



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 16, 2021

## The News & Observer

### Hurricanes' Don Waddell adds Michael Futa to management team

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes of the NHL play their home games at PNC Arena. It's also the home arena for NC State men's basketball games. Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell has added to his management team, bringing in Michael Futa as senior consultant to the GM, the Canes announced Wednesday.

"Michael brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our front office," Waddell said in a statement. "He knows what it takes to build a championship-caliber team, and we're excited to add him to our organization."

Futa, 53, had a hand in the Los Angeles Kings winning Stanley Cup championships in 2012 and 2014, when former Canes captain Justin Williams was a member of the Kings. Williams now serves as a special advisor to the general manager for the Canes.

Futa was the Kings' co-director of amateur scouting from 2007-14 before being promoted to vice president of hockey operations and director of player personnel in 2014. He was promoted to assistant general manager in April 2017.

Before joining the Kings, Futa spent 10 seasons in the Ontario Hockey League. He was general manager of the Owen Sound Attack from 2002-07 and was named OHL executive of the year by the league in 2004-05.



### Futa joins Hurricanes as Senior Consultant to GM

The Carolina Hurricanes announced on Wednesday that the team has hired Michael Futa as Senior Consultant to the General Manager.

"Michael brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our front office," said President and General Manager Don Waddell in a statement. "He knows what it takes to build a championship-caliber team, and we're excited to add him to our organization."

Futa, 53, has worked in the NHL for 13 seasons, serving various roles for the Los Angeles Kings from 2007-20. He began as the Kings' co-director of amateur scouting from

2007-14 before being promoted to vice president of hockey operations and director of player personnel in May 2014.

After serving in those roles for three seasons, he was again promoted to assistant general manager in April 2017. During his tenure with Los Angeles, Futa helped build the Kings' 2012 and 2014 Stanley Cup-winning rosters.

Before joining the Kings, Futa spent 10 seasons in the Ontario Hockey League as general manager of the Owen Sound Attack from 2002-07, assistant coach and assistant general manager of the Oshawa Generals from 1999-01 and coaching the Toronto St. Michael's Majors from 1997-00.



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## Carolina Hurricanes hire Michael Futa as senior consultant

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"Michael brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our front office," said Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell. "He knows what it takes to build a championship-caliber team, and we're excited to add him to our organization."

Futa comes to the Hurricanes with a plethora of experience working in the NHL. He started with the Los Angeles Kings in 2007, working as the co-director of amateur scouting until 2014. Then, he got promoted to vice president of hockey

operations and director of player personnel. Futa received another promotion with the Kings in 2017, serving as assistant general manager. The Toronto native played an integral role in the Kings winning two Stanley Cups in 2012 and 2014.

Before joining the Kings, Futa worked as the general manager of the Owen Sound Attack in the Ontario Hockey League. He earned OHL Executive of the Year honours in 2004-05.



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

## An offseason conversation with Rod Brind'Amour: Part two

By Andrew Schnittker

We continue our interview with Carolina Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour today. In part two, the Canes' bench boss gives his thoughts on each of the new additions the team made during its busy 2021 offseason.

As before, questions and answers have been very slightly edited for flow and clarity, but they are listed in the order of the conversation. The first portion of the interview is available here. Enjoy!

I wanted to ask you about the new guys and what each of them brings. You mentioned one already in the trade that you guys made in bringing in Ethan Bear. What do you see him bringing to the team?

Well, again, it's a young player who we're hoping is just tapping into what he's going to be. I think anytime you can get an opportunity to bring in a young player that can be in a top-four role in a defensive group, that's the attraction, for sure. That's where we see him. He can skate. I think there's a whole bunch more to his game still to come. Obviously that's our job to pull it out of him, but I think it's a pretty good gamble, so to speak, on trading for him, because there's a lot of upside there.

One of the next players you guys added that day was Ian Cole, someone who has some Stanley Cup experience. I'm sure that was something you liked to see?

You can never have enough of those guys around, guys that have been through it. It's one thing to talk about it, but when you've been there, that experience is really hard to replicate unless you've been there. That's a big, big plus. Plus the way he plays, it's hard-nosed, gritty and doing the dirty things that obviously you need to have those kinds of players if you want to win.

You added a little bit of depth with Brendan Smith as well?

Same kind of player, maybe a little bit more gritty, sandpaper kind of player, great teammate, I think looking to try to get his second half of his career going. I think he's got a lot of motivation, and again, being a great teammate is what was always checked off when we talked about him and did our homework on him. You can't have enough of those guys around.

Tony DeAngelo is the addition to the blue line that's gotten the most attention this offseason. What do you think he brings on the ice? And he's obviously a player who's had some controversy in his past, and I know Don Waddell said that you spoke with him before you guys made the decision to bring him in. What was it about your conversations with

him that made you believe that he has grown as a person and learned from those things that happened in his past?

Obviously, we've had quite a few conversations with him when we were able to. Before that, we were doing the homework, talking to people that know him, that have played with him and getting that background. I feel like obviously watching him play, let's be honest, you're not having these conversations if you don't think he can play. That's the first thing. And then, once we do that, you obviously know that what he's gone through and the whole nine yards, that's a concern, for sure. But when you talk to him and do your homework on him, you realize that, 'OK, that's not really an issue.' And so it was unfortunate the way it all played out. I did not anticipate that [reaction], to be quite honest with you. And the reason I didn't is because I've done the homework and talked with him, and talked to people that played with him, and all that stuff. I get it where there's that reaction, because the people that are having that reaction aren't privy to those conversations and aren't privy to getting the background. So it's the type of situation where you've just got to let him do his thing and let his actions speak for himself. We're giving a place to show that he's grown up. I think we've got a good environment here that will allow him to do that.

Continuing with the additions that you guys made, you made a pretty major change in that you've got two new goaltenders in Frederik Andersen and Antti Raanta. What do you see them bringing, and how much of a challenge is bringing in two new goalies?

The whole thing is a challenge. You keep going on and on here, there's a lot of new pieces. I can't imagine looking around at teams that have won and saying they've made this many changes. So we're going to have to kind of break the mold here on that, but I feel that we're bringing in two guys who have proven in the past that they can do it. I think that's good. It's not like we're hoping they can play. We know they can, it's just a matter of can they stay healthy and regain what we know they have in them? I think they're both motivated to do that, and if they can, I think we're going to be in great shape.

Looking up front, you guys made a couple additions to your bottom six in Derek Stepan and Josh Leivo. What do they bring?

With Stepan, that center position is so crucial. He's obviously a guy that's played way higher up in the lineup in his career. He had kind of a rough year last year with injuries and what not, but I think it's a great guy to have, a veteran guy that



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knows how to play, and can, I think, provide a lot of depth in a lot of areas. So that's a big, big signing for us.

Leivo's kind of one of those guys that we'll have to wait and see on. I think he probably hasn't had the opportunity to really show what he can do. We definitely see something in him that there's a chance that this guy can really help us. We'll give him that opportunity and see where it goes.

The most recent acquisition is probably the one that I think a lot of people find the most interesting in Jesperi Kotkaniemi. It's not every day that you see a chance to add a 21-year-old former third-overall pick to your roster. Looking at the process you guys went through in evaluating him and deciding to get him, what have you seen him so far in what he brings, and what's your approach to trying to get the most out of him here after things didn't go the way he hoped in Montreal?

I think the whole key on it is the youth of it. You're hoping that what everybody thought about this player three years ago, where his game would end up being, we're just getting to it and we're hitting that stride of now he can take that next level. Obviously that's the reason you go and make this

move. It's certainly not based on what he's done, it's where you think he can get to. That's essentially it. I don't know the player. He's not even here yet. So it's going to be a clean slate with him. He's going to have a great opportunity to play with some great players, for sure, and hopefully they can drag that potential out of him and we'll see where they're at.

What was last week like for you? That whole offer sheet process isn't something we see very often, were you thinking 'Am I going to get him, am I not going to get him,' just what was that like?

To me, it's easy. There's no stress for me. It's obviously on the player and the organization. They're the ones that we went out and made this move. I think at the end of the day, you have to give [Tom Dundon] and [Don Waddell] credit for saying, to me, it was more of 'We have this space now,' meaning cap relief, and you can't take it with you. What's the best move that you can do to use it and identify a player that you think might be a future great player? That's what they went and did. It was not stressful for me. The stress comes now with trying to put all the pieces together.



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## Hurricanes State of the Position: Defense

By Brett Finger

The Carolina Hurricanes underwent several big defensive changes over the offseason, parting ways with Dougie Hamilton and Jake Bean and bringing in Ian Cole, Ethan Bear, Tony DeAngelo, and Brendan Smith.

Despite the overhaul, the Canes still have their two cornerstone pieces in place, but the team's postseason upside will largely depend on the new guys.

Here's the state of the defense.

Jacob Slavin

The 2021 season was a rocky one for Slavin, who missed time after contracting COVID in the first week of the season and didn't experience the sustained level of dominance that he had in past seasons.

Slavin at 75% is better than most NHL defensemen at 100%, though, and despite missing part of the first round due to injury, some of his best moments came in the postseason. Over the last three seasons, he has shown that he can find another level in the playoffs, and he did that again in 2021 with six points in eight games and dominant play driving throughout.

With Dougie Hamilton now out of the equation, there will be a lot of pressure on Slavin this season to bring stability to what will likely be a variety of defensive partners early on in the season.

Brady Skjei

Skjei's first full season in Carolina was a mixed bag. He excelled in tough penalty-killing minutes but struggled mightily at 5-on-5. No matter how you slice it, he had a deeply negative offensive impact when he was on the ice, and his average defensive impact could only go so far in making up for it.

He was far more effective on the PK, even if the Canes allowed more shots from right in front of the net when he was on the ice.

