



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### PNC Arena is holding a blood drive, but Hurricanes are closing their offices there

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes said Monday the team will temporarily close its PNC Arena offices on Tuesday and have hockey and business employees work remotely because of the coronavirus crisis.

"As the situation with coronavirus continues to escalate, it is clear that social distancing is the best way to protect our employees and help to flatten the curve," Don Waddell, the Canes' president and general manager, said in a statement. "We will continue to operate our business on the hockey and arena sides as normally as possible given the circumstances."

The NHL on March 12 suspended the 2019-20 season. Gale Force Sports & Entertainment, the parent company of the Hurricanes, handles the daily operations of the arena.

The PNC Arena box office and The Eye, the team merchandise store, will be closed.

Hurricanes season-ticket members were asked to contact ticket reps via email, and individual-game purchasers were told to call the PNC Box Office Information line (919-861-2323) from Monday through Thursday between 10 a.m.–3 p.m. or consult Ticketmaster.com.

The Hurricanes' official online shop, CarolinaProShop.com, will remain open, but delivery times may be delayed, the team said.

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Donor chairs will be spaced as far apart as possible.

Donors are strongly encouraged to make an appointment to control social distancing.

Donors can make an appointment online at [thebloodconnection.org](http://thebloodconnection.org) or by calling 800-392-6551.



### If NHL returns in summer, ice makers face daunting task

TSN's Mark Masters chats with Carolina Hurricanes ice technician Jared Dupre on the challenges ice makers throughout the league may have to contend with if the NHL returns to playing games in the summer, especially those working for teams based in warmer, humid climates.

By Mark Masters

Jared Dupre moved from Long Island, New York, to Hillsborough, N.C., in 1993 after his father took a job with the University of North Carolina's hospital system.

"I had just finished high school and decided to make the move with him and glad I did it," said Dupre, who grew up a big Rangers fan. "Found out there was an ice rink within bicycle-riding distance of my house and I got to know the manager of the building and I got a part-time job and I just got lucky and got to know the right people in the area down here that kind of steered me in the right path."

That path led to PNC Arena, home of the Carolina Hurricanes, where Dupre has worked since 2001. He has served as the ice technician for the last eight years.

"Just fell into something I love doing on a daily basis," he said. "I like the camaraderie, the atmosphere of the building, the people I work with, I've always been someone who's liked the cold so it's kind of fitting. I've always been a hockey fan."

When the NHL season was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 12, the Hurricanes held the first wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference with hopes of making another long playoff run after reaching the final four a year ago. If the season resumes and Carolina recaptures that magic it likely means games being played in July and perhaps even August.

"That would probably be one of the bigger challenges we would ever have to deal with in this building," Dupre readily admits.



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TSN spoke with Dupre by phone on Monday. The following is an edited transcript of the interview.

What's the biggest issue if games are played in the summer?

"Our biggest problem here in North Carolina is the humidity we face at that time of year. Typically in July and August we can have temperatures anywhere from 90 degrees (Fahrenheit) to 115 with 65 per cent humidity outside. We all like to joke about the fact that, 'Hot and humid, plenty of sunshine, chance of afternoon thundershowers,' is pretty much the weather forecast from about the end of May to the beginning of September on a daily basis."

What can you do to combat that humidity?

"Our building has desiccant dehumidifiers on the roof and we try and pull the temperature down and the humidity out of the building, but once the doors open it's basically null and void. Because once the doors are open and all that hot, humid air starts coming in, we can't pull it back out with the people in here. You get 15,000-plus people in the building for a game, you're adding to the humidity with people talking and yelling and screaming and the general body heat warming the air."

And this isn't just a problem in North Carolina, right?

"Any of the southern teams on the Eastern Seaboard here are dealing with the same issues this time of year."

If the NHL returns, but there are no fans at the game, how much would that help?

"It would probably help, because we wouldn't have that hour when we have our exterior doors open for the fans to ingress into the building. I couldn't judge how significant it would be, but it would definitely help us, because we wouldn't be increasing the temperature in the building, we'd be better able to regulate the temperature."

The NHL recommendation is for ambient air to be between 60 and 64 degrees at 40 to 44 per cent humidity. How close could you get to that in the summer?

"I couldn't tell you, off the top of my head, what it would be for that time of year. Obviously, the last time we were that deep into the playoffs and it was that warm outside was 2006 when we won the Cup and (chuckle) I wasn't the person in charge of worrying about those things at that time."

How did the ice hold up last year when the team played until May 16?

"We didn't have any issues come up. We did our best to try and control the arena environment to the best of our abilities with the equipment we have on hand. I mean, I didn't hear any negative feedback, but I also didn't hear any positive feedback. It was never really that warm outside. We were kind of lucky in that aspect so we never really had a whole lot of issues."

So, would there be a dramatic drop in the ice quality between May last year and July this year?

"It's kind of anybody's guess, because of the uncertainty of what the weather's going to do. But, definitely the humidity's going to affect the surface."

With the NHL season on pause, players and some governors alike believe that an August-to-September finish could make sense, assuming the global pandemic subsides. But as our Darren Dreger, Pierre LeBrun and Frank Seravalli explain, that is only one of many ideas being thrown around in such a unique situation.

What happens to the ice now?

"We actually made the decision to take our ice surface out of the building last Wednesday. The higher-ups weighed the options and the smarter option was to take it out and put it back in if needed."

What went into that decision?

"The thought process was it's going to be more cost effective to take it out and not leave it covered with the compressors running or leave it uncovered and have to groom the ice from time to time. It was just a cost-effective decision and we weren't the only ones in the league, there were several other teams that made the same decision or are making that decision this week."

How long does it take to get the ice back in if you get the green light?

"Typically, it would take us a day to get the compressors back on and get the system to start cooling the floor. It will take roughly 24 hours to pull the floor back down to (the right) temperature before we can start making ice and then you're looking at a minimum of 24 to 36 hours before the sheet is able to be skated on."

Are ice makers around the NHL close?

"Without a doubt. The ice makers and the operations departments in the buildings, we all stay in touch with each other, everyone's friends on Instagram and Facebook. Our facility operation managers association normally gets together right at the end of the season in different locations across the country to meet, strategize and brainstorm."

Is there a lot of talk among ice makers about the challenge of hockey in the summer months?

"Yeah, I mean, everybody's kind of in that uncertainty area right now, not sure what's going to happen and what the next steps are going to be, but we're all hoping we get back up and running at some point here sooner rather than later."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## What's it like to work with Tripp Tracy?

by Jason Shaya

It was Jan. 7 and PNC Arena in Raleigh was jammed. The Flyers, a divisional opponent, were in town for what was a four-point swing game. Even though it was the start of the second half of the season, everyone was watching the standings intently. Each night you were fighting for your life, and the implications of a single loss seemed to plummet you out of a playoff spot.

That night's game went to overtime and both teams had great chances. During one moment when the Canes almost scored, I looked over to my right and the Canes' color commentator Tripp Tracy was white knuckled and dialed in to every single moment – Teuvo Teravainen fired a one-timer and just missed, Tripp nearly leapt out of his chair. Eventually, Carolina wins the game on a Dougie Hamilton goal, and Tripp and I – along with the sellout crowd – are overcome with excitement. But even so, Tripp goes on to break down the play, analyze what exactly took place and maintain an even keel on air. It was seamless and, more than anything, it was really fun.

That's what I explain to people when they ask me what it's like to work with Tripp Tracy. Above all else, it's totally entertaining and I know I'm going to learn something.

When Tripp walks into a room, if he's not laughing and joking with someone, at the very least he's got a smile on his face. I don't think he's programmed to have a bad day. He comes to the arena with alacrity and I think that's why his commentary is so optimistic in nature. He's serious about his job without taking himself too seriously. He can also be very blunt and that comes from the genuine love of the organization he's been a part of for over two decades. He truly wants the Hurricanes to succeed, and not for any other reason than the overall success of each player and the team as a whole. He truly loves his job and wants everyone involved to have a good time even when things don't always go well on the ice or even in the booth.

We were in New Jersey last year and during an intermission segment I spoke over his segue, so we talked over each other for about a second. On TV, you probably don't notice. But when you're in the booth, you try very hard to make sure those moments are smooth. After we went to commercial break, I

apologized and Tripp, without hesitation, said, "Don't even worry about it." He was sincere and never thought about it again. He was a gentleman and he moved on with a smile. For someone like me, Tripp's words meant a great deal.

After calling my first Canes win in 2018 against Ottawa, we were on the postgame show – keep in mind, that's live TV – when Tripp gets up out of his seat and leaves the room ever so briefly. I had no clue what was going on, but the sudden panic of being alone on TV was pretty much exactly what Garth went through in Wayne's World 2 when Wayne walked out of the studio and left Garth all alone on the set.

Tripp got right back to his seat after what felt like 10 minutes and handed me a signed puck from Justin Faulk congratulating me on my first NHL win. Tripp set that up without telling me and then proceeded to make me emotional on television. He didn't have to do that, but I get the sense that was he genuinely proud of me and felt this was an ample way to show that. I am not a memorabilia guy and I save almost nothing with few exceptions. But that puck isn't going anywhere. It was a kind and thoughtful gesture by a guy who wants to make sure everyone feels appreciated. After we called a game last season, he took time to phone me on my drive back home. I'll never forget what he said – "That wasn't just a good broadcast from a call-up guy, that was a great NHL broadcast." He didn't have to take time to do that, but he did. For a guy with over twenty years of TV experience, he always made me feel as if we were on the same level. It's a lesson to anyone in humility.

For all the stress that comes with being a part of the NHL, however ephemeral, Tripp was there next to me making sure it went smoothly and guiding me along the way with a smile and a little suggestion about how we can make it work together. There probably isn't a guy in the league with a bigger Rolodex. Everyone from Scotty Bowman to Sidney Crosby are counted among his friends. Yet, a few times a year, he makes a guy from the AHL feel like he belongs standing next to him. I learn something new every time we work together, but more than that, I know he's got my back. He's an eternal optimist with a jovial disposition. You couldn't ask for a better colleague.

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## SportScan

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

1181475 Carolina Hurricanes

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BY CHIP ALEXANDER MARCH 23, 2020 03:46 PM

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News Observer LOADED: 03.24.2020

1181542 Websites

The Athletic / LeBrun: As it considers every scenario, NHL's goal remains to salvage season

By Pierre LeBrun Mar 23, 2020

The NHL had its infectious disease consultant on Monday's call with the Board of Governors, a reminder of the times we are living in.

But I would say, a wise move by the league to have the expert on.

"That was really most of the call, and it was educational for all of us," one NHL governor, who requested anonymity, told The Athletic.

And a sobering view of the reality at hand with the COVID-19 crisis.

Governors were invited to ask questions on the call. These days, there are a lot of questions, not nearly enough answers.

Monday's call with governors (which consisted of a blend of owners and team executives) was mostly an update, but the first official Board call nonetheless since the group last gathered over the phone March 12 when the NHL season was paused.

The call also had a discussion about the two positive player tests for COVID-19 in Ottawa as well as a business update from the league, among a few other matters.

The question most governors want to know is what the league is thinking as far as a potential timeline for a season resumption. But the reality is that the NHL can't answer that now. The league told governors Monday on the call that there is no set plan yet. It remains too early for that.

However, the league, as sources reiterated Monday, has investigated scenarios for all kinds of possibilities. The NHL continues to work on different format/schedule scenarios trying to prepare for all possible contingencies.

What governors heard Monday was that whatever the NHL ends up deciding will be "fair" and must have "integrity."

The league is essentially considering every scenario which gives it maximum flexibility.

