



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## The Top 30 Unrestricted Free Agents of 2021

With prominent names being bought out and the Seattle Kraken approaching their exclusive free-agent negotiating window, it's time to update the UFA rankings.

By Matt Larkin

With the looming Seattle Kraken expansion draft and the salary cap staying flat at \$81.5 million, the 2021 NHL off-season pretty much guaranteed fireworks, and it hasn't disappointed thus far. We've already seen Viktor Arvidsson and Duncan Keith traded. We know Seth Jones could get moved any day now, not to mention Dougie Hamilton's negotiating rights. Eventually, we should see Vladimir Tarasenko and Evgeny Kuznetsov dealt. And the buyout hammer dropped this week to create new big-name UFAs in Ryan Suter, Zach Parise and Keith Yandle.

The list of my top 30 UFAs will thus be quite fluid in the days to come. For now, it remains a star-studded group at the top. But the Kraken will have exclusive negotiating rights for pending UFAs from July 18 to 20. The odds of some prominent UFAs signing with the expansion club are far greater than they were with the Vegas Golden Knights in 2017. Players view Seattle as a legitimate destination, agents have told me. With Vegas establishing itself as a prestige franchise immediately, the Kraken are expected to be a phenomenon right away. After the expansion draft concludes July 21, a cluster of players who made handshake deals with their teams to skirt must-protect status will officially re-sign. When league-wide free agency commences July 28, then, this UFA list will probably look much thinner. I'll be sure to update these rankings again between July 21 and 28.

But it's still worth reviewing who's available before teams finalize their protected lists and before the Kraken begin their exclusive shopping. Here's how the UFA group looks for now. Ages listed as of July 28, 2021, the start date for unrestricted free agency.

1. ALEX OVECHKIN, LW, 35  
2020-21 cap hit: \$9,538,462

Hard to believe he's concluding his 13-year, \$124-million pact. It's finally time. Ovechkin has already expressed his desire to finish his NHL career as a Capital and then play his final pro-hockey season with his hometown club: Dynamo Moscow of the KHL. We know he'll be back with the Caps next season. It's just a matter of whether he signs a short- or long-term deal. As Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman reported a couple weeks back, most people around the league believe the Ovechkin extension is already "in the drawer."

2. DOUGIE HAMILTON, D, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$5,750,000

In the past four seasons, no defenseman has scored more goals than Hamilton – despite him missing significant time with a broken leg last season. The old guard may not like his body language or off-ice interests – LOL, says the new guard – but he's a top-tier puck mover and play driver who has great size and a right-handed shot. He has begun the negotiation process with multiple teams and would have a shot to command an AAV north of \$8 million on the open market. It'll come down to whether he chases the money or prefers a comfortable situation playing on a Stanley Cup contender in Carolina.

3. GABRIEL LANDESKOG, LW, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$5,571,429

Landeskog is the anti-Hamilton in that old-school hockey thinkers love Landeskog. Some league executives still talk about how impressed they were with his scouting interviews leading up to the 2011 draft. He's a revered, heart-and-soul captain who blends top-line scoring touch with bruising physical play. He recently expressed his "disappointment" that he's so close to making it to market. That certainly doesn't sound like someone who has a handshake deal in place for after the expansion draft. The Avs would be ill advised to let their captain make it to free agency and incite a bidding war.

4. TAYLOR HALL, LW, 29  
2020-21 cap hit: \$8,000,000

Hall's one-and-done Sabres tenure played out as a true worst-case scenario, but the home stretch and playoffs in a Bruins uniform were vital to restoring his value as he found a nice groove playing on the second line with David Krejci and Craig Smith. Given Hall's upside and that he remains on the right side of 30, he'll have suitors if he goes to market. He's already been "linked to the Toronto Maple Leafs," if you believe that's anything more than just posturing from agent Darren Ferris, but Hall is more likely to take a discount, stay in Boston and pursue a championship.

5. PHILIPP GRUBAUER, G, 29  
2020-21 cap hit: \$3,333,333

Talent was never in question for Grubauer. He delivered a tremendous "put it all together" season for the Avalanche and has the fifth-highest save percentage in NHL history among goalies with at least 100 games played. The key was



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to prove he could stay healthy and, while he did land on the COVID-19 list, he avoided injury in 2020-21. With Landeskog a UFA and RFA blueliner Cale Makar needing an extension, the question is whether Grubauer priced himself out of Colorado with a season in which he finished third in the Vezina Trophy vote.

6. ZACH HYMAN, LW, 29  
2020-21 cap hit: \$2,250,000

Hyman produced at a career-best rate just in time for his next contract. He is an even-strength scoring dynamo who contributes in many different situations. His numbers get puffed up playing with great scorers, sure, but he fills an important role on those lines with his puck-retrieval skills. Playing on such a high-profile team, he's maxed out his value to the point he might command \$6 million or more per season. The gap between his asking price and what the Leafs are willing to pay is large enough that Toronto has granted Hyman's agent Todd Reynolds permission to approach other teams about acquiring Hyman's negotiating rights before July 28.

7. PHILLIP DANAULT, C, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$3,083,333

Danault is one of the top two-way forwards in the business, capable of shutting down elite forwards while still driving the play on a scoring line. He reportedly turned a six-year, \$30-million offer from the Habs before the 2020-21 season but, with his offense disappearing, he may want to ask if that deal is still on the table. He showed during Montreal's run to the Stanley Cup final that he's still a crucial part of the team's puzzle, erasing opponents' top forwards. He expressed after the season that he understands how he fits into the lineup now.

8. TYSON BARRIE, D, 30  
2020-21 cap hit: \$3,750,000

Seventh in points among NHL defensemen since his breakout 2013-14 campaign. Barrie, a power-play specialist, was set up nicely to post massive contract-year numbers in Edmonton, and that's exactly what's happened. But do the Oilers need to bring him back? They were already a powerhouse power-play team before he signed, and he's a bit of a drag on their defensive play. They've also just committed an additional \$5.5 million in cap space to Keith.

9. BLAKE COLEMAN, LW, 29  
2020-21 cap hit: \$1,800,000

Coleman can play center or the wing, he kills penalties, he forechecks aggressively and, don't forget, on a team that needs him to play bigger minutes, he can score 20 goals. The only problem is that, after playing an important role on consecutive Stanley Cup champions in Tampa, his value has exploded to the point it may require an overpay to land him.

10. DAVID KREJCI, C, 35  
2020-21 cap hit: \$7,250,000

Brings so much experience in the regular season and playoffs as the Bruins' longtime No. 2 center, and he showed how impactful he can still be once they gave him proper

second-line wingers to play with this past season. The Bruins are waiting to see if Krejci decides to return to the Czech Republic for 2021-22. If he plays in the NHL next season, it's likely for Boston.

11. JADEN SCHWARTZ, LW, 29  
2020-21 cap hit: \$5,350,000

Schwartz is ready to cash in as a top-six forward who doesn't excel in any one area but does a lot of things well and is tenacious for his size. It's just never a given that Schwartz plays a full schedule, however. He's missed double-digit games in four of his past six seasons.

12. KYLE PALMIERI, RW, 30  
2020-21 cap hit: \$4,650,000

Averaged 30 goals per 82 games in his first five seasons as a Devil. That appears to be Palmieri's ceiling, but it's a highly useful ceiling. He endured a bad year, but it was likely the product of (a) playing with less help in New Jersey before his trade to the New York Islanders and (b) an unlucky shooting percentage of 6.5. Perhaps that'll make him a bargain signing this off-season. His goal-scoring place in the 2021 playoffs pro-rated to his usual 30 goals per 82 games, FYI.

13. RYAN SUTER, D, 36  
2020-21 cap hit: \$7,538,462

Upon learning of his shocking buyout, Suter hung up on Minnesota Wild GM Bill Guerin, but Suter should be back on the phone soon fielding offers from contenders. He's not the all-around dominator he was in his prime, especially on the defensive side of the puck, but he could still provide useful middle-pair help on a contender and might only cost half his Minnesota AAV.

