



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 20, 2020

THE ATHLETIC

The Hurricanes lost files: Uncovering the bloopers and funny stories we missed

By Sara Civian

It's not in the best of circumstances by any means, but many of us have more time on our hands these days than expected.

For me, that means looking for the next big writing project. I didn't expect that the journey would become the destination, but sifting through all the interviews I did before the season's pause, I realized I'd miss the stuff that comes before and after the "pucks in deep" talk the most, and the stuff that tended to break through the fourth wall.

I also realized there was a lot of humor I just hadn't fit into actual stories.

I'm sure I've missed a bit, but as I'm emptying the contents of my Voice Memos, let's relive (or experience for the first time) some lost gems from the 2019-20 Hurricanes season. We don't know if it's paused or completely over yet, but there were good, little moments that deserve to be remembered.

I'm sure I (or someone else) used at least some of this in stories, but here we go:

Sept. 23: Vanna White calls it quits

Oct. 3: Postgame, season opener

The Athletic: "Do you maybe feel like Justin Faulk leaving has given you a better opportunity on the power play?"

Dougie Hamilton: "Yeah, for sure. I think that's obvious."

The Athletic: "Do you think Faulk leaving gives (Hamilton) a better opportunity to maybe be himself?"

Rod Brind'Amour: "I don't think that has any bearing."

You can see why I left this one alone at the time. Turns out everything worked out.

Oct. 10: Failed story about pre-game rituals

The Athletic: "Hey guys, anyone have any pre-game rituals? Anyone do anything weird?"

Ryan Dzingel: "Not me, no. It's too long of a season. Iced coffee."

Teuvo Teravainen: "Play soccer. Normal. Have a nap."

The Athletic: "OK, do you know if anyone does anything weird?"

Dzingel: "Ask Slavin or Haula. Haula's pretty weird (joking)."

The Athletic: "What's your pre-game ritual?"

Erik Haula: "I don't really have one. Nothing exciting (laughs)."

The Athletic: "None of you have anything good."

Haula: "No."

~End scene~

Oct. 19: Haydn Fleury's first NHL goal

Fleury, completely joking: "Well, I saw that I had the most games played without scoring a goal."

(He scored the goal less than 24 hours after he passed Victor Mete for that distinction.)

Fleury: "All the guys have been joking, saying 'It's coming, it's coming' ... Pesce was probably more fired up than I was, the whole bench was, it was really nice to see."

Oct. 29, 2019: Nino Niederreiter's many superstitions

The Athletic: "Thought it was interesting Nino changed his stick and immediately scored, do you think that can make a difference sometimes?"

Brind'Amour: "Oh, is that what happened?" (I wish there was a font to convey Brind'Amour's brand of sarcasm.)

The Athletic: "I guess ..."

Brind'Amour: "I think he's changed it a hundred times already. I think what happens, I've been there where you're trying everything. If it works you keep trying, you're trying to shake any kind of monkey off your back. Players are superstitious, he is superstitious. You'll probably see him doing that again, and again, and again, and again."

(As an aside, he did do it again, and again, and again, and again. His teammates voted him most superstitious in our first player poll.)

Oct. 29: THE (first) LACROSSE GOAL

Dougie Hamilton: "Where's Svech?"

The Athletic: "He really did it ... are you surprised?"

Hamilton: "I'm not surprised at all. I think he's the guy that would do it, he's capable of doing it and unreal to see that go in."

Andrei Svechnikov walks into the locker room

Hamilton, in the middle of answering a question: "Svech is here, if you guys want to go talk to him."

(Spoiler alert: We did.)

Oct. 31: Halloween

The Athletic: "Hey, Sebastian, is there Halloween in Finland?"

Sebastian Aho: "Yes, but it's not that ... spooky."

Brind'Amour being a dad: "We've got more than enough costumes (sigh). My gut says (Brooks, his son) will be Spiderman."

Nov. 1: Scooter gang

The Athletic: "It seems like every time you and Svechnikov are on the ice, something happens. What's the deal with that?"

Hamilton: "I just like him, and I hope he likes me."



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Nov. 5, from Philly: One of the all-time greats on the faceoff dot gets real

Flyers reporter: "The Flyers have two of the better faceoff guys in the league, what kind of concern is that for you?"

Brind'Amour: "Faceoffs are a huge part of it, and historically these guys have been two of the best in the league — always have been. It's a challenge, every night faceoffs matter. But I do know that for about seven years, there, we were one of the best faceoff teams in the league and didn't make the playoffs, so ... I think I'll hang my hat on that a little because that's not one of our strengths right now."

Nov. 11: Mike Maniscalco returns

Brind'Amour, to Maniscalco: "It's a long cry from L.A." (Where we were when Maniscalco's health started going south).

Maniscalco: "Oh God, you have no idea."

Brind'Amour: "You didn't look so good, there. When I walked in on you there, like ..."

Maniscalco: "You were the first one to notice, you were like 'You look kind of sick.'"

Brind'Amour: "I'm glad you're back."

Maniscalco: "Good to be back."

And that was that.

Nov. 11: Shania Twain — huge Caniac

The Athletic: "I heard you have the best postgame tune?"

Joel Edmundson: "I sure do."

The Athletic: "What is it?"

Edmundson: "I got some Shania Twain — 'Any Man of Mine.'"

Nov. 11: Sebastian Aho ripping my question to shreds, as always

This is going to be a common theme in this series, and I wanted to introduce it here. Sebastian Aho is NOT here for the stupid questions.

The Athletic: "Do you think this was one of your most confident games?"

Aho: "Oh, I don't know. Sure. If you want to say that."

Nov. 14, from Buffalo: Every Svechnikov interview is a blessing

The Athletic: "Do you think you're better at scoring or passing?"

Svechnikov: "Oh, I don't know. I think scoring. (Laughing.) I really don't know."

The Athletic: "Maybe both."

Svechnikov: "Maybe. (Laughing.) I don't know." Nov. 14, from Buffalo: The first time this season Teuvo Teravainen talked about passing

We will keep a tally, and if you're doing a boozy quarantine take a shot every time — not that he would.

Teravainen: "I'd rather pass it to someone."

Nov. 18, from Chicago: Cliche exposure

The Athletic: "How would you describe your game?"

Eetu Luostarinen: "Which game ... ?"

Warren Foegele: "Laughing so hard it ruined the audio"

Dec. 7

1. Teravainen: "If I ever see someone open, I try to pass."

(Drink)

2. A Bromance

The Athletic: "Have you ever had as much chemistry with a teammate before as you have had with each other (Teravainen and Aho)?"

Aho: "I mean, we've been together so long now. It's pretty awesome to have him here. It's been my whole NHL career, to have him with me, it's pretty special."

Teravainen: "I don't know, that's a tough question. Maybe, I don't know."

Dec. 10, from Edmonton: The night James Reimer punched Zack Kassian

Reimer, unstrapping his gear and preparing for interview: "How's it going, guys?"

The Athletic: "Good, how are you?"

Reimer: "Oh, not too bad. Better after a W, eh? Gave the fans something to cheer for. That would've been a boring, 3-0 win."

(The Hurricanes blew a 3-0 lead but ultimately won.)

The Athletic: "You and Mrazek clearly aren't shy about defending the crease ..."

Reimer: "With Kassian you know you're gonna (bumped or poked, audio not clear) all night, which is fine — it's fun, it's hockey. But I thought he kinda came in late there, then I didn't even know who it was, I just felt someone slash me. So I punched him. I looked up and it was him and I'm like, 'I probably could have picked someone who isn't as tough as he is.' But you don't want to get whacked and you want to protect your area. Thankfully the boys stepped in so I didn't get my face punched in."

Dec. 11: Aho's two-goal, 100th goal game

The web's Mike Smith (@MSmithCanes): "Did you know that was your 100th goal?"

Aho: "Yes."

The Athletic: "Did you know the next was your 101st?"

Aho: "I did the math."

Dec. 13, from Calgary: Mike Commodore was scrum lurking

Maniscalco: "Speaking of that guy (Commodore), if you could get him on the team today, how would he fit in with your coaching style?"

Brind'Amour: "He would probably have a tough time, I've got to be honest with you. You know what, though? I think he'd find a way to battle through it — I think he'd figure it out. Not



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to get too serious, but I loved the way he played. There's something to be said about being a great teammate and coming to play every night. That's kind of where it all starts, and Mike never did that, but if he did he'd be fitting right in."

Dec. 17, from Winnipeg: Aho's got jokes

Sportsnet's Sean Reynolds: "I think you and Patrik Laine are good friends off the ice, have you watched him much this year? He seems to be a different player in the way he is suddenly an assist man instead of a goal-scorer."

Aho: "Yeah, to be honest, I haven't watched a lot of his games. But yeah that's what I heard, he backchecks now (laughing). No, he always had that, I guess it's better for them that he works both ways."

Dec. 17, from Winnipeg: Another Michigan

If you're in the mood to relive Svechnikov's second Michigan goal ...

Dec. 21: Facts only

Teravainen: "Sometimes you lose, sometimes you win."

Dec. 23, from Toronto: The 14-goal Nightmare before Christmas

If you're in the mood to relive this ...

Early January: Grilling the Canes for Justin Williams stories

Clearly a few days before Williams actually returned to the Hurricanes, it was my strong sense that he'd return — and soon. I thought I'd go about it by doing a "Seven Anecdotes about Mr. Game 7 story" or something like that. Life had other plans.

The Athletic: "Asking for no reason at all, what's your best off-ice Justin Williams story?"

Jordan Staal: "Nothing I can think of right now ... that I can actually say."

Brind'Amour: "That's a good question, I'd have to think about that one. I'll think about that one."

The next day ...

The Athletic: "You think of a Williams story yet?"

Brind'Amour: "I knew you were going to ask about this, and I did think about it. Nothing you would want to write about, that's the thing. Nothing interesting."

The Athletic: "Come on ..."

Brind'Amour: "For me, with Willy, it's that he was the same. When I played with him he was the same. He gives you everything he has. If I think of a moment, it's Game 7 after we won in Washington. Him coming into the locker room and you see a guy that's giving you everything he has — no energy to even celebrate. He was just sitting down. That's a moment to me I'll never forget, it kinda epitomizes what he's all about."

The Athletic: "I'll take it."

Jan. 13, from Washington: Brind'Amour vs. officiating continues

Brind'Amour has some pretty close relationships with many referees around the league, and his bone to pick is not at all with them — it's about the process and what these referees are mandated to do. That said, he certainly has a problem with it (as he should).

The Athletic: "Just kinda watching that, at first they were calling everything then they weren't calling anything. Is that tough to coach?"

Brind'Amour: "That's the league now, right? It kinda seems that way every night to be honest with you."

Not to be one-upped by his take on goaltender interference:

"No one knows what it is."

Jan. 15.: We'll never know

I was trying to interview Jake Gardiner, and I can barely hear a word because someone is screaming "OPA!"

Have to think it was either Jordan Martinook or Brett Pesce.

Jan. 21, after Brett Pesce's first NHL fight

Maniscalco: "Who taught Pesce to throw those punches?"

Teravainen: "Not me."

Feb. 5, from Arizona: 'Best practice hit ever'

The practice following one of the Hurricanes' worst losses of the season to St. Louis was really something to behold.

Relive the whole thing.

Brock McGinn laid a monstrous hit on Martin Necas, but to be fair Necas had allegedly tried the Spin-O-Rama "one thousand times," and McGinn had enough. Also, there was money on the line.

Haula: "Usually that starts an actual fight."

Aho, urging the media to interview McGinn: "Ask this guy why he hits his own teammates."

McGinn: "Because there was money on the line."

Aho, sarcastically: "Yeah, I need it."

Feb. 6, from Arizona: 'I mean, yeah'

Svechnikov, after two goals and almost a hat trick: "What's up, guys?"

The Athletic: "How are ya?"

Svechnikov: "Unbelievable, you?"

The Athletic: "You, Aho and Teravainen really have some chemistry, huh?"

Svechnikov: "I feel they are the best in the world of Finnish, it's very enjoyable to play with those guys, and like you see we score a couple goals. It's great for us."

Coyotes reporter: "Just to be clear, you said those two Finnish guys are the best?"

Svechnikov: "The best, yeah."

Coyotes reporter: "You said that, right?"

Svechnikov: "I mean, yeah."



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As a personal blooper, my huge hoop earring fell directly onto Brind'Amour during the postgame interview in Arizona. I don't know how it happened but I'm just happy he didn't notice and it didn't get on TV.

Feb. 15: Everything went off the rails

Have you ever been to Raleigh Center Ice? If you've never had the pleasure, picture about 1,000 children packed in for Hurricanes practice — they'd just played a tournament. I literally needed an escort to get to the locker room.

They were all screaming for Svechnikov to do the lacrosse goal as if he was a member of The Beatles. He did it and I assumed he'd heard them, but maybe the best part of this story is that he didn't — he just felt like doing it.

Of course, all the kids (being the hockey-crazed kids that they are) wanted sticks. Some tried the absolutely classic "It's my birthday" tactic.

One Hurricane, walking into the locker room: "Lotta birthdays today."

Mind you, this was right after the outdoor game was announced. Brind'Amour reminded us all he's one of the best interviews in the league.

To add to the chaos, Petr Mrazek is in the background of my audio screaming (cheerfully) on the phone in Czech.

Here we go.

The News & Observer's Chip Alexander: "You've never been part of an outdoor game, have you wondered what it would be like — would you like to have the opportunity?"

Brind'Amour: "Ehhhh (not the Canadian one). I never really thought about it because we didn't really have them when I was playing. Now coaching, I think it's about the players who have to be out there playing. I mean, standing behind the bench it doesn't really matter wherever you are. I think the environment would be really cool, but I wish I would've had (that experience), I should put it."

Maniscalco: "When you were a little kid were you a sun up to sun down pond hockey player when you got the chance?"

Brind'Amour: "Where I grew up, it was never cold enough to play pond hockey on the ice. That's the misnomer about Canada, everyone thinks it's freezing. The weather where I grew up was the exact same as it is here. We didn't have outdoor skating rinks — I wish we would have. Put it this way — I wish we would have had outdoor skating rinks, I would've been out there all day long."

Alexander: "It's not even snowing in Antarctica these days ..."

Brind'Amour: "Well, there you go. And that's a whole nother issue."

Feb. 18, from the Mom's trip in Nashville: Justin Williams, man of the people

At the end of his scrum Williams just said "Sara, are you good? you seem disappointed in my answers"

Sir we have been in Vegas and Nashville in one week I just need to go to sleep

Feb. 24 and 25, post-EBUG and trade deadline mayhem

The Athletic: "What are you thinking when an emergency backup goalie enters the net?"

Jake Gardiner, taking a deep breath: "Not a great sign ..."

Don Waddell, strolling into the media room after a very postponed trade deadline news conference: "I apologize on the behalf of the National Hockey League (laughing)."

The Athletic: "Thoughts on the Storm Surge?"

Brady Skjei: "Yeah, about to get involved with that. I like it. Obviously I've seen the highlights, I'll definitely get involved."

The Fan's Adam Gold: "You know where to get good pizza around here?"

Skjei: "I don't."

Feb. 28: Teravainen after scoring two goals

"If I saw a good play I might still try to pass it."

Drink

March 7, from Long Island: First coronavirus-induced closed-locker room interview went well

Very loud noises you'd expect as arena workers disassemble a hockey rink

Williams: "Welp, I don't think that's going to stop ..."

March 10, from Detroit: Going out with a bang ...

**"Mambo No. 5" absolutely blaring in the background*

The Athletic: "Are you surprised Justin Williams is playing so well?"

Aho: "No"

The Athletic: "..."

Aho: "Not surprised."

The Athletic: "What are you thinking, seeing all those brawls?"

Brind'Amour: "Well, those aren't really brawls (laughing) — they are for today's game. But I don't like them. I don't want our guys to get hurt, we just can't afford to get injuries. We're in a little different spot than they are. We need our guys to play, these games matter. I don't really like it this time of year."

OK, so when hockey comes back — and it will — I have two major things to work on:

Give Aho an actual question, and don't talk about "brawls" with Rod freakin' Brind'Amour.



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FOX Sports Carolinas to Re-Air Best Canes Games From 2019-20 Season

Relive top moments from the first 68 games of the season

by Michael Smith

It's unknown when the Carolina Hurricanes will return to the ice, but until the puck drops again, you can relive some of the best Canes moments from the 2019-20 season.

During the pause, FOX Sports Carolinas will re-air memorable Hurricanes games from the 2019-20 regular season. Among the highlights are David Ayres' history-making emergency relief performance and a pair of come-from-behind overtime victories.

Each encore presentation begins at 7 p.m. and is followed by Hurricanes LIVE! postgame. Fans can also stream the re-airs on the FOX Sports GO app.

It's Been a Week

by Michael Smith

It's been a week.

It's been a week since the Carolina Hurricanes had won three games in a row on a critical five-game road trip to jump into a wild card playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

It's been a week since the Canes then caught an impromptu late afternoon flight out of Newark bound for Raleigh.

It's been a week without hockey.

It's been a week since everything changed.

It changed in an instant, like a goal in double overtime of a decisive Game 7 that elates one team and stuns another.

The week since has slogged along like a game with no flow, bogged down with whistle after whistle.

It's beginning to feel like we're all Desmond Hume, dropping the needle on a Mama Cass record before settling into an all-too familiar daily routine. We might as well be pressing a button every 108 minutes. We've got the time.

We're making our own kind of music. We're singing our own special song. We're making our own kind of music, even if nobody else sings along.

And we're waiting. Waiting, yearning for some sense of normalcy amidst the abnormal and the unprecedented.

But it has to be this way.

It has to be this way, for now, so that we can rediscover the way it was before.

Saturday, March 21 7 p.m. at Toronto, Feb. 22
Recap

Tuesday, March 24 7 p.m. at Washington, Oct. 5
Recap

Saturday, March 28 7 p.m. vs. Tampa Bay, Oct. 6
Recap

Searching for FOX Sports Carolinas? Find your local channel listing.

Television schedule subject to change. Additional encore presentations will be announced at a later date.

Right now, there are no crowds. But there are family and friends, a community of those closest to us that we have to lean on and support.

Right now, there are no highlight-reel goals, no jaw-dropping passes, no ten-bell saves. But there are triumphs of the human spirit in an otherwise bleak period of time.

Right now, there are no goal horns, no "Raise Up," no wooing. But there are those working tirelessly to keep us safe and healthy, selfless heroes who deserve our jubilant appreciation.

It's been a week, and it's likely to be many more weeks.

One day, though, it will change again. As suddenly as sports disappeared, so too will they return. Hockey will be back. The Canes will be on the ice again. The puck will drop. Cheers. Boos. Wins. Losses. Tailgates. Celebrations. It will all be back.

Until then, be safe. Stay home. Practice social distancing. Wash your hands. Check in on your loved ones. Keep the mind sharp and the body active. Take a walk outside. Read a book. Support local businesses in need.

It's been a week, a prolonged, empty week. And still, only a week.

Together, though, we'll make it through the next, and the next, and the next.

That's what matters most.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://theathletic.com/1677603/2020/03/20/the-hurricanes-lost-files-uncovering-the-bloopers-and-funny-stories-we-missed/>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/fox-sports-carolinas-to-re-air-best-canes-games-from-2019-20-season/c-316228910>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/it-has-been-a-week/c-316225212>



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SportScan

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

1181230 Websites

The Athletic / Picking the playoff opponent? NHL GMs don't love it but here's how it could look

By Craig Custance

Mar 19, 2020

One of the best things about interviewing Vegas GM Kelly McCrimmon is you always know where you stand. At least that's how our conversations go. If he doesn't like the question, he says so. If he disagrees with the premise, you hear that too. It makes for some good sparring.

