



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### The Hurricanes' trade deadline inaction came back to haunt them in the playoffs

By Luke DeCock

When the trade deadline came and went, the Carolina Hurricanes made a single move: they traded Haydn Fleury for Jani Hakanpaa -- a left-for-right upgrade on defense, to be sure, but a lateral move from a depth perspective.

Every other contender in what would normally be the Eastern Conference added something at the deadline. For depth. For insurance. For just-in-case.

Some of the prices were outrageous, some were not but still well above fair market value, and many of the players who moved were not what you would call, and this is being generous in many cases, darlings of the analytics community.

The Hurricanes saw none of the players available as better than the players they had, especially given the cost it would take to acquire them. That's fine on paper, but there's an equivalent opportunity cost for failing to act. The reason teams do mortgage their futures to some degree -- sometimes to great degrees -- for players they wouldn't normally pursue is that the present is fleeting.

#### Cap space left unspent

The Hurricanes had \$2.1 million in cap space at the April 12 deadline that went unused the rest of the season, and with teams able to retain salary -- as the Buffalo Sabres did with Taylor Hall in the trade that sent the winger to the Boston Bruins -- that was enough to work with.

Meanwhile, the Bruins added Hall. The Pittsburgh Penguins added Jeff Carter. The New York Islanders added Kyle Palmieri. The Montreal Canadiens added Eric Staal. The Tampa Bay Lightning added David Savard. The Florida Panthers added Sam Bennett and Brandon Montour.

And so on: Jordie Benn, Riley Nash, Patrik Nemeth, Michael Raffl.

The Hurricanes did nothing. Their unused cap space sat there, an asset unrealized, money unspent. Meanwhile, the Lightning not only gamed the system with Nikita Kucherov's season-long injury, they made a three-way deal to get Savard and stay under the cap, giving up a first-round pick to do it, a year after they gave up two first-round picks at the deadline to add Blake Coleman and Barclay Goodrow and won the Stanley Cup. That's commitment.

The Hurricanes' inaction at the deadline would come back to haunt the Central Division champions.

#### Depth issues in postseason

The Hurricanes could easily have lost to the far-inferior Nashville Predators, going 2-2 in four straight overtime games to close out the series, 0-2 without Jaccob Slavin in

the lineup. Rod Brind'Amour didn't trust Jake Gardiner, which left the Hurricanes pulling Maxime Lajoie out of the AHL to make his debut for the team and relying too heavily on Jake Bean. It cost them in Nashville when Bean got caught on the ice in overtime and misplayed the winning goal in Game 3.

Savard or Montour or Benn may not have made the Hurricanes better when fully healthy, but they could have helped the Hurricanes both while and after Slavin was injured. That may not have been worth the first-round pick the Lightning gave up for Savard, but the Lightning saw a chance to repeat and took it. The Hurricanes looked at a chance to contend and passed.

And while with the benefit of hindsight the Lightning was clearly superior, the better team doesn't always win and there were more than enough openings for the Hurricanes to win the series. That list starts with one-goal home losses in games 1 and 2 and a two-goal lead on the road in Game 4 that turned into a summary collapse in a game the Hurricanes played without Nino Niederreiter and Vincent Trocheck, and with a half-speed Warren Foegele.

Would a veteran forward (or two) have turned the tide in Game 1 without Niederreiter? Or in Game 4 with a full line essentially missing? As good as Andrei Vasilevskiy was, that series was still out there for the taking. The Hurricanes played two games with Jordan Martinook centering the third line while the most familiar name out there at the deadline, Staal -- the Canadiens got him for third- and fifth-round picks -- has helped push Montreal over the top with seven points in 10 games.

That didn't look like a great deal at the time, but only one Staal brother is still playing.

#### Window to contend is fleeting

For all the talk about how this team's window to contend is just opening, one phase of that opening just closed. The group that has essentially been together for three seasons will undergo some inevitable retooling, almost certainly starting with free agent Dougie Hamilton.

Hamilton's going to get paid beaucoup bucks by somebody on the open market, but the Hurricanes will have to fit Andrei Svechnikov's new contract under the cap, among other financial concerns. If they were going to be able to re-sign Hamilton at a so-called hometown discount, it would already have happened. There's going to be more money out there for him elsewhere. It's not inconceivable he returns, but it's a tricky situation without an obvious solution.

It's all too clear now that Hamilton isn't a great postseason player, but for all his very visible mistakes, he's a tremendous regular-season weapon, quarterbacking the power play and creating chances at even strength. Whatever



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

Dougie giveth away, he taketh as well. That won't be easy to replace on the right side of the defense if he leaves.

Meanwhile, as good as Alex Nedeljkovic was in his first NHL season, there are still goaltending questions. He wouldn't be the first rookie to regress. Petr Mrazek and James Reimer are both free agents, so there's the opportunity for a new face there. And the Lightning series demonstrated that as much skill as the Hurricanes have amid their top-six forwards, they not only need more, but more players willing to go to the net and stay there. Jordan Staal at 32 isn't getting any younger.

## Five pressing questions for the Hurricanes as they look to 2021-22

By Chip Alexander

Not long after leaving the ice Tuesday, beaten by the Tampa Bay Lightning in the Stanley Cup playoffs, the Carolina Hurricanes began facing questions about the 2021-22 season.

Rod Brind'Amour, who needs a new contract, was asked if he would be the Hurricanes head coach next season. His reply: "Yeah, I hope so."

So it went. Here are five pressing questions for the Canes:

Will Dougie back back?

We'll soon find out how much defenseman Dougie Hamilton enjoys playing for the Canes and how much the Canes are willing to pay to see him keep playing for them.

Hamilton came out to sit on the bench more than an hour Tuesday before Game 5 at PNC Arena, alone with his thoughts. Could it have been his last game for a team that traded for him at the 2018 NHL Draft, or will he be back on the same bench next season?

Hamilton's cap hit has been \$5.75 million. He can look around and see Washington defenseman John Carlson getting \$8 million a year or Nashville's Roman Josi making \$9 million. Tampa Bay's Victor Hedman checks in at \$7.875 million and Jared Spurgeon of Minnesota at \$7.575 million.

What's Hamilton worth? Considered by many the top unrestricted free agent who could be available on July 28, the right-shot D-man may opt for top dollar. But his expressed comfort level with Carolina might keep Hamilton put.

What about Brind'Amour's contract?

There seemed to be a prevailing thought a new contract for Brind'Amour might be announced before or during the playoffs. But there has been a holdup.

It's believed Brind'Amour is adamant about keeping his staff together and wants them fairly paid. Is that the snag in the contract talks? Will assistant coaches Jeff Daniels and Dean Chynoweth both be returning?

What should make some Canes fans uneasy is that there are teams looking for head coaches that can pay top dollar — the New York Rangers, for example. The Seattle Kraken,

There are three seasons left in the Hurricanes' window-at-large, before Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, Brett Pesce and Brady Skjei become free agents. (Slavin has another year after that.) It may not seem like it, but the clock is already ticking on this core group.

For this particular conception of that core group, the one that won its division under extraordinary circumstances, time expired not only Tuesday but in April, when the Hurricanes decided their best still lay ahead.

They lost to a team that decided, for the second year in a row, the future is now.

and general manager Ron Francis, have not yet hired their first head coach for the expansion team.

Brind'Amour's \$600,000 salary the past three years was one of the lowest in the league. After three straight playoff appearances, he should be in line to get an salary that's tripled or more in a new pact. Former Rangers coach David Quinn was getting \$2.4 million a season, according to CapFriendly.com.

Brind'Amour wants to stay in Raleigh with the Canes, and has said, "I can't imagine it not working out." It has not been worked out yet.

Has Mrazek played his last game for Carolina?

Odds are, goalies Petr Mrazek and James Reimer both could leave in free agency as UFAs. Alex Nedeljkovic will be a restricted free agent and will be re-signed. But is he emerging as a No. 1 goalie or should the Canes try to pursue someone else either in free agency or with a trade?

If the playoffs have taught the Canes anything the past few years, it's that an elite goalie is needed to reach the highest level and they don't have that elite goalie yet. It may be Nedeljkovic one day, but can the Canes wait?

What other UFAs could leave?

It's hard to imagine the Canes allowing Brock McGinn (\$2.1 million cap hit this season) and Jordan Martinook (\$2 million) to both go elsewhere. Could their production be better? Yes, but they're both "glue guys" whose intangibles mean a lot to the team. They're Brind'Amour's kind of players, and Martinook is an alternate captain.

Defenseman Jani Hakanpaa, 29, was traded to the Canes on April 12 by Anaheim and played 26 games for Carolina in the regular season and playoffs with a cap hit of \$750,000. He was a useful addition, gave the Canes size on the back end and could be re-signed by Carolina, depending on the need. And there could be a need.

Who leaves in the expansion draft?

Remember 2017 and the expansion draft for the Vegas Golden Knights? Many were guessing the Knights would pick veteran forward Lee Stempniak from the Canes and instead took forward Connor Brickley, who had played with the Charlotte Checkers that season. Francis, then the Canes' general manager, and Vegas GM George McPhee worked



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

out a deal that sent a fifth-round draft pick to Vegas and the Knights took Brickley, a pending UFA that year.

Will the Canes expose defenseman Jake Bean for the new Seattle Kraken to consider for the July 21 expansion draft? Forward Warren Foegele? It's a guessing game and one scenario being suggested is that Hamilton remain unsigned until after the expansion draft. If Hamilton is available and

Seattle takes him, the Kraken would have one week to sign him before free agency began, a gamble the ever-cautious Francis might not want to take. The Canes could protect, say, Bean and then re-sign Hamilton before July 28 and ...

As 2017 proved, it's unpredictable. Connor Brickley, by the way, played 81 NHL games, none with Vegas.

## The Athletic

### The Hurricanes' Stanley Cup window is open, so what's next? Five priorities for a critical offseason

By Sara Civian

The Hurricanes' third consecutive playoff run is over, ending Tuesday in Game 5, Round 2, at the hands of the defending champion Lightning. This time around, the lingering feelings are a mixed bag of optimism for the future and disappointment in a team that seemed primed to take the next step.

"I'm always proud of these guys, that's the thing that's great," coach Rod Brind'Amour said postgame. "You come to work and you have a group of people that just leave it out there. That's what they did tonight. Everybody was just going so hard. But we're obviously disappointed. This is not what we started out to have. We wanted to win it all. It's tough. I think everyone's disappointed right now, but I'm always proud of the group. When we started this three years ago, it was to get relevant and expect to win, and we do now. And then to be proud of what we're doing. I think we've done that.

"There's that next step we've got to find. That's what's left."

So how do they get there? It all starts with what promises to be a lively offseason for the Canes. Here are their main priorities:

#### 1. Sign Brind'Amour, key staff members

After the Hurricanes' season ended, un-signed Brind'Amour was asked sort of in a tongue-in-cheek way if he plans on being the coach of the Hurricanes next season.

He laughed, aware of all the speculation, then said, "Yeah, I hope so."

While the response was obviously meant to match the tone of the question, it reminded us of the dynamic of the situation. The ball is in the Hurricanes' court.

Part of the hold up in the Hurricanes re-signing the Jack Adams Award front-runner is that he wants to bring the band back together and make sure the rest of the coaching staff gets paid fairly. Another hold up is that although he's not going anywhere else (sorry, Buffalo), he deserves fair pay, too. To exploit Brind'Amour's allegiance to the Hurricanes would be a terrible look for this front office.

The Canes should also look to erase the questionable vibe created when they signed color commentator Tripp Tracy to a one-year contract at a 70 percent pay cut. They did this in

the face of uncertainty, and this is what Waddell told me at the time:

"The problem now is: Who knows what's going to happen next year?" Waddell said. "The way I've done these contracts is base-by-base, (the main difference being) playing games with no fans and playing games with fans. No one knows what's going to happen here. We can't pay everyone their whole salary if we don't play hockey again next season."