The Hurricanes desperately need some sort of development from Skjei within the team's system. He needs to carry his own weight at 5-on-5 and bring some defining characteristics in his game, because the 2021 version of Skjei wasn't good enough to instill much confidence in him being the number three defenseman on a team with Stanley Cup aspirations.

Jake Gardiner

Gardiner missed most of the 2021 season due to nagging injuries, and he will be on LTIR to start the 2021-22 season.

Brett Pesce

It was a banner year for Pesce last season. After undergoing serious shoulder surgery just before the COVID pause in 2020, he returned and was arguably Carolina's best defenseman in 2021.

He was an offensive machine at 5-on-5 and maintained a reliable defensive presence both at 5-on-5 and on the penalty kill.

Pesce has really transformed his game over the last few seasons, but last season was the best example to date of what he can be. He has gone from a steady stay-at-home defender with limited offense to a dynamic offensive creator. He hasn't performed well in his limited power-play ice time over the years, but that doesn't take away from his even-strength production.

He might be the best all-around defenseman on the team.

Ian Cole

The Hurricanes presumably brought in Cole to serve as a rugged, reliable third-pairing defenseman.

He has plenty of experience doing that on winning teams. He's a veteran blueliner who took a step back last season in Minnesota, but his track record in Colorado and Pittsburgh is impressive, and if he can replicate that, he will be worth the contract he got in Carolina.

Ethan Bear

Acquired via trade from the Edmonton Oilers, Bear is an exciting young defenseman with loads of upside.

He creates a ton of transition offense at 5-on-5 with his great vision and passing ability in the defensive zone, and he has the mobility to move up with the play and be a threat in the neutral zone. Bear had a number of ups and downs in Edmonton, but he is just 23 years old, and the Hurricanes expect him to be a key piece in their blue line moving forward. He took a massive leap forward last season, especially with his defensive numbers.

He could slot into many places in the depth chart and will likely move around a bit. Only time will tell where he sticks, but he should be an impact player when he hits his stride.

Anthony DeAngelo

DeAngelo's game is all about offense, and that's what the Hurricanes need from him.

He is a dynamic offensive player with all of the skills you'd look for in a potential 40-point defenseman and power-play quarterback. He is a great playmaker with great on-ice vision and an effective shot.

His skating ability makes him a very good rover in the offensive zone. He can attack you from many areas.

Then there's his defense, which has been bad from the moment he entered the league. He should be shielded from tough matchups as much as possible if you want to get the best version of him.

You can find a more in-depth look at DeAngelo's game here.

Brendan Smith

Smith had a bounceback year in 2021 after a series of declining seasons in New York. His better season was aided, in large part, by his high on-ice shooting percentage, but his defensive metrics did improve marginally.



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He will be the team's seventh defenseman and, if things go to plan, he won't have much of an on-ice impact.

## Depth

The Hurricanes solidified their blueline depth with the signing of Eric Gelinas and the re-signing of Maxime Lajoie.

Gelinas hasn't played in the NHL since 2017, but he went overseas and established himself and his game in the SHL. He tallied 34 points in 46 games last season with Rögle.

Lajoie played well in AHL Chicago last season and held his own for the most part in his two games of postseason action with the Hurricanes. He's a quality two-way defender who can eat up some bottom-pairing minutes.

Young defenseman Joey Keane is also in the pipeline and has NHL upside. If key injuries hit, he could see NHL games as soon as this season.



The Chicago Wolves announced a new time for their American Hockey League road game on Saturday, Jan. 15, against the Iowa Wild. Puck drop has been changed from noon to 6 p.m. at Wells Fargo Arena.

The Wild are one of the six teams that will try to dethrone the Wolves as Central Division champions during the 2021-22 regular season. The Wolves have claimed four of the last five division crowns.

The Wolves' updated schedule can be found [here](#). Head coach Ryan Warsofsky and the Wolves launch their title defense Saturday, Oct. 16, versus the Rockford IceHogs on Opening Night, presented by Turtle Wax. The first 2,500 fans to enter Allstate Arena will receive a Wolves Static Cling Schedule.



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# SportScan

Articles from outlets covering the Hurricanes'  
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1191767 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' Don Waddell adds Michael Futa to management team

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 4:20 PM

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"Michael brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our front office," Waddell said in a statement. "He knows what it takes to build a championship-caliber team, and we're excited to add him to our organization."

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The Athletic / How NHL prospect tournaments went from small-town solution to leaguewide must

By Max Bultman and Sean Shapiro

Sep 15, 2021

The hockey season starts today.

No, the NHL regular season doesn't kick off until mid-October, but for many NHL executives and prospects, the 2021-22 campaign has its soft opening on Thursday afternoon when prospects, in full NHL apparel, clash in exhibition games.

"It's really the kickoff of the season," Dallas Stars GM Jim Nill said. "Everyone is back in the rink, there are games to watch, and it's a return to a sense of normalcy of what we hope will be a long season."

Prospect tournaments and showcases were canceled in 2020 because of COVID-19 but have returned in 2021. Some have been altered for financial or logistical reasons, but with a few exceptions, sending prospects to play in September has become a must-do item for NHL teams as they hope to embark on a more normal season.

And for five NHL teams, normal means returning to a small resort town along the lake in Northern Michigan, which served as the setting for the growth of the prospect tournament from an outside-the-box idea to an institution amongst NHL clubs.

The birth of the NHL Prospect Tournament dates back to 1997.

The Red Wings were coming off a Stanley Cup win, with a new general manager in Ken Holland taking the reins in the lead up to the 1997-98 season.

At the time, the Red Wings held their training camps at Joe Louis Arena, where they played their home games. But Holland — a former goaltender who had spent eight years in the American Hockey League — fondly remembered the bonding and team-building that had come with going away for a few days in those minor-league years: hanging out, playing golf and getting dinners with teammates.



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So, when he took over as Detroit's GM, he asked then-coach Scotty Bowman what he thought of moving camp outside the city. After a trip to Traverse City (located in the Northwest part of Michigan's lower peninsula) to check out the rink, hotel and overall area, Holland was sold, and so it was that the Red Wings took their training camp up north.

But Holland still noticed one issue when it came to evaluating the prospects in the defending champions' training camp.

"You've got young players coming to camp," Holland said, "and you're trying to evaluate them against (Steve) Yzerman and (Nicklas) Lidstrom and the Russian Five and (Brendan) Shanahan."

"I remember watching these kids just getting left out to dry, they had no chance for any real evaluation," Nill said. "This was where you get to the 'there has to be a solution' conversation about your problem."

While the Red Wings' massive collection of talent was a good problem to have, it was certainly not the ideal context in which to assess a prospect. So Holland and his director of player development (and soon-to-be assistant general manager) Nill got to thinking: "I wonder if some other NHL teams would have any interest in just having some kind of a rookie or a prospect tournament," Holland recalled.

Sure enough, they were. The NHL Prospect Tournament debuted in Traverse City in the fall of 1998, featuring four teams, each playing each other once.

Eventually, the tournament grew to include eight teams, each playing four games over five days. It would have grown even larger if not for logistical challenges. There's only so much ice and time in a day available, and other organizations started looking for their own solutions, leading to the creation of a prospect tournament in Buffalo, and later the rotating tournaments that will be housed in Arizona and Florida this year.

Many of the players at the camp were on tryouts, and management needed to see them in live action to decide whether to sign them. Others were junior-aged players who had recently been drafted, and who would doubtless be heading back to their junior teams shortly, but the NHL teams first wanted to see where those players were in their development. And there were some prospects who would actually be sticking around for main camp but who still weren't guaranteed to get much action in NHL preseason games, and would have to wait weeks to get into a limited number of AHL exhibitions.

To this day, that remains a driving force of teams participating in Traverse City and the other prospect tournaments.

"There's a fundamental distinction between watching your guys go through the efforts of a traditional training camp — where they do drills and have intrasquad scrimmages, which is a rather homogenous event — compared to getting closer to what we deem to be real competition, where you can see them compete and measure them against their peers," said Maple Leafs assistant GM Laurence Gilman.

"And when you go to a tournament such as the Traverse City event, the stakes rise significantly and you get a far better measure of what they're really made of as prospects and how they measure up against prospects from other teams."

As an example of the impact the tournament can make for a player, Gilman pointed to defenseman Kristians Rubins, whom Toronto brought on its first-ever trip to the tournament in 2019, while he was on an AHL contract. Rubins, an undrafted defenseman, played well at the tournament, which Gilman said "really made us pay a little more attention to him as his time with us evolved."

And sure enough, the team eventually converted Rubins' contract to an NHL deal. At 23, they now consider him a prospect.

"He's still in the evolutionary process of his career, but he's a good example of a player who came to Traverse City and performed well and made us rethink our perspective of him," Gilman said.

As it turned out, though, the opportunity to better assess a team's own internal prospects — while certainly the chief objective of the tournament — was not its only benefit for teams. Especially when tournaments are at full capacity, they can serve as a sort of one-stop shop for teams to get a leg up on their pro scouting, seeing a decent portion of up to eight different farm systems in one place, over one long weekend.

And as tournaments have proliferated, they've become a draw for scouts whose teams aren't even attending. Edmonton, for example, will have a scout in Traverse City, as well as one in Arizona, despite the Oilers prospects not playing at either one.

Those are the tangible benefits teams see by participating each year. But there is also another, less quantifiable one for NHL organizations: the ability to have players develop, compete and spend time together at an early point in their careers.

"Those players, they're a team for a week, but some of them are going to be a team (in the NHL) five years from now, four years from now," Holland said. "You start to build chemistry, they start to build relationships, they start to be proud to be from that organization."

In normal years, when team personnel can travel more freely and budgets aren't so tight, that same principle can even extend upstairs to the front office, too. Scouts who are usually spread across the world (or at least the continent) have the rare chance to get together in one place — not just to scout, but also to learn, interact and build relationships with one another.