So, when pulling him aside at the recent GM meetings in Boca Raton, Florida, and the question began with, "I can't imagine this ever happening in hockey but ..." he tried to put a stop to it right there.

"Then good," he said, cutting things off. "You don't need to write about it. If you can't imagine it, don't write about it."

What would be the fun in that?

The question posed to McCrimmon and a group of other general managers that week by The Athletic was about a February proposal that surfaced in baseball. There were multiple reports that baseball was considering a playoff system in which some teams would get to pick their playoff opponent. It would make for great theater, the perfect television event. Something we all could use right now. It would also create instant bulletin board material for the team that gets picked.

"Be careful what you wish," warned Sharks GM Doug Wilson.

Maybe it's hard to imagine in hockey, but as the NHL figures out what to do next, perhaps this might be the perfect time to try something so unique and to create a must-watch event when we're all dying for something to watch.

The GMs? Based on their answers in Florida might disagree. To put it mildly, they don't love the concept.

"I have no appetite for that whatsoever," McCrimmon said, once he heard the idea.

He was very much in the majority.

"I don't like it," Capitals GM Brian MacLellan said. "I like to play who you're supposed to play. You play a whole season to get your spot in the standings and you play it out. I imagine, if you're picking someone it'll be a little motivation to the team you're picking, 'Oh really? You're picking us?'"

Besides providing motivation, Bruins GM Don Sweeney felt like it might present the wrong mindset, that you believe you're better than your playoff opponent.

"For me, you don't pick your opponents. You have to be playing your best hockey, hope you're healthy and saddle up," Sweeney said. "It's a dangerous exercise to think at any point in time you're better than the other guy. I don't know if I want that one."

Wild GM Bill Guerin agreed.

"That's real dangerous, personally," he said. "You'd better be careful what you wish for when you start picking your opponents. I think you have to let your play decide that."

While shooting down the idea, both Blues GM Doug Armstrong and Maple Leafs GM Kyle Dubas acknowledged the potential from a televised event standpoint.

"I get the allure of having the public selection show and having the teams select and the team that gets picked, they have more motivation because they're the underdog," Dubas said. "I just think the way it is now is a sound structure. It's obviously created some unbelievable races basically in every division. ... I like the way it is now."

"I think there's intrigue to it from a fan's perspective," Armstrong said. "But it's difficult on travel. There's a whole host of things that go into it. I like our playoff format. It's in division. You've got rivalries."

Blackhawks GM Stan Bowman shared an interesting anecdote while considering the concept. In 2012, the Blackhawks felt like they matched up well with the Coyotes in the playoffs. If they were picking that year, it probably would have been Arizona.

Well, they got the Coyotes, and Blackhawks fans probably remember how that played out.

"The one thing I've found is every time you're wishing for an opponent and you get them, it doesn't work," Bowman said. "We lost to Arizona that year. I remember coming down the stretch, that was the matchup we wanted and ended up losing to them."

His conclusion?

"It's just taboo to wish for an opponent," he said. Even so, he was the only GM interviewed who at least provided a glimmer of hope.

"I'm not closed-minded to it," Bowman said. "I'd probably want to see how it plays out (in baseball) before I would put my stamp on it."

So how might it play out if it happened this year in the NHL? Since the real GMs don't seem to want to play along, we asked The Athletic's beat writers from playoff teams (based on current point percentages) to pick their playoff opponents, giving first picks to the division winners. And then we asked resident analytics genius Dom Luszczyszyn to analyze their picks. There were no limitations placed on conference.

Let's dive in:

1. Boston Bruins (represented by Joe McDonald)

The pick: New York Islanders

McDonald's explanation: From a pure entertainment standpoint, I would go with the Blues. Think about what it would be like to have these two teams battle again in a rematch type series in the first round. Games would be fierce and off the charts. However, the Bruins would want to save that rematch for the Cup final. It wouldn't be surprising if the Bruins and the coaching staff picked the Islanders as a first-round matchup. Boston would be favored in this series and a victory would be a solid foundation for a deep run.

2. St. Louis Blues (represented by Jeremy Rutherford)



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The pick: Dallas Stars

Rutherford's explanation: I know, I know, you can pick any playoff opponent and you choose the one that has the annual Vezina finalist in Ben Bishop and a captain in Jamie Benn who has 20 goals and 42 points in 44 regular-season games against you. My explanation is three-fold: 1) I'm staying in the Western Conference, where the Blues are 29-11-6 this season. 2) I'm looking at head-to-head, and after beating Dallas in the second round last season, the Blues seem to have the Stars' number, going 4-0-1 this season. 3) There are less-dangerous opponents, but for a Blues' team that's traveled a ton this season, I'm staying in the U.S. and making the fairly quick trip from St. Louis to Dallas.

3. Washington Capitals (represented by Tarik El-Bashir)

The pick: Edmonton Oilers

El-Bashir's explanation: If you're looking to get a fan base re-engaged following a protracted "pause" in the season, it doesn't get much better than Caps-Oilers in terms of star power. Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins vs. Alex Ovechkin, Nicklas Backstrom and John Carlson? Yes, please. The average number of goals scored in the teams' last five meetings: 5.4. Two of those games required extra time. From the Caps' perspective, it'd be entertaining as all get out. But they'd also be favored to advance given the disparity in recent postseason experience.

4. Vegas Golden Knights (represented by Jesse Granger)

The pick: Calgary Flames

Granger's explanation: I think the Golden Knights would pick a fight with the Flames. The two are very familiar to each other and don't particularly like each other, so from an entertainment standpoint, it would be great. But it's also the best matchup for the Golden Knights on paper. They're 3-0-0 against Calgary this season, outscoring the Flames a combined 17-5, including 6-0 and 6-2 blowouts in Vegas.

5. Colorado Avalanche (represented by Ryan Clark)

The pick: Pittsburgh Penguins

Clark's explanation: Everything Avalanche general manager Joe Sakic and his front office staff have done has generated the idea that they have a long-term Stanley Cup contender on their hands. What better way to test that than going against a team that won three Cups and remained a serious challenger over the last decade? Seeing what the Penguins have done to constantly stay competitive could provide a glimpse into the future for the Avalanche. That, and it could be interesting to see what happens when those two kids from Cole Harbour play one another on a big stage.

6. Tampa Bay Lightning (represented by Joe Smith)

The pick: Toronto Maple Leafs

Smith's explanation: This would be a fun, fast-paced series that fans would love to watch. There wouldn't be the kind of nastiness and "bad blood" like a seven-game slugfest with the Bruins, but the amount of elite offensive skill on both sides will make every power play must-see TV. There would be legacies on the line for each team's core, both trying to get over the hump. Think about the storyline of Steven Stamkos, coming back from injury, facing his hometown team. The Leafs play a style that would be more of a fit with Tampa, which should have the edge on the blueline and in net. But as the last meeting showed – a 2-1 Leafs win in Toronto – this series would be tight and great theater.

7. Philadelphia Flyers (represented by Charlie O'Connor)

The pick: Vancouver Canucks

O'Connor's explanation: The negative here is the travel, which surely would be brutal and could make it tougher for the Flyers to sustain a long playoff run in the wake of this series. But to win the Cup, you have to get out of Round 1, and the Canucks provide the best opportunity for

Philadelphia to do so out of the teams left. Carolina is injury-ravaged now, but could plausibly have all of its goalies, Dougie Hamilton and Brett Pesce back for a mid-summer playoff start. Nashville has been underwhelming in 2019-20, but it feels like a sleeping giant with all the talent it has. Vancouver, on the other hand, is heavily dependent upon its top line and power play, and a Selke Trophy favorite (Sean Couturier) combined with an elite chance-suppression penalty kill would go a long way toward neutralizing both. Add in Philadelphia's depth advantage and this feels like a very winnable series. Oh, and we get Alain Vigneault versus his old team. That should make for some fun storylines!

Final series: Carolina Hurricanes vs. Nashville Predators

How'd they do?

Luszczyszyn with the final say:

The Athletic LOADED: 03.20.2020

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The Athletic / How the NHL can fix the statistic you love to hate: Plus-minus

By Jonathan Willis

Mar 19, 2020 69

The 2019-20 NHL season quietly marked the 60th anniversary of that most-hated, yet constantly used statistic in hockey: plus-minus.

It's virtually impossible to find someone willing to publicly defend the statistic. Its flaws are many and their existence widely acknowledged. Yet it continues to creep into hockey conversations, often with a deprecatory "I know it isn't perfect, but ..."

It's never going to be a perfect catch-all statistic, but it could be a lot better than it is.

Plus-minus is always going to be influenced by team strength, by situational usage and prone to big fluctuations up and down not just from season-to-season but even from month-to-month. That isn't going to change. What the NHL could do, however, is strip away the parts of the stat which outright lie.

Despite the name, plus-minus isn't just a simple count of goals for and against when a player is on the ice. It's more complicated than that, in ways which render it unusable by any serious analyst.

"Plus-minus is a team's goal differential while a particular player is on the ice, excluding power-play goals for and against but including empty-net situations," explains the NHL glossary. "All the skaters on the ice receive a plus or minus when an even-strength goal or shorthanded goal is scored depending on which team scored(.)"

The wording there is confusing. It's useful to clarify by listing what goals are included:

The effect is to introduce a systematic bias into the number, one favouring grinders and penalizing scorers.

That probably made sense in the Original Six era, when situational statistics were hard to come by and even watching the games could pose a challenge. Hockey Night in Canada only predates the records of plus-minus by seven years (although not officially adopted until 1967, league-wide records exist dating back to 1959-60), and initially not all games were televised. Those that were aired over the objections of then-NHL



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president Clarence Campbell, who called television "the greatest menace of the entertainment world."

In the modern era, where those details are easier to find, what justification there once may have been no longer exists. The effect of those numbers is to create a cudgel with which to beat skilled players and elevate grinders.

One of the great long-running examples is Alex Ovechkin. Washington's captain has led the NHL in goals in seven of the league's last eight seasons. He has 599 points in 599 games over that span. He's just plus-2, with plus-minus often cited in stories ridiculing his defensive commitment.

While there's some truth to those stories, the presented statistic lies about Ovechkin. At 5-on-5 over those eight seasons, the Capitals are plus-48 with Ovechkin on the ice. Why the difference?

Some of it has to do with Ovechkin's own lethal scoring ability. He's famous as a shooter on the power play, to the point where the top half of the left faceoff circle in the offensive zone is widely known as the "Ovi Spot." He's arguably the key reason why Washington has the league's best power play over those eight years.

The Capitals have scored a whopping 390 goals with Ovechkin on their top unit. They've allowed 43. Plus-minus doesn't care how good he or anyone else is on the power play, but it does penalize anyone who gets used a lot, and that minus-43 almost erases all the good work Ovechkin has done at 5-on-5.

The rest of it disappears into empty net situations. Ovechkin is fortunate that Washington uses him a fair bit when the opposition's net is empty (boosting his plus-minus by 20), but the Capitals use him even more when they pull their own goalie. With the Caps' net empty, they've out-shot the opposition 281-59, but every one of those 59 shots against has been a goal against.

The NHL's preeminent goal-scorer may not be a perfect defensive player, but the idea that he gives back everything he creates is a gross distortion of the truth.

Ovechkin isn't the only one, or even the player most mistreated by this silliness. Virtually every high-end offensive weapon in the NHL is punished for being good at scoring, and players on bad teams really feel the pinch.

Brent Burns falls from plus-41 at 5-on-5 down to plus-6 in the NHL's official stat. John Tavares sees basically the same drop, from plus-44 to plus-7. Taylor Hall has it worse, going from plus-26 to minus-30, as does perennial Selke candidate Ryan O'Reilly, who goes from plus-26 to minus-16.

Nobody gets a rougher ride by plus-minus than Phil Kessel, though. At 5-on-5, Kessel is plus-13 over the last eight seasons. The NHL's official plus-minus statistic lists him at a whopping minus-74.

Where there are losers, there are also bound to be winners. Even as plus-minus paints the league's best scorers as less than they are, it elevates defensive grinders.

Ron Hainsey is a good example.

Plus-minus describes Hainsey as an even player over the last eight seasons, a truly remarkable accomplishment for a defenceman who starts a ton of shifts in the defensive zone and is usually deployed in a shutdown role. The truth is less flattering: he's minus-33 at 5-on-5, but thanks to killing penalties, playing a lot when the opposition has an empty net and rarely being used in offensive situations, all of those negatives get wiped away in the league's official record.

Niklas Hjalmarrsson has an even more exaggerated profile. Officially, he's plus-79 over the last eight seasons. In actuality, at 5-on-5, he's just plus-8. He has a whopping 16 assists on empty-net goals over the last eight years, putting the defensive defenceman on par with Avalanche superstar Nathan MacKinnon in those situations.

If plus-minus made Ovechkin look worse than he is, it also elevated his teammate Jay Beagle, from minus-22 at 5-on-5 to just minus-2 officially. It vilified Burns but bumped Brenden Dillon from minus-17 to plus-13. It submarined Tavares while moving Casey Cizikas from minus-15 to plus-21.

Across the board the pattern is consistent. Plus-minus levels the playing field. It makes talented players look bad. It makes role players look far better than they are.

Sixty years ago, when it was impossible to click on a website and find out who was killing penalties, it arguably made some sense to give a little extra credit to the grinders. Now that information is easy to find, and all that is accomplished by incorporating it into plus-minus is skew the numbers and provide a tool to criticize the best players in the game.

We've certainly seen that this season.

Leon Draisaitl, the NHL's leading scorer, has an ugly minus-7 next to his name on his official stat line. He's plus-7 at 5-on-5, but empty-net situations and playing massive minutes for the league's best power play make him look considerably worse than he is. The temptation to contrast his point total with that minus has proved irresistible to many.

It's not confined to just Draisaitl. Nathan MacKinnon, Patrick Kane, David Pastrnak and others at the top of the NHL leaderboard are all shortchanged to some degree by a statistic that doesn't reflect the modern game and probably didn't do a great job at the same task six decades ago, either.

The beautiful thing is that there's a simple solution. All the NHL has to do is level the playing field. Ignore empty-net goals, ignore special team goals entirely, and make the number reflect either just 5-on-5 totals or all even-strength goals.

There would be a trickle-down effect, too. The NHL sets the standard that other leagues follow. Making plus-minus more accurate wouldn't just improve numbers at the highest level, but would undoubtedly also improve them in the AHL and eventually in junior hockey and Europe, leading to better, more accurate data across the board.

And if nothing else, fixing plus-minus will at least force writers to look a little harder when they're scrambling for a club to bash over the head of the league's most talented scorers.

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The Athletic / Is this the end? 15 NHL players who might have played their last game

By James Mirtle

Mar 19, 2020

Every corner of the sports world has been affected by the impact of COVID-19.

In the week since the NHL season was shut down due to the threat of the novel coronavirus, we've heard stories about arena workers losing their jobs, restaurants near stadiums struggling without business, minor-league players without paychecks and those in junior sent home. College players are being denied the chance to play for championships in their senior years; children are missing out on large portions of their minor hockey seasons and playoffs.



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In some locations, the ice is even being taken out of arenas – proof of how low the optimism is that hockey will be back.

The impact on professional athletes is far down the list when it comes to folks you should feel sorry for in this situation. But it's still a reality that, because of the season being halted 85 percent of the way through, many established players could have played their last NHL games.

Some likely Hall of Famers are in that group, too.

Now, we already know that several high-profile older NHL players like Joe Thornton, Patrick Marleau, Ilya Kovalchuk and Jason Spezza intend to play next season in the NHL. I expect they can all get contracts – in many cases with the teams they're with. So I've left them off this list.

I also expect Bruins captain Zdeno Chara will be back, too, as he's still playing 21 minutes a night for the best team in the NHL at age 42 and is a fitness freak. He could well be the next Jaromir Jagr – minus the whole travelling mercenary thing.

In some of these cases, this unscheduled hiatus may even help prolong player's careers, as they'll get extra downtime to recover and get ready for next season. Beyond those big names, however, other veterans are likely going to be negatively affected by this shutdown.

What follows is my list of 15 players who very well may have retired without knowing it last week when hockey went away. This piece was compiled based on talking to several players and teams, in addition to many of our NHL reporters based in these markets. Also taken into account: a players' age, where their team is in the standings (non-playoff teams are much less likely to play games even if the season does resume) and their contract status, among other factors.

1. Ryan Miller, Anaheim

Honestly, it feels like half the time I talk to Miller there isn't hockey going on. It's either a conversation about a lockout or, in this case, a pandemic.

I messaged Miller a couple of days ago to explain I was working on this story and asked where he sat when it came to playing next season, assuming the Ducks don't get into another game the rest of the way.

He remains on the fence about what comes next, as this has all come on so suddenly.

"Too soon – can't even process what is happening," Miller said. "I think I need to get clear of the real-world issues that surround us ... and then sit with my wife and have a real discussion about where we are at with things."

Miller has had another solid season in Anaheim, appearing in 23 of their 71 games and posting a .907 save percentage behind a D that has had a lot of injuries and allowed a lot of chances. But he turns 40 this summer, and for family reasons – his wife is actress Noreen DeWulf – he wants to live in or near California, where most of the teams are not contenders. His opportunities to win that elusive first Stanley Cup appear fleeting.

If this is the end, Miller has had a marvelous career. Only three goalies – Marc-Andre Fleury, Henrik Lundqvist and Roberto Luongo – have won more games than he has since he entered the league back in 2002-03. He won the Vezina in 2009-10, the same year he put in a star turn for Team USA at the Olympics in winning a silver medal in Vancouver.

He very well could wind up in the Hall of Fame, given his credentials and those of his contemporaries. Not bad for a fifth-round pick out of East Lansing, Michigan.

"This is all pretty sad to see," Miller said of the pandemic's impact on society at large. "Hopefully we get a handle on it. We are doing our part. Feel like we are socially as distant as we can get."

2. Henrik Lundqvist, NY Rangers

At first, it felt like Lundqvist didn't fit on this list.

He's a legend with the Rangers, the only team he has ever played for. And he has another year left on his contract.

But you talk to people around the franchise a little and it's clear that the three-goalie situation this season has not been a lot of fun. It certainly sounds like the Rangers may buy Lundqvist's final year out, opening the door for him to either sign elsewhere as a UFA or hang up his pads.

Lundqvist just turned 38 earlier this month, so it's not out of the question this is it.

Like Miller, he's had an amazing career. A career .918 save percentage. A Vezina in 2011-12. Olympic gold (2006) and silver (2014). Sixth all-time in wins. The best Swedish netminder ever.

He's going to the Hall for sure. But does he have a final act as a veteran backup with a contender somewhere else? Could he somehow find a way to play for a Cup, one last time?

We'll see. I certainly hope so.

3. Justin Williams, Carolina

Williams wasn't certain about even coming back for this season, as he waited until midseason to jump back in.

Now, it is up in the air whether he'll get to finish out his final lap.

Unlike Miller and Lundqvist, Williams' team is likely to play in the postseason, assuming there is one with 16 (or more) teams. So we may yet watch him in games at a later date.

If the playoffs are wiped out, however, he certainly sounds like someone at peace with the idea of moving on. He's 39 in the fall. He's won three Cups. And he's down to playing less of a role than he ever has, with only 13 minutes a game.

Maybe there are no more Game 7s for Mr. Game 7.

Mikko Koivu

4. Mikko Koivu, Minnesota

Yeah, this is probably goodbye.

I mean, maybe the Wild get into some play-in games or something in a playoff setup designed to give teams on the bubble a chance. But Koivu turned 37 last week and his contract is up at the end of the year.

There's no question he has slowed down, and any return to play would have to be at a greatly reduced salary and role.

Still, this would be a tough way to end things for the classy captain. The league would be Koivu-less for the first time since 1994-95 when (much older) brother Saku entered the league and quickly became a star in Montreal.

