



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 12, 2021

## The Athletic

### Hold 'em or Fold 'em: Which NHL teams would prefer an expansion-style reboot over what they currently have?

By Eric Duhatschek

Here at The Athletic, we're always looking for a good hypothetical to chase down the rabbit hole and today, we're going to explore this question, in the context of the Seattle Kraken entering the NHL as its 32nd franchise.

If you're an NHL team and faced with a choice of either starting your entire franchise over from scratch, as Seattle is about to do, or press on with your current lineup and depth chart — which would you do?

Stay the course, on the grounds that even the weakest teams have some nice pieces in place?

Or jettison the entire lot because nothing would be better than all the overpaid, underachieving somethings that you've been accumulating over the years?

And we'll make it an either/or proposition. You can't cherry-pick one player — Miro Heiskanen in Dallas or Trevor Zegras in Anaheim, for example — and then dump all the rest.

You're either the Kraken, starting fresh, or you're prepared to muddle ahead with the good, the bad and the ugly on your current roster.

Procedurally, Seattle will make its expansion draft selections on July 21, choosing one player from each team except the Golden Knights, who are exempt. The Golden Knights are also exempt from this particular exercise.

One of the Golden Knights' most successful strategies was to weaponize its salary-cap space. They entered the NHL with a clean financial slate, which allowed it to help cure other teams' salary-cap headaches — at a price. In turn for taking on bad contracts, the Golden Knights received either player help or draft-choice consideration.

Think of this exercise as the NHL equivalent of sitting down at a poker table, and the dealer gives you two choices. You can either completely discard a bad hand without penalty or stay with what you've got.

Two choices: Hold 'em or fold 'em.

Any veteran card player will tell you there are no guarantees the new cards will be any better than the old ones. On the other hand, if they're awful to start, how much worse can they get?

So, let's take a look and assess every team and conclude with a verdict. Then we want your take on each situation as well. There's a poll to vote for each team and we'd love for you to share your thoughts in the comments.

Anaheim Ducks

If you did this exercise two years ago, the Ducks would have been at or near the head of the class when it comes to turning all their cards in. But this summer, a combined \$13.5 million in contracts (Ryan Getzlaf and David Backes) comes off the books, which leaves Adam Henrique, at \$5.825 million through 2023-24, as the priciest overpay. John Gibson hasn't played like a \$6.4 million goalie in a couple of seasons now, but there's no reason to think that as the Ducks improve he can't return to the form he demonstrated earlier in his career. But the best news in Anaheim is that both Trevor Zegras and Jamie Drysdale, in this year's NHL cameos, showed significant NHL upside. Along with a slowly maturing young core, the Ducks look poised to inch back into NHL significance without too many salary-cap impediments holding them back.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

Arizona Coyotes

The Coyotes explored trade options for Oliver Ekman-Larsson last offseason, but found the going difficult because not only is he signed until 2026-27 at \$8.25 million per year, he also has a full no-move clause, which limited Arizona's potential trading partners. When Ekman-Larsson was on the periphery of the Norris conversation, that contract might have seemed like a good idea. Now? It's weighty. The Coyotes have one emerging shining light on the blue line in Jakob Chychrun (\$4.6 million through 2024-25) and the underrated Conor Garland up front (RFA this summer and due for a raise). But when you factor in too much money for the likes of Clayton Keller, Nick Schmaltz, Christian Dvorak and Phil Kessel, the scales tip in the direction of a reset.

The verdict: Fold 'em.

Boston Bruins

Any discussion of the best value contracts in the NHL would have to include the Bruins' entire top line — Patrice Bergeron (\$6.875 million), David Pastrnak (\$6.66 million) and especially Brad Marchand, who this year finished third in the NHL points race and is signed for an extremely reasonable price (\$6.125 million) through the end of 2024-25. Historically, the Bruins have been able to convince a high percentage of their core players to accept hometown discounts in order to keep the whole band together. The biggest misstep might have been committing \$5.25 million per year to Charlie Coyle after one effective playoff. The Bruins' window to contend for a championship could shrink in three or so years down the road, but the core still looks effective right now.

The verdict: Hold 'em.



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## Buffalo Sabres

The Sabres are a mess on so many levels, but the one that's basically beyond their control is the state of Jack Eichel's health, which sounds precarious. He has a neck issue and at the moment, there is a divide between the players' camp and the organization over how to treat that going forward. Eichel is a rare talent, which is why the Sabres originally committed \$80 million to him over an eight-year span. They also have arguably two of the most untradeable contracts in the NHL right now (Jeff Skinner, \$9 million AAV until 2026-27 and Kyle Okposo \$6 million until 2022-23). When you factor in all the losing and all the mediocrity in the bottom half of the lineup, even the idea that you'd be jettisoning younger bright lights such as Rasmus Dahlin and Dylan Cozens, you'd have to think: No one needs a complete, top-to-bottom makeover more than the Sabres do.

The verdict: Fold 'em.

## Calgary Flames

Whenever a discussion of general manager Brad Treliving's strengths and weaknesses occurs, the one thing that almost always falls into the plus-category is his ability to get players signed for fair market value — and sometimes, even great bargains. Elias Lindholm would fall into that category — when he came over from Carolina in the Dougie Hamilton trade, he signed for an AAV of \$4.85 million until 2023-24 — there may not be a better value contract in that under \$5 million-per-year price range in the NHL. The highest-paid player on the Flames roster is Matthew Tkachuk, at a bridge contract at a \$7 million AAV that takes him to the end of 2021-22. The biggest anchor is popular dressing-room presence Milan Lucic at \$6 million for the next two years. More than anything else, the Flames need some of the reasonably priced players in their core to have better seasons next year. This is one of the many teams that falls into a mushy middle — with the good outweighing the bad by enough that you'd probably lean toward ...

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Carolina Hurricanes

When Tom Dundon joined the NHL's ownership ranks, he was described as a "disrupter" and mostly when that term was applied to him, it was meant negatively. Well, who's laughing now? Dundon questioned some longstanding assumptions about value in the NHL. The staff, led by general manager Don Waddell, has done a nice job of blending players coming through their developmental pipeline (Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov, Martin Necas, Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce) with those arriving via trades (Dougie Hamilton, Vincent Trocheck, Nino Niederreiter). The net result: A team that contended for the Presidents' Trophy with the 27th-highest payroll in the league, according to CapFriendly. Impressive.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Chicago Blackhawks

If you scroll through CapFriendly and get to the Blackhawks' long-term injured reserve, you'd have seen five names there for this season, totalling \$25.3 million — salaries for Jonathan Toews, Brent Seabrook, Andrew Shaw, Zack

Smith and Alexander Nylander. The Blackhawks are hopeful (but unsure) if Toews is coming back. Seabrook and Shaw aren't. Smith comes off the books this summer. For Nylander, it was essentially a lost season. On the plus side, Patrick Kane remains a driving force, but he commands \$10.5 million through 2022-23, so he represents fair-market value, but not a bargain by any means. Kirby Dach is on his entry-level contract and is probably their most exciting prospect. But the idea of shedding all that salary and starting over without paying for past performance would likely please the organization's accountants to no end. We know how they'd vote.

