shane Pinto, C, Ottawa



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November 12, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. NR

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

93. Alexandre Texier, LW, Columbus

Sept. 13, 1999 | six-foot | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 103

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

94. Anton Lundell, C, Florida

Oct. 3, 2001 | 6-foot-1 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 104

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

95. Jack Quinn, RW, Buffalo

Sept. 19, 2001 | six-foot | 176 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 97

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

96. Nolan Foote, LW, New Jersey

Nov. 29, 2000 | 6-foot-4 | 201 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 99

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

97. Jan Jenik, RW, Arizona

Sept. 15, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 98

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

98. Oliver Wahlstrom, RW, New York Islanders

June 13, 2000 | six-foot | 187 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 105

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Below-average

Shot: Above-average

99. Matias Maccelli, LW, Arizona

Oct. 13, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 165 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

100. Dante Fabbro, D, Nashville

June 20, 1998 | six-foot | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 108

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Average

101. Nils Hoglander, LW, Vancouver

Dec. 20, 2000 | 5-foot-9 | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 136

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Elite

Hockey Sense: Below-average

Compete: Above-average

102. Calen Addison, D, Minnesota

April 11, 2000 | 5-foot-10 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 102

Skating: High-end

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

Compete: Below-average

103. Connor Zary, C, Calgary

Sept. 25, 2001 | six-foot | 178 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 60

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average



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104. Brendan Brisson, C, Vegas
Oct. 22, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 179 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 96
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Above-average
Compete: Average

105. John Leonard, C, San Jose
Aug. 7, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 185 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 107
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Above-average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

106. Cam York, D, Philadelphia
Jan. 5, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 174 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 151
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

107. Bobby Brink, RW, Philadelphia
July 8, 2001 | 5-foot-8 | 163 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 155
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Above-average
Compete: Average

108. Scott Perunovich, D, St. Louis
Aug. 18, 1998 | 5-foot-10 | 174 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 109
Skating: Above-average
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Above-average
Compete: Below-average

109. Kailer Yamamoto, RW, Edmonton
Sept. 29, 1998 | 5-foot-8 | 159 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 116
Skating: High-end
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Above-average

110. Jacob Perreault, RW, Anaheim

April 15, 2002 | 5-foot-11 | 192 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 111
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Above-average
Hockey Sense: Above-average
Compete: Average
Shot: High-end

111. Shakir Mukhamadullin, D, New Jersey
Jan. 10, 2002 | 6-foot-3 | 178 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 125
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

112. Mathias Emilio Pettersen, C, Calgary
April 3, 2000 | 5-foot-10 | 187 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 114
Skating: High-end
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Above-average
Compete: Below-average

113. Kevin Bahl, D, New Jersey
June 27, 2000 | 6-foot-7 | 240 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 115
Skating: Poor
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Above-average

114. Lukas Reichel, LW, Chicago
May 17, 2002 | six-foot | 170 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 117
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

115. Evan Bouchard, D, Edmonton
Oct. 20, 1999 | 6-foot-3 | 194 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 134
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Above-average
Compete: Average
Shot: Above-average



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116. Egor Zamula, D, Philadelphia
March 30, 2000 | 6-foot-3 | 176 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 119
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

117. Alexander Nylander, RW, Chicago
March 2, 1998 | 6-foot-1 | 192 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 120
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Below-average
Shot: Above-average

118. Jack Studnicka, C, Boston
Feb. 18, 1999 | 6-foot-1 | 172 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 121
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

119. Liam Foudy, C, Columbus
Feb. 4, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 181 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 122
Skating: Above-average
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

120. Mario Ferraro, D, San Jose
Sept. 17, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 185 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 126
Skating: High-end
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Above-average

121. Ty Dellandrea, C, Dallas
July 21, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 190 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 128
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

122. Mavrik Bourque, C, Dallas
Jan. 8, 2002 | 5-foot-10 | 178 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 127
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Above-average
Compete: Average
Shot: Above-average

123. Braden Schneider, D, New York Rangers
Sept. 20, 2001 | 6-foot-2 | 202 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 138
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Above-average

124. Rasmus Kupari, C, Los Angeles
March 15, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 185 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 130
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Below-average
Compete: Average

125. Max Jones, LW, Anaheim
Feb. 17, 1998 | 6-foot-3 | 220 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 131
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Below-average
Hockey Sense: Below-average
Compete: Above-average

126. Dominik Bokk, RW, Carolina
Feb. 3, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 187 pounds
Previous ranking: No. 140
Skating: Average
Puck Skills: Average
Hockey Sense: Average
Compete: Poor
Shot: Above-average

127. Ivan Morozov, C, Vegas
May 5, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 196 pounds
Previous ranking: NR
Skating: Below-average
Puck Skills: Average



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Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

128. Dmitri Voronkov, C, Columbus

September 10, 2000 | 6-foot-3 | 190 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

129. Jack Dugan, RW, Vegas

March 24, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 133

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

Shot: Below-average

130. Justin Barron, D, Colorado

Nov. 15, 2001 | 6-foot-2 | 195 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 135

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

131. Ryan Suzuki, C, Carolina

May 28, 2001 | six-foot | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 100

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

132. Raphael Lavoie, RW, Edmonton

Sept. 25, 2000 | 6-foot-4 | 198 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 150

Skating: Poor

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Poor

Shot: Above-average

133. Dylan Samberg, D, Winnipeg

Jan. 14, 1999 | 6-foot-4 | 216 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 139

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Below-average

Compete: Average

134. Tyson Jost, C, Colorado

March 14, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 141

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Below-average

135. Emil Bemstrom, RW, Columbus

June 1, 1999 | 5-foot-10 | 181 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 142

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Below-average

Shot: Above-average

136. Victor Mete, D, Montreal

June 7, 1998 | 5-foot-9 | 183 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 143

Skating: High-end

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

137. Tyler Madden, C, Los Angeles

Nov. 9, 1999 | 5-foot-11 | 152 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 144

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Above-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

138. Samuel Poulin, RW, Pittsburgh

Feb. 25, 2001 | 6-foot-1 | 216 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 146

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

139. Adam Beckman, LW, Minnesota

May 10, 2001 | 6-foot-1 | 179 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 147

Skating: Below-average



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Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: High-end

140. Ryan Johnson, D, Buffalo

July 24, 2001 | six-foot | 174 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Above-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

141. Joel Hofer, G, St. Louis

July 30, 2000 | 6-foot-5 | 172 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 148

Athleticism: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

142. Thomas Bordeleau, C, San Jose

January 3, 2002 | 5-foot-10 | 175 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

Shot: Above-average

143. John-Jason Peterka, LW, Buffalo

Jan. 14, 2002 | 5-foot-11 | 192 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 132

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

144. Jason Robertson, LW, Dallas

July 22, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 201 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 149

Skating: Poor

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

145. Ian Mitchell, D, Chicago

Jan. 18, 1999 | 5-foot-11 | 174 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 152

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

146. Ridly Greig, C, Ottawa

Aug. 8, 2002 | 5-foot-11 | 163 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 153

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

147. Roni Hirvonen, C, Toronto

Jan. 10, 2002 | 5-foot-9 | 172 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

148. Ryan Poehling, C, Montreal

Jan. 3, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: No. 154

Skating: Below-average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

149. Jacob Bernard-Docker, D, Ottawa

June 30, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 194 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

150. Devon Levi, G, Florida

December 7, 2001 | six-foot | 185 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: Average

Hockey Sense: Above-average

151. Jakob Pelletier, LW, Calgary

March 7, 2001 | 5-foot-9 | 161 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Above-average

152. Topi Niemela, D, Toronto



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March 25, 2002 | 5-foot-11 | 165 pounds

Previous ranking: NR

Skating: Average

Puck Skills: Below-average

Hockey Sense: Average

Compete: Average

The additions to this group were Arizona's Maccelli, Ottawa's Pinto, San Jose's Bordeleau, Vegas' Morozov, Columbus' Voronkov, Toronto's Hirvonen, Calgary's Pelletier, Ottawa's Bernard-Docker, Buffalo's Johnson, Toronto's Niemela and Florida's Levi.

Removed were Nashville forward Eeli Tolvanen, New York Rangers forward Vitaly Kravtsov, St. Louis forward Klim Kostin and Minnesota forward Alexander Khovanov, all of whom haven't had overly impressive seasons in the KHL. For Tolvanen and Khovanov, there are concerns over size and skating, but they have great skill and scoring ability. Kravtsov's concerns are over skating and compete level, but he has elite skill. And Kostin's offensive upside remains a question even though he can skate like an NHLer.

Los Angeles defenseman Tobias Bjornfot was removed as questions continue to linger about his offensive upside despite his great skating. Carolina forward Noel Gunler was removed because of concerns over his foot speed and compete level, but he does have a big shot and can make plays. Edmonton forward Dylan Holloway was also removed.

Maccelli and Pinto continued to build off strong 2019-20 seasons, as top players for top teams in Liiga and the NCAA, respectively. Pinto has shown more skill as the years have gone on. Maccelli has shown great playmaking and finishing ability despite so-so skating. Fellow Senators and NoDak prospect Bernard-Docker has also grown on me because he has enough offense to go with his skating and physicality.

Morozov and Voronkov have both been impressive in the KHL and with Russia's national team. Voronkov continues to trend up after going undrafted in 2018 and then a mid-round pick in 2019. He's a big, physical center with some touch. Morozov's skill and work ethic continue to stand out as he grows into a good pro.

Bordeleau looked very good in the first half for Michigan, with his skill on display more consistently than it was in junior hockey and being one of the better players in the Big Ten. Hirvonen is an average skating 5-foot-9 forward, but he makes so many plays and he's produced at a high level the last two seasons between the club and international level.

Johnson's season has been strong between the Gophers and Team USA. His great skating shows how his game will translate to higher levels, and the offense in his game has been good at both levels, which was the question in junior. He's a pass-first type offensively but with his skating he could excel in that role in the NHL.

The two Toronto Finns, Hirvonen and Niemela, followed good draft seasons and great U18 5 Nations last February with great world juniors performances. Both have shown well versus men, too. They don't have the typical toolkits that pop for this range, but they both have great hockey sense and just seem to gain responsibility from coaches and put up numbers.

Newhook moves down a nudge into this group. I love the speed and energy he brings to shifts and I see a lot of skill, but I'm not as sold as I was when he was 16 and 17 that he can be an offensive impact player at the higher levels as opposed to a solid second-line player.

Flames pick Zary moves down a tier after the U20 level exposed his skating a bit, although I still like his skill level a lot. On the other side, I've moved fellow Flames pick Pelletier into this range. I have my concerns on Pelletier's skill level, but he works, he's very intelligent, coaches love him and he continues to score in bunches wherever he goes.

Oilers fans won't like me much for downgrading Broberg and Holloway. Broberg was moved down a tier. I still like his great skating and see some offense in his game, but at some point he needs to elevate his game as he hasn't really exceeded at any level for the past 18 months. Holloway is a similar player in terms of strengths and weaknesses. He has speed, size, compete and skill, but he doesn't make a ton of plays. Those concerns lingered for me into the draft where I still had him in this range, but the more I've watched him this season, the more I see a third-line forward offensively.

Finally, Levi cracks the list. I know, I know. He was just picked in the seventh round a few months ago. This could be a classic overreaction to the World Junior tournament. But he was so good there that it made me go back and check his games from last season and it validated what I saw in Edmonton. I think this is a very good player despite his size.