And the NHL will be poorer for it.

"Ahh, yeah. It would be tough," Wild GM Bill Guerin told Mike Russo earlier this week when asked about Koivu's career potentially being over. "Nobody ... you know what, that's all I should say. That would be tough."

5. Jay Bouwmeester, St. Louis

It was probably the end anyway, but I'm not leaving him off this list.

Everyone is simply thankful Bouwmeester is alive after what happened on the bench in Anaheim earlier this season. I'm no medical expert, so I can't comment on the logistics of him returning to play one day. It sounds unlikely but hopefully, that's a comeback story he can write.

If not ... what a career. He was only 18 at his first NHL training camp in Florida, right out of the draft, and became a big-minute defenceman by his second season.

Since he entered the league, only Marleau, Thornton and Chara have played more games than Bouwmeester – and only Chara has logged



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more minutes, period. A big reason for that is Bouwmeester has been ridiculously durable, rarely suffering a significant injury in his 17 years in the league.

Still only 36, he's played more games at that age than all but 10 defencemen in NHL history.

Very quiet and humble, Bouwmeester took some silly criticism early in his career. Part of that was the fact he was a high pick and the top defenceman on some bad clubs in Florida and Calgary, which meant he didn't get a sniff of the postseason until he was nearly 30 years old. So it was nice to see him finally get the Cup last year in St. Louis and prove some doubters wrong.

If this is the end, he'll always have that. And five gold medals from various levels of international play for Canada, including the Olympics in 2014.

6. Brent Seabrook, Chicago

I'll say this much: He doesn't think this is the end.

He may be on the verge of turning 35. He may have a bloated contract that's going to be difficult to perform up to. And he may now be a bionic man after taking most of this season to have surgeries on half of his body parts.

But Seabrook is a gamer, and he'll do whatever he can to try and battle back.

The tough thing is that contract makes it harder for the Blackhawks to build a competitive team, if the best Seabrook can be is a depth defenceman. The buyout terms are simply brutal, too, so that won't be an option.

So is he headed for LTIR? Or a trade, with some salary retained?

I don't know how it happens but hopefully, he at least gets a shot with his rebuilt body. He was a massive part of Chicago's three Cup wins in six years and the rebirth of one of the NHL's marquee franchises. And he helped Canada win Olympic gold in his hometown in 2010 as part of a dream season.

But Father Time comes for us all.

7. David Backes, Anaheim

No, I'm not using a photo of him as a Duck or a Bruin. He'll always be the captain of some really good St. Louis Blues teams in my mind.

One personal story that sticks with me about Backes was during the last lockout. He was part of a video arguing the NHLPA's case when the season was on the verge of shutdown. It was really well done and eloquent on the players' part.

I sent him a message saying I thought as much and, within seconds, my phone was ringing. Backes was ready to talk. Did I want to do a story about the PA's position and trying to save the season?

That was kind of how he played, too. All in. Like Seabrook, he was a battler. Up for anything. You can see it in the 1,144 penalty minutes Backes piled up. And in his willingness to fill any role – even as an enforcer – as he gets to the end of his career here.

Backes turns 36 in May. He's been punted around a bit of late, and the Ducks aren't going to make the playoffs. He does have one year left on his deal, at big money, but what if Anaheim decides it's better to buy that out rather than keep him on the roster as a veteran mentor?

Then, yeah, this might be the end. But my guess is he battles onto the bottom of a roster somewhere for another year or two. That's his nature.

8. Craig Anderson, Ottawa

Anderson is another guy who's had an inspiring road to here.

He was in the minors until he was 26 years old. Then a backup until he was 28. He didn't even start 100 NHL games in his first eight years in pro hockey.

But his numbers were sparkling, especially in the AHL and in Florida. And when it came time to be a starter, first in Colorado 10 years ago, Anderson continued to perform.

In the 10 seasons between 2007-08 and 2016-17, he had a .919 save percentage, putting him in the top 10 among No. 1 netminders. He started 431 games in that span, the league's 12th heaviest workload and took the underdog Senators on an unlikely playoff run as recently as 2017.

Anderson's late start as a starter meant that he was never a viable option to be a long-term No. 1 goalie. He's 39 in May, and his numbers have been subpar for three years running now.

COVID-19 could very well be the end of his career. At least he made nearly \$40 million along the way, the vast majority of which came after he turned 30 years old. There's a good story of perseverance in there, to be sure.

9. Dan Hamhuis, Nashville

That's the perfect picture for Dan Hamhuis. The pride of Smithers, B.C.

I first watched Hamhuis closely way back in junior, when he was a star with the Prince George Cougars and I was doing some junior scouting work for McKeen's Hockey in Kamloops. There was no doubt back then he was going to be an NHLer. And likely a very good one.

The Preds took him 12th overall, and he blossomed into a defensive mainstay for both Nashville and Vancouver over the next 13 years. Heck, his first three years with the Canucks he received a bunch of Norris votes, as his profile was raised in a bigger (and Canadian) market.

Now in his second stint in Nashville, Hamhuis is closing in on 1,200 games. But he's into strictly third-pair duty at this point, at age 37, and will be year to year contractually the rest of the way.

But he remains a solid, smart, defensive player with limited offence, so hopefully, this isn't the end.

10. Ron Hainsey, Ottawa

I'm glad I had a chance to cover Hainsey. The guy is one of a kind. A true character. And the kids with the Leafs loved playing with the sarcastic veteran who seemed to wear the same rumpled suit to the rink every day.

Like Anderson, he was another guy that had to battle to find his role. Hainsey was actually picked 13th overall by Montreal — and that was a helluva pick, even if it didn't look like it for years. The list of players from that draft class who played more NHL games than Hainsey has only two names on it: Justin Williams and Scott Hartnell.

But he was in the minors for years in that Habs organization before getting a chance with a crappy expansion outfit in Columbus. That was around the same time that analytics like Corsi began to gain popularity, and Hainsey quickly became a favorite among the numberly inclined.

He's bounced around a ton as of late, in part due to his own desires. I imagine he probably could have stayed in Pittsburgh or Toronto, had he been willing to accept a bargain of a contract. No, it was off to Ottawa, where he's on the verge of turning 39 next week and still somehow playing 21 minutes a night and making \$3.5 million.

I didn't bother reaching out to him to ask if he intends on coming back next season because, well, there's no way he would return that call. He's Ron Hainsey.

But my guess is he tries to keep going as long as he can. Perhaps with team No. 9.

11. Andrew Ladd, NY Islanders



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Tough to watch him go out this way.

One of the worst of the ill-advised bad contracts signed on July 1, 2016, Ladd's still getting big money for three more years, with a \$5.5 million cap hit even as he approaches 35 years old.

He spent most of this season in the minors, however, before a late recall, and it's hard to see a path where he becomes an NHL regular again. With the way his contract is structured, it'll also be tough to buy him out, as there really aren't much savings involved in doing so – and they'd still have to pay him \$11 million.

In his prime, Ladd was a force. He landed that big contract thanks to some power forward seasons with Atlanta and Winnipeg, where he was the captain for five years. A fourth-overall pick, Ladd didn't quite hit the heights some scouts thought he would back in junior, but he was a good player.

Like a lot of guys who play that role, however, it gets hard to maintain it into your mid-30s. He's had back problems and a knee surgery lately, which has hurt his mobility. A lot of this points to Lou Lamoriello finding a home for him on LTIR, but we'll see how it plays out.

12. Jimmy Howard, Detroit

Howard turns 36 next week, and he's had a tough year with an awful Detroit team. His numbers before this season weren't terrible, however, so maybe he catches on as a backup elsewhere. But there's at least a chance he's played his last NHL game.

That kind of thing can be unpredictable with older goalies.

How will we remember Jimmy Howard? Well, a lifelong Red Wing, at least to date. A second-round pick in 2003, he just missed Detroit's glory years, not catching on as a regular until 2009-10, two years after their last Cup win.

But they were still a solid team and he was a decent contributor, putting up three seasons with big save percentages in his first four seasons as a No. 1. He finished second in Calder voting as a rookie and then sixth in Vezina voting in his fourth year in the league.

Then Nick Lidstrom left, the Wings began to decline and Howard struggled to regain that form. He settled in as a mostly average starter on a team that never had another meaningful postseason run.

My guess is Detroit deems it time to move on, after a 17-year marriage. It's possible Howard plays on. But it's also possible there isn't a fit, given his age and the season he is coming off of.

13. Trevor Daley, Detroit

Thus continues a run on Red Wings.

We know they won't play another game, even if there's some sort of play-in format to make the playoffs, so we can write off that as a source of more games for Detroit. And they have a lot of these veterans on the downswing on the roster.

Probably not a very fun season to end a career on, that's for sure.

Daley is one of the players on this list whose game has really fallen off in recent years. In his heyday, he was a great skater and a wonderful utility D-man, someone who logged about 22 minutes a night for years with some pretty good Dallas teams. He then won a couple of Cups on an unheralded Penguins blue line in 2016 and 2017.

A second-rounder way back in 2002, Daley has now played more games than everyone in his draft class except Bouwmeester, Duncan Keith and Rick Nash, the latter of whom he was on the verge of passing before the NHL shut down. That's a testament to his durability but also his ability to fill any role, from top pair to depth D, even as he aged.

But Daley's going to be 37 and he's down to under 16 minutes a game on a bad team. I'm not sure if he'll get another contract or not, not with

the NHL's continued push to get younger and younger. He had a good run, though. And he deserves a tip of the cap on the way out.

14. Roman Polak, Dallas

At 33, Polak's one of the younger players on this list, but he's also a bit unusual in the modern NHL. He's massive and mean and not the greatest with the puck on his stick.

I didn't really know if he'd get another NHL opportunity after Toronto passed on him a couple of years ago, but he's found a role as a depth D with Dallas the past two years. He's had some brutal injuries the past several years – including fracturing his sternum in the Stars' opener this year – so that's beginning to be a factor for the big man.

Polak may catch on somewhere as a sixth or seventh D next season for a contract around the league minimum. Or maybe he opts to go overseas and make bigger money there to close out his career.

He's had a darn good career for a sixth-round pick, though, playing more games than all but three other defencemen from that 2004 draft: Mike Green, Alex Edler and Alex Goligoski. He's a fascinating guy, too, someone who should have a future in the game in some capacity when he's done. It'd be fun to see him do some media.

15. Jonathan Ericsson, Detroit

Last on the list is the big man from the Red Wings.

Another guy who has spent his entire career in Detroit, Ericsson sort of flew under the radar leaguewide. At his very best, he was a modest second-pair type, but that was what landed him the ill-advised six-year, \$4.25 million a season contract in 2014 that he's just finishing up this season.

The more the NHL moved towards smaller, younger, faster defencemen who could skate, however, the further it moved away from players like Ericsson. Which is a problem when you're locked into top-four money until age 36.

Of late, he hasn't even been able to play up to the level of a fringe NHL defenceman, which is how he wound up in the minors this season.

Fans have been talking about buying Ericsson out for more than three years now, so I don't imagine many will miss him.

If this is the end, Ericsson will sit seventh all-time in games played as a Red Wings defenceman, which is pretty remarkable for an Original Six franchise. He also sits seventh in career games among defencemen picked in the ninth round, too, so there's always that.

Who did I miss?

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The Athletic / Behind Jack Quinn's rapid rise from obscurity to top 2020 NHL Draft prospect

By Scott Wheeler

Mar 19, 2020

Jack Quinn and his Ottawa 67's were preparing to play three games in three nights, beginning with a home game against the Oshawa Generals and ending with a home-and-home versus the Kingston Frontenacs, when they were called into a meeting and told to go home.



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"It happened really fast, honestly," Quinn said a few days later.

Days after the OHL followed the NHL's lead by putting its season on pause, Quinn still can't quite believe what happened. He's home, with his mom Jennifer, in Cobden, Ont., a little over an hour drive west of Ottawa, still trying to wrap his head around the idea that his season may be over.

In that meeting, the one where he was told to go home, players and staff expected to be able to continue to train and skate together.

"(The coaching staff) were very positive. (They) were hopeful that one way or another there will be a scenario where we can play in the playoffs and whoever makes it, makes it, but we're going to be ready," Quinn said.

In the days since, though, the situation has changed. Most gyms and arenas have been shut down. These days, Quinn is spending his time watching movies. He and his teammates keep in touch through a group chat but he misses them already.

"It's crazy. It's tough. I'm just hoping it gets better right now," he said. "It's frustration, it's disappointment. We don't know where things stand. We don't know what's going to happen. That's probably the worst part, is just not knowing right now."

Though he won't admit it, the pause – and a potential future cancellation – will have a more pronounced impact on him than most other junior hockey players.

Not only were the 67's in first place in the OHL and routinely the No. 1 ranked team in the CHL's weekly top 10 rankings, but Quinn is in the midst of his NHL Draft year.

He was also just getting started and the upcoming window to impress NHL scouts meant more to him than it did to most other draft hopefuls. Most of his peers have been top prospects since they were kids. Many have been tracked closely since their early teenaged years.

At first glance, Quinn belongs among them now. His 52 goals in 62 games ranked second in the OHL. His 89 points sat eighth – and third among draft-eligible players to projected top-10 picks Cole Perfetti and Rossi. He was named Team Red's player of the game at the CHL/NHL Top Prospects Game.

But this – the notoriety, the feeling of belonging, the accolades at his age group's top level – is all very new for Quinn.

He grew up playing AA hockey for the Upper Ottawa Valley Aces because he couldn't crack the area AAA teams and kept getting cut. His first and only year at the AAA level with the Kanata Lasers came in his 15-year-old minor midget season and OHL draft year.

Unlike most prospects that age, Quinn didn't have an agent heading into his OHL draft year either. After a strong start, former NHLer Randy Robitaille decided to give him a look. Robitaille remembers going to Kanata to watch him across two weekends.

"After the second weekend, I was just impressed with his hockey sense and the decisions he was making. I could tell he was raw and slight but he showed me that he could be a player. Then I made the introduction," Robitaille remembered.

That season, Quinn had to play his way up the lineup and onto the OHL radar. When he posted 52 points in 45 games, the local 67's were among the teams that took notice, drafting him 39th overall in the 2017 OHL priority selection.

Still, though, despite a late-September birthday and an age advantage over his peers, Quinn didn't stick with the 67's in what should have been his rookie season in the OHL. Instead, they sent him to the Jr. A Kanata Lasers, where he had to prove himself to everyone all over again.

Just like he had done a season earlier at AAA, Quinn proved his worth, picking up 46 points in 49 games on route to a CCHL Rookie of the Year award.

Questions remained about his status as an NHL prospect, though.

Part of the reason Quinn didn't play AAA growing up, and part of the reason he was sent to the CCHL instead of playing in the OHL as a true rookie, was that slight build that Robitaille – and everyone else – quickly identified. Growing up, Quinn never worked out during his summers in rural Ontario, either. He didn't have a personal trainer or get on the ice every day. Instead, he spent his summers playing competitive golf. During the season, his attention was also usually split between hockey and other high school sports.

"I never worked out or anything," he said, bluntly. "I never trained until my 15 or 16-year-old year."

It's around that time that he was introduced to Tony Greco, an Ottawa Valley trainer with a group of junior and pro hockey clients that includes Philadelphia Flyers captain Claude Giroux.

Together, Quinn and Greco worked to bridge the gap between his fitness level and his on-ice talent.

After a full summer of training, Quinn stuck with the 67's in his second crack at it, posting 32 points in 61 games (11th on the team) as a depth forward on a dominant, OHL finals-bound 2018-2019 team.

Still, as he entered the summer of 2019, his last before his NHL draft year, Quinn's pro prospects weren't a sure thing. Therefore, it was time to get back to the gym. And the hard work paid off, again.

There aren't a lot of kids who can say they scored 50 goals in their draft year. He worked his way up the rankings. Today, Quinn is widely considered a first-round prospect. He currently ranks ninth among North American skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

When Greco talks about him, he points to another old client: Mike Fisher.

"Mike would just go through a wall for you. And that's Jack Quinn. Jack is a bull," Greco said.

"You give him an extra heavier weight, he's going to do it. He's not going to say 'What are you giving me that for?' He's going to say 'OK, give it to me.' He's just non-stop. Claude loves the guys that challenge him because Claude's a machine and Jack will just do whatever you throw at him and he just makes sure he does it well, and fast and explosive. He's a really good kid. He's now moved up to a name, they say he might go in the first round. That's amazing."

Though Robitaille says Quinn was on some NHL teams' radars last season, he's among the first to acknowledge that everything changed for his client this year.

"He's a special talent. And Jack's just starting to come onto the scene," Robitaille said.

In Ottawa, 67's staff glow about the underdog kid from "the valley" who worked his way into the limelight – and third on the team in points.

When head coach Andre Tourigny is asked about Quinn, he describes him first with one word: fantastic.

"Oh boy. His progression since last year is really good," Tourigny said. "He's a 200-foot player. He's really good defensively, he's good offensively, he's playing all three positions up front, he has a lot of ice-time. He's a big reason for our success."

The team's general manager, James Boyd, marvels at that progression.

"In a short span of time he goes from AA to AAA to the rookie of the year in the CCHL and a full-time OHLer. Last year, in a depth role, he was outstanding for us. He was a big part of why our team had so much success and a record-setting season," Boyd said.

"We would talk and say 'This is the weekend Quinner's going to score 10 goals.' It wasn't if, it was when. 'When is Quinner going to get on a roll?' He's a tremendous athlete (and) he's got great skill. Now, with increased



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ice-time and some more confidence, the production is what the coaches have seen for a long time.”

Quinn has also been able to add weight. These days, he says he’s 6-foot and 175 pounds. Boyd and Greco both insist it just took him some extra time for his physical maturity to catch up with his natural athleticism.

“Whatever he’s doing, whether it’s golf or hockey, he’s got tremendous hand-eye, he’s got great balance and he’s only going to improve as he gets stronger moving forward,” Boyd said.

Nobody knows that better than his teammates. Fellow draft-eligible 67’s star Marco Rossi is quick to point to Quinn as one of the hardest-working players on the team.

“He competes really hard in practices every day and you can see it today, it paid off. He deserves it because he’s really underrated,” Rossi said. “Now he’s getting more and more love, so I’m really happy for him. He’s a good skater and he can shoot the puck. He’s a great guy off of the ice, too.”

Devils prospect and 67’s forward Graeme Clarke, who also trains with Greco and shares Robitaille as his agent, has seen that firsthand in the last two summers. Clarke, a top prospect from the Ottawa area growing up, admits he didn’t even know who Quinn was, despite living just an hour away from Cobden in Nepean and playing in the same age group, until their OHL draft year (Clarke was the team’s first-round pick when they took Quinn in the second round).

“From there, we just created a really good friendship and he’s one of my best friends today,” Clarke said. “He’s going to be a high pick this year. He’s an underdog story but it’s a great one and I’m proud of him. He’s just a great person.”

Quinn still can’t believe just how quickly everything changed for him. Today, he says he wouldn’t change anything about his story, including all of those years in AA.

“It all came pretty quick. A couple of years after I was playing AA, here I am,” he said. “It makes you not take anything for granted. I haven’t been a top prospect. I’ve had to perfect my craft. It’s humbling.”

His journey has helped him keep the pressures of his draft year and the anxieties of the recent weeks in the age of COVID-19, at bay. Though he is spending his break with his mom in Cobden, he lives with his dad, Dan, who works in the government, during the season in Ottawa (instead of billeting). He also considers himself lucky to have players like Rossi to go through the draft process with.

“There’s a lot going on. A lot of interviews with teams after games, a lot of media and it can be a little nerve-racking. But I just try to enjoy it and talk to Marco about it to take some stress off,” Quinn said.

He’s thankful, too, for Tourigny’s guidance and belief.