14. BRANDON SAAD, LW, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$6,000,000

Saad is attractive for teams wanting him to fill the same role he did in Colorado this past season: a win-now piece, responsible at both ends of the ice, fast, able to play in the middle six and contribute decent goal totals. He got 16 this season in 43 games while playing just 14 minutes or so per night, but that's a trap: his shooting percentage was unsustainable at a league-leading 22.1, almost double his career mark of 11.9.

15. ALEC MARTINEZ, D, 34  
2020-21 cap hit: \$4,000,000

Wow. What a year. Martinez, who has profiled as more of a two-way defenseman for most of his career, produced by far the best offensive numbers of his career just in time for a new contract. A personal-best season at 33 makes him a risky signing at 34 if any suitor is banking on repeat numbers.

16. TUUKKA RASK, G, 34  
2020-21 cap hit: \$7,000,000

The rise of prospect Jeremy Swayman pushes one of Rask and Jaroslav Halak out. Odds are it's Halak. Rask only wants



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to play in Boston and won't return to game action until winter 2022 after undergoing hip surgery. He'll thus never come cheaper. Disclaimer: he'd be ranked at least 10 spots higher on this list if he was healthy.

17. ADAM LARSSON, D, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$4,166,666

Gradually, Larsson has realized his promise as a defensive defenseman, and he delivered the best season of his career in 2020-21, playing an ornery game, sacrificing his body. The Oilers might be best off keeping him. He's become an important player for them. He's a strong bet to re-sign, but it'll likely happen after the expansion draft at this point since the Oilers no longer have an available protection spot to use on him after acquiring Keith.

18. NICK FOLIGNO, LW, 33  
2020-21 cap hit: \$5,500,000

He was entrenched in the Columbus community thanks to his charity work and role as Blue Jackets captain. Does that mean he'll return there after his stint as a trade-deadline rental with the Leafs? It depends on how badly Foligno craves a Stanley Cup run, as Columbus appears to be trending toward a rebuild.

19. MIKAEL GRANLUND, LW, 29  
2020-21 cap hit: \$3,750,000

Granlund may never reach the ceiling he was projected to have when he ripped up the Finnish Liiga a decade ago, but that's OK. He's still a skilled top-six forward who makes an underrated defensive impact. His most useful trait is his versatility. He can play any forward position if needed.

20. TOMAS TATAR, LW, 30  
2020-21 cap hit: \$5,300,000

The idea of Habs GM Marc Bergevin "having to choose" between Danault and Tatar is a distant memory. Tatar endured the worst season of his career and only dressed for five playoff games. With Montreal extending coach Dominique Ducharme's contract, that's it for Tatar as a Hab. Each game he sat in the playoffs felt like it eroded a few more bucks off his value. It was terrible timing from his perspective, but it could make him a nice bargain. He was an elite play driver for multiple seasons playing with Danault and Brendan Gallagher. Tatar is hardly finished.

21. DAVID SAVARD, D, 30  
2020-21 cap hit: \$4,250,000

He's big, rugged, shoots right-handed and was generally underrated as a shutdown defenseman, having spent his career in a relatively small market before Columbus dealt him to Tampa Bay at the deadline. He got better as the playoffs progressed and proved to literally be a "guy you win with." He's far less under the radar with the championship glow on him now.

22. ALEX GOLIGOSKI, D, 35  
2020-21 cap hit: \$5,475,000

He's durable, he plays 22 minutes a night, he moves the

puck pretty well...he's just a safe veteran pickup at this stage of his career, even if it's on a short-term deal.

23. MIKE REILLY, D, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$1,500,000

Reilly was a bright spot on a rebuilding Ottawa Senators team this past season, forming a net-positive pair with rookie Artem Zub, and Reilly was an extremely useful trade-deadline acquisition for the Bruins as a left-shot puck-mover. He felt more like a fringe NHLer a few years ago but has established himself as a legitimate UFA target.

24. PAUL STASTNY, C, 35  
2020-21 cap hit: \$6,500,000

Getting long in the tooth, but he still has a skill set plenty of teams need: intelligent, good on faceoffs, can center a scoring line and, as he's shown this year, can transition successfully to the left wing as well.

25. JAMIE OLEKSIK, D, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$2,137,500

Sometimes big defensemen take longer to find themselves in the NHL, and Oleksiak, who carries first-round draft pedigree, fits the bill. He was much improved in his second stint with Dallas, using his strength effectively while also showcasing good mobility for a man his size.

26. RYAN MURRAY, D, 27  
2020-21 cap hit: \$4,700,000

Tough year for all Devils players, but Murray is still relatively young for a UFA, has a recent history as a respectable defensive defenseman and can skate. On a better team, he could be a handy middle-pair option.

27. KEITH YANDLE, D, 34  
2020-21 cap hit: \$6,350,000

Given his strained relationship with the new Panthers regime, Yandle clearly wasn't part of the franchise's long-term plans, and he wasn't about to do Florida a solid and waive his no-movement clause before the expansion draft, so the buyout makes sense. He's not what he was in his prime, but if he's used for sheltered third-pair duty and power-play work, he could still be a relative bargain. Think 2019-20 Kevin Shattenkirk.

28. BARCLAY GOODROW, RW, 28  
2020-21 cap hit: \$925,000

He brings the penalty-killing acumen, physicality and intangibles of linemate Coleman without the offensive upside. Every championship team needs a Goodrow type to go to war with, but teams have to understand they're buying high right now.

29. CHRIS DRIEDGER, G, 27  
2020-21 cap hit: \$850,000

Driedger's small sample size makes him paradoxical. There's risk for a player with 34 career starts. But the lack of data means a team could get a massive bargain on a netminder with a .929 career save percentage. He could be a



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flash in the pan, but he could be a budding star. He's worth the dice roll as part of a platoon at the very least. Could he be Kraken material?

30. MIKE HOFFMAN, LW, 31  
2020-21 cap hit: \$4,000,000

Hoffman's defensive shortcomings in 5-on-5 play are beginning to overshadow his goal-scoring skills, and he was healthy-scratched at times in St. Louis, but he still scored at a 27-goal pace if pro-rated to 82 games. He can bulge the twine as a power-play specialist, but he's a risky team-chemistry fit.

Other prominent 2021 UFAs to watch: Mattias Janmark, Zach Parise, Alexander Wennberg, Petr Mrazek, Jake McCabe, Nick Bonino, Jonathan Bernier, Ryan Getzlaf, Brandon Montour, Derek Forbort, Joel Armia, Mike Smith, Damir Zhafyarov, Dmitrij Jaskin, Jani Hakanpaa, Alexander Edler, Frederik Andersen, Jaroslav Halak, Erik

Haula, Zdeno Chara, Nikita Gusev, Casey Cizikas, Tyler Bozak, Bobby Ryan, Travis Hamonic, Joe Thornton, Erik Gustafsson, Sami Vatanen, James Reimer, Eric Staal, Devan Dubnyk, Niklas Hjalmarsson, Jason Demers, Alex Galchenyuk, Ian Cole, Marcus Johansson, Jordan Martinook, Travis Zajac, Alex Chiasson, Luke Glendening, Linus Ullmark, Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, Jordan Oesterle, Antti Raanta, Mathieu Perreault, Jimmy Vesey, Ryan Dzingel, Brandon Sutter, Derek Stepan, Josh Leivo, Derek Ryan, Corey Perry, Artem Anisimov, Michael Frolik, David Rittich, Laurent Brossoit, Zach Bogosian, Dmitry Kulikov, Jon Merrill, Riley Nash, Travis Boyd, Tucker Poolman, Jordie Benn, Derick Brassard, Michael Bunting, Patrik Nemeth, Kurtis Gabriel, Marcus Sorensen, Tomas Nosek, Brock McGinn, Cedric Paquette, Vinnie Hinostroza, Michael Del Zotto, Andrew Cogliano, Erik Gudbranson, Sean Kuraly, Cody Ceci, Marc Staal, Darren Helm, Andy Greene, Mikko Lehtonen, Evan Rodrigues, Frederick Gaudreau.