Pronman's NHL under-23 ranking

1

Rasmus Dahlin

D

Buffalo

1

2

Elias Pettersson

C

Vancouver

1

3

Alexis Lafreniere

LW

NY Rangers

1

4

Andrei Svechnikov

RW

Carolina

2

5

Patrik Laine

RW

Winnipeg

2

6

Jack Hughes

C

New Jersey

2

7

Kaapo Kakko



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RW	16
NY Rangers	Pierre-Luc Dubois
2	C
8	Columbus
Quinn Hughes	4
D	17
Vancouver	Dylan Cozens
3	C
9	Buffalo
Brady Tkachuk	4
LW	18
Ottawa	Robert Thomas
3	C
10	St. Louis
Quinton Byfield	4
C	19
Los Angeles	Nico Hischier
3	C
11	New Jersey
Cale Makar	4
D	20
Colorado	Mikhail Sergachev
3	D
12	Tampa Bay
Miro Heiskanen	4
D	21
Dallas	Barrett Hayton
3	C
13	Arizona
Tim Stuetzle	4
C	22
Ottawa	Connor McMichael
3	C
14	Washington
Trevor Zegras	4
C	23
Anaheim	Lucas Raymond
3	RW
15	Detroit
Kirby Dach	5
C	24
Chicago	Nick Suzuki
4	C



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Montreal	Josh Norris
5	C
25	Ottawa
Adam Fox	5
D	34
NY Rangers	Samuel Girard
5	D
26	Colorado
Moritz Seider	5
D	35
Detroit	Alex Formenton
5	LW
27	Ottawa
Arthur Kaliyev	5
RW	36
Los Angeles	Joel Farabee
5	LW
28	Philadelphia
Jamie Drysdale	5
D	37
Anaheim	Drake Batherson
5	RW
29	Ottawa
Cole Perfetti	5
C	38
Winnipeg	Filip Chytil
5	C
30	NY Rangers
Martin Necas	5
RW	39
Carolina	Jakob Chychrun
5	D
31	Arizona
Alexander Holtz	5
RW	40
New Jersey	Bowen Byram
5	
32	D
Jesper Kotkaniemi	Colorado
C	5
Montreal	41
5	Grigori Denisenko
33	LW



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Florida	Clayton Keller
5	LW
42	Arizona
Matthew Boldy	6
LW	51
Minnesota	Samuel Fagemo
5	LW
43	Los Angeles
Jake Sanderson	6
D	52
Ottawa	Adam Boqvist
5	D
44	Chicago
Yaroslav Askarov	6
G	53
Nashville	Victor Soderstrom
5	D
45	Arizona
Carter Hart	6
G	54
Philadelphia	Erik Brannstrom
5	D
46	Ottawa
Alexander Romanov	6
D	55
Montreal	Vasili Podkolzin
5	RW
47	Vancouver
Cole Caufield	6
RW	56
Montreal	Dawson Mercer
5	C
48	New Jersey
Owen Tippett	6
RW	57
Florida	Nils Lundkvist
6	D
49	NY Rangers
Kirill Marchenko	6
RW	58
Columbus	Nick Robertson
6	LW
50	Toronto



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6	C
59	Vegas
Dillon Dube	6
LW	68
Calgary	Seth Jarvis
6	C
60	Carolina
Ty Smith	6
D	69
New Jersey	Jesper Bratt
6	RW
61	New Jersey
Thomas Harley	6
D	70
Dallas	Henri Jokiharju
6	D
62	Buffalo
Nolan Patrick	6
C	71
Philadelphia	Rasmus Sandin
6	D
63	Toronto
Cody Glass	6
C	72
Vegas	Ville Heinola
6	D
64	Winnipeg
Filip Zadina	6
RW	73
Detroit	Rodion Amirov
6	LW
65	Toronto
Morgan Frost	6
C	74
Philadelphia	Jake Bean
6	D
66	Carolina
Noah Dobson	6
D	75
NY Islanders	Marco Rossi
6	C
67	Minnesota
Peyton Krebs	6



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76	Colorado
Spencer Knight	7
G	85
Florida	Ryan Merkley
6	D
77	San Jose
Hendrix Lapierre	7
C	86
Washington	Alex Turcotte
6	C
78	Los Angeles
Jesse Puljujarvi	7
RW	87
Edmonton	Sam Steel
7	C
79	Anaheim
Casey Mittelstadt	7
C	88
Buffalo	Maxime Comtois
7	LW
80	Anaheim
Jordan Kyrrou	7
RW	89
St. Louis	Brett Howden
7	C
81	NY Rangers
Nicolas Hague	7
D	90
Vegas	Philip Tomasino
7	C
82	Nashville
Juuso Valimaki	7
D	91
Calgary	Gabriel Vilardi
7	C
83	Los Angeles
Philip Broberg	7
D	92
Edmonton	Shane Pinto
7	C
84	Ottawa
Alex Newhook	7
C	93



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Alexandre Texier	7
LW	102
Columbus	Calen Addison
7	D
94	Minnesota
Anton Lundell	7
C	103
Florida	Connor Zary
7	C
95	Calgary
Jack Quinn	7
RW	104
Buffalo	Brendan Brisson
7	C
96	Vegas
Nolan Foote	7
LW	105
New Jersey	John Leonard
7	C
97	San Jose
Jan Jenik	7
RW	106
Arizona	Cam York
7	D
98	Philadelphia
Oliver Wahlstrom	7
RW	107
NY Islanders	Bobby Brink
7	RW
99	Philadelphia
Matias Maccelli	7
LW	108
Arizona	Scott Perunovich
7	D
100	St. Louis
Dante Fabbro	7
D	109
Nashville	Kailer Yamamoto
7	RW
101	Edmonton
Nils Hoglander	7
LW	110
Vancouver	Jacob Perreault



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RW	119
Anaheim	Liam Foudy
7	C
111	Columbus
Shakir Mukhamadullin	7
D	120
New Jersey	Mario Ferraro
7	D
112	San Jose
Mathias Emilio Pettersen	7
C	121
Calgary	Ty Dellandrea
7	C
113	Dallas
Kevin Bahl	7
D	122
New Jersey	Mavrik Bourque
7	C
114	Dallas
Lukas Reichel	7
LW	123
Chicago	Braden Schneider
7	D
115	NY Rangers
Evan Bouchard	7
D	124
Edmonton	Rasmus Kupari
7	C
116	Los Angeles
Egor Zamula	7
D	125
Philadelphia	Max Jones
7	LW
117	Anaheim
Alexander Nylander	7
RW	126
Chicago	Dominik Bokk
7	RW
118	Carolina
Jack Studnicka	7
C	127
Boston	Ivan Morozov
7	C



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Vegas

7

128

Dmitri Voronkov

C

Columbus

7

129

Jack Dugan

RW

Vegas

7

130

Justin Barron

D

Colorado

7

131

Ryan Suzuki

C

Carolina

7

132

Raphael Lavoie

RW

Edmonton

7

133

Dylan Samberg

D

Winnipeg

7

134

Tyson Jost

C

Colorado

7

135

Emil Bemstrom

RW

Columbus

7

136

Victor Mete

D

Montreal

7

137

Tyler Madden

C

Los Angeles

7

138

Samuel Poulin

RW

Pittsburgh

7

139

Adam Beckman

LW

Minnesota

7

140

Ryan Johnson

D

Buffalo

7

141

Joel Hofer

G

St. Louis

7

142

Thomas Bordeleau

C

San Jose

7

143

John-Jason Peterka

LW

Buffalo

7

144

Jason Robertson

LW

Dallas



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7	April 26, 1997 5-foot-10 201 pounds
145	Skating: Above-average
Ian Mitchell	Puck Skills: Average
D	Hockey Sense: Average
Chicago	Compete: Above-average
7	Alex Barre-Boulet, C, Tampa Bay
146	May 21, 1997 5-foot-10 170 pounds
Ridly Greig	Skating: Average
C	Puck Skills: Above-average
Ottawa	Hockey Sense: Average
7	Compete: Average
147	Shot: Above-average
Roni Hirvonen	Ilya Sorokin, G, New York Islanders
C	Aug. 4, 1995 6-foot-2 176 pounds
Toronto	Athleticism: Average
7	Hockey sense: Above-average
148	Kyle Capobianco, D, Arizona
Ryan Poehling	Aug. 13, 1997 6-foot-1 196 pounds
C	Skating: Average
Montreal	Puck Skills: Below-average
7	Hockey Sense: Average
149	Compete: Average
Jacob Bernard-Docker	Kaprizov would be between Chychrun (40) and Bowen Byram (41). Barre-Boulet would be between Merkley (87) and Turcotte (88). Sorokin would be between Pettersen (114) and Bahl (115). And Capobianco would be between Lavoie (134) and Samberg (135).
D	The Athletic LOADED: 01.09.2021
Ottawa	
7	
150	
Devon Levi	1198410 Websites
G	
Florida	The Athletic / The NHL's top 10 breakout candidates for 2020-21
7	
151	Harman Dayal
Jakob Pelletier	Jan 8, 2021
LW	
Calgary	One of the most satisfying feelings in the sports world is identifying a breakout candidate and then watching him fulfill that potential soon thereafter.
7	
152	You feel a sense of pride for finding the diamond in the rough before everybody else in the mainstream did. That's, of course, until your next breakout prediction sputters and makes you eat a nice slice of humble pie (we're never wrong, we're just early, dammit!)
Topi Niemela	The goal of today's piece is to scan across the NHL in search of the game's next breakout players. This could be a bottom-six forward or bottom pairing defenceman that emerges as a core piece or an upper- echelon talent that starts knocking on the door of stardom — the goal is to target substantial year-over-year improvement.
D	
Toronto	
7	
Prospects who missed the age cut	
Kirill Kaprizov, F, Minnesota	



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How do we find these candidates? There are a few key factors to look for that most prominently influence a potential breakout.

More ice-time/bigger role (think back to the 2017-18 Vegas Golden Knights as a reminder of how important this is)

Uptick in quality of linemates (look at how Ryan Strome's point totals exploded after playing with Artemi Panarin)

Underlying indicators that suggest the player is capable of producing more (this could be a low shooting percentage, high rate of producing scoring chances, two-way numbers or microstats like zone entries and shot assists)

Age-related growth expectations (most players peak in the early stages of their mid-20s so if you're far younger than that, you've got a natural tailwind)

We're going to exclude rookies from this exercise because that feels like cheating. So no Cody Glass, Kirill Kaprizov, Igor Shesterkin or anyone else that's eligible for the Calder this year.

It was difficult to narrow this list down, but here we go in no particular order.

1. Nick Suzuki, C, Montreal Canadiens

Max Pacioretty has been excellent for the Vegas Golden Knights, but it's inarguable that the trade has been a coup for Marc Bergevin and the Montreal Canadiens. Tomas Tatar has fit seamlessly on Montreal's top line to replace Pacioretty's production and that says nothing about the real centrepiece of that trade, Nick Suzuki.

Suzuki notched 13 goals and 41 points in his rookie campaign but it feels like he's just scratching the surface.

The right-shot centreman is a dynamic force who has all the ingredients to be a high-end playmaker in the top-six. Suzuki's biggest strength is his intelligence — this powers his vision as a setup man, his tremendously advanced two-way game and the layers of deception and craftiness he implements as a puck rusher to overcome the fact that he isn't the fastest straight-line skater.

Suzuki is poised beyond his years and has the all-around tools to thrive as an impact pivot.

The 21-year-old facilitates zone exits and zone entries at a high-end rate and ranks among the 78th percentile of NHL forwards in passes that lead to shot attempts, per Corey Sznajder's tracking. Coming back from the March pause in the bubble playoffs, he started to dictate the flow of games and saw his ice-time rocket to 19:11 per game.

Heading into this season, we should be able to bank on an increase in ice time, better luck at five-on-five (Suzuki's on-ice shooting percentage is just 6.4 percent) and wingers with a higher offensive ceiling (he's currently lined up with Jonathan Drouin and Josh Anderson, with Tyler Toffoli a new addition that could see time there).

Montreal has long yearned for an explosive offensive centre to key their offence and Suzuki looks like he isn't far off from being that answer.

2. Matt Grzelcyk, Boston Bruins, LD

The Boston Bruins are desperately short on left-handed top-four defencemen after losing Torey Krug and Zdeno Chara.

Matt Grzelcyk, who's crushed it on Boston's bottom pair for three seasons, is more than ready to claim one of those spots. A third-round pick in 2013, Grzelcyk is a top-flight puck-mover who can get the Bruins out of their own end with impressive efficiency — ranking above the 90th percentile of defencemen in leading breakouts.

Data via Corey Sznajder, Viz by CJ Turtoro

Most would pigeonhole a 5-foot-9 defenceman like Grzelcyk as a pure offensive piece, but the key to his potential emergence is that he's a gifted two-way player. Grzelcyk is quick on his feet to close gaps, always

possesses a disruptive stick, understands how to funnel players to the outside and makes good reads to take passing lanes away. He's not as dynamic as Krug offensively but more polished defensively.

The Bruins generate substantially more shots and scoring chances than they allow with Grzelcyk on the ice. He's an impressive all-around play-driver and the territorial edge he creates has translated to a massively positive five-on-five goal differential (115 goals for, 74 against). There are nearly 150 NHL defencemen who've skated 2500 five-on-five minutes since 2017-18 and Grzelcyk leads them all with a five-on-five goal share in the 60 percent range.

5v5 Goal Differential Since 2017-18

Matt Grzelcyk

60.9%

54.4%

Victor Hedman

60.1%

54.5%

Ryan Ellis

59.0%

53.8%

Charlie McAvoy

58.5%

55.5%

Roman Josi

57.9%

52.6%

Mikhail Sergachev

57.7%

54.1%

Michal Kempny

57.7%

49.4%

Zdeno Chara

57.0%

52.4%

Victor Mete

56.7%

54.8%

Marcus Pettersson

56.5%

51.6%

You do have to take the goal differential with a grain of salt because Boston's been one of the top teams in the league and Grzelcyk's posted this in sheltered minutes but he's definitely earned a chance higher in the lineup.