“Without Andre, my game wouldn’t be close to where it is now. It’s been a journey, for sure. (When) they sent me to Jr. A, that was tough. Last year was a lesser role again on a good team. And I just kept working on my skills and with great coaching, it has all come along,” he said.

Now, he knows he belongs. When he talks about his game, he’s confident, describing himself as a smart, offensive winger who can score and never stops competing.

He just hopes he’s not done competing for the year.

“I’m happy with how the season went, knowing that I gave it everything I had. But the playoffs were the real test for the team and it sucks if we don’t get the opportunity to prove ourselves,” Quinn finished.

“The draft is something to look forward to. If that’s the only thing that happens, it’s unfortunate but not everyone has a chance to do it so I’ll use it to keep myself motivated. It’s a terrible situation. Fingers crossed.”

The Athletic LOADED: 03.20.2020

1181234 Websites

The Athletic / Eight laid off at The Hockey News amid COVID-19 fallout for sports media

By Sean Fitz-Gerald

Mar 18, 2020

Eight full-time editorial employees at The Hockey News have been temporarily laid off without pay following the NHL’s unprecedented mid-March “pause” due to the global spread of COVID-19.

The layoffs affected longtime editor-in-chief Jason Kay, senior editor Brian Costello, managing editor Edward Fraser, senior writers Ken Campbell, Ryan Kennedy and Matt Larkin, features editor Sam McCaig and art director Shea Berencsi. Two contract workers are still producing content for THN’s website.

Graeme Rouston, The Hockey News’ publisher and owner, said he considers the layoffs a temporary measure and will re-evaluate the decision every week. He pledges to bring everyone back to work once the NHL resumes activity.

“I’ve set my own timeline to every Friday morning,” he said in an interview, “to wake up and try to determine what next week looks like.”

If the NHL were to return before a Friday morning, he said “the recall would take place that instant.”

Rouston was involved in a minor Twitter spat with TSN insider Bob McKenzie, a former THN editor-in-chief, after McKenzie tweeted the news of the layoffs.

Rouston said remaining non-editorial staff were working from home, after he closed the publication’s office out of precaution for the virus. The NHL announced it was shutting down last week.

Layoff notices were delivered at The Hockey News within two days of the announcement.

“I’ve never met a business owner in my life who wants to, or enjoys, laying off people,” Rouston said. “I’m sure they’re out there, I just haven’t met them yet. Nobody likes it. Nobody wants to do it, but it’s just a fact of business life.”

Rouston bought the storied hockey publication two years ago. He also owns The Curling News, which is at the end of its annual publication cycle. George Karrys, who has remained deputy editor with that publication since he sold it to Rouston, said it would not be affected by the cuts.

“These are tough decisions,” Rouston said. “It’s a no-win situation. There’s no win, whatsoever.”

The Hockey News was founded in 1947 and recently entered a “strategic partnership” with Sports Illustrated in which the two brands share content. THN has weathered prolonged NHL work stoppages in the past. During the lockout that eventually led to the cancellation of the 2004-05 season, it is believed the company did not issue layoff notices until after the league officially announced all games would be lost.

One or two employees were let go, while two or three more were redeployed to work at other outlets in Transcontinental Media Inc., which owned The Hockey News at the time. The company also shifted its publication schedule to better survive in a world without top-level hockey.



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"It's always come out the other end," Roustan said. "The Hockey News is not a magazine that focuses on the day-to-day scores and the day-to-day games. It tells stories, long stories. And there's always a need for the long stories and the in-depth stories."

It is not clear when those stories might resume. A member of the Ottawa Senators has become the first NHL player to test positive for COVID-19, and some of their teammates were thought to be feeling unwell as they awaited test results.

In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended that crowds larger than 50 be avoided for eight weeks. That prohibition would carry into the middle of May, when the Stanley Cup playoffs are usually in full swing.

On Wednesday, Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner, told The Athletic that preserving the full 82 games for next season was the league's priority. He told Pierre LeBrun and Scott Burnside the NHL did not "want to do anything around a resumption of play this season that will impact our ability to have a full season next year."

The abrupt end to sports has led to changes across the sports media landscape. March is usually one of the busiest months in the North American calendar, from the stretch drive of the NHL and NBA seasons to March Madness to Opening Day in Major League Baseball.

Sports radio has scrambled for topics. Television networks have wrestled with acres of suddenly empty airtime, with nothing anywhere near as valuable as the live sports it was replacing. As The New York Times framed it, the value of live sports diminishes quickly: "Live sports are the brand-new car that gets totaled by a speeding semi-truck the second it is driven off the lot."

In Canada, many contract workers and freelancers at both TSN and Sportsnet have lost work. On Wednesday, the networks took the extraordinary step of issuing a joint news release to promote their coordinated rebroadcast of the entire Toronto Raptors championship run from last spring.

The first game from the first series, against Orlando, airs on Sportsnet on Friday. The second game is on TSN the following night. (Without spoiling the ending, TSN will air Game 6 of the NBA Finals against the Golden State Warriors on April 12.)

Roustan noted layoffs were being made across all sectors of an economy amid the pandemic.

"All anyone has to do is turn the TV and try to stomach, for an hour, what's going on out there," he said. "It's brutal. I don't want to downplay the despair of one or eight or 10 people being laid off because it hurts everybody. But we're in a period that nobody ... I've never gone through anything like this before."

"I've never seen anything like this before. I don't know what's going to happen next."

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1181235 Websites

The Athletic / NHL's Bill Daly: Playing a full 82-game season in 2020-21 is top priority

By Pierre LeBrun and Scott Burnside

Mar 18, 2020

Regardless of what playoff system could possibly be employed if the NHL is able to complete the 2019-20 season, having a full 82-game season in 2020-21 is sacrosanct, NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Athletic.

Speaking on the Two-Man Advantage podcast on Wednesday, Daly said that although there are lots of options being discussed to salvage the current season and crown a Stanley Cup winner, including the notion of a playoff schedule that would occupy most of August and September, the league will not entertain any ideas that involve a truncated 2020-21 season.

"The only definite for us is we certainly don't want to do anything around a resumption of play this season that will impact our ability to have a full season next year," Daly said. "So that's kind of the outside parameters and rules we're following currently. Everything else is kind of up for grabs for lack of a better term. There are lots of possibilities. We do have people working internally on those scenarios and what they look like and what the feasibility is."

"There are a lot of complications associated with that. Obviously you have network partner obligations that we have to take into account. And then we have to work through with the Players' Association what the critical date calendar looks like. We need to work with our clubs on building availabilities. We have to consider whether a resumption of play is to a building that's open to the public versus perhaps a resumption of play that doesn't involve a building that's open to the public. So these are all relevant considerations and variables none of which you can really align at this point behind a specific plan. So, it, like the situation generally, is very fluid."

Here is the full transcript of Daly's conversation, including his response to the first positive test of an NHL player for the coronavirus and his revelation that the league has hired an infectious disease expert to advise the league throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Scott Burnside: Let's start with the news of the day, reports coming in overnight of the first NHL player who appears to have tested positive for the coronavirus. Can you give us an update on what's going on with that and what steps the league takes moving forward?

Daly: Yeah. Sure. I suppose I got a call from the Ottawa Senators team doctor last night. It was probably about 9 o'clock last night, indicating that a player had tested positive for COVID-19. From our perspective, as we kind of indicated in the release when we hit the pause button on the season, the virus' impact on our community was inevitable to a certain extent, so it was really just a matter of time until we were going to have our first player test positive. In terms of next steps vis a vis the player and vis a vis those around the player, it's really the same approach that we've taken with other members of the NHL community, staff members, club staff members who have tested positive over time in terms of what the health agencies are telling us on self-quarantine and preventative steps going forward and potentially infected individuals and following up with those potentially infected individuals. So the fact that it's a player instead of a club staff member or a front office staff person really doesn't change the approach in terms of how you have to deal with it.

Pierre LeBrun: How many players do you think around the NHL have been tested already, in other words, either have been cleared or are awaiting results still?

Daly: I think it's actually a fairly small number, Pierre. The advice we received from the medical professionals, which is actually the preferred method moving forward, is you don't just get tested because you're concerned and you want to be tested. You get tested if you're symptomatic. Our emphasis has been on advising players that if they're symptomatic obviously they should report that right away, they should self-isolate and in appropriate cases they should get tested. And that's really what happened in this case. The player became symptomatic, he told his team medical staff, his team medical staff recommended a test, the player took the test and the test was positive. So that's really the approach that everyone really should follow.



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Burnside: You mentioned team officials. Have you had other positive tests, whether it's coaching staff or administrative staff?

Daly: All the tests that we've had within the NHL community have been publicly exposed, press releases. I think there was a Vancouver employee who recently tested positive. There was a San Jose arena worker who tested positive. Obviously we had the situation in Buffalo where an employee's family member tested positive. These have all been disclosed by the clubs and appropriate steps have been taken so this is just really, as I said, the fact that it's a player obviously it's much higher profile but it's the same approach.

LeBrun: As a lot of us keep saying, it seems like a story that keeps changing by the hour. It's just been a lot. It's just been moving and moving and moving. Do you sense now that as much as the story keeps changing you've hit a bit of a, I don't say a quieter phase, but at least now that you're bunkering down and just waiting to see over the next couple of weeks what happens with the COVID-19 threat here?

Daly: You mean like settling into a routine?

LeBrun: I don't know about a routine but at least there is some waiting now, right?

Daly: No, no, no. I totally understand the question and I'm hoping you're right. Have we seen that yet? As Scott led off with it's been busy every day with respect to developments, trying to stay on top of the developments. Just trying to make sure we're in communication with clubs on a constant basis and that's not just on the hockey side, that's obviously on the business side. There are a lot of business decisions the clubs are making every day vis a vis this pause. And we have to be there to facilitate that and be helpful to the greatest extent we can be even though on that end of it the clubs are really in a different business than the league office is. So we can only kind of facilitate best practices and make sure all the clubs know what's going on around the league and in other sports. So that's certainly a function that we serve.

Burnside: You mentioned other sports, you mentioned medical officials, how closely are you in contact with the other leagues, with medical officials and maybe can you describe what that relationship is like because my sense of it is that at some point when we hope to get back to the game that you're going to take your cues from those medical officials and I wonder what that relationship is like and how often you're in contact?

Daly: I would say frequently. Obviously we have a full-time chief medical director, Dr. Winne Meeuwisse, who's been with us and has been consulting with us for many years. The Players' Association has John Rizos, its chief medical consultant. We obviously have the expertise of our joint health and medical committee, and obviously we look for interaction with the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and Health Canada as the agencies in charge. We do have an infectious disease expert who we have retained to help us through this. We had a conference call with him yesterday (Tuesday) so, obviously the medical side of this is very, very important, trying to understand it the best we can. It's evolving quickly. There is certainly some information out there, but I think as with any medical type issue there are different views and different reads of the science on some issues, so you have to take that into account when you're making decisions. But yeah the medical information is very important if not the most important part of the mix when we're making decisions.

LeBrun: Should we expect any other announcements about a positive test today as far as you can tell?

Daly: If the question is do I have any more information that I haven't disclosed, the answer is no. Could there be more positive tests today? Certainly. I don't have a crystal ball on that.

LeBrun: So, secondary issues, and again I use the word secondary a lot because it certainly pales in comparison to what we're all facing in real life, but the business does go on. I'm just wondering your sense of the

hope of still having a season this year and what that timeline continues to shift and look like, where would you say that's at right now?

Daly: Look. I appreciate the fact that everybody's curious and everybody's really interested and I think that's a good thing in terms of what a resumption of play might look like. But I'd caution everybody that we're literally now six days into the pause. We don't know how long we're going to be in pause and what the world's going to look like over the next couple of days, hours, weeks. Pick your time increment. We don't know when we would be able to come back if we can come back for this season. I think the only certainty we have is that whatever decisions we make with respect to a resumption of play this season obviously have to be consistent with the advice we're getting from the medical professionals because, to both your points, that's first and foremost. People's health and safety has to be our primary concern and that's not only our players, that's our fans and that's people in general. Not even necessarily associated with our game in any meaningful way. So we have to do our part societally to make sure we're doing the right things and making the right decisions. But the only definite for us is we certainly don't want to do anything around a resumption of play this season that will impact our ability to have a full season next year. So that's kind of the outside parameters and rules we're following currently. Everything else is kind of up for grabs for lack of a better term. There are lots of possibilities. We do have people working internally on those scenarios and what they look like and what the feasibility is. There are a lot of complications associated with that. Obviously you have network partner obligations that we have to take into account. And then we have to work through with the players' association what the critical date calendar looks like. We need to work with our clubs on building availabilities. We have to consider whether a resumption of play is to a building that's open to the public versus perhaps a resumption of play that doesn't involve a building that's open to the public. So these are all relevant considerations and variables none of which you can really align at this point behind a specific plan. So, it, like the situation generally, is very fluid.

LeBrun: I know there are a million different modeling ideas that you guys are coming up with and that are being thrown at you. I happened to write about one yesterday that a governor shared with me but the idea of pushing it all the way back to August/September playoffs. There may be a time where who knows what your options are, as crazy as that sounds again because we don't know where this crisis is going?

Daly: Yeah. I agree. Look that's why I said I don't think I'm ruling anything out other than we're going to make decisions to try and preserve our ability to have a full season next year.

Burnside: When you get to that point where you have to make those decisions on what a playoff may look like later this summer or what you're thinking about critical dates moving into next season, is it as simple as the top executives with the league sitting down with the top executives with the PA and making those kinds of calls, or do you imagine at some point it'll be a broader, like a competition committee type group, where you're going to seek input from a wide variety of people from within the game. How do you imagine these final decisions coming together?

Daly: I think the consultative process you're talking about with the clubs, with the managers, with the owners I think that's going to be going on almost on a constant basis. We have invited their ideas on this so that we have the best possible ideas to take into consideration. But ultimately when it comes time to actually having to make a decision and implement a decision I don't know what our time frame's going to be so I don't know exactly what process we can follow. Obviously we're going to have to have buy-in from the players and the Players' Association. But as with anything else, including the draft lottery we adopted coming out of the 2004-05 work stoppage, not everybody was happy with that model as you might imagine. So whatever we come up with ultimately we're going to try and come up with some type of process that's fair, that has integrity and we'll make the difficult decisions to implement even if it doesn't satisfy everybody because that's the nature of what our obligations are.



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1181236 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 31 Thoughts: NHL teams prepping for anything amid COVID-19 suspension

Elliott Friedman | @FriedgeHNIC

March 18, 2020, 6:51 PM

Twelve hours after helping a teammate move out of his hockey-season home, James Henry is available to talk. The Winnipeg-born forward, who played five WHL seasons with the Vancouver Giants and Moose Jaw Warriors, is an ECHL veteran.

It quickly becomes obvious that, as captain of the Adirondack Thunder and the team's PHPA rep (the minor leagues' version of the NHLPA), Henry feels an obligation to speak out.

"I think we expected a little more support and backing," he says. "We didn't get as much effort as we should have."

Last Saturday night, the ECHL announced it was cancelling the rest of the 2019–20 season, including the playoffs. A couple of sources indicated the conference call was "heated," with some teams arguing it was wrong to cut loose players without pay.

"I wouldn't call it heated," Commissioner Ryan Crelin said on the 31 Thoughts podcast. "There were varying viewpoints, and it was emotional.... But there were a couple of factors that everyone agreed on. We wanted to find something to hold on to, a way to keep the season going... but I wouldn't say that it was heated."

"It was an excruciating decision, (but) 100 per cent the right decision."

The ECHL has a weekly salary cap of \$13,300 per team (20 players). The floor is \$10,100. There are playoff bonuses — after the first round. Multiple sources indicated the biggest issue was the future of the league itself. Crelin and PHPA Executive Director Larry Landon were concerned about franchises surviving the economic impact of COVID-19.

"We were worried about three or four teams," Landon said Tuesday. "This was the best thing to do to protect players and the CBA. We will do our best to save jobs. These are difficult times, with difficult decisions on all fronts. No one wants to be in this position. If you look at the entire picture, the vast majority of ECHL teams are in no position to pay players with no revenues."

"That's certainly a top priority — to maintain our league and our member teams," Crelin added. "Economic activity is seizing up right now.... Even our teams at the top of attendance are going to be significantly impacted. At this point I believe we made the prudent decision to give us the best opportunity to maintain our league and set up our league for future growth for years to come. We're working together to try and help all of our members."

The best piece of news is that players' health insurance will be covered until June 30. Moving expenses are covered, too. If Henry had a request, it would be to honour one other CBA provision: If a player is waived and doesn't get a new job in two weeks, he receives two weeks' pay as severance.

"You go from fully expecting to be compensated to nothing," he said. "It's an opportunity to help people who need it. Some guys are renting out their regular place during the season, so they have to find somewhere else to go. They've lost their April rent (at their ECHL home). Opportunities to earn money are going to be hard right now because people aren't hiring."

"We discussed it, but under our CBA, when you invoke end of season, there is no severance," Crelin said. "We understand this is a troubling time for everyone. For our teams, for our players, for all stakeholders in the ECHL community. The PHPA recognizes that and we recognize that as well. So we'll be working as partners in hockey to try and assist everyone."

The ECHL and PHPA have a "career enhancement" plan. It allows players to take courses or learn a trade, and can help with job placement. Landon said he's found work for three players, but Henry recognizes there won't be enough opportunity due to shutdowns.

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

Both Crelin and Landon said other avenues to help are being discussed.

"We have a player-hardship fund — that will be looked at," Crelin said. "How can we build up that fund, and then react on a case-by-case basis, or perhaps a blanket scenario — make sure we are supporting everyone in our community on both sides of the aisle?"

"Given the uncertainty, nothing is off the table," Landon added. "We know they need help. We're working to create funds for economic need."

One idea: There is one team (rumoured to be defending Kelly Cup champion Newfoundland) that apparently offered to pay its players through the remainder of the regular season. The Growlers are unique in that the parent Maple Leafs have several players on NHL/AHL contracts there, so the big club is responsible for those. With this added flexibility, there's room to help out those on ECHL deals.

It was not allowed.

"Under our end-of-season [rules], any payment to an ECHL-contracted player would be a salary-cap violation," Crelin said. "The PHPA represents all their members and we represent all our teams. We act as a league and move forward as a league.... Collective bargaining takes months and months. We had hours and hours. We stayed within the terms of that agreement."

He added, "We recognize these are extraordinary times."

Yes, they are. That's why any team that wishes to step in should be allowed to — on a one-time, agreed-upon scenario. For one thing, it embodies the spirit of what needs to happen for everyone to survive this. For another, if a team takes more responsibility upon itself, that's fewer players that the league and PHPA have to worry about. The emergency fund can help those others.

One agent said it best: "This just sucks. It's not anyone's fault — it just sucks."

"Some sleepless nights, no question," Crelin finished. "But you've got to make what you believe is the right decision.... There were moments where you believe it is the wrong decision. But as we reflect on it here, I'm confident it was the right decision."

31 THOUGHTS

1. We all need a good smile right now, and, on Tuesday night, it came from the Canadiens' and Kings' twitter feeds. The two teams were supposed to play last night. Instead, their social media teams did video-game simulations:

In a textbook example of unconscious bias, Montreal won 6-2 on its feed, the Kings won 5-4 on theirs. Los Angeles had Trevor Lewis scoring the winner in the last few seconds, and the celebration surrounded Shea Weber:

A true simulation would have seen Weber pile drive everyone in anger.

2. The OHL, QMJHL and WHL notably cancelled the remainder of their regular seasons, but not the playoffs. According to Sportsnet CHL analyst Sam Cosentino, the No. 1 thing that allows them to do on time is



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their drafts — which would be online. As for playoffs, what does Sam think?