That was totally fair, but there are fans now, and kudos to the Canes for making that happen. The pandemic pay cut multiple sources confirmed to me makes you wonder what's next, who else took huge pay cuts and who might not be willing to take one for the team when better opportunities arise next season.

There are certain financial realities about working for a small-market team that are unavoidable, number one being you could almost certainly make more money elsewhere. This is understood, and the positive side of that is knowing if some of the staff is taking below their market value, it's because they genuinely love working for the organization, the vision for the future and their colleagues.

The Hurricanes' on-ice success speaks for itself. But it's a fine line between the financial savvy it takes to win consistently in a small market and disrespect. And for more than one Hurricanes employee with contract negotiations coming up, it isn't even about the money — it's about the respect.

#### 2. Figure out the goaltending direction, act accordingly

I'm seeing far too many comments, presumably from people who might not follow the Canes closely, saying the biggest issue is still the lack of a "No. 1 goalie." I'm not saying Alex Nedeljkovic was the Hurricanes' best player through the playoffs, but the Canes scored only six goals in five games with him in net. Take away Game 4 and that's two goals in four games. Nedeljkovic is known for his goalie goals in the minors, and he might already have a primary assist on a regular-season game-winner, but even he can't fix the Canes' playoff scoring woes.

My sense among the organization is that the Hurricanes now have their "guy" in Nedeljkovic — they rolled with him in an elimination game, after all, and he was fine. He is a Calder Trophy finalist coming off a fantastic season under odd



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

circumstances, recency bias and first-ever NHL playoff run aside. He's also a restricted free agent under team control, whereas Petr Mrazek and James Reimer are set to become free agents.

Considering everything else the Canes need to get done, I don't think they re-sign Mrazek. And while I sort of hope Reimer gets to live his best life in Toronto with Steve Dangle, I think it'd be smart for the Canes to re-sign him as a backup. The jury's out on that decision, but I have a strong sense Nedeljkovic is the starter.

3. Re-sign Hamilton — or come up with something else

The Dougie Hamilton contract situation warrants a novel of its own, and we'll get much deeper into it soon. But my bare-bones opinion is this: It's not that he doesn't deserve Alex Pietrangolo's \$61.6 million, seven-year contract, but sometimes I wonder if even Pietrangolo deserves that deal in these times.

I don't know. As always, Down Goes Brown had me second-guessing everything I believe with one tweet:

Yet Vegas is still alive and the Canes delivered a goose egg when facing elimination.

In a vacuum, I think Hamilton's value falls somewhere in between Pietrangolo's number and Torey Krug's seven-year, \$45.5 million deal.

I don't envy the Hurricanes front office in deciding if that price and term make sense for this specific team. But Hamilton has been one of the biggest factors in the Hurricanes going from "cursed" offensively to all of a sudden scoring goals. Brind'Amour, the longtime coach of the Hurricanes power

play, points directly to increase in talent for the reason the power play has suddenly become good.

I'm not saying they have to sign Hamilton, but if they can get him for around Krug's price, they absolutely should. And if they don't sign him, they'd better have a backup plan.

4. Pick one (or two): McGinn, Martinook, Foegele, Paquette?

The Canes have a lot of big stuff to take care of this offseason — sign two goalies, sign Hamilton or do something that will make the fan base forgive them for not signing Hamilton, sign RFA Andrei Svechnikov.

When teams go from making the playoffs to expecting to win in the playoffs, they just can't have the fourth line operating on a payroll hovering around \$2 million per player. For context, the Lightning have Blake Coleman on a \$1.8 million AAV, Barclay Goodrow at \$925,000, Pat Maroon at \$900,000, Ross Colton on his ELC — and this team is famously over the cap.

Carolina probably has to go with Warren Foegele considering he's an RFA, but he's already at a \$2.15 million AAV. Brock McGinn's at \$2.1 million, Jordan Martinook's at \$2 million and Cedric Paquette's at \$1.65 million.

Again, I don't envy making this decision, but Brind'Amour of all people has the utmost respect for McGinn for a reason — tough as nails, scores tough goals on the road in the playoffs. He's a perfect fourth-liner.

5. Sign Svechnikov

This is obviously going to happen, but when it happens it'll be a relief and then the Canes can put all their focus into the surrounding pieces.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021



## Hurricanes ousted from playoffs due to penalty kill, injuries

Lack of offense contributed to five-game loss to Lightning

By Tracey Myers

The Carolina Hurricanes were eliminated from the Stanley Cup Playoffs by the Tampa Bay Lightning, losing 2-0 in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Second Round on Tuesday.

The Hurricanes (36-12-8) were the No. 1 seed in the Discover Central Division and were 4-3-1 against the Lightning in the regular season.

Here's a look at what happened during the 2021 postseason for the Hurricanes and why things could be better next season:

### THE SKINNY

Potential unrestricted free agents: Jordan Martinook, F; Max McCormick, F; Brock McGinn, F; Cedric Paquette, F; Drew Shore, F; Jani Hakanpaa, D; Dougie Hamilton, D; Roland McKeown, D; Joakim Ryan, D; Antoine Bibeau, G; Petr Mrazek, G; James Reimer, G

Potential restricted free agents: Warren Foegele, F; Morgan Geekie, F; Andrei Svechnikov, F; Jake Bean, D; Maxime Lajoie, D; Alex Nedeljkovic, G

Potential 2021 NHL Draft picks: 8

### WHAT WENT WRONG

#### Forward injuries

Carolina was unable to overcome the loss of several key forwards. Nino Niederreiter missed the first four games of the second round with an upper-body injury sustained at practice the day before the series began. Vincent Trocheck missed Games 3 and 4 with a lower-body injury sustained when he collided with Foegele late in the second period of Game 2. Each returned for Game 5. Niederreiter scored 34 points (20 goals, 14 assists) in 56 regular-season games and one goal in seven playoff games. Trocheck scored 43 points (17 goals, 26 assists) in 47 regular-season games and three points (two goals, one assist) in nine playoff games. Foegele sustained an upper-body injury in Game 3, and although he played Game 4, he did not play Game 5. He scored 20 points (10 goals, 10 assists) in 53 regular-season games and two points (one goal, one assist) in 10 playoff games.

#### Too many penalties

The penalty kill had some strong performances but eventually the Lightning were going to break through. The Hurricanes allowed three power-play goals on six

opportunities in a 6-4 loss in Game 4. Lightning forward Brayden Point scored the series-winning goal on the power play in the second period of Game 5. Carolina was 9-for-16 (56.3 percent) on the penalty kill.

#### Couldn't solve Vasilevskiy

Lightning goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy kept the Hurricanes from capitalizing on many of their chances. Carolina scored four goals in Game 4 but lost. Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said that was a game they had to win because "he's probably not going to let in four again." Vasilevskiy didn't, with a 29-save shutout in Game 5.

### REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

#### Nedeljkovic ready for more

Nedeljkovic was 15-5-3 with a 1.90 goals-against average, .932 save percentage and three shutouts in the regular season and was named a finalist for the Calder Trophy as NHL rookie of the year. He started nine of 11 playoff games and was 4-5 with a 2.17 GAA, .920 save percentage and one shutout. The 25-year-old, who can become a restricted free agent July 28, looked confident and showed he can handle a heavier workload, especially in the playoffs. Reimer and Mrazek can each become an unrestricted free agent and it's likely Nedeljkovic, if signed, will be the No. 1 next season.

#### Staal still strong

Jordan Staal was a steady contributor in the playoffs, scoring eight points (five goals, three assists) in 11 games, second on the Hurricanes to forward Sebastian Aho, who scored 11 points (six goals, five assists) in 11 games. Staal scored 38 points (16 goals, 22 assists) in 53 regular-season games, which included 14 points (seven goals, seven assists) on the power play. The 32-year-old has two years remaining on a 10-year, \$60 million contract (\$6 million average annual value) he signed July 1, 2012, and showed he has plenty left.

#### Core group returning

Although Hamilton is a pending unrestricted free agent and Nedeljkovic and Svechnikov are each a pending restricted free agent, Carolina has a good core in place for at least another season with forwards Teuvo Teravainen, Aho, Niederreiter, Staal and Trocheck; and defensemen Jaccob Slavin and Brady Skjei. The Hurricanes should be able to contend for the Stanley Cup Playoffs again next season even if they lose players as free agents.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021



**SB NATION**  
**CANES COUNTRY**

## Hurricanes' efforts to be "that much better" will be magnified in regime-defining offseason

After three straight postseason exits at the hands of perennial Stanley Cup contenders, the Hurricanes must go back to the drawing board ahead of a make or break offseason.

By Brett Finger

On May 16, 2019, the Carolina Hurricanes got swept out of the Eastern Conference Final by the Boston Bruins, ending a season unlike any other in the history of the franchise in Raleigh that ended a nine-season playoff drought.

"Not being there, to know how hard it is, it takes that little bit extra," then-rookie head coach Rod Brind'Amour said of their unceremonious exit at the hands of the Bruins. "We found out how hard it is. We played a team that knows it, and they said, 'thank you very much.' Everyone has to be that much better."

754 days, two playoff runs, and one world-changing pandemic later, the Hurricanes are in that same position - looking for answers. How do they reach the next level?

"When we started this three years ago, it was to get relevant and expect to win - and we do now," said Brind'Amour on Tuesday night. "And to be proud of what we're doing, and I think we've done that. There's that next step that we have to find... You learn that you have to be that much better."

While many things about this Hurricanes team have changed over the last three years, their quest to be "that much better" remains the same.

After back-to-back five-game exits against two consensus top-dogs in the Eastern Conference, Carolina's front office enters a regime-defining offseason that will, in many ways, dictate just how good this core of players will be.

The age of "happy to be here" is over. It's winning time for the Hurricanes.

The big in-house decisions start in two places. Rod Brind'Amour and Dougie Hamilton.

It's been all but assumed that the Hurricanes will re-sign Brind'Amour, but the longer this deal doesn't get announced, the longer questions will be asked about the Jack Adams Trophy frontrunner.

Say what you will about the perceived "underachieving" of this year's team (a sentiment that I don't necessarily agree with). There's no arguing who should be the coach of this team and who, almost certainly, will be the coach of this team.

The conversation is much, much tougher for Hamilton.

A couple of months ago, TSN's Pierre LeBrun reported that the defenseman's representatives used Alex Pietrangelo's contract (seven years, \$8.8 million AAV) as a starting point in negotiations with the team. The Hurricanes countered with Torey Krug's contract (six years, \$6.5 million AAV), and, predictably, those talks were shelved for the remainder of the season.

Well, the season is over now, and Hamilton may have played his final game with the Hurricanes. His lackluster postseason performance likely hammered home that he won't be getting north of \$8 million AAV from Carolina.

That being said, Hamilton unquestionably makes the Hurricanes a better team, especially in the regular season. Since the beginning of the 2019 calendar year, he has 39 goals and 111 points in 146 regular-season games. Over the last two regular seasons, he has 24 goals and 82 points in 102 games.

His oft-discussed and occasionally overblown defensive issues are the biggest concerns, and they were certainly on display in the first half of the season. To what may be a surprise to some, his defensive metrics improved drastically in the second half of the year, and he finished much closer to his 2019-20 numbers than his poor 2018-19 numbers. Near the midway point, he was on pace to regress to those '18-19 numbers.

While the Hurricanes are desperately searching for answers on reaching the next level in the postseason, they mustn't overlook the regular season.