Overall, Grzelcyk looks the part of a sturdy second-pairing quality defender. He's ready to take the next step and could also see time on the first power-play unit in the absence of Krug.



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3. Robert Thomas, C, St. Louis Blues

Robert Thomas drove one of the league's most potent third lines last year, scoring 42 points in 66 games despite averaging just 14:34 per game. That kind of production efficiency was good enough for him to rank top 50 among NHL forwards in five-on-five points per hour.

The 21-year-old's on-ice shooting percentage looks a tad overheated but that should be very comfortably offset by the boost he's about to receive in ice-time and linemate quality as Craig Berube has slotted him as the second-line centre flanked by Jaden Schwartz on his left and Mike Hoffman on his right.

The idea of a Thomas-Hoffman should strike fear into the Blues' opponents. Thomas is as pure of a playmaker as they come, capable of finding his teammates through mazes of sticks and bodies. He's a one-man setup machine — knifing his way through the neutral zone as a puck transporter and ranking in the 88th percentile for shot assists last year. The 2017 20th pick consistently spots backdoor and cross-seam passing opportunities which should be perfect for a sniper like Hoffman to capitalize on.

Berube can use the Ryan O'Reilly line as a tough matchups group and free the Thomas unit up to feast offensively on secondary matchups.

4. Denis Gurianov, LW, Dallas Stars

Denis Gurianov was the only Dallas Star to hit the 20-goal milestone last year. That's solid scoring on its own but it's mighty impressive when considering that the Russian winger averaged 12:59 per game.

Gurianov's lack of playmaking limited him to just 29 points despite all the goals but the exciting proposition with him is how his production might blossom with a real top-six opportunity. The Stars gave him a taste of more minutes in the postseason and he rewarded the club with 17 points in 27 games.

The 23-year-old is an electric skater who can punish opponents on the rush with his explosive release. He can manufacture a ton of scoring opportunities on his own with his individual shot and scoring chances rate at five-on-five ranking 51st and 19th respectively. His ability to create offensive zone entries with possession is a big part of that.

Data via Corey Sznajder, Viz by CJ Turtoro

If the 2015 first-round pick can continue generating good looks with this level of volume and consistency, he'll have many more 20-goal campaigns to come.

Gurianov shot 15 percent last year so you may not see a huge bump in how often he finds the back of the net, but his overall point totals should see a nice boost through an increase in minutes and more well-rounded playmaking results.

There's no reason for the Stars not to lean on the right-winger as an offensive leader — they need him.

Dallas ranked 26th in goals per game in the 2019-20 regular season and will miss Tyler Seguin for the start of the season. It's a no-brainer to feed some extra minutes to Gurianov. That definitely looks like it could be in the cards, as he lined up on the opening day of camp on a line with Jamie Benn and Roope Hintz. Benn's setup ability mixed with Gurianov's finishing talent could end up being a very interesting combo if that line sticks.

5. Rasmus Dahlin, LD, Buffalo Sabres

Cale Makar, Quinn Hughes and Miro Heiskanen have garnered all the attention as the elite defencemen that will shape the NHL's future. Rasmus Dahlin isn't there yet, but it feels like this could be the year where he knocks on that tier's door.

It may seem odd to project a former No. 1 pick who notched 40 points 59 games as a breakout candidate but this one isn't necessarily about the point totals, it's about the all-around game. The fact of the matter is that while Dahlin has done a phenomenal job in the offensive zone,

particularly in quarterbacking Buffalo's power-play, the five-on-five impact just isn't there yet. The Swedish defenceman averaged less than 20 minutes a night, was sheltered with a high dosage of offensive zone starts and soft competition and didn't tilt the ice significantly enough with his two-way impact — these are the areas where I think you're going to see him take a pretty sizeable step.

There are three main reasons that I'm bullish on Dahlin taking a big leap forward.

He turned a corner after a rough start to the season. After returning from a mid-November injury, Dahlin posted a solid 51 percent expected goal differential on a Sabres team that struggled to control play.

Dahlin's just 20 years old with two impact seasons already under his belt. Defencemen who are as good as Dahlin's been as an 18- and 19-year-old in the NHL are extremely rare and breakout as top-pairing workhorses sooner rather than later.

Dahlin is already an elite puck mover at five-on-five, plus an above-average rush defender. Those skills should eventually translate to a stronger even-strength impact.

Buffalo's left side is begging for a defenceman to really take the reins and lead the blue line and it feels like Dahlin's gained the maturity and experience necessary to make the jump.

6. Brady Tkachuk, Ottawa Senators, LW

Brady Tkachuk's already a solid top-six forward but this could be the season where he more prominently enters the conversation as one of the North Division's top wingers.

Tkachuk's a little bit different than the five players preceding him on this list because his case isn't built on opportunity — he's already averaging first-line minutes. Instead, the argument for him rests on a combination of a really promising underlying profile, plus the fact that he'll have a chance to play with new signing Evgeny Dadonov.

Few players dominate the net-front like Tkachuk can, who clocks in at fifth among all NHL players in shots from the slot per Sportlogiq's tracking.

Graphic via The Point Hockey/Sportlogiq

Tkachuk isn't dynamic the way Thomas or Suzuki is but his physical tools are robust and make him an unstoppable force from inside the slot.

Natural Stattrack's model pegs Tkachuk with 31 expected goals in all situations individually last year, compared to just the 21 he actually scored. What this means is that a league-average shooter would score 31 goals if given the same quantity and quality of shots that Tkachuk did. There are two possible conclusions to draw from that — either Tkachuk is a below-average finisher or he was unlucky and is poised to see some positive regression. Tkachuk didn't underperform his expected goal output by a significant margin in his rookie year (24 xG vs 22 actual goals) so I'd bet on it mostly being the latter.

The other variable that should aid Tkachuk is the aforementioned addition of Dadonov. Dadonov is a strong puck carrier and one of the game's better playmakers — that will give Tkachuk a dynamic forward that can drive the bus offensively and set up chances for him.

7. Devon Toews, LD, Colorado Avalanche

The fit for Devon Toews in Colorado seems like a match made in heaven. A fundamentally sound two-way defenceman with top puck-moving skills setting the table for the most potent rush offence in the NHL? Sign me up.

Toews' move from Long Island to the Mile High City is one of the most extreme changes in offensive environment that a player could go through. The left-shot defender will go from a defensive Islanders' system that prioritized dump and chase hockey to an aggressive, high-octane system that prioritizes speed through the neutral zone. Toews' active style of play feels like it will synergize well with how the Avs like to play



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and if that becomes the case, this could be the year he enters the mainstream conversation as a top-pairing quality defenceman.

From the looks of training camp lines, he'll get a crack next to Makar on what could end up being one of the most dynamic pairs in hockey.

Toews isn't a household name yet but he could be pretty soon. He's an excellent skater that activates in transition, defends the rush well and is an underrated playmaker in the offensive zone.

These individual skills have translated to very impressive two-way numbers — Toews provided the Islanders with a strong boost in shot differential and expected goal share when he took the ice. There's no denying that his postseason performance, which soured some Islanders' fans on him, was an issue but it's important to focus on the larger body of work rather than the small sample of one or two playoff series' — any player can go cold or lose confidence for a stretch.

One should expect Toews' five-on-five points rate to climb in this more explosive offensive environment, though a drop off in power-play time could nullify a big counting stats spike. The overall bet, however, is that he'll go from being regarded as a No.4 defenceman to emerging as a minute munching workhorse that helps drive Colorado's five-on-five success, particularly in transition.

8. Jack Hughes, C, New Jersey Devils

Jack Hughes flashed moments of brilliance, but his rookie season was ultimately a disappointment. The 2019 No. 1 pick struggled to drive play, wasn't productive at five-on-five and battled defensive issues.

That shouldn't come as a huge shocker given the massive step up he faced from the USHL to NHL, however, and there are reasons to believe he's better equipped to being a solid contributor this season. For starters, Hughes has had 10 months to bulk up and get stronger — he claims he's added 14 pounds to his frame. This should help ensure he doesn't get knocked off the puck too easily which was a pretty significant issue in his rookie year.

Second, he'll have more offensively inclined linemates to play with. Hughes got time with Kyle Palmieri last year but he also saw quite a bit of time with Wayne Simmonds and Pavel Zacha. This time around he's starting camp with Palmieri on one side and Andreas Johnsson on the other. Those two should be decent fits for Hughes' method of attacking on the rush.

Third, Hughes was pretty unlucky in 2019-20 and should get more bounces going his way. His five-on-five individual shooting percentage was a measly 2.4 percent with the on-ice conversion rate being 5.1 percent. It doesn't matter how much he may have struggled in Year 1, part of that was still driven by tough puck luck.

Lastly, it's not as if Hughes' campaign was without any signs of life, the 19-year-old centre was in the 98th percentile at carrying the puck into the offensive zone. A lot of those were empty-calorie rushes but as he becomes stronger and more confident, he should be able to learn how to attack more decisively through the middle rather than getting funnelled and rubbed out along the boards.

I think it's going to be a long-term project to groom Hughes as a No.1 centre, I'm not sure he's going to explode as a high-end top-six centreman this year, but he's in a position to take a sizeable step nonetheless.

9. Cal Petersen, G, Los Angeles Kings

It's a pretty risky proposition to bet on goalies, but it felt like I should include at least one on the list. It's very difficult for the naked eye to accurately evaluate netminders and this spot could have just as easily gone to Ilya Samsonov or Thatcher Demko.

This is easily the riskiest breakout pick in the top ten.

Samsonov and Demko will each have a chance to take over as top-flight starters this year, an opportunity Petersen won't have, but those two are

a lot closer to being household names than the Kings' goaltender. Petersen's far less heralded which makes him a more traditional breakout candidate.

Petersen has a peculiar track record as his save percentage has been mediocre in the AHL, but team environment influences save percentage a lot more than people are willing to admit and the Ontario Reign rosters that he played for frankly weren't very good. In the NHL, he's managed a .923 save percentage in 19 career games.

Goalie evaluation is more of an art than a science, though. The numbers aren't always a great indicator and I'm not just picking him because he has a high save percentage in a small sample. Far more important than that is the confidence that those who understand the position have in Petersen. One example is Kevin Woodley of InGoal Magazine, who believes Petersen is ready to see more consistent big league action.

"Petersen has a nice blend of a strong technical foundation and ability to process and read the game at speed, but still show a willingness to go outside the box when needed and just battle," said Woodley. "What really sets him apart is his skating and patience holding his edges, which is increasingly important against more dynamic east-west attacks."

With Jonathan Quick's game trending in the wrong direction, one would think the Kings will give Petersen a decent chunk of starts this year. This could be the first real chance for the right-handed catcher, one that he could be poised to take advantage of if his technical skills and small sample numbers are any sign.

10. Chandler Stephenson, C, Vegas Golden Knights

The fate of this breakout pick will live and die by usage. If Chandler Stephenson beats out Cody Glass for the second-line centre spot that Paul Stastny left behind, he'll ride with Mark Stone and Max Pacioretty on his wings — the perfect opportunity for him to make a name for himself. If he doesn't win the spot, then it's tough to envision a significant leap forward.

While the outcome of this pick hinges on opportunity, there's a pretty solid player quietly buried beneath the surface. It's unlikely Stephenson will ever be a true talent top-six centre, but I also think he's got more in him than simply being the fourth-liner he was with the Capitals.

Stephenson is a speed demon whose game started to transform last year. In Washington, the microstats tell us that he wasn't active in transition, couldn't create a ton of entries with possession and was a pretty average playmaker. In Vegas, however, it appears he's taken huge strides — he was one of the league's better zone entries forwards and made a ton of passing plays that led to shot attempts.

The Golden Knights' system is favourable for centres to fit into and that's unlocked some skills in Stephenson's repertoire that we hadn't seen previously.

The other thing worth pointing out is that the Pacioretty, Stephenson, Stone combination was literally unstoppable in the 223 minutes they played together at five-on-five. The trio controlled 62.4 percent of shot attempts, a 70.3 percent expected goal share and scored a whopping 20 goals while allowing just five.

Obviously, we can't expect that level to last, but it's a sign that coach Peter DeBoer could be onto something with this line. Buoyed by two All-Star calibre players, we could see Stephenson express an array of skills that we've never seen before and that could key an impressive breakout.

Honourable mentions

Charlie McAvoy, RD, Boston Bruins: McAvoy's an elite two-way defenceman. He deserves way more plaudits than he gets and it's, in part, because he doesn't put up gaudy point totals. It feels like this is the year where he can make a serious Norris Trophy push by getting some more power-play time to pad his stats.

Thatcher Demko, G, Vancouver Canucks: Demko was unbelievable in the playoffs with a historic three-game cameo that helped Vancouver



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push Vegas to seven games. With Jacob Markstrom out of the picture, the path is clear for the highly talented American goaltender to take the net and run with it.