All of this, of course, does cost money. And the revenue squeezes and cost-cutting driven by the pandemic don't necessarily lend easily to spending money on attending a rookie tournament — which may be one factor in the smaller field in Traverse City this year.

Among the others: the Carolina Hurricanes were a fixture at the Traverse City tournament but have split and joined a more regional showcase with the Florida Panthers, Tampa Bay Lightning and Nashville Predators, where the teams rotate hosting duties.

Being able to host the tournament, even on a quadrennial basis, has major appeal for some NHL teams when it comes to both player and business development. It's a chance to keep prospects in their own facility, while also creating an event to generate a small amount of revenue.

To be clear, prospect tournaments are always going to operate at a loss for NHL teams, but the ability to sell some tickets and food and beverage, like the Arizona Coyotes are doing when hosting their prospect games, helps lessen the financial burden for owners that have been losing money during a pandemic.

Some GMs also prefer their prospects to play fewer games, with some noting that the four-games-in-five-days setup at Traverse City has its drawbacks and in general might not be the smartest structure for player health.

That's why the Minnesota Wild and the Chicago Blackhawks decided to leave the Traverse City tournament and start their own one-off showcase, with each team alternating hosting duties of a two-game prospect series at their home facility.

"Detroit and the city of Traverse City do an outstanding job ... but all of a sudden you're going from zero miles an hour to a hundred miles an hour in the first shift of the game in Traverse City. And then you're continuing to do that for three more games after that," Wild director of player development Brad Bombardir said. "So physically, it was a little bit of a push for guys sometimes. So we're much happier and that's why it's been spaced out the way it is with some practices and two games leading into main camp. So we thought that was a better way to tackle a camp like this."

It's important to note this plan had been in the works before the pandemic.

Other teams have also kicked around ideas of potentially hosting their own tournament or combining it with a mini training camp, almost like a bonus development camp with more built-in competition.

Multiple NHL executives on the business side have also told The Athletic that if they had their way, they'd be pushing more to host their own tournament.

"I think the GMs and team presidents have different ways of viewing this in some cases," one said. "Personally, I would love to host it in my home rink or practice rink and sell some tickets, keep my brand in the market. But I also know some GMs like the experience of having the young players at one of the other tournaments."



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Overall it's an evolving space for teams to figure out the merit of various formats and approaches for prospect tournaments and showcases, but the initial idea hatched in Northern Michigan has solidly entrenched itself as an institution for NHL management.

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1191847 Websites

The Athletic / The 2022 NHL Draft: Wheeler ranks his top 32 prospects in preseason

By Scott Wheeler

Sep 15, 2021

The hockey calendar is turning. Some leagues are already in progress. Others are beginning to gather for training camps and preseasons. And with all of it comes the start of a new draft season for the (mostly) 2004-born class of 2022.

This list follows my early top 22 from March as my first ranking for the 2022 NHL Draft.

This list comprises 24 forwards and eight defensemen, with just one defenseman inside the top 10, signaling a draft that is lighter on high-end defenders than 2021 was — last year four defensemen went inside the top 10.

The 2022 NHL Draft is shaping up as a bounce-back year for USA Hockey. Americans outnumber Canadians 11-10 here. That's a big deal a year after Canadians outnumbered Americans 43-24 on my draft board, and just three players from the national program's under-18 team were drafted in the first round. It's also shaping up as a formative year for Slovakia, a country that has struggled to produce talent in recent years but just won silver at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup on the back of an age group that boasts two players with legitimate top 10 aspirations in 2022 and a third with first-round potential.

It's too early to make any real determinations on the class as a whole, especially given the role the pandemic played in many of these players' recent seasons, but it looks stronger at this stage than 2021 did.

Note: Though I consult scouts, coaches, managers, and agents in preparing my draft boards, the following evaluations are strictly my own. For more information on my process, read my guide to scouting.

### 1. Shane Wright — C, Kingston Frontenacs, 6-foot-1

A year ago, when I released my preseason ranking for the 2021 NHL Draft, the eventual first pick, Owen Power, ranked third on my list. He settled into the No. 1 slot by midseason, but I wasn't alone in the very early days in hesitating to put him there. That's not an issue this year, though. It's going to be Shane Wright's name called first next summer. That's particularly noteworthy when you consider the fact that outside of his brief and brilliant performance at the under-18 worlds and an audition for Canada's world juniors team, he didn't play hockey last year. This is my ninth year doing this work and I'm as sure of his place at the top of this draft class at this stage in the process as I have been in any previous. And not because he's a Connor McDavid-level talent, or even an Auston Matthews-level one. As good as he is, with the exceptional status and the brilliant rookie season in the OHL to show for it, I don't think he'll get to their stratosphere. I don't think he's going to win the Art Ross in his first full NHL season as a teenager, or register 105 points in 56 games, like McDavid did. He's not going to score 40 goals as a rookie, or 41 in 52 games as a 23-year-old, like Matthews did. But he's head and shoulders above the field in this draft class and there's virtually nothing to nitpick in his game. He's got a wide, balanced gait to his stride and a boxy build that helps him stay on pucks and win battles. He's got an NHL release that he can disguise off of the toe or heel of his blade from multiple stances. He's a heady handler and facilitator who reads the play at a high level with and without the puck. He's a powerful, though

not explosive skater. And he's also a lead-by-example type who understands the finer details of the game and will excel at both ends at the next level.

- What makes Shane Wright special? Everyone who knows him can explain

- Behind Shane Wright's exceptional life as hockey's best 15-year-old

### 2. Matthew Savoie — C, Winnipeg Ice, 5-foot-10

Savoie is the most exciting player in this class to watch. He's dangerous offensively every time he touches the puck, with extremely quick side-to-side hands that help him beat defenders one-on-one off of cuts and an NHL shot (which he can place with pinpoint accuracy from a bad angle, rip by a goalie clean from a distance or slide five-hole with consistency). He's excellent in traffic because of his craftiness and maneuverability into scoring spots. He's a soft small-area passer who blends deception into his movements. And he's got a bit of a chip on his shoulder, which keeps him engaged when he's at his best. He's also sturdier on his feet than his 5-foot-10 frame might suggest, which helps him play between checks. I see a dynamic, top-six, goal-scoring package. He wowed me away at Canada's under-18 showcase in Calgary this summer and I expect him to rack up a ton of points in his return to the WHL after a season in the USHL.

### 3. Brad Lambert — C/RW, JYP, six-foot

I'm pretty comfortable with my 1-2 right now but I debated ranking Lambert as low as sixth. He has been a star prospect for some time now, and has played above his age group for years because of his December 2003 birthday and advanced skillset. When he posted six points in five games at the 2019 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge as a 16-year-old, he was the youngest player on Team Finland. When he scored three goals in as many games at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup that year, he was the youngest player on that team, too. He also led all under-17 players in Finland's top junior league in scoring that year, posting 38 points in 42 games. And the same was true last season, when he posted four points in seven games as Finland's youngest player at the world juniors, or when he became Liiga's youngest full-time player and most productive under-18 one with 15 points in 47 games. Some scouts worry about his play when he doesn't have the puck on his stick, both in his energy levels off of it and his ability to make things happen offensively when he's not getting a lot of touches. With it, though, Lambert's a multi-faceted threat who blends impressive puck skill with good all-around skating mechanics and an attack mentality that complements a dangerous curl-and-drag shot, which also complements the short stick he uses. He plays pucks into space beautifully, gets to the interior, splits lanes, cuts off the wall aggressively and has a low base to his stride that allows him to extend plays — though he does have a bit of a hunch to his posture. He's excellent on the point and half wall on the power play because of his puck skill, dangerous wrist off the flank and playmaking instincts.

Here's some recent tape from preseason, including this five-hole penalty shot goal:

And here's that attack mentality off the flank that I talked about, showing off a nice cutback and that subtle curl-and-drag shot (which nearly squeezes under the goalie's arm):

### 4. Simon Nemeč — RHD, HK Nitra, 6-foot-1

Nemeč took a giant step forward last season at home in Slovakia, where he quarterbacked a power play, logged 17 minutes a night and posted 19 points in 37 games as the 18th-most productive defenseman (all ages!) in the top professional league at 16 and 17 years old. He posted four points in five games and was named one of Slovakia's top three players at the world juniors after starting on its third pairing. He played for the senior team at the world championships and into Olympic qualifying, and he captained Slovakia to a silver medal at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, where he was named tournament MVP and registered six points in five games. Nemeč is a tactical, intelligent two-way defender who starts and leads his fair share of rushes; finishes plays with his feel for the offensive zone; and manages the blue line with rare poise and comfort for his age. He's got great deception to his game, which fits in nicely with the maturity that is most evident in his poise and comfort out there. Though the Tipos Extraliga is a weak pro league, making it hard to be sure about its young



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players, he has shown impressive assertiveness against professionals and feels like a safe bet. He's also got pro size and desired handedness.

### 5. Danila Yurov — LW/RW, Metallurg Magnitogorsk, 6-foot-1

Yurov's another December 2003 with early pro experience and an impressive track record against his peers. Whenever he has played at the junior level, he has looked dominant. He was a point-per-game player in the MHL last season, which is pretty rare for a player two years out from his draft. Before that, he helped lead a Russian group of 2003s to under-17 gold with eight points in six games. This spring, he helped lead a group of 2003s and 2004s to silver at U18s with 11 points in seven games. He has blown me away in some of those viewings, particularly his final few in the MHL last season, which included a hat trick and four points in advance of U18s. He hasn't yet broken through to earn more than spot depth usage in the KHL, though. I suspect it's only a matter of time until that comes because the tools are all there. He plays hard and fast, he pushes tempo, he's an excellent give-and-go player who excels at playing in and out of space without the puck, his shot pops off of his blade in motion, he's got pro size and skill, and he's diligent in all zones. He just knows how to operate out there.