The verdict: Fold 'em.

## Colorado Avalanche

The best bargain in the NHL right now is arguably Nathan MacKinnon, with two years remaining at \$6.3 million and easily in the top five of NHL centres. Colorado showed a willingness to pony up for market value when it gave Mikko Rantanen an extension averaging \$9.25 million, and they have three key players — UFAs Gabriel Landeskog and Philipp Grubauer and RFA Cale Makar — up for new deals this summer, so GM Joe Sakic will need to trim and pare elsewhere to keep his core pieces in place. But with quality youngsters such as Alex Newhook and Bowen Byram coming through the pipeline, the Avalanche has a great blend of today and tomorrow to offset the money they owe a couple of yesterday's heroes (Erik Johnson, the most notable drag at \$6 million for two additional years).

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Columbus Blue Jackets

The Blue Jackets began shedding assets at the trade deadline, adding extra first-rounders for Nick Foligno and David Savard. They might also be obliged to trade franchise lynchpin Seth Jones in the offseason, to maximize his asset value and so as not potentially lose him as a UFA in 2022. Zach Werenski is a valuable piece, but he's RFA following this season, coming off a \$5 million AAV bridge contract. Patrik Laine had an underachieving season after coming over from Winnipeg and he'll need a \$7.5 million qualifying offer to retain his rights as an RFA. Goalies Elvis Merikins and Joonas Korpisalo are both UFA after 2022, so decisions need to be made there as well. On the plus side, the Blue Jackets aren't boxed into a lot of salary-cap corners and as they remake their roster to reflect the post-John Tortorella era, there is some valuable trade bait on the current roster. So, a little tentatively, but ... hold 'em.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Dallas Stars

Arguably, no team is harder to assess than Dallas because, on the one hand, they have around \$38 million tied up in five players that are either aging, injury-prone or both (Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn, Joe Pavelski, Alexander Radulov and goaltender Ben Bishop). On the other hand, they have some quality young talent that's attractively priced and has some upside, beginning with Miro Heiskanen, Calder finalist Jason Robertson plus goalie of the future Jake Oettinger. They are supported by Roope Hintz and Denis Gurianov, who are both young and entering their primes. To unload all the salary cap



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anchors would also mean discarding a decent young nucleus. I changed my mind on the Stars about five times, before grudgingly deciding on what will almost certainly be an unpopular conclusion.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Detroit Red Wings

The Red Wings are another team that two years ago would have gladly started from scratch, given all the dead weight they were carrying on their payroll. But time has a way of fixing that. Now you're really down to only one terrible contract — Frans Nielsen at \$5.7 million — and that disappears after next year. The Red Wings have a select few building blocks already in place — Dylan Larkin, Tyler Bertuzzi, Filip Zadina and Filip Hronek — and have a few more coming, including two high-end draft choices from 2019 and 2020, Moritz Seider and Lucas Raymond. In 2019, the Red Wings would have happily started over. Now? No.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Edmonton Oilers

You have Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl in their respective primes, signed for a combined \$21 million, McDavid for five more years and Draisaitl for four (which, for comparative purposes, is just slightly more than Dallas will pay Seguin and Benn, who'll earn a combined \$19.35 million over roughly the same term). This isn't difficult. You've got the last two Hart Trophy winners signed for decent dollars and term, plus emerging star Darnell Nurse. The biggest salary-cap headache they've got is James Neal, two more years at \$4.65 million, which, if necessary, can be bought out.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Florida Panthers

The Panthers would be neck-and-neck with the Oilers in this ranking, if not for one glaring contractual error — committing \$10 million a year to goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky for five more years after this which, even if he were a Vezina Trophy contender, would be too much. Consider that Bobrovsky, by himself, earns just slightly more than the combined salaries of Aleksander Barkov and Jonathan Huberdeau — who make \$5.9 million apiece. Both players are stars and, along with MacKinnon, Mark Scheifele and a handful of others, deliver as much bang for their salary cap buck as any two stars in the league. MacKenzie Weegar's emergence this year for a \$3.25 million AAV is more, great under-the-radar value. Imagine where the Panthers would be if they could shed themselves of Bobrovsky's money (not to mention the \$2.33 million buyout payment to Scott Darling or the \$1.092 million cap recapture payment for Roberto Luongo). You'd have up-and-comer Spencer Knight on his entry-level salary, plus the means to extend pending UFA Chris Driedger for modest dollars. Still, it's an easy call.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Los Angeles Kings

Just as with Chicago, the Kings paid a heavy financial price for their two Stanley Cup championship teams, rewarding their core players with massive pay raises that currently

either match or outstrip their on-ice contributions. Both Anze Kopitar (\$10 million until 2023-24) and Drew Doughty (\$11 million through 2026-27) had good seasons for the Kings, but they certainly didn't outplay their contracts. Nor did Jonathan Quick (\$5.8 million) or Dustin Brown (\$5.875 million). The Kings do have a lot of youngsters in the developmental pipeline, but probably only Quinton Byfield projects as a front-of-the-roster candidate. It probably won't sit well with some members of Kings Nation, but we're going to opt to ...

The verdict: Fold 'em.

## Minnesota Wild

Kirill Kaprizov may be the most exciting player to join the Wild since Marian Gaborik, and he's ultimately the tipping point in this discussion. On one hand, the dollars tied up in aging stars such as Zach Parise and Ryan Suter (\$7.538 million AAV until 2024-25), other pricey deals for Mats Zuccarello and Matt Dumba (\$6 million AAV per player) and even the \$7.574 million committed to heart-and-soul captain Jared Spurgeon weigh heavily on the organization's payroll flexibility. On the other hand, the Wild developed some chemistry around worker-bee contributors such as Joel Eriksson Ek, Marcus Foligno and Jordan Greenway, and the upside of Kevin Fiala does not look to be fully tapped as yet. Also, the goaltending tandem of Cam Talbot and rookie Kaapo Kahkonen returned a lot of value for a combined salary total of roughly \$4.3 million — more than many teams pay for a starter. In the end, you'd have to lean toward ...

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Montreal Canadiens

Both Carey Price (\$10.5 million AAV) and Shea Weber (\$7.85 million AAV) are signed through 2025-26. It wouldn't be a problem if both were still in the absolute primes of their careers, delivering performances that had them in the Vezina and Norris Trophy conversations for many years. Until these playoffs, they hadn't played to those levels in a while — and those contracts will force the Canadiens to jump through the salary-cap hoops until they expire. That's a lot to ask for from a team that also has a few fairly priced contributing veterans (Jeff Petry, \$6.25 million; Brendan Gallagher, \$6.5 million), one bargain in Tyler Toffoli (\$4.25 million) and \$5.5 million committed to Jonathan Drouin. It would be an easy decision if it weren't for the presence of three youngsters: Nick Suzuki, Cole Caufield and Alexander Romanov, two of whom were absolutely sensational in Montreal's unexpectedly deep postseason run. Even though the goal of the exercise is to think long-term, big-picture thoughts, we can't completely rule out the value of having the collective whole come together as effectively as it did in the recently completed playoffs.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Nashville Predators

Nashville's salary-cap situation was even more complicated a few years back, but then the Predators traded P.K. Subban, bought out Kyle Turris and now just have to figure out what to do with Ryan Johansen and Matt Duchene, who each count \$8 million against the cap and are signed, respectively, until the 2024-25 and 2025-26 season. Neither is producing anywhere near the numbers those contracts



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imply. Nashville does have one of the NHL's top talents in 2020 Norris Trophy winner Roman Josi (\$9.059 million AAV). Also, Eeli Tolvanen finally looks like an NHL contributor (especially on the power play) after a longer-than-anticipated minor-league apprenticeship. It's hard to quantify how much the Predators' improved second-half chemistry would factor into the decision. Because if it was strictly based on contractual commitments, you'd have to say ...