In the meantime, you've got bubble playoff teams who sources say have been in Gary Bettman's ear, of course, regarding the potential playoff field. Will it be 16 teams? Or does it expand to 20, 22 or 24?

Some team executives I've spoken with prefer the 16-team route; others like the expanded field. It's going to be impossible for Bettman to appease everyone and he no doubt already realizes that.

Another question with no answer yet: how do they deal with draft lottery if the playoff field is expanded? That's another hot potato the league office has discussed internally in case the NHL does expand the playoff field.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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When I wrote about the idea of August-September NHL playoffs last Tuesday, most of our readers seemed down on the idea, I think mostly because they found the idea far-reaching and jarring.

At this point, given the likely postponement of the July 24-Aug. 9 Tokyo Olympics, that August window for an NHL season resumption might be the only window left that's even realistic. That's just my own two cents (mind you if the Tokyo Olympics are indeed postponed, that gives the NHL more flexibility if late July becomes at all an option).

And that's if there's a season resumption at all.

For now, that's the NHL's goal, to salvage a season at some point in time even if it means late summer hockey.

Yes, having a full season next year is of paramount importance to the NHL, but that doesn't mean a full 82-game season couldn't slide into November, another source suggested again to me Monday. Cancel the All-Star Game and bye weeks and play the playoffs deep into June in 2021; you can still plan for a full season. Obviously the players would have to be on board for those type of schedule changes but the NHLPA's sole focus for next season is it being a full 82-game schedule as well. The two sides share that common desire.

In fact, in my 25 years of covering the NHL — which includes day-to-day coverage of both the 2004-05 and 2012-13 lockouts — I can't recall a higher level of cooperation that I'm sensing right now between the NHL and NHLPA. They have been aligned in a number of quick, important decisions since this crisis first broke. So that's a real positive in this dire time.

But that relationship is going to be seriously tested as time goes on because there will be some rather difficult financial decisions which affect both players and owners. Everyone is going to take a hit as hockey-related revenue is affected by the season disruption. The salary cap, escrow, it's all tied to the fact players and owners share a 50-50 split of HRR, which is going to take a beating.

I do sense a willingness from the league to do what's fair as they navigate those difficult waters with the NHLPA, but at the end of the day, let's not sugarcoat it, it's not going to be pretty.

Including the fact that if/when there is playoff hockey this year, I can't imagine we can count on sellout crowds every single night. Yes, the return of sports will have a healing aspect as society eventually takes baby steps back to normalcy, but the financial hardship on everyday people already being felt in job losses will make paying for tickets to sporting events a low priority in many North American households.

Which everyone on that call Monday already knows.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.24.2020

1181543 Websites

The Athletic / 'Ghost towns' and no traffic: Inside the journey minor-leaguers are making home

By Scott Cruickshank Mar 23, 2020

A couple of thousand kilometres behind him, more than a thousand kilometres still in front of him, Matthew Marcinew manages to sound upbeat.

Having just checked into a hotel a half-hour west of Fargo, N.D., the Calgarian isn't sure he'll get home the next day.

But that's OK.

With hockey shut down — minor leagues included — Marcinew is like most players from Canada. He's making a patched-together push for the border.

Travel itineraries, given the pandemic and subsequent measures, are unprecedentedly hectic. But for Marcinew? Recent weeks have been madness.

Hence his mellow approach to this final road trip, despite its length. "There's no rush to get anywhere," explained Marcinew. "Because once we get home we're going to have to do the social distancing and self-quarantining anyways."

"It's kind of nice not to have a timeline or a schedule — and just hit cruise control."

Understandably.

Because March has been a blur for the 26-year-old.

The month opens with his AHL rights being traded for future considerations from the Springfield (Mass.) Thunderbirds to the Stockton (Calif.) Heat — while he's skating for the ECHL Greenville (S.C.) Swamp Rabbits. "Definitely not expected," Marcinew said, "but that's part of the job, right?"

A couple of days later, after playing against the home-ice Orlando (Fla.) Solar Bears, he's called up to the Heat. Which requires an immediate cross-continent flight — with only the clothes he's packed for a two-day road trip.

The day after arriving in Stockton, he makes his debut — in Bakersfield, Calif. It's the only time he'll skate for the Heat because the AHL soon suspends play.

So, from Stockton, Marcinew flies back to Greenville to collect his belongings and fetch his vehicle. (In the meantime, too, he's had to sell all the stuff he left in Springfield — which is where he'd started the season — to his roommate. Meaning Chris Driedger got one sweet deal on a bed, bedding, towels. "Next year, wherever I play," said Marcinew, "I'll have to buy more pots and pans.")

Before packing up in Greenville, he squeezes in an early morning MRI on his shoulder, then hatches a plan with his pal, Tariq Hammond, a fellow Calgarian and a former teammate at the University of Denver.

Hammond has just finished his own season with the ECHL South Carolina Stingrays in Charleston, which is three hours away.

The buddies convene in Greenville. Then? "We started driving northwest," said Hammond. The idea being to convoy all the way home, Hammond's Chevy SUV followed by Marcinew's Chevy SUV.

The first day sees them reach Chicago. The next day they make it to the other side of Fargo, where they check into a highway hotel and gamely field a phone call from a reporter.

"I'm a little tired right now, to be honest," said Hammond, 26. "It's just kind of a weird time to be around things. But I'm doing all right."

The following day, crossing the border at Portal, N.D., the pals arrive in Calgary by 10:45 p.m.

For Wacey Rabbit, the plan had been to hang out in Jacksonville, Fla., for a few weeks following the unexpected conclusion to his season with the ECHL Icemen.

But after a couple of days of self-isolation with girlfriend Ashley Callingbull and their Boston Terrier-pug Papa, it became evident that not everyone was taking proper measures.

Convincing them to begin the 40-hour trek, too, was pressure from family members back in Alberta. A member of the Blackfoot Nation, Rabbit grew up on the Blood Reserve near Lethbridge. Callingbull is a member of the Enoch Cree Nation.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"We had the conversation that it was probably for the best just to come home," said Rabbit, 33. "Everyone sees the beaches here. There's the video — everyone's out spring-breaking. I feel like it's going to be impacted really bad here. So they're concerned about that the most."

"We've been keeping to ourselves since the end of the season. We haven't gone out, other than to the grocery store, getting gas. We've been taking it pretty serious, so we don't have to worry about anything."

Prior to departure in their loaded-up Jeep, Rabbit had been keeping tabs on teammates who already started their journeys home to Canada.

"New York and Philadelphia, guys are going home through that area and they say it's rush hour and there's absolutely no traffic," Rabbit said. "So it's kind of eerie. But it's good — people aren't out. We just want to be safe."

"We're going to try to travel when the sun's up."

The first leg of their daylight journey took them to Nashville. The second to Omaha, Neb.

Then, after a night in Sheridan, Wyo., they made it to the Carway border crossing, 40 kilometres north of Babb, Mont., and carried on into Alberta.

If the drive felt long, the events leading up to the ECHL's cancellation happened in a blink.

Players first heard Saturday, March 14, that their season was suspended. Monday, via the Professional Hockey Players' Association, came official news that it was over — no more games, no more pay. Rabbit had participated in the conference call.

Afterward, at the apartment complex that houses all the players, he and a couple of the other veterans gathered the rest of the crew.

"We had a meeting by the pool, and you could tell there was a lot of uncertainty in their eyes, a little bit of panic. It was tough to tell them," said Rabbit, noting that first-year players earn only \$500 US per week. "Guys were pretty upset. I'm fine (financially) — I've played hockey for a while, so I'm OK. I'm more concerned for the younger guys. There's a lot of kids that just came out of college and it's their first year and they're not exactly making the big bucks in the East Coast Hockey League."

Rabbit and Ashley, meanwhile, have other issues to consider, including the fact that their offseason home in Edmonton may not be ready. After all, they're back more than a month ahead of schedule.

But, in the grand scheme of things, that's nothing to worry about, according to Rabbit, who has played hockey all over the world — in eight countries to be exact.

"These are uncertain times," he said. "Nothing has ever happened like this since I've been alive, since my parents have been alive. The biggest thing is just making sure everyone is safe and healthy and, if there is hockey, we're able to come back in the fall. That's the biggest thing for us."

Taking a break from unpacking his (financed) 2019 Mazda CX-3, Logan Thompson answers his phone.

Yes, the Calgarian reports, he is safe and sound.

Thompson, a teammate of Hammond's with ECHL South Carolina, powered through his drive in two days. More than 13 hours of seat time, twice.

Rushing out of Charleston, he managed to reach Rockford, Ill. "Got in at midnight. Grabbed a quick hotel. Got up around seven. Took off."

He describes traffic as "very light," which allowed him the following day to hit the Peace Garden border crossing — just south of Boissevain, Man. — by 11 p.m. There, Thompson had no issues. "Honestly, it was pretty quick. And very calm. They just said, 'Make sure you quarantine for 14 days.' It was pretty simple. Just like every other border (crossing in the past)."

After that, it was a short drive up to Brandon, where his girlfriend lives (and where he played four years for the WHL Wheat Kings). "Till everything blows over," said Thompson. "I'm going to stay in Brandon."

Like everyone else, he remains stunned by the pace of developments.

"It was definitely unexpected. Obviously, you hear about the virus, but it's not close to you, it's not affecting you," said Thompson, 23. "I remember we were in Orlando playing (March 11) and finished the game and looked at our phones and saw that the NBA season was cancelled. It definitely surprised us. We kind of figured the NHL would be next, just following the footsteps."

"Then everything, day by day, got a lot faster. I ended up leaving Charleston right away. Kind of a domino effect."

Packing, he made choices, choosing to leave his television and bedding, but grabbing all of the toilet paper.

"I took the essentials — the stuff I left I can definitely live without," he said. "The most important thing was just getting back to Canada and staying safe. It's definitely more comfortable (here). Just happy being back. Definitely way less stress than there was in the U.S., for sure."

Any indecision he had harboured was put to rest by his dad, Mark, who works in Fort McMurray, Alta.

"He's seen all these videos of people going out and partying, so he was on me pretty hard about just staying safe and not doing anything dumb," said Thompson. "He definitely was concerned with it getting worse and worse every day. He wanted me to get back to Canada as soon as I could and just stay inside."

No doubt, there is a certain comfort in travelling together, even if it's in separate vehicles.

"Thank god Tariq was with me," said Marcinew, "because it would've sucked to do it by myself."

While the pals blasted down the freeways, they stayed in contact on speaker phone. Marcinew laughs. "So we're like, 'Look at this idiot to our left ...'"

Although, truth be told, there was not a lot of traffic out there.

"The funny thing is, we did see a lot of Canadian plates — Ontario, a couple Manitobas," said Hammond. "You look when they're passing you or when you're passing them and they give you a wave. Everyone's kind of in the same boat."

"The traffic, mainly just semi trucks and Canadian drivers, to be honest."

The vibe checking into hotels, too, had been different. Hammond describes them as "absolute ghost towns. People look at us weird when we're walking in with our luggage. In these times right now, it's not normal for people to be staying in hotels."

When COVID-19 shuttered the ECHL, Hammond had been planning to remain for a few days in Charleston and just chill. Then he would mosey over to Denver, where he went to college, where he still spends his summers.

That all changed.

"I was thinking positively," Hammond said. "After more talk with my family — and everything you see in the news — the wise decision was to make it back into Canada and just be with my family and make sure everyone is safe and healthy."

He says, of course, everyone he knows is practising self-isolation. "But it's kind of a culture shock for everyone."

Marcinew, after his wild month, had no idea what awaits him in Calgary.

Well, except for one thing.