Kaapo Kakko, RW, New York Rangers: It looks like Kakko is going to get a look on Panarin's line, he's super young and he should see some positive regression with the tough luck he had last year.

Dillon Dube, RW, Calgary Flames: Dube was dynamite in the playoffs, carrying a line with Sam Bennett and Milan Lucic. It doesn't seem like a matter of if he's going to break out but when. The only problem is that the "when" could hinge on a top-six opportunity that he doesn't appear to be pencilled in for just yet (at least based on camp lines).

Rasmus Andersson, RD, Calgary Flames: Top puck mover who should emerge as a more crucial top-four piece for the Flames following TJ Brodie's departure.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.09.2021

1198411 Websites

The Athletic / How the NHL's new division format affects every team's playoff chances

Dom Luszczyzyn

Jan 8, 2021

In less than a week, the 2020-21 NHL season is starting. Finally.

As you may have noticed, I've spent the last few weeks breaking down each team's chances, from playoff odds to Stanley Cup probabilities, going division by division. The big change this year is that every single regular-season game will be divisional and divisions were realigned to accommodate a closed Canada/United States border.

In case you've somehow missed it, here's how those divisions look.

Scotia® North Division

Calgary Flames, Edmonton Oilers, Montreal Canadiens, Ottawa Senators, Toronto Maple Leafs, Vancouver Canucks, Winnipeg Jets

MassMutual® East Division

Boston Bruins, Buffalo Sabres, New Jersey Devils, New York Islanders, New York Rangers, Philadelphia Flyers, Pittsburgh Penguins, Washington Capitals

Discover® Central Division

Carolina Hurricanes, Chicago Blackhawks, Columbus Blue Jackets, Dallas Stars, Detroit Red Wings, Florida Panthers, Nashville Predators, Tampa Bay Lightning

Honda® West Division

Anaheim Ducks, Arizona Coyotes, Colorado Avalanche, Los Angeles Kings, Minnesota Wild, San Jose Sharks, St. Louis Blues, Vegas Golden Knights

I sympathize with the league navigating the new world landscape to find the best solution to solve pandemic-related issues – it's no small feat – and as a Canadian, the North division might be the league's greatest ever idea. Having said that, it's still worth reporting how the new normal compares to the old normal. Obviously whatever needs to be done is necessary, but relative context still matters.

Really, I just want to see which team gets screwed over most.

A change in format means some teams will reap rewards and some teams will get the short end of the stick. It's unavoidable and the hope is that the effect size is small enough that it doesn't matter. That wasn't the case with the bubble playoffs introducing eight new teams into the equation and that manifested with the two teams affected most, Pittsburgh and Edmonton, seeing that concern turn into reality. Both teams were near playoff locks before the stoppage but were forced to play in a play-in series (lowering their odds significantly) that both ended up losing.

It was likely a necessary evil given revenue concerns, but the magnitude of the changes – almost 40 percentage points in playoff probability lost for those two teams – was a bit much. That's fortunately not as big of a problem over an entire season, even a shortened one. For playoff probability, the largest jump is roughly 12 percentage points while the largest fall is nine percentage points. Only seven teams see a five percentage point difference or more. That's not bad!

Here are the teams that see the biggest increases and decreases to their playoff probabilities as a result of the changes made to the league's regular-season format.

Probabilities for an 82-game season were estimated using last season's schedule.

Point Pace

Before we get into playoff and Stanley Cup chances, let's quickly take a quick look at how certain teams saw a change in their point paces. Consider this the strength of schedule effect from either changing divisions or getting to play the same teams over and over again. This might help inform some of the other odds increase.

Teams with a one-point increase or more

Colorado: +3.3

Tampa Bay: +2.3

St. Louis: +1.8

Minnesota: +1.7

Toronto: +1.6

Vegas: +1.4

Montreal: +1.3

Carolina: +1.1

Florida: +1.1

Arizona: +1.0

Columbus: +1.0

The entire upper half of the Honda® West Division makes the cut, as do four teams that escaped the old Atlantic Division. Colorado sees the biggest jump and that's on playing Los Angeles, San Jose, Anaheim and Arizona 28 times this season. I wouldn't be shocked to see the Avalanche pick up 20 wins in those games

Teams with a one-point decrease or more

Washington: -1.4

Islanders: -1.4

Ottawa: -1.7

Rangers: -1.7

Buffalo: -2.3

New Jersey: -3.0

So, Ottawa, the punching bag of the Scotia® North Division, and then the bottom five teams from the MassMutual® East Division in order. Yeah,



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that division is going to be an absolute gauntlet. It was hinted at in each preview, but if you're wondering why some of those teams had lower point projections than expected, this is why. Every game is going to be a battle and even the other three teams – Boston, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia – all see a drop as well.

Playoff Chances

Montreal: +11.6 percent

Florida: +10.8 percent

Columbus: +9.6 percent

Minnesota: +4.1 percent

Ottawa: +3.8 percent

The key to upping playoff odds under a new normal? Leave a difficult division and be a team on the bubble, like the top four teams are.

In the previous Atlantic, all three of Tampa Bay, Boston, and Toronto would've been around 90 percent or more to make it. That doesn't leave much room for either of Montreal or Florida who would've had to fight for the final spot with each other, barring a surprising rise or an epic decline from the top three teams. The Scotia® North Division is extremely tight in the middle, but Montreal is at the top of that hierarchy for now and is in control of its own fate. Florida is sixth in the Discover® Central Division, but there's much more room to compete with only Tampa Bay's spot really set in stone.

Columbus is in that division too and the Blue Jackets go from an incredibly difficult Eastern Conference wild-card race, to a wrestling match with Nashville or Dallas for the third-or-fourth seed. There's less of a traffic jam which gives the team much more leeway.

The Wild's odds are tricky because they obviously have an easier path in the weakest division, but they also go from a seven-team division to an eight-team division. The average playoff chance difference there is seven percent, so the net difference for Minnesota is closer to plus-11 percent. With the Wild's only real competition being Arizona and Anaheim, it's very tough to see them fall out. However, they do suffer that same Montreal and Florida problem from the previous Atlantic Division: Those top three spots in the Honda® West Division are basically locked up.

Theoretically, no team increased their odds more than the Senators who more than quadrupled their playoff chances going from 1.2 percent to 4.9 percent. Going from a miracle near 100-to-1 to a 20-to-1 long shot is a pretty sizeable improvement.

Vancouver: -4.4 percent

Calgary: -5.5 percent

Edmonton: -7.1 percent

Dallas: -7.8 percent

Nashville: -9.1 percent

The Scotia® North Division may seem like a cake-walk, but it's not with six legitimate playoff-calibre teams. That's a massive difference from the old Pacific Division which was basically just Vegas followed by a free-for-all. Having only seven teams does help, but that's offset by how competitive the field is which hurts all of Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton.

Dallas and Nashville get the brunt of the Minnesota effect illustrated above, going from a seven-team division to an eight-team division. Both teams would've been slated for third or fourth in either the Central or the Discover® Central Division, but the extra team decreases the slice of probability pie for every team.

Final Four, Final, and Stanley Cup Chances

Maple Leafs:

Final Four: +11.2 percent

Final: +5.7 percent

Stanley Cup: +2.1 percent

"So... how does this affect the Leafs?"

It's the classic The Athletic writer trope, and folks, I gotta say, the new alignment really helps the Leafs – more than any other team. There's a reason the model is much higher on the team's odds than conventional wisdom and that the team is currently fourth in bookmaker Cup odds. Going from likely third fiddle to two of the league's best teams, Tampa Bay and Boston, to top dog against the rest of Canada is a big deal. The reason most are down on Toronto is because the Leafs can't get out of the opening round and well, the reason they previously couldn't is no longer really a problem. The path is clearer than it ever has been and it means a massive swing to the team's odds of making it to the final four at 11.2 percentage points. Only three teams are even above two percent. Just getting to the final four is half the battle alone and that is what causes the league-leading spikes in final and Stanley Cup chances. If the Leafs manage to falter under these circumstances, something is seriously wrong and changes will need to be made.

Lightning:

Final Four: +7.2 percent

Final: +2.3 percent

Stanley Cup: +1.5 percent

There's going to be a theme here and that theme is getting out of the Atlantic. Tampa Bay had two very serious threats beneath them with Boston and Toronto and while Carolina and Dallas are certainly strong teams, those two don't stack up as favourably. It gives the Lightning a slightly easier path to the final four as there's less of a chance of finishing second or third in the division. That's where they'd have to go through both Toronto and Boston. The Lightning would obviously be favoured in both, but the series would be closer than a Dallas and Carolina combo. That every game is divisional also plays a role here as it increases the team's odds of finishing first in the division.

Canadiens:

Final Four: +7.2 percent

Final: +3.3 percent

Stanley Cup: +1.4 percent

Another Atlantic team and another team benefitting from being at the top of Scotia® North Division. The model ranks the Canadiens as the second-best team in their new division rather than the fourth and that gives them a much stronger path to the final four. It means likely being favoured in the opening round rather than getting stomped by one of the top three in the Atlantic. The increased playoff chances are also a big help here.

Bruins:

Final Four: +2.3 percent

Final: +1.9 percent

Stanley Cup: +0.2 percent

Whatever was said about Tampa Bay applies here too because Boston has a much clearer path to the top of the division. The difference is that the MassMutual® East Division is the league's deepest which means Boston's odds don't jump up nearly as much. The Bruins would likely get to face the fourth-best team in the MassMutual® East rather than another likely date with Toronto. The difference here isn't nearly as large though.

Blue Jackets:

Final Four: +1.4 percent



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Final: +0.5 percent

Stanley Cup: +0.3 percent

Finally, a team not from the old Atlantic. Columbus had a sizeable increase in playoff odds so that's the only reason the team is here. The Blue Jackets' chances of going much further only go up slightly and that's because the team at the top of their new division is Tampa Bay rather than Pittsburgh. Huge difference.

Avalanche:

Final Four: -3.2 percent

Final: -2.5 percent

Stanley Cup: -0.1 percent

The Avalanche are the best team in hockey (spoiler alert) and their Cup odds are mostly unaffected by the division switch, but their path to the final four is much more arduous than before. The Honda® West Division is basically the old Atlantic with three contenders, three bottom-feeders, and two okay teams in the middle. It means Colorado is almost guaranteed to play another contender before the final four with the possibility of playing two being very real. The Avalanche should be fine, but while the regular season should be a snooze, the playoff path is definitely much more arduous.

Oilers:

Final Four: -2.0 percent

Final: -0.6 percent

Stanley Cup: -0.4 percent

The Oilers go from likely second or third in the Pacific to likely fourth in the Scotia® North Division, which is a pretty big deal. Edmonton would have a chance to play Vegas in the first round, but that wouldn't be the team's most likely opponent. In the Scotia® North, Toronto is the team's most likely opponent which would make the Oilers pretty large potential underdogs in the opening round. Combine that with the team's lowered playoff odds and you get a slight decrease in the team's chances of going deep.

Penguins:

Final Four: -2.5 percent

Final: -0.1 percent

Stanley Cup: -0.7 percent

The Penguins go from being the top dog to having an elite team inserted above them with the Bruins. Pittsburgh probably isn't good enough to be a team that's best in its respective division, so that does add more balance. It's just at the expense of the team's odds. The likeliest previous scenario was a date with whoever was the top wildcard in the East – likely an only okay team. Now, the Penguins are in line for a date with a Flyers team on the rise, a team that is nearly its equal. After that, they likely have to get through the Bruins. The path is definitely harder.

Blues:

Final Four: -4.4 percent

Final: -3.2 percent

Stanley Cup: -1.1 percent

The top of the Honda® West Division is the toughest in hockey and that naturally means the Blues odds suffer. Considering they're not the front-runner for the number one seed, it means they'll have to take down two contenders to get to the final four. St. Louis already had Colorado in its path in the old Central, but the addition of Vegas only increases the degree of difficulty.

Golden Knights:

Final Four: -12.6 percent

Final: -6.0 percent

Stanley Cup: -2.8 percent

In terms of going deep, no team gets hit harder than Vegas who sees its odds drop the most across the board. The Golden Knights' final four chances take a 13-percentage point hit and their Cup odds go down almost three percentage points. In a normal season, Vegas would have the second-highest Stanley Cup odds behind Colorado. That's a function of the West being extremely thin, especially in the old Pacific where it was just Vegas and three basically average Canadian teams to spar with. The Golden Knights had a free path to the final four and it showed with a 40 percent chance of getting there before. That was the highest in the league. Now, the Golden Knights are fifth in both Cup chances and final four chances, entirely due to the new reality of its division. The team's old path was a cake-walk. The new path is much more daunting.