The verdict: Fold 'em.

## New Jersey Devils

In June, the Devils were at the absolute bottom of the salary-cap charts, and that's even with Subban counting \$9 million against the cap for another season after this one, at which point he will be UFA. The only core player signed for an extended period is Nico Hischier (\$7.25 million through 2026-27) and Hischier had a miserable season, punctuated by injury and illness. Most of the young building blocks, including Jack Hughes, are on entry-level contracts. The reality is the Devils are already close to Seattle in terms of having their own, relatively clean financial slate. It's unlikely they would turn that in, after nabbing two No. 1 picks since 2017, plus a goaltender with a decent upside (Mackenzie Blackwood). No, they'll play this hand out.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## New York Islanders

The Islanders have two salary-cap anchors, Andrew Ladd and Johnny Boychuk (currently on long-term injured reserve) that they would gladly discard if they could. But otherwise, they're managing the payroll effectively and have some youngsters with an upside that would be difficult to part with: Goalie Ilya Sorokin, defenceman Noah Dobson and forward Oliver Wahlstrom. GM Lou Lamoriello traditionally likes an experienced lineup, so while the opportunity to go all young and fresh might appeal to many of his peers, it probably wouldn't suit his style or personality.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## New York Rangers

The Rangers are in a good place — in part because all the promising young talent they have in the system, from Adam Fox (still on his entry-level deal for one more year!) to Alexis Lafrenière and Kaapo Kakko — can offset the money allocated to Jacob Trouba (\$8 million per season through 2025-26) and to Tony DeAngelo, who is at \$3.725 million and figures to be a buyout candidate this offseason. And while Artemi Panarin has been an exceptional fit as a UFA, which happens so rarely that it's worth pointing out here, he does eat up \$11.642 million per season in salary-cap space. That's probably fair-market value for Panarin, but a bargain it is not. But when you factor in the youthful depth in goal, the upside looks quite promising.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Ottawa Senators

It wasn't so long ago that the Senators were an NHL laughingstock, with players fleeing the market in droves. But Ottawa maximized its return on a fading Erik Karlsson and its young core was fun to watch in the second half of a season,

where they proved to be a tough out most nights. Thomas Chabot was the first of Generation Next to cash in — he's signed for \$8 million per season through 2027-28 and Brady Tkachuk (who along with Drake Batherson) is a restricted free agent this summer, who will similarly cost a lot of dollars to lock up. So far, the only real financial misstep has been giving Matt Murray a four-deal deal at a \$6.25 million AAV, which didn't return a lot of value this year. Maybe next season will be better.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Philadelphia Flyers

The Flyers are caught a little betwixt and between because, on the one hand, they have a quartet of players (Kevin Hayes, James van Riemsdyk, Jakub Voracek and Shayne Gostisbehere) earning way too much money for their levels of production. But on the other hand, they also have enough good young pieces (Carter Hart, Ivan Provorov, Joel Farabee) and players coming through the pipeline (Cam York, Morgan Frost) plus a wild card in Nolan Patrick that more than offsets the pricey high end of the roster. Starting from scratch means discarding too many players with upside.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Pittsburgh Penguins

The Penguins built two great dynasties by absolutely cratering at the bottom of the NHL standings and doing it at a time when generational players (Mario Lemieux, Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin) were coming down the pipeline. They may have to do it again — the question is the timing. The timing isn't right now, not after a year in which they won a regular-season divisional title and squeezed another fabulous year out of Crosby. He's still just 33 and has always played on a below-market contract (\$8.7 million per season) and has a decent supporting cast still in place. Once Malkin and Kris Letang's current deals come off the books (\$9.25 million and \$7 million, respectively, both expiring at the end of next year), there may be a need to reassess. But now? No.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## San Jose Sharks

Ding! Ding! Ladies and gentlemen, we have a winner. Even if all 29 other teams beyond Vegas ultimately decided to stay the course, there is no chance that the Sharks wouldn't completely avail themselves of our opportunity for a do-over here. Consider the evidence: On defence, Erik Karlsson, \$11.5 million AAV until 2026-27; Brent Burns \$8 million AAV until 2024-25; Marc-Edouard Vlasic, \$7 million AAV until 2025-26. In goal, Martin Jones, \$5.75 million AAV until 2023-24. Up front, Logan Couture, \$8 million AAV until 2026-27; Evander Kane, \$7 million AAV until 2024-25; Timo Meier, \$6 million AAV until 2023-24. At every price and experience point around the NHL, there is better value than what San Jose is getting from its core. Also: It's not as if the Sharks have any franchise-defining, history-altering prospects in the pipeline. Some of these calls are difficult and nuanced. This one is not.

The verdict: Fold 'em.



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## St. Louis Blues

Only two years removed from a Stanley Cup championship, the Blues have made some unusual spending decisions, signing both Justin Faulk and Torey Krug to contracts with identical AAVs (\$6.5 million) for terms that may not age well (both are on the books until 2026-27 seasons). Jordan Binnington's extension kicks in this year at \$6 million and it's uncertain if Vladimir Tarasenko has made a full recovery from the shoulder surgery that limited to 24 games this past season or if it will hinder his performance or trade value, which isn't great when you're on the books for \$7.5 million. The best value for dollars spent in St. Louis probably lies with three players: a \$7.5 million Ryan O'Reilly, a \$4 million David Perron and a \$5.5 million Colton Parayko. St. Louis' straight-set playoff exit to Colorado might muddy the waters a little, but the Blues have enough pedigree and experience to compete for the foreseeable future, which sways us to the side of ...