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"My girlfriend works at a hospital — she's a nurse — so once I get home I can't see her for 14 days," he said. "It's wild. Crazy. I've never seen anything like it, and I don't expect to see anything like this again. Hopefully not."

"It's so unknown as to the circumstances going forward."

The last time Rabbit practised, March 12 in Jacksonville, he had been chatting with teammate Mike Hedden, a 35-year-old winger.

"He was talking about how this was his last season," said Rabbit. "We're couple points out of a playoff push and he didn't even know if that was his last skate as a professional hockey player."

"So it was all pretty raw there. I'm pretty close to Mike. We were talking about how we were going to have a good playoff push for him. He was playing unreal."

"Then, just like that, it was over. Something you couldn't control."

Elsewhere in the South Division, the 44-14-4 Stingrays were earning a reputation as one of the ECHL's powerhouses. No squad had produced more points than their 92.

And Thompson, a first-year pro, was boasting terrific numbers — 23-8-3, 2.25 GAA, .929 — in the Stingrays' net.

"Being on that team was a privilege," he said. "Lot of veteran guys, guys that have played a lot of years of pro. A special group of guys. It's a shame that we couldn't do more and bring a Kelly Cup to Charleston. It's definitely frustrating not being able to do more with that team and that group of guys."

Thompson, however, understands what's at stake. As does Hammond, his teammate, who says "it sucks" that their 2019-20 accomplishments go up in smoke. "But it's the big picture," he said. "The health of everyone you know and are close with — and, obviously, right now the world — is way more important than a hockey playoff."

As they whizzed homeward in recent days, there had been plenty of time to think.

Still, the hockey players are left wondering.

"You come back and now what? Where do we go from here?" said Thompson. "Everything in the whole world is pretty much on pause right now. Hopefully this passes over and the world can get back on track."

In Hammond's mind, at least one element of the what-now scenario is pretty straightforward.

"You've got to do your part to not make things worse."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.24.2020

1181544 Websites

The Athletic / DGB weekend power rankings: Dipping into the archives for this rerun from 1993

By Sean McIndoe Mar 23, 2020

Editor's note: The DGB Power Rankings would normally appear in this space today. However, due to the current shutdown, there is no NHL action to write about. So for this week's rankings, we'll do what our friends in the TV industry have been doing: Dip into the archives and air a rerun.

The following Weekend Rankings column originally ran exactly 27 years ago today, on March 23, 1993.

Let's dive right in with the big news of the day: Yesterday's trade deadline. As expected, it was a frantic day of wheeling and dealing, with a ton of action to sort through.

Nine trades, to be exact. Involving fourteen different players. Whew. Nine trades! Where do you even begin?

The Penguins loaded up for their run at a three-peat, adding defensemen Mike Ramsey and Peter Taglianetti. That's not quite up there with the Ron Francis deal from two years ago, but it's a pair of nice adds that cement the Pens as the favorites heading into the stretch run.

The Kings added veteran blueliner Mark Hardy from the Rangers, while the Caps and Jets pulled off a goalie-for-goalie swap involving Jim Hrivnak and Rick Tabaracci. Murray Craven went to the Canucks for Robert Kron. And Chicago added Craig Muni from Edmonton; the veteran will be going from a bottom-feeder to a Cup contender, and will no doubt be thrilled to report to the Hawks.

The big loser in all of this might be the Rangers, who whiffed in their well-publicized efforts to add a big-name defenseman. They did pick up Esa Tikkanen from Edmonton a few days ago, for the low cost of marginal prospect Doug Weight. And they're still holding down third in the Patrick, so unless they collapse, they won't become the first Presidents' Trophy winner to miss the playoffs. It's not all bad. But if they're ever going to break their 53-year-and-counting Cup drought in New York, you'd think Neil Smith will have to learn how to get aggressive at the deadline.

Will any of those trades impact this week's power rankings? Let's find out ...

### Road to the Cup

The five teams that look like they're headed towards a summer of respectfully celebrating a hard-earned victory in a quiet and dignified fashion.

Last night's Canucks/Blues game was a real snoozer, eh? Just four goals total in a 3-1 Blues win, one that turned into a goaltending battle between Curtis Joseph and Kirk McLean. Here's hoping they offered a partial refund to any fans who paid to see that dud. Luckily, these sorts of defensive struggles remain rare; there's only been one other game all week that featured fewer than five goals, compared to an even dozen that featured eight or more.

Offense isn't quite back up to 1980s levels, but it's rebounded nicely after a two-year dip that saw league scoring drop all the way down to seven goals-per-game. With a league full of in-their-prime legends and young up-and-coming stars, good luck to any defensive-minded coaches out there looking to stem the coming tide of fan-friendly offense; they'll no doubt have a devil of a time.

5. Washington Capitals (36-28-7, +24 true goals differential\*) – They've cooled off since last month's impressive seven-game win streak, but they remain well-positioned for home ice in the playoffs. Their path out of the division goes through Pittsburgh, which is a concern, but they're pretty much the only Patrick team that has any chance of beating the Penguins. And besides, they've lost to the Pens in each of Pittsburgh's two Cup-winning years. If I know the law of averages, there's no way that keeps happening.

By the way, how about that Dale Hunter? Three points against the Sharks and he's closing in on the team scoring lead. Don't turn your back on this guy, he's showing no signs of slowing down.

4. Boston Bruins (41-25-7, +38) – They remain one of the most consistent teams in the league, with last night's comeback win over the Whalers meaning they still haven't lost consecutive games since early January. While they haven't caught the Habs for top spot in the Adams yet, that feels all but inevitable right now. Will they have a long playoff run? Nothing's ever guaranteed, but let's just say I'm feeling pretty confident that May is going to be memorable.

3. Detroit Red Wings (40-27-9, +72) – They're loaded pretty much everywhere in the lineup, especially down the middle where Steve



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

Yzerman and Sergei Fedorov give them one of the best one-two combos in the league. I really liked their midseason move to add Paul Coffey, who gives them some depth on the blue line that they'll probably need with 22-year-old Nicklas Lidstrom looking like a one-hit-wonder after last year's strong rookie season. The only question is whether Tim Cheveldae is enough in goal. He'll probably be fine.

2. Chicago Blackhawks (40-23-10, +42) – They're neck-and-neck with the Red Wings for top spot in the Norris, and that's an important race. Second place probably gets a winnable matchup with the Maple Leafs, but first gets a virtual bye against either the North Stars or Blues. We at least know the North Stars can pull off an upset or two after their 1991 run, but the Blues? That series would probably end in a sweep.

1. Pittsburgh Penguins (45-21-6, +64) – Not even a tough call for top spot, because this team looks pretty close to unbeatable. They've won six straight, and a look at the upcoming schedule makes you wonder if anyone will be able to beat them for the rest of the season.

That sounds crazy, but they're so loaded that this year's playoffs are going to feel like a formality. The Penguins have won back-to-back Cups, but neither of those teams topped 90 points. This one already has, and will go down as one of the great teams in NHL history. Mario Lemieux is back and has already banked 20 points in just eight games, meaning he still has a shot at winning the Art Ross despite missing two months to cancer. Ron Francis, Rick Tocchet and Kevin Stevens should all hit 100 points too, and Jaromir Jagr might get close. They've got goaltending, a solid blue line, toughness ... they're just the total package.

Could somebody beat them in the playoffs? You never say never. Miracles happen. Maybe this unstoppable Goliath will run into a David. But at this point, it's hard to imagine anyone saying that there will be a new Stanley Cup champion in 1993.

\*True goals differential, which is just goals differential. I'm not sure why we even have an asterisk here, I mean, how could you screw up goals differential?

Not ranked: The Canadian teams – Sorry, Canada. It just may not be our year. We already know that Ottawa and Edmonton won't be in the playoffs, which leaves us with six hopes for a Cup. I'm not sold on any of them.

The three Smythe teams will each have a shot. The Flames and Canucks are good teams, and the Jets have been all sorts of fun with this record-breaking Teemu kid. But the reality is that the top Norris teams are just too good, so whoever comes out of the Smythe will just get rolled by the Wings or Hawks.

What about the Leafs? They're at least intriguing, as Pat Burns has them looking like a contender. But I'm on the fence about last month's big trade with the Sabres. Sure, Dave Andreychuk can score, but do you really want to go into the playoffs with an unproven rookie in goal? Veteran experience matters, especially in net. The Sabres understood that, which is why they made the deal for a proven winner like Grant Fuhr rather than hang their hopes on some Czech weirdo who can barely stay upright and probably won't even be in the league next year. The Leafs are gambling on Felix Potvin. We'll see if it pays off.

(Oh, and speaking of the Leafs, I know Oiler fans are still complaining about that recent loss in Toronto where they gave up three powerplay goals and had to kill four different high-sticking penalties. Guys, get over it. It's been three days now. High-sticking calls are tricky, and you don't want to be the fan base that can't stop crying about them.)

The Adams Division at least offers a little hope, since the Nordiques look like they could be on the verge of something. Joe Sakic and Mats Sundin are both breaking out, and there's solid depth up and down the lineup thanks to the Eric Lindros trade. Ron Hextall has been OK in goal, although you wonder if they'll look for an upgrade there someday. Bottom line, I really think this team has a Cup or two in them, but I'm not sure if this is their year or whether they'll need to make a big move first.

And that leaves us with the team that the standings say is Canada's best: the Montreal Canadiens. Yeah, sorry Habs fans, I'm just not seeing it. They were great early in the year, winning eight straight in November. But they've been pretty pedestrian ever since, and last night they got pumped 8-3 by the Sabres. Patrick Roy looked awful in that one, and that's been par for the course in what's shaping up to be one of the worst years of his career. The Canadiens' playoff hopes will go as far as Roy will take them, and right now I don't see that being far. Will Montreal's Cup chances flatline almost immediately? Let's just say I think their fans should get used to hearing the phrase "sudden death."

So no, a Canadian team probably isn't winning the Cup this year. But don't worry, Canada – we'll just get one next year, or the year after. Our country has owned the Stanley Cup for seven of the last nine years, it's OK if we let the United States keep it warm for another season or two.

The bottom five

The five teams that are battling for the right to use the top pick on can't miss phenom Alexandre Daigle.

Hey, what do you all think of this Gary Bettman guy so far? The new commissioner has been officially on the job for almost two months after being hired in December, and I'd say it's been so far, so good. He's saying all the right things, and while we'll need a new CBA soon, he seems like the kind of guy who can get that deal done without any major disruptions. Yeah, it's a little weird to have an American from the NBA in charge, but maybe Bettman is exactly the sort of fresh set of eyes we need to lead this league into the next century. Call me an optimist, but I think the hockey world is going to warm to this guy. Pretty soon, I'm betting fans will be giving him a loud reaction every time they see him.

5. Edmonton Oilers (25-42-8, -88) – While they won't be mathematically eliminated until later this week, the Oilers are going to miss the playoffs for the first time in the franchise's NHL history. That's pretty stunning, especially after watching them go to at least the conference finals in eight of the last ten seasons. I mean, just look at the sentence: "The Oilers miss the playoffs." It just looks weird, right? That's going to take some getting used to.

4. Hartford Whalers (21-45-5, -77) – They're going to miss the playoffs by a mile, but may not even get to draft in the top five thanks to the incoming Ducks and Panthers. You wonder if rookie GM Brian Burke might try to swing a deal to move up; he's not much of a talker, so we don't know what his plans are. But if he does try, here's some free advice: You might as well aim high and try to move all the way up to the top pick to grab a sure thing in Daigle, because in this draft, nobody is going to remember No. 2.