Here's that give-and-go game leading to a goal in KHL preseason action (notice, too, that tempo that I talked about when he holds the puck along the wall and then pushes up ice with his feet from a standstill):

And here's that shooting motion, which happens quickly and without much of a drawback into his stance:

### 6. Ivan Miroshnichenko — LW/RW, Omskie Yastreby/Krylia, 6-foot-1

Miroshnichenko has become a star for Russia internationally, forming a formidable one-two punch with 2023 NHL Draft sensation Matvei Michkov at the Youth Olympics, under-18 worlds and the Hlinka Gretzky Cup. He was impressive for his age (he turned 17 in February) in the MHL last season, too. But his numbers domestically didn't pop quite like Yurov's, and Miroshnichenko doesn't have any KHL games under his belt yet. So while his game can flash a little more than Yurov's offensively, I'm more inclined at this stage to take a wait and see approach with Miroshnichenko before I get too carried away with the excitement that already exists around his game. There's no doubt he's got an exciting game, though. He's got a dangerous shot (his wrist and one-timer both come off hard), he generates good power through his crossovers and edges, he's got sneaky vision as a passer, and he's always engaged in the play when he's on the ice. One thing that will enter the conversation with him as we get closer to the draft: He's signed in the KHL until the end of the 2023-24 season, so he'll likely be in Russia for at least two full seasons after the draft. That doesn't tend to matter if you're picked late in the first round or beyond, but it will if he finishes the season in the conversation for second or third overall.

Here's his first pro goal from his second game in the second-tier VHL on Sept. 7, for a taste of that shot and a nice bit of dexterity handling the bouncing puck in stride:

### 7. Isaac Howard — LW, U.S. NTDP, 5-foot-10

Howard put up elite (and I don't use that term lightly) age-adjusted numbers with USA Hockey's under-17 team last year. His 0.79 goals per game (27 in 34) and 1.59 points per game (54 in 34) are both the second-best under-17 rates in recent program history, trailing only Cole Caufield and Jack Hughes respectively (meaning he outproduced names like Clayton Keller, Matt Boldy and Trevor Zegras). Whenever he played with the under-18 team, he stood out as one of its better creators. He's a terrorizing offensive player inside the offensive zone, with silky smooth hands, lethal touch and instincts around the home plate area, and a knack for making plays through layers under pressure with a small-area pass or a fake. He's also strong on his feet for his size, which should help him continue to produce at higher levels.

### 8. Juraj Slafkovsky — LW, TPS, 6-foot-4

Slafkovsky is going to be a fascinating case study in this draft class because scouts are already salivating over his skill-size combination. He's got tremendous hands for a player his size, especially in tight to his body, regularly beating the first layer of pressure one-on-one to make difficult plays into the middle of the ice. And while he can play the heavy-on-the-cycle, power forward style game that you'd expect out of a 225-pound player, there's finesse layered into it in all sorts of ways. He's also

got a fluid stride, which makes him a surprisingly dangerous rush player; and impressive confidence with the puck on his stick, which enables him to hang onto it (sometimes to a fault). As a 16-year-old last season, he was productive at Finland's top junior level and excellent in Edmonton at the world juniors, where he led Slovakia in shots on goal (13 in five games) as a double underager and created a ton of chances despite finishing the tournament scoreless. That strong play continued at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, where the points came (nine in five games as Slovakia's second-leading scorer). I'm looking forward to tracking him as he tries to put it all together and challenge for pro minutes this year. He has shown some early flashes in preseason and Champions Hockey League action with TPS, but they haven't been consistent.

### 9. Frank Nazar — C/RW, U.S. NTDP, 5-foot-10

I really fell in love with Nazar's diverse offensive toolkit last season. He's a marksman from the hashmarks because of his wrist, which he powers through with ideal balance and weight shift. He's got quick hands, he shows creativity throughout his game and he plays pucks into space as well as anyone in the draft, regularly making plays through tight gaps in coverage. He's also just a hungry, driven player who consistently targets the middle lane with his standout skating. I have big expectations for him this season.

### 10. Logan Cooley — C, U.S. NTDP, 5-foot-10

No player on USA Hockey's under-17 team progressed quite as steeply as Cooley did last season. He wasn't one of the biggest names coming in (there was more buzz around the next name on this list, to be sure), but he emerged as one of the program's best players across both age groups, working his way into top-line usage with the under-18 team when injuries and his play forced their hand. Cooley is a speedy two-way center who played the entire season as a 16-year-old due to his May 4 birthday. When he's out there, his skill might not pop like some of the other forwards, but he's usually the most noticeable of them all because he's always on the puck, he can play in all situations, his tempo never wavers and he can play with anybody. His ability to change pace and beat defenders out wide works in concert with his approach to make a lot of plays.

### 11. Rutger McGroarty — C/LW, U.S. NTDP, six-foot

McGroarty came into the national program with a ton of hype and he followed through on it early with 13 points in his first five games with the under-17 team. But a slow finish, which included no goals and just three assists in his final 13 games (eight in league play and five more at under-18 worlds), left some a little sour on his progression. He's got a raw package of tools that is hard to deny, though. He's a plus-level skater — though there are some kinks he still needs to work out in his mechanics — who boasts a sturdy frame that matches his overall strength, power and athleticism. I'd like to see him open up his vision a little more. I don't think he's a particularly cerebral player per se, but he's got a great set of hands, impressive maneuverability with the puck and finishing touch that can thrill when he's really on. I think there are outcomes for his development this season that see him as a fringe top-10 player and others that land him in the second round. For now, I'm comfortable slotting him here on the upside and moving him down later if it doesn't come to fruition.

### 12. Jack Hughes — C, Northeastern University, six-foot

Due to his November 2003 birthday, Hughes is already college-bound after two years at the program. Despite being one of the youngest players on last year's under-18 team, he posted 34 points in 38 games to finish fifth on the team in points per game (0.89) and second among forwards in assists per game (0.68). While he's more of a passer than a shooter, he was probably owed better results than his eight goals on 73 shots indicated. He was third on the team in shots per game (1.92) but 12th in goals per game (0.21). He's got great poise under pressure and in traffic, sliding in and out of coverage to draw attention and then distribute behind coverage. Add in diligent off-puck game, decent skating and some of the better hands in the draft, and there's a lot to like.

### 13. Seamus Casey — RHD, U.S. NTDP, 5-foot-10

Casey's game is built on his mobility, and his ability to adjust to pressure with his footwork and escapability. He looks effortless out there, weaving in and out of coverage, and mixing in delays and fakes with the puck to



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create space for himself or take it from others. He's a fabulous puck transporter through neutral ice and a tactile player inside the offensive zone, where his footwork and escapability show nicely. He needs to get a little stronger in board battles but his feet, stick and intuition help mitigate against concerns over his size.

14. Ryan Chesley — RHD, U.S. NTDP, six-foot

A survey of NHL scouts gives Chesley the clear edge over Casey as the top defenseman at the program right now, but I view it as really close. Chesley and the diminutive Lane Hutson (more on him later, but some scouts also think he belongs in the same group) really came together nicely in the second half of last season to form a really strong pairing at both ends. Chesley is a sturdy four-way skater who plays tight gaps, commands his ice in control offensively, and plays with a boldness offensively that sees him join a lot of rushes and frequently attack off the line.

15. Elias Salomonsson — RHD, Skellefteå AIK, 6-foot-1

Salomonsson looked really good at Sweden's top junior level last season, playing to a point per game to work his way into some SHL action as a 16-year-old and Team Sweden's under-18 worlds team as an underager. That, combined with his Aug. 31 birthday, turned a lot of heads and made him an assistant captain on Sweden's Hlinka Gretzky Cup team. The only blip on his radar was his performance in Slovakia en route to a bronze medal with the Swedes, where he wasn't at his best throughout the tournament. I've liked what I've seen through the summer and fall exhibition schedule, and into Champions Hockey League play with Skellefteå. Salomonsson's defensive game has some warts. His positioning and reads can be sloppy, but some of that will polish over time. I really like his comfort level under pressure and confidence for a player as young as he is. He moves well in all four directions, he involves himself in a lot of plays offensively, he's got room and runway to fill out his frame, and some of the finer skills are there and should blossom as he continues to get reps.

Watch the way No. 3 activates from a standstill at the top of his crease to create an odd-man rush the other way before setting up the goal with a heady one-touch pass in motion:

16. Conor Geekie — C, Winnipeg Ice, 6-foot-4

Geekie, the second pick in the 2019 WHL Bantam draft, was excellent in the WHL's abbreviated season, producing 23 points in 24 games as the Ice's fourth-leading scorer and finding his way into the highlight reel more than once. He was less inspiring at Canada's summer showcase, but I think part of that was because of the expectations I'd placed on him going in. Geekie's a big center with impressive hands who battles hard, fights back against contact, skates really well for his size, plays through bumps, and thrives taking pucks from the cycle to dangerous areas. He can force it a little too much, trying to go one-on-one and create something that's not there, and there's a bit of a hunch to his stride that will need straightening out, but he's got an impressive skill level as a shooter, handler and passer. There's a real chance he goes — and eventually ranks on my board — inside the top 10.

17. Joakim Kemell — RW, JYP, 5-foot-11

I'd sooner rank Kemell higher here than any lower than this. He's a slick, goal-scoring winger who excels in possession, knifing in and out of coverage to take play from the flanks to the middle of the ice so that his quick hands and dangerous wrist, which he can get off quickly from a variety of stances and at a variety of tempos, can take over. Off of the puck, he also plays with a lot of energy and doesn't shy away from the physical side of the game. I'd like to see him slow down and utilize his linemates a little better than he does as I've seen him execute difficult passes.