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Tampa Bay Lightning

Ever since trading J.T. Miller to the Vancouver Canucks at the 2019 draft, the Lightning have deftly managed a tricky proposition — keeping a championship nucleus intact that features a lot of players earning a lot of money. How much longer can GM Julien BriseBois keep up the Houdini act? Well, one way or another, he's done it for two years running and so it's possible he'll pull another rabbit out of the hat this coming offseason. Brayden Point is paying big dividends at an AAV of \$6.75 million, though his pay cheque next year comes in at a cool \$9 million in the final year of a bridge contract. The best values here are Victor Hedman (\$7.875 million until 2024-25) and Mikhail Sergachev (\$4.8 million until 2022-23). Nikita Kucherov and Andrei Vasilevskiy are priced about right for players of their respective statures and accomplishments (\$9.5 million each) and if we were ever to remain healthy, few would begrudge Steven Stamkos his \$8.5 million. There may come a time when it all explodes in a salary-cap mess in Tampa, but that hasn't happened yet. There's just flat out no way you could move on from this group at this time, not with a chance to go for a threepart next season.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Toronto Maple Leafs

Toronto's salary-cap commitments and machinations rival those of Tampa Bay's as a leaguwide example of what to do and what not to do. On the one hand, Toronto tied up about \$40 million in four players: Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner, John Tavares and William Nylander. One could argue that three of the four are delivering value for what they're earning. The strategy of flowing in cost-effective youngsters and aging role players — some of whom were lured by the simple pleasure of playing for an iconic franchise — has kept them competitive for the last number of regular seasons. You can quibble with how GM Kyle Dubas got here, but there's no way you'd turn your back on a team with this sort of young core, even after this year's playoff stumble.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Vancouver Canucks

The Canucks' future is tied to three young pieces — Elias Pettersson at forward, Quinn Hughes on defence and Thatcher Demko in goal — and they'll all eventually break the bank on some level if their development arcs continue. Demko is signed already (five years at \$5 million a year seems reasonable). The goal, in the meantime, is to dig the team out of its salary-cap hole that prevented them from retaining, among others, Tyler Toffoli and Chris Tanev last year. The good news? Three of their better forwards (Brock Boeser, Bo Horvat and J.T. Miller) are all signed for contracts that also begin with a five and the better news is that, in one year's time, both the final year of Loui Eriksson's contract and Roberto Luongo's cap-recapture penalty come off the books. There's really no other conclusion here, other than ...

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Washington Capitals

Washington's Stanley Cup window may be closing fast, but the Caps stubbornly, year after year, make the playoffs and play an entertaining brand of hockey, yet tease you into thinking that they're a contender. Nicklas Backstrom's ticket — \$9.2 million per season — is pricey. And \$7.8 million is too much for what Evgeni Kuznetsov currently brings to the mix. Alex Ovechkin will probably get a small raise this summer after his groundbreaking 13-year, \$124 million contract expired. There really aren't a lot of prospects to get excited about in the Capitals' pipeline, but this is still a fun team to watch that looks as if there's still some tread left on the tire. When the time finally comes to bottom out, that's the year they discard the aging remnants of a squad that's pleased a lot of fans for a decade or more. In the meantime, we're keeping them around for a while longer.

The verdict: Hold 'em.

## Winnipeg Jets

The Jets have managed a neat trick; they've been getting a lot of talent signed at reasonable numbers for the long term while operating in one of the NHL's smallest markets. The latest value proposition? Adam Lowry turned down a chance to go to market this summer for a five-year, \$16.5 million extension — pretty good value for what he brings to the Jets' mix. Nik Ehlers (\$6 million AAV until 2024-25), Kyle Connor (\$7.124 million to 2025-26), 2020 Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck (\$6.16 million until 2023-24) and especially Mark Scheifele (a huge bargain at \$6.125 million until the end of 2023-24) leave the Jets with a stable core of young vets either in — or just entering — their respective primes. Blake Wheeler, at \$8.25 million, is a little costly and they have another year to assess Pierre-Luc Dubois (\$5 million next year, until he becomes a restricted free agent) to work out a long-term arrangement or perhaps explore a deal. But still, this is a good team, with a bright future.

The verdict: Hold 'em.



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## Drury Prepared for Next Step

Yorke: 'All he does is exceed expectations'

By Michael Smith

In the last four seasons, Jack Drury has played for three different teams in three different leagues, and at each level, he's evolved and excelled.

Drury captained the Waterloo Black Hawks to the top of the USHL's Western Conference and was named a second team All-Star in 2017-18 before being drafted by the Carolina Hurricanes in the second round (42nd overall) of the 2018 NHL Draft. He then played two seasons at Harvard and recorded 63 points (29g, 34a) in 60 games, earning Second Team All-ECAC, Second Team All-Ivy League and ECAC All-Rookie Team honors in his collegiate career.

With the COVID-19 pandemic wiping out Drury's potential junior season at Harvard, he explored overseas options and landed in the Swedish Hockey League (SHL) with the Växjö Lakers. In his first professional season, Drury posted 30 points (10g, 20a) in 41 games and was named one of three finalists for the SHL's Rookie of the Year Award. He then helped the Lakers capture the league championship with 11 points (5g, 6a) in 14 playoff games.

It's a pretty impressive string of hockey for Drury, who now figures to play for his fourth different team in a fourth different league in 2021-22, whether that's the Hurricanes or Chicago Wolves.

"It doesn't seem like the league or competition impacts Jack," Canes Assistant General Manager Darren Yorke said. "He just seems to be able to rise to the occasion. It's incredibly exciting."

Each step has challenged Drury to mold and refine his game, especially as the level of competition has matured.

"The jump from college hockey to the SHL is a big jump. Now you add going from the regular season to the playoffs in the SHL, and that's a big jump. All these little things allow players to graduate to the next level," Yorke said. "When he gets to Raleigh for training camp, he's going to be further ahead than had he just stayed at Harvard because the level of competition is bigger, faster and stronger."

And, so too now is Drury.

"When I got drafted, I was kind of a scrawny 18-year-old. Now I'm 21 and a lot bigger, faster and stronger," he said in

a Zoom availability earlier this week. "I think mentally you just learn how to be pro a little bit more and learn how to be a little bit more consistent. Overall skill development, learning how to read plays and things like that that come with time, and I feel like these last couple of years have really helped me out with that."

Drury, of course, has strong hockey bloodlines. Jack is the son of Ted Drury, who played over 400 games in the NHL, and the nephew of Chris Drury, a Calder Trophy winner and a Stanley Cup champion.

Jack has set out to carve his own career path in hockey, and he's done so with a support group - including his mother, Liz, who was a three-time All-American lacrosse player at Harvard - that can relate.

"They can provide me with a lot of input, particularly in tough times," Drury said. "They know the mental approaches needed to get through the dips in your career and how you can use those to really better yourself."

Drury is a self-described "offensive, two-way player" who models his game after a player like Montreal's Nick Suzuki, a Stanley Cup finalist and brother of Canes prospect, Ryan.

"I try to play a bit like him. Strong at both ends of the ice, but offensive scoring ability and playmaking ability, as well," Drury said.

"His game is so transferrable, and it's built off his hockey sense and competitiveness," Yorke said. "You may say, well, maybe he's not the sexy, one-on-one type of player, but it doesn't seem to matter what league or level - he continues to produce, and it's because of how smart and competitive he is, and we do feel like the skill is really good."

After agreeing to terms on his three-year, entry-level contract, Drury is now prepared to take the next step in his professional career, and if his growth over the last three years is any indication, he'll adapt and succeed just as he has before.