"Contingency plans are being discussed frequently," he said. "But with the Memorial Cup scheduled for Kelowna, government regulations will determine that."

How late do you think the CHL can wait?

"I think it has to happen before the NHL draft."

3. In its media release last week announcing the season's pause, you could tell the NHL was well aware it would be impossible to escape at least one positive test to a player. That happened Tuesday night with an Ottawa Senator. The official position is that testing is necessary if a player is symptomatic and/or determined to need a swab. This is always a thorny issue. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio was upset when Brooklyn Nets players were tested:

We wish them a speedy recovery. But, with all due respect, an entire NBA team should NOT get tested for COVID-19 while there are critically ill patients waiting to be tested.

A great deal of "flattening the curve" is about self-isolation, social distancing and limiting contact. That's what the NHL and NHLPA are asking players to do.

4. Obviously, there are a few questions about the Sens player's identity being undisclosed. It was his choice. In the NBA, both Kevin Durant and Rudy Gobert agreed to put their names out there, but it is a personal decision.

5. Ottawa visited Los Angeles in the most recent game of this NHL season. That was March 11, days after the Brooklyn Nets were at the same arena to face the Lakers. (The Senators reportedly used the same dressing room as the NBA visitors.) They also played earlier in both San Jose and Anaheim. The game against the Sharks was played after public health officials in Santa Clara County advised the public to avoid large gatherings in the area. (A mandatory decree came two days later.) The team also had a day off in the Los Angeles area on May 8. Some of the players went to the basketball game that night. So those will be the steps everyone tries to retrace.

6. Nine months ago, 25-year-old winger Spencer Foo decided to try a new hockey adventure, leaving AHL Stockton for Kunlun Red Star of the KHL.

"I loved it," Foo said Tuesday, back home in Canada after his team missed the playoffs. "It didn't end the way we wanted it to end, but I had a blast."

Red Star had a legit excuse, as it spent the last month of the season on the road as COVID-19 expanded.

"At the start, it was hard to find information into what was happening because news is in [Mandarin], and you can't find translations. By the time we left Beijing the final time, there was nobody on the subways, nobody on the street. That was crazy because you are used to seeing people everywhere."

Because he could not go back to collect belongings, Foo came home with what he carried on his final road trip. The rest of his stuff is still over there. One of the reasons he went was the possibility of representing China at the 2022 Winter Olympics.

"That is still the plan. A few of us (who played there) are still hoping that is an option."

You're going back for next season?

"Yes. It was an awesome experience."

7. How much Mandarin did he learn?

"We gave it a valiant effort," he laughs. "It's a tough language, props to anyone who can learn it."

What can you say?

"I can do 'Thank you,' ask for water and direct a taxi driver. Another try next year. But it makes you think of European players who come to Canada and the U.S. for sure."

Kunlun's schedule is not easy, simply because of location. They'd go on a 10- to 14-day road trip and then back to Beijing, where players would stay in a hotel or an AirBNB. It meant checking in and out over and over again, sometimes with a roommate. Foo joked captain Brandon Yip, who played 174 NHL games with Colorado, Nashville and Phoenix, always had a single room, "Because he'd be complaining if not. The travel does create a decent amount of adversity, but we had a good group that embraced being over there and seeing the world. When you're going hotel to hotel, you end up being very close. It's fun that way."

8. What was the most difficult thing about playing there?

"It's hard to explain, but you think it is going to be a really offensive league, because there are so many super-skilled players. But it is much more defensive. You get some NHL-sized rinks, some Olympic and some in Finland that are in the middle of the other two. Switching rink-to-rink gives you a different feel depending on where you're playing. We played on an Olympic-sized rink in Beijing, where it slowed down — not quite as many chances. It was hard to find offence."

Foo finished with 25 points in 58 games.

"Once I figured it out, I felt a lot more confident."

Does head coach Curt Fraser still have that killer glare?

"He's an awesome guy, great for us," Foo laughed. "We didn't see it too much, but you know it is there."

9. What is the wildest hockey-related thing you saw?

"Oh, the fan stuff in the intermissions. There were a couple games I sat out with an injury. There was one where they came on the ice in running shoes after a fresh scrape — two teenage girls doing a tug-of-war, no helmet, falling all over the place. It was hilarious."

Finally, I asked what he thought of hockey's chances for success in China.

"There are a ways to go, but the good thing to see is there were kids and families at our games. The biggest thing is getting the youth there into the sport."

10. In case you are not a basketball fan, ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski reported the NBA's Board of Governors had a conference call with former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy on Tuesday. According to Wojnarowski: Murthy explained the "grim potential impact of coronavirus pandemic in U.S., but left owners with hope of re-starting season/playoffs before July."

11. It is a tough time to be an optimist. We had heard about the impact the coronavirus would have, but now, those of us in North America are seeing it play out in real time. Everyone is stressed about the financial implications. When it comes to the NHL, there's nothing anyone can do but see how it plays out over the next six weeks. We can speculate all we want (and come up with fun/crazy playoff scenarios) but we won't know until close to the end of April at the earliest.

"All we can do is chill until then," one agent said.

That's not going to be easy, but I'm going to try and make it my (mental) approach. On his Pull Up podcast, Portland Trail Blazers guard CJ McCollum talked with teammate Carmelo Anthony about meditation — how it helps them deal with life's insanities. There are just so many factors here we cannot control.

If I could recommend one thing that I've picked up later in life: 10 minutes of meditation per day, which I try to do with my son. I never thought I'd be into anything like that, but it slows down life and clears your mind. Very valuable.



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12. Many of you, great hockey fans that you are, have asked good questions like, "What happens with the conditional first-rounder in the Jason Zucker trade?" or "What happens with the conditional pick based on James Neal/Milan Lucic production?" or "How do rookie bonuses hit or not yet hit affect my favourite team's cap next year?" These are all good questions. At this time, there are no good answers. It depends on when the NHL resumes and what things look like.

Obviously, there will be changes to the NHL's calendar. There's nothing confirmed, but teams are preparing for the possibility of life without a combine, a draft from their own war rooms, and no visitation period for free agency. Who knows how everything plays out, but organizations know they need to be prepared for anything.

13. One of the most interesting questions that one exec asked: What happens in situations where teams were considering front-office and/or coaching changes? Does this give them a reprieve? Can you do a proper search/interview process under these circumstances?

14. One of the theories behind the AHL not cancelling its season yet is the NHL clubs may want a "taxi squad" of extra players available to them for any playoffs that might happen.

15. We'll get back to business later, but I wanted to inject some fun throughout the blog. If you are looking for some new recipes, allow me to present (via @derek_orr12 on Twitter) Flaming Foods: A Cookbook of Enjoyable Recipes by your Calgary Flames Families:

Derek said Doug Risebrough was a family friend, and gave them the book. Please enjoy selections from Al MacInnis, Bob and Martha Johnson, and Harley and Becky Hotchkiss:

I know some of these may not be 21st-century healthy, but who cares?

16. Via text, I asked Al MacInnis if he really made the Cape Breton Clam Chowder or the Turtle Cake.

"Absolutely," he answered. "You grow up quick when moving away from home. We didn't have a team chef to make three meals a day."

17. Okay, so when it comes to the possibilities for playing again, here are a couple of things that are important to the NHL: 1) awarding a Stanley Cup this year, and 2) ensuring a full 82-game season next year. As we sit here on March 18, we have no idea if these things are going to be possible, but those are the targets.

18. Existential question, if it came down to it: If you're Chicago or Montreal, would you rather be in the playoffs or the draft lottery?

19. This is why I think an expanded playoffs with a unique format will be targeted, if it's at all possible. One of Commissioner Gary Bettman's biggest successes has been negotiating TV deals. We all know the U.S. one is up soon. When sports comes back, people are going to be starving for action. Go big or don't bother. So if there's a way to include eyeball-catchers like the Blackhawks and Canadiens, it's going to happen.

20. I'm a big believer in play-in games, and, as Chris Johnston reported, we could very well see some. But, instead of two games, total goals, there's a better way. After all, if the first game ends 5-1, the second is borderline wasteful.

So here's the better way: Game 1 is only 60 minutes no matter what. If Game 1 ends in a tie, then Game 2 is winner-take-all. And if someone wins Game 1, then the other team must win Game 2 in regulation to force sudden-death overtime. That gives us a better chance for an incredibly meaningful Game 2. Love it.

21. Jeff Marek's crazy playoff idea from the 31 Thoughts podcast: Go home until September. Play the Stanley Cup playoffs then, which crowns a new champion in December. Then start the season again in January, with another champion in June. The NHL's desire for an 82-gamer next year ruins that, as does the question: What do you do with the teams who don't qualify, assuming not everyone is invited? But I have to say I didn't hate it as much as I hate most of Marek's ideas.

22. I don't know if the NHL has discussed it, but an NBA friend says the idea of playing the playoffs at one or two locations that are declared "safe" first has been thrown around. More of a brainstorm than actual policy, though.

23. Some previously taped podcasts will be coming. One is with Nashville head coach John Hynes, who has not been afraid to bench his best players.

"There's a reason why I'm in Nashville now," Hynes said. "Part of it was the team was not where it needed to be record-wise. So when we came in, we really talked about — as a new coach — our standard of play, our standard of competitiveness, the work ethic that it takes to be successful every night has to be higher. We had talked about what the standard was going to be, and we talked about having guys earning their ice time. If you're a 20-minute player and that's your ice time, we'd expect you to play at a high level for 20 minutes. When I first came in, I thought our team was very inconsistent, and part of our inconsistency was we didn't have the right kind of work ethic and competitive level night in and night out. In a situation where we have to win games, [the most competitive players] are going to get the most ice time. To their credit, I think those guys understood what was going on. Their games have gotten better — they accepted and wanted to know why and what they needed to do to have to get it."

I decided to do some fishing and ask Hynes if there was a particular conversation that struck him as honest. He mentioned Viktor Arvidsson.

"He self-admitted, 'I'm not having a great year,'" the coach said. "My job as a coach is to help this guy come through. He's one of our better players, he's had massive success in the league.... I say, 'If you were the coach, the way you're playing right now, would you play you 18 minutes a night?' And he says, 'Probably not.' Okay, well, these are the areas that need to get better. This is how we need to work to get these areas better for me to be able to give you that ice.... To his credit, he [put in the work]... and he's progressively gotten better."

24. Courtesy @Liam_Morrison95: The unofficial 31 Thoughts: The Podcast drinking game. Don't do this and drive.

25. Some NCAA free-agent stuff: On his Instagram, Scott Perunovich made it clear his successful time at Minnesota-Duluth is over:

The 45th-overall selection in the 2018 NHL draft, he could become an unrestricted free agent if not signed June 1 by the St. Louis Blues, who picked him. (The June 1 date could change, too, since everything is up in the air.) All indications are that the Blues are the frontrunners, but he knows there would be plenty of opportunity if he chose to examine it.

26. Perunovich's college teammate, Nick Wolff, signed in Boston on Wednesday. The AAV is \$792,500.

27. Others getting closer to a decision: Mitchell Chaffee (UMass); Connor Mackey (Minnesota State-Mankato); Brinson Pasichnuk (Arizona State); Colton Poolman (North Dakota). Teams can't sign them to contracts for this season, which would usually be a recruiting strategy — "We'll let you burn the year." Curious to see if any of them wait until we get some kind of resolution, to see if "burning the year" will still be possible.

28. Clarkson's Josh Dunne has notified teams he will stay in school.

29. The U.S. National Development Team had to cancel a recent camp for the 2004 birthdays.

"That's a talented group," one source said.

It may force decision makers to select the team from the group invited to the camp. It's imprecise, but unusual measures for unusual times.

Senior Writer Ryan Dixon and NHL Editor Rory Boylen always give it 110%, but never rely on clichés when it comes to podcasting. Instead, they use a mix of facts, fun and a varied group of hockey voices to cover Canada's most beloved game.



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30. Last Saturday, the NFL and NFLPA agreed to a new CBA through 2030. It was a very close vote, contentious and controversial. Superstars like Aaron Donald, Aaron Rodgers, JJ Watt and Russell Wilson publicly voiced their reasons for voting “no,” but their side was defeated. One of the theories out there is that, as bulletproof as the NFL is, there were concerns about what the COVID-19 outbreak could do to finances. While the highly paid superstars were going to be financially safe, other players weren’t as sure.

At a time when the NHL and NHLPA are negotiating their own extension, you wonder how this will affect those talks. Unlike with the NFL, this pandemic hit at a critical point of the NHL season. On last week’s conference call with the clubs, estimates were that \$1 billion in revenues could be affected — approximately 20 per cent of the 2018–19 total.

31. The biggest player concern will be escrow — as it always is. If no playoffs are played, players are concerned it could get to 30–35 per cent, which would be the highest ever. It’s possible there would be conversations about spreading that out over multiple seasons, but that’s a big bite from the paycheques.

The biggest concern from teams will be cap, and you can expect the NHL and NHLPA to work together on keeping it as close to this year’s \$81.5 million as possible — as opposed to lowering it.

The biggest concern for owners will be damage to other business, never mind hockey. And, while player salaries are tied into a percentage of the cap, other expenses aren’t. So, we’ll see if there is incentive to work together. Cap, escrow, Olympics, World Cup, everything. The world is different today.

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Sportsnet.ca / Power-ranking all 15 Maple Leafs drafts of the salary cap era

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjokebox

March 19, 2020, 8:22 AM

From thunderous booms to hideous busts. From first-round flops to seventh-round steals. From surprises that paid off to smart choices traded way too soon.

The Toronto Maple Leafs’ 15 draft classes of the NHL’s salary-cap era have pretty much run the gamut.

Here, with the benefit of hindsight and a judgmental eye, we take a look back at the results from all the Leafs’ trips to the draft floor over the past decade and a half and power-rank their prospect classes from worst to first.

15. 2010

The Maple Leafs’ 2010 draft class is the franchise’s worst of the cap era, and it’s not even close. Having dealt away what would become second-overall pick and the right to select superstar Tyler Seguin to Boston as part of the Phil Kessel acquisition, Brian Burke’s club had to sit on its hands until pick 43, which was used on Brad Ross. Fun fact: Ross is still playing pro, for the Lausitzer Foxes on the second-tier German circuit.

Burke & Co. did make a little hay in the later rounds, finding NHL depth centre Greg McKegg in Round 3 (McKegg enjoyed a career-high 53 NHL games played this season with the Rangers), plus cup-of-coffee guys Petter Granberg and Sam Carrick.

14. 2011

Hindsight is cruel. Round 1 busts Tyler Biggs (22nd overall) and Stuart Percy (25th overall) were chosen ahead of talents like Nikita Kucherov, Rickard Rakell, John Gibson, Brandon Saad and William Karlsson, to name a few.

Toronto did find a real player in Round 3. Unfortunately, Josh Leivo’s best opportunity arrived on the other side of the country. He was dealt to Vancouver in 2018 for AHLer Michael Carcone, now skating in Belleville.

13. 2007

John Ferguson Jr.’s disastrous trade with San Jose for Vesa Toskala and Mark Bell meant the Maple Leafs were unable to participate until the draft’s third round. JFJ didn’t hit until the fourth round, when he landed winger Matt Frattin, who played 135 NHL games before keeping his career alive in the KHL. Sixth-rounder Chris DiDomenico also made the big leagues eventually.

Ironically, Toronto’s best selection was its last: Seventh-rounder Carl Gunnarsson (194th overall) has enjoyed 600-plus games (and counting) as a reliable stay-at-home defender. And in 2019, Gunner became a Stanley Cup champion in St. Louis.

12. 2017

As with all recent draft classes, this one has a chance to move up these power rankings as the prospects develop. Timothy Liljegren (17th overall) fit the Maple Leafs’ greatest need — puck-moving, right-shot defenceman — and earned his first call-up this season. Expectations remain high for the kid they call “Lily” that he can become a top-four fixture, yet several first-rounders selected after Liljegren (Robert Thomas, Filip Chytil, Henri Jokiharju) have had a smoother trajectory to the pros.

The organization also has lofty hopes for 21-year-old goaltender Ian Scott. He’s been set back this season with hip surgery but was an absolute stud for 2019 WHL-championship-winning Prince Albert Raiders.

Toronto Maple Leafs; Timothy Liljegren

11. 2013

With regards to selecting Frederik Gauthier 21st overall, GM Dave Nonis could’ve done better (Shea Theodore) or worse (Morgan Klimchuk). The lovable Goat (six-foot-five every night!) has slowly but surely improved all aspects of his game — skating, faceoffs, scoring — over some injury plagued years and developed into a serviceable fourth-line NHL pivot.

Nonis fared better with some deep cuts: goalie Antoine Bibeau (Round 6) played a couple games for the Avalanche this season, and feisty seventh-round winger Andreas Johnsson had carved a spot in the Leafs’ top-six before a knee injury snuffed out his season.

10. 2008

In retrospect, one could build a case that Erik Karlsson (15th overall) is the superior right-shot defenceman to Luke Schenn (fifth overall). But, hey, Schenn has carved out a long career for himself — 758 games and counting. Yes, he may have been given too much too soon, but he’s outlasted and outperformed the majority of 2008 first-rounders.

Burke also uncovered a pair of decent NHLers in his first draft as Leafs shot-caller, picking Jimmy Hayes in Round 2 and Greg Pateryn in Round 5.

9. 2019

Way too early to tell, the Leafs’ most recent draft class could go either way. Yet placing it inside the top-10 is a testament to our hopes for the undersized, super-skilled Nick Robertson.

Having spent a first-rounder to acquire Jake Muzzin from L.A., Robertson was Kyle Dubas’ first pick last June (second round, 53rd overall) — and the kid has exploded with offence for the Peterborough Petes.



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Meanwhile, fourth-round forwards Mikhail Abramov and Nicholas Abruzzese put up better than point-per-game numbers with Victoriaville and Harvard, respectively.

8. 2018

Consider some of the defencemen selected ahead of Rasmus Sandin (29th overall): Ty Smith, Ryan Merkley, K'Andre Miller, Filip Johansson, Jacob Bernard-Docker, Nicolas Beaudin, and Nils Lundkvist. Right now, we'd take Sandin over all of them. That Dubas traded down to get Sandin makes the pick feel all the more like a victory.

There is plenty of promise farther down Dubas's first NHL draft class, too. Spokane Chiefs defenceman Filip Kral was enjoying his greatest offensive season. AHL defenceman Sean Durzi was used by the GM to help acquire Muzzin. Semyon Der-Arguchintsev, 19, has 75 points in 55 games for the Petes. And Marlies right-shot defender Mac Hollowell, 21, has quietly shown well in his first professional campaign.

7. 2009

No later Round 1 pick has accumulated more points than seventh-overall Nazem Kadri (393). The Leafs did an excellent job developing Kadri, a guy with 1C dreams, into a coveted two-way 2C. He posted back-to-back 32-goal campaigns in Toronto before getting shipped out of town for Tyson Barrie and Alexander Kerfoot. Kadri had a shot at another 30-goal season for Colorado prior to his lower-body injury.

Unfortunately, the '09 class essentially ends there. Later picks Jesse Blacker, Jamie Devane and Jerry D'Amigo combined for 34 NHL games played.

6. 2006

We feel it safe to crown 2006 the Maple Leafs' most consistent draft-table performance of the cap era. Six of Ferguson Jr.'s seven picks (sorry, Tyler Ruegsegger) that June not only made the show but played a minimum of 157 NHL games.

First-rounder Jiri Tlustý would eventually become a 20-goal man in Carolina. Second-rounder Nikolai Kulemin made the most of his one 30-goal performance in Toronto and is now keeping his career alive in Magnitogorsk. Viktor Stalberg went on to be a 20-goal scorer for Chicago, nearly hit the 500-game mark and has since found a second life in the Swiss league. And 14 years post-draft, Korbinian Holzer (fourth round) and onetime All-Star Game rep Leo Komarov (sixth round) are still kicking around, playing meaningful games for NHL playoff contenders.