18. David Jiricek — RHD, HC Plzen, 6-foot-3

I have a pretty clear-cut top-18 prospects right now and debated ranking Jiricek as high as 11th, so the gap between him and the players in front of him is smaller than the one between him and the next few names on this list right now. Jiricek is a big, strong, mobile defender who checks virtually every box and doesn't have any glaring holes. Last season, he was a standout for the Czechs at the world juniors a few weeks after his 17th birthday and a regular in the Czech Extraliga, where he posted 10 points in 36 games, drove goal results (Plzen scored 65 percent of its

goals with Jiricek on the ice) and played 15 minutes a night in a role that expanded as the season went on. He's a tremendous transitional defender who snuffs out plays in the neutral zone with his skating and length, and leads a lot of rushes as a puck transporter back the other way. Inside the offensive zone, he's also a capable handler and distributor. I wouldn't say he's A-level in those areas but he's comfortable walking the line and loves to attack off of it. He also boasts a powerful point shot. His confidence in control combines with pro tools to create an active, engaged three-zone player.

19. David Goyette — C/W, Sudbury Wolves, 5-foot-10

This is an aggressive ranking for a player who hasn't played a junior hockey game or an international one, but Goyette was the 2022 prospect who impressed me the most at Hockey Canada's summer showcase. He's a beautiful, effortless skater with a flowing stride who catches and handles pucks with ease at speed. He tries (and executes) difficult plays offensively with his hands by finessing pucks under sticks, through feet and into space for himself, and then stays on them inside the offensive zone to create for himself or draw defenders in so that he can feed pucks into soft spots in coverage for his linemates. He's clearly an impressive athlete, too. He was listed on Tri-City's 30-man roster in the USHL, but will play for Sudbury in the OHL this season.

20. Tristan Luneau — RHD, Gatineau Olympiques, 6-foot-2

Luneau, the first pick in the 2020 QMJHL draft, missed Hockey Canada's summer showcase and remains out of action with the Olympiques after undergoing surgery on a lower-body injury this summer, though he hopes to be back in time for Gatineau's Oct. 1 opener and is skating again. He impressed in Gatineau last season, winning the QMJHL's defensive rookie of the year award and contributing 18 points in 31 games as the Olympiques' most productive defender. I wouldn't call his game dynamic, but he's a smooth-skating right-shot defenseman who can competently run a power play, he's a plus-level passer but not a shooter, he reads the play at a high level with and without the puck at both ends, plays with a great deal of poise, and excels in transition. I see two-way, play-driving upside.

21. Noah Östlund — C, Djurgårdens IF, 5-foot-10

Östlund disappointed at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, but he looked tremendous in Sweden's summer exhibitions and a level more talented than Sweden's other top 2004-born forwards in the junior ranks last season. The hallmark of Östlund's game is his airy, agile skating and excellent hands. He wins a ton of short races, creates quickly as soon as he's in possession, and darts around the ice in control to get into scoring areas or facilitate from the perimeter.

22. Cruz Lucius — RW/LW, U.S. NTDP, six-foot

I've found evaluating Lucius in the early days to be an interesting exercise and challenge because it's easy to look at his numbers (which tilt to the assist column) and his past play as the facilitator in minor hockey to his brother Chaz (a natural goal scorer) and assume that he's a pass-first winger. While there's some truth to those assumptions, I also think they have miscast him this season. And so does he (I asked him). In fact, he'll be the first to tell you that he fancies himself a goal scorer, which will make watching him try to do that a little more this season particularly fascinating. He's got playmaking instincts, and a strong understanding of how to use time and space to his advantage to make plays through layers to his teammates and facilitate. He's got the quick hands that his brother has. But he's also a threat to score around the slot, and I suspect that will shine through more this season.

23. Jack Devine — RW, University of Denver, 5-foot-11

Devine, like Hughes, has already played two years at the program (due to his October 2003 birthday) and will take the leap to the NCAA this season as a true freshman. I'm a big fan of what he brings to the table. His skill level doesn't pop like some of USA Hockey's other 2003s and 2004s, but he's a better player than his numbers last season indicate (in part due to injury). He uses a tenacious playmaking style to drive play, keep sequences alive, and help out in the little battles and areas of the ice that tilt the ice in the right direction. I've also seen his skill really flash in possession, hanging onto pucks and playing between checks to blend effort with above-average talent. He's not going to be a star but there are the makings of a really good middle-six forward there.



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24. Markus Vidicek — C, Halifax Moosehead, 5-foot-10

Vidicek led the QMJHL's under-17 players in scoring last season with 31 points in 43 games, and then he created a heck of a lot of offense at Hockey Canada's summer showcase. He's a slick playmaker with a good acceleration gear who plays a gifted offensive game built upon a filthy set of hands that allow him to maneuver in and out of trouble to slice around the offensive zone making plays. I see signs of a dangerous offensive zone player who thrives under pressure.

25. Antonin Verreault — LW, Gatineau Olympiques, 5-foot-8

The second pick in the 2020 QMJHL draft, Verreault's 0.94 points per game (29 points in 31 games) and 23 assists both led all QMJHL rookies last season. His gifts with the puck are clear in the deception that's layered into his carries, and the little fakes he uses to make defenders and goalies bite. But he drifted a little too much to the perimeter last season and in Hockey Canada's camp this summer, illuminating concerns about his size and his ability to get to the inside to create for himself. He excels when the game breaks down into little small area plays and he's got to problem-solve his way through pressure as a handler and facilitator. I'll be looking for him to attack the middle a little more this season as an individual creator.

26. Maddox Fleming — RW, U.S. NTDP, six-foot

Fleming arrived at the program with a lot of notoriety after impressing on a Shattuck St. Mary's under-18 team that included older prospects like Artem Shlaine, Jackson Kunz and Scott Morrow. While he became a consistent shift-to-shift player on the under-17 team, he didn't quite meet the expectations some had for him. I like the finesse that's present in his game. He makes a lot of plays to the backside of coverage and he's a strong skater. I like his attention to detail, too. But he's going to need to take over offensively a little more than he did last season to stay in this range on my board.

27. Ty Nelson — RHD, North Bay Battalion, 5-foot-8

Nelson was a star in the minor hockey scene in Ontario growing up and the first pick in the 2020 OHL draft. Despite being just 5-foot-8, he's widely regarded as a sturdy, stocky, athletic kid who is heavy over his skates. There's some risk-taking that comes with his game and that was present on a couple of ugly turnovers in Calgary this summer, but once he learns to simplify a bit he's got all of the makings of a modern offensive defenseman. His head is always up, he's eager to activate up ice and join the rush or lead a transition sequence, he side-steps pressure with ease, and while I wouldn't say he's fast per se, his stride is compact and balanced, which allows him to weave up ice and spin off of pressure. Mix in standout instincts inside the offensive zone and a hard shot and there's a lot to like about his prospects.

28. Lane Hutson — LHD, U.S. NTDP, 5-foot-7

It's not every day you see a 5-foot-7 defenseman in the first round conversation, but Hutson's play in the second half of last season with USA Hockey and into the under-18 worlds, where he stepped up big on a depleted team, left scouts no choice but to consider him in this light. He's a light, though not powerful skater and deft puck transporter who excels across the line and in transition, weaving around the ice to find seams and open up lanes to pass through. He sees the ice beautifully, regularly identifying plays a step ahead of the opposition. While his size will continue to make evaluators pause, I actually quite like the way he defends. He gets back to so many loose pucks that he doesn't have to rely all that much on engaging in battles and even when he does his positioning and active stick help him remain disruptive.

29. Nathan Gaucher — C, Quebec Remparts, 6-foot-3

Due to his November 2003 birthday and advanced physical development, Gaucher, who was actually invited to Canada's under-20 camp this summer, is already entering his third QMJHL season. He led the Remparts in scoring last season with 31 points in 30 games, despite being Quebec's second-youngest player. His play with the puck doesn't pop, but he's comfortable in control, plays a strong give-and-go game off of the cycle or the rush, can be relied upon in all situations and has good feel around the net.

30. Filip Mesar — LW/RW, HK Poprad, 5-foot-10

Mesar, the third Slovak on this list, has become one of my early favorites to watch in this draft. I actually debated ranking him as high as the early 20s. He never looked out of his element at the pro level in Slovakia last season, producing 18 points in 51 games as a teenaged rookie. Then he looked borderline-dynamic helping Slovakia to silver at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, where he posted eight points in five games, wore an 'A' and made some really high-end plays. He's a plus-level skater who excels with the puck on his stick as more of a passer than a shooter; though his shot is extremely versatile and I've seen him score goals in a variety of ways.

Watch the way he carries below the goal line here, pushes past contact and then manages play from the halfwall before using that diverse shot to finish a nice seam pass from Nemecek with a one-timer from the top of the circle:

31. Mattias Hävelid — RHD, Linköping HC, 5-foot-10

Hävelid, whose twin brother is a goalie prospect in the 2022 class, has been a known prospect for some time now but he really shined at the under-18 worlds and especially the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, where he wore a letter and completely controlled play at both ends to lead the team in scoring and manufacture the bulk of their offense from the backend. He's a smooth-skating, calculating three-zone player who makes a lot of small plays that drive results, create exits and entries, and take away time and space.

32. Denton Mateychuk — LHD, Moose Jaw Warriors, 5-foot-11

Mateychuk's talked-about prospect who played a big role on a rebuilding Warriors team last season, made Team Canada for under-18s as an underager, and is widely considered a well-rounded prospect whose game is built around his mobility and sound decision-making. His July 12 birthday has scouts excited about the progress he still has in front of him, too.

The Ranking

As always, I've broken down the ranking into tiers below to give you a better sense of the fluidity within groupings and the drop-offs. These tiers (1, 2-6, 7-18 and 19-plus) will likely shrink as the season progresses.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' plan on consent, cybersexual violence a step in right direction

Eric Engels@EricEngels

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MONTREAL — Logan Mailloux was absent.