"I don't think putting a ceiling on Jack is fair. He's probably had people put expectations and ceilings on him before, and all he does is go right through them," Yorke said. "With Jack, we believe in him as a player, and we believe that his potential is going to be an impact player in the NHL. If he can do that tomorrow, great, but I don't think putting a ceiling on him is fair because all he does is exceed expectations."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 12, 2021



## Top NHL free agent defensemen: Hamilton on market

Barrie, Martinez, Larsson also possibly available when signing can begin July 28

By David Satriano

With the NHL free agent signing period about to begin, there are several teams in need of a defenseman who can play top-four minutes or provide leadership in a third-pair role.

NHL.com takes a closer look at the top unrestricted free agent defensemen expected to be available when the market opens July 28 (listed in alphabetical order):

**Tyson Barrie, Edmonton Oilers**

Barrie bounced back this season, leading NHL defensemen with 48 points (eight goals, 40 assists) in 56 games after he scored 39 points (five goals, 34 assists) in 70 games with the Toronto Maple Leafs last season. The 29-year-old has scored at least 48 points five times in the past seven seasons and at least 21 power-play points four times in that span. Barrie has scored 394 points (88 goals, 306 assists) in 610 regular-season games with the Oilers, Maple Leafs and Colorado Avalanche.

**Zdeno Chara, Washington Capitals**

The oldest player in the NHL proved he could play at a high level, scoring 10 points (two goals, eight assists) in 55 games this season. The 44-year-old was a physical presence who averaged 18:19 of ice time and led the Capitals in shorthanded ice time per game (2:41). Chara was second on Washington in blocked shots (67, two behind John Carlson) and had 88 hits, second among Capitals defensemen (Brenden Dillon, 143). He has scored 666 points (207 goals, 459 assists) in 1,608 regular-season games with the Capitals, Boston Bruins, Ottawa Senators and New York Islanders. Chara won the Stanley Cup with the Bruins in 2011.

**Cody Ceci, Pittsburgh Penguins**

The 27-year-old scored 17 points (four goals, 13 assists) and was an NHL career-high plus-18 in 53 games this season. Ceci led the Penguins in blocked shots (70) and was fifth in hits (74), averaging 18:31 of ice time per game. He has scored 143 points (37 goals, 106 assists) in 549 regular-season games with the Penguins, Maple Leafs and Senators, and likely will be a more affordable option than some other unrestricted free agent defensemen.

**Alex Goligoski, Arizona Coyotes**

Though the offense may be down -- he scored 22 points (three goals, 19 assists) in 56 games this season, his fewest since scoring 20 in 45 games as a rookie in 2008-09 --

Goligoski is a veteran leader who can play in all situations. The 35-year-old was second on the Coyotes in ice time per game at 23:00 behind Jakob Chychrun (23:23) and first in shorthanded ice time (164:31), and he had seven assists on the power play. He also was tied for ninth in the NHL in blocked shots (108) with Scott Mayfield of the Islanders. Goligoski has scored 429 points (83 goals, 346 assists) in 924 regular-season games with the Coyotes, Dallas Stars and Penguins. He won the Cup with the Penguins in 2009.

**Dougie Hamilton, Carolina Hurricanes**

Hamilton is likely the top defenseman available, having scored at least 10 goals and 39 points in each of the past seven seasons. He scored 42 points (10 goals, 32 assists) and was plus-20 in 55 games this season, and has scored the most goals among NHL defensemen (59) in the past four seasons. The 28-year-old averaged 22:43 of ice time per game, including a Carolina-high 3:03 on the power play. Hamilton has scored 341 points (106 goals, 235 assists) in 607 regular-season games with the Hurricanes, Calgary Flames and Bruins, including 104 power-play points (28 goals, 76 assists).

**Adam Larsson, Edmonton Oilers**

Larsson is a shutdown defenseman who ranked second in the NHL with 128 blocked shots (40 behind Alec Martinez, of the Vegas Golden Knights) and was fifth in hits at the position (166) this season. He averaged 19:39 of ice time per game, including 2:18 on the penalty kill. The 28-year-old scored 10 points (four goals, six assists) in 56 games and has scored 137 points (25 goals, 112 assists) in 603 regular-season games with the Oilers and New Jersey Devils.

**Alec Martinez, Vegas Golden Knights**

Martinez scored 32 points (nine goals, 23 assists) in 53 games and led the NHL with 168 blocked shots this season. The 33-year-old was plus-26 and was second on Vegas in average ice time per game (22:34) behind Alex Pietrangolo (24:26). He has scored 238 points (73 goals, 165 assists) in 660 regular-season games with the Golden Knights and Los Angeles Kings. Martinez won the Cup with the Kings in 2012 and 2014.

**Brandon Montour, Florida Panthers**

Montour scored 18 points (seven goals, 11 assists) in 50 games with the Panthers and Buffalo Sabres this season. He averaged 20:29 of ice time per game and was relied on to kill penalties, averaging 1:44 of shorthanded ice time per game. The 27-year-old has scored 109 points (31 goals, 78 assists) in 293 regular-season games with the Panthers, Sabres and



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Anaheim Ducks, and would be a good addition for a team seeking help on the second or third pair.

Mike Reilly, Boston Bruins

Reilly, who turns 28 on Tuesday, is coming off his best offensive season in the NHL with 27 assists in 55 games with the Bruins and Senators. Reilly is reliable and can handle a steady workload; he averaged 19:18 in ice time per game this season and has increased that total in each of the past five seasons. He has scored 80 points (eight goals, 72 assists) in 259 regular-season games with the Bruins, Senators, Montreal Canadiens and Minnesota Wild.

David Savard, Tampa Bay Lightning

Savard was one of the most sought-after defensemen before he was acquired by the Lightning in a three-team trade April 10. The 30-year-old scored six points (one goal, five assists) averaging 19:51 of ice time in 54 games with the Lightning and Columbus Blue Jackets this season, when he was one of seven players with at least 100 hits (132) and 100 blocked shots (109). He has scored 166 points (41 goals, 125 assists) in 611 regular-season games with Tampa Bay and Columbus, and won the Cup with the Lightning this season.

## The Hockey News

### The Trade Tier List: Where Will Vladimir Tarasenko Go?

With reports that Vladimir Tarasenko wants out of St. Louis, is your team a realistic choice for the Russian scoring winger?

By Jason Chen

There are no breaks in the NHL.

In the midst of the Stanley Cup Finals, it was reported that Vladimir Tarasenko has requested a trade from the St. Louis Blues. Tarasenko, 29, is just one of 30 players who have managed to score 40 goals in a season over the past 10 seasons.

Hampered by three shoulder surgeries, the Russian winger has appeared in just 34 games over the past two seasons despite missing just 15 games in the prior five seasons. Even with injury concerns, Tarasenko still possesses elite scoring talent and multiple teams will certainly be knocking on their door.

The Blues have some flexibility with a little over \$17 million in cap space with a roster of 17, according to CapFriendly. This is important if the Blues wish to retain some salary to facilitate a trade, and they still have their first-round pick in this year's draft as a bargaining chip should Tarasenko's contract, which carries two more years at a \$7.5-million cap hit with a no-trade clause, require a sweetener.

The Blues' Cup window is still open, which rules out trades that involve picks and prospects, but it also leaves them with fewer options. Here's a rundown of the 31 teams Tarasenko might end up.