You can't win a Stanley Cup if you don't set yourself up with regular-season success. The team took an important step forward this season in being a top-seeded team, but next season they'll go back to a Metropolitan Division that should offer much more depth of competition than the top-heavy Central Division. Hamilton has been one of the best regular-season defensemen in hockey for years and is in the elite-of-the-elite tier of offensive defensemen.

If the numbers come down to the Krug range, he's clearly worth it. However, if they stay in the Pietrangelo range, they'll likely try to look elsewhere for a top-four defenseman who can produce offense near Dougie's level, because as it stands, this team has precisely zero defensemen who can replicate the offense he generates at five-on-five and on the power play.

Their only longshot hope was Jake Bean, but after a strong start, he became nearly unplayable in the postseason and saw just 6:41 of ice time in game five against the Lightning.

Maybe he gets better in year two. Or maybe the pending RFA isn't even on the team in a couple of months due to the



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

**NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021**

expansion draft or a trade. Either way, he simply wasn't good enough to be relied upon in that capacity for a team that is looking to get "that much better."

Brock McGinn, Jordan Martinook, and Cedric Paquette are all depth players scheduled to hit the UFA market. Warren Foegele is of a similar ilk and is an RFA with arbitration rights.

You can't justify bringing back all of these players, especially when one of the biggest hurdles for the Canes in the postseason was scoring, particularly on Andrei Vasilevskiy. Money invested into depth players quickly starts to add up. The development of Steven Lorentz, who has another year left on his low-money two-way deal, likely makes at least one of them expendable in the offseason.

Foegele's arbitration rights make his situation dicey. What kind of money is he worth? Has he already maxed out what he can be in this league?

McGinn had a great year and was an elite five-on-five defensive forward. He's a great penalty killer, his on-ice finishing numbers went up, and he is everything you want out of a bottom-six player. Martinook experienced serious regression at five-on-five. He remains a good penalty killer, but he has never regained his 2018-19 form, likely due in part to injuries.

These are decisions that, while not as impactful as Hamilton, have real ramifications on how you build your team. Can the money that they'd have to spend on one or two of those players be better spent on additional scoring options? They are in need of more guys who have game-breaking talent - higher-end players who are tough to come by and would likely necessitate a trade. Perhaps that money can also be put towards a Hamilton contract or, of course, Andrei Svechnikov.

Instead of taking the next step in becoming a star player, Svechnikov took a concerning step in the wrong direction with his defense. That was magnified by inconsistent finishing by both him and his linemates at times in the season. That could play into what kind of deal he gets as a first-time RFA, but it doesn't change what kind of player he projects to be - a really good one.

Do they have their goalie of the future in Alex Nedeljkovic? It certainly seems like they do, but they'd be foolish not to invest in a quality 1B to give him help. Will that lead to a return for Petr Mrazek, or do they go outside of the organization to find that?

Like Foegele, Nedeljkovic has arbitration rights. He's a Calder finalist, and he will start taking up a more significant portion of this team's salary cap, though it should be offset by the likely departure of at least one of Mrazek or James Reimer.

Beyond the regulars, the development of 2020 first-round pick Seth Jarvis should be kept a close eye on. He started the year in the AHL due to the WHL's delayed start, and he looked like anything but an underage player in that league. He's probably a good deal closer to being a lineup candidate than most people expected, but he still might be a year away.

As the sting of a disappointing ending to the 2021 season starts to wear off in the coming days and weeks, the reality of what is a massive offseason will start to set in.

Another reality is that the core of this hockey team is legitimately good. Sebastian Aho has again shown that he is the real deal as a star player in this league and can rise to the occasion in the postseason. He wants the Hurricanes to be a winner as much as anyone. Jaccob Slavin and Brett Pesce remain as cornerstones on the blue line. The cast of Svechnikov, Teuvo Teravainen, Vincent Trocheck, Jordan Staal, Nino Niederreiter and Martin Necas, among others, instill plenty of confidence in the direction of this team.

The Hurricanes are not where they want to be right now, but this is the process that almost every young team with high aspirations goes through. You don't turn into a champion overnight. These things take time, and along the way, there are key moments that determine whether you'll be one of the few teams that can break through; or one of the many teams that can just never get over the most difficult hurdle - going from good to great.

That moment starts now for the Carolina Hurricanes.

## TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/spt-columns-blogs/luke-decock/article251998373.html>

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article251998618.html>

<https://theathletic.com/2642150/2021/06/09/the-hurricanes-stanley-cup-window-is-open-so-whats-next-five-priorities-for-a-critical-offseason/>

<https://www.nhl.com/news/carolina-hurricanes-eliminated-from-stanley-cup-playoffs/c-325267054>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2021/6/9/22524577/carolina-hurricanes-look-to-take-next-step-regime-defining-offseason-hamilton-brindamour-nhl-rumors>



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

## SportScan

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

1189474 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes turn attention to free agency — and signing Rod Brind'Amour to a new contract

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

JUNE 09, 2021 07:30 AM

Not long after Vincent Trocheck's shorthanded shot was stopped by Andrei Vasilevskiy, the realization began to sink in: the Carolina Hurricanes would not be beating the Tampa Bay Lightning in their playoff series.

The Canes' season would be ending Tuesday at PNC Arena, which had been a huge home-ice advantage for Carolina all year but not against the Lightning. For the third straight season, the Canes would find a playoff opponent that was too tough, too good for them to handle.

The past two years, it was the Boston Bruins. The Lightning, the 2020 Stanley Cup champion, offered an even sterner test with a blend of experience, savvy, scoring, special teams. And with Vasilevskiy, the best goalie in the world, in net.

The Canes had Trocheck and Nino Niederreiter back in the lineup Tuesday for Game 5, but having the two forwards come off injuries and play wasn't enough. The Lightning won 2-0 to end the second-round series in five games, a sour end to what had been a special season for the Canes team that won the Central Division with a 36-12-8 record,

"We obviously had a strong season," Canes captain Jordan Staal said. "We had a solid playoffs. We just couldn't quite pull it together here at the end.

"We had a lot of fun this year and we did a lot of good things. It's great to see our young guys grow and become elite players. It's only going to get better here in Carolina."

The handshake line after the game was prolonged, as the players paused to speak and patted each other on the chest. Brind'Amour took several moments speaking to Vasilevskiy.

"I've been around a long time and I've seen a lot of goalies that are good, but he's as good as anybody I've ever seen," Brind'Amour said. "And how he affects the team and how they can play. That's kind of what I told him. And it's true."

The Canes scored four goals on Vasilevskiy in Game 4, which made him uncomfortable, but lost 6-4. The 2021 Vezina Trophy finalist -- and likely favorite -- was back on his game Tuesday.

"He makes it look easy," Brind'Amour said.

Vasilevskiy's save on Trocheck at 3:18 of Tuesday's second period was a game-changer. Had the Canes broken through shorthanded for the first goal of the game, PNC Arena would have erupted and the Canes could have played from in front.

Instead, Tampa Bay's Brayden Point scored on the power play. And he did it with a crafty little move, faking a forehand, toe-dragging the puck and then lifting a backhander past goalie Alex Nedeljkovic, who Brind'Amour gave the start after Petr Mrazek started the two games in Tampa.

When Ross Colton scored in the third period, with Vasilevskiy unflappable in net and the Lightning limiting the Canes' offensive chances, Tampa Bay was able to ruggedly lock it down. It's on to the NHL semifinals for a team capable and talented enough -- with Nikita Kucherov in the lineup -- to make it back-to-back titles.

The Canes were left badly disappointed. Center Sebastian Aho, ever competitive, took the series loss hard and refused any notion of the Canes taking a "step forward" this season.

"It doesn't feel like that right now," Aho said. "We had, in our minds, something different than this. I thought we were ready to take the next step. The next step is to be the best, right?"

Aho had no problem pinpointing a key to the Lightning winning the series: Tampa Bay scored on a lot of their power plays and the Canes did not. That, and Vasilevskiy.

"It's such a small margin," Aho said. "Games could go either way. But if I had to say one, it's got to be the special teams. Today they got a power-play goal and that was the game-winning goal. We didn't get any. That's the game."

As the Canes shook hands with the Lightning players and staff after the game, one had to wonder: which of the Canes players would not be with the team next season? Some will be unrestricted free agents, headed by defenseman Dougie Hamilton, and could leave in free agency. Others could be traded.

And what about Brind'Amour? He's essentially a free-agent head coach, his three-year contract ending this season. Will the Canes and Brind'Amour finally hammer out a new contract, as many expect, or could an NHL team in a bigger market, offering more money, possibly lure him away?

Asked after Tuesday's game if he would be the Hurricanes coach next season, Brind'Amour said, "Yeah, I hope so."

Brind'Amour often has said he wants to stay with the Canes and continue to live in this community, but there must be an agreement that fits both sides' needs.

There's much to be done before the 2021-22 season begins and there will be some uncertainty. But everyone can agree that beginning a full, new season in a more normal setting, with fans in the arena on opening night, with an outdoor game likely being played, is an exciting thought after the challenges and limitations of the 56-game pandemic season.

"This team was a great team all year and people didn't get to watch us until the end," Brind'Amour said. "This would have been an unbelievable year. We were one of the best teams in the league the whole year and nobody could come see us play. They missed out on that.

"Hopefully we can replicate that and create that excitement, and people have a lot of fun around here. Because that's what I'm hoping that we can provide."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

News Observer LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189475 Carolina Hurricanes

The Hurricanes' Stanley Cup window is open, so what's next? Five priorities for a critical offseason

By Sara Civian

Jun 9, 2021

The Hurricanes' third consecutive playoff run is over, ending Tuesday in Game 5, Round 2, at the hands of the defending champion Lightning. This time around, the lingering feelings are a mixed bag of optimism for the future and disappointment in a team that seemed primed to take the next step.

"I'm always proud of these guys, that's the thing that's great," coach Rod Brind'Amour said postgame. "You come to work and you have a group of people that just leave it out there. That's what they did tonight. Everybody was just going so hard. But we're obviously disappointed. This is not what we started out to have. We wanted to win it all. It's tough. I think everyone's disappointed right now, but I'm always proud of the group. When we started this three years ago, it was to get relevant and expect to win, and we do now. And then to be proud of what we're doing. I think we've done that.

"There's that next step we've got to find. That's what's left."

So how do they get there? It all starts with what promises to be a lively offseason for the Canes. Here are their main priorities:

### 1. Sign Brind'Amour, key staff members

After the Hurricanes' season ended, un-signed Brind'Amour was asked sort of in a tongue-in-cheek way if he plans on being the coach of the Hurricanes next season.

He laughed, aware of all the speculation, then said, "Yeah, I hope so."

While the response was obviously meant to match the tone of the question, it reminded us of the dynamic of the situation. The ball is in the Hurricanes' court.

Part of the hold up in the Hurricanes re-signing the Jack Adams Award front-runner is that he wants to bring the band back together and make sure the rest of the coaching staff gets paid fairly. Another hold up is that although he's not going anywhere else (sorry, Buffalo), he deserves fair pay, too. To exploit Brind'Amour's allegiance to the Hurricanes would be a terrible look for this front office.

The Canes should also look to erase the questionable vibe created when they signed color commentator Tripp Tracy to a one-year contract at a 70 percent pay cut. They did this in the face of uncertainty, and this is what Waddell told me at the time:

"The problem now is: Who knows what's going to happen next year?" Waddell said. "The way I've done these contracts is base-by-base, (the main difference being) playing games with no fans and playing games with fans. No one knows what's going to happen here. We can't pay everyone their whole salary if we don't play hockey again next season."

That was totally fair, but there are fans now, and kudos to the Canes for making that happen. The pandemic pay cut multiple sources confirmed to me makes you wonder what's next, who else took huge pay cuts and who might not be willing to take one for the team when better opportunities arise next season.