Not only from opening day of the Montreal Canadiens' rookie camp, but also from the plan of action vice-president of community engagement and Canadiens Foundation general manager Genevieve Paquette delivered to the media Wednesday morning.

But Mailloux's selection in the 2021 NHL Draft was the impetus for this plan, and his future became the main discussion point as Canadiens prospects ran through physicals while Paquette and director of player development Rob Ramage fielded questions from the media.

Positive changes for both him and the organization were outlined.

Mailloux, who was chosen by the Canadiens 31st overall in a draft he had renounced himself from after he was charged and penalized \$1,650 in Sweden for sharing with SK Lejon teammates a photo of himself engaged in a consensual sexual act with an unidentified 18-year-old woman, was barred from participating with the 27 other prospects invited to the team's south-shore practice facility this week. He won't be at



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Canadiens main camp next week, either, as mandated by Canadiens owner Geoff Molson back on July 28. And though the 18-year-old's name wasn't included in the announcement Paquette delivered Wednesday — that the Canadiens were investing \$1 million to help raise awareness and educate young people “on the concept of consent, respect for others and the serious consequences of sexual cyberviolence” — he was certainly at the heart of it.

Paquette first explained that, with the support of “long-standing partners and committed stakeholders” who helped authorize this plan, “members of the Canadiens hockey operations department as well as all employees will receive training on respect and consent and sexual cyberviolence in line with our policy of equity, diversity and inclusion and with the values of our organization.”

She talked about how with the help of “aid and prevention organizations, such as Sport-Aide, and the Quebec hockey community, a prevention program aimed at young hockey players as well as the interveners who support them in their practice of the sport, will be developed in the coming months to bring positive and lasting changes in hockey culture,” and added “initiatives are already underway to hire women in key positions within the hockey operations department to continue to add another perspective to the daily actions and management of our hockey teams.”

Finally, Paquette announced “financial support will be given to proven initiatives of recognized organizations that work to prevent, raise awareness and educate in schools about sexual cyberviolence, and a contribution will be made to an organization that helps victims and their loved ones.”

Then, once prompted by media, Paquette began to divulge what Mailloux has been doing and what he would be doing to earn the second chance the Canadiens afforded him back in July.

She said Mailloux was “continuing to do therapy,” continuing to be educated on respect and consent, and that he’s doing so in a “very serious and engaged way.”

Though neither Paquette nor Ramage were too detailed on what steps Mailloux would have to take before resuming his hockey career, which is currently on indefinite pause after Ontario Hockey League commissioner David Branch announced on Sept. 2 he was being suspended from the London Knights and would only be able to apply for reinstatement as of Jan. 1, 2022, they both expressed confidence he’s on the right path.

“Normally a first-round pick of the Montreal Canadiens would’ve been here yesterday for development camp, for Canadiens rookie camp today, and next week for NHL camp,” said Ramage, “but for his punishment, I guess we’ll say, he’s not here.

“He’s in London, with his junior team, the Knights, for which he cannot play right now, either... Logan is practising with them, he’s finishing up his high school and he continues on his journey of education and awareness from the situation that occurred in Sweden.”

Paquette added the process can’t be rushed and that, in consultation with outside professionals, it’s clear certain steps must be taken before others.

“In Logan’s actions and his path to being educated, he will be doing some volunteer work,” Paquette said. “I haven’t had the chance to follow up in the last week as to where we are at in regards to that, but following conversations that we had with outside counsel and sexual therapists it was not recommended that Logan go and speak to other kids or youths or groups to talk about what he did and what happened.

“He needs to complete his own journey to have the credibility to talk about this. Out of respect for his victim and all the other victims of sexual violence or cyber violence, we need to make sure that when he speaks up about what happened and why he did it, he needs to have completed his journey as a person.”

What Mailloux has been doing, and what he will continue to be doing — according to his agent, Dylan Liptrap of Quartex Management — is weekly sessions with a therapist, submitting to rigorous study and training programs overseen by Knights ownership and management, and engaging in several conversations with the Canadiens, the Knights and Liptrap regarding other initiatives to bring the player along in that journey.

Mailloux is also serving his punishment. In addition to the penalties faced in Sweden, the public scrutiny he’s been subjected to, not being able to participate in camps with the Canadiens and having to serve out the suspension from the OHL, Mailloux is restricted to virtual learning and not permitted to attend school in person.

Liptrap says all of that has taken a considerable toll on Mailloux’s mental health, but he is facing the situation head-on and with full ambition to improve his character and emerge a better person.

“There’s a number of organizations from leagues all around the world who have reached out and offered spots for him,” said Liptrap. “but Logan is standing up and taking the punishment that’s been provided to him. He does want to face it. He views going somewhere else as running away from his problems and he wants to take ownership for what happened in every way. He’s made that very clear to us and has made that clear in every public forum. He wants to do this the right way and make sure he’s taking the right steps to continue to grow as a person off the ice and use this as a positive.”

As Paquette alluded to, part of that plan will see Mailloux do volunteer work.

Liptrap said a local woman’s shelter is being considered, but they’re still awaiting clarity from the OHL on if and when Mailloux would be permitted to engage in that work.

“The league stated none of the players can be involved in the community this year, and it’s a league-wide mandate because of COVID,” Liptrap said. “So, we’re looking for clarification on what Logan is able to do. Part of the reinstatement is going to require community work — and he’s committed to doing that anyway as part of our plan — so we’ve requested formal documentation on what else will be required.”

“There will also be a point Logan will be speaking with teams, locally, in London, but not right away,” Liptrap added before echoing Paquette. “We have to make sure Logan is in the right headspace and has a full understanding of what he’s done, and that he’s properly gone through sensitivity training and properly understands how to relay the information to a younger generation to express what he’s learned in a proper manner.”

The Canadiens are submitting to a similar process with all employees. The management team, coaching staff, veteran players and emerging prospects were all included in the initiatives announced by Paquette, and that’s a step in the right direction.

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Sportsnet.ca / What to expect from the Toronto Maple Leafs in 2021-22

Justin Bourne@jtbourne

September 15, 2021, 12:26 PM

Hey, here’s a fun question to throw out to some Torontonians: are the Leafs gonna be good this season?

I say “fun question” in the way that it might be “fun” to wrap your limbs with bacon and sprint around your local dog park. It might be a legitimately good time at first, but eventually the pack’s gonna take you down, and regret will follow.

For science, I decided to wrap a tweet in bacon and throw it out there on Twitter though, and yeah: I didn’t have a great time.

Twitter is a terrible proxy for this sort of thing, but I exist in other spaces too, and public consensus seems to lead two places on the Leafs these days:

1. Sure, in the regular season, but y’know...



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...and

2. Who cares, which is just code for "I'm not yet ready to be hurt again."

I wouldn't view those as positive outcomes were I managing the Leafs brand, but hey, let people down enough times and you can't fault them for not trusting you with their heart.

Still, I can't help but feel recent disappointments have clouded reality a bit, which is evidenced by the pre-season gambling lines. Emotion doesn't exist for sports books, and just about anywhere you look the Leafs are among a handful of teams with odds that reflect contender status. The below is from Coolbet:

Granted, you get lower odds on the Leafs because people are going to bet it anyway, so the books protect themselves a bit. But that's still a big jump between them and the Bruins.

(Did I look at the above and immediately bet on the Islanders? Why yes, yes I did.)

The thing about my question here is that the Leafs were good last season -- a point that'd be foolish to argue -- but we've entered the San Jose Sharks territory of the 2010s, where people have stopped caring what they do in the regular season entirely. And that's fair! Toronto let a series slip away and have lost the benefit of the doubt after tough eliminations in the first round five straight years now.

To bring it back to reality though, it's really hard to win in the NHL. It's hard just to make the playoffs, and there's only a few teams league-wide we assume will find their way in each season. Safe to say those teams tend to earn the label "good."

There are a few reasons I expect this Leafs team to be very good, beyond the usual "they have a handful of elite top-end players." Let's pick through those reasons, and try to pin down this team before the season gets under way.

This topic is what actually inspired this column. Working with Keefe for two seasons allowed me to see how he operates, which means I've seen what he does between seasons using the previous year's game tapes. It's extensive. In-season the grind forces you to move on to the next game and the next period and the next flight and the next practice, and it doesn't stop. Going in-depth on unusual questions you may have ("Do we generate more chances when we move the puck corner-to-corner in the O-zone or low-to-high," or whatever) is nearly impossible. And so you get set to work on those things in the off-season, something Keefe hasn't yet had the opportunity to do in full.

This may be his "third" season as coach, but in his first year he took over a .500 hockey team in November, in the wake of Mike Babcock's departure. That year was then shut down for y'know, the pandemic, which lead to a janky restart in the bubble in front of no fans, followed by a shortened off-season and shortened season (with no pre-season) in front of nobody.

As excuses go, not being able to set up his team and prepare for a full season seems like a pretty legitimate one for Keefe. This will be his first proper season as the head coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs. I expect him to be able to use pre-season to evaluate who he has on his team, to run different line combinations together, set up a plan for his goaltending deployment, and just get started on the right foot.

Speaking of starting on the right foot...

They can take advantage of their schedule out of the gates

It seems likely that Auston Matthews will be in uniform on night one for the Leafs despite the recent procedure on his wrist. John Tavares is by all accounts feeling fantastic and looking good. Who knows what the pre-season will bring, but the Leafs look to open their season healthy and at home against the Montreal Canadiens, who I expect to be a team that fights for a playoff spot this season, but not much better than that. Whatever you may believe there, the Leafs will undeniably be favourites in that game. Then they're off to Ottawa the next night to face the Senators, who are still likely to be a bottom-third team in the league.

After that, the Leafs have a three-game home stand against Ottawa, San Jose, and the Rangers. There's a really good chance to get some positive vibes going before they head out on the road to play more

formidable opponents in Pittsburgh, Carolina and Chicago (more formidable, but not without question marks of their own), before returning home for a game against Detroit, who should also not be great.