3. Tampa Bay Lightning (21-47-5, -62) – As has been the case all season long, our bottom three teams are all recent expansion franchises. That's unavoidable, of course, because an expansion team can't be good right away. They've lost seven straight heading into tonight's matchup in New Jersey, but at least they've been competitive, giving the Hawks a tough one-goal game and also playing teams like the Leafs, Habs and Jets pretty tough. That's progress, I guess, but this is still the NHL: You don't get pity points for losing by just a little bit.

2. Ottawa Senators (9-59-4, -167) – They're very bad, they're losing money, they need a new arena and they're plagued by questionable leadership, internal dysfunction and a distinct lack of fan confidence. The good news is that these are all short-term problems.

1. San Jose Sharks (10-61-2, -170) – This certainly seems like it will be the end of the road for veteran captain Doug Wilson. You hate to see it end this way, but at least he's probably happy to know that his days of leading the Sharks to embarrassing last-place finishes are finally done for good.

Not ranked: Los Angeles Kings – Yes, they've finally put together a winning streak, racking up four straight victories to claw their way back over the .500 mark after that brutal midseason stretch that saw them win just five times in 28 games. You'll forgive me if I'm not especially



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

impressed with that streak, one that came against a batch of mediocre teams including the Blues, Sabres and Islanders, all teams that won't scare anyone in the playoffs. You can only play who the schedule gives you, but the Kings still look like a flawed team.

Yes, they've got star power, especially now that Wayne Gretzky has returned to action after missing half a season. He had eight points over that four-game streak, running his season total to an even 50 points in 33 games. That's great, but the Kings are just 14-17-2 over that stretch, so it's not like Gretzky's offense is translating to wins. And that's just in the regular season – what's going to happen when they get to the postseason and everything tightens up? Here's hoping Kings fans enjoy all those regular-season points when Gretzky's disappearing in a Game 7 in May.

That's if the Kings get that far, which they almost certainly won't. This is a top-heavy team that scores a ton but can't keep the puck out of their own net. They're too old, too inconsistent, take too many penalties and have an overwhelmed rookie coach who looks like he'd be better suited in some broadcast booth than behind a bench.

They'll make the playoffs in an unusually weak Smythe, and maybe even win a round, but that's about it. For a team that was built to make a run at the franchise's first Stanley Cup, that's not enough. And for a team that's not guaranteed to even make the playoffs next year or beyond, it calls into question just when – or if – this deep run will finally happen.

(Also, am I crazy or has Marty McSorley started using a more pronounced curve on his stick? It seems like too much. You know what, don't worry about it, it's probably not important.)

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1181545 Websites

The Athletic / The Athletic's NHL awards for the 2019-20 season

By The Athletic NHL Staff Mar 23, 2020

One of the many things in question about the rest of the NHL season is what will be done with the major awards traditionally handed out in June.

While we can't answer when or if the hardware will be handed out, we can answer who would likely win the awards if our sizeable roster of NHL beat writers and columnists – mostly members of the Professional Hockey Writers Association, which votes for a number of the awards – had its say.

Our panel was made up of 41 writers: 17 cover Eastern Conference teams, 19 cover Western Conference teams and five national writers.

And if you'd like to look back at what we predicted in October before the season began, check it out here.

Luszczyszyn: The Awards race by the numbers

Hart Trophy

Given to the player selected to be the most valuable to his team.

Winner: Leon Draisaitl, Oilers

1. Leon Draisaitl, Oilers

39.02 percent

2. Nathan MacKinnon, Avalanche

31.71 percent

3. Artemi Panarin, Rangers

17.07 percent

The league leader in points with 110 through 71 games, Leon Draisaitl can sometimes go unheralded playing in the same lineup as Connor McDavid. But with McDavid temporarily out with what the Oilers called a quad injury, Draisaitl had a chance to get more recognition league-wide. And our voters took notice. More from Daniel Nugent-Bowman

The people who know him best tell the story of how Leon Draisaitl took the NHL by storm

Keep it 100? Yeah, Nathan MacKinnon does that and then some

The case for Artemi Panarin

Norris Trophy

Given to the defenseman who demonstrates the greatest all-round ability in the position.

Winner: Roman Josi, Predators

1. Roman Josi, Predators

63.41 percent

2. John Carlson, Capitals

24.39 percent

3. Victor Hedman, Lightning

7.32 percent

Nashville captain Roman Josi was the decisive winner over Washington defenseman John Carlson, who spent most of the regular season as the favorite. Was that the right choice? Adam Vingan and Tarik El-Bashir debate the winner.

How the Capitals' John Carlson became the best defenseman in the NHL

Selke Trophy

Given to the forward who best excels in the defensive aspects of the game.

Winner: Sean Couturier, Flyers

1. Sean Couturier, Flyers

48.78 percent

2. Anthony Cirelli, Lightning

29.27 percent

3. Patrice Bergeron, Bruins

12.2 percent

Sean Couturier's case for the Selke did not rest on reputation. He had another fantastic two-way season by the numbers to give him the edge over Anthony Cirelli and Patrice Bergeron, who has won the award four times since 2012. More from Charlie O'Connor

Why the Lightning's Anthony Cirelli should win the Selke

Patrice Bergeron's defensive excellence was more amplified in previous seasons

Vezina Trophy

Given to the goalkeeper selected to be the best at the position.

Winner: Connor Hellebuyck, Jets

1. Connor Hellebuyck, Jets

92.68 percent

T-2. Tuukka Rask, Bruins



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

2.44 percent

T-2. Andrei Vasilevskiy, Lightning

2.44 percent

T-2. Ben Bishop, Stars

2.44 percent

No one dominated the voting more than Connor Hellebuyck, who also received two votes from our panel for the Hart Trophy. The Jets were fighting for a playoff spot behind Hellebuyck, who led the league in shots against and saves in 58 games (also tied for the league lead). More from Murat Ates.

The perfectionist: How the Jets' Connor Hellebuyck took an unconventional path to NHL stardom

Tuukka Rask's best season since 2013-14

Calder Trophy

Given to the player selected as the most proficient in his first year of competition in the NHL.

Winner: Cale Makar, Avalanche

1. Cale Makar, Avalanche

53.66 percent

2. Quinn Hughes, Canucks

43.9 percent

3. MacKenzie Blackwood, Devils

2.44 percent

An argument could be made that picking between Cale Makar and Quinn Hughes is harder should the league not resume play. On one hand, Makar found a way to become the second-best player behind Nathan MacKinnon on a team that could have or still can make a case for winning the Stanley Cup. Then again? Hughes had the same responsibilities for a Canucks team that was a point away from being able to outright claim a wild-card spot when the season halted. Thomas Drance and Ryan S. Clark debate the winner.

How Mackenzie Blackwood became a bright light in a season of Devils darkness

Jack Adams Award

Given to the coach selected to have contributed the most to his team's success.

Winner: Alain Vigneault, Flyers

1. Alain Vigneault

Flyers

31.71 percent

2. John Tortorella

Blue Jackets

24.39 percent

3. Mike Sullivan

Penguins

17.07 percent

When the NHL paused its season, the Flyers were inarguably the hottest team in hockey. With nine wins in their last 10 games, the Flyers had stormed up the Metropolitan Division standings and were embarking on

an unlikely late-season charge for divisional supremacy. A big reason for that? Coach Alain Vigneault. More from Charlie O'Connor.

Behind the scenes with the Flyers' stacked coaching staff

John Tortorella, his volatile, confrontational style

General Manager of the Year

Presented to recognize the work of the league's GMs.

Winner: Joe Sakic, Avalanche

1. Joe Sakic

Avalanche

39.02 percent

2. Don Sweeney

Bruins

12.2 percent

T-3. Julien BriseBois

Lightning

9.76 percent

T-3. Jeff Gorton

Rangers

9.76 percent

Two Stanley Cups, a Hart Memorial Trophy, a Conn Smythe Trophy, a Lester B. Pearson Award, an Olympic gold medal and a street named after him. Joe Sakic could add GM of the Year to his list of accolades as he navigated making moves to help his team both now and in the future with Stanley Cup hopes on the line.

LeBrun: Q&A with Avs GM Joe Sakic

LeBrun: Q&A with Julien BriseBois

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1181546 Websites

The Athletic / Roman Josi vs. John Carlson: Who deserves the Norris Trophy? Let's discuss

By Adam Vingan and Tarik El Bashir Mar 23, 2020

On Monday, we at The Athletic released the results of our NHL awards poll. In the vote for the Norris Trophy, Nashville Predators captain Roman Josi was the decisive winner over Washington Capitals defenseman John Carlson, who spent most of the regular season as the favorite.

Was that the right choice? Predators reporter Adam Vingan and Capitals reporter Tarik El-Bashir decided to have a conversation.

Adam Vingan: On Feb. 5, I published a story titled, "Is John Carlson the clear favorite over Roman Josi for the Norris Trophy? Not so fast." Tarik, I am delighted that most of our colleagues agreed with me.

My argument was that when you look below the surface, Josi is a more complete defenseman than Carlson. I understand the temptation to anoint Carlson as the best defenseman in the league because of his point total, but that does not tell the entire story.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

Tarik El-Bashir: Is Josi a more complete defenseman? That's debatable. What you cannot debate is this: From a points perspective, Carlson is having one of the most dominant seasons that a defenseman has had in a long time. He's got 75 points, 10 more than Josi, and his 60 assists are fourth in the league, ranking behind dynamic forwards Leon Draisaitl, Connor McDavid and Artemi Panarin. Also, it's not like Carlson is just feasting on the Capitals' Alex Ovechkin-led power play. In fact, Carlson is 11th in power-play points.

Look, Josi is having a nice season, but Carlson, who was on pace for 89 points when the season was suspended, is having a historic one. The last defensemen to have at least 89 points in a season were Ray Bourque and Sergei Zubov in 1993-94.

John Carlson was on pace for 89 points when the season was suspended. (Geoff Burke / USA Today)

AV: In regards to my assertion that Josi is a better all-around defenseman than Carlson, our colleague Dom Luszczyszyn explained it well as part of his recent analysis on the NHL awards:

The big difference, though, remains on defense, where Josi has had a very strong positive impact, while Carlson has not only been negative but among the league's worst. What good are all those points if he gives them right back? Carlson's season has been strong, and he still lands in the top 10 among top-pairing defensemen, but he's a long way from the value that Josi and others have provided due to his one-dimensional play this season.

You watch Carlson on a nightly basis, so how would you evaluate his defensive play this season?

TEB: Here's how I see it from my seat in the press box: Carlson, like his team, was very good before Christmas. He was a goal-scoring machine and very reliable defensively. Since the bye week, however, there's been some slippage in his game, and it has mirrored his team's downturn.

One bad game turned into two or three, and Carlson's confidence took a bit of a hit. He began second-guessing his decisions and sagging back instead of gapping up. He got beat a couple of more times, and it snowballed from there.

That's not to say that Carlson has been a complete liability as of late, either. He isn't getting toe-dragged by fourth-liners or tossing the puck around like it's a grenade. He's just not executing at the same level or playing with the same swagger that he did from October to December. In his last interview before the stoppage, Carlson acknowledged as much, telling me, "I'm trying to find the perfect level of aggression and defensiveness. It's something I'm battling right now."

I realize the advanced statistics don't paint a rosy picture, but they've got their limitations, too. Let me counter with this: Carlson is the ice-time leader by more than two minutes on the best team in the Metropolitan Division. Let's not forget that.

AV: Those are legitimate points, though Josi is third among all skaters in average ice time, having played at least 25 minutes in 41 of his 69 games this season. (Carlson has done so 31 times in the same number of games.)

This is going to sound more like an argument for the Hart Trophy than the Norris Trophy, but the Predators would not have been in a playoff spot when the league paused the season if not for Josi.