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The Athletic / NHL Trade Big Board: Eichel, Jones, Tarasenko and ... Stamkos? 25 players who could be dealt

Craig Custance and Dom Luszczyszyn Jul 15, 2021

This NHL offseason went from 0-60 in warp speed. First, there was the long-ruminated Duncan Keith trade. Fine. That one was telegraphed. The Ryan Suter and Zach Parise buyouts? Now, we're getting somewhere and it's only going to pick up from there.

"There's going to be a lot of activity," predicted an Eastern Conference executive on Wednesday. "I think there's going to be a lot of upheaval around the entire league."

The offseason is certainly in motion. It was already going to be a wild one because we have an expansion draft. Now, mix in teams up against the cap, others trying to mitigate financial losses, some under pressure to win and it's all teed up for those on Team Chaos.

"Now, it's really heating up," said a Western Conference executive on Tuesday. "A lot of phone calls. A lot of balls in the air."

With that, we roll out our 2021 summer edition of the Trade Big Board, tweaked slightly because of how much we liked the format done by our baseball group. We're breaking it up by position. We're adding in trade probabilities, comparables and analytics with all the usual anonymous executive assessments still completely intact.

Let's dive in:

Forwards

1. Jack Eichel, Sabres

Likelihood of a trade: High

The door wasn't even completely closed as Suter and Parise exited the Wild and people were quick to boost Minnesota to the top of the Eichel sweepstakes. It makes sense. Minnesota has needed a center forever. They have the young assets it might take to happen. Suddenly there's cap space. The owner will spend, clearly. "This could be the clearance for them to pick up Eichel," said one source on Tuesday afternoon shortly after the Minnesota news broke. "They're one of the few teams to have the resources."

That said, there's certainly some trepidation about acquiring Eichel. Yes, he's a franchise center, but he didn't have the strongest season; he



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scored twice in 21 games while struggling to generate offense at five-on-five. The neck injury and the complications surrounding treatment is certainly part of the equation, adding to the concern. One executive said his team is completely out on Eichel in large part because of the risk involved.

"If we made the trade and it doesn't work out, you never recover," he said. "The franchise that wants to take that chance, all the power to them. It's a franchise-killing risk. Or you look like a genius. One or the other."

### 2. Vladimir Tarasenko, Blues

Likelihood of a trade: High

If this were 2016, trading for Tarasenko would be a no-brainer. But there's some high mileage. And a healthy contract to take on. And, as Jeremy Rutherford reported, a list of acceptable trades in which he'd accept a deal. In this piece, Rutherford highlighted the New York Rangers, New York Islanders, Vegas Golden Knights, Boston Bruins and Philadelphia Flyers as the top potential destinations. Each one of these factors drives down the expected return. It's not entirely dissimilar to Taylor Hall at the deadline.

"Doug is going to have trouble moving him," said one executive of Blues GM Doug Armstrong. "That's two more years. You don't want to pay a big price for it."

That's especially true if Tarasenko can't recover from back-to-back shoulder surgeries. After seven straight seasons above two points per 60, Tarasenko was at 1.46 last season while posting some ugly possession numbers. His minus-0.36 relative expected goals per 60 was the worst of his career and a big reason his value has dropped. There should be a significant concern about whether he can still drive play.

### 3. Evgeny Kuznetsov, Capitals

Likelihood of a trade: High

Kuznetsov's skill is obvious and he's been able to transcend public analysis because of it. He's a gifted puck-carrier and playmaker and that's allowed him to consistently outperform expectations. From an underlying numbers perspective, last year may have been his best ever with a 53 percent expected goals rate and a stunning 65 percent actual goals rate — both of which were built upon improved defense. That's generally been the biggest concern with his game and fixing that should go a long way in upping his value. His point pace may have fallen to 58 over a full season, but that looks to be a result of lessened ice time and power play opportunity. If his defensive improvements are legit he can still be an asset and surpass his low projected value in a bigger role but age is also not on his side. Definitely a perplexing player.

### 4. Sam Reinhart, Sabres

Likelihood of a trade: High

It feels like we've been waiting a long time for a Reinhart breakout. But this might just be who he is, a second-line player. He did look a little stronger down the stretch as a center and based on his comps there's still a 25 percent chance he becomes a bona fide top-line forward but time is running out. Still, there's legitimate upside here, especially in a locale that isn't Buffalo.

### 5. Pavel Buchnevich, Rangers

Likelihood of a trade: Low

Colleague Rick Carpiello did a great job breaking down why it makes sense for the Rangers to consider trading Buchnevich. He's a pending restricted free agent due for a raise and the Rangers have strong depth at right wing with Vitali Kravtsov and Kaapo Kakko on the path to earning more ice time. Adam Fox is about to get way more expensive. So is Igor Shesterkin. They don't have to deal Buchnevich now but at some point, there's going to be a tough decision to be made here. The Rangers better be sure the young guns can fill the void, though, because

Buchnevich is a stronger player than many give him credit for. A two-win forward with 60-point upside is hard to replace.

### 6. Tyler Bertuzzi, Red Wings

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

The sense one source had was that Red Wings GM Steve Yzerman is open to trading Bertuzzi but wasn't in a huge hurry to move him. There's a belief outside Detroit that Bertuzzi has padded his numbers a bit by playing a prominent role on a bad team and the result is that he might eventually price himself into a tier more expensive than some think he's ultimately worth. His injuries are a concern too. "He's hurt a lot," said one talent evaluator. "He plays hard, a little reckless. Not a big body. There's a price point he's at right now, anybody trading for him knows he has (arbitration) rights."

### 7. Clayton Keller, Coyotes

Likelihood of a trade: Low

Keller is 22 and his top comp is Claude Giroux, who scored 47 points in 81 games as a 22-year-old — which was his first NHL full season. Over the next four seasons, Giroux was the most productive player in the league scoring 303 points over 289 games.

Keller is entering his fifth season and there's some impatience with what he's shown so far. As the Giroux example shows, there's time for him to figure it out and although he currently projects as a regular top-six forward, there is a lot of upside that can be fulfilled. The skill is there and while a career like Giroux's isn't set in stone, that it's even a possibility should give Arizona serious pause here.

"Keller plays so far on the perimeter but he's talented," said one exec. "A change of scenery could work. I think (Arizona) would trade anybody but (Jakob) Chychrun."

### 8. Jakub Voracek, Flyers

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

He's still an excellent playmaker, one of the league's best, but has been in decline for a few years now and has the potential to fall off a cliff at any moment. Colleague Charlie O'Connor broke down those pluses and minuses well here. The more interesting news from Philadelphia might be that the No. 13 pick appears to be very much in play, according to another story from Charlie. "I think we have to explore what we can do with it," Flyers GM Chuck Fletcher said of that pick.

### 9. Kevin Fiala, Wild

Likelihood of a trade: Low

His future with the Wild may depend on what his next contract looks like. Or just how aggressive GM Bill Guerin is in his search for a center. If Guerin is big game hunting, it may take a player like Fiala to help make it happen. Let's say the Wild acquire a player like Eichel and his big contract, there wouldn't be the cap space to keep Fiala around long term anyway with Kirill Kaprizov up for a raise.

### 10. Johnny Gaudreau, Flames

Likelihood of a trade: Low

The expectation from other teams is that Calgary wants to make a major change but nobody is quite sure exactly what that will ultimately look like. Is it Gaudreau? Sean Monahan? Matthew Tkachuk? "They're caught in the middle with those guys," said one executive. "They're having a changing of the guard there." Gaudreau is just two years removed from finishing fourth in Hart Trophy voting, but his value has fallen a fair bit since. There's a chance he gets back to that level, but it's not the most likely outcome.

### 11. Steven Stamkos, Lightning

Likelihood of a trade: Low



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There was some smoke last summer about a possible Stamkos trade and it would solve a lot of financial issues for the Lightning. Colleague Pierre LeBrun broke down the situation well here, acknowledging that it's a sensitive one in Tampa. This is their captain. They've won back-to-back Cups under his leadership. But his ice time continues to decline and they've shown they can win without him. There are tough decisions on the way for GM Julien BriseBois and that franchise has never shied away from making them.