Leo Komarov injury

5. 2014

While Nonis did pass over some spectacular talent — David Pastrnak, Dylan Larkin, Nikolaj Ehlers — when he selected William Nylander eighth overall, ask yourself if you'd rather have any of the four players chosen immediately before Willy. That would be Sam Bennett, Michael Dal Colle, Jake Virtanen and Haydn Fleury. Nylander, 23, is in the midst of a head-spinning, 31-goal, 59-point campaign, while driving to the net and making zone entries look like a breeze.

A couple lottery tickets farther down the ladder paid dividends as well. Second-round prospect Rinat Valiev was used as bait to help the Leafs rent Tomas Plekanec from Montreal at the 2018 trade deadline (hardly a great fit, Plekanec did pitch in two goals and two assists in seven playoff games). And versatile forward Pierre Engvall has proven to be a seventh-round steal, helping on the penalty kill and earning a new contract extension just last month.

4. 2015

Back in 2015, there was hope in Toronto that the highly touted Dylan Strome would still be available when the fourth pick rolled around. He wasn't. There was also much debate over whether the next-best option was a creative, pass-first forward named Mitch Marner or a sturdy D-man named Noah Hanifin. Of the entire 2015 class, only the first two picks,

Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel, have more points than Marner (291). Good choice.

The Leafs also fared well in Round 2, selecting defenceman Travis Dermott and skilled prospect Jeremy Bracco, and uncovered emerging NHLer Dmytro Timashov (now with Detroit) in Round 5.

3. 2012

Burke insists he had Morgan Rielly rated No. 1 on his draft list, and still the defenceman was a surprise to go as quick as fifth overall. That Rielly has outperformed all those picked before him (Nail Yakupov, Ryan Murray, Alex Galchenyuk and Griffin Reinhart) and is now the longest-tenured Leaf is a testament to Toronto's scouting.

Three late-round picks in '12 eventually made the NHL as well. Sixth-rounder Connor Brown has enjoyed a more productive career than anyone selected after the fifth round and is now a top-line winger on the Senators. Dominic Toninato (Round 5) and Viktor Loov (Round 7) had cups of coffee.

2. 2005

Today, Tuukka Rask leads all NHL starters in save percentage (.929) and goals-against average (2.12). The Finn has a Vezina on the mantle, 291 wins and 50 shutouts under his belt, and his name etched into the Stanley Cup till infinity. Not too shabby for a 21st pick. The sad news? Rask was dealt to Boston (for the Calder Trophy-winning Andrew Raycroft) before dressing for a single game in blue and white.

Leafs scouts plucked another winner out of Scandinavia in the seventh round. Anton Stralman (216th overall) skated his first 88 games in Toronto before excelling elsewhere. The smart stay-at-home defender is now a 33-year-old Panther with a shot at reaching 1,000 games played.

1. 2016

Midway through the 2017-18 season, as the Maple Leafs sped toward the playoffs, former coach Mike Babcock described his reaction to the television as the 2016 draft lottery unfolded.

"We got Auston. But what if we don't? I remember when we got to three (in the lottery), I was jumping up in the living room. When we got to one, tears," Babcock recalled. "People don't understand. You need real players."

Matthews was, of course, No. 1 with a bullet (hot tip: tanking can make for good drafts) and has been a goal-scoring machine out the gate. But the Leafs' 2016 draft paid off in other ways. Big winger Egor Korshkov (31st overall) made his NHL debut this season; Carl Grundstrom (57th overall) was a key trade chip in the Muzzin acquisition and has a bright future in L.A.; Joseph Woll (62nd overall) is Toronto's most enticing goalie prospect in a decade; and Marlies stud Adam Brooks (92nd overall) earned a seven-game NHL look this season.

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Sportsnet.ca / Uncertainty from COVID-19 has players leaning on agents for support

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis

March 19, 2020, 1:35 PM

The world's new practice of social distancing can take on many forms, as Ritch Winter learned through a phone call earlier this week.



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"One player I reached on the phone was driving somewhere and I said, 'where are you headed?' and he said 'I don't know, but my wife needed me to get out of the house as much as I needed to get out of the house,'" said the Edmonton-based player agent.

"I had another player ask me, 'how can we have a season – we can't even work out? How can we even think about proceeding without a training camp?'"

NHL player agents have long worn many hats. It's the nature of the gig.

But some of the ones they're wearing these days are significantly different given the unknowns the world is facing with COVID-19 and the abrupt halt it brought to pro sports.

"I would say I'm as busy as I've ever been," said Allan Walsh from his home office in Los Angeles where he deals with a large clientele of Europeans.

"The NHL and AHL said players are on their own for booking flights, so first and foremost it was a mad dash to get some of them home before borders and flights shut down. But the primary thing at a time like this is providing players and their families information, which is key."

Some players are on social media and staying up on the latest developments, while others are, well, in the dark.

"I have one player in the AHL who was holed up in his apartment, thinking he had to stay there, as per the league's original instructions," said Dallas-based Jarrett Bousquet of Titan Sports Management.

"I said, 'did you not see the memo two days ago where all players can go back to their homes worldwide?'" He said, 'oh really?' – and he got the next flight out. Some of the players don't check emails regularly, or refresh Twitter every 45 seconds like I do. So we're making sure they're getting the NHL and NHLPA memos and enforcing their rights."

Bousquet said that because things were changing on an hourly basis last week, he was on the phone non-stop, trying to answer questions his players had.

"The number one thing we're telling guys is, 'respect the disease and take it very seriously,'" said Bousquet, who represents players at every level.

"We're telling guys to stay home, keep in shape, eat well and be ready because they are still being paid."

It's easier said than done as some players have exercise equipment at home, while others either rely on hotel gyms or must do modified workouts in their apartment.

With so much uncertainty surrounding the ramifications of COVID-19's spread, players, like everyone else, have concerns.

And in many cases, agents are turned to first for answers, support and direction.

"When people ask me at sports law conferences or on the radio, 'what's the one resource you provide to players more than anything else, I say, 'it's being a psychologist,'" said Walsh, who has a large stable of clients through Octagon Athlete Representation.

"That's what you're doing on a daily basis. They're calling you and they are up or down or frustrated and angry. Your job is trying to bring them into neutral as quickly as you can so they can focus on what they need to do. Guys panic, overreact, underreact and you're the one who can help them more than anyone else, even parents. Right now there's a lot of that going as every player has got a different situation."

Some veterans are wondering if they've played their last NHL game, while all free agents worry about what this stoppage means to their future.

The initial logistics of moving players around the globe once various seasons were paused or cancelled included agents being travel agents

and even negotiators with landlords trying to extend or shorten leases for players.

Some players aren't feeling well and wonder what their course of action should be.

That sort of concern was echoed by many who worry, like many around the world, about their children, their wife, their parents and their grandparents.

Understandably, this is all a little overwhelming for some.

"Players sometimes just want someone to talk to," said Neil Sheehy from his office in Minneapolis, where he is also busy trying to broker NHL deals for some of his U.S. college grads.

"Guys are asking, 'what should I do?' I say, 'go to the place you are the most comfortable.' The more veteran guys really don't say too much. The younger guys now have a plan and they're getting home."

Every agent says one of the hardest things for their clients to navigate through is the absence of structure, which has dominated their lives to this point.

"These guys have been on a schedule every hour of their life since they were ten, so when that goes away they get uncomfortable," said Bousquet.

"People have their own space and time through a lifestyle they've developed, and they're all home now," added Winter.

"A hockey players' life is the same every day unless they are on holiday. There's a big void now in terms of, 'what can we do?'"

One thing the large majority of players aren't doing is media.

"I think there's some nervousness of players not wanting to say the wrong thing," speculated Winter.

"They're probably getting phone calls from everybody they know and no one knows for sure what's next."

Until they do, they'll continue to lean on agents more than ever.

Perhaps the best news is that teams, players and agents have all worked well together to try making these trying times as easy as possible for everyone.

"What I'm hearing is there has been unprecedented cooperation between the Players' Association and the league," said Walsh.

"There really is a sense, 'we're all in this together.'"

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL looking at different factors that could determine return to action

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris

March 19, 2020, 12:33 PM

And now, the Great Wait.

Everything moved quickly in the hours and days after the NHL paused its season last week. Players were urged to self-quarantine and remain close to their playing city in hopes that teams could reopen training facilities. Then, with borders closing and the Centers for Disease Control



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and Prevention recommending against gatherings of more than 50 people until May, the directive changed and everyone was permitted to scatter.

The quarantined hockey world is now hunkering down and pondering the future. There's a lot of conversations and ideas flying around in text messages, but little clarity with the spread of the COVID-19 virus still picking up steam across the continent.

The clearest hint of where the NHL is headed came from deputy commissioner Bill Daly during an appearance on The Athletic's "Two-Man Advantage" podcast, when he spoke of the league's priorities in the months ahead: "The only definite for us is we certainly don't want to do anything around a resumption of play this season that will impact our ability to have a full season next year."

That clearly sketches out the timelines at play here.

It tells us that crowning a 2020 Stanley Cup champion hinges on finding a window where it's safe to conduct some kind of playoff tournament between mid-May — when the CDC could potentially change its recommendations on how many people can safely gather — and mid- to late-July, which is believed to be the absolute latest the league would be willing to stretch its season.

If that's not possible, we're looking at a lost year.

Playing into August would disrupt the season to follow and Daly made it clear that's off the table. What this revelation does is rule out at least two ideas being kicked around in NHL circles in recent days:

- One, emerging from conversations with team executives, revolves around doing a complete restart to the 2019-20 season whenever it's safe to do so. It could be August, September or October. Doesn't matter. The plan would be to finish the final 15 per cent of the regular season plus playoffs, then pause for free agency signings and the entry draft, before starting 2020-21.
- The other, bubbling amongst some players, is a similar concept that's more rigid in structure. Complete the regular season in July, hold the playoffs in August and September, break for a shortened October off-season and commence 2020-21 in November.

There are a number of reasons why it's believed the NHL doesn't favour either of these approaches. Chief among them is how it impacts teams way out of the playoff race — can you really ask members of the last-place Detroit Red Wings, for example, to return from the COVID-19 hiatus, go through a training camp and then play 11 meaningless regular-season games before waiting out the playoffs and another off-season?

Then you also have to account for potential building availability issues, the financial impact of delaying the return of meaningful hockey to a number of markets even longer than it already will be and the fact that some contending teams already view 2019-20 as a tainted season.

Everyone wants to win a Stanley Cup, sure, but it's hard to imagine that achievement feeling equally as satisfying now as it would conclude an uninterrupted campaign.

To make a betting analogy, the NHL is currently on the equivalent of a bad run at the blackjack table and won't spend all night trying desperately to salvage the session. It's already committed to when it will get up and walk away if things don't change for the better.

That's a smart approach under the circumstances.

As unsatisfying as it could end up feeling if there's no real conclusion to a season where 1,082 games were played — and as disappointing as that will be to the organizations with legitimate championship aspirations — there will be a point where the focus needs to shift to letting the business reset and recover.

And that point is probably still at least a month away.

The NHL hopes that a period of self-quarantine for players will eventually allow it to open mini training camps by early May. That needs to happen

before any games are played. In the meantime, the league plans to monitor the situation closely and lean on the relevant authorities for guidance.

"We're not equipped to say 'the pandemic's over,'" commissioner Gary Bettman said during a recent appearance on Hockey Central at Noon. "There are going to be medical people at the highest level who are going to tell us."

And, so, this is where we are.

The decision on when it's safe for the NHL to potentially resume may rest in someone else's hands, but it's clear the league has already figured out how it will react to that news: The Cup will be lifted by July, or it won't be lifted at all this year.

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Sportsnet.ca / How Senators player contracted COVID-19 likely to remain a mystery

Wayne Scanlan

March 19, 2020, 2:29 PM

One of the great challenges of the coronavirus street war is determining how an individual may have contracted COVID-19.

This comes to mind when unravelling the positive test of a member of the Ottawa Senators roster, the first confirmed case involving an NHL player.

The hockey club announced late Tuesday night that an Ottawa player had tested positive, was experiencing "mild symptoms" and put in isolation. The announcement went on to say all members of the team would remain isolated, as well, while their health was being monitored.

A subsequent statement on Wednesday added more information:

"The Ottawa Senators medical team is actively monitoring players and staff and following all appropriate and professional guidelines to help ensure the health and safety of our employees and the greater community.

"Players are being assessed and tested under the supervision of public health authorities."

No news is good news. As the time of this writing on Thursday, no further positive tests have been announced.

All players and Senators staff who were on the club's trip to California from March 6-12 were instructed to self-quarantine, effective last Saturday. The team has assured the greater Ottawa community that the travelling group does not pose a public health risk.

The Senators have not disclosed the name of the player who tested positive, although it is possible he may step forward at some point, as NBA star Kevin Durant did this week. Durant is one of four Brooklyn Nets players who have tested positive for COVID-19. The other three are unnamed. Only one of the four was symptomatic, according to the Nets.

"Everyone be careful," Durant said. "Take care of yourself and quarantine. We're going to get through this."

Why have so many NBA players tested positive (seven, and counting)? In part because so many are being tested. At latest report, five of the seven were asymptomatic, meaning they showed no symptoms of the



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virus and only discovered they were positive because they were issued a test.

After Rudy Gobert of the Utah Jazz tested positive (following his bad-karma stunt, touching media microphones), several teams that had recently faced the Jazz were also tested: including the Toronto Raptors, Detroit Pistons, Boston Celtics and Oklahoma City Thunder.

It stands to reason that if dozens of NHLers were tested, there would be further positive results. Generally speaking, outside of the Senators' confirmed case, NHL teams are waiting for players to show symptoms of the virus before administering tests.

For example, while the Anaheim Ducks and Los Angeles Kings, who recently faced the Senators (March 10, 11), have not indicated they tested their players, they are leaning on the fact that none has exhibited symptoms.

"Players from the Ducks have been under quarantine at their respective in- or off-season homes since the NHL's suggested guidelines were announced on March 12," the Ducks said in a statement. "No player in the organization has reported COVID-19 symptoms at this time."

The Kings released a similar statement.

How did a Senators player contract the virus?

It's like playing a game of Clue, except this real-life mystery will likely remain a mystery. There are many clues involved, considering the Senators spent nearly a full week in the state of California, which was generating headlines as a virus hot spot even before the Senators boarded their charter plane on March 6.

There were already 20 confirmed cases in Santa Clara County, and health officials there had advised organizations in the area to avoid large public gatherings.

Nevertheless, the San Jose Sharks went ahead with a scheduled game against the Minnesota Wild on March 5 and the Senators game March 7. The Sharks played host to a third game after that warning, March 8 against the Colorado Avalanche.

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

The Senators, of course, used the same dressing room occupied by the Wild a couple of days previously. This is where it gets dicey – players, trainers, coaches and staff share a lot of the same confined spaces, unwittingly playing Russian roulette in their surroundings.

There had been reports that in L.A., at the Staples Center, the Senators used the same visitors room as the now virus-laden Brooklyn Nets, who had played the Lakers on March 10 (the Sens faced the Kings on March 11). But in fact, the NBA and NHL have separate, dedicated visitors dressing rooms at the Staples Center. However, as Helene Elliott reported in The L.A. Times, the Kings did use the NBA visitors room to conduct post-game interviews following the game against the Senators.

Clearly, viruses can cross paths as easily as these constantly moving professional athletes. They are walking through a minefield of germs. As are all of us when we travel.

To their credit, all NHL teams are in lockdown mode now, and complying with all the best advice and public health practices.

If the Senators or any other club finds another positive case, it will be announced. Until then, we all wait. And hope. We hydrate and isolate. And try not to hyperventilate.

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Sportsnet.ca / Breaking down the NHL's top playmakers in the offensive zone

Andrew Berkshire | @AndrewBerkshire

March 19, 2020, 5:02 PM

After breaking down the best shooters at 5-vs-5 in the suspended 2019-20 NHL season, it's time to take a look at the players who butter their bread: the playmakers.

Like the shooters, we've done this before, specifically at the beginning of the season using data from 2018-19, slicing the data we have available on offensive zone passing up to attempt to find the best 31 playmaking forwards after getting over the blue line.

Once again we'll be using the cut off of 500 or more minutes played at 5-vs-5 in order keep things in a big enough sample that we can have confidence in the reliability of the data, and we'll be using statistics pro-rated per 20 minutes of ice time in order to make sure we're not missing those younger players who haven't fully earned their coach's trust as of yet, which as we know gives us a group of 336 forwards to look at.

Let's start out with a general look at the volume of completed passes compared to how successful each player is at connecting on the offensive zone passes.

The cluster at the top for the playmakers is much tighter than it was for shooters, which made it a little bit more complicated to label, but with the axes set at league average numbers for both metrics, we can see the top group of playmakers in general in the top right of the graph.

Once again and always, Joe Thornton is the pass volume king. He's not leading by as much as he was last season, but he is still yet to be overtaken. The other top players are a bunch of names you would probably expect; Artemi Panarin, Sidney Crosby, Leon Draisaitl, Nikita Kucherov, Mat Barzal, Aleksander Barkov, Evgeni Malkin, Ryan O'Reilly, Connor McDavid, and the surprisingly adept and underrated J.T. Miller.

There are some problems with evaluating things this generally though, for example, different players attempt different types of passes more often, and passes do not all carry the same expected completion rate. At the beginning of the year, I adjusted each player's pass success rate weighted by the types of passes they completed and relative to the league average expected outcome, then separately adjusted for how difficult it was to make those passes in the specific team structure each player played in, but this time around I think we can do both at once.

Adjusting for difficulty and team structure, we get a much tighter grouping overall in the scatter plot, and the biggest reason for this is that the types of passes a player makes has a far greater influence on their overall pass success rate than the team structure they play within. There are outliers of course, but not many and they aren't huge.

Adjusting pass success rate for difficulty and team structure puts Ryan O'Reilly as the most dependable playmaker to complete a pass in the NHL, followed closely by Brayden Point, Loui Eriksson, and Elias Lindholm.

Eriksson might be a surprising one since his career has really gone down the tubes in Vancouver, but the veteran just doesn't mess up passes. He has a league-high 74.7 per cent success rate on his offensive zone passes, when the league average is about 62 per cent. The issue is, that doesn't necessarily make him a great playmaker, does it? His volume of passes is just around league average, and even if we're adjusting for difficulty, a player could look great hereby still making easier passes at a very high rate.

With that in mind, let's look at the top-31 forwards in the league ordered by quality passes; namely those to the slot, off the rush, and through the



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middle of the ice East-West. Who sticks out as the most incisive offensive zone passer?

Just like last season, Panarin is the name that rushes to the top, as his ability to make cross-zone passes just blows away the competition. Malkin makes more passes to the slot, while Kucherov and a whole host of others are better playmakers off the rush, it's Panarin who stands alone at the top when you combine all three.

For anyone thinking that O'Reilly might have just been spamming easy passes in the offensive zone, that isn't the case. He ranks in the middle of this top group of forwards in quality passes, so he's more than just a safe passer, he's a high-end playmaker who rarely misses.

Knowing O'Reilly sits at the top of the pack in adjusted pass success rate though, where do the rest of these players compare? Let's cut out the cycle passes and look just at the higher quality plays, and compare it to the relative success rates each player managed this season.

With only 31 players plotted, there's a lot more space to be seen between them, and once again the further up and to the right a player would be, that's the more potent their playmaking has been.