There are certain financial realities about working for a small-market team that are unavoidable, number one being you could almost certainly make more money elsewhere. This is understood, and the positive side of that is knowing if some of the staff is taking below their market value, it's because they genuinely love working for the organization, the vision for the future and their colleagues.

The Hurricanes' on-ice success speaks for itself. But it's a fine line between the financial savvy it takes to win consistently in a small market and disrespect. And for more than one Hurricanes employee with contract negotiations coming up, it isn't even about the money — it's about the respect.

### 2. Figure out the goaltending direction, act accordingly

I'm seeing far too many comments, presumably from people who might not follow the Canes closely, saying the biggest issue is still the lack of a "No. 1 goalie." I'm not saying Alex Nedeljkovic was the Hurricanes' best player through the playoffs, but the Canes scored only six goals in five games with him in net. Take away Game 4 and that's two goals in four games. Nedeljkovic is known for his goalie goals in the minors, and he might already have a primary assist on a regular-season game-winner, but even he can't fix the Canes' playoff scoring woes.

My sense among the organization is that the Hurricanes now have their "guy" in Nedeljkovic — they rolled with him in an elimination game, after all, and he was fine. He is a Calder Trophy finalist coming off a fantastic season under odd circumstances, recency bias and first-ever NHL playoff run aside. He's also a restricted free agent under team control, whereas Petr Mrazek and James Reimer are set to become free agents.

Considering everything else the Canes need to get done, I don't think they re-sign Mrazek. And while I sort of hope Reimer gets to live his best life in Toronto with Steve Dangle, I think it'd be smart for the Canes to re-sign him as a backup. The jury's out on that decision, but I have a strong sense Nedeljkovic is the starter.

### 3. Re-sign Hamilton — or come up with something else

The Dougie Hamilton contract situation warrants a novel of its own, and we'll get much deeper into it soon. But my bare-bones opinion is this: It's not that he doesn't deserve Alex Pietrangolo's \$61.6 million, seven-year contract, but sometimes I wonder if even Pietrangolo deserves that deal in these times.

I don't know. As always, Down Goes Brown had me second-guessing everything I believe with one tweet:

Yet Vegas is still alive and the Canes delivered a goose egg when facing elimination.

In a vacuum, I think Hamilton's value falls somewhere in between Pietrangolo's number and Torey Krug's seven-year, \$45.5 million deal.

I don't envy the Hurricanes front office in deciding if that price and term make sense for this specific team. But Hamilton has been one of the biggest factors in the Hurricanes going from "cursed" offensively to all of a sudden scoring goals. Brind'Amour, the longtime coach of the Hurricanes power play, points directly to increase in talent for the reason the power play has suddenly become good.

I'm not saying they have to sign Hamilton, but if they can get him for around Krug's price, they absolutely should. And if they don't sign him, they'd better have a backup plan.

### 4. Pick one (or two): McGinn, Martinook, Foegele, Paquette?

The Canes have a lot of big stuff to take care of this offseason — sign two goalies, sign Hamilton or do something that will make the fan base forgive them for not signing Hamilton, sign RFA Andrei Svechnikov.

When teams go from making the playoffs to expecting to win in the playoffs, they just can't have the fourth line operating on a payroll hovering around \$2 million per player. For context, the Lightning have Blake Coleman on a \$1.8 million AAV, Barclay Goodrow at \$925,000, Pat



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

Maroon at \$900,000, Ross Colton on his ELC — and this team is famously over the cap.

Carolina probably has to go with Warren Foegele considering he's an RFA, but he's already at a \$2.15 million AAV. Brock McGinn's at \$2.1 million, Jordan Martinook's at \$2 million and Cedric Paquette's at \$1.65 million.

Again, I don't envy making this decision, but Brind'Amour of all people has the utmost respect for McGinn for a reason — tough as nails, scores tough goals on the road in the playoffs. He's a perfect fourth-liner.

### 5. Sign Svechnikov

This is obviously going to happen, but when it happens it'll be a relief and then the Canes can put all their focus into the surrounding pieces.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189476 Carolina Hurricanes

'It's not a step forward': Disappointed Sebastian Aho breaks fourth wall as Hurricanes' season ends

By Sara Civian

Jun 9, 2021

On the CVS receipt-sized list of things I won't miss about video call interviews, not being able to read the room ranks No. 1.

If you've read my stuff over the past three seasons (thank you), I hope you can tell how much I've cherished the relationships I've made and personalities I've met while covering the Hurricanes — the friends we've made along the way, if you will. It's been the joy of my career to attempt to uncover new tidbits about the Justin Williamses and the Rod Brind'Amours while witnessing the Andrei Svechnikovs and Sebastian Ahos form their own stories in front of our eyes. I didn't realize how easy had it back in the day, or how lucky I was to get backstage access to the little moments — and I seriously wasn't prepared for how much it would affect something as simple as a postgame column.

Throughout the Hurricanes' third consecutive playoff run — that ended in Round 2, via a 2-0, Game 5 loss to the Lightning on Tuesday — I'd been searching so hard for the little moments to no avail. It was such a weird juxtaposition, in a season filled with such resolve and emotion, to have to ask about it all through a computer that more often than not had an unignorable bad WiFi connection.

I don't know if Aho realized it in the moment, but his postgame presser actually broke through the video call wall, which has become a bit of a fourth wall, and he said much more than he thought he did.

A transcript:

Is this a step forward?: "I don't know. It doesn't feel like that right now. We had, in our minds, something different than this. I thought we were ready to take the next step. The next step is to be the best, right? A lot of good things. I'm proud of the effort. I love the group. I enjoyed this year with these guys, but at the same time it's not a step forward because we didn't get the ultimate goal."

What does it feel like, then? "It feels pretty bad right now. I don't know. Maybe tomorrow or in two days I can give you a better answer, but I feel not good right now. It sucks. But it is what it is."

On the difference in the two teams that eventually lost it for the Canes: "It's such a small margin. Games could go either way. But if I had to say one, it's got to be the special teams. Today they got a power-play goal,

and that's the game-winning goal. We didn't get any. That's the game. The guys who play on the power play and penalty kill, it needs to be better. That's probably the top PK in the league, but guess what. They're the defending champs, and it's a pretty good run they're making right now. Those are the things where you've got to be better, for myself today. It's one part of the game if the team wants to win, I'm one of those guys who plays a lot of special teams. I've got to be better."

As great as Jordan Staal has been on and off the ice as the Hurricanes' captain, he's got the perspective of a Cup-winning veteran, and he's much more of a do-er than a talker. That's fine, and he's had an amazing season by any account. His postgame interview wasn't fluff, and it wasn't a lie — he's super even-keeled, and he genuinely believes this team will win it all, eventually — he sees beyond himself.

That's exactly what the young Hurricanes need to balance out the uncertainty and inner turmoil. But after this playoff run, and after a season that was somehow so emotional and so cold at the same time, the people needed humanity.

The most positive takeaway from this arguably disappointing playoff run was Aho's negativity.

Six goals and 11 points in 11 games, a few tussles he initiated himself when he took exception to shots at his teammates and a teary-eyed press conference. This bizarre situation showed us that the passion and competitiveness we've always sort of thought Aho had is legit.

Brind'Amour kept coming back to Aho's words in his own press conference.

"I'm glad he would say that," Brind'Amour said. "You certainly don't want to be satisfied because that's not it. We were here to try to win. I love that that's what he said because we fell short of that. I think in looking just at him, he took a big step this year. He went toe to toe with one of the best players in the game this series, and I thought was right there with him. That's where he took a step forward. I love that he's all in to just win. That's what we need around here, for sure."

"... What I love about (Aho) is that he wants to win. It's all about winning the Stanley Cup. That's it."

Anything short of that is a disappointment to a choked-up Aho and maybe to a fanbase whose expectations have been rightfully higher after a Central Division regular season championship (please, no banners) and a young core getting more experience. We'll get to the road ahead tomorrow, but let's put this season to rest first.

### Postgame Observations

- The things everyone saw coming but nobody could stop finally proved fatal for the Canes: Special teams, world-class goaltending, wasted opportunities and failing to score first. Sometimes it really is that simple. Game 5 was as surgical as it needed to be from Tampa's standpoint — squeeze the Canes' energy out after their best period (first) with nothing to show, grind them down and score on the power play before the second period expires, capitalize on a small, late-game error and make it seem gigantic. Oh, and do all that while allowing nothing. Brind'Amour told Andrei Vasilevskiy (29 saves) in the handshake line that he's as good as any goalie he's ever seen. I'm still thinking about Brind'Amour's answer to NHL.com's Tracy Myers, when she asked what, exactly, he said. "I've been around a long time, that's kind of what I said. I've seen a lot of goalies that were good, but he's as good as anyone that I've ever seen," he said. "I go back to Dominik Hasek and how he affects the team the way they can play. He makes it look easy. Dominik Hasek made it look hard. We had a lot of great looks tonight, and they looked like nothing because he was in the right place or whatever. That's what I told him."

- The Canes are one step closer, but this series showed they still aren't quite there. How do they get there? The most important question for the Hurricanes this offseason is honestly weighing themselves against their playoff opponents and not asking — how do you get there? — but asking how you get beyond it. It sort of felt like the Lightning were able to solve



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

the Hurricanes surgically because the Canes were just playing to match the Lightning and survive. You can't blame them, but you do wonder what their "Oh, I'm good enough to win a Cup" moment will really be. Let's remember it took the Lightning getting swept in the first round. It feels like the Canes have something special brewing they haven't yet figured out how to ferment into their own brand. They're young, and they'll get there, but right now some of their passes and plays feel too easy to read to actual Cup contenders. You saw it in the way the Lightning adjusted their penalty kill like it was nothing halfway through the series, and the Canes suddenly couldn't connect on the power play. Whatever that is, it isn't about a certain goalie or a certain top six acquisition or any perceived "hole." At this point, it's about how to put it all together to be less predictable to the top dogs.

- I polled 3,171 of my lovely Twitter followers before the game, and 83 percent of you said Alex Nedeljkovic should start in net, while 17 percent of you said Petr Mrazek should start. Shout out to those of you who replied "James Reimer" for making me feel bad. Regardless, Brind'Amour, goalie coach Paul Schonfelder and company agreed with you — and everyone was right. This postseason didn't end because the Canes "need a No. 1 goalie" — they've finally found him in Nedeljkovic, I think — even if Nedeljkovic isn't fully there yet. He will be next playoffs, and we'll look back and remember how it all started when the Canes gave him the playoff experience he's absolutely going to need.

- Hot take? I don't know. Brett Pesce was the best Hurricanes player in these playoffs. I refuse to elaborate for dramatic effect, but if you ask me why I think this in the comments I'll give you a 300-plus word answer.

- Vincent Trocheck wasn't lying when he said he'd run through a brick wall for Brind'Amour. The end-of-season list of injuries and surgeries hasn't been revealed yet, but, how do I put this? Multiple sources tell me it took a serious belief in the team and desire to win to play through what Trocheck played through. He didn't just play through it either, he was one of the best on the ice — he laid a huge hit on Anthony Cirelli in the first. You think of the way he's played since he became a Cane, and you just have to tip your hat.