Possible

Washington Capitals – Could a swap for Evgeny Kuznetsov make sense? There's some history between the two teams with T.J. Oshie and Kevin Shattenkirk, though the Caps have some decisions to make with the expansion draft first.

Calgary Flames – This one's an Internet favourite, but despite the Flames' tough season, the Blues will have to offer substantially more than just Tarasenko if they want to get Matthew Tkachuk. This is where the Blues' first-round pick (16th overall) may come into play.

Seattle Kraken – They literally have a clean slate and anything is possible. The Kraken can draft players the Blues want and then flip them afterwards. Tarasenko gives the Kraken an elite player right off the bat, something the Knights didn't have.

New York Rangers – Owner James Dolan wants the team to win now and acquiring Tarasenko would be a big splashy move for new GM Chris Drury and form quite the duo with Artemi Panarin. The trouble may be figuring out who to send the other way.

Maybe

Anaheim Ducks – They're a dark horse because GM Bob Murray isn't afraid to swing big, having been linked to Jack Eichel previously, and they have plenty of cap space. Two problems: Any assets they offer the Blues will likely be futures and Tarasenko can nix the deal if he thinks the Ducks won't be competitive.

Philadelphia Flyers – They're never afraid to make big moves and they have multiple pieces they can move, including Nolan Patrick and James van Riemsdyk, but whatever cap space they have will likely be used to address their defense.

Carolina Hurricanes – Under owner Tom Dundon they're very cost-conscious and Tarasenko's injury history carries some risk, even if the Canes have plenty of cap room. They could use more depth up front and it'll take some pressure off Sebastian Aho.

Winnipeg Jets – They'll have to make some key decisions to make before the expansion draft, their blue line depth needs to be addressed and they've generally been conservative when it comes to acquiring players, but adding another top-six winger could certainly boost their offense.

Los Angeles Kings – Drew Doughty wants them to be competitive now, their future is bright and if the Kings can entice the Kraken to take Jonathan Quick, that will open up some cap space. However, acquiring Viktor Arvidsson might have prohibited them from adding another top-six winger.



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Edmonton Oilers – The focus should be on the blue line, though imagine a power play with Tarasenko alongside Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl... Buying out James Neal frees up close to \$4 million in cap space over the next two seasons, which fits the remaining two seasons on Tarasenko's deal.

Florida Panthers – They'll need to move salary to make it work, but bringing in Tarasenko might show Aleksander Barkov, who is entering the final year of his contract, that the Panthers are serious about winning. Buying out Keith Yandle opens up \$4 million in cap space for the 2021-22 season.

Unlikely

Colorado Avalanche – Their focus will be on re-signing Cale Makar and Gabriel Landeskog, which leaves them with very little wiggle room unless they can strike a deal with the Kraken or another team to shed salary.

Chicago Blackhawks – It's an interesting scenario, but the Blues would probably rather deal Tarasenko to a team outside the Central, and if Jonathan Toews returns, the Blackhawks don't have the cap space.

Boston Bruins – It's only possible if Taylor Hall doesn't re-sign, though it's strongly believed he will.

Montreal Canadiens – Depth on the wings is actually one of the Habs' strengths, and the addition of Tarasenko seems redundant, especially if Jonathan Drouin returns.

Vegas Golden Knights – They're one of the biggest big-name hunters out there, and moving Marc-Andre Fleury will free up \$7 million in cap space, though their big problem is depth down the middle and not on the wings.

New York Islanders – There isn't enough cap space at the moment and the Kraken won't do anyone any favors. Anthony Beauvillier, Adam Pelech and Ilya Sorokin deserve raises and Lou Lamoriello usually sticks to players he's familiar with.

Pittsburgh Penguins – They'll have to move money out, but Jason Zucker has a modified no-trade clause and their first priority will be to get some veteran help in net.

Nashville Predators – The Preds can make it work even without shedding Matt Duchene or Ryan Johansen's contracts, and trading Arvidsson is a sign that GM David Poile is looking at making significant changes. However, the Blues would probably prefer to send Tarasenko to a non-Central team.

Minnesota Wild – Imagine a line with Tarasenko and Kirill Kaprizov? This is where buying out Zach Parise this summer makes sense; the Wild can save over \$5 million in cap space for the 2021-22 season, though the cap hit climbs back up to \$6.37 million in 2022-23. Like the Preds, being in the same division as the Blues makes it an unlikely destination.

Slim to zero chance

Columbus Blue Jackets – GM Jarmo Kekalainen isn't afraid to make a big move, but the team's performance is trending in the wrong direction.

Vancouver Canucks – They have a ton of cap issues and face an uncertain future despite having some game-changing talent and eliminating the Blues from the playoffs two seasons ago.

Arizona Coyotes – The focus is on the future and it won't be an appealing destination for Tarasenko.

New Jersey Devils – They're a sneaky exciting team with Jack Hughes and Nico Hischier, but they're not in a position to win now.

Tampa Bay Lightning – What is cap space?

Toronto Maple Leafs – Their cap structure is already heavily skewed towards their elite forwards which gives them little flexibility, and they're already facing a big challenge re-signing Zach Hyman. Oh, and they need another goalie.

Detroit Red Wings – GM Steve Yzerman will need to make the sales pitch of a lifetime to convince Tarasenko to come. Even with key pieces in place already, the Wings are years away from competing.

Buffalo Sabres – With Jack Eichel, Sam Reinhart and Rasmus Ristolainen likely gone, the Sabres are bottoming out. Again.

Ottawa Senators – They were surprisingly good and the future is pretty bright, but they're expected to be a bottom-10 team next season.

San Jose Sharks – Saddled with bad contracts and an aging roster, even though they've been aggressive in pursuing big-name players in the past, there's no fit.

Dallas Stars – Miro Heiskanen needs a new contract, Alexander Radulov should return and Ben Bishop may return, which doesn't leave much room to fit Tarasenko's contract, not to mention they're a divisional foe.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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

## 2021 Draft Profile: Sebastian Cossa

The netminder has emerged as one of the top goaltenders in the upcoming draft due to his size and athleticism.

By Matthew Somma

Welcome to the fourth profile in our 2021 NHL Entry Draft coverage. We've taken trips to the SHL, the USHL, and the QMJHL to profile Oskar Olausson, Matthew Coronato and Zachary L'Heureux thus far, and now it's time to take a trip out west to the WHL. Sebastian Cossa is the top ranked North American Goaltender according to NHL Central Scouting and could be available when the Hurricanes select in the first round. As always, these profiles will be split into three parts: paper stats, the scouting report, and a summary of the player and team fit.

### Paper Stats

Cossa could very well be classified as "An Absolute Unit," coming in at 6-foot-6 and 212 pounds. On paper, that's enough to get NHL GMs to salivate at the thought of drafting him. The league has been more welcoming to taller goalies, while goalies under six feet typically get passed over due to their height. With Cossa's height, there's almost a guarantee that he'll at least see a handful of NHL games.