We know that O'Reilly will be the diamond furthest to the right, but how much more is that pass success rate worth if Panarin is completing nearly twice as many quality passes? To me, this debate comes down to two players; the pure volume of Artemi Panarin while remaining decidedly above average in success rates, or the combination of high volume and being nearly five and a half per cent better than expectations in success rates on the passes he makes that Malkin brings to the table.

To me, the extra accuracy that Malkin brings to the table, more than twice as far from league average in expectations than Panarin is, outweighs the gap in overall volume, so he would be the top 5-vs-5 playmaker in the league this year.

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Sportsnet.ca / Bill Daly talks NHL playoff ideas, player testing, salary cap impact

Sportsnet Staff | @Sportsnet

March 19, 2020, 2:24 PM

The truest thing anyone can say these days is that no one knows what's going to happen next.

One week after the NHL paused its 2019-20 season, people all over are coming up with wild scenarios of what the league could do to finish a season once the all-clear is given by the medical community that it's safe to resume. Could we see a Stanley Cup awarded in July, August or even later?

And then there are the business implications in terms of the salary cap outlook, or how trades made with conditions will play out.

Not even the league has solid answers for all of these questions yet, but they're certainly considering their options right now. Not until this lockdown starts to break will we start getting an idea of what is really on, or off, the table.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly joined Good Show on Thursday morning to talk about some of these questions, and more, as we all sit in self-isolation dreaming and thinking of an eventual return.

What can really be planned with so much uncertainty at this time...

"You need to have everything on the table. You need to understand what would be feasible in a certain set of circumstances and what's impossible in various circumstances. It's really just understanding the possibilities and the landscape and then as things get decided and we move along and we understand a little bit better where we are and where we're going to be, then you start kind of picking options.

On the possibility of returning to a playoff format that has less than eight teams per conference...

"In the shower this morning I was thinking about that. I haven't reduced it to writing, I haven't put it on a piece of paper, I haven't discussed it with the commissioner or with Colin Campbell, so literally it's me just thinking through, well, if we really have a very short window could we go with a four-team tournament? Is that a possibility? I haven't run it up the flagpole so I don't even know. Given the uncertain nature of where we are you have to consider everything."

On if there is a drop-dead date to cancel the season by...

"My only parameter that I've been proceeding on the assumption of, which I think is firm — but again in this uncertain world I won't rule out anything — is that I think there's an objective that we share to ensure that whatever we do will allow us to accommodate a full season for next season. So whatever that means, that is the assumption I'm proceeding with."

On if that means a season could start in November or later, and still run its regular length...

"I could say theoretically I'm not averse to that idea, but there are a lot of practical considerations that we'd have to go through the process of working through. I'm very much in the mode of I'm not ruling out anything."

On if ice conditions are a worry in some markets if hockey is to be played in the summer months...

"We're in the 21st Century now and while some buildings perhaps don't have the same capability as others in producing top, top, top, quality ice, I think most of our buildings are pretty good and where we have deficiencies we're able to fill those deficiencies at warm times of year, so I don't think ice making is really a consideration at all."

On how much time it would take to bring everyone back together and prepare for a season resumption...

"Our managers have a good sense of what they think would be necessary in terms of ramp-up time, training time. A lot will depend on, like everything else, what transpires between now and then. Is a 7-10 day training camp or mini-training camp enough to resume a season in certain circumstances, and for the next little while I think it would be. If you're talking about a resumption in August I'm not sure it would be. It probably depends on what access to ice players have had before to do their own workouts as they normally do in preparation of a normal NHL season. A lot is going to depend on how things play out."

On if every player will be tested for COVID-19 by the time the league resumes...

"I don't think so. I don't think that's even practical. The medical advice continues to be against mass testing of the population. Really, testing is only recommended for people once they experience symptoms and become symptomatic. That's due in part to the shortage of testing resources, but I think it's also essentially the medical practice and the medical advice that a negative test when you're not symptomatic doesn't really tell you much because it doesn't stop you from becoming symptomatic the next day and being positive two days later. Testing is not a factor at all for us."

On the impact this will all have on the salary cap...



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"We've thought about everything. So, of course, the disruption of the season is going to affect the generation of revenues and what we end up with in HRR (hockey-related revenues) and the formula we have in our CBA to formulate a cap. Having said that, all of those items I just mentioned are really products of negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA. And when we get to the end of this and when we understand what we're looking at and what we're trying to accomplish, obviously we're going to sit down with the NHLPA we're going to have to negotiate a transition to what we're trying to accomplish. That is clearly something that is in our future, but I think both sides recognize that and welcome that challenge. We'll be happy to be in that position to work through those issues."

On if the NHL would come back at the same time as the NBA, MLB and other sports leagues...

"I can't say we've had that discussion with the other sports leagues. I'd say we've had a good level of co-operation. We do have frequent contact and the ability to run ideas off each other. But I don't think we're linked in the way of having to do what each other decides to do. It may work out that way for obvious reasons, but that certainly is not been necessarily how we've agreed to proceed."

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1181243 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks hoping to win lottery again with Michaelis, Lockwood signings

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

March 19, 2020, 7:18 PM

VANCOUVER – In terms of value and efficiency, the only thing better than getting a player out of a late-round draft pick is developing one out of nothing.

Three years ago, the Vancouver Canucks signed physical forward Zack MacEwen as an undrafted free-agent out of the QMJHL, and this season, the team got 17 games out of the 23-year-old and was impressed enough that general manager Jim Benning declared the winger a full-time NHL forward for next season.

A year ago, the Canucks signed dynamic defenceman Brogan Rafferty, undrafted out of Quinnipiac University, and this season the 24-year-old was an offensive sensation as a rookie with the Utica Comets, amassing 45 points in 57 games in the AHL.

Rafferty could be on the Canucks next season – with MacEwen.

Thursday's free-agent signing of German centre Marc Michaelis out of Minnesota State-Mankato may turn out to be nothing. But if the 24-year-old playmaker develops into an NHL player, it will be like another winning lottery ticket for the Canucks.

"We've signed some free agents in the past and they've worked out well for us," Benning said in a conference call with reporters. "We think that (Michaelis) is close to playing.

"I'm excited about him because over the last four years he has put up good numbers at the college level. He has skill and playmaking ability, but he also plays a good 200-foot game. His attention to detail defensively is good. He's a little bit older player, so we think he's not far off being an NHL player."

In a productive day that briefly interrupted the gloom and gravity surrounding hockey's shutdown due to the coronavirus, the Canucks also signed 2016 third-round pick William Lockwood, who has finished four seasons at the University of Michigan and could have forced his way into unrestricted free agency this summer.

Lockwood, a tenacious two-way forward whose development has been slowed by injuries, and Michaelis deepen the Canucks' prospect pool and should start next season in Utica.

"It feels strange," Benning said of signing players during the COVID-19 pandemic that has scuttled sports worldwide. "None of us have been through this before. I talked to five GMs yesterday, and it's unfortunate, but we need to deal with it. The business side of it doesn't stop, even though we're not playing. I'm excited we got these guys signed today."

The Canucks are chasing at least one other college free agent and hope to sign more of their own draft picks, including 2017 fourth-rounder Jack Rathbone, another high-scoring defenceman who just finished his sophomore season at Harvard University.

Rathbone and Rafferty have surged up the Canucks' development list since they were acquired, occupying spots among the top eight or so prospects in the organization.

Michaelis is an interesting wild card.

Like Rafferty, another late-bloomer who played three seasons at Quinnipiac, Michaelis is further along in his development than most players coming out of college hockey. His ability to play centre gives him added value after Benning traded highly rated Northeastern University centre Tyler Madden, the Canucks' third-round pick in 2018, to the Los Angeles Kings in February's deal for winger Tyler Toffoli.

A former junior player of the year in Germany, Michaelis finished his four NCAA seasons in Mankato as the school's second all-time leading scorer with 162 points, including 71 goals, in 148 games. He is five-foot-10 and 180 pounds.

"We've got some guys on the wing that can shoot the puck, and he's like a playmaker that can get them the puck," Benning said. "That's why we're excited about him choosing us.

"We had a short list this year; there was, like, two guys we went after really hard, him being one of them. So we're excited that we got him signed. The other player we should hear in the next couple of days whether he's going to choose us or another team."

Lockwood, a 21-year-old winger from Bloomfield Hills, Mich., had nine goals and 23 points in 33 games as a senior at Michigan, down from 16 goals and 31 points the previous season. Benning said Lockwood, who is five-foot-11 and 172 pounds but plays a fast, physical game, projects as a third- or fourth-line "energy" player at the NHL level.

Both Michaelis and Lockwood captained their college teams.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canucks could suffer serious cap ramifications due to NHL shutdown

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

March 18, 2020, 7:21 PM



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 20, 2020

VANCOUVER – The coronavirus pandemic could ravage the NHL economy as much as the global one. And the U.S. Federal Reserve isn't putting together a rescue package for hockey's billionaire owners and millionaire players.

It will be up to the league and its players association to negotiate a separate economic deal for the 2020-21 season because applying the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and basing next year's salary cap on this season's stalled revenues could make it nearly impossible for NHL teams to open with full lineups.

The Vancouver Canucks were going to have to do some maneuvering this summer to re-sign its free agents based on this season's \$81.5-million salary cap. With the league shut down indefinitely since March 12 – and no guarantee of the playoff revenue windfall – the cap could plunge by \$10-20 million based on current revenue formulas.

"A lot of teams would be over without adding new any new contracts (this summer)," Canucks general manager Jim Benning said. "We're going to get it figured out, no matter what. They'll have to come to some agreement."

That's a common belief around the NHL: that however this season ends, if it hasn't already, owners and players will have to agree on a salary cap that makes sense given what everyone hopes is a once-in-a-lifetime shutdown of all professional sports this spring.

When the 2012 lockout by NHL owners shortened that season to 48 regular-season games, plus a full Stanley Cup tournament, the sides came to a side agreement for the 2013-14 salary cap, which was set at \$64.3 million – the same upper limit as the previous 82-game season in 2011-12.

That flat cap wasn't especially onerous because the players' share of revenue declined to 50 per cent from 57 and teams were given leeway that included two "compliance buyouts," which did not count against the salary cap.

That interesting wrinkle could be the best thing that comes out of this shutdown for the Canucks, whose cap pressure would be greatly alleviated simply by shedding Loui Eriksson's \$6-million annual charge.

The winger's bonus-heavy \$36-million contract is largely buyout proof. According to CapFriendly, a buyout this June would save the Canucks only \$333,000 against Eriksson's \$6-million cap hit next season. But a compliance buyout, if the NHL and NHLPA agree on them, saves the entire \$6 million.

That would make a massive difference to the Canucks. But before closet capologists get too excited, compliance buyouts are extremely unlikely unless the cap really is going down.

Only two weeks ago – or was it two years ago? – NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told general managers to expect a salary cap between \$84- and \$88.2-million next season. That range seems impossible now.

But will the cap be below this season's \$81.5 million?

If it is, the Canucks and a lot of other teams are in trouble.

Capfriendly shows Vancouver has \$63.5 million committed next season for 15 players. This includes \$6.35 million in "dead money" on Ryan Spooner's buyout, commissioner Gary Bettman's cap-recapture penalty on Robert Loungo, and Sven Baertschi potentially earning his NHL salary in the minors – again. Super-rookie Quinn Hughes' \$850,000 in bonuses will likely also be charged against next season's cap.

If the ceiling is \$81.5 million, the Canucks will have about \$17 million to spend. The majority of that could be eaten up by re-signing goalie Jacob Markstrom (\$3.67 million this season) and winger Tyler Toffoli (\$4.6 million), unrestricted free agents who will be the team's top priorities after this season.

Beyond them, the Canucks would like back UFA defenceman Chris Tanev (\$4.45 million) and versatile middle-six forward Josh Leivo (\$1.5 million), and they also have to deal with restricted free agents Troy Stecher (\$2.33 million), Jake Virtanen (\$1.25 million), Tyler Motte (\$975,000) and Adam Gaudette (\$917,000).

Now imagine if the salary cap, based on reduced revenue, is set at \$71.5 million.

"That's a big unknown," assistant GM Chris Gear, who oversees the Canucks' cap, told Sportsnet. "I am glad that we haven't already signed any of our free agents. If we'd already made those commitments (before the NHL shutdown), we'd have less flexibility. I'm not sure you're going to see anybody signing big contracts until we have a better idea what the cap is going to be."

The Canucks may already have plans to reduce their payroll. Even without a compliance buyout, the team could approach Eriksson about agreeing to terminate his contract (like the Buffalo Sabres did in February with Zach Bogosian), unless the Canuck wants to finish his career in the minors.

And Benning said when he acquired Toffoli ahead of last month's trade deadline that he would try to replace draft picks he surrendered in that deal (a second-rounder to Los Angeles) and the one last summer for J.T. Miller (a first-rounder to Tampa Bay, since traded to New Jersey) when this season ends. That would mean trading a significant player or two off his roster.

The Canucks could also look at trading spare defenceman Jordie Benn (\$2 million) and retain salary to move veteran centre Brandon Sutter (\$4.375 million).

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1181245 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL's pause has silver lining as journeyman Sam Gagner returns home

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

March 18, 2020, 4:03 PM

EDMONTON — Sam Gagner grew up a hockey brat, the son of long-time NHLer Dave Gagner. Dad played in six different NHL cities before Sam was 10 years old.

Gagner, his two sisters, and their mother Jo-Anne, packed up and followed Dave from Minnesota to Dallas, to Toronto, to Calgary, to Florida and finally to Vancouver, where Dad played out his 946-game, 714-point NHL career. It was a hockey life that produced an 844-game NHL career for Sam, and a four-year stint at Dartmouth University for sister Jessica, who is two years younger.

But it also meant changing schools, and a revolving door of friends throughout the Gagner kids' youths. Not necessarily a bad way to grow up, but certainly different, is the best way to describe what it's like to be raised in an NHL hockey family.

So if Sam Gagner, whose wife Rachel had their third child in September, gets anything out of this "pause" that the NHL is on, it's that life as a normal family man isn't so bad.

"That's the silver lining," Gagner said over the phone from his Edmonton home, the voices of his kids — aged four, two and six months — audible in the background.



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"I was reading something the other day about, as a society, maybe it's time for a re-set. Focus on our families, the things that matter, and just try to stay healthy. Those are the main things, and as a family, that's what we're trying to do.

"Hanging out as a family? Getting in as much time family time as you can, because we missed a lot of that this year? That part of this has been good."

Gagner was so very pleased to be traded from Vancouver to Edmonton last season. Nothing against the Canucks, but Rachel is an Edmontonian. They have a house here, and so is her family.

And he was, on the other end of the scale, every bit as devastated when his salary was shipped to Detroit at the 2020 trade deadline, so that the Oilers could afford the acquisition of Andreas Athanasiou. Of course, Gagner realized that as a bottom-six utility winger making \$3.15 million, it was highly possible he would be traded in a cap-clearing move.

But Detroit is a long way from home — which is why he hopped the first plane home when the NHL hit the pause button.

"I just didn't want to get stuck in Detroit, while my wife and kids were here. Just leaving my wife with the kids during a quarantine. I felt like I had to get back, and the Wings were really helpful in making sure of that. It's just nice to be with family at this time, obviously," he said. "I don't want to trivialize things. I know there are a lot of people out there who are way worse off than we are, struggling to make ends meet. We're very fortunate that we're together as a family.

"You try to use the time as a period of reflection."

The Gagners are all on self-quarantine due to his travels from the United States. That will end soon enough, as will the COVID-19 pandemic, eventually.

When it does, Gagner — who is a 30-year-old unrestricted free agent that has played for seven different organizations since the 2013-14 season — will be facing some realities.

After this extended time spent with his three kids, does he sign a six-figure deal with a team that is two time zones away from his family? Does he drag the whole clan along for what could well be a one-year deal, giving his kids the same migratory upbringing that he had?

Can Gagner, as a utility man, sign with the Oilers where he successfully moved up and down the right wing this season from the fourth line all the way up to Connor McDavid's unit?

"I don't have anything figured out yet," Gagner said. "A weird part about this is, you don't know if the season is over, so we haven't had exit meetings or anything yet. I don't really know where anything stands with Detroit.

"I'm not really worried about that right now."

As players go, Gagner is near the top of the curve on smarts, experience and personality. He seems old because he broke in at age 18, but in reality, he's only 30.

When the Oilers sent him down to Bakersfield this season — his third AHL stint since 2015-16 — Oilers GM Ken Holland told Gagner to keep his eyes open and watch how things work down there. Observe.

Holland was always looking to groom future management types like Steve Yzerman, Kris Draper, Dan Cleary and Kirk Maltby while in Detroit, and he sees the same potential in Sam, whose father Dave worked in the Canucks' front office and is now an agent with the Orr Hockey Group.

Right now though, the only departure Gagner is willing to make from "hockey player" is the temporary transition to "full-time dad." You sense he would love to find a way to continue his NHL career before beginning the next chapter, whatever it may be.

"Everyone's in the same situation. In every line of work, people are away from work at this time," he said. "A lot of people have the opportunity to

work from home, but for us, it's self-quarantine, make sure you're staying in shape and make sure you're ready if we do come back."

Of course, between workouts and feedings, a little something on TV wouldn't hurt.

"You turn on the TV and you're like, 'I'm going to watch some golf.' There's no golf," he said. "You're never sure what to do with yourself when life comes to a complete stop.

"But when you're with your family — and we haven't had a ton of family time this year — it allows us to do that."

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1181246 Websites

TSN.CA / Handing out MVP awards to the seven Canadian teams

Travis Yost

One of the most painful realities of a potentially lost National Hockey League season is the fact that Canadian teams were going to be well-represented in the playoffs — an occurrence that's been hit or miss over the last decade.

At the time play was halted, the majority of Canadian teams were trending towards postseason bids.

Consider the playoff chances of each organization as of March 11, 2020:

Edmonton Oilers (95 per cent)

Toronto Maple Leafs (73 per cent)

Calgary Flames (63 per cent)

Vancouver Canucks (61 per cent)

Winnipeg Jets (42 per cent)

Montreal Canadiens (< 1 per cent)

Ottawa Senators (0 per cent)

In aggregate, it was an impressive year for teams north of the border, and that's even true for teams like the Senators, who have started to show signs that a lengthy rebuild is progressing relatively well — one ripe with young assets and three first-round picks in the upcoming draft.

With time available, I decided to go through and hand out team MVP awards to each of the seven Canadian teams. Is the Travis Yost Trophy — awarded annually to the player judged most valuable to his Canadian team — more valuable than the Hart Trophy? Probably.

Here is each team's winner:

Edmonton Oilers

Winner: Leon Draisaitl, F

Also considered: Connor McDavid, F;

Picking between Draisaitl and McDavid would have ordinarily been impossible, but there are a few factors that give Draisaitl the edge. The first and perhaps most obvious one is availability. Draisaitl and McDavid had eerily similar production on both sides of the ice, but Draisaitl ended up playing seven more games and 100 more minutes than his star counterpart. With that comes added benefit: Draisaitl will presumably end



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the season 13 points better in the box score numbers and three net goals better in on-ice goal differential.

One thing that I think is worth mentioning – perhaps because it was such a popular topic during the regular season – concerns Draisaitl, his Hart Trophy candidacy, and how we should analyze a player with such disparate offensive and defensive splits. I think there are a few truisms here. One, Draisaitl's offensive production – and McDavid's too – far outpaces any defensive limitations they have right now. Two, we ultimately care about net goal differential, and for as long as both of these skaters are scoring at such a ridiculous clip, their on-ice numbers will remain positive. Three, the defensive play was an issue. Despite being in the 95th percentile in on-ice scoring, the group was around the 68th percentile in net on-ice scoring. That is a legitimate criticism.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Winner: Auston Matthews, F

Also considered: Jake Muzzin, D

Muzzin would have had an interesting claim if he hadn't missed so many games – Muzzin broke his foot in a December game against New Jersey and then broke his hand blocking a shot in a February game against Tampa Bay. That said, in the 53 games he did play, Muzzin was certifiably fantastic on the defensive side of the ice. For a Maple Leafs team that struggled to find defensive balance all year, Muzzin was one (positive) exception.