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The Athletic / Providence College's Theresa Feaster on her history-making World Junior gold win

Fluto Shinzawa

Jan 8, 2021

Theresa Feaster was already a pioneer. As the video coach for Team USA at the World Junior Championship this month, the 28-year-old Feaster was the first woman to be on a coaching staff in tournament history.

Feaster booted open another door when she became the first female coach to win gold following the Americans' 2-0 win over Canada as a member of coach Nate Leaman's staff. Leaman named her to the team in May 2020 after working with her for years in his capacity as coach at Providence College.

Feaster, Providence's director of hockey operations since 2016, is back in Rhode Island now. She is quarantining following her return from Edmonton, although she left something behind in Alberta.

Thus, we had our chat on Zoom:

So you lost your phone but brought back gold from Edmonton?

That's a good tradeoff, right?

We saw you getting your medal from one of your players. What did that feel like?

It was an unbelievable experience from start to finish. It's one I'll remember forever. Back in the spring, we started with the goal of winning a gold medal. To see it come to fruition and to have it happen the way it did was really incredible. To get the gold medal from (captain Cam York) was really cool too. Just an unbelievable moment. I'll remember it forever.

Was there something running through your mind when the medal goes over your head?

I was just so proud of our team. I thought the way the guys bought in, played for each other and how well they played throughout the tournament, I thought we kept getting better. I was so proud of them. Really happy for them that this is what we came to do. To see them achieve that was so awesome. I was just really proud for the guys and for our country, and really grateful to be a part of it.



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Where does this rank in terms of accomplishments?

It's right up there. It's such a cool moment. Winning a gold medal is obviously one of those crowning achievements that you strive for. It's certainly right up there at the top.

There were so many roadblocks, from when you first know you have the position, to getting to gold. What was the process like of being named to the team, preparing through the pandemic and winning gold?

It's a really cool journey, right? All the obstacles along the way are just part of that story and part of that journey. It's been a crazy year, a weird year for everyone, not just us. Even six-(to)-eight months ago, we didn't know if we'd have the opportunity to do this. The fact the tournament was able to happen, credit to everyone that worked so hard to make sure it did happen and we were able to play. I'm very grateful for that. I think we all are grateful for the opportunity that we were able to play. Different circumstances this year, but something everybody's dealing with, not just us. All across sports. Every league, not just hockey. It'll be one of those things where it makes the journey a little more special because of all the things you had to encounter along the way and find a way to get through.

Was there ever any worry the tournament wouldn't happen before and even once you got to Edmonton?

No. Once we found out it was on, we were all just focused ahead and focused on the hockey. That's the great thing. They did such a good job and took care of all the details for us that as coaches and players, we didn't really have to worry about all the day-to-day stuff. We were just able to focus on the hockey. That was what was in front of us. Hats off to the tournament for making sure we didn't have to worry about any of that stuff.

What was your typical schedule like — game day, off day? What were Nate Leaman and the rest of the staff relying on you to do?

In a tournament like this, it's so fast-paced and there's so much hockey. That was something that was really enjoyable for me. Every day, it was about just making sure we had whatever we needed in terms of ourselves, our own video, and pre-scout for opponents. You're kind of going every other day with games at that point. You're just working through it and getting everything done. It was a lot of hockey. But for me, that's the best part. I really enjoyed that. I really enjoyed the challenge of the fast pace. Just making sure the coaches had whatever they needed so we could be prepared.

What was the setup like for games?

They had a video area for all the teams. The two competing teams had a spot. There were also areas for teams not competing to capture for pre-scout. They had a setup for us up on the concourse that we were able to live-capture and get whatever we needed.

In-game, what were your duties?

Just trying to get whatever systems things we need. For me, I'm fortunate to have worked with coach Leaman for a while. I capture the video at Providence. So from that standpoint, I'm pretty familiar with what he likes as far as in-game breakdown. I just tried to make sure we had all of our systems stuff and anything that might be useful in terms of looking at between periods or to show the guys a clip. When you're live-tagging, it's mostly about your own systems rather than an opponent.

You're logging in-game at Providence too?

Yes. At Providence, the ops person has the video coach role and the team services role. It's the two parts. For USA, it was really just the video component. The video's my favorite part. I enjoy that.

What program were you using?

The program we use at Providence is a software called Vision. It's a newer product.

During the tournament, what caught your eye in terms of systems, skill, individuals or the way certain teams were playing?

The thing that stands out to you right from the drop is just how elite all the players are, on our team and all the other teams. It's such a high level of hockey. All the players are so skilled and so good. That stands out right away. It's really humbling and really incredible to be around athletes that are so good at what they do. It makes for really good hockey games.

From the very start of the tournament all the way to the last game, all the games were incredible. It's a testament to how good all the athletes are. In a tournament like that, it's a lot about your team, how your team's playing and how you want your team to play. We tried to focus on that, sticking to our game plan and our style. Being prepared for an opponent and different wrinkles they might throw at us, but when it's quick like that, you've really got to focus on how you play.

Even with the tournament's compressed nature, were you able to identify a progression in the way your team played?

Yeah. The guys were really bought in. They played really hard from the start. I think we did get better as the tournament went on. That's all you can really ask for — for the guys to buy in and play for each other. I think they did that. They focused on one day at a time and just getting better all the way through the tournament.

For a video coach, it's long hours and the work isn't done after the game. How was the workflow postgame and preparing for the next day?

That's the best part. Just being able to dive in. Make sure you have your breakdown done and you have everything you need. For me, that's what the video coach does. That's the stuff I love. Whenever we were done playing, just making sure whatever breakdown we needed, the guys had. Whatever pre-scout we needed, the guys had. For me, it's a labor of love. It's something I really enjoy doing. I don't necessarily look at it as work. For me, that's what I was there to do. I love it.

For enjoyment, do you lean in a particular direction, whether it's preparing shifts for one player or coaches' breakdowns?

I like it all. I like it because it keeps you on your toes. It keeps everything fresh. Sometimes you might be doing something for special teams. You might be getting a player's shifts. Or you might be doing faceoffs. It's all unique. It's all important. Every breakdown, there's similar parts you're doing consistently. But there's also different things every time. It keeps you on your toes and keeps you fresh. I find that really enjoyable.

Were there things you learned in Edmonton you can apply to Providence?

Yeah. All of us — players, staff, coaches, everyone — the hockey is so great and at such a high level that we're all going to learn and grow from this. We're going to be better because we were a part of this. I certainly hope I'm no different. I feel like I was able to learn and grow. Hopefully I can bring some of that experience back to Providence.

The Providence season has been unusual too. What stands out about the way things have gone so far?

It certainly has been different. Just with the timing, I was only able to be in Providence for our opening weekend. I'm really excited to get back. All the Friars that were in Edmonton, we followed the team. We watched as much as we could. We're obviously really excited for those guys and following along as much as we could. We're all really excited to get back. We think we have a great team. We're really excited to see what's ahead of us and get going again.

To have that distinction of being the first female coach to win, does that hold meaning to you?

Absolutely. As you're in it and you're working toward the goal of winning a gold medal, it's not something I thought about while you're in it. You're just focused and focused on the work. Now that I have some time to step back, you start to see some of the texts and emails: "My daughter was watching." Or, "This was really cool for me." Those things are significant. It's something I'm very proud of. If I can just be a small part of helping girls, women, seeing themselves in those roles, that's a huge honor. It's something that's incredibly moving to see those messages. I'm very



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proud. I'm thankful for the opportunity. I'm thankful to USA Hockey. I'm really thankful to Coach Leaman for giving me the opportunity at Providence and believing in me and bringing me on to his staff with USA. I'm very grateful. It's incredibly humbling to see those things. It's great.

Nate has said you've made yourself indispensable. What do you bring to Providence and USA Hockey where Nate needed you in Edmonton?

I want to be the hardest-working person at the rink. That's kind of the way I approach things. I hope it's that, that it's my work ethic and passion that people see. Those are two things you can control. You can control your work ethic. You can control your passion and how you approach things. That's the way I try to approach it. Every day, be the hardest worker at the rink and have the best attitude. Hopefully be a part of a great staff and be a valuable member of a staff.

At 28, if you take this experience and apply it to your resume, where do you see yourself? How do you see your career progressing?

Right now, I love working at Providence. I love working for Nate and Ron (Rolston) and Joel (Beal). I think we have a great team at Providence. I try not to get too far ahead of myself. Right now, our next goal is to make the NCAA Tournament and win a national championship. That's where my focus is right now. Down the road, I hope there's some opportunities. We'll see where things go.

If you look at the landscape, there are more women entering pro sports. How do you see women being more significantly incorporated?

I think it's great. It's great when you see those moments in sports. It's happening in basketball, baseball and football. I hope hockey is right down the line. I think it's one of those things where it's hopefully going to become more and more commonplace. I hope to just be a small part of that. Maybe if someone sees that hey, this worked, maybe it can open some doors. I'd be honored to just be a really small piece of that. I think it's going to happen. Every time you see women achieving things in sports — professional, collegiate, otherwise — it's great.

What do you tell the girl or mother who says her daughter is inspired by you and might be interested in following your lead?

I'd just tell them to work hard and keep dreaming. Don't let naysayers or obstacles get in your way. You can achieve great things. Put your head down and work hard. You can accomplish great things.

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The Athletic / LeBrun: 7 landing spots for Pierre-Luc Dubois that make sense

Pierre LeBrun

Jan 8, 2021

What's rather fascinating in the aftermath of Pierre-Luc Dubois' trade request becoming public is how teams around the league react to it.

Some teams want to check in on something like that right away to figure out what's going on, others wait a few weeks to let the dust settle and give Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen time to digest what's happening.

But regardless of which approach teams take, believe me when I say about 20-25 teams will have checked with Kekalainen by season's end.

How can you not? How often do 22-year-old No. 1 centres with his combination of skill and size become available?

Most people I've talked to this week around the league believe Kekalainen will take his time and some predicted a summer trade around the draft.

But as always, all it takes is one terrific offer to make him blink and it could happen anytime this season.

It's very early in the process and I think two-thirds of the league will check in with Columbus at some point or another, but here are some teams that I personally believe would make sense as potential suitors:

Anaheim Ducks: They've got young assets throughout the organization, more than most teams, and Dubois' age fits perfectly with where Anaheim is headed. Not to mention he's like a young Ryan Getzlaf. No question in my mind that when the time is right, the Ducks will inquire. All things being equal, as others have pointed out to me, the Jackets probably would prefer having Dubois moved out of the conference.

Calgary Flames: It was a busy offseason for the Flames. The team improved, especially with the addition of goalie Jacob Markstrom. What didn't happen, despite all the speculation, was Calgary doing something bigger as far as dealing either Sean Monahan or Johnny Gaudreau. This could be an appealing trade partner for Columbus if a Dubois deal is more about getting players back who can help the Jackets now. Is there something here around Dubois and Monahan? Again, this is just me spit-balling. But I'd be surprised if the Flames didn't check in.

New York Rangers: Eventually, I'm guessing next summer, the Rangers are going to get around to finding another top-6 centre for their talented lineup. Can you imagine if that's Dubois? A 1-2 punch at centre of Mika Zibanejad and Dubois and all that talent on the wings... Yikes. There's absolutely no question in my mind the Rangers will be among the many teams who check in with Columbus. The fly in the ointment is that Columbus ideally would rather avoid trading within their own (normal) division. So there's that. But as far as a need and fit, this is a good one.

Los Angeles Kings: So you can take this two different ways. On the one hand, centre is the last position the Kings even need to look at given the prospects they have at that position in Alex Turcotte, Quinton Byfield, Lias Andersson, Rasmus Kupari and Gabriel Vilardi. But the other argument to make here is if Columbus will want a young centre back in a package then the Kings are better suited to build that package than many other teams. On the surface, this seems like a deal better avoided for the rebuilding Kings. But Dubois is only 22 and a known commodity. At the very least, it's a conversation I believe the Kings have had internally. Probably if Dubois was a 22-year-old, left-handed blueliner, it would be more of a no-brainer.

Chicago Blackhawks: He's the kind of young, core piece that would fit the vision of what's going on now in Chicago so I would expect the Blackhawks to at least inquire. But if I'm the Jackets, the conversation must start with Kirby Dach and that might be tough for Chicago to contemplate given his place in the Hawks' rebuilding plans. Still, Kekalainen and Hawks GM Stan Bowman have made a few big trades before.

Winnipeg Jets: As I wrote back on Monday, the Dubois for Patrik Laine idea is a fun one, one team's problem for another. Until they become your problem. You'd have to know if you're Columbus that Laine would want to sign there long-term and ditto for Dubois in Winnipeg. But hockey-wise, especially with Paul Stastny a pending UFA and Cole Perfetti not ready probably for a few years, having Mark Scheifele and Dubois down the middle in Winnipeg sure is alluring.