12. Jake DeBrusk, Bruins

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

DeBrusk's name has been in the trade circuit for some time. Around the trade deadline, there were some casual conversations surrounding a possible deal for Anthony Mantha and interest in him remains high because of his age (24) and history of scoring in both the regular season and playoffs. But with the Taylor Hall addition and the cap squeeze that would come with Hall staying in Boston, time might be running out on this front. He also had first-line upside to start his career, but his play has dipped since. DeBrusk is young enough that he can still get back to that level but his most recent season was worrying. He played at a 0.5-win pace.

13. Brock Boeser, Canucks

Likelihood of a trade: Low

The Canucks have huge contract negotiations to do with RFAs Quinn Hughes and Elias Pettersson this summer and cap space is at a real premium in Vancouver. An inordinate amount of poor contracts on the books on top of those two deals may not give the club the flexibility to pay Boeser, whose actual salary this season is \$7.5 million heading into his arb year. "They're open to moving Boeser," said a source. "I like him and he's a good kid. He can shoot the puck and he can score. He's injured a lot but I do like him." When Pettersson was out, Boeser stepped up. He should be a solid first-line talent for years to come with upside for more. That would be a difficult piece to lose as a result of poor cap management.

Defensemen

1. Seth Jones, Blue Jackets

Likelihood of a trade: High

One team said their expectation is that Jones' preference is to play in Chicago, Dallas or Florida, although those aren't his only options. Chicago has been mentioned most recently because of the Keith trade and while that clears up cap space to help make it happen, another source warned against reading too much into the Caleb Jones aspect as any sort of deal indicator. "That deal happened irrespective of Seth," he said.

The Blackhawks may be the front-runner. Guys love playing in Chicago. The concern is whether or not the team is close to real playoff contention, something Jones will have to weigh. The Flyers have been connected to Jones but shouldn't be considered a front-runner as of right now.

The Stars are a bit of a wild card here. They'd have to move some money to make it happen but would consider it if there was a trade to be made that Columbus liked. Dallas might be a more realistic option as a Jones destination if he makes it to free agency. As for the return, Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen wants to maximize this, especially considering the talent that has left the organization in recent years.

"He doesn't need draft picks. He wants young players. Centermen," said one executive. "Anybody who is going to give up assets will want permission to talk to him. (Kekalainen) is not in any rush."

After a down season, it's also fair to wonder how much Jones can realistically move the needle to push a team up a tier. He was widely regarded as a top 10 defender going into the 2020-21 season but delivered uncharacteristically poor results that now leave his status as a top-pairing defender in question. There's a chance he can get back to

that level but his current comps aren't flattering, featuring a lot of names whose reputations outweighed actual results.

2. Nate Schmidt, Canucks

Likelihood of a trade: High

It hasn't been a great fit between Schmidt and the Canucks. "They're desperately trying to move Schmidt," said one source. The problem with Schmidt is the same as many on this list: You're not getting a ton of value because of an inflated contract. This won't necessarily be an easy deal to pull off for GM Jim Benning but his reputation as a character guy helps the cause. "He's selfless. Doesn't need to be on the PP," said a source. "Unbelievable culture guy."

3. Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Coyotes

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

The Coyotes have more destination options than just Boston and Vancouver, as was the case last year, for Ekman-Larsson. That's the good news. The bad news: "Have you seen him play?" asked one source. It hasn't gone well for Ekman-Larsson in a while. "Maybe it's his situation," suggested an executive. That's a risky maybe in which to place a bet.

Ekman-Larsson grades out as replacement level by GSVA with a limited chance of performing above that level for the remaining six years on his deal. Given the cap hit and term left, Arizona should have to pay a premium to unload his contract.

4. Rasmus Ristolainen, Sabres

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

Ristolainen has plenty of experience playing difficult minutes, but not much success in them. For the first time in his career, his underlying numbers looked legitimately promising to start the year playing with Jake McCabe. Is there hope for rehabilitation? The right role, fit and partner may be able to unlock some utility out of Ristolainen, but that's a lot to ask for a player who is making \$5.4 million this season.

5. Vince Dunn, Blues

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

Dunn was an analytics darling in the two seasons prior but struggled immensely last season. He had negative actual and expected goal rates relative to teammates, primarily as a result of struggling to generate offense. There's still potential for him to blossom into a legitimate top-four option but last season wasn't promising in that regard.

6. Nick Leddy, Islanders

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

Colleague Arthur Staple reported that multiple sources indicated that Leddy was being shopped. There are expansion implications, the Islanders could use the cap space and they have a young defenseman in Noah Dobson ready for an expanded role. That said, it thins out after Dobson and moving Leddy (or losing him to Seattle) would create a hole Lou Lamoriello would immediately have to fill.

7. Marcus Pettersson, Penguins

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

There's isn't anything wrong with Pettersson. He's a capable 25-year-old defenseman. But the Penguins like Pierre-Olivier Joseph and moving Pettersson could create space. They might also want to bulk up a little defensively. Another name to watch in Pittsburgh is Jason Zucker, who was acquired by the previous regime. A trade there would help create more financial flexibility.

8. Ryan Graves, Avalanche

Likelihood of a trade: High



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(Update: Graves was traded to the New Jersey Devils for winger Mikhail Maltsev and a 2021 second-round pick.)

As he expressed to Peter Baugh in a recent conversation, this was a bit of an up and down season for Graves. There's also a good chance he's available for Seattle in the expansion draft, barring a side deal. And as LeBrun pointed out recently, the price is high (or in the case of one of his sources, "exorbitant") to cut side deals with Kraken GM Ron Francis. So a trade to another team might be the best path forward here for the Avs.

Goalies

### 1. Darcy Kuemper, Coyotes

Likelihood of a trade: High

There are some execs who believe the mandate in Arizona is to cut a ton of salary, which presents rival GMs with some opportunity. In Kuemper, the Coyotes have a starting goalie with only one year left on his deal that people around the league like. Kuemper might be his best trade chip.

### 2. Chris Driedger negotiating rights, Panthers

Likelihood of a trade: High

The Panthers are getting calls on Driedger and for good reason. He has a .929 save percentage in 38 career games and the price tag to plug him in should be reasonable. LeBrun recently reported that it might take around \$3.5 million per year to get a deal done but considering the price of goaltending around the league, that's pretty reasonable. History suggests a fourth-round pick probably gets this done.

### 3. Joonas Korpisalo, Blue Jackets

Likelihood of a trade: High

The expectation is that the Blue Jackets will trade one of their two goalies — Korpisalo or Elvis Merzlikins. Both goalies are 27 and in the final year of their contract. Merzlikins has more upside but for teams on a budget or up against the cap, Korpisalo might be the better option although a team trading for Merzlikins wouldn't have to protect him from Seattle and the expansion draft.

### 4. Braden Holtby, Canucks

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

The Canucks would do well to move this contract off the books with Thatcher Demko signed long term but that's easier said than done. With cap space at a premium, teams aren't eager to spend on a goalie who has gone consecutive seasons without posting a save percentage above .900.

### 4. Frederik Andersen negotiating rights, Maple Leafs

Likelihood of a trade: Medium

Andersen is another starting goalie who is likely to hit the free-agent market. His play has declined a bit over the last couple of years so that's why early interest in his negotiating rights has been moderate. At 31 there should be something left here for a team looking for a reasonably priced veteran goalie. He'll need a big bounce-back, though. Over the last two seasons, he has the 11th worst goals above expected rate.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.16.2021

1217412 Websites

The Athletic / 'I'm going to go No. 1' — William Eklund's drive to achieve his NHL dream boosted by his off-ice teammates

By Joshua Kloke Jul 15, 2021

On Sunday afternoons in Stockholm, the local children, many of whom have yet to enter high school, wait eagerly by their door for a visit from a neighborhood teenager.

William Eklund, the Djurgårdens IF up-and-coming star and likely top-five pick in the 2021 NHL Draft, will make his way door-to-door inviting children to play road hockey outside.