I'm a big believer in the snowball effect. If you get some wins early and start to feel good about what your team can do, it develops a confidence that leads to better plays and more goals and more wins shortly after. The opposite is true, too. But with that opening it's not hard to see the Leafs winning six of their first nine. That would take them into a three-pack of tough, tough games (Vegas, Tampa and Boston) before a series of six games against teams who missed the playoffs last year. All told over their first five weeks of the season Toronto has 18 games, only six of which are against teams that made the playoffs in 2020-21.

It's impossible to predict how every team will look over the full season ahead, but it seems like the Leafs have the chance to get themselves in a good spot heading into December.

Prime-aged "prove it" players

It's very easy to get excited about talented prospects in a team's system who are likely to take a step. The Leafs have been doing it for years. But until that step is taken, it's not guaranteed. That's why I like the players the Leafs have brought in as UFAs this past summer. They're prime-aged players who've shown they can contribute in the NHL, and are likely to give you the best years of their career.

Nick Ritchie is coming off 15 goals in 56 games during his 25-year-old season. Michael Bunting has put in his development years in the minors and at age 25 showed he can score in the NHL, potting 10 in 21 games last season (that's not oblivious to the whole "he can't keep up that pace" angle. Obviously not. But he can contribute). Ondrej Kase is a good gamble given that if he's healthy, great, and if not, he's not on the salary cap anyway. He's -- guess what -- 25 years old, and has had a 20-goal season in the NHL.

Of all these names, David Kampf might have been the guy the Leafs' front office coveted most. He's also around that prime age at 26, he's 6-foot-2, and a guy who'll be asked to do a lot of what Zach Hyman did for the club on the defensive side of the puck. He's a proper centre, reliable, and they like him a lot. Given his age and development, he could give them a high value year.

I don't know how many of those guys need to hit for the Leafs to have had a successful off-season, but if even two can have good years the Leafs will be plenty deep up front.

When you expect to win every night, wins aren't a huge deal. They come and go without much celebration. Good teams get to a point where they win on nights they don't play great, and they move on. The Leafs were that last regular season, and I expect some element of that this year, too.

Their division gets talked up because of the top-end teams in it, but they'll still see a steady diet of Ottawa, Detroit, and Buffalo this season. It's easy to take for granted a team that's been good in the regular season for years, but when you look at the schedule and say "They should beat this team" more often than not, it's safe to say you're talking about a good-to-very-good team.

In the end I see a 100-point-plus team and likely first-round "favourites," whatever the heck that's worth in the NHL. So to answer my own question, yes, I think the Leafs are going to be good. Setting the bar at "Yeah but what will they do in the playoffs" may be fair in the big picture, but there's a whole marathon to run before they get there.

At least on the way, Leafs fans should expect to see some good hockey this season.

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers Rookie Notebook: Dylan Holloway's wrist injury a tough blow



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 16, 2021

Mark Spector@sportsnetspec

September 15, 2021, 5:36 PM

EDMONTON — The first blow came even before Edmonton Oilers rookie camp had opened, with prized prospect Dylan Holloway going under the knife Tuesday to repair a broken scaphoid bone in his left wrist.

What made it even more disappointing was, after busting the bone in the NCAA playoffs with the University of Wisconsin, Holloway had surgery after Wisconsin's season ended in late March in Chicago that was designed to have him ready to play hockey this fall. But that surgery failed.

Holloway, Edmonton's first-round pick in 2020 (14th overall) lunched with Holland during a Calgary world junior camp in August, and the Oilers GM didn't like what he heard.

"He was telling me that he couldn't shoot, couldn't take draws. He was getting frustrated," Holland said. "We were five to six months down the road ... and there was very little healing going on. Probably about 30 per cent. The decision was made: nothing was really happening, and we'd need to start the process all over again."

Holloway is only 19, but can play in the American Hockey League. He was likely destined for Bakersfield this year, which is definitely where he will be assigned when he heals up sometime around the new year.

Hopefully.

The Oilers roster is pretty much set with veterans, with precious few (if any) spots for a youngster to worm his way into the NHL.

But two left shot defencemen who may have the best shot — along with left winger Tyler Benson — are both in town and ready to begin their North American transition in earnest. Dmitri Samorukov and Philip Broberg are at the Rookie Camp prepping for main camp, where it isn't a total reach that one might be able to stick around.

"They're both going to be in North America," said Holland, who had good news when doctors cleared Samorukov for full contact after a January shoulder injury suffered in Moscow. "He was playing very well in the KHL, but hasn't played hockey since January. Two years of pro — one in Bakersfield, one in (the KHL) — and I'm also excited to see where Broberg is at, like everybody else.

"Do they force their way onto the Edmonton Oilers roster? Or do they have to go down to the American League and continue their development into NHL defencemen? That's what we're trying to find out, but they are both here (in North America) to stay."

Samorukov, 22, played a season in Bakersfield then went home to CSKA Moscow last year, the club where he was raised as a player. Broberg, 20, spent two developmental seasons in Sweden's top league with Skelleftea, while limping through the 2021 World Junior here in Edmonton.

"I had a knee injury and a shoulder injury at the World Juniors. It was difficult," said the defenceman, who played through the pain. "It is an honour to play for your country, especially at the World Juniors."

Broberg said he was about "80 percent" when he returned to Skelleftea, and by season's end, his minutes were down. Samorukov injured his shoulder in a January battle drill during practice and lost the back half of his KHL season, but says the last two seasons have him ready to challenge for a spot on an NHL blue line.

"When I first came to the AHL two years ago, it was really good for me. Learning how to be a pro player," he said. "Then, the season in the KHL, I established myself as a pro player. Now, we're trying to knock in the door. To do our best."

Remember, Samorukov first came over as a 17-year-old to play three junior seasons for the Guelph Storm. He had 45 points in 59 games in his 19-year-old season and then nicely quarterbacked the Russian powerplay at the World Juniors in Vancouver-Victoria. But the 197-pounder has settled on a less offensive game as a pro.

"Of course when you come from junior you have a lot of points. You think you might be something special," he smiled. "Then you realize you have some guys who can really get points. (You learn) what kind of game you have to play. I know who I am right now."

Samorukov was part of the ask by Arizona when they were peddling goalie Darcy Kuemper, a package considered too rich by Holland. Now, we'll begin to get a closer look at the 2017 third-rounder, who moves a nice puck and stands six-foot-three.

"This rookie camp offers him a good chance to get up and running," said Bakersfield head coach Jay Woodcroft, "so he's feeling confident heading into main camp next week."

Tyler's Time?

Is this finally the year that Tyler Benson cracks the Oilers roster? It had better be — he is waiver eligible now, at age 23 years of age with four pro seasons under his belt.

With left wingers Zach Hyman, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Warren Foegele in town, it's pretty clear that Benson will have to make the club as a fourth-line left-winger and try to move up from there. He's in against Devin Shore and Brendan Perlini for that 4-LW spot, as a former candidate for exceptional status as a junior now finds himself in a utility role if he wants to get his NHL career off the ground.

"We came up with a plan to develop different areas of his game (in Bakersfield last season)," Woodcroft said. "For example, his board work. Introducing him to the penalty kill. Something he had minimal experience on, but something we felt provided a line of sight or a pathway to ... make our parent club.

"Tyler was a point-per-game player last year and played on what I felt was the most dominant line in the Pacific Division of the AHL. He made plays," his coach said. "The opportunity before him is obvious. He feels like he's in top shape, mentally ready to go, and he's excited about that opportunity."

Edmonton's recent first-round pick (22nd overall) Xavier Bourquart hit the gym hard this summer, putting on 10 lbs. He comes to camp at six feet tall and 172 pounds, so he has a ways to go.

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Sportsnet.ca / Pinto ready to take his best shot at Senators camp after unique road to NHL

Wayne Scanlan

September 15, 2021, 12:25 PM

As an advocate of diversification in youth sport, I love hearing pro athletes like Ottawa Senators centre Shane Pinto share stories of how they weren't always the star athlete on their triple-A team.

Growing up in Long Island, N.Y., Pinto played nearly all of his minor hockey for the Tier 2 Brooklyn Aviators -- a modest, early flight plan that ultimately led him to soar among the three finalists for the 2021 Hobey Baker Award as the top college hockey player in the United States.

Pinto, playing for the University of North Dakota, was the first unanimous pick as player of the year in the history of the National Collegiate Hockey Conference (NCHC). Ultimately, the Hobey Baker went to Cole Caufield, whom you may have seen light up the NHL playoffs with the Montreal Canadiens last spring and summer.

This fall, Pinto and Caufield will resume their rivalry, but now in the Atlantic Division of the NHL, where the Habs and Sens will get after each other in a big way.



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For Pinto, who doesn't turn 21 until November, his first full NHL season will be the culmination of a long and varied road, and a childhood that included lots of golf, baseball and hockey -- if not always at the highest level.

"I played one year for the (Tier 1) Long Island Gulls, but I was mostly with the Brooklyn Aviators growing up," Pinto said. "I wasn't really good enough to play Tier 1, so, I was always with Brooklyn -- and it was awesome. I loved it there."

Repeat memo to minor hockey parents: making the triple-A or Tier 1 team is not vital as far as a child's competitive future.

"It's crazy how it works, but it's true, everyone is different," Pinto says. "It doesn't matter how you start, it's a marathon and that has been my journey -- definitely a marathon."

Pinto is so mature and well-spoken I found myself double-checking his age at the end of the interview. OK, yes, he really is just 20.

Not surprisingly for a boy who grew up close to two high-profile MLB teams, the New York Mets and Yankees, baseball was Pinto's first love. He played shortstop, third base and a bit of centre field as a leadoff hitter. He also was a base-stealing threat.