- To the outside media members that came at Hurricanes fans for, uhh, cheering on the team after "gestures toward a year of actual Hell on Earth", I will put this as kindly as my Bostonian ass possibly can: Please, just shut up. I will also leave you with this, from the first playoff game at PNC Arena: "That's why you play. You kinda forgot about it, cuz you haven't had it for so long. I think the guys were just, like, wow. And I think the people just needed something to cheer about. We had a year-and-a-half worth of just junk thrown at everybody. They let it all out last night. That's what it felt like. Yeah, they're cheering for us, but they were just cheering that they got to go outside, root for a team and have a sense of, OK, this is kind of normal again. Forget about all the crap that's gone on. It's just, hey, we're here to enjoy ourselves, and that's what life is about. We can do it in an environment with people you love and care about, and what the heck? Why wouldn't you? I think it just all came out last night." I don't know who needs to hear this, but being negative doesn't mean you're smarter or better than anyone else. I don't want to go back to normal after COVID-19 — I want us to celebrate every darn thing worth celebrating. If you wake up and get out of bed tomorrow, I'm clapping for you. But I'm definitely not doing the wave.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189570 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / With unwavering zeal, Islanders extend final Cup run at iconic Nassau Coliseum

Nelson's two goal night leads Islanders to series victory over Bruins

New York Islanders forward Brock Nelson scored two crucial goals to help his team eliminate the Boston Bruins in Game 6.

Iain MacIntyre June 10, 2021, 12:52 AM

In the final days of an arena made holy by a Stanley Cup dynasty more than a generation ago, proclamations from 12,000 grateful worshippers thundered down from the pews Wednesday as validation: "New York Saints! New York Saints!"

The crowd at old and dying Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Long Island, N.Y., used Boston Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy's words against him, embracing his accusation about how National Hockey League referees were treating the New York Islanders.

Cassidy was right, of course: the Islanders aren't saints. But they are believers.

Their conviction was evident as they swatted aside the Bruins with a 6-2 win to move into another NHL semifinal. The victory guaranteed their joyous followers at least another couple of games in the Coliseum before the team moves next season about 15 minutes west, nearer to civilization and its new \$1.5-billion home at Belmont Park.

There is an unwavering zeal about how the Islanders play: consistently, smartly, quickly and physically, shift after shift after shift.

That they do this with a deep, experienced, playoff-hardened lineup that has been through eight playoff series in three years since Barry Trotz arrived as coach and Lou Lamoriello as general manager — Hall-of-Famers cast off by previous teams that should have known better — make the Islanders a formidable opponent.

Yes, even for the Tampa Bay Lightning, the Stanley Cup champions who again will have to go through the Islanders to get to another Final.

New York eliminated Boston in six games, winning the final three after falling behind to the Bruins 2-1 in the East Division Final. The Islanders are capable of winning a Stanley Cup even if few people outside of their flock will pick them to beat the Lightning.

The Bruins had the bigger stars, as the Lightning will, too, but the Islanders had the better team. And by the end, really, it wasn't close.

"We recognize this as a special moment for this building," Trotz said late Wednesday. "Guys understood the magnitude of this game, the importance of the game. This is a group... you don't have to say too many things, you just have to give them little reminders here and there. But they are really a solid, veteran group. They understand the moments, and this was a moment for them and our crowd."

Nassau Coliseum is ROCKIN' #ItsOn pic.twitter.com/b8BDTlZMcj

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) June 10, 2021

One of a dozen skaters who has been through all eight playoff rounds with the Islanders since Trotz won a Stanley Cup in Washington in 2018, Brock Nelson scored two of three Islanders goals during a second-period outburst made possible by dreadful Boston puck management.

"One of those nights — Barry touched on it after the game — you'll always remember moments like that," Nelson told reporters. "It just feels good having a full Coliseum there behind us, and playing for them."

Trotz said: "I talked to them, I said, 'You know... when your career is all done, you're going to remember those special moments — when you win a series and hopefully when you win a Stanley Cup. There's going to be special moments along the way, and we can make this a special moment. Try to take the next step.' There's going to be four teams left playing, and all the other ones, the 27 other teams, they're wishing they had this opportunity that we have."

The Islanders' six playoff series victories under Trotz is one more than the franchise had managed over the previous 34 years since the Edmonton Oilers ended in 1985 the Mike Bossy-Bryan Trottier-Denis Potvin Islanders dynasty at four-straight Stanley Cups.

"We've got a group of guys that have been together for quite a while [and] we've added some key pieces," veteran forward Josh Bailey said. "You get in these high-intensity games and guys just keep showing up for



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

one another. It just builds a bond. It's going to be no easy task; I think Tampa has a great team, defending Cup champs. But we know we believe in ourselves and we know we're going to need our best to find a way to take them down."

The Lightning beat the Islanders in six games in the Edmonton playoff bubble last summer.

Since then, Lamoriello added two more experienced wingers in Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac, and Trotz developed defenceman Noah Dobson and put him on the first-unit power play.

It was classic Islanders that, late in the third period on Wednesday — with the score 4-2 before New York added a couple of empty-netters — Trotz sent his third and fourth lines out to defend the lead, and on consecutive shifts these players spent their time on the ice running out the clock by keeping the puck protected deep in the Boston zone.

With their season, and possibly an era, on the line, the Bruins managed five shots in the third period.

"I keep coming back to experiences because that's what allows you to have success, to understand the moment," Trotz explained. "We don't get too far in front of the moment. We weren't even thinking about Boston; we were just thinking about the next shift."

"We have a good group of guys that have been here a long time," Nelson said. "They've kind of grown up here, grown together. It's a special group, a special place, the history this place has dating back to the early days, the 80s. I've said a few times... it's just not the players, but the community have a strong connection to this place."

Never stronger in the last 35 years, even if the place is changing.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189571 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets' Mark Scheifele: NHL's department of player safety 'shut me down'

'Feels helpless' for Scheifele to watch Jets lose to Canadiens from sidelines

Mark Scheifele talked about having to watch the Jets take on the Canadiens while serving a suspension, and the helpless feeling he had.

Emily Sadle June 9, 2021, 1:49 PM

For the second straight post-season, Mark Scheifele watched the Winnipeg Jets' Stanley Cup hopes come to an end from the sidelines.

"It's not fun. It's definitely not a great feeling. You feel pretty helpless when your team's out there battling and you're watching from the stands," he told reporters during Wednesday's media availability after the Jets were swept by the Montreal Canadiens. "But the way you handle setbacks is what defines us. So, that's the mentality I'm taking."

While last year it was an injury that forced Scheifele out of the Jets' qualifying-round series against the Calgary Flames in Game 1, this year it was his own actions that took him out of play. Scheifele was issued a four-game suspension for charging Canadiens forward Jake Evans in the series-opener of Round 2. Evans had to be stretchered off and was diagnosed with a concussion.

"I thought I was going to be tried to be shut down by Phillip Danault. Instead it was the Department of Player Safety that shut me down. So that definitely sucks," Scheifele said of the suspension on Wednesday.

To be clear, Mark Scheifele shut himself down

This is the second time Scheifele has publicly addressed the suspension, having spoken to reporters following the league's decision last week.

"I think at the end of the day, you regret the outcome of it. I said that over and over. You never want to see a guy hurt, and I'm a guy that respects

this game and respects players," he said Wednesday, repeating his stance that he was trying to negate a goal when he hit Evans.

"I would've loved an answer from [the department of player safety] of what would've been a better thing to do. I've replayed the thing over and over in my mind and the only real thing is if I gave up on my teammates on that play and just didn't back check," he said.

Scheifele reiterated his stance that he still believes the suspension was "excessive."

"They knocked me out of the series," he said. "I didn't even get a chance to play with my teammates and battle with my teammates in the series ... I'm gonna stop talking before I get fined or something like that."

Hellebuyck: We're very close to being able to make runs and being a dynasty."

The Jets have been considered a contender the past few seasons now, and Hellebuyck has always made clear his will to win it all. He reiterated that on Wednesday when asked about the club's mindset.

"You want to win, and I think having the conversations I've had now, I think they do want to win and they want to win now," Hellebuyck said of the Jets, adding that he believes every team should have that all-in will to win every single season. "They're looking for the right pieces. My mindset is now, and next year I'm gonna say the same thing. You also don't want to blow it for future years, so you want to be smart about it, but I think our organization definitely wants it now and they're gonna do what they have to do."

He later added: "We're close. We're very close to being able to make runs and being a dynasty."

Hellebuyck confident Jets will put together pieces to win Stanley Cup

Wheeler talks expectations of 2018 vs. 2021 and beyond

A lot can change in three years, and that includes the Jets' identity. The 2018 edition of the Jets was one built more on a foundation of defence thanks to a group of veteran blue liners and an elite netminder, while this year it's a strong, deep offence (and continued elite goaltending) that propelled the club into the playoffs. All along, the same core group of forwards has (mostly) remained, and captain Blake Wheeler believes it's just now hitting its prime.

"Our core was still very young. What you'd consider the core of our team, outside of myself probably, was very, very young," Wheeler, 34, said of that 2018 roster. "And that core is now, I mean, they're maturing into men in the primes of their career."

Among the core group of players under contract for at least the next three seasons are Wheeler, whose deal will expire following 2023-24; Mark Scheifele, 28; Kyle Connor, 24; Nikolaj Ehlers, 25; Adam Lowry, 28; Josh Morrissey, 26; and Hellebuyck, 28.

The 2017-18 post-season brought Winnipeg's best shot at winning to date, with the club advancing to the Western Conference Final where they lost in five games to the Vegas Golden Knights. One year later, the team finished second in the Central for the second consecutive time, with its Cup hopes cut short after losing in six games to the eventual champion St. Louis Blues.

"Those two years, the back-to-back years, those were probably very real chances to win it all," Wheeler reflected. "I think our team this year, we have a lot of the makings of what it takes to win it all. I'm excited about the direction that we're headed, I think there's a lot to look forward to for our group."

Wheeler continued: "The hardest part is formulating a core group of players that you believe are kind of the identity of your team and the guys that can push you over the hump — and I think we have that. That's a great step in the right direction ... that's a group you can get really excited about.

"Now, it's just supplementing," he said. "And in a flat-cap world, that's gonna be Kevin [Cheveldayoff]'s challenge this summer, is 'How do you fit the pieces in to kind of push that core over the top?' And I guess that's what remains to be seen."

Why Wheeler still feels Jets have Cup contending core



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

Copp, Pionk, Stastny address upcoming contract negotiations

General manager Kevin Cheveldayoff has a busy summer ahead, with a trio of crucial restricted free agents in defencemen Neal Pionk and Logan Stanley, and versatile forward Andrew Copp due new deals.

On the UFA front, veteran forwards Paul Stastny, Mathieu Perrault, Nate Thompson and Trevor Lewis will all have decisions ahead of them. Asked about their impending contract talks, here's what some of them said Wednesday:

Andrew Copp, RFA: "Those conversations — where they see me moving forward here and the direction of the team, what we're gonna do to make us better — are the two biggest things for me. I wouldn't say anything's off the table at this point, and I'm sure with everything kind of happening sooner rather than later that that will get addressed pretty quickly."

Copp went through the arbitration process two summers ago with the Jets, and said Wednesday that the experience of 2019 won't impact this off-season's negotiations.

Paul Stastny, UFA: "I'm older, I think options are probably more limited."

Stastny, 35, said he was open to a return to the Jets but indicated he won't be rushing into any decisions.

"I think with the expansion draft and everything that's going on, I'm pretty sure teams are gonna be busy trying to figure that stuff out."

He also made clear that what's best for his family will factor heavily into any decisions made.

"We'll be patient about it. No rush. I kind of have an idea of what places you wanna play at but you wanna do what's a good fit for you and you wanna go somewhere where you're wanted, too," he said. "I have nothing but good things to say here, and I know the future has always been bright, it continues to be bright. There's always gonna be a chance here and I think that's a really important piece to picking a team you wanna play at."

Players throw support behind Paul Maurice

Jets head coach Paul Maurice joined the team in January 2014 and is currently the second longest-tenured bench boss in the league behind Jon Cooper, who's led Tampa Bay since March 2013.