"Even if some of the kids don't want to play, he drags them out," his father, Christian Eklund, said.

And William Eklund brings a team of his own, with five younger siblings to join him.

Eklund is only 18 years old, but is already a natural leader, having spent so much of his life as the head of the pack in his household. He has one younger brother, 14-year-old Victor who also plays in Djurgårdens' youth setup; three stepbrothers, aged 8, 6 and 2; and one stepsister, who is 14 years old.

Eklund will oversee the road hockey game, setting up teams and calling penalties if need be. To the local children, and more importantly, to his siblings, Eklund is not a supremely talented left winger who uses his elusiveness, dynamic skating and high-end hockey IQ to become a consistent offensive threat.

To the people who need him the most off the ice, he is their role model. And that job has helped him become the composed, dynamic offensive producer he is on the ice, too.

"He's become so much more mature, with taking care of all the brothers," Christian said. "It helped him when he started to play with the men's team because he had a more mature attitude and he came in with a good mature playing style, actually."

And it is because of his experience as the oldest sibling that he could handle becoming the face of an NHL team's rebuild, and possibly one of the next great Swedish NHL stars.

Joakim Eriksson is Djurgårdens IF general manager and also played alongside Christian for two seasons. Though he's able to compare father and son, he can't find many similarities.

"They are very different," he said

Christian was a gritty, bottom-six player who loved getting in the face of his opponents. William is a gifted playmaker who demands the puck on his stick and is confident and calm enough, unleashing his high-end skill to make high-risk plays in the offensive zone.

Whereas Eriksson described Christian as the life of the party in the dressing room, always quick with a joke and a prank, William is more serious. He's gained that persona, in part, by having responsibilities many his age don't always have.

Christian said there is a calmness, focus and self-sufficiency in his son's attitude that he's gained from having to take care of his younger siblings every day. And it's not perfunctory tasks, either. Christian and his wife often leave their 2-year-old son under the care of William, no matter what.

"If he shit his pants when we're not home, William has had to take care of him," Christian said.

William Eklund's parents are divorced, and whenever he goes to either of his parents' homes, there is work that follows him: helping his siblings with their homework, playing with them and, most importantly to Eklund, trying to be the kind of person they can emulate. His siblings constantly come to him for advice, which he takes seriously.

"Obviously when you're the oldest brother, you know everybody is going to look up to you and see you as a role model," Eklund said.

As a role model, Eklund stresses to his siblings the importance of setting goals and following through on them. And that is what those closest to Eklund see in him.



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Eklund himself said his "main goal" in life was reaching the NHL "from the first time I saw my dad play."

The goal-setting didn't end there.

Take, for example, his reaction when Bob McKenzie's midseason draft rankings on TSN came out in April. Eklund was having lunch with someone close to him who referenced Eklund being ranked seventh in a positive light.

Eklund briefly looked up from his lunch and, mid-bite, simply stated: "I'm going to go No. 1."

Eriksson said being the oldest sibling in his family made Eklund "very ambitious from an early age and very eager to achieve goals and that has driven him."

"Comparing William to a lot of those other talents that have (come) through Djurgårdens, in that perspective, I can see he's been driven, motivated, goal-oriented and knows what to work on," said Eriksson.

Coming up through Djurgårdens' youth system, Eklund was hardly the sure-fire talent he is today. He was woefully undersized, often made poor decisions with the puck and simply wasn't at the level of some of his better peers in a competitive program.

He's long been compared to teammate, friend and 2020 first-round pick Alexander Holtz. While Eriksson saw Holtz "totally dominating" throughout his youth career, Eklund took longer than Holtz to develop into the offensive weapon he is today.

"When I watched him as a young teenager, I thought, 'He has a long way to go,'" Christian said. "But he practiced so much. He knew the game so well. He wasn't the strongest, the best skater or had the best shot, but you could see the game. He always said he got that from street hockey. Always scrimmaging with the kids."

At 17 he made his debut on Djurgårdens' first team. He may have logged just two assists in 20 games playing fourth-line minutes, but this season, his improvement was drastic: he scored 11 goals and 23 points in 40 games and was named the SHL Rookie of the Year.

Whereas some teenagers might cower with the increased responsibility and attention that comes with playing with the men's team, Christian said his son was not fazed by the physicality and the ups and downs from game to game.

Christian and Eriksson have seen far too many young, talented players invest too much of themselves in their performances and the result of every game, and can see negative emotional swings as a result. Working toward personal development is one thing, but Christian had a long enough career that he understands the importance of a healthy state of mind.

"You can't talk, eat, sleep, hockey, like people say you have to. Because if you want to have a long career, you have to learn to do other things just to get your mind out of hockey," Christian said.

When Eklund walks into his house after a game, his siblings will run to him, eager not to discuss the game itself, but whatever else is happening at home.

"It's good not to just focus on hockey all the time," Eklund said.

"While maybe parents or fans, they want to talk about hockey all the time," Christian said. "That makes you tired of hockey sometimes."

He has had his fair share of trying circumstances that have hurt his hockey career at times. But he's dealt with those challenges with the kind of steadfast resiliency not often found in teenagers. Difficulties don't linger.

Take the frustration that came from being cut from a Swedish U-17 team. Given how angry he was after initially receiving the news, Christian expected his son to be emotionally distraught for weeks afterward.

But the night they got the news, Christian awoke at 2 in the morning to loud noises coming from his garage. He initially thought there was an intruder in the house and that the home was being broken into. He rushed downstairs to find his son in the garage.

"He was so mad, he'd gone there from his room and was shooting pucks in the middle of the night," Christian said. "And then, the next day, he was done. He focused on his brothers."

William was angry when he couldn't play in the 2021 world juniors because of his COVID-19 diagnosis and the emergency appendectomy he suffered in January sidelined him for nearly three weeks. But his anger quickly subsided as he had figured out that his energy was better spent elsewhere.

"I thought I was going to have to sit with him for weeks. He was sad for a day, and then he said 'I can't do anything about it,'" Christian said. "He was so mature, the way he handled those two things. He's always been like that."

And moving forward, that maturity could help him make the jump to the NHL.

"There's going to be times when you have injuries and have to work really hard, mentally, and be mentally tough," Eklund said. "You have to focus on the next thing to get back playing again."

Eklund said that while he will follow the directions of the NHL team that chooses him, he would be open to returning to the SHL for another year. It's a mature stance from a player who understands that he needs to add some size and improve so that he can fulfill his next goal of being a top-six NHL forward.

If his last few seasons are any indication, he should be able to achieve that goal. Even if he wasn't always regarded as a high-end prospect, he's learned that the best way to deal with adversity is to focus on his siblings, not just hockey.

In doing so, he has progressed far more than many thought he would as an undersized forward. The comparisons to Holtz are starting to dissipate.

"Alexander is more dependent on the environment at the senior level," Eriksson said. "He needs a good playmaker, he needs to be in an environment with players to set him up and he can finish. But William can do more on the ice by himself. These last 12, 18 months, William has caught up to Alex and almost gone past him."

William Eklund's life will soon change as he becomes, in all likelihood, one of the faces of a team's rebuilding efforts. The pressure will increase as he begins his next job. But throughout, he will not forget the job he has in Sweden and his young siblings who will eagerly await him walking back through the door whenever he can.

"My job is to have a good influence on them," said Eklund of his siblings, "and show them how life works."

The Athletic LOADED: 07.16.2021

1217413 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL Rumour Roundup: Landeskog 'disappointed' he hasn't re-signed with Avalanche yet

NHL's piping-hot rumour mill making for 'NBA-style off season'

Frank Seravalli joined Tim & Friends to talk about the NHL rumour mill, and touched on what the Maple Leafs could be looking to do on the goalie market.

Emily Sadler July 15, 2021, 2:51 PM



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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To say the next week of the NHL off-season is a crucial one would be a gross understatement. With the deadline for teams to submit their protected lists this Saturday at 5 p.m. ET, and the Seattle expansion draft taking place in six days, it's crunch time for teams to sort out their rosters.