This has been — or was — a terribly frustrating season for the Predators, who spent more than three months outside the playoff picture and fired coach Peter Laviolette in January.

Most of the team's top players have underperformed, but Josi, who will be the third-highest paid defenseman in the league next season, has been great on both ends of the ice. (It is also worth noting that he maintained that consistency as partner Ryan Ellis, one of the most valuable skaters in the league based on Evolving Hockey's wins above replacement model, recovered from a concussion that sidelined him for seven weeks.)

Josi does not have as many points as Carlson, but he arguably is the league's most impactful defenseman in terms of driving play. Only one player — Thomas Chabot — has had the puck on his stick more on a per-game basis this season than Josi, according to The Point, and few skaters come close to matching his ability to transport the puck from the defensive zone to the offensive zone.

I can only imagine how much worse the Predators would have been this season without Josi's contributions. To me, that should give him the edge in Norris Trophy voting.

TEB: As you've laid out, Josi has been the Predators' best player in a season fraught with challenges. But we cannot dismiss the impact that Carlson has made on a Capitals team that sits atop the toughest division in the league.

Carlson inherited Brooks Orpik's alternate captain role and the responsibilities that go along with it. He plays heavy minutes in all situations and rarely misses a game. He has eight more points than Ovechkin, who is the franchise leader in that category, and 18 more assists than Nicklas Backstrom, who is the franchise leader in that department.

On top of that, Carlson was on the verge of a historic offensive season, one that could have put him in the company of legends such as Bourque, Paul Coffey, Brian Leetch and Al MacInnis. Unfortunately, we'll never know if the regular season doesn't continue. But after finishing a career-best fourth in Norris voting last year, this should be Carlson's year to take home the hardware.

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1181547 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Nine biggest off-season questions facing the Maple Leafs

Luke Fox March 23, 2020, 1:18 PM

Kyle Dubas does not shirk responsibility.

"The buck does stop with me, and if our team doesn't reach its potential, it is on me," the Toronto Maple Leafs general manager reminded last week, as he answered questions from fans via the Toronto Star's Kevin McGran.

"Whatever the economic landscape is, we will have to adapt and find a way to put the best team possible on the ice as we continue to grow toward our goal of being a perennial contender for the Stanley Cup," he continued.

"We have a long ways to go, but how we overcome the obstacles along the way will likely be the biggest determinant of whether we get there."

As the 2020 off-season feels more and more like the present, let's dive into those obstacles towering before Dubas and his Leafs before the puck drops on 2020-21. Here are nine compelling questions that will need answers.

How do they improve the blue line?

To the haters, Dubas will point out a positive defensive trend. When Sheldon Keefe stepped behind the bench, the Leafs ranked 25th in goals against per game (3.44). Under Keefe, they've chopped that figure to 3.04, but the GM hopes to whittle that down to 2.5.

Dubas believes part of achieving that is the team's mindset.

"We have shown at times that we can really give an excellent defensive effort against some of the best offensive teams in hockey and then other



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

nights leave our entire organization and fans feeling frustrated," he wrote last week.

Part of that is personnel. In addition to ranking bottom-six in goals allowed, the Leafs rank bottom-10 in shots allowed (30.5 per night). They are crying out for a reliable defender on the right side and a greater portion of their salary allotment to the back end.

Landing a dependable, right-shot defenceman in free agency is a long shot. So, if Dubas can't find a way to sign Alex Pietrangelo, Chris Tanev, Travis Hamonic, Justin Schultz, or Radkos Gudas, he'll be exploring trades for righties with term.

Candidates such as Matt Dumba, Rasmus Ristolainen, Colin Miller and Josh Manson fit that bill.

How can Toronto get its penalty kill trending in the right direction?

Die-hard Maple Leafs fans (as if there are another type) will recall Dubas standing at the podium when 2019's season concluded in misery and assuming the blame for the club's porous PK. The GM said he'd set out to cut down on the goals against with a man down.

The defensive assistant coach was changed (exit D.J. Smith, enter Dave Hakstol), the personnel was tweaked and the kill only got worse.

Toronto's special teams are a microcosm of the team as a whole. The Leafs' expensive, star-studded power play ranked sixth-overall (23.1 per cent) in 2019-20, as it should.

But for the third consecutive season, Toronto's penalty killing got worse, settling in at disappointing 21st overall (77.7 per cent).

It's a problem. And one that rings back to the roster's need for more experienced, determined stay-at-home defenders and a reliable face-off man on the PK unit.

Consider this glaring discrepancy: This season, Toronto ranked third overall in face-off wins (52.5 per cent) but 25th in short-handed face-off wins (43.1 per cent). If you don't start with the puck, you can't clear the puck.

Can Dubas sit out Round 1 of the draft and still find gold?

Surrendering 2019's first-round pick as part of the Jake Muzzin trade has increasingly felt like less of a sacrifice.

For one, Muzzin re-signed for four more years a month ago, alleviating fears that the blueliner would be just a year-and-a-half rental.

Secondly, Dubas appears to have knocked 2019's second-round draft pick out of the park. Nick Robertson (53rd overall) led the OHL with 55 goals this season at age 18.

A steeper challenge will be hitting on a similar pick in the top-heavy 2020 draft. Dubas, you'll recall, dealt away his 2020 first-rounder to the Carolina Hurricanes last summer in order to clear Patrick Marleau off the books. He also forfeited his 2020 third-round pick to the Colorado Avalanche as part of the Tyson Barrie and Alexander Kerfoot acquisitions.

As a result, the pressure to turn 2020's second-rounder into a real player (or find a way back into Round 1 via trade) has intensified.

Where will the Leafs' leadership and experience injection come from?

During the last week we had hockey, Sheldon Keefe confessed his dressing room was thin on strong vocal leaders.

"At times, it has to be the coach, and the coach is the guy that's got to kind of bring the energy and get the team going," Keefe said. "Sometimes the coach has to do a little bit too much, (and I'd) like the players to do their thing. At times, that stands out to me as a problem for our team, something we'd like to do a better job of."

We'd anticipate an element of that maturity and ownership to evolve organically, as a young, letter-wearing core ages.

But we're also a firm believer that surrounding the young stars with a few of the right thirtysomethings is essential. (Hey, there's a reason Dubas kicked tires on Justin Williams midway through the season.)

Kyle Clifford and Jason Spezza have been fine fits on the bottom six. Can those impending UFAs be retained at a reasonable rate? Spezza, who turns 37 in June, is on record saying he wants to keep playing.

On paper, the Leafs' already inexperienced back end is scheduled to get even younger, with veterans Cody Ceci and Barrie both heading to the open market. This would leave Muzzin and Morgan Rielly as the only Leafs defencemen with at least 250 NHL games under their belt. Who else can fill that void of wisdom?

What kind of agreement can be reached with the RFAs?

While Toronto's upcoming wave of RFA negotiations feels like a ripple to the Nylander-Matthews-Marner-Johnsson-Kapanen tsunami that preceded it, some compelling decisions await nonetheless.

We feel confident that head-turning rookie Ilya Mikheyev (\$925,000 cap hit) and defenceman Travis Dermott (\$863,333) will be retained. Due to injury plagued seasons, neither should command overwhelming raises, and the smart path for both sides would be short-term extensions that give the players a shot to excel and management time to better evaluate their ceiling.

More compelling will be the fates Denis Malgin, who's been just OK in his eight Leafs games, and fourth-line centre Frederik Gauthier, who enjoyed more lineup security under former coach Mike Babcock than Keefe.

The lovable Goat is wrapping a bridge deal over which he's shown steady improvement and is eligible for arbitration. He needs a \$700,000 qualifying offer, and considering the organization's lack of centre options, he'd be easy to keep in the fold — but a reasonable area to look at upgrading.

Without the need to rely on LTIR, how can Toronto fit everyone under the salary cap?

The 2019-20 Maple Leafs took full advantage of the salary relief provided by a crowded long-term injured reserve.

In 2020-21, the contracts of Nathan Horton and David Clarkson will finally come off the books, and Johnsson and Mikheyev should be healed, lessening the need for LTIR.

Subtract that payroll cushion and factor in a potentially flattened salary cap (a subject we explored here), and Dubas may be pushed to trade from his forward group and will lean heavily on entry-level talent and free agents willing to skate for close to the league minimum.

Who gets traded?

As was the case in the 2019 off-season, the only way we can see Toronto continuing to cut cheques for the Big 4 — Auston Matthews, John Tavares, Mitch Marner, William Nylander — is by taking a bite out of the middle class.

It's not personal. It's math.

How does that impact the future of Kasperii Kapanen and/or Andreas Johnsson and/or Kerfoot, none of whom have trade protection?

And which of those middle-six calibre forwards can yield the best return?

Which prospects get their shot to stick?

The 2020 call-ups of defencemen Rasmus Sandin and Timothy Liljegren indicate the prospects are likely staples of the 2020-21 blue line, ready or not. They will need to train for more minutes and tougher assignments.

Upfront, does the inevitable roster turnover open opportunity for bubble guys like Egor Korshkov and Nic Petan, who are already under contract for less than \$1 million each?



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

And where does the organization go with Marlies Jeremy Bracco, Adam Brooks and Max Veronneau? All three forwards need new contracts. All three are getting anxious for a true big-league shot after two or three years in the minors.

The two big important extension decisions must be delayed, right?

On the horizon await the contract expirations and near-certain pay raises for two integral Maple Leafs.

While Zach Hyman and Frederik Andersen, both headed toward UFA status in 2021, can re-sign as early as July 1, we anticipate player agents and team execs will push such significant negotiations down the road.

Hopefully, there will be more clarity on the salary cap, the Canadian dollar, the impact of the U.S. broadcast deal and Seattle expansion, and the global economy by this time next year.

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1181548 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Breaking down the 6 best and worst drafts in Canucks history

Iain MacIntyre | March 23, 2020, 8:36 PM

VANCOUVER — We don't know if there will be Stanley Cup playoffs this season, but there will be a National Hockey League entry draft. Remarkably, given the franchise's mostly dismal history at the draft table, this has become a good thing for the Vancouver Canucks.

It's too early to tell, but 2019, 2018 and 2017 could all turn out to be among the top 10 drafts for the Canucks in their 50-year history in the NHL. Of course, 2016, may also be one of their worst — and Jim Benning was the general manager for all of those.

Canucks drafting has been much better since Benning and former president Trevor Linden took charge in 2014 and promoted amateur scout Judd Brackett, who became director of amateur scouting in 2015.

For a decade before that, the draft was a wasteland for the Canucks, who between 2005 and 2012 did not produce a single NHL regular in Vancouver, unless you count the brief, unhappy time on the West Coast for Cody Hodgson. In fairness to previous GMs, Mike Gillis, Dave Nonis and Brian Burke oversaw some very good Canuck teams that were trying to win, not rebuild, and the number of draft picks they surrendered in trades reflected that.

Three months out from the 2020 draft — we all hope — here are Sportnet's best and worst draft classes in Canucks history.

### The Best Drafts

#### 2004

The Canucks didn't get a ton of quantity out of this draft but excellent quality: four players out of seven picks who logged at least 400 NHL games. First-round pick Cory Schneider was chosen 26th by Nonis and outplayed most of the players taken ahead of him. And at Gillis' final draft in 2013, Schneider was parlayed into Canucks captain Bo Horvat in a trade with New Jersey, so that pick continues to pay dividends.