"I had a bit more speed then," Pinto said, apparently washed up in baseball before his 21st birthday.

From age eight to 15, Pinto imagined himself working toward a place on a college baseball team, and perhaps a pro career after that. Shane's father, Frank, still plays men's league baseball in New York and Shane's sister, Brianna, was captain of the Fordham University softball team last year (and is returning to play this season as a Masters student). Judging by her stolen base stats, Brianna has speed to burn.

So, yeah, baseball remains big in the Pinto household. So is golf. Shane is proficient enough to shoot in the low 80s at the notorious Bethpage Black course -- the one that comes with a giant red warning sign that Bethpage is an "extremely difficult" track and only suitable for highly skilled golfers.

But for Pinto, hockey reigns supreme. It came to him while playing under-16 hockey in the US Premier Hockey League (USPHL) and watching Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins win the 2017 Stanley Cup (ironically, after beating Ottawa in the Eastern Conference Final).

The next season, 2017-18, with visions of Sid the Kid dancing in his head, Pinto exploded as a scorer at the under-18 level, with 34 goals and 65 points in 54 games. He was on his way. He thrived in the USHL and in two seasons with the University of North Dakota, Pinto produced 60 points in 61 college games, while winning 62 per cent of his faceoffs and establishing himself as one of the most complete two-way players in Division 1 hockey.

In May, Pinto was named University of North Dakota male athlete of the year, by which time he was already a member of the Senators, having signed a pro contract in April. Pinto was the 32nd overall pick in the 2019 NHL Draft, part of an active UND-Senators pipeline that includes Jake Sanderson, Pinto, Jacob-Bernard Dockey and Tyler Kleven.

That a late-year-birth player (Nov. 12) like Pinto could be a polished, responsible college coach's dream at age 19 and 20, needs to be emphasized.

"There are only so many players who come through college who did what he did," UND head coach Brad Berry told the Grand

Forks Herald at the time of Pinto's Hobey Baker nomination.

Pinto was NCHC player of the year and defensive player of the year. Let's just admit they eventually ran out of awards to present to him.

Asked which stage of his hockey development was most significant in getting him to the NHL, from minor hockey to UND, Pinto thinks for a moment. He feels each step played a role in the journey.

"Going to prep school helped me grow up and mature as a person," Pinto said. "The USHL got me on the radar of scouts; going to UND helped me grow as a player and tap into my potential. I felt if I could dominate at the college level I could be an NHL player one day."

Pinto so dominated UND practices that coach Berry once told me in an interview he was a bit fearful of a teammate getting hurt by the 6-foot-2, 195-pound Pinto (he's now an even 200 pounds).

"We do a lot of faceoff work with centres and wingers jumping in," Berry said last season, "and I sometimes worry he's going to rip someone's arms off because for Shane, it's for keeps, even in practice."

In his dozen NHL games, Pinto chipped in seven points and looked like a great fit at season's end between Ottawa's rookie star Tim Stützle and veteran winger Connor Brown. That line will certainly get some looks in camp and the pre-season.

Albeit in a small sample size, Pinto's 41 per cent faceoff percentage -- a significant dip from his dominant NCAA numbers -- demonstrated yet again how tough an adjustment it is from college to the NHL level against top, veteran centres.

Pinto will continue to work on faceoffs, skating, and on finding those little seams in the offensive zone to release that wicked shot. At UND, Pinto was known for setting up in the "Ovi-spot," a right-hand shot on the left side of the circle.

Trent Mann, the Senators' chief amateur scout, says he has "no doubt" Pinto will grow into his game this season, including in the faceoff dot.

"Shane is intrinsically driven to get better," Mann said.

"You know, he's always bugging -- in a positive way -- development coaches and strength coaches, he wants to be better in all those areas. So, knowing Shane, he has done his homework, and he will know certain tendencies of players he played against.

And he'll continue to learn. Obviously there's many players he didn't play against last year because of the way the divisions were set up. He'll continue to learn, and pound away.

"He's a bright kid. He understands where he is at with his path, and the experience he lacks. But the work ethic is going to be there and he'll gain experience over time and learn tendencies of centres he goes up against and even linesmen and how they drop the puck. He's detail-oriented and will continue to get better."

At UND, Berry recalled a skinny kid who arrived at North Dakota as a sponge, wanting to learn, grow and develop strength, which happens more readily at the college level because there are fewer games and more time for the gym. Though he built a reputation as a shooter, especially on the power play (seven of his 15 goals came on the power play), Berry noted that Pinto had the maturity and patience to dish at the last second, if someone else was in a better spot.

On the phone this week, Pinto describes his playmaking this way: "not too flashy, but my IQ kind of takes over."

Pinto thinks he can improve in all areas.

"My shot gets talked about, but I think it could get better still," he said. "My playmaking could get better -- I've got to create more if I want to be successful, and I think that just comes with time and experience in the NHL."

To me, Pinto flies under the radar a little bit as the rookie camp opens Wednesday leading to the main camp on Sept. 22. And low profile is not necessarily a bad thing.

Most of the chatter pre-camp is about Brady Tkachuk's contract talks, and Year 2 of Stützle, who was strutting his stuff at the NHL media tour in Toronto this week. Forward prospect Egor Sokolov turned heads at development camp. Even Sanderson is creating excitement in the Sens prospect pipeline with preparations for what figures to be a huge year for him at UND, perhaps his last before joining the Senators.

Pinto can quietly go about his business, knowing his time for making noise will come soon enough.

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 16, 2021

USOPC rebuffs request to suspend Bowman

By Rick Westhead

Rick Westhead

TSN Senior Correspondent

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) has rejected an American think tank's request to suspend Stan Bowman from his position as general manager of the U.S. Olympic men's hockey team while he faces allegations that he helped cover up the sexual abuse of two Chicago Blackhawks players.

In an email to TSN on Tuesday, USOPC spokesman Jon Mason wrote the U.S. Center for SafeSport is the appropriate organization to investigate allegations against Bowman.

"The U.S. Center for SafeSport was created as an independent organization dedicated to receiving and investigating reports of sexual misconduct and harassment, and emotional and physical abuse within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements," Mason wrote. "The Center has the exclusive jurisdiction over participants, and to investigate and resolve allegations involving child abuse or sexual misconduct, including failure to report such allegations."

Mason refused to say whether the USOPC would consult with the center for SafeSport about the request made on Sept. 10 by Marci Hamilton, founder of the advocacy group Child USA, to suspend Bowman from his position with USA Hockey.

"At this point, I'll have to direct you to the center for any additional information," Mason wrote.

Hamilton had asked the USOPC to commission an independent investigation into Bowman's behaviour as GM of the Blackhawks.

In a text message to TSN on Wednesday, Hamilton wrote she is awaiting an official response to her request from USOPC.

"SafeSport doesn't select the summer and winter Olympic coaches and SafeSport has an opaque, slow and ineffective system," Hamilton wrote. "That's USOPC once again avoiding its own responsibility for athlete safety and for the sex abuse that runs through athletics."

Hamilton's letter recounted allegations made against Bowman and his Blackhawks management colleagues in a pair of lawsuits filed earlier this year in Chicago against the team.

One lawsuit, filed by a former Blackhawks player referred to as "John Doe 1" in court documents, alleges that after the team's management was informed that former video coach Brad Aldrich had allegedly sexually assaulted two players during the 2009-10 season, the team allowed him to remain employed through the end of that season, and refused to report the allegations to police.

A second lawsuit filed by a former high school hockey player in Houghton, Mich., who is referred to as "John Doe 2" in court documents,

alleges that the Blackhawks gave Aldrich a positive job reference that allowed him to secure positions within the hockey department of Miami University in Ohio and later as a high school coach in Houghton, where in 2013 he was convicted of sexually assaulting the then-16-year-old player.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport is aware of the Blackhawks scandal. In June, an intake coordinator for SafeSport contacted a lawyer for John Does 1 and 2 to inform her that the centre had received a report concerning Bowman's alleged misconduct that her client, the former Blackhawks player, may have witnessed, or personally experienced.

It's unclear whether the centre has officially opened an investigation.

The Blackhawks have claimed in court documents that the team investigated the allegations and found them to be meritless. The team said in a court filing on Friday that the former Blackhawks player's lawsuit should be dismissed because of limitation periods, The Chicago Sun-Times reported.

The Blackhawks also said the former high school player's lawsuit should be dismissed because there was a lack of evidence to support the claim the team provided Aldrich with a job reference, The Sun-Times reported. The newspaper reported that the team has asked the former high school player's attorney to withdraw that lawsuit.

With media scrutiny over the scandal increasing, the Blackhawks in June hired Chicago lawyer Reid Schar to look into the claims. The Blackhawks say the investigation is independent and that they will make Schar's findings public. The National Hockey League has said it's awaiting the results of Schar's investigation before taking any possible action.

"This investigation is not neutral," Hamilton wrote in her letter to the USOPC. "A truly independent investigation cannot be funded by the organization whose executives reportedly covered up Aldrich's abuse. Miami University has opened an internal investigation, but the scope is limited to the four months he was employed at the University."

"Bowman is still the general manager of the Blackhawks and earlier this year he was appointed as the general manager of the U.S. Olympic men's hockey team for the 2022 Beijing Games. How could Bowman, who has been publicly accused of covering up the abuse of a serial predator, be allowed to lead USA Hockey and represent our country at the international level?"

Hamilton's three-page letter was also sent to U.S. senators Richard Blumenthal and Jerry Moran.

Blumenthal and Moran led an 18-month investigation into systemic abuse within the U.S. Olympic movement and advocated for the passage of the Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletes Act, which was passed in October 2020 and imposed reforms in the Olympic world, forcing more oversight of the coaches and executives who control the sports.

The act permits Congress to dissolve the board of directors of the Olympic committee and to decertify offending national governing bodies.

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