Cossa has been a force in the WHL since he broke into the league, compiling a 38-7-4 record, a .928 save percentage and a 1.98 goals against average over the course of two seasons. Edmonton has been next to unstoppable these past two seasons, and it's largely in part due to Cossa. EliteProspects' consolidated rankings has him at 23rd overall across all scouting services that they list. Bob McKenzie has Cossa ranked the highest at 14th overall, while Dobber Prospects ranks him at 36th overall. Clearly, Cossa will be gone in the early stages of the second round if he is not taken in the later half of the first round. Let's explore what makes him such an interesting prospect on the ice.

### Scouting Report

Cossa stands out on the ice because he's such a tall goalie. He takes up so much of the net that it makes it that much harder for players to get anything past him. He has an active stick and can poke the puck away if a player gets too close to the net. I don't see the poke check taking him out of position or being the only thing he relies on, however. He makes a quick attempt to poke the puck away and immediately prepares for a shot, just in case. Cossa moves well for a big goalie and can react to the play almost instantly. It doesn't take long for Cossa to get square to the puck due to his size, so he doesn't have to lean on his quickness as much as smaller goalies like Saros or Nedeljkovic have to.

He makes one push and he's already square to the shooter without having to scramble. Cossa takes up so much of the net and I'm noticing that junior players don't seem to have an answer for that. They're clearly not able to beat Cossa unless he makes a mistake at this level, and that's difficult for him to do. Cossa is such a steady presence in net and doesn't get rattled or out of position often. If you want to beat Cossa, your shot has to be perfect, and a lot of shooters at the WHL level aren't able to do that often. Cossa is able to locate the puck through traffic, largely in part due to his size, but it allows for him to make saves on screened shots.

The only negative thing that I was able to find in Cossa's game is his rebound control. A lot of pucks hit his pads because he's such a big goalie, and so a lot of pucks bounce off of him and back into the slot. He's smart enough to try and cover the puck on a lot of occasions, but sometimes a rebound can bounce off of him and onto a forward's stick. WHL players might not be able to take advantage of that, but NHL players certainly will. He'll have to tighten up on those rebounds in order to have sustained success at the NHL level.

### Summary

There were two questions that kept popping up when I watched Cossa play. The first is: is he good, or is he just tall? The second is: How much of his success is due, in part, to WHL skaters not being a challenge for him? I now have an answer to both questions. I believe that Cossa is a very good goalie that happens to have outgrown the WHL, both in the literal and physical sense. He is clearly a step or two above the competition and has little else to prove in the WHL. The team that drafts him might have to wait a little longer for Cossa to adjust to the pro game, since he'll have to stay in the WHL for at least two years before making an impact at the professional level. The WHL isn't a tough league for Cossa to play in anymore, and if he's the top goalie in the league, there isn't a ton of room for him to grow.

I like Cossa as a player and I think that whichever team picks him will have a starting goalie on its hands. I don't know if he's a franchise-defining goalie at this point in time, but he's at least going to be a top-15 goalie in the league someday.

That being said, I think the Hurricanes pass on Cossa and take a skater. The Canes already have goalies like Eetu Makiniemi, Jack LaFontaine and Pyotr Kochetkov in the system, so adding Cossa will only crowd the pipeline further. Both LaFontaine and Kochetkov have high upside, and Makiniemi is a dark horse to become an NHL starting goalie as well.

Alex Nedeljkovic has emerged as the Hurricanes' starter and the fact that he is 25 years old means that the Hurricanes



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could have a long-term starter on their hands. It doesn't make drafting Cossa a futile effort, but I believe the Hurricanes will benefit from drafting a forward or a defenseman in the first round rather than a goalie. Given that there are only two roster spots available for goalies in a

normal year, I think that the Hurricanes bet on the goalies that they have and try and take one in the later rounds.

The final draft profile will be out next week. We'll take a look at Sasha Pastujov of the USNTDP and explore what makes him a first round prospect.

## TODAY'S LINKS

<https://theathletic.com/2615452/2021/07/12/hold-em-or-fold-em-which-nhl-teams-would-prefer-an-expansion-style-reboot-over-what-they-currently-have/>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/jack-drury-prepared-for-next-step/c-325619296>

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<https://www.canescountry.com/2021/7/9/22568243/nhl-draft-carolina-hurricanes-sebastian-cossa>

# SportScan

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

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Sportsnet.ca / Jets off-season to-do list: Upgrading defence an urgent priority

Ken Wiebe July 11, 2021, 11:02 AM

WINNIPEG - The Stanley Cup has been handed out and the road to this roster renovation is full speed ahead for the Winnipeg Jets.

Since being bounced from the playoffs by the Montreal Canadiens in a second-round sweep, the Jets management team has been busy preparing for what figures to be a high-paced off-season.

There are a number of potential potholes to navigate for Kevin Cheveldayoff and company, beginning with the submission of the protected list for the Seattle Kraken expansion draft.

That list (expected to include seven forwards, three defencemen and one goalie) is due on July 17, with the selection of players set for July 21 in Seattle.

The first round of the 2021 NHL Draft, which will be held virtually for a second consecutive year before heading to Montreal in 2022, is slated for just two days later, with rounds two through seven scheduled for July 24.

The Jets hold the 17th overall selection, then have choices coming in the second, third and fifth rounds -- so it wouldn't be a surprise to see a trade or two made to try and recoup some of the picks that were moved in prior deals.

By the time free agency opens on July 28, this stretch figures to hit a crescendo, especially when you consider some big names appear to be available via trade -- which could lead to a blockbuster or several around the league.

How busy do the Jets figure to be?

This won't be a massive overhaul, but several upgrades are required to augment a core group that advanced to the Western Conference Final in 2018 but has won only one round since then.

The list of priorities for the Jets is fairly easy to identify, but how much movement is on the horizon is still a bit tough to nail down.

With that in mind, here's a quick look at what is on the horizon for the Jets:

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

Finalize the protected list

Chances are pretty good the debate within the organization has already been settled, but the anticipation among the fan base will continue to build until those lists are made public.

While the creative suggestions have been flowing from the many armchair general managers, most of the choices are pretty straightforward.

Connor Hellebuyck, Blake Wheeler, Mark Scheifele, Nikolaj Ehlers, Kyle Connor, Pierre-Luc Dubois, Adam Lowry, Andrew Copp, Josh Morrissey and Neal Pionk can be written in pen, while the final spot figures to go to Dylan DeMelo or Logan Stanley.

DeMelo chose to forego unrestricted free agency last off-season to sign a four-year deal worth \$12 million with the Jets, citing stability as one of the reasons he made the choice.



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Although he doesn't put up eye-popping statistics, DeMelo provides stability to his defence partner.

The Jets have also made a substantial investment in the development of Stanley, the 2016 first-rounder who was chosen 18th overall.

Stanley had a breakthrough season in his third year as a pro, taking advantage of a lengthy off-season to become an NHL regular.

He's a high-volume shooter known for his size (six-foot-seven, 231 pounds) and while he brings a physical element, Stanley also showcased his hands on a number of occasions.

After seeing Stanley start to show glimpses of his potential, it's unlikely the Jets want to see the more finished product move to a new team, especially without getting an asset in return.