And that's not even addressing the free agency rumour mill ahead of the new league year on July 28.

Here's a roundup of some of the big rumours and reports swirling around the NHL right now:

Landeskog 'disappointed' he hasn't re-signed with Avalanche yet

It's tough to imagine the Colorado Avalanche without Gabriel Landeskog. The forward has been in Colorado for 10 years, and has served as captain for nine. But with his contract expiring and the club needing to also sign star RFA defenceman Cale Makar and Vezina finalist Philipp Grubauer among other off-season questions, the Swede is facing an uncertain hockey future for the first time in his NHL career.

"I've always known that come September, October, I'm going to pull on that Avs jersey," he told The Athletic's Peter Baugh in a piece published Wednesday.

In the article, Landeskog opened up to Baugh about his disappointment in having not already signed on the dotted line long ago.

"I can't help but be honest with you that I'm a little bit disappointed that it's gotten this far and it's had to come to this point," Landeskog, 28, said.

Per Baugh, talks have increased but "the sides are still far away from an agreement, according to a league source."

Landeskog told Baugh, "We'll see what happens. I'm still hopeful that we can agree on something and come to terms, but if it was up to me, I would have liked it to be done eight months ago, 10 months ago."

Both sides have been clear they'd like to keep the relationship going, but the timeline now brings a little bit of doubt to the outside eye. Obviously, the elite, physical forward would have no shortage of suitors should he in fact hit the open market.

Adding to the intrigue is the fact that if Colorado doesn't sign Landeskog before the expansion draft, and leaves him exposed, Seattle gets an exclusive window to chat with him before any other club.

Guerin on Kaprizov contract: 'We'll get there'

With the buyout bombshell news in Minnesota comes not only a new era in the State of Hockey, but some new cap space with which to usher it in. Priority No. 1 has been, and still is, signing rookie phenom Kirill Kaprizov. The Calder winner is a 10.2(c) RFA, which means another team can't try to pry him away or force Minnesota's hand with an offer sheet. At 24, he can become an unrestricted free agent as early as the 2024 off-season, and that's got the pressure on GM Bill Guerin to lock up some term. Asked about the status of negotiations on that front during a Hockey Central interview on Wednesday, Guerin had this to say:

"He came in and had a big impact on us last year, it was great to see. We needed it, and we still need him going forward. We're just going through the process right now of negotiating a contract. Me and his agent, we talk on a regular basis and some days we get somewhere, some days we don't. But these things take time, and we've just got to continue to work through it. We'll get there someday. It might not be tomorrow, but we've got time."

Wild GM Guerin confident they'll be able to lock up Kirill Kaprizov

Wild still undecided on expansion draft plan

While Kaprizov's importance to the franchise cannot be understated, especially at this time of transition, Guerin's got a few other pressing issues that also need addressing at the moment -- like, oh, the impending expansion draft, for example. This week's big buyouts clear out two

protection spots, putting Guerin in good position for skater protection. Goaltending, on the other hand... that's a tough one.

Minnesota's smart signing of Cam Talbot last off-season paid off in a huge way, with the veteran bouncing back and putting up his best numbers since 2016-17. This season also saw the emergence of Kaapo Kahkonen, a strong 1B to Talbot's 1A. Both are expansion-eligible. Both cannot be protected. And based on performance (in Talbot's case) and potential (in Kahkonen's), it would not be surprising to see Seattle scoop up whichever is left exposed.

Asked whether he would be making any side-deals with Seattle to protect both goalies, Guerin said he didn't know yet.

"Yeah, I'm not quite there yet. I don't know if we're gonna be making any sort of deals. We could just be rolling the dice. We're gonna lose a player that we like, and the one thing I don't want to do is kind of overthink it and get myself into trouble and lose two players -- we could trade a player, and then we're definitely going to lose a player, so we'd be out two guys."

Guerin wasn't at the helm of the Wild when they made a side-deal with Vegas that saw Minnesota send Alex Tuch to the Golden Knights so they'd select Erik Haula, protecting key young players like Matt Dumba. But he can learn from that.

"To be honest with you, we're still going through it," he said. "We're still taking a lot of phone calls and seeing what our options are."

Bill Guerin: Suter, Parise buyout decisions months in the making

Where to next for Suter, Parise?

One more Wild item, courtesy of Elliotte Friedman and Jeff Marek on Tuesday's edition of the 31 Thoughts podcast: Where might Ryan Suter and Zach Parise land? And might they wind up together once again?

As Friedman indicated, there's widespread belief that Parise will be Long Island-bound. There was almost a deal in place to send him there last off-season, reuniting him with GM Lou Lamoriello. Suter has an interesting connection there, too, with Barry Trotz. Trotz coached Suter for several years in Nashville. Interesting.

As for the likelihood of Suter playing somewhere north of the border, it sounds like we can cross seven teams off his list of possible destinations:

"I think a lot of people would be surprised if Suter ended up in Canada. He's an American guy, he's a Team USA guy, he's always played in the States," Friedman said. "A lot of people think Vegas, a lot of people think Colorado, I've had a few people think Washington -- that those would be the kind of places that he could potentially end up."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.16.2021

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Sportsnet.ca / Q&A: Canucks' Jim Benning on the expansion draft, busy off-season

Vancouver Canucks general manager Jim Benning.

VANCOUVER – In his lifetime in hockey, Vancouver Canucks general manager Jim Benning can't remember another week with as many agenda items and ongoing discussions as this one.

Already in the first post-Stanley Cup buyout window, National Hockey League teams are jockeying ahead of Saturday's roster freeze for the Seattle Kraken expansion draft next Wednesday. The entry draft starts two days later, followed by the opening of free agency on July 28.



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The Canucks are trying to use the expansion draft as leverage to add a good player from a team with protection issues, but so far nobody is selling.

With the salary cap staying flat at \$81.5 million USD and not many assets he can afford to trade, Benning will find it difficult to fulfill his pledge after last season to be "aggressive" in upgrading Vancouver's speed, skill and depth. Still, the roster will look different a couple of weeks from now.

In a short interview on Wednesday – halfway through his hectic week – Benning told Sportsnet that pressure is still building on teams to make their best deals before the roster freeze. The GM predicted activity between the expansion and entry drafts, didn't rule out a Canucks buyout despite the absence of one so far, said Elias Pettersson's injury recovery is "on track" and revealed the team would like to add a Russian player to ease the transition of rookie Vasily Podkolzin to Vancouver next season. And, Benning insisted, "there is no Nate Schmidt situation."

(Editor's note: This interview has been edited slightly for brevity and clarity.)

Sportsnet: What is this week like from a management standpoint?

Jim Benning: The expansion draft has added another wrinkle. I think teams, this week they're trying to figure out what the protection lists are going to look like and... if they're looking at other things trade-wise, they're looking to maybe move money or moving a player out to try to recover some sort of an asset. There's a bunch of things going on. Once the expansion draft is over and Seattle's got their team picked, then I think the next stage is teams are looking at trades to make their teams better and, going into the (entry) draft, maybe trying to acquire picks. And then the following week, we have unrestricted free agency in a flat-cap world. So there's a lot of things going on all at once here.

How different is it from when the Vegas Golden Knights joined the league in 2017?

When Vegas joined the league and we went through that expansion process, there wasn't the same issues that we're dealing with now.

What happened to the great asset re-allocation some were predicting before the Seattle draft? Are you surprised there haven't been more trades?

Everybody understands you're going to lose a player, right? Some teams that have a lot of depth, they know they're going to lose a player and in a flat-cap world, they may be okay with that because they've got to sign other players. And then there's the teams that maybe only have one real good player to lose that want to move that player to get some sort of an asset back. But these types of things seem to happen around a deadline and I guess the deadline is Friday, Saturday morning. I still think there could be some things that happen, but it might not happen until the deadline hits.

What's the best-case scenario for the Canucks at the Expansion Draft?

Even being aggressive, how difficult will it be to improve the Canucks given your lack of cap space and expendable assets?