Montreal Canadiens: Oh come on, you didn't think I would speculate a list of teams and not include the Habs, right? Can you imagine a French-Canadian star like Dubois rocking the Bleu, Blanc et Rouge?

The funny thing is that after all the years of pointing to centre as such a position of need for the Habs, it suddenly isn't. If Nick Suzuki and Jesperi Kotkaniemi continue on their current path — and there's obviously no guarantees of that — the Habs feel pretty damn good about those two down the middle. Throw in the two-way beast Phil Danault (UFA after the



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season, mind you), and it really isn't a situation where Montreal needs to aggressively go after Dubois. However, GM Marc Bergevin has a track record of keeping tabs on situations like this. So you can bet he will do just that. And why wouldn't you if you were him? But as far as something that he needs to do, it really isn't. But I talked to a few people around the league this week who believe Bergevin will stay on it.

And like I said at the top, it's a shorter list of teams who won't call Columbus, rather than those who will. You owe it to yourself as an organization to find out what's going on there. But it will end up being a short list of teams who can satisfy what Kekalainen is looking for whenever he decides to get serious on this front.

Latest on Frederik Andersen

Things have been rather quiet on the Frederik Andersen front for a few months now.

The last time the Leafs' front office and Andersen's camp even discussed his contract situation goes back to July, a source said this week.

Since then, crickets.

Which is fine with both sides at this point. Andersen isn't the only pending UFA on the Leafs, and there's no rule against letting your goalie play out his contract before deciding what to do with him, if that's indeed what GM Kyle Dubas decides to go.

Claude Lemieux's track record as a player agent is generally not to negotiate contracts for his pending UFAs once the season has begun. He finds that distracting for his clients. There are exceptions, of course, and if the Leafs came during the season with the kind of offer that made too much sense not to look at, who knows.

But for now, I think both Lemieux and Dubas are comfortable letting things play out and see what happens.

Landeskog eyes long-term extension

Avalanche captain Gabriel Landeskog is entering the final season of a seven-year, \$39-million contract which frankly has treated both sides pretty well at a \$5.57-million cap hit.

Now it's about finding the next deal that fits in with all the other contract decisions the contending Avs will have to make over the coming year or two (Philipp Grubauer pending UFA, Brandon Saad pending UFA, Cale Makar coming out of his entry-level deal after this season, and superstar Nathan MacKinnon is eligible to sign an extension as of the summer of '22).

"Gabe is looking forward to staying his whole career with the Avs," his agent Peter Wallen said. "Joe Sakic's intention is the very same ... we are looking forward to signing long term when we all know where COVID-19 is taking us."

There have been talks already, of course. But the last comment is telling. I've heard the same from both teams and player agents around the league. They're curious to see how the NHL gets through this unique season and specifically how the economic landscape starts to look past this year. Of course, we know there's a flat cap, but is there a rebound kicking in at some point this year? Or more economic malaise?

You get the sense some people, not all, but some want to wait on big contract decisions until having a better sense of that.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' roster comes into focus as regular season draws closer

Iain MacIntyre

January 8, 2021, 8:40 PM

VANCOUVER -- Dress rehearsals in the National Hockey League are an oxymoron because nobody wears their actual costumes. All we get are practice jerseys.

But the Vancouver Canucks players who filled those ubiquitous blue and white smocks on Friday will be largely the same group of performers who open the regular season next Wednesday in Edmonton.

With Saturday's simulated game and two more practice days remaining in training camp, coach Travis Green pooled his top 23 players into a single group for practice at Rogers Arena.

We can report that Elias Pettersson has squeaked on to the roster for a third straight year. Slightly more unexpected -- at least until camp began on Monday -- is that another dynamic, skilled Swede, 20-year-old second-round pick Nils Hoglander, will also be in the lineup in Edmonton for his NHL debut.

The five-foot-eight winger is the biggest story of training camp, earning the top-six forward spot created by the free-agent exit of Tyler Toffoli. Hoglander has barricaded himself inside the second line, beside captain Bo Horvat and winger Tanner Pearson.

"We've waited probably as long as I've wanted to," Green said of getting down to an NHL lineup halfway through camp. "We debated doing it right from the beginning, to be honest. We've only got four days, counting today, before we play a game. I think it's important to get that group together.

"You'll probably see a couple of changes throughout the next few days but we don't have a lot of time, so those guys need to be dialed in with their details and their work. The best players going against the best players gets them a lot better prepared for Game 1."

THE LINEUP

Forward lines

J.T. Miller-Elias Pettersson-Brock Boeser

Tanner Pearson-Bo Horvat-Nils Hoglander

Antoine Roussel-Adam Gaudette-Jake Virtanen

Tyler Motte-Jay Beagle-Brandon Sutter

Defence pairings

Alex Edler-Nate Schmidt

Quinn Hughes-Jordie Benn

Olli Juolevi-Tyler Myers

Goalies

Braden Holtby, Thatcher Demko

Extra skaters

Loui Eriksson, Zack MacEwen, Brogan Rafferty

THE FINE

Benn's lineup spot is likely temporary because Travis Hamonic, who is in camp on a professional tryout but has the framework for a one-year contract with the Canucks, ends his travel quarantine on Sunday and is expected to partner with Hughes as Chris Tanev's replacement. Benn would be the seventh defenceman.

When Hamonic returns, the Canucks' "lineup" will have one too many skaters. Assuming Green wants to keep eight defencemen, another



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forward, possibly \$36-million-man Loui Eriksson, will be moved to the six-man taxi squad.

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.

HOGLANDER WITH A D?

One of the fascinating aspects of Hoglander's deployment with Horvat is that playing with the two-way centre generally means difficult matchups and tough minutes defensively. Hoglander's strength is his speedy, creative offensive game. He exudes confidence with the puck. But how will he handle the defensive half of the ice against much bigger, more experienced NHL players?

"I'd be lying if I didn't say (I wonder) how he is going to handle that," Green said. "That's part of the big adjustment for rookie players in the NHL — your attention to detail. Even strength, going up against better players? Yeah, we're going to have to figure it out if he's ready for that or not.

"We're just taking it day by day with him, trying to teach him. Today's practice was a lot of different systems work that he probably hadn't done yet. We don't have exhibition games, so we're going to make these decisions on the fly."

Hoglander looks much more comfortable on the ice than he does on Zoom calls, but said Friday that he likes the smaller NHL rink compared to the international-size sheets back home. His quickness to pucks and agility in tight spaces translates well to North American hockey.

"Of course, I'm nervous a little bit but . . . when I play my best hockey, that's when I have my confidence," Hoglander, who turned 20 just three weeks ago, told reporters. "I still have that (confidence) in this camp."

Horvat said: "I think he's just a smart player and his work ethic, I think, is the biggest thing I've noticed. Does he have skill and speed? Sure. But I think his smarts and his willingness to get places, and do the dirty work, too, I think is a testament to his personality, his character. I think he's going to handle himself really well."

GOALIE TIPOFF

Braden Holtby had the "home" goal, typically the domain of the Canucks' starting goalie. The former Washington Capital also had his sharpest day of camp on Friday, and has been a little better than incumbent backup Thatcher Demko. You may have heard this before, but both goalies will play a lot in this condensed season. The Canucks open with back-to-back games against the Oilers, so each will play next week.

BLUE-LINE WRINKLE

The biggest surprise in the sneak-peek at the Canucks lineup is that Brogan Rafferty replaced Jalen Chatfield as the first-alternate at right defence.

Chatfield, who spent the last three seasons in the American Hockey League, had skated with Hughes until Friday and appeared to be headed to a depth role in the NHL lineup. Rafferty, who at 25 is a year older but has played just one season of pro hockey, is coming off an excellent year with the Utica Comets, with whom he had 45 points in 57 games. He is known for his offensive ability, but said Friday he sees an opportunity on the defensive side of the puck.

"Obviously, with the departures that the Canucks have had on the blue line there, there's a lot of minutes open," Rafferty, a former free agent out of Quinnipiac University, explained. "A lot of heavy minutes, the penalty kill, playing against the top lines on other teams. I'm aware of that and speaking with the staff here, and just kind of reflecting on my own game. I'd like to be hard to play against in my own zone."

SNEAKY PETE

Practice ended with a robust, three-aside game, the intensity of which was characterized by Pettersson nearly amputating the legs of opponent Adam Gaudette.

"He was holding my stick and I got heated up and took a five-minute major for kicking," Pettersson explained.

It looked like slashing.

"There was some of that, too," he added. "I just got mad. Those drills, everyone gets fired up. After the play, we kind of got together and said 'nice battle' and we were friends again."

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' Puljujarvi finds mentor in new linemate Kyle Turris
McDavid on how happy, excited Puljujarvi is to be back with Oilers

Mark Spector

January 8, 2021, 6:43 PM

EDMONTON — It takes a village to raise a high draft pick.

And so the Edmonton Oilers, in search of a veteran third-line centre and a player to help Jesse Puljujarvi find his NHL legs, landed on Kyle Turris, a former No. 3 overall draft pick who knows exactly what Puljujarvi is going through — because he lived it.

A year ago, GM Ken Holland told me that he'd like to put Puljujarvi beside a smart, veteran centreman for an entire season, giving the young Finn a chance to learn the things he's struggled with through his young NHL career. Puljujarvi ended up in Finland instead, but the wily GM hung on to the asset, and now we'll watch his plan play out, with Puljujarvi returning to Edmonton on a two-year deal.

He has spent every minute of this training camp beside the 31-year-old Turris, a sneaky-good signing who is getting \$1.65 million annually from the Oilers — and another \$2 million from his buy-out by Nashville.

"It really reminds me of myself when I was younger," said Turris, who is all-in on playing mentor to the lanky Finn, paying back the hockey world for all the help he had when he arrived in Phoenix a decade ago. "I didn't have a great start to my career, and you do things to try and put yourself into positions where you think you're going to have success. And when it doesn't go your way you get frustrated and down on yourself.

"Just having that second opportunity, in my case it was career-changing."

Truth be told, it won't just be Turris who gets the credit if Puljujarvi becomes a player. The 22-year-old will hear a bunch of voices this year through his centreman, most notably the Hall of Fame Ottawa Senator, Daniel Alfredsson.

"I had a bunch of guys (who helped)," Turris said, starting with current Oilers head coach Dave Tippett. "Tipp played a big role in helping me when I was young. He was honest with me and helped me work on what I had to get better at. Shane Doan helped me. When I got to Ottawa, Jason Spezza was great. But the one guy who really helped me out a ton was Daniel Alfredsson.

"The way he would talk to me and walk me through things — just his perspective on things — really helped me as a person and a player, helping me to have the kind of career that I wanted to have."



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Tippett recalls Turriss joining a bankrupt Phoenix Coyotes team where the instructions were to play the veterans and try to win some games. There was no money, and not much of a plan.

"He was a young player, a high draft pick, big expectations, and the mindset was to go with more experienced guys," Tippett said. "The young players kind of took a step back."

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.

It's ironic that the two would reunite in Edmonton, and that the student would become the teacher.

"I look at Kyle now, the maturity and leadership he brings to a team... It's amazing," marvelled Tippett. "He's kind of taken Jesse under his wing a bit, and it's great to see."

Turriss is confident that he can help polish the diamond that is Puljujarvi, a true specimen who just needs to learn the NHL game.

"He's a great player. Big, strong, fast, great shot... He looks to make plays," Turriss said. "He's very humble. A down-to-earth and happy kid. He's got to keep that confidence, and I'm going to help him do that."

Game Notes

A few lineup shifts for Thursday's scrimmage, with Dominik Kahun taking the left wing spot next to Leon Draisaitl for the first time.

Tyler Ennis stayed on a potential fourth line with Juhar Khaira and Alex Chiasson, while Evan Bouchard and Tyson Barrie swapped D partners.

Team White

Forwards:

Nugent-Hopkins-McDavid-Kassian

Kahun--Draisaitl-Yamamoto

Ennis-Khaira-Chiasson

Quine-Marody-Cracknell

Defence:

Koekoek-Barrie

Niemelainen-Stanton

Lagesson-Lennstrom

Team Blue

Forwards

Archibald-Turriss-Puljujarvi

Nygaard-Shore-P.Russell

Benson-McLeod-Griffith

Defence

Nurse-Bear

Jones-Larsson

K.Russell-Bouchard

As for the rest of camp, here's how Tippett sees it shaking down: "We'll do a special teams day (Saturday), take Sunday off, and then we'll come in and do two normal practices like you would before a game on Monday and Tuesday."

The Vancouver Canucks visit on Wednesday and Thursday, with Montreal coming for games Saturday and Monday.

Connor McDefence

We hear that old hockey cliché about trying to get better every day from player after player. But how does Connor McDavid try to get better?