But with so many games lost, there really isn't any argument for another player outside of Matthews. He had a legitimate chance at winning the Rocket Richard Trophy (and would have made me look smart for once in the process). He has developed into one of the league's most dynamic offensive talents, an exceptionally dangerous shooter who needs very little time and space to get off his patented wrist shot. What may be lost in Matthews' season is the fact that Toronto was actually quite good from a defensive standpoint with him on the ice. Matthews was near the top of the leaderboard when it came to on-ice goals against, expected goals against (goaltender neutral), and shots against.

He's simply one of the best players in the game. You can count on one hand how many players you would take over Matthews today.

Calgary Flames

Winner: T.J. Brodie, D

Also considered: Matthew Tkachuk, F

Unlike a few of their Canadian counterparts, the skater group in Calgary was much more balanced when measuring production. That makes identifying candidates a bit more difficult, particularly from a group of forwards who didn't do much to separate themselves from one another.

Take Tkachuk for example. He was clearly the team's most productive offensive player, true both at even strength and on the power play. But despite those offensive numbers, Tkachuk was outscored at 5-on-5 (-2). Compare that with a defensive workhorse like Brodie (+5 actual goals; +7 expected goals), who saw Calgary outscoring their opponents with him on the ice all season long.

The Brodie pairing – he again played the majority of his ice time with Mark Giordano – has been solid for the Flames for years now and one of the key reasons why this team has been a regular playoff threat for the past few seasons.

Vancouver Canucks

Winner: Elias Pettersson, F

Also considered: none

Of the seven teams, this was the easiest choice. It may be the easiest choice for any team in the league. Vancouver's was a top-heavy team all season long, but their first line – anchored by Pettersson – was one of

the most dominant groupings in the league, and was good enough to overwhelm the depth issues this team had for much of the year.

If you are into more advanced regression-based measures like Goals Above Replacement, Pettersson somehow comes off looking even better than he normally would by way of scoring totals or on-ice differentials. What you find through these regressions is that teammates are materially better when playing with Pettersson, and when moved to other lines, see performance drop-offs well below expectations.

At the time the season was halted, Pettersson was nearly 24 goals (approximately four wins!) better than a replacement player, which was the second highest number in the league. The only player ahead of him? A similarly situated one-man band in the form of Rangers sniper Artemi Panarin (25 goals above replacement).

Pettersson's arc – he is a full year behind Matthews, two behind McDavid – is going to be interesting to follow. At 21, he is already a superstar in this league. The question now is where is his ceiling, and how can Vancouver surround him with even better complementary talent as the team prepares for his second contract?

Winnipeg Jets

Winner: Connor Hellebuyck, G

Also considered: Mark Scheifele, F

Scheifele comes off looking like the best skater on this Jets team, but everyone in Winnipeg knows that this team's success came by way of goaltender Hellebuyck.

Hellebuyck – assuming awards will be given out regardless of what happens with the season – seems like a lock to win the Vezina Trophy. He stopped 92.2 per cent of shots and played in 58 of Winnipeg's 71 games. While an 82 per cent appearance rate might seem high, consider the league's trend towards load management for goaltenders and how little other primetime goaltenders played, relatively speaking. For quick reference: New York's Semyon Varlamov was at 66 per cent, Dallas' Ben Bishop was at 64 per cent, Boston's Tuukka Rask was at 62 per cent. You get the point.

Another thing to consider: Hellebuyck's 92.2 save percentage is fantastic, but he did it behind a shaky defence. That save percentage alone puts him 21 goals above average, and adjustments for shot quality don't change those numbers any – Evolving Hockey had Hellebuyck at 20 goals saved above expectations, more than double our second-place goaltender in Arizona's Darcy Kuemper (+9). Just look at this heat map of where shots had fallen over the course of the season!

Hellebuyck is one of the best goalies in the league. Winnipeg would have been at the bottom of the division without him. This one is rather simple.

Montreal Canadiens

Winner: Brendan Gallagher, F

Also considered: Max Domi, F

Picking between Gallagher and Domi is only difficult because Gallagher missed some time this year – Domi ended up playing 12 more games over the course of the season. But despite that 12-game differential, Gallagher's production was equivalent (or better) than Domi's on both ends of the ice.

Tomas Tatar will be a notable omission – he had a fantastic year and was probably the hardest name to leave off across the seven Canadian clubs. But outside of the counting totals, Tatar struggles head-to-head with Gallagher. The team was about 10 per cent less effective offensively with Tatar on the ice relative to Gallagher, and many of Tatar's counting numbers came by way of secondary assists – 21 of those in total, or 35 per cent of his total scoring. He was also a penalty magnet: his -11 penalty differential was sixth worst amongst forwards in the league, a combination of him taking untimely penalties and failing to be able to draw many from the officials.



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Ottawa Senators

Winner: Thomas Chabot, D

Also considered: J.G. Pageau, F; Brady Tkachuk, F

I'm not sure how to handle J.G. Pageau's candidacy – he was clearly the best player on the Senators this season, but as a result of his trade deadline move to Long Island, he is no longer on the roster. That opens up a debate between forward Tkachuk and defenceman Chabot, and honestly, this is the closest thing to a coin flip as I can find.

While Tkachuk was the team's most productive offensive player (and his penalty rates were sterling), his on-ice differentials were less impressive. Ottawa gave up 2.9 goals against per 60 minutes with Tkachuk out there, fourth worst amongst Ottawa skaters. Tkachuk's expected goals against rates were in line, so this wasn't exclusively a goaltending performance issue.

The thing about Chabot that gave him the edge by way of tiebreaker for me is just how difficult his job was. This Ottawa team has been strategically gutted, and only recently has the organization been able to introduce their young talent – most of which is at the forward position – into the lineup.

Tkachuk spent most of the season playing with the likes of Pageau and Connor Brown, two capable middle-six forwards that can play complementary roles with most impact forwards in the league. Chabot, on the other hand played most of his pairing minutes with immobile defenders like Ron Hainsey and Nikita Zaitsev. That's a tough assignment for any player in the league.

There isn't a wrong answer here. And I don't think Ottawa will lose sleep over deciding which of their two young stars had the better season, all things considered!

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1181247 Websites

TSN.CA / Ottawa Senators 'actively monitoring' players and staff after positive COVID-19 test

Ian Mendes

When the National Hockey League pressed the pause button on the 2019-2020 season last week, it did so with the knowledge that one of its players would soon test positive for the COVID-19 virus.

"Following last night's news that an NBA player has tested positive for coronavirus – and given that our leagues share so many facilities and locker rooms and it now seems likely that some member of the NHL community would test positive at some point – it is no longer appropriate to try and continue to play games at this point," commissioner Gary Bettman wrote in his statement on March 12.

Bettman's prediction came to pass on Tuesday night as the Ottawa Senators confirmed that an unnamed player had tested positive for the COVID-19 virus in a brief statement to the media just before midnight.

On Wednesday, the team said that players "are being accessed and tested under the supervision of health authorities." They declined to confirm the number of suspected cases that they could be dealing with – only saying they are "actively monitoring players and staff."

The club also wanted to make it clear that in their estimation, Senators players "do not pose a public health risk to the community." The club

says it instructed players and staff who were on the recent California road trip to self-quarantine on Saturday.

The league offices were notified of the positive test about three hours prior to that – around 9 p.m. ET on Tuesday evening.

"I got a call from the Ottawa Senators team doctor last night indicating that a player had tested positive for COVID-19," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Athletic's Two-Man Advantage podcast on Wednesday. "It was really just a matter of time before we had a player test positive."

The player is said to be exhibiting mild symptoms of the virus and is in isolation. The club says it is abiding by Ontario privacy laws in withholding the player's name from the public realm.

After returning from the California trip, the Senators player started exhibiting signs consistent with the COVID-19 virus. After informing the club's front office and medical personnel, he underwent a screening for the virus and the result came back as a positive.

Following the trail of how a Senators player may have contracted the virus is not difficult and, as Bettman had warned, it may have come directly as a result of being in a shared facility with an NBA team.

The Senators trip to California last week was riddled with warning signs of impending danger at a time in which the term 'social distancing' was in its infancy in North America:

- On Saturday, March 7, the Senators played a game against the San Jose Sharks at the SAP Center. Two days earlier – on March 5 – Santa Clara County (California) had made a recommendation for a ban on large-scale gatherings being held in the area due to the concern of the virus spreading in a rapid fashion.

- The following day – with the Senators now in the Los Angeles area – the players and staff had a complete day off, enjoying some of the attractions in Southern California. A number of the players watched the Lakers-Clippers game together from a luxury suite at the Staples Center.

- On Wednesday, March 11 – in what would be their final game before the league was suspended – the Senators played the Los Angeles Kings at the Staples Centre. The night before, the Lakers played host to the Brooklyn Nets – who have since confirmed four cases of the COVID-19 virus on their team.

- On Thursday March 12, the Senators flew back to Ottawa from Los Angeles in their charter aircraft following word that the NHL had paused its season. The club had to sit on their plane for a couple of extra hours on the tarmac in Los Angeles, as the flight plan – which was originally supposed to take them to Chicago – had to be altered to reflect a sudden return home. In total, the players and staff would have spent close to eight hours together on that plane – from the time they boarded to the time they de-planed in Ottawa.

In another wrinkle for the team, the Senators also saw goaltender Marcus Hogberg join the team in the middle of their trip to California. On Sunday, March 8, Hogberg rejoined the team in southern California, after spending close to a week back home in Sweden tending to a family emergency.

Hogberg was technically caught in a grey area, considering he left for Europe on March 1 – just a couple of days before the NHL enacted their own ban for employees travelling overseas. On March 4, the league had asked its own personnel to stop travelling overseas and if they had been to places such as Europe, they would need to adhere to a 14-day period of a self-quarantine.

Hogberg, however, didn't fall into that category. That was deemed to be a directive aimed towards league employees and not players, so Hogberg was allowed to rejoin the Senators without any period of self-isolation. While he might seem like a prime candidate to be the vulnerable player, sources tell TSN that Hogberg was not the player who tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.



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But since Hogberg was a teammate of the Sens player who is carrying the COVID-19 virus, there remains a chance he could still test positive in the days ahead.

Given that two NBA teams – the Utah Jazz and Nets – had multiple players test positive for the virus, there's a chance the same fate could befall a couple more members of the Senators.

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1181248 Websites

USA TODAY / As coronavirus has current season on hiatus, NHL says playing 82 games in 2020-21 is goal

Chris Bumbaca

The NHL playoffs should be starting in a little more than two weeks. But the league is operating with uncertainty that nearly every sports entity shares in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Postseason play will not begin on April 8, as was scheduled, and it's unclear when hockey will return. The CDC on Sunday recommended no gatherings with more than 50 people for eight weeks.

What the league does know is that it does not want the hiatus to impact the ability to play a full 82 games during the 2020-21 regular season.

"The only definite for us is we certainly don't want to do anything around a resumption of play this season that will impact our ability to have a full season next year," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Athletic. "So that's kind of the outside parameters and rules we're following currently. Everything else is kind of up for grabs for lack of a better term. There are lots of possibilities. We do have people working internally on those scenarios and what they look like and what the feasibility is."

Among the many variables at play, Daly said, were television network partner obligations, availability of teams' arenas, details to iron out with the players union and whether games would even be open to fans.

"That's why I said I don't think I'm ruling anything out other than we're going to make decisions to try and preserve our ability to have a full season next year," he said.

An unnamed member of the Ottawa Senators tested positive for COVID-19, the team announced Tuesday, giving the NHL its first confirmed case of the disease. Prior to that, positive tests came from a San Jose Sharks arena worker and a Vancouver Canucks full-time office member who does not have a "fan-facing role."

"People's health and safety has to be our primary concern and that's not only our players, that's our fans and that's people in general," Daly told The Athletic. "Not even necessarily associated with our game in any meaningful way. So we have to do our part societally to make sure we're doing the right things and making the right decisions."

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1181249 Websites

USA TODAY / Sports' greatest hits: League-owned TV networks dip into archives with no live games to air

Steve Gardner

With no live games to broadcast, recap and debate now that the coronavirus outbreak has shut down the sports calendar, several TV outlets are altering their programming to look backward instead of forward.

In an effort to "deliver engaging and compelling programming," MLB Network has picked out a theme for each of the next few days that will center around a particular classic game or moment.

For example, Wednesday's featured game is the Wrigley Field slugfest from May 17, 1979, when the Chicago Cubs and Philadelphia Phillies combined for 45 runs.

The entire game will be replayed at 8 p.m. ET. A one-hour special, "MLB's Greatest Games," will precede it at 7 p.m. with former Phillies shortstop (and later manager) Larry Bowa joining host Bob Costas and insider Tom Verducci to offer insights into that high-scoring affair.

Other themes to come later in the week include:

-- Rookie sensation Mark "The Bird" Fidrych making his national TV debut in 1976.

-- The Seattle Mariners' franchise-saving playoff victory over the New York Yankees in 1995. (Ken Griffey Jr. slides across with the winning run.)

-- The one-game AL East playoff between the Yankees and the Boston Red Sox in 1978. (The Bucky Dent game.)

The NHL Network, which is run out of the same Secaucus, New Jersey, headquarters as MLB Network, is taking a similar approach with the hockey season on ice.

Stanley Cup-clinching games are featured for the rest of the week including:

-- Bryan Trottier, Mike Bossy and Billy Smith leading the New York Islanders to four consecutive titles in the early 1980s.

-- Wayne Gretzky and the high-scoring Edmonton Oilers finally ending the Isles' dynasty in 1985 and starting one of their own.

-- The Montreal Canadiens getting stellar goaltending from Patrick Roy to hoist the Cup in 1986.

And the NBA, which is also on hiatus, will be following a similar blueprint on NBA TV, featuring classic contests with a mix of documentaries and original programming. That includes:

-- Game 1 of the 1992 NBA Finals between the Chicago Bulls and Portland Trail Blazers (Thursday, 4 p.m. ET).

-- Game 7 of the 1988 NBA Finals between the Detroit Pistons and Los Angeles Lakers (Friday, 12 p.m. ET).

-- Kobe Bryant (Los Angeles Lakers) and Shaquille O'Neal (Miami Heat) meet for the first time as adversaries in 2004 (Friday, 8 p.m. ET).

-- Several airings of NBA TV's "The Dream Team" documentary.

-- Games from the 2019-20 season on Saturday.

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USA TODAY / With games called off because of the coronavirus outbreak, are athletes still getting paid?

Paul Myerberg

Athletes across all professional leagues are in varying degrees of limbo as the coronavirus strain leaves sports on an indefinite hiatus.

COVID-19 hasn't profoundly impacted the NFL, which is just beginning to enter the heart of its offseason. For now, the league is juggling how to handle its marquee offseason events, such as the upcoming draft, amid calls to limit large public gatherings.

But the NBA, NHL and MLS had to suspended their regular seasons in the midst of the playoff push for the former two and the early part of the schedule for the latter. MLB has already moved back the start of its regular season.

Where does that leave professional athletes? In terms of collecting paychecks, here's where things stand across the major pro sports leagues.

MLB

Amid news that Opening Day will be delayed at least into May, MLB and the MLB Players Association are still negotiating some of the salary-related details for the weeks to come.

The MLBPA informed players that, upon leaving their spring training facilities, they will receive a living allowance of \$1,100 per week from the union through at least April 9 — with the belief that teams will then begin to pick up expenses. This arrangement applies only to players on a 40-man roster, and non-roster invitees who finished the 2019 season on a 40-man roster or injured list.

But a lot of uncertainty remains. As San Diego Padres outfielder Tommy Pham recently told USA TODAY Sports: "I don't know if any of us will get paid."

POSITIVE TEST: A second New York Yankees minor leaguer has coronavirus

NBA

NBA players have still received their typical salaries during the league's ongoing hiatus, but there is a caveat.

The league's collective bargaining agreement, like most contracts of that magnitude, contains a clause about the ramifications of a "force majeure event" — something entirely out of the NBA's control, like a global pandemic, that would allow owners to withhold a portion of players' salaries.

NBPA executive director Michele Roberts told USA TODAY Sports on Tuesday that it is too early to know if the NBA will enforce that part of the league's labor deal. But Roberts said that the union and the league have a shared goal of resuming games as soon as possible, as long as it is safe to do so.

NFL

Under the league's former collective bargaining agreement, NFL players were paid in 17 weekly installments across the regular season. In 2019, for instance, players began drawing paychecks with the start of the season's four-month stretch.

The new CBA, which was approved this week and will go into effect this season, changes the traditional pay schedule. The new agreement will pay players across 34 weeks, not 17, with that number growing to 36 weeks once the NFL adds a 17th game in the regular season to its schedule, as the league is expected to do.

Not that the COVID-19 crisis has impacted the normal offseason schedule: NFL teams made a flurry of personnel moves at Monday's start of free agency's negotiating window, while Tom Brady's social-media post announcing the end of his tenure with the New England Patriots dominated Tuesday's news cycle.

NHL

While the league is still working on how to put together its postseason, NHL players will receive their final three scheduled paychecks, according to NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly. The first, which came on March 13, will be followed by two additional payments to cover through the end of regular season, which was scheduled for April 4.

MLS

The MLS season was just getting started when the coronavirus outbreak brought it to a halt last week. The league's teams had only played two games.

Nevertheless, in a statement provided to USA TODAY Sports on Tuesday, MLS Player Association executive director Bob Foose said the union's CBA with the league does not include any force majeure language and MLS players "are receiving, and will continue to receive, their regular bimonthly paychecks" even while play is suspended.

"To their credit, the league has given us no indication that they are considering any change in that regard," Foose added.

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1181251 Websites

USA TODAY / Ottawa Senators player becomes first in NHL to test positive for coronavirus

Jace Evans

An Ottawa Senators player became the first NHL player confirmed to test positive for COVID-19, the team announced Tuesday night.

The Senators said the player, who remained unnamed, had mild symptoms and is in isolation.

"The Ottawa Senators are in the process of notifying anyone who has had known close contact with the athlete and are working with our team doctors and public health officials," the team said in a statement.

"As a result of this positive case, all members of the Ottawa Senators are requested to remain isolated, to monitor their health and seek advice from our team medical staff.

"The health of our players, fans, and community remains our highest priority. We will continue to do everything we can to help ensure our players, staff, fans and the greater community remain safe and healthy during this time of uncertainty due to the spread of the coronavirus."

TSN reported Wednesday that some Senators players "are being accessed and tested under the supervision of health authorities," though the team did not give a number.

The NHL is not mandating testing.

"The current state of medical advice is that people should likely not be tested unless they are symptomatic," deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Associated Press by email Wednesday. "That doesn't mean that potentially exposed individuals shouldn't take proper precautions such as



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adhering to self-quarantine principles as necessary and immediately reporting to medical staff should they become symptomatic.”

NHL Players' Association spokesman Jonathan Weatherdon said the union has been in contact with Senators players about the situation.

The Sens had wrapped up their California road trip, their final game in Los Angeles' Staples Center on March 11, right before the season was postponed indefinitely due to the coronavirus pandemic. They had played in Anaheim on March 10 and San Jose on March 7. The Senators' game vs. the Sharks was the second-to-last at San Jose's SAP Center following Santa Clara County officials' recommendation for sporting events and large gatherings to be canceled (the county eventually issued a mass gatherings ban before the season was suspended altogether).

The Ducks and Kings released statements that they were monitoring team members, but no one was exhibiting symptoms of the onset of COVID-19 at the moment.

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