We'll see how that plays out in the next couple of weeks. We've put a lot of work in here and we'll see how it all plays out. I can't answer that question now.

Are you seriously considering trading the ninth pick of the draft?

We're looking at everything. We're keeping all of our options open. We meet every day and I go through with our hockey-ops group what's on the docket for that day, the conversations that we're having, and we discuss things and then try to figure out what's best for our organization.

After reports that both the team and player may be looking for a trade, can you bring us up to date on the Nate Schmidt situation?

There is no Nate Schmidt situation. Teams call us about our players all the time and sometimes that gets out there. But he hasn't asked to be moved or anything like that.

So you expect him back with the Canucks next season?

We listen to teams whenever they ask about our players. You don't rule anything out, and if I think there's a way to improve our team, I'll consider it. But he hasn't asked to be traded.

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.

A buyout of Jake Virtanen seemed semi-automatic because, regardless of his serious legal issues, he far underperformed his contract last season, you need cap space and his age makes a buyout pretty painless. But nothing has happened since the buyout window opened last week. Should we assume you won't be making one?

That's too early to say. We have until the 27th (with this window). And then if players go to arbitration, there's a second window. So it's too early to say.

Other than the massive buyouts of Ryan Suter and Zach Parise in Minnesota, it has been pretty quiet across the NHL. Are teams waiting for expansion clarity?

I think that's what all the teams are thinking right now: Let's get through the expansion draft. And I expect, after the Seattle expansion team is named, next Thursday is going to be a busy day going into the draft.

Elias Pettersson posted a video of himself shooting pucks and said his injured wrist "felt really good." Is his recovery on track?

We had a conversation with him at the end of the year (and) even the games he played this year, he needs to continue to work hard and get stronger and keep developing. We're expecting him to come in and have a big year for us next year. Everything is on track. He's going through the rehab and should be ready for training camp.

Canucks needed to find positions for Sedins to be impactful and to learn

What about Vasily Podkolzin? In a normal summer, he'd have come from Russia for a development camp. When will he be in Vancouver to acclimate and get ready for training camp?

He's planning on coming here at the beginning of August to start working out and getting ready for the season. That's his plan. We're going to sign some guys and have good depth this season and... like any other player, he's going to have to come in and have a good camp. But everything I've seen from him... I believe that he can be part of our group next year.

Would you like to acquire another Russian player to make Podkolzin feel more comfortable and give him a teammate to speak to in his first language?

We've talked about that and we're looking at that. I think it would help... having another Russian player on the team. So, we're looking at that and seeing if there's a fit that works either through trades or free agency. We may look to do something like that.

Daniel and Henrik Sedin, of course, had each other. And now you have them in hockey operations. We understand they've been coming in early and staying late. How has that dynamic been so far?

It's been a real enjoyable experience for, I think, our hockey-ops group so far. They're humble guys, they want to do the work, they're learning a lot. We're keeping them involved with the daily discussions we have. They're part of our hockey-ops group trying to figure everything out.

How much pressure do you feel during these hectic summer weeks to get the team turned back in the right direction so that you start next season much better than the last one?

I believe in our core group. We didn't have Petey for three months and we got off to a bad start. I'm not going to make excuses; it wasn't a good year. Our guys weren't happy with the season we had. They're all going



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to be in top shape when they come back. I'm going to do what I can do to make the team better and make it harder to make the team so we have a competitive training camp. I think we're all looking forward to getting off to a good start and having a good year next year.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.16.2021

1217415 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Sportsnet's 2021 NHL Draft Prospect Rankings: Final Edition

Sam Cosentino July 14, 2021, 12:51 PM

With the draft just around the corner, it was time for a refreshed set of rankings.

More work has been put in on a number of fronts to try and have at least a little certainty in what should be as random a draft as I've seen in my time covering it. Having said that, we do know a few things.

First, Seattle GM Ron Francis holds the keys and should be able to impact this draft. He may not be able to work the same magic that George McPhee was able to exact in 2017 with Vegas, but plenty of options and cap space should give Francis ample room to maneuver. The idea might be to acquire as many draft picks as possible and not just for 2021, but beyond that as well. Vegas was able to pick up two additional first round picks in the 2017 draft and ended up with 12 picks total.

Next, we know this draft is top-heavy with defencemen. University of Michigan product Owen Power leads the way, in a group that includes Swede Simon Edvinsson, American Luke Hughes and Canadian Brandt Clarke. In terms of the strength of this class, we may have to extend our window of judgement by an additional year based on the fact that, at best, some players in this class have missed out on at least a half season, some playoffs and some international play. Despite extended off-season training, game and practice play has been limited and that typically provides the best developmental path.

Finally, just as we see every year, players will unexpectedly emerge from this draft class to become NHL stars, regardless of where they are selected. Look no further than the 2021 Stanley Cup Champion Tampa Bay Lightning, who featured the likes of Nikita Kucherov (58th overall in 2011), Brayden Point (79th overall in 2014), Anthony Cirelli (72nd overall in 2015), Ondrej Palat (208th overall in 2011) and an undrafted Tyler Johnson.

Here's our final draft rankings. Expect a mock draft immediately following the expansion draft on July 21st.

1. Owen Power, D, University of Michigan (NCAA): His place at the top of the rankings was cemented after his performance at the IIHF Men's World Championship.

Top NHL prospect Owen Power says he is leaning towards going back to school

2. Matthew Beniers, C, University of Michigan (NCAA): He is the safest pick in the class. A Dylan Larkin-type that a team will want to keep forever.

3. Simon Edvinsson, D, Frolunda Jr. (SWE): Should be able to handle top-pairing workload in the NHL and has some offensive upside, too.

4. Dylan Guenther, RW, Edmonton Oil Kings (WHL): An average showing at the U18 notwithstanding, Guenther is still a scorer with a big league shot who is often on the right side of the puck.

5. William Eklund, LW, Djurgarden (SWE): He scored 11 goals and 23 points in 40 games playing with Djurgarden in Sweden's top professional league – those numbers for a first-year draft eligible player in the SHL are good for fifth all-time.

6. Luke Hughes, D, USNTDP: Injury issues are well behind him. He displays the confidence, skating and puck-handling talents of his brothers Jack and Quinn.

Remaining Time -1:10

Luke Hughes would love to play with his brother Jack on the Devils

7. Brandt Clarke, D, Barrie Colts (OHL): Should be able to run a power play at the next level. As smart, poised and patient as he is, he could still stand to play more consistently with pace.

8. Mason McTavish, C, Peterborough Petes (OHL): Between his stint playing in Switzerland and a nice sampling at the U18, showed a complete game and the ability to play effectively at centre.

9. Kent Johnson, C, University of Michigan (NCAA): Has the confidence, the willingness and the skill to do anything out there. Will need to add weight and strength to his 6-foot-1, 165-pound frame.

Round 1 draft order

1. Buffalo Sabres
2. Seattle Kraken
3. Anaheim Ducks
4. New Jersey Devils
5. Columbus Blue Jackets
6. Detroit Red Wings
7. San Jose Sharks
8. Los Angeles Kings
9. Vancouver Canucks
10. Ottawa Senators
11. Chicago Blackhawks
12. Calgary Flames
13. Philadelphia Flyers
14. Dallas Stars
15. New York Rangers
16. St. Louis Blues
17. Winnipeg Jets
18. Nashville Predators
19. Edmonton Oilers
20. Boston Bruins
21. Minnesota Wild
22. Detroit Red Wings (from Washington Capitals)
23. Florida Panthers
24. Columbus Blue Jackets (from Toronto Maple Leafs)
25. Minnesota Wild (from Pittsburgh Penguins)
26. Carolina Hurricanes
27. Colorado Avalanche
28. New Jersey Devils (from New York Islanders)



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 16, 2021

29. Vegas Golden Knights

30. Montreal Canadiens

31. Columbus Blue Jackets (from Tampa Bay Lightning)

Note: The Arizona Coyotes forfeited their pick as a consequence of violating the NHL Combine Testing policy during 2019-20 season

10. Cole Sillinger, LW, Sioux Falls Stampede (USHL): Has been groomed by NHL people at home (his dad is former NHLer Mike Sillinger), in the WHL (where he played 52 games in Medicine Hat) right on through to his time with Marty Murray in the USHL this season.