Third-round pick Alex Edler is still on the Canucks 16 years later and became the franchise's career scoring leader among defencemen. (Note to readers: check back with us when Quinn Hughes has played four of five more seasons). And Jannik Hansen, selected 287th in the ninth round, played 626 NHL games and is one of the best bargain picks in Canucks history. A fourth player, wrecking-ball depth forward Mike

Brown, played 407 games for six NHL teams after getting drafted in the fifth round.

#### 1981

Despite how poor their teams were, the Canucks actually had a solid four-year run at the draft starting in 1978 (Curt Fraser, second round; Stan Smyl, third round) during which the majority of their selections played in the NHL — nearly 10,000 games combined. In 1981, general manager Jake Milford chose nine players and six of them logged at least 100 games in the league.

Sure, he chose Garth Butcher in the first round, 10th overall, ahead of Al MacInnis (15th), but the combative defenceman played most of his 897 NHL games for the Canucks and outperformed several players chosen ahead of him. The Canucks picked backup goalie Wendell Young in the fourth round and he played 187 games, winning Stanley Cups with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1991 and '92, and stole Petri Skriko in the eighth round (373 points in 472 games for Vancouver). Ninth-round pick Frank Caprice was the Canucks' backup for parts of five seasons.

#### 1999

Vancouver has had several awful drafts that were saved by one great player: Horvat in 2013, Ryan Kesler in 2003, Pavel Bure in 1989. But in 1999, the two players chosen by Burke near the top of the draft not only made up for the stiffies taken later, but turned that draft into one of the franchise's greatest days.

Burke's famous series of moves ahead of the draft allowed the Canucks to sweep the Sedin twins second- and third-overall. Henrik and Daniel Sedin became the best players, and two of the most respected figures, in Canucks history. By the time they retired after 17 seasons in Vancouver, the Swedish brothers had combined for 2,636 games and 2,111 points. The totals of the other six players Burke drafted that day: 0 and 0. But who cares?

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.

### The Worst Drafts

#### 2007

Usually, when you look at a team's draft list from a certain year and see no NHL games-played, it is because that draft occurred recently and the players selected are still hopeful and churning their way towards the big league. But unless Patrick White comes out of retirement having spent the last several years bathing in the holy water at Lourdes, we're pretty sure the Canucks are never getting anything out of this black hole of a draft.

Nonis, who homered in his first draft after replacing Burke in 2004, struck out completely in 2007 by choosing six players who never saw a minute in the NHL. Now, only two of the picks were in the first four rounds. But White at 25th overall (ahead of David Perron) and defenceman Taylor Ellington at 33rd (ahead of P.K. Subban)? At least Gillis eventually packaged White in a trade for San Jose defenceman Christian Ehrhoff.

#### 2010

While we're on the subject of Gillis, a couple of his drafts were candidates for worst-ever, but we're going with 2010 for the "totality" of the former GM's work at and before that draft. Gillis picked only five players that day and it wasn't a complete whiff because undersized centre Alex Friesen, a sixth-rounder, did play one game for the Canucks in 2015-16 before taking his career to Europe.

But Gillis' first selection wasn't until the fourth round (defenceman Patrick McNally's most notable hockey achievement was getting thrown out of Harvard in an exam cheating scandal) because he'd traded away his first three picks. The worst move was giving up his first-rounder, and prospect Michael Grabner, to get defenceman Keith Ballard from Florida to replace



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

defenceman Willie Mitchell, who was soon invited to leave Vancouver as a free agent. It turned out OK for Mitchell because he was able to help the Los Angeles Kings win two Cups. It wasn't a strong draft in 2010 and the incompetent Panthers, who would waive Grabner so he could score 34 goals for the Islanders the next season, selected Quinton Howden at 25th — just before the Washington Capitals took a Russian named Evgeny Kuznetsov.

2002

Three years after his heist of the Sedins, Burke went to the 2002 draft without a first-round pick, but nobody was complaining because the GM had repatriated Trevor Linden in a trade with Washington. But the Canucks still had volume, 11 picks, including two in the second round and two in the third. The first four players they selected: Kirill Koltsov, Denis Grot, Brett Skinner and Lukas Mensator. The draft didn't get any better for Vancouver after that.

The pick of the litter of these mutts turned out to be Skinner, who played all 11 of his NHL games for the Islanders in 2008-09, in the middle of a career that saw the defenceman play for 10 different American League teams. The Canucks' other 10 draft picks combined for one NHL game: a three-minute appearance by goalie Rob McVicar during 2005-06. At least it was for the Canucks.

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1181549 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Four biggest off-season questions facing the Flames

Eric Francis | March 23, 2020, 1:36 PM

CALGARY – There are some holes to fill on the blue line, one hotshot youngster to re-sign up front and a backup goaltending situation that needs to be addressed.

If the NHL season is indeed over, what are the biggest questions facing the Calgary Flames?

Is this a summer to spur significant change for the team, or is the signing of a defenceman or two the extent of general manager Brad Treliving's heavy lifting?

Signing Andrew Mangiapane won't be a significant hurdle, as the 23-year-old winger is an arbitration-eligible restricted free agent on the verge of cracking the \$2 million barrier on a one-year deal after scoring 17 goals on the team's second line.

The Flames could also opt to try signing the sixth-round revelation to a longer deal, which would make for interesting debate around town.

Either way, it's the kind of business that should take care of itself.

As should the decision to take the interim tag off of Geoff Ward due to the solid job he did in relief of Bill Peters.

Here's a quick look at the four biggest questions facing the Flames if, in fact, we've seen our last game:

Who will play defence?

Five of the Flames' nine rostered defencemen are pending unrestricted free agents this summer, including mainstays Travis Hamonic and TJ Brodie, as well as Michael Stone and deadline deal acquisitions Erik Gustafsson and Derek Forbort.

The team will undoubtedly be looking to re-sign one or two of them, depending on cost.

You can bet the chief goal is to keep Hamonic in the fold, but it wouldn't be surprising if Brodie is the one who stays long term.

On the left side, the team still has Mark Giordano, Noah Hanifin and Juuso Valimaki under contract. Lefty Oliver Kylington is a restricted free agent who will also be re-upped.

Rasmus Andersson is the only righty signed for next year, making it clear the Flames will push hard to ensure Hamonic or Brodie return.

Stone is a Calgary resident who could once again be added for the league minimum as a solid insurance policy on the right side.

The signings of highly-touted U.S. collegians Connor Mackey and Colton Poolman on Friday give the team significant depth, as at least one of them is expected to push for a regular roster spot as early as next season.

Is this the summer to shake up the core?

When we say core, we mean Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan.

This was supposed to be the season in which the duo would have a chance to atone for last spring's disappearance and prove they can step up their game when it matters most.

Had they failed to get the team into the playoffs, or lost again in the first round, it might have been clear management would need to trade one or both.

Assuming we won't get to see how they'll finish this season, it's now likely they'll get another shot at it here next year on a roster which has nine of the team's 12 forwards inked next season.

Gaudreau has two more seasons left on his six-year contract at \$6.75 AAV, which includes a \$3.5 million signing bonus this summer.

Monahan is here an additional season after that.

As first-line staples, both absorb the lion's share of criticism when the team is losing, as it did far too often this year. They've come to understand that as their reality in Calgary.

Gaudreau had been playing his best hockey of the season over the last month, and Monahan still managed to score 22 goals, eclipsing the 20-goal mark for the seventh time in his seven-year career.

Both were far from posting the numbers they had a year earlier, but were likely good enough to warrant a longer stay, allowing Treliving to avoid the horrors of swapping out the faces of the franchise.

Then again, if the right deal came along...

Do they re-sign Cam Talbot?

Following a horrific pair of campaigns that had many questioning his NHL future, Cam Talbot's career is certainly back on track.

The 32-year-old's progression got to the point where he deserved to take over as the Flames starter the second half of the season. While David Rittich's third-straight second-half stumble had plenty to do with that, Talbot did exactly what Treliving hoped he would when the GM took a chance by signing him last summer for \$2.75 million — the exact sum Rittich makes.

Popular with teammates and fans, Talbot sure seems to have found the perfect landing spot in Calgary.

Rittich has one year left on his deal. If he falters again next season, then Talbot — if he re-signs in Calgary — could be in prime position to solidify a starting gig.

However, Talbot's stock is on the rise, which could make him an attractive option for a team looking for someone to hold the fort while a young hotshot gets more seasoning in the minors or as a backup.

Talbot would certainly cherish the chance to play somewhere that offers more playing time than he received in Calgary, where he made just 26



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

appearances this season, posting a .919 save percentage and 2.63 goals against average.

Do they get compensation from the Oilers?

The oh-so-intriguing James Neal-for-Milan Lucic swap last summer included a provision that the Flames would also get a 2020 third-round pick from the Oilers if:

Neal scores at least 21 goals in 2019-20 and Lucic scores at least ten fewer goals than Neal.

After a torrid start to the season, Neal came back down to earth and then suffered an injury that has him stalled out at 19 goals. Lucic has eight.

The Flames have 12 games remaining and the Oilers have 11.

Although Neal clearly didn't reach the 21 needed to kickstart possible compensation, an incomplete season will have the Flames urging the league to rule on this.

If the league simply pro-rated their stats over the full season, the Flames would get the pick.

These are uncharted waters, however, which means both teams will likely have strong opinions on how – or if – the league should intervene.

There's a chance the league won't intervene at all, meaning the Flames' string of bad luck surrounding everything James Neal continues.

Trade conditions like these have been brought up with the league, which has informed clubs they will have answers in due time.

Arbitration hearings have long included a focus on stats based on a per-game basis, adjusting for games lost to injury. If so, the Flames would land that pick.

At the rate each player scored at this season, Lucic would have scored nine goals over an 82 game season and Neal, who only played 55 games, was on a pace to score 28.

The change of scenery served both players and their new teams well, but the Flames still hope to gain even more.

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1181550 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' Lavoie working to prove he can adapt, thrive among pro ranks

Mark Spector | March 23, 2020, 7:20 PM

EDMONTON — The Edmonton Oilers have run the gamut of experiences with their draft picks at the World Junior tournament.

From Darnell Nurse, a top D-man in Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds who was called upon to become a shutdown defenceman in 2015 and walked away with one assist and a gold medal. To Jesse Puljujarvi, whom they drafted a few months after he was named tournament MVP with 17 points in seven games.

They've won some and they've (so far) lost some.

So when second-round pick Raphael Lavoie found himself as a depth forward last December in the Czech Republic, Oilers director of player development Scott Howson just sat back like a good scout does, and observed.

"Raphael got to the World Juniors, and he had a different role. But he seemed to embrace the role, and earned the coach's trust," said

Howson, who is scheduled to leave the Oilers and begin his new job as commissioner of the American Hockey League this spring. "He could have been one of those guys who kind of gets lost in the shuffle, and doesn't play very much, but he played right down to the end. I know he didn't score or produce as much as maybe he wanted to (just two assists in seven games), but we were happy with what we saw."

We've heard the tale at every level when it comes to Canada's national teams. Literally every invited player is the star on his club team. They're all first-liners, top pairing defencemen and No. 1 goalies — but when they pull on that red maple leaf, they're just members of Team Canada.

"My end goal was to win, so I didn't mind taking on a defensive role if, in the end, it could mean we would have a gold medal," said Lavoie from his home in Chambly, Que. "I think I did the right choice. I wasn't the only one to have a more defensive role. Everyone put their ego aside, and I think that's why we won the tournament."

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.

Lavoie is a big centre/right-winger with a wicked shot, who fancies himself in the Ryan Getzlaf mould. "I haven't scored a goal in the NHL yet," he laughs when compared, but he'd like to pattern his game after the big Anaheim centre. In the Czech Republic however, he found himself on the fourth line with Connor McMichael (Washington) and Akil Thomas (Los Angeles), tasked with playing a defensive game and chipping in where they could — which Thomas did tremendously when he potted the game-winner in the gold-medal game.