Said Wheeler: "I've been on teams where the coach has lost the team and the message isn't received. But that has just never happened with Paul."

For Ehlers, Maurice is the only NHL head coach he's ever known.

"He's been the coach since I came in. It's very unusual, even in Europe, to have the same coach for that long. But it just shows what kind of coach and what kind of guy Paul is," he said. "I think everyone on the team is very happy with the way he coaches us — and not just the on-ice stuff, but the off-ice stuff, too. He's a guy you can go talk to when something's up and there's always something with the on-ice stuff that he's got for you, whether it's good or bad. And that goes for the whole coaching staff. They're great at finding small things that they can help you with, whether they do video or it's on ice, they pull you aside. I think that's been huge for me, to work on small details of the game. That's been great."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189572 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Thoughts on cross-checking, Islanders-Bruins, pushing refs to make calls

Bruins' Cassidy disagrees with his fine, but respects the league's decision

Bruins head coach Bruce Cassidy justifies his comments after Game 5, says it was a bit of gamesmanship, says he'll always stick up for his captain, says he thought he was civil enough and didn't deserve a fine, but is ready to move on from it.

Justin Bourne @jtbourne June 9, 2021, 12:52 PM

"Push them in."

Over and over I've heard coaches watching video talk to one another and say something like "Smitty's gotta push him in there. Their guy's able to grab the loose puck and take off with it. He should never be able to get out of that pile."

"Push them in" is in reference to puck battles in the corner, which generally consist of two offensive players trying to get the puck moving in the O-zone, and two defensive players trying to kill movement and dig the puck free. One of the two defensive players is usually in the thick of the battle, with the other a step back from the pile to ensure they don't get burned by a puck popping free. It's his job to contain the outermost offensive player by "pushing him in" to the pile ... with cross-checks.

Legal ones, of course.

Here's the thing about cross-checks, which have become a hot button issue this post-season, particularly in the Islanders-Bruins series: how they're called is utterly subjective, it has to be, and it always is going to be. Even the "call the rulebook" zealots are going to have to accept some measure of cross-checking or cross-pushing or cross-controlling, however much they want to water it down. That doesn't mean we can't do a better job calling the bad ones, there just has to be a subjective cut-off somewhere.

We accept that hockey is a physical sport, a contact one, and to some extent it has to be. This is true in international play, the women's game, youth hockey, you name it — there's too many bodies fighting for small spaces to make it contact-free. So to defend someone as it currently stands, we've said that you cannot take your hand off your stick to do it. It's an insta-penalty these days, called holding, whether much of a hold takes place or not. So, everybody's got two hands on their stick.

You can't slash down on opposing sticks anymore because composite sticks break pretty readily, so that's just begging for two minutes. All you can do, really, is stand in someone's way, and try to control their body with "cross-pushes," as you've got both hands on your stick.

How these "cross-pushes" are generally accepted: on the opposing player's hips (not back), with your hands closer together than farther apart, and here's the big one, contact with the player has to happen at the start of the cross-check motion so you're pushing them where you want to push them like a broom sweeping away dirt, rather than the contact happening at the end of the cross-check motion, which is more likely to hurt and knock people off-balance a dangerous distance from the boards.

You see the issue here is "how far into the cross-check/cross-push motion is it OK to start making contact with the offensive player?" Whatever your stance is on this, it has to be somewhere. Generally, as the temperature of a game ramps up and people defend more tenaciously, it gets harder to pick out the ones that are OK and the ones that aren't, which of course refs try very hard to do and mostly do well.

An example? In a 1-1 hockey game with less than three minutes to go, this got Sean Kuraly a two-minute minor for cross-checking.

That angle looks bad, doesn't it? I'm sure some people want to see that called every time, and from my point of view, Kuraly invites the ref to make a subjective call, so he's not exempt from blame.

Only, I don't think that's a penalty. His hands are low on Kyle Palmieri's hips and close together. It's more of a push than a jarring blow, and frankly, I think the Islanders savvy vet sells it a bit. Guys know to expect contact here. Like a good flop in basketball, and the value of what was created, I'd call it a pretty nice play.

At the end of the day, though, it's on Kuraly for putting the ref in that spot in that moment, but you can see why he'd be frustrated given the score and timing of the huge playoff game they're in.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

That brings us to David Krejci's cup-check on Mathew Barzal (which was arbitrarily deemed a slash because "he doinked him in the beans" isn't an official penalty), and the Barzal cross-checks that preceded it.

Generally, attempts at "pushing them in" are allowed by referees, as they aren't violent and are in service of controlling an opponent's body, which is the crux of defending. Barzal doesn't want Krejci to be able to step back from the pile, see the puck and pull it free, then have room to take it where he wants. Barzal wants Krejci stapled to the glass, like Chris Pronger on Justin Bieber.

So, are these cross-whatevers from Barzal too much?

My answer is no, with the context being that I like the battling aspect of the game; I think it reveals a lot about players and their will, and part of what makes the game entertaining.

Part of being a player in these moments is that cross-checks are a subjective call, meaning it's one of the places you can actually give it a little to your opponent, so of course guys push the envelope. Half the time they're daring the ref to call it. But I think Barzal is just on the right side of the line here (the first one is the hardest, but it's when Krejci is closest to the pile so it doesn't feel dangerous), even though some of the contact comes away from his body on the cross-check motion.

Part of the problem with calling cross-checking today is the same problem we had with hooking many years ago. Everyone did it, and the refs would only call it if you went down. Palmieri went down, there's a penalty. Krejci didn't, there's no penalty. I certainly don't want us in a position where we encourage diving to get calls, but I can't see how moving the line to allow less or more cross-stick contact eliminates it from happening.

Hooking wasn't battling, though. It sucked joy from the game and was something we could just outright eliminate. As long as players have to have two hands on their sticks to defend, we're not going to be able to eliminate players from using the shaft of their sticks to control and defend in their own zone. So no matter where you stand on the "call-everything-o-meter," you're just moving the line of where the ref blows the whistle, not eliminating the subjectivity of the call. There's always going to be some measure of pushing, the only thing that differs is how much you personally want to see.

This is how we end up where we did with Bruce Cassidy's post-game comments on the refereeing, and the whole "New York Saints" thing.

Bruins' Cassidy calls out referees after Game 5 loss

Cassidy was fined \$25,000 for those comments, but you have to wonder if at times that's money well spent. Calls are subjective, so coaches can get in refs' heads, which is part of why they complain after borderline calls. If they can convince the refs they've been unfair in their decision-making, the hope is the next call is more likely to go their way. You control what you can as a coach, and I appreciate him trying to make a difference with the people in black and white.

In Game 6 Wednesday night, the Bruins and Islanders will get the same officiating crew they had in Game 2, which saw nine penalties called, five against the Bruins and four against the Isles. It's possible the Bruins have the league's attention and might be able to change a ref's opinion on one call in Game 6, which might make all the difference. But the Islanders finished the regular season with the lowest number of penalties taken of any team in the league, so it's harder to make a case that they deserve more penalties now.

Islanders and Bruins aside, cross-checking and cross-pushing are going to remain a theme of the post-season as it moves along, as the battle level stays high and every inch of ice only matters more. Refs have a hard job, but they're paid to decide what's across the arbitrarily agreed-upon line, and they by-and-large do a great job of it.

As Cassidy knows from his playing days, the pain of a cross-check hurts a little. The pain of losing playoff games because of refereeing — whether that's perception or reality — that hurts a lot. And unfortunately, both pains will continue to be felt as long as people play hockey.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189573

Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens Notebook: Gainey offers wisdom to help Montreal stay in rhythm

Who do the Habs cheer for, Vegas or Colorado?

The Canadiens await the winner of the Golden Knights-Avalanche series in the Stanley Cup Playoffs semifinals. Is there a preferred matchup? Danielle Michaud and Eric Engels discuss this and how Montreal is rejoicing in the Habs' playoff success so far.

Eric Engels June 9, 2021, 3:55 PM

MONTREAL — I'm not sure Marc Bergevin could've called on a better person to address his Montreal Canadiens at this critical juncture of their quest for the Stanley Cup, as they await a semifinal opponent and attempt to avoid the same issue the team they just beat ran up against.

Enter Bob Gainey, one of Bergevin's predecessors as Canadiens general manager, a man of few words but one of even fewer words wasted. A legendary player of the game who was once described as "technically the most complete in the world" by Russian coaching guru Viktor Tikhonov and who was once hoisted up by some of the greatest players of all time for his role on one of the greatest championship teams of all time in 1979. He has faced every situation imaginable, including the one the Canadiens are in right now, and you can bet that every player in that room devoured every word he used to inspire them and keep them in the headspace they need to be in at this moment.

It's a bigger challenge than anyone can imagine. You'd think a team eight wins away from a Cup could shock itself back into rhythm immediately, but no amount of preparation can guarantee that.

I spoke to former Canadian Nate Thompson about how he and his current Winnipeg Jets teammates weren't able to overcome this after sweeping the Edmonton Oilers in the first round of this year's playoffs. I asked if they could've approached their layoff — while the Canadiens were in the process of coming back and beating the Toronto Maple Leafs in seven games — any differently, and his answer perfectly encapsulated why they couldn't and why any team in a similar position would have been challenged to.

"Not sure what you can do, to be honest," Thompson said via text. "You can practise all you want, but the break just takes the rhythm out of playing games and the feel of the playoffs. You get taken out of the mindset of having every second night as a game night and being in that routine."

It's not as if any player purposely disengages. They are often described as creatures of habit, and that's not a notion that's overblown.

To have routines broken for eight days, as the Jets did between dispatching the Oilers and facing the Canadiens, is a mental challenge that can't just be overcome by will.

If the Vegas Golden Knights beat the Colorado Avalanche on Thursday, that would mean a Sunday start for the Canadiens against them in Round 3 — making it only four days off between games. You'd think the Canadiens might prefer the Avalanche force a seventh game, for both teams to travel once more and play six extra periods on top of the two games, but Thompson is probably not alone in thinking it would be better off for them to just get back to playing as soon as possible.

He knows how well the Canadiens played to beat his Jets, how they got complete buy-in and execution from the entire team, and he knows the value in keeping that going.

So does Bergevin, hence Gainey's arrival Wednesday.

"We were fortunate enough to have Mr. Bob Gainey speak to us about exactly that," said Brendan Gallagher. "You talk about experience, there's not a lot of organizations that can fall on alumni with the amount of experience that this one can, and we were fortunate to have one in the building today. And he was able speak to us on some things that he went through in his career and some things he's seen, and it was exactly that



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

— how important it is going to be to start Game 1 and really implement our style of play.

"It was a passionate speech, it was nice to have him here, and those are the things we're going to be doing this week to make sure you balance rest, but you also stay mentally and physically sharp. We don't want our game to fall off from where it was from when we finished the series. So, it's something that we've talked about and something that we're going to make sure is a key focus here as we prepare for Game 1."

We'd imagine the guy they invented the Selke Trophy for might have also had a few words of praise for the defensive commitment that led the Canadiens down this path. Perhaps Gainey cited what happened in 1976, when his Canadiens shut down the NHL's best offence — a Philadelphia Flyers team that had averaged over four goals per game in both the regular season and playoffs, and was chasing its third consecutive Stanley Cup — and Gary Dornhoefer said, "They've checked us so closely that you can tell what brand of deodorant they're using."

I would think the Jets feel similarly right about now.

Remaining Time -4:33

How does Canadiens' defence stack up against Golden Knights or Avalanche?

Dominique Ducharme provides updates on Jeff Petry and Jake Evans

The Montreal coach reiterated Wednesday that the Canadiens are hoping Jeff Petry will only be out short-term after missing Game 4 of the Winnipeg series with a hand injury.