We asked him for some specifics.

"Offensively, I think I check off most of the boxes there. Defensively is where it's at," McDavid said. "It's the little things: stopping on pucks; winning battles; hounding pucks on the forecheck; getting involved in battles; winning faceoffs."

McDavid has been lethal at this camp, with two goals on Thursday and another one Friday.

Friday filth from Captain Connor. pic.twitter.com/HHbfARfN8w

— Edmonton Oilers (@EdmontonOilers) January 8, 2021

There was never any doubt that McDavid would eventually focus down on the finer defensive elements of the game at some point in his career, the way Sidney Crosby did, and Steve Yzerman before him. McDavid appears to be there now, and we'll predict that he'll approach the 50 per cent mark in the faceoff circle this season.

Last season was McDavid's best at 47.8 per cent in the circle, but his career mark is 44 per cent.

"I've liked in the last couple of scrimmages — beside (Turriss) and his foot move — where my faceoffs have been. I can't seem to figure him out, but I'm just bearing down and rounding out my game," said McDavid. "The speed's always going to be there, the offensive instincts.

"(It's about) rounding out that game and being solid all over the ice."

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Sportsnet.ca / Ottawa Senators season preview: Can new faces help them exceed expectations?

Connor Brown excited for the Senators' depth heading into season

Wayne Scanlan

January 8, 2021, 6:11 PM

No Canadian team has been off so long, or in camp as long, as the Ottawa Senators.

Finally, 10 months and four days since their last game, the Senators will face the Toronto Maple Leafs on Jan. 15 in their 2020-21 regular-season opener.

The Senators have changed half their roster and are far deeper in experienced players and ready prospects than they were at the outset of 2019-20. They hope that added depth will carry them through a season like no other: a compressed 56-game schedule, with injuries and health concerns ripe during an unrelenting pandemic.

2019-20 regular season record: 25-34-12=62 pts

2019-20 season finish: 30th

Top 2020 draft pick: F Tim Stuetzle, third overall

Additions: G Matt Murray, D Braydon Coburn, D Erik Gudbranson, D Josh Brown, D Artem Zub, F Evgenii Dadonov, F Derek Stepan, F Alex Galchenyuk, F Austin Watson, F Cedric Paquette



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Subtractions: G Craig Anderson (to Washington), D Dylan DeMelo (to Winnipeg), Anthony Duclair (to Florida), F Jean-Gabriel Pageau (to New York Islanders), F Tyler Ennis (to Edmonton), F Bobby Ryan (to Detroit), D Mark Borowiecki (to Nashville), D Ron Hainsey

Outside of Ottawa, few have serious aspirations for a Senators team that has occupied the bottom two places of the league standings for the past three seasons. From that vantage point, anything beyond a seventh place finish would be a strong result by the Senators.

That is certainly not the view inside the organization or in the dressing room. The Senators expect to take a step toward being a competitive team, not just a hard-working club that can catch a contender napping.

"We want to be able to play even with teams or better," says head coach D.J. Smith, when asked to outline his expectations for the 2020-21 Senators.

"For the most part last year, we were always counter-punching. Even when we won we spent a lot of time in our zone and we had to hang on a lot. We want a little more even play with these teams, regardless of wins and losses."

It is Smith's plan to sustain more offensive time, more puck control with better breakouts. He also wants the power play to be better, understandably. Ottawa was dead last in the league in 2019-20 with a 14.2-per cent efficiency. The coaching staff think that will improve with the additions of Evgenii Dadonov, Derek Stepan and Alex Galchenyuk. It will be interesting to see if some of the young guns who have shown proficiency on the power play at the AHL level — namely Logan Brown, Josh Norris, Christian Wolanin and Erik Brannstrom — get a chance, either with a regular spot or by coming off the taxi squad.

Fresh off an exhilarating performance at the world juniors, Tim Stuetzle will get an opportunity to play and stay with the Senators all season, despite the fact he only turns 19 on Jan. 15, the day of the season opener. A natural centre, Stuetzle is expected to start his NHL career on the wing, on one of the top two lines.

It's no secret the 30th ranked team in goals allowed will have to tighten up.

"No team can have success and give up as many goals as we did last year," Senators general manager Pierre Dorion told Sportsnet. "So, obviously it starts with the defence, then it's how you play in your own end."

While Dorion stops short of calling this a playoff team, he is convinced his roster will be competitive, a team "fans will be proud of."

Top line winger Brady Tkachuk, already leading the charge for the Senators entering his third NHL season, goes a little further in setting the bar for 2020-21.

"A realistic expectation, what we have in mind is to make the playoffs," Tkachuk says. "We've got so many veteran guys who have won, who have got the experience. They've won the Stanley Cup. I think we have the tools. We have young guys eager to learn. It's seven teams, top four, in a short season. Anything can happen."

The Senators reaching the playoffs would be stunning, though not out of the realm of possibility considering the different factors in play this weird year. Long term, even a fifth or sixth place finish, with progress made by their emerging talent would register as a success.

X-Factor: Matt Murray

The puck stops here. The Senators certainly hope that is the case with goaltender Matt Murray, having invested four years and \$25 million into their biggest off-season acquisition.

Murray won two Stanley Cups with a veteran Pittsburgh Penguins roster and should be motivated coming off what was a mediocre season for him — a save percentage under .900 (.899) for the first time in his NHL career. It would be one thing if Murray were just switching teams, to an

established blueline. But he is joining a Senators roster in transition. Three starters are gone (DeMelo, Borowiecki, Hainsey) and the replacements should be an upgrade — Coburn, Brown and Gudbranson, with Zub and Wolanin knocking on the door.

Still, it will take time for the new group to gel, and there is little time to waste when teams are playing every other night. Ottawa will have to find chemistry in a hurry because a bad start could be lethal.

Player who could surprise: Alex Galchenyuk

Galchenyuk could be a pleasant surprise, or he could bomb. But considering the former first-round pick (third overall, Montreal, 2012) could be had for one year at \$1,050,000, he is a low-risk signing with potential upside.

Galchenyuk, 26, hasn't reached the 20-goal mark since the 2015-16 season when he scored 30 goals for the Canadiens. My concern with his status in Ottawa relates to his attention to detail defensively and a declaration from Smith that only his hardest-working players will stay in the lineup. When he's engaged, Galchenyuk can be a good player, but he has lapses.

Galchenyuk should get opportunities on the power play, where Ottawa is auditioning for upgrades. Galchenyuk was once a productive player. Three times he has scored nine power play goals in a season, as recently as 2018-19 with Arizona.

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL Training Camp Day 6: Stars, Blue Jackets face setbacks due to COVID-19

Keefe on why NHL teams must remain diligent after Stars COVID-19 outbreak

Emily Sadler

January 8, 2021, 1:34 PM

As we look ahead to the start of the shortened 2020-21 NHL season, we're collecting news and notes from training camps around the league.

COVID forces multiple camps to press pause

The Dallas Stars became the first NHL team this season to have a COVID-19-related practice cancellation, which is likely to push back the start of their 2021 campaign.

Reporters Saad Yousuf and Sean Shapiro of The Athletic first broke the news that Friday's practice had been called off.

While the Stars themselves are not permitted to elaborate, Yousuf and Shapiro reported that the pause in camp proceedings is, in fact, COVID-related. The league followed up with an official statement shortly after, announcing that six Dallas players and two staff members have tested positive for COVID-19. As a result, facilities will be closed for "several days" to allow ample time to conduct further testing and contact tracing, and the Stars will likely see a regular-season schedule-change:

"The National Hockey League announced today that six Dallas Stars players and two staff members have recently confirmed positive tests for the COVID-19 virus," the league's statement read. "Those individuals are self-isolating and following CDC and League protocols. As a result of the positive tests, and as an appropriate precaution, the team's training facilities have been closed, effective immediately, and will remain closed for several days while further daily testing and contact tracing is



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conducted. The League is in the process of reviewing and revising the Stars' regular season schedule with the expectation that the team will not open its 2020-21 season earlier than Tuesday, January 19."

Dallas is scheduled to open its season in Florida with two games against the Panthers (Jan. 14 and 15), followed by a pair of games against the Tampa Bay Lightning (Jan. 17 and 19). Those games will now likely need to be rescheduled.

Just like in the return-to-play protocols over the summer, the league is handling all official COVID-related announcements, including all testing outcomes and reports. Teams cannot publicize the names of any players unavailable due to COVID-related issues, though that will change once the season gets underway.

Shortly after news of the Stars' cancellation was released, the Columbus Blue Jackets revealed that several players were being held out of Friday's events due to "an abundance of caution."

According to Aaron Portzline, who covers the Blue Jackets for The Athletic, the team had just 21 players skating on Friday, with no coaches affected.

Lundqvist says heart surgery went 'really well'

The hockey world got some great news on Friday, with Henrik Lundqvist announcing that his heart surgery went "really well."

Day 3. Surgery went really well. About 5 hours to get it all taken care of. Really appreciate the great staff here at the Cleveland Clinic. Last few days has been pretty crazy but feel like I'm in really good hands. Every day is a step in the right direction pic.twitter.com/wjMTosFWQy

— Henrik Lundqvist (@hlundqvist35) January 8, 2021

"Surgery went really well," Lundqvist wrote Friday, via Twitter. "About 5 hours to get it all taken care of. Really appreciate the great staff here at the Cleveland Clinic. Last few days has been pretty crazy but feel like I'm in really good hands. Every day is a step in the right direction."

Just a few months after signing with the Washington Capitals, following the end of his New York Rangers tenure, the beloved veteran netminder made the emotional announcement that he would be sitting out the 2021 season due to a heart condition. He later revealed that he was to undergo open heart surgery.

The entire hockey world is pulling for a full recovery for King Henrik.

Devils' Crawford taking personal leave

The New Jersey Devils announced Friday that goaltender Corey Crawford has been granted a leave of absence from the team for personal reasons.

The statement comes after several days of Crawford being absent from camp for undisclosed and personal reasons.

After delays, Kapanen finally Pittsburgh-bound

After sorting out immigration issues, Penguins forward Kasper Kapanen finally got the go-ahead to arrive in Pittsburgh -- though it'll still be a little while before he can join the team for any in-person practices.

While it poses a definite setback for Kapanen to miss his first camp with his new team, head coach Mike Sullivan explained he'll be coaching up the speedy forward remotely to get him up to date with everything.

More mic'd up Canucks, please

Between Nate Schmidt earlier this week and Elias Pettersson on Thursday, the Canucks might just be the training camp winners thanks to some excellent mic'd up moments:

"It would have touched my beard but I shaved two days ago, so."

@Canucks, please mic up @_EPettersson more often.pic.twitter.com/OhsqhOwFHj

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) January 8, 2021

Andersen keeping focus on season, not free agency

As one of the top pending UFAs of 2021, Toronto Maple Leafs goaltender Frederik Andersen will no doubt be the subject of much speculation this season. During his media availability Friday, the netminder said there has been a little bit of negotiations happening between team and player but that his focus is set solely on the season ahead:

With special teams so often a focus -- especially when they're struggling - the Leafs' unveiling of new P.K. units was a popular topic in Toronto on Friday:

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TSN.CA / Andersen blocks out contract noise, focuses on upcoming season

Maple Leafs goaltender Frederik Andersen has started more games than any NHL goaltender since the 2016-17 season and is playing out the final year of his contract, but he's not letting his looming free agency derail him or his team in 2020-21, Kristen Shilton writes.

Kristen Shilton

TSN Toronto Reporter Kristen Shilton reports on the Maple Leafs, who held a practice Friday on their fifth day of training camp at Ford Performance Centre.

Frederik Andersen hasn't had much to say publicly about potentially playing out the final year of his contract, and apparently there hasn't been much dialogue between the Maple Leafs and their starter on a new deal either.

"There's been a little bit [of negotiation] but not too much else," Andersen told reporters on a Zoom call Friday. "Right now we're just focused on getting started."

The 31-year-old netminder is currently on the last season of his five-year, \$25 million contract signed back in June 2016. And with no impending clarity about his future, Andersen is content to do most of his talking on the ice.

"I try not to think too much about [the contract], actually. The main focus has been just going day by day," he said. "Here on the team we try to raise our levels, raise our standards, and I think that's everyone. That's really just been my focus and I know by doing that, I'm going to get the best opportunities in the future and this year of course is the main focus. So I think just by focusing on the daily process it's going to help me do well and that's going to help the team [too]."

Andersen has been carrying the load in net for Toronto ever since he arrived via trade from Anaheim, and agreed on that expiring five-year pact. Since the 2016-17 season, Andersen has started more games (244) than any goaltender in the NHL, and ranks third overall in wins with a 136-66-33 record.

There's no doubt that's placed him among the Leafs' most important pieces, but head coach Sheldon Keefe said his team can't allow anyone's looming free agency to derail this coming year.