"He's going to have to learn how to do all those things on a consistent basis in order to pay in the NHL," Howson said of Lavoie, who at age 19 is six-foot-four and 198 pounds. He signed his entry-level deal with the Oilers over the weekend — a three-year deal with an average annual value of \$925,000 — after being a second-round pick (38th overall) in the 2019 draft.

"He's going to have to check hard, be reliable," Howson continued. "He's got a great shot. He's a one-shot scorer who only needs one chance. His pace of play isn't always terrific, as it is with a lot of the top players in junior because they play so much that they rest on the ice a lot of the time. And there was no resting on the ice at the World Juniors.

"I think it did educate us. Now we know he can do those things when he turns pro."

"It shows a different aspect on how I can play hockey," added Lavoie. "That's good for me."

Lavoie was dealt from Halifax to Chicoutimi as the Saguenéens anticipated a Memorial Cup run this spring, but with Monday's news that the rest of the Canadian Hockey League season has been officially cancelled, his next stop will be Bakersfield of the American Hockey League.

"Guys are a lot bigger," said Lavoie. "It's a lot more physical, and a lot more tough than junior. Those are big parts of the adjustments I will have to make."

The book on Lavoie is that he needs to work on his skating, a line in the scouting reports that gets over-used in today's game, where everyone skates so fast at the NHL level. As such, Lavoie has been working with Oilers skating coach David Pelletier, the former three-time Canadian champion and Olympic gold-medal figure skater.

"Leg strength, core strength, power," began Howson. "He's a good skater in junior — there's nothing wrong with his stride. It's just power and strength. He's got to get a little more powerful off the mark. He's got to separate from people, because when you're a pro it's all about getting the time and space for you to make plays or get a shot off. His separation isn't what it's going to need to be once he gets to the NHL."

What does Pelletier stress when he gets on the ice with Lavoie?



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

"Edges, cross-overs, strides, starts... There is room for improvement pretty much everywhere," smiles Lavoie. "I skate well for junior. I can go around guys, I can outskate guys. But I want to be able to bring my skating to a pro level. Everything needs to get better, because next year I won't be playing against guys who are 16-19 years old. I'll be playing against guys who are 20 and older.

"Everything just needs to be better."

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1181551 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Olympics postponement extends window to stage Stanley Cup Playoffs

Chris Johnston | March 23, 2020, 8:43 PM

The impending postponement of the Tokyo Olympics will extend the potential window for the Stanley Cup Playoffs to be held this summer, the NHL told its teams on Monday.

That news came as part of a question-and-answer sheet circulated along with a league memo, according to a source.

The NHL also conducted a teleconference with its Board of Governors for the first time since putting its season on pause March 12. Monday afternoon's session with governors included updates on the COVID-19 outbreak, financial projections on how the league could be affected by the pandemic and a discussion about some of the contingency options under consideration for a potential resumption of play.

That now includes the possibility of extending the playoffs beyond July 24, when the Olympics in Tokyo were originally set to get underway. It only seems like a matter of time before those Games are officially put off until 2021, with the Canadian Olympic Committee already having withdrawn its athletes and IOC member Dick Pound telling The Canadian Press on Monday: "You're looking at a postponement. I think that's out there now."

For the NHL, it extends the window to meet its stated goal of crowning a champion this season. The league shares a U.S. broadcast partner with the Olympics in NBC and had previously believed the playoffs had to be wrapped up before the cauldron was lit during the Opening Ceremonies.

That extra time could be valuable with the coronavirus still spreading rapidly in North America — although at this stage there's only so much the league can even tell team owners about where things are headed.

It remains a huge unknown for both the wider population and the sports leagues that operate within them.

While it's believed the NHL has already engaged in a fair amount of dialogue on contingency plans — what does the playoff format look like if games can resume May 15? Or June 1? Or June 8? How is the start of next season impacted if the Stanley Cup isn't awarded until Aug. 15 or Aug. 30? — the league is essentially in a holding pattern when it comes to making actual decisions.

Those will ultimately depend heavily on recommendations from the governments and leading authorities like the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In a question-and-answer document published by the NHL's public relations department on Monday afternoon, the league indicated that it isn't sure if any part of the regular season might still be played or what a reimagined playoff format will look like.

"The form and format of resumption of play scenarios will depend entirely on what transpires between now and when we are permitted and able to resume — and, ultimately, on timing and taking into account logistical constraints," said the NHL's release. "We are going to have to be flexible and react to events as they unfold as well as the best medical advice available."

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1181552 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL strength coaches give tips on staying fit in self-isolation

Ryan Dixon | March 23, 2020, 3:22 PM

Matt Nichol doesn't really present like a person who has a problem with self-starting. But Nichol's toned body belies the fact he, like so many of us, is still capable of making the wrong decision when it comes to working out — especially under the unique circumstances we all find ourselves in.

"I live so much of my life in a very regimented routine," says the founding partner and chief formulator of BioSteel Sports Supplements. "Whether I'm training athletes at my gym or consulting, I'm usually busy all day long with a bunch of places I have to be at very specific times. So right now — when I can go to bed when I want and I can sleep in as late as I want — I could tell myself, 'I'll do my workout later.' Personally, I know that I'm an inherently lazy procrastinator, so I have to kind of set up that full schedule for myself."

People like Nichol and St. Louis Blues strength and conditioning coach Eric Renaghan are usually occupied working with those whose profession demands they be in peak form. Later this week, Sportsnet.ca will publish a piece about how those athletes are staying strong without access to their typical training equipment. In the meantime, both Nichol and Renaghan offered some advice on what those of us who usually cheer for those pros can do to clear a much lower bar. For Nichol, Step 1 is avoiding that "I'll do it later" mindset and making sure you prioritize some form of exercise early in the day.

"I just make a point of getting to bed on time, getting up on time and doing my exercise right away — that way at least I get it done," he says.

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Our current situation, where COVID-19 has forced so many people to work from home or not at all, could even present a chance to kickstart some good behavior.

"People who are very busy often find it tough to balance that work/life scenario," says Renaghan. "This is an opportunity to add in the window for self-care. My goal is to get [my entire family] active. The kids are downstairs playing [Nintendo Wii] or doing yoga with my wife, so we're trying to make it an experience we can all try to engage in."

Nichol — who used to work as a trainer with the Toronto Maple Leafs — notes that his gym is so small it used to be a storage closet in an arena. He's used to making the most of his space and stressed that by no means do you need a sprawling setup to get the blood pumping and muscles twitching.

"I believe that if you have [any] space and creativity, you can accomplish anything you want with training," he says. "It's been an opportunity for me to try a bunch of different stuff that I hadn't done before. I've done more



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

yoga in the last week than I have in a while and I'm exploring new, different bodyweight exercises. It's probably going to make me a better coach and a better trainer."

Among the simple things Renaghan suggests is opening the fridge and grabbing a milk jug for some added squat weight or even picking up one of those squirrely kids you have and holding them while you do some lunges. Beyond that, both Nichol and Renaghan stressed that wellness needs to be a more rounded experience than dropping down and doing 20 pushups. Mental health often goes hand-in-hand with activity and while we're all required to keep some space these days, do everything you can to get some fresh air.

"I think it's really important for people to get outside," says Nichol, while acknowledging the crucial need to social distance. "Whether you choose to do your exercise outside or not — some people are not into jogging or they're not into outdoor fitness activity — that's fine. But I think it's really important for people to get outside. If you live in a condo, go stand on the balcony; if you can get outside that's hugely important for health."

Renaghan is taking part in a webinar initiative called "Coaches versus COVID-19," which will see pro trainers like himself instructing anyone interested on techniques to stay in top shape or start to try and get there. The series, hosted by a handful of groups and people, runs April 3 and 4 and while there's no sign-up fee, donations are being accepted to help those in the service industry who've lost their money-making means. Even on an everyday basis, our ability to connect online has the power to create some positive energy as both athletes and Average Jane's and Joe's alike take to social media with their domestic routines.

"There's a ton of people putting home workouts on Instagram and Twitter," says Renaghan, who also stressed the heightened importance of watching calories and healthy eating right now. "People can go on there and see all the different ideas and I think there are so many resources to just say like, 'Oh, I didn't think about doing pushups and doing 10 sets of 10; I always do three sets of five.' There's tons of stuff out there right now that's going to be useful."

It may even provide a little much-needed levity. Nichol certainly chuckled while theorizing what might be caught on video when bathroom pullups or kitchen chair lifts go wrong.

"I mean, I think there's probably going to be some pretty good gym fail videos that come out of this when people start destroying furniture doing exercises," he says with a laugh.

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1181553 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Remember When? Gretzky talks Goal 802, breaking Howe's record

Emily Sadler | March 23, 2020, 1:06 PM

On this day 26 years ago, hockey history was made.

March 23, 1994 saw Wayne Gretzky pass his idol, Gordie Howe, to claim the record for all-time goals scored when he registered No. 802.

That historic marker came on home ice before a sellout crowd against the Vancouver Canucks, with Howe himself in attendance.

In 2016, Gretzky talked to NHL.com about the milestone moment, sharing some of his favourite memories from that time.

"One of the greatest parts of 802 was I got to spend a lot of time with Gordie and his wife Colleen because Gordie was following me around," Gretzky said. "A lot of times when you meet your idol, you're somewhat

taken aback or disappointed. For me, when I met Gordie, he was bigger and better than I thought.

"When I had an opportunity to be around his record and break his record, I found it really fascinating to be around him, ask him questions and talk about stories."

Gretzky also broke down the give-and-go goal, which came at 14:47 of the second period of the game, highlighting the roles that teammates Marty McSorley and Luc Robitaille played:

"Luc made a nice play to Marty and Marty made a really nice play to me to get me the puck and I basically had an empty net to throw it into," Gretzky said. "If you look at the play, [McSorley] made such a good play that everybody, defense and the goalie [Kirk McLean], were over this way. I don't think Marty could have drawn it up better."

McSorley also recounted the goal, over two decades later.

"People always say to me, 'You were responsible for the record.' No. I feel zero responsibility because Wayne is going to break the record," McSorley told NHL.com. "Somebody is going to assist on it and it was a real pleasure that it was me that got that honour."

It took Gretzky 15 seasons to reach the record, compared to Howe's 26 campaigns to set the 801-goal mark. Gretzky would, of course, go on to score 92 more times before retiring with 894 goals to his name and 2,857 career points. Both records still stand.

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1181554 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Norris Trophy Tier List: Carlson, Josi in a league of their own

Josh Beneteau | March 23, 2020, 9:52 AM

It's been a two-horse race for the Norris Trophy all season long but in the final weeks before the shutdown, some challengers had emerged.

While John Carlson is still a favourite to win, this year has seen plenty of other defencemen put up strong performances, making his lock on the award not as sure now as it was earlier in the campaign.

With the season stopped and no return in sight, here is where things stand in the race to be the NHL's top defenceman.

The Favourites

John Carlson, Roman Josi

With just over 10 games to go for most teams, Carlson and Josi have separated themselves as co-favourites for the Norris.

Carlson grabbed the lead in this race with a historic 23 points in his team's 15 October games. He hasn't relinquished the defence scoring lead since, currently leading all others by 10 with 75 points, and before the shutdown had an outside chance at hitting 90 points, which hasn't been done by a blueliner since Ray Bourque in 1993-94. Of course, this award is about more than just points — Carlson led blueliners in scoring in 2017-18 but finished fifth in Norris voting that year — but his possession stats show Carlson has positive impacts for the Capitals in all three zones. He's also a regular penalty killer for the Capitals and leads the team in ice time by almost two minutes a game.