"Jeff, like we said after the game, we think he's going to be back early in the series," said Ducharme of his top-scoring defenceman this season. "We don't know if it's going to be Game 1, 2 or 3. We're hoping for the best. So, there's no update now, because it doesn't change for him. He needs a few days. So, when game-time comes, if he's not in, we feel he's going to be pretty close."

As for Jake Evans, who suffered a concussion on the Game 1 charge that saw top Jets forward Mark Scheifele suspended four games, Ducharme said there's hope he could be back in this coming round.

"Jake is doing even better today," Ducharme said. "He went to our gym yesterday and worked out, he's progressing well. Can he join us in this series? It's possible. At what point? Too difficult to say today."

"For an injury like that, it's more important for the person than the player. Jake being 100 per cent is the most important thing."

That's especially true given this was Evans' third documented concussion since 2018.

Evans went down when he was playing the best hockey of his career and as well, if not better, than most Canadiens forwards. He was the most-used player up front in the game he got hurt in.

And yet, if he were somehow available for Game 1 of the next series, we can't think of a way he'd get back into the lineup immediately.

Part of that is because everyone's game has dramatically risen since Evans went down, and another big part of it is Artturi Lehkonen returning from a concussion suffered in Game 3 against Toronto and filling Evans' skates so admirably.

"He just played the best games of his career," said an Eastern Conference executive we spoke to after Game 4, which saw Lehkonen score for a second consecutive contest. "I've watched Lehkonen a ton over the years, and I've always liked the way he plays. Great forechecker, great backchecker. He tightens up a bit in the scoring areas, but he does everything the right way and has never bailed on making a play — even with someone lining him up in the crosshairs."

I'd say the same of Evans, who has a bit more offensive poise to him.

If the Canadiens need to turn to him after a tough loss or because someone else goes down to injury, he'll be able to provide exactly what he provided before he got hurt, if he's completely recovered and comfortable enough to come back in.

But if even if Evans is healthy and can't immediately reclaim his spot, it only highlights what's so good about these Canadiens. Their depth and balance have brought them this far, and Ducharme has said over and over again that he understands how crucial that is to their success.

Remaining Time -2:25

Are the Canadiens ready to play road games in a full arena?

Vibe check in Montreal

I'm 38 years old and have lived in this city my entire life. It is everything visitors say of it — a beautiful metropolis, a unique and vibrant place with a mostly harmonious, multi-cultured society — and it exactly what you expect it to be when the Canadiens are doing well.

There's just an extra pop to it, but this is even more apparent now given everything we've been through since COVID-19 hit in March of 2020. We were locked down and under curfew from January through most of May, and we're now on the cusp of moving from orange zones to yellow and green.

Hallelujah!

On Wednesday, the Montreal Gazette reported 77 per cent of eligible Quebecers had already received their first vaccine — a higher rate than any single state in the U.S. — and that Montreal was down to just 60 daily cases of the novel coronavirus. If that's not a cause for celebration, I don't know what is.

What the Canadiens are doing is bringing the elation to another level. I feel it everywhere I go, in every interaction I have with even the most casual observers.

A lot of people have asked me what it was like to have 2,500 fans at the Bell Centre over the last three games, and I described the first experience as an emotional one in just thinking about what it represented in terms of hope of soon emerging from this wretched pandemic.

But I can't describe in words how incredible the atmosphere has been in the building. I'm not sure 2,500 would sound as loud anywhere else.

I know what it means to the players. Gallagher said Wednesday that it gave them a huge lift and was a big reason they won their last three games at the Bell Centre.

But I also think about what it means to their partners.

And think about the ones among them who came to Montreal from other cities in the off-season and knew they'd have to wait for the real benefits of being a part of the Canadiens family and the city to be realized.

Can you imagine how special this experience has been for those people?

They spent all year basically by themselves, tested twice per week, never permitted to be with each other and often separated from the players, who took three extended road trips to Western Canada, and their first glimpse of what it's like when the Canadiens are doing well is coming with the team doing better than it has in seven years.

The vibe they're experiencing is absolutely electric, and the voltage is only going to rise as we move forward.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189574 Websites

TSN.CA / Top prospect Clarke on experience in Slovakia, winning under-18 gold

By Mark Masters

When top prospect Brandt Clarke does interviews with National Hockey League teams the questions are often similar and expected. That's why the session with the New York Islanders stood out.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

"They run you through a test and you sit on Zoom for like two hours and they have, like, a sheet of paper on the screen and you just answer math questions and [different] stuff," the Barrie Colts defenceman said. "I asked around and was like, 'Were they trolling me, or is that actually what they do?'"

He found out that older brother Graeme, a third-round pick of the New Jersey Devils in 2019, experienced the same thing a couple years ago, as did some of his friends this year.

"I guess there's something there [in the questions] that they realize your personality traits but, yeah, that was definitely strange and I wasn't too sure how it aligned with hockey, but you just got to get through it."

On the ice, Clarke seems to have all the right answers. He helped Team Canada win gold at the world under-18 championship in May, finishing with seven points in seven games. With the Ontario Hockey League unable to hold a season due to the pandemic, Clarke played in Slovakia's top professional league, where he posted 15 points in 26 games with Nove Zamky.

The 18-year-old Ottawa native is ranked seventh by NHL Central Scouting on their final list of North American skaters. Clarke came in No. 6 on TSN Hockey insider Bob McKenzie's mid-season list, which is based on a sampling of scouts.

Clarke spoke to TSN about his experience overseas, admiring Erik Karlsson as a Senators fan growing up, and why he doesn't mind getting into it with guys verbally on the ice. The following is an edited transcript of the interview.

What will you remember most about the experience playing in Slovakia?

"Me and my brother went over there originally, but he was only there for three weeks. He got the call back to play in the American Hockey League so then it was just kind of me living on my own halfway across the world. It was a different experience, but one I definitely think was worthwhile. I was really fortunate that, even in a year where not much was going on, I still got to have a pretty good scenario."

How do you think you held up against men in a professional league?

"It was definitely an adjustment, especially since I went over in late December and they were already 20, 25 games into their season. They were in mid-season form and I was playing professional hockey for the first time, so it was definitely an adjustment the first couple of games. I had to get my feet under me and start thinking the game at that speed. Some guys were pushing me off the puck easier than I would've liked. After the first couple games, I kind of got my feet under me and I was making more plays. I was more calm with the puck. I was holding onto the puck longer and making safer plays and not just throwing it away quickly. I felt like once I got comfortable I started to play my game. I started to dominate a little bit and it was a big confidence boost for me knowing that I am playing against these guys and I can out-skill them and, if I have better body position, I can win corner battles."

#2021NHLDraft top prospect [CA Brandt Clarke](#) has just scored his 1st goal of the season. The 17 y.o. defenseman showed off his skills and scored on the rebound.

Clarke is currently on loan in Slovak top tier league. He's playing his 9th game with HC Nové Zámky.

: [Tipsport TV pic.twitter.com/h2Lp0DAOCo](https://twitter.com/h2Lp0DAOCo)

— Matej Deraj (@MatoDeraj) January 22, 2021

What was the culture shock like off the ice?

"Yeah, it was a culture shock. Having to cook my own meals, do my own grocery shopping. I've been pretty fortunate that my parents have kind of spotted me in those departments, but I had to do that. I made it work so that was part of growing up, I guess. In terms of the dressing room, we had a lot of great guys. A lot of them were from age 25 to 32. They were really welcoming of me and 80 per cent of them spoke English too, so that was a nice surprise. They welcomed me with open arms and they wanted me to do my thing. They were really supportive. It was a great organization."

You were named a tournament all-star at the world under-18 championship in Texas en route to winning gold with Team Canada. What did you take from that experience?

"We had a pretty star-studded team, but some of the guys hadn't played for 14 months or something like that, so we were worried at the start. Like, was rust going to be a problem? Are we going to have to ease our way into this tournament? Are we going to drop a couple games early? But then we beat Sweden 12-1, so that worry was right out the window and then we kept rolling from there. There was a different guy who stepped up every night. We all did our job and production-wise there were a couple different players every night and that's what you need. That's why other teams couldn't hone in on us. We had a great group and I made a lot of friends and definitely some memories that will last me a lifetime."

Where do you keep the gold medal?

"It's in my room right now. It's hanging in my room. It's at the forefront. You see it right away when you walk in."

Brandt Clarke makes it 2-0 for Canada! [CA #U18Worlds pic.twitter.com/pY1m80ICK](#)

— TSN (@TSN\_Sports) April 28, 2021

This season you switched from the P92 mid-curve blade to the P28 toe curve. What sparked the change?

"The skills trainer I work with always preached that that's a curve you should use and that's a curve that gives you more opportunity and lets you play further away from your body. You have your hands off your body more, which gives you more room to go to your forehand or go to your backhand. I feel like it fits my game really well. If I'm walking the blueline, it's kind of sitting in the toe already and I can either sling it back to one of my forwards who are wanting a pass or, if the lane is there, I can sling it to the net. I just feel like the puck is always in a shooting-ready spot, but it's also not difficult at all to shimmy and make a pass. It suits my game and definitely is the curve I will rock with from here on out."

Why do you use blade tape versus traditional hockey tape?

"A lot of people ask me that. A lot of guys on my team give it to me sometimes. It's kind of unorthodox, but I like it. I've used it since I was a kid. My dad gave it to me and my brother when I was younger. A lot of people had it when they were in novice and atom, like ages seven to 10, and then they made the switch and I just didn't make the switch. I guess I missed that trend. It's just something I'm used to now. I had a couple practices last summer when I went back to tape and I just didn't feel the puck as much. I take a couple chirps from the boys sometimes for it, but it's worthwhile, because it benefits me."

Your older brother went through the draft process not long ago. What's the best advice Graeme has given you?

"It's been nice to follow his path. He had to learn on the fly and now he gets to tell me a bunch of advice. He says, 'Be respectful, be yourself and show the personality qualities that you have in these interviews.' With the tournaments or in Slovakia, he tells me, 'Don't shy away from your game.' He said, 'Clearly, what you've been doing has been working and people like the way you play. People like the way you move out there. If you're feeling down on yourself just remember that the way that you do things is what got you this far and don't take criticism and just keep strutting along. You're going to carve your own path and it's going to go really well for you.' I always take his advice. It means a lot to me."

Our director of scouting, Craig Button, has you going to New Jersey fourth overall in his latest mock draft. What would it be like to play with your brother in the NHL?

"That'd be cool. All NHL teams are cool, but if me and Graeme could be together for a really long time and make our paths together in the NHL, that would be awesome."

MICHIGAN MOCK: [@CraigJButton](#) has Owen Power to Sabres; Matty Beniers to Seattle and Kent Johnson with the #Canucks in his post-lottery Mock Draft - <https://t.co/7cOwKwoolQ#TSNHockey> [pic.twitter.com/BRZNP11c1r](https://twitter.com/BRZNP11c1r)



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

— TSN Hockey (@TSNHockey) June 3, 2021

What was your favourite moment growing up in Ottawa as a Senators fan?

"I'll go with 2017 when Karlsson was dominating and they had [Mark] Stone and [Mike] Hoffman and they made the Eastern Conference final and Game 7 went to overtime. I was watching that game with my head right in front of the screen. That was really tense and I was really upset when they didn't come out on top that night. But that run was crazy and they were putting on a show every single night. Karlsson was my favourite player growing up and seeing him doing the things he does at the playoff level, as you can see in the playoffs this year, playoffs is a different game, but he was still the best player in the world and separating himself and making something happen every time he was on the ice, so that was pretty remarkable to see."