The Jets could consider making a side deal similar to the one made with the Vegas Golden Knights in 2017, but that depends on what the asking price is from Kraken GM Ron Francis.

Is it possible the Kraken might have some interest in someone like defenceman Sami Niku, forward Jansen Harkins or even goalie prospect Mikhail Berdin?

It's not out of the equation, but right-winger Mason Appleton is a prime candidate to be chosen, barring an unforeseen turn of events -- or one of those aforementioned side deals.

Remaining Time -2:01

Jets' Maurice: 'The game's no fun without fans, it's no fun at all'

Figure out where things stand with Copp

The versatile Jets forward is a restricted free agent and he's expressed his desire to become the latest core piece to commit to the organization. Copp made it clear following his exit interview that he's open to all options when it comes to his next contract.

What that potential deal looks like remains to be seen.

The AAV figures to be north of \$4 million, depending on how many years Copp signs for and how many years off unrestricted free agency the Jets are buying.

Copp, 27, is coming off a career season that saw him produce 15 goals and 39 points in 55 games, while averaging 18:15 of ice time per game (up nearly five minutes from his career average).

He plays a regular shift as a middle-six forward who can play either centre or wing, is part of the top penalty-killing unit with frequent linemate Adam Lowry and was also part of the highly effective second power play unit.

Just one year away from pending unrestricted free agency, Copp is arbitration-eligible but that's a road the Jets won't care to go down again.

The priority for both sides is to get a deal done, but if common ground can't be found, the Jets could investigate the prospect of moving Copp in a deal to...

Upgrade the defence

This isn't a new priority, but the urgency has reached a new level.

Jets head coach Paul Maurice spoke openly about the need to improve on the back end and this must be done, whether that's through trade, free agency or a combination of both.

Based on recent history, it would be an interesting turn of events for the Jets to win a bidding war for a top-tier free agent like Dougie Hamilton, but guys like Jake McCabe and Jamie Oleksiak (among others) should be on the radar.

There figures to be some internal improvement with the arrival of top prospects Ville Heinola and Dylan Samberg and it's important not to read

too much into the comments made by Maurice regarding the balance between playing young players and winning.

Maurice wasn't necessarily making a bold proclamation about there not being enough room in the lineup to have Heinola and Samberg join Logan Stanley in the regular rotation.

Maurice has never been one to make a public declaration or hand a spot to a young player before or even during training camp.

It doesn't mean they can't all win a job either.

Remaining Time -4:01

2021 NHL season ending montage: The Tampa Bay Lightning repeat as champions

Decide if it's short-term or longer-term for Pionk

Speaking of restricted free agents, defenceman Neal Pionk has put together two outstanding seasons since coming over from the New York Rangers in the trade for Jacob Trouba.

Pionk is also eligible for arbitration and figures to be in line for a significant raise after earning \$3 million on his two-year bridge deal.

After recording nine goals and 77 points over 125 games with the Jets, Pionk is a candidate for a long-term pact, but given where the organization is in their window of contention, it's possible both sides might prefer to look at a two-year deal -- even if it means going to arbitration.

Hire a head coach for the Manitoba Moose

The departure of Pascal Vincent to the Columbus Blue Jackets (where he joined the staff of Brad Larsen as an associate coach) was a blow for the organization.

Vincent had spent the past decade in the Jets organization, the first five as an assistant under Claude Noel and Maurice and then the past five as the Moose bench boss.

Vincent has been praised on countless occasions by both Maurice and Cheveldayoff for his ability to help prepare players to be promoted to the NHL and has built a great reputation as both a teacher and communicator.

During the off-season, Vincent interviewed for the head coaching vacancies in Columbus and Arizona and he's viewed by many as a candidate to run his own NHL bench sooner than later.

31 Thoughts: The Podcast

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

The Moose job is an attractive one and figures to draw a number of high-end candidates.

Kevin Dineen became a free agent when the San Diego Gulls hired Joel Bouchard on Friday and he has ample experience behind the bench in both the NHL and AHL following his extensive playing career.

Mark Morrison is someone who could be in the mix as well, as he spent six seasons as an assistant coach with the St. John's IceCaps (four seasons) and Moose (two seasons) before spending the past four seasons with the Anaheim Ducks.

Morrison also spent five seasons as the head coach of the Victoria Salmon Kings of the ECHL when they were an affiliate of the Moose, so the folks at True North Sports and Entertainment would be very familiar with his work.

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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USA TODAY / Tampa dive team prepared if the Lightning attempt to replicate Tom Brady's trophy toss

Alyssa Hertel

Five days after winning the franchise's second straight Stanley Cup, the Tampa Bay Lightning are following in the footsteps of their NFL counterpart – the Tampa Bay Buccaneers – and celebrating with a boat parade on Monday.

With some interesting antics and tomfoolery on the part of none other than Tom Brady during the Bucs' Super Bowl parade and a Bud Light-driven press conference with shirtless Tampa forward Nikita Kucherov, no one really knows what to expect from the Lightning's celebration.

Some are wondering: Will the Lightning celebrate Tampa's sports success (two Stanley Cups, one Super Bowl) in the last 10 months by paying homage to Brady's trophy toss?

Following the Lightning's Game 5 win over the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday, reporters asked Tampa Mayor Jane Castor if she was concerned about a trophy-toss repeat during the Lightning's parade.

"It's their day," Mayor Castor said. "We are always prepared. We have divers if Stanley gets wet. We'll get him back in short order."

In February, Brady made headlines with video of him tossing the Lombardi Trophy a little over ten feet from his boat to Cameron Brate in another boat. The seven-time Super Bowl champ said the details of the toss are foggy, but he's joked about the situation in the months since.

Logistically, throwing the Stanley Cup a few yards might not go as smoothly as tossing the Vince Lombardi Trophy. At 22 inches tall, the Lombardi weighs in at only seven pounds. Lord Stanley, on the other hand, is just under 3 feet tall and weighs 34.5 pounds. Add in some alcohol and rocky waters from tropical storm Elsa, and throwing the NHL championship trophy from own boat to another may not be the best means of transfer.

If a toss is attempted, there is no doubt that the Stanley Cup would sink nearly 82 feet, the maximum depth of the Tampa Bay. After the Pittsburgh Penguins won the Cup in 1991, during a team party at Mario Lemieux's house, Phil Bourque threw the Cup into the pool, where it sank to the bottom.

Regardless of what happens on the water, the Tampa Police Department's dive team will be ready. Members of that team will be on standby, according to 10 Tampa Bay, and they have been instructed to keep watch on the Stanley Cup while escorting the team and trophy along the parade route.

Still, Officer Chris Audet of the Tampa Dive Team hopes that the Lightning players don't attempt to repeat Brady's risky toss.

"My biggest concern for us would be people randomly jumping into the water trying to retrieve it themselves," Audet said to 10 Tampa Bay. "...If the Stanley Cup does decide to take a swim that day, the TPD dive team is ready to retrieve it."

The event is set to kick off at 11 a.m. at Tampa Riverwalk, less than a mile from the Lightning's home base, Amalie Arena. With the team on boats, fans are encouraged to spread out on both sides of the river along the parade route before the celebration continues on land at Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park.

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