11. Matthew Coronato, RW, Chicago Steel (USHL): An absolute bulldog who hunts pucks and knows exactly what to do with them afterwards. Scored 48 goals in 51 games with the Steel this season, and added nine more in eight playoff games.

12. Chaz Lucius, C, USNTDP: There is precedence for players who missed significant time during their draft year to still be taken high (see Alex Galchenyuk, Morgan Rielly). Lucius played just 25 games this season.

13. Fabian Lysell, RW, Frolunda Jr. (SWE): Most polarizing player in the draft. Played 26 games in Sweden's top league this season and registered just three points, but dominated against his own age group.

14. Brennan Othman, LW, Flint Firebirds (OHL): A mini growth spurt along with an improvement in skating, led to a great U18. Scored 16 points in 34 games on loan to EHC Olten in Switzerland this season.

15. Jesper Wallstedt, G, Lulea (SHL): Technically sound goalie with a nice dose of athleticism. Character of an NHL veteran.

16. Isak Rosen, LW, Leksand (SHL): Hands and feet work quickly and effectively, especially off the rush. Possesses a powerful stride.

17. Sebastian Cossa, G, Edmonton Oil Kings (WHL): Plenty of personal adversity has not affected his on-ice performance. He's got size, too, standing 6-foot-6, 211 pounds.

18. Fedor Svechkov, C, Togliatti (RUS): Solid, steady, two-way player whose game may get overlooked because it lacks a dynamic element.

19. Carson Lambos, D, Winnipeg Ice (WHL): Had plenty of looks in his 16-year-old season and then got a little taste of the pro life in Finland with JYP this season. Looks to have fully recovered from an ablation procedure.

20. Samu Tuomaala, RW, Karpas Jr (FIN): Shifty, speedy shooter with a penchant for striking from anywhere.

21. Nikita Chibrikov, RW, St. Petersburg (KHL): Shifty playmaker who can also score. Competes hard and plays with pace.

22. Xavier Bourgault, C, Shawinigan Cataractes (QMJHL): An excellent finisher whose brain works best in the offensive zone. As good a shooter as he is, he's an underrated playmaker, too.

23. Daniil Chayka, D, Guelph Storm (OHL): Has been a winner at every level for a variety of teams internationally and domestically. Spent this season playing back in Russia on loan, with stints in the KHL, VHL and MHL.

24. Zachary Bolduc, C, Rimouski Oceanic (QMJHL): Tried to replace Alexis Lafreniere with Rimouski before coming to the realization he could carve out his own niche. Led the Oceanic with 29 points in 27 games.

25. Corson Ceulemans, D, Brooks (AJHL): Hockey has been the foundation for a player whose family has moved frequently in his youth. Committed to University of Wisconsin for next season.

26. Aatu Raty, C, Karpas (Liiga): Production has never been equal to his work rate, and despite being a young phenom before his draft year, he hasn't lived up to expectations. Managed three points in 35 games this season playing in Finland's top pro league.

27. Simon Robertsson, RW, Skelleftea (SWE): Plays a prototypical north-south game. NHL bloodlines always an asset (father Bert played with Canucks, Oilers and Rangers) even more in uncertain times.

28. Zachary Dean, C, Gatineau Olympiques (QMJHL): Old school traits in that he has great outside speed and a bulldog determination to get to and stay in front of the net.

29. Francesco Pinelli, C, Kitchener Rangers (OHL): There's plenty to like in this versatile forward whose best-suited to play centre.

30. Wyatt Johnston, C, Windsor Spitfires (OHL): Might be the sleeper pick of Round 1. He didn't play for more than 14 months and then was able to do everything Canada asked of him at the U18s.

31. Zachary L'Heureux, LW, Halifax Mooseheads (QMJHL): A lack of discipline resulted in multiple suspensions, and that posed questions about an unpredictable character. Needs structure and a solid leadership sidecar.

32. Sasha Pastujov, RW, USNTDP: Circus references aside (his parents used to work for Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey), he showed remarkable consistency against a variety of competition all season.

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TSN.CA / Keith trade a reminder that timing is everything

Moving first in any market tends to carry higher risks and higher rewards, as the Edmonton Oilers found out this week in adding the veteran blueliner, Travis Yost writes.

By Travis Yost

On Tuesday, the Edmonton Oilers acquired veteran defenceman Duncan Keith from the Chicago Blackhawks. To land the 37-year-old blueliner and three-time Stanley Cup champion, the Oilers had to part ways with prospect Caleb Jones and a conditional third-round pick (2022).

The move was, in one word, curious. Keith may have one of the most impressive resumes of any active player, but there are serious performance concerns now late in his playing career.

General manager Ken Holland defended the move, citing Keith's experience and leadership. It's clear the Edmonton front office not only thinks Keith will bolster the team's top four, but that he'll be a positive impact on the Oilers' star forwards next season.

Perhaps Keith will rebound – there's no arguing he was playing on a rapidly deteriorating Blackhawks team that offered very little by way of support and structure, and his skating ability alone should fit in with an Oilers lineup that wants to play fast.

But a lot has changed in 48 hours. The Minnesota Wild, one day after the Keith trade, opted to buy out veteran defenceman Ryan Suter. The Florida Panthers followed suit on Thursday, buying out Keith Yandle.

Let's circle back to a quote Holland gave after the Keith trade to The Athletic's Daniel Nugent-Bowman, with specific attention to the price paid by the Oilers organization:

"What, do you want me to get him for free? You want a lesser price? You want Caleb Jones? You don't want the draft pick? You want them to retain 50 per cent? Which would you like me to do? Do you want me to get them to retain money? Or do you think I paid too high a price with Caleb Jones and a third-round pick?"

It's impossible for outsiders to know what the real trade market is yielding, and to that end, Holland is correct. But now those bearish on a



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

**NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 16, 2021**

Keith trade must consider a second question: Did being a first mover in this market cost the Oilers?

Moving first in any market tends to carry higher rewards and higher risks. One of the things you are considering when engineering a trade is alternatives and opportunity costs.

At the time of the trade, we can reasonably assume the Oilers preferred the combination of acquiring Keith and taking care of some of the expansion draft math they are working against in lieu of signing free-agent defenders looking for term – Alexander Edler and Dougie Hamilton at the top of that list.

But now you add players like Suter and Yandle to the free agency pool, which increases the available supply of talent for general managers to tap into.

Perhaps the Oilers don't see a fit for players like Suter or Yandle. But consider the available supply of veteran defenders (age 30+, left shot, looking for shorter-term deals) in free agency relative to the player they acquired in Keith – and consider their respective production in recent years:

Holland is trying to build a Stanley Cup contender. Due to salary cap limitations (including a flat cap), the Oilers – like many teams – have reduced flexibility in terms of what they can do. On top of that, the organization is trying to figure out the right structure for which players to protect in the upcoming expansion draft.

On the other hand, there are a remarkable number of veteran defenders who are still contributing in a very positive manner, with Suter being at the top of that list. If the Oilers organization thought a veteran blueliner who can still play was the answer to what ails them, there were several options through free agency alone, and most of those options look much more encouraging than a player like Keith.

Even lower-tier players like Jordie Benn (age 33, coming off a \$2-million dollar per-year contract) and Alec Martinez (age 33, coming off a \$4-million dollar per-year contract) offer intriguing alternatives, and likely at a lower risk.

Signing one or more of these players may have caused another series of moves to become compliant for the expansion draft, but it also would have likely accomplished the most important thing – adding value to the lineup and improving the roster. And if nothing else, the added presence of players like Yandle and Suter readily available in free agency should have depressed the trade price of a player like Keith.

Hockey is a lot like everything else. Timing is everything. If Keith does not pan out as Edmonton anticipates, the cadence of how the Oilers' off-season moves played out will be scrutinized in even finer detail.

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