"Distractions are really what you make of them," Keefe said. "It's a matter of remaining focused, controlling what you can control, and that's whether you're in a contract year or not. That's the message to our team: Block out the noise and focus on what we can control every single day



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and that's really all that matters. We don't expect there to be any distractions here; that's on us to manage that."

When it comes to managing Andersen's workload in a shortened 56-game season, the goaltender says he hasn't been told what his number of starts might look like, and it could be too soon to predict a total.

"Sometimes you feel in a groove, sometimes you play tougher games. I think it's really tough to say because it's a lot of hypotheticals," he said. "I think it's tough to know beforehand what games are harder to play and what kind of workload you're getting in that game. So I think we have to see it day-by-day and how it plays out."

What Andersen does know for sure is that whether it's him or backup Jack Campbell in net, Keefe's rigorous training camp is helping prepare them for a difficult road ahead.

"I do think it will be a tough stretch of games either way," Andersen said. "I think the main focus here in camp is just to get off to a good start and really put the emphasis on the process we do day-to-day here, and I think that's going to set us up the best way every game. Whether it's me or Soup that plays, we'll have to see on a nightly basis and I think together we'll help each other play good when called upon."

Auston Matthews had nothing but good things to say about taking the first penalty kill reps of his career on Friday.

"I like it. I think it's something that I can grow into," Matthews said. "I'm just taking it step by step, talking to guys like [Mitch Marner and Zach Hyman], some experienced guys that have been doing this for a couple years and just kind of picking their brain. Just having good structure out there, it takes a little bit of thinking but at the end of the day, you're just playing hockey."

Just as he and Marner have been paired as linemates in camp, so too were they matched in Friday's shorthanded drills. Keefe said previously he was going to give Matthews a part-time role on the PK this season for a number of reasons, which he expanded on in Friday's media session.

"[Today was] the first time that I've ever seen him take a penalty kill rep in a practice and you can just see the presence and the difference that he can make," Keefe said. "So we want to capitalize on that, and capitalize on the fact that he's strong in the faceoff circle. We want to also ensure that [we're prepared for] whatever the game is bringing. Maybe we have to kill multiple penalties in a row and he's sat for a long period of time, and you have no ability to use him. Now he knows what he's doing, he knows what the expectations are, because he's practised it. And then sometimes, the game is on the line, there's a really big moment, and to have a player like Auston not involved in that, that's something that doesn't make you feel very good as a coach."

Matthews also earned rave early reviews on his penalty-killing skills from Marner and Joe Thornton, who called him "a big horse...with a great hockey mind" for that side of special teams. And Matthews himself can see, too, where his input would be valuable.

"Just knocking on pucks, getting in lanes and anticipating the play, anticipating the power-play guys out there and just having a knack for that," he listed. "At the end of the day, you're trying to keep the puck out of your net, so just try not to get too anxious out there and stay patient but I think there's definitely a lot of characteristics that I can bring that are positive to the penalty kill, it's just learning some new stuff along the way."

Thornton may be almost 20 years older than his new linemates Matthews and Marner, but he's found that's not much of a barrier in building their solid forward unit.

"We're still getting to know each other but it's been really good so far," Thornton said. "We're continuing to talk, to see where each other is going to be, where each other likes to shoot from or who wants to be net-front

and things like that. But Auston brings everything, he's so strong, he's got great speed, and his shot is very dangerous. I like Mitchy, who also has great speed, he sees the ice very well, he's very shifty and has as a very underrated shot. For me it's just getting these guys the puck, do some dirty work, and it should be an effective line."

Marner holds the advantage of having played with Matthews before, so he's been dialed in on learning Thornton's tendencies as well in an effort to complement the veteran.

"It's just trying to figure out where Joe likes to go, where he likes to put the puck coming out of our d-zone and what he likes to do," Marner said. "So I'm trying to figure all that stuff out. I know Jumbo's always wanting to be behind the net, below the goal line making plays, holding off guys. For me it's more so trying to be a little bit of a worm in the slot, trying to find a spot to go and quickly get it off my stick. That's something I'm trying to work on pretty frequently, just finding those spots, getting it off my stick quickly. I think as soon as our games really do start, it'll just click in."

It wasn't until Friday's practice that Keefe first turned the Leafs' attention onto special teams, and where his new-look groups got their first crack at practicing together.

"The two units that we worked with today, we had one with John Tavares, William Nylander, Hyman and Jason Spezza with Mikko Lehtonen," Keefe revealed. "And then we had one with Morgan Rielly, Matthews, Marner, Thornton and Wayne Simmonds."

That breaks up last season's top group, consisting of Tavares, Nylander, Matthews, Marner and the since-departed Tyson Barrie. But that was by design for Keefe and power play coach Manny Malhotra.

"The decisions around that are that we feel with the addition of Thornton and Simmonds in particular, it gives us two guys that have lots to offer the power play, and is enough so that we feel like we can create two units and kind of separate the four forwards we utilized on our No. 1 unit last season," Keefe explained. "So we want to give that a go here. We like what it does in terms of the competitiveness of the two units competing with each other, and the fact that we can remain more fresh and have more urgency to the things that we do."

But, of course, these new alignments don't mean the old look won't make an appearance during the season.

"I don't think we've seen the end of those four guys all remaining together," Keefe said of his former No. 1 unit. "We know that we can go to it at any time and we'll see some of the way line changes and things will flow. We think it's really important to give our best players the proper opportunity on the power play, so sometimes that means going over a minute at different times and we'll adjust accordingly."

Technically, Saturday's Blue & White game is just an intra-squad scrimmage. The Leafs have much higher expectations for it than that, though.

"We're transitioning now into our game day tomorrow," Keefe said. "We'll go down to Scotiabank Arena and have a morning skate there tomorrow. Generally speaking, it's going to replicate a typical exhibition game and not necessarily like a scrimmage. There will be three 20-minute periods, and what we will do differently is we're going to have shootouts at the end of the first and second periods, and then regardless of score, we'll play five minutes of 3-on-3 overtime."

Keefe said Andersen and Campbell will each play two periods for their respective teams, while Aaron Dell will play one period for each side. And thanks to some cooperation on the NHL's part, Toronto was also able to secure a final element of realism for the tilt.

"In terms of the officials, my understanding is that we're going to have a full NHL staff with two refs and two linesmen," Keefe went on. "So we're trying to put together a situation as close as we can for what you would



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get in an exhibition setting. The refs and linesmen are in the NHL [COVID-19] protocol and the testing and all those kind of things and they themselves are getting ready for the season. So we're happy to have them."

After Team Blue demolished Team White 6-0 two days ago in the Leafs' first camp scrimmage, players are hoping this tune-up will provide some more much-needed in-game preparations before Montreal visits for their season opener on Wednesday.

"I think just skating, getting your lungs back into it and trying to build good habits, getting a little bit physical out there, getting used to feeling that pressure because we have no exhibition games this year," Matthews said of his goals for the scrimmage. "We're just jumping right into the fire. I think it's going to be important that each side really pushes the pace, pushes the intensity of the play and make it as game-like as possible."

Keefe provided an update on injured forward Alex Kerfoot, who skated for the first time on Friday after hurting his leg going into the boards on Tuesday.

"He's progressing, and the fact that he's skated today is a very positive sign," Keefe said. "What it means going forward [for Wednesday's game], I don't have that answer here yet."

Leafs' lines on Friday:

Forwards

Thornton-Matthews-Marner

Vesey-Tavares-Nylander

Mikheyev-Engvall-Hyman

Barabanov-Spezza-Simmonds

Defencemen

Rielly-Brodie

Muzzin-Holl

Lehtonen-Bogosian

Sandin-Dermott

Goaltenders

Andersen

Campbell

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TSN.CA / North Division format a blessing and a curse for Canadian Cup drought

So let's talk about it, Canada. The drought is approaching 28 years since the Montreal Canadiens last brought Lord Stanley home in 1993. The NHL's juicy, one-off all-Canadian North Division has the country clamouring: Is this the year?

Frank Seravalli

The late, great John Muckler made famous a motto during his time with the Ottawa Senators: "You can't win the Stanley Cup if you don't talk about it."

So let's talk about it, Canada. The drought is approaching 28 years since the Montreal Canadiens last brought Lord Stanley home in 1993.

The NHL's juicy, one-off all-Canadian North Division has the country clamouring: Is this the year?

That's what training camp brings – some much-needed hope. But it's not wild to dream this year, because the season's unique pandemic-dictated format would seem to give Canada a leg up.

One victor will emerge as King of the North and that crown comes with a guaranteed ticket to the Stanley Cup semifinals via exclusive intradivision play through the first two rounds of the playoffs.

In other words, assuming that all of the surviving teams are of equal strength, Canada is guaranteed a 25 per cent shot at the Stanley Cup.

Sign us up for those one-in-four odds, right?

Sure, those odds are a bit better than in any 'normal' NHL season. The math is a bit complicated and messy, so I'll leave it to analyst Micah Blake McCurdy of HockeyViz.com fame, who computes that a Canadian team typically has a 22 per cent chance to get to the Conference Final.

Only three Canadian teams have gotten to the Conference Final in the past seven seasons. The Winnipeg Jets were the last Canadian club to make it that far, bowing out to the Vegas Golden Knights in five games in 2018. The Ottawa Senators lost to Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins in double overtime in Game 7 of the East Final the year prior; the Montreal Canadiens fell to the New York Rangers in 2014.

But push aside the odds and the anecdotal evidence for one second. This format could be viewed as both a blessing and a curse.

You could make the argument that Canada is getting shortchanged by this format for this one season in particular. By guaranteeing that one Canadian team will win at least two rounds, that also means that the other six will be eliminated before then.

Pick another random moment in time over the past two or three decades and that notion would be met with a shrug.

Now, we are smack in the middle of a Golden Age of Canadian hockey in the NHL.

In the NHL's Sun Belt era, it tends to come around every 15 years or so. The last Golden Age - the only other one since the late 80s - was sandwiched around the season-long lockout in 2004-05. Canada had a representative in the Stanley Cup Final in three straight seasons in 2004 (Flames), 2006 (Oilers) and 2007 (Senators).

As exciting as that stretch was in those markets – Toronto included with a trip to the East Final in 2002 – the success during that run wasn't spread across the country.

And Canada certainly didn't have the embarrassment of riches in young superstars then who currently call the North home – from Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl to Auston Matthews and Elias Pettersson. They are the fruits of Canada's Lotto 7, back when all seven clubs missed the playoffs in 2016, the only time that's happened since 1969-70.

There are three preseason Vezina candidates in goal in Carey Price, Jacob Markstrom and reigning winner Connor Hellebuyck.

There is the NHL's best shift disturber in Matthew Tkachuk, the heartbeat of the Flames, who will square off against younger brother Brady and the Ottawa Senators in nine appointment television matchups – including five times in a 10-day stretch in late February.

The upstart Canucks were one game away from the Conference Final last year. Montreal might have improved more than any team in the



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league over the off-season. The suddenly pesky Sens have put a stake in the ground, ready to be a thorn in the side of every Canadian fan base – and they just might be with 11 sets of back-to-back games with their young legs.

Given the depth and quality of the division, it will be arguably the toughest one to correctly predict the order of finish for this 56-game sprint.

Last year, six Canadian clubs qualified for the 24-team Stanley Cup playoffs. It wouldn't be a stretch to think that six of Canada's teams would qualify this season in a normally aligned 16-team format. Could two have advanced to the NHL's final four? It's possible, but it hasn't happened since 1994 (Canucks vs. Leafs).

But that's what is going to make this once-in-a-century, Original Six, old-school style season so compelling.

The blessing is that one Canadian team is guaranteed to make it through to the semifinals. The curse is that only four will make the playoffs, leaving at least two clubs cursing about what could have been if not for COVID-19.

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USA TODAY / NHL coronavirus updates: Six Dallas Stars players, two staff test positive; Blue Jackets close facility

Chris Bumbaca

The reigning Western Conference champion Dallas Stars will have to wait even longer to start the 2021 season after six players and two staff members have recently tested positive for the coronavirus, the league announced Friday.

The Stars' facility has been closed and will remain closed for "several days" as further daily testing and contact tracing is conducted, the league said. Additionally, the Stars will not open the season on Jan. 14 against the Florida Panthers as scheduled, and the expectation is that their season will begin until Jan. 19 at the earliest.

"The Stars organization has, and will continue to follow, all recommended guidelines aimed at protecting the health and safety of its players, staff and community at large as set by the NHL, local, state and national agencies," the league said in its statement.

Columbus Blue Jackets hold players out

The Columbus Blue Jackets announced they held a number of players out of Friday's practice and canceled an afternoon practice for another group of players in accordance with the league's NHL COVID-19 protocols.

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