Check out these two pics of a young Brandt Clarke playing minor hockey in Ottawa. @TSNHockey @CraigJButton #U18Worlds #TSNHockey pic.twitter.com/8eFO3mVSnr

— Geoff Clarke (@GClarkeToronto) May 1, 2021

What was it like getting the chance to skate with Karlsson last summer?

"That was crazy. Being on the ice last summer with guys like Karlsson, Thomas Chabot and Claude Giroux, I was like, 'Holy crap! I really got to focus in here.' It's summer skates and we're doing scrimmages and they're going 75 per cent and not going all out, but I'm going all out. I can't let one of these guys burn me. I know how talented these guys are and if I take the foot off the gas for one second I'm going to get dangled, so I was all in. I was 100 per cent focused."

I understand you like to talk on the ice. How much is trash talking part of your game?

"In terms of talking, it's more with my own teammates. I like communicating. I like, before draws, telling guys where to go and saying, 'I'll be here, if you get the puck there then maybe I'll cut backdoor and you can look for me if that option is there.' In terms of trash talking, if a guy gives me a shot in front of the net, you know, I don't mind getting in front of his face and stuff like that. If he's going at me then sometimes I'll go back at him. I'm like that. I'm not going to say I'm the best trash talker in the world. I'm not trash talking every, single shift, but I don't shy away from going back at guys."

During an interview on Showbound: The Podcast earlier this year you spoke about getting into it with Dallas Stars first rounder Thomas Harley and some other guys during an overtime game against Mississauga. And then you actually called your shot and told them you were going to score. Is that the favourite chirp from your young career?

"It's got to be that one. I always think back to that. These three guys, they were all NHL-drafted players, and it's overtime and our two other guys, who were on with us, already went to the bench and it was just me barking at all three of these guys and telling them that I was going to score next shift and send them home and, 'Have a good bus ride home.' And I did score. So, I even surprised myself. I don't surprise myself too much, but the fact it happened on the very next shift after I called it was definitely pretty cool."

@ClarkeBrandt doesn't just talk the talk...

Episode 12 with Clarke is live tomorrow! pic.twitter.com/NsBAJBdUUI

— Showbound: The Podcast (@ShowboundPod) January 19, 2021

What got into you that night?

"These guys were whacking me and I don't know. It was a big rivalry. Barrie-Mississauga, you know, the one-hour rivalry and we play each other pretty often in the season, so we're pretty familiar with each other and, in the heat of the moment, I was just like, 'I'm going to score this shift and you're all going to catch dashes.' And that's exactly what happened. It was pretty funny."

You seem to have a swagger to your game. You pulled off the lacrosse move with the Don Mills Flyers in minor hockey. We've seen that move done a bit more of late all around the hockey world, but maybe not by defencemen. What inspired that?

"It's a thing that's blowing up these days. It started a couple years ago and you see guys pulling it off more and more. Graeme's really good at it. He gets like one or two a season, which is pretty remarkable. In terms of me, a defenceman isn't behind the net with time and space too often, but I pulled it off once with Don Mills and I actually tried it once in Barrie last year, too. It's cool if it works out. It's actually kind of an effective way, if there's no passing options, to get a shot on net from a place where you usually wouldn't be able to get a shot on net. It's not the first option you should think of when you're in the offensive zone, but once in a blue moon, if that's the right play, just try and use your skill and be creative and hopefully it works out and you don't stick the goalie in the face."

Brandt Clarke (@ClarkeBrandt) almost scores on this lacrosse goal attempt! pic.twitter.com/CacsD4IR60

— Barrie Colts (@OHLBarrieColts) January 4, 2020

What's the focus for you this off-season?

"When I was in the Slovak league there were a lot of bigger guys, who were stronger than me ... so I want to build my upper-body strength. I want to be filled out. I'm hoping to be north of 200 pounds next season. I'm closer to 190 now. I want to be north of 200 pounds and being able to push guys off the puck."

"And another thing is my first-step explosiveness. I feel like once I get to my top speed, once I get up skating, I'm pretty fluid, pretty shifty and a pretty good skater. But if me and another guy are at a standstill, I'm not as fast out of the gates as I want to be so that's kind of what I'm working on. That will help me in situations like a two-on-two and there's a guy who chips the puck around me, as a d-man you got to pivot and go get it in the corner. If I can get to the corner even quicker, you know, that allows me to use my creativeness, have my head up and make a play and not just have to whack it away."

Here is my friend @ClarkeBrandt crushing his off ice hockey training! Excited to see the future of this stud #NHLDraft @RobitailleRandy pic.twitter.com/wS5cghvueF

— Tony Greco (@TonyGrecoTG) September 19, 2020

What makes Tony Greco, who you work with, a good trainer?

"His energy. The atmosphere he creates in the gym. He makes you want to be there and makes you want to put in the work. He's done so much for me. I'm so thankful for him. We have a group where it's me, my brother, Claude Giroux, Jack Quinn, a Buffalo Sabres pick last year, and it's a fun group. Some people are like, 'Ah, I have to go to the gym today. It's a drag.' But Tony makes the atmosphere into, 'Wow, I get to go to the gym today. This is awesome! I'm going to have fun today.' I'm excited when that morning comes and I get to go to the gym, because he makes it a good time and everyone wants to put in the work. It's just a fun atmosphere."

TSN.CA LOADED: 06.10.2021

1189575 Websites

USA TODAY / Islanders – and fans – giving Nassau Coliseum proper sendoff with final postseason run

CHRIS BUMBACA | USA TODAY

UNIONDALE, New York — These fans have already said their goodbyes to Nassau Coliseum, drank their last Bud Lights in the parking lot, sat in traffic on the way home for the final time.

They did it six years ago, when the New York Islanders packed up after more than 40 years on Long Island for the shiny Barclays Center, home of the Brooklyn Nets, ditching their dueling suburban-blue-collar identity for Atlantic Avenue.

But on Wednesday, they will play Game 6 of their second-round playoff series at the Coliseum – official name NYCB Live: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, "the Coliseum" locally – against the Boston Bruins. It



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 10, 2021

will be New York's sixth home game there this postseason, six more playoff games these fans ever thought they'd watch again in this building.

A win would move the Islanders into the next round, securing at least two more games here. It could also be the last time the Islanders skate inside the Coliseum – for real this time, exact date still unknown.

The only certainty is that by puck drop, Islanders fans will have “The Barn” rocking like a zoo.

Michael Leboff was convinced Game 4 was really going to be the last time he watched the Islanders in the building.

Down 2-1 in the series, they'd lose the next two games, preventing Game 6 back at the Coliseum, he thought.

“That's being an Islander fan,” Leboff, the co-host of a team-centered podcast called “Islanders Anxiety,” told USA TODAY Sports.

With about three minutes left in the first period of a scoreless Game 4, the Bruins' David Pastmak hit the right post when shooting on a wide-open net. Had that shot gone in, maybe it's a different series. Instead, the Islanders would prevail 4-1, scoring four unanswered goals after an early second-period Boston goal.

But during the first intermission, Leboff met up with friends who said the gaffe was a sign the Islanders would win. Leboff wasn't convinced, but he's found himself more trusting under the regime of general manager Lou Lamoriello and coach Barry Trotz, who led the Washington Capitals to the Stanley Cup in 2018.

“This team has showed us not to be so fatalistic with the Islanders,” he said. “They're such a composed, confident group. I guess old habits die hard.”

Besides, he'd done this before. After a standoff with local government officials, the team let its lease with the building expire after the 2014-15 season under former owner Charles Wang. The Islanders won their “final” game at the Coliseum on April 25, 2015, Game 6 of the first round against Trotz's Capitals. A defeat in Game 7 meant what Isles fanatics like Leboff had accepted and expected: the end.

What should have been a celebration was more of a depressing countdown.

“We knew at some point they were going to get eliminated,” Leboff said. “Then Barclays Center looming felt shitty.”

This time around, instead of Brooklyn, the Islanders will be moving 7.5 miles west on the Hempstead Turnpike to UBS Arena, an 17,000-seat rink in Elmont, New York, across the street from Belmont Park that is scheduled to open by next season.

“It sounds like they're building the inside to basically be a spitting image of the guts of the Coliseum,” Leboff said. “So there's a chance that that place could be just as good.”

Leboff likened this sendoff to a New Orleans-style funeral, a lighter affair with a brass band as part of the procession – a celebration.

“The last time we said goodbye felt more like, I don't know, an Irish-Catholic funeral or something,” Leboff said. “This is much more a party. It's been an absolute zoo.”

Even without captain Anders Lee, the Islanders are one win away from the NHL semifinals for the second consecutive season. The excitement, combined with the chance to give the Coliseum a proper send-off thanks to fortuitous timing of lifted COVID-19 restrictions, has given the Coliseum an energy it has rarely seen in decades.

At 6:38 p.m., 47 minutes before Game 4's start, a full-throated “Let's Go Islanders!” chant filled the concourse. A fan of the visiting team was called a loser for wearing a Brad Marchand No. 63 Bruins jersey.

During the game, members of the New York Jets, notably offensive lineman Dan Feeney, shotgunned and rumped cans of beer to charge up the crowd.

“This run has been like nothing I've ever seen,” Leboff said. “Because there's actual promise of this team.”

To call Nassau Coliseum “a barn” these days is technically a misnomer. The interior received a facelift during the renovation that began after the 2015 postseason. When the Coliseum reopened in 2017, the Islanders returned for an exhibition game, and then gradually for more regular season games each year.

With the Islanders leaving as tenants, the space will continue to be used for concerts and other entertainment events. The Long Island Nets, the G-League affiliate of Brooklyn, will continue playing at the Coliseum. It's a far cry from the New York Nets of the American Basketball Association, which won two titles (1974, 1976) while calling the Coliseum home with local star Julius Erving leading the way at the dawn of his Hall of Fame professional career.

His jersey hangs in the rafters, right next to Billy Joel's name – “34 sold out shows,” the banner reads.

There are also the names of Islanders greats from the dynasty of the early 1980s.

Gillies. Potvin. Bossy. Trottier. Smith.

That core won four consecutive championships, a stretch not repeated in the four major men's professional league. The Islanders went 10-0 in Cup Final games at home during those years, and the Coliseum became known as “Fort Neverlose.”

“It was such a special place for me and my Islander group that I played with,” Hall of Fame center Bryan Trottier told USA TODAY Sports. “We all have our special memories of that place. I'm sure the fans do too. It reflects well on Long Island.”

“It has its identity, but beyond that, I think it has its energy. I think that energy is real.”

After the Islanders advanced past the first round in 2019, playoff games moved to Barclays Center, which quickly became a sore spot for Isles fans, whether it be the commute or eerie feeling of a hockey game being played in a building not constructed for that purpose. They remained near the bottom in attendance at Barclays Center.

“It felt like you went to a shopping mall and there was a hockey game taking place in there,” Leboff said.

In other words, the complete opposite of the Coliseum.

As the move to Barclays backfired, it allowed the Coliseum to host the entire slate of home games – plus playoffs – in 2021, which New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced on Feb. 29, 2020. Weeks later, the coronavirus pandemic threatened that reality.

Fans were allowed back in the building in March 2021, starting at 1,400, and the arena approached its 14,000-person capacity Saturday night.

“If you're a hockey fan,” Leboff said, “there's no better place to watch a hockey game.”

The seats are nicer now, the exterior of the building looks different and there are more corporate amenities compared to the old joint. But not much of a difference exists when it comes to atmosphere.

“It's so raucous,” Trottier said.

The noise funnels down to the ice, he added. Lip-reading became an essential skill – hearing the teammate next to you, even if he was screaming, was impossible.

“Here we are, basically 50 years after it opened, and the Coliseum stands ready,” he said. “It stands ready to bring that same, crazed din.”

The proper way to close down a barn like this.

USA TODAY LOADED: 06.10.2021