Josi's season has evolved like Carlson's in a lot of ways. On a Nashville team that struggles on offence Josi excels, leading the team in scoring by 17 points. Josi also leads the Predators in expected goals and scoring



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

chances (according to Natural Stat Trick), and is third among all defencemen with 25:47 of ice time per game.

Had A Chance

Victor Hedman, Quinn Hughes, Cale Makar, Alex Pietrangelo

The Norris gets three finalists and the runner-up to Carlson and Josi will likely come from this group.

Hedman got off to a strong start this season but quieted down in the second half. He's only posted 18 points since the calendar flipped to 2020 but still averages over 24 minutes of ice time, plays in all situations and is among the league leaders with a plus-27 rating.

Hughes is a favourite to win rookie of the year but could also be considered among the best defencemen. Still only 20, Hughes is one of seven defencemen to crack 50 points so far and is third among blueliners with 45 assists. With quick skating and patient play, Hughes has given the Canucks a star on the blue line to replace the ageing Alex Edler. And he's just getting started.

Makar and Hughes have been battling for rookie of the year but injuries have seen the Avalanche blueliner fall slightly behind his Vancouver counterpart in that race. But despite missing 13 Avalanche games, Makar is still among the league-leaders in defence scoring with 50 points (in only 57 games), has a plus-12 rating and positive possession numbers. His 0.88 points per game is third behind only Carlson and Josi among defencemen.

Pietrangelo, the captain of the reigning Stanley Cup champions, was in the midst of another impressive season. He crossed the 50-point mark for the fourth-straight season, was on pace to set a new career-high in goals and carries a 53 per cent Corsi rate. The 30-year-old is a pending unrestricted free agent and can expect a big pay raise from the Blues or elsewhere this off-season.

The Long Shots

Ivan Provorov, Shea Theodore, Shea Weber, Zachary Werenski

This last group of players have all had great seasons but now that we're in a pause, they are long shots to challenge for the Norris.

Provorov has been the best defenceman on one of the NHL's biggest surprise teams and is having a big bounceback season after a disappointing contract year. The Flyers are a Cup contender in part because Provorov has been among the league leaders in ice time (24:50), goals (13) and Corsi For percentage (51.79). Still only 23, Provorov will only get better and the Flyers' window to win is opening because of it.

Theodore's season has been extra special when you factor in he spent the off-season recovering from testicular cancer. Despite that, he hasn't missed a game and has been one of the most productive defencemen in the league. The 24-year-old has set career-highs with 13 goals and 46 points, and has seen his average ice time increase to over 22 minutes a night. On top of that, he leads all defencemen (minimum 1,000 minutes, according to Natural Stat Trick) in plenty of advanced stats, including Corsi For (58.50), Fenwick For (57.86) and on-ice shooting percentage (58.36). The Golden Knights have been looking for an elite defenceman for basically their entire team history and in Theodore they may have found it.

Weber has incredibly never won this award but has finished top four in voting five times. After injuries limited him to only 84 games over the past two seasons, the 34-year-old bounced back in a big way this year with 15 goals, more than 24 minutes of ice time and an overall return to his dominant play from his prime with the Nashville Predators. Even his recovery from an ankle injury — which only took six games — shows Weber has found the fountain of youth this season.

Werenski doesn't make the same headlines his teammate Seth Jones does but he's had a very productive season for the surprising Blue Jackets. Werenski is the only defenceman who's scored 20 goals this

season, but he's also seen his role on the team grow, with a career-high 1:59 on the penalty kill and his overall ice time rise to 23:59 a game. In the 14 games since Jones had ankle surgery in early February, Werenski has risen as a leader on his team even more, skating nearly 25 minutes a game and potting eight points, tied for the team lead.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Caufield staying in Wisconsin could open spot for Ylonen

Eric Engels March 23, 2020, 2:47 PM

I'd have paid more than a penny for Jesse Ylönen's thoughts on last week's announcement from the Montreal Canadiens that star prospect Cole Caufield is staying at the University of Wisconsin for at least one more season.

Of the thousands of people waiting on that decision to become official, no one should have been more compelled by the outcome than the Finn who made the (surprise) jump overseas to the AHL's Laval Rocket from Liiga's Lahti Pelicans at the beginning of this month, before the COVID-19 pandemic brought sports (and daily life as we knew it) to a screeching halt.

Boy, if I were Ylönen, I'd be doing two-a-day workouts in quarantine right about now.

I'm not saying the 20-year-old, who's listed at 6-foot-1 and a meager 172 pounds, is suddenly going to be ready to jump into the role that might have been designated for Caufield on next season's Canadiens. I'm merely suggesting that the opportunity to do exactly that became much more tangible for him the minute Caufield's absence from the next Canadiens training camp was confirmed.

Granted, Ylönen will likely be best served honing his craft and adapting to the small ice surface in Laval as of next (fall?), but he must see what the rest of us see when we look at the Canadiens' depth chart at right wing — that the opportunity is right there for the taking. There you have Brendan Gallagher locked into a top line role, with Joel Armia (who scored a career-high 16 goals in 58 games this season) and depth players Jordan Weal and Dale Weise behind him.

With respect to the group, we're not exactly looking at a murderer's row of snipers.

And yes, even considering the likelihood of soon-to-be 37-year-old Ilya Kovalchuk returning in the off-season — if you weren't fully convinced of it after Kovalchuk told reporters his February trade to the Washington Capitals was "not goodbye, for sure," I'm told it's all but a slam dunk the big right-hander will be back in Montreal on a bonus-laden contract — this is as good of a chance as Ylönen could have hoped for to show he can immediately fill a scoring role.

Meanwhile, I would think it's consensus at this point that Caufield not being made available to do so was the right decision.

Even if some detractors want to argue that continuing to play for a Badgers team that underperformed this past season and just lost key players Alex Turcotte and K'Andre Miller to NHL teams isn't optimal, it's doubtful it's going to hurt Caufield's development to have a chance to dominate at that level after authoring a remarkable campaign that saw him tie Boston College's Alex Newhook for most goals by a freshman (19) and finish third among NCAA rookies in points (36).



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

If Caufield's coach, Tony Granato, thinks it'll be good for him to continue to develop his all-around game, who are we to argue?

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

Plus, the college schedule — teams practise on weekdays and play games on Fridays and Saturdays — allows the 5-foot-7 sharpshooter to spend more time in the gym and add significant weight and muscle to that 162-pound frame of his.

As Gallagher told us in an interview last week, that's an essential process for any young player, but specifically for an undersized under-ager.

The 2010 fifth-round pick would know. Gallagher, who's generously listed at 5-foot-9, followed up his selection by playing two more seasons with the Western Hockey League's Vancouver Giants.

If Gallagher didn't immediately understand the benefit of spending extra time at the junior level, he certainly did after he made his professional debut with the AHL's Hamilton Bulldogs and then made an immediate impact in 44 games with the Canadiens during the lockout-abridged 2012-13 season.

"I remember going back after that season and talking with my dad (his father, Ian, is his personal trainer) about summer training, and we could both see that even in a shortened season — and yeah, I played 36 AHL games before — we could see my body got worn down and deteriorated," Gallagher said. "You just have to be that much more — and it comes with maturity, and it comes with age — but you have to be that much more prepared and aware in order to deal with that reality.

"There's things you need to do throughout the year just to maintain, but there's also things that, until you get that base and you're able to put in that time and that work, your body won't be able to handle the full 82-game season plus whatever you get to play beyond that.

"The opportunity for Cole to play a lighter schedule is an opportunity to create that muscle base you can rely on for when you go through a tough schedule and your body starts to break down. That base allows you to maintain."

Caufield will work on building it up now, but he won't have a full appreciation of what's required until he spends a full season at the pro level.

That's what makes Ylönen's arrival at this juncture so interesting. Here's a player who has 103 games of pro experience over two seasons with the Pelicans under his belt.

The 2018 second-rounder's production of 25 goals and 49 points, against men and in a notoriously strong defensive league, is a sign of his potential.

Others are the speed at which Ylönen plays at, the agility and skill he displays regularly, and the offensive instincts he has.

And, as we saw at the 2019 World Junior Championship, the kid can shoot.

It remains to be seen if Ylönen will be doing it all in Montreal next season, but the possibility that he could become a lot more real with Caufield's commitment to a sophomore season at Wisconsin.

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Sportsnet.ca / Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy on David Pastrnak's passion for game

Emily Sadler March 23, 2020, 3:23 PM

When the NHL suspended its season on March 12, few teams were rolling down the stretch as well as the Boston Bruins.

Last year's Stanley Cup Final runners-up are the league leaders by a six-point margin and are a Cup favourite should they resume playing this season. (The team that beat them, the St. Louis Blues, are sitting second.)

While credit for the club's success goes to its excellent depth — we saw that in spades throughout last year's playoff run — there's one player in particular who's shining the brightest: David Pastrnak.

The 2019-20 campaign has been the best season of Pastrnak's career. Through 70 games, he'd already tallied personal-bests across the board: 48 goals, 47 assists and 95 points.

Few people have witnessed Pastrnak's power and progression like Bruins head coach Bruce Cassidy, who coached the Czech forward in the AHL before they both eventually made the jump to the NHL.

During an appearance on Hockey Central on Monday, Cassidy shared some of his perspective on what makes Pastrnak so good — and a lot of it has to do with his mindset and self-starting nature — with an anecdote from his early days coaching him with their AHL affiliate:

"David Pastrnak's playing for us in Providence, I believe he's 19 at the time. He goes to the world junior championship the year it was in Toronto and Montreal (in 2015)," Cassidy explained. "I think they lost out on Friday night, he travels all day Saturday to get back to Providence, comes in (Sunday) morning, and I always write the lineup on the board. So he walks in ... and goes, 'where's my number on the board?'"

Cassidy told his young forward management wanted him to rest up after the tournament.

"He says, 'No, I want to play. I'm here to play, that's what I do.' So he's playing the world junior championships one night, flies to Boston, drives into Providence and the kid wants to play. Tells you all you need to know about him in terms of his commitment to being a hockey player," Cassidy said.

The head coach said when it comes to coaching the forward over the past few years, "I kind of let him be with the skill part of it." He said team leaders and linemates like Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand played crucial roles in his development, too.

"He's a great kid, comes to work every day, there's not a lot of coaching that needs to be done with him," he said.

As for Pastrnak's infamously sparse tape job on his stick...

"Yeah, I don't know where that comes from, but all the little kids want it now," said Cassidy, laughing, adding that his son's teammates all try to mimic it with their sticks. "Anyway, he's left his mark. It works for him."

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1181557 Websites

TSN.CA / If NHL returns in summer, ice makers face daunting task

Mark Masters

Jared Dupre moved from Long Island, New York, to Hillsborough, N.C., in 1993 after his father took a job with the University of North Carolina's hospital system.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

"I had just finished high school and decided to make the move with him and glad I did it," said Dupre, who grew up a big Rangers fan. "Found out there was an ice rink within bicycle-riding distance of my house and I got to know the manager of the building and I got a part-time job and I just got lucky and got to know the right people in the area down here that kind of steered me in the right path."

That path led to PNC Arena, home of the Carolina Hurricanes, where Dupre has worked since 2001. He has served as the ice technician for the last eight years.

"Just fell into something I love doing on a daily basis," he said. "I like the camaraderie, the atmosphere of the building, the people I work with, I've always been someone who's liked the cold so it's kind of fitting. I've always been a hockey fan."

When the NHL season was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 12, the Hurricanes held the first wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference with hopes of making another long playoff run after reaching the final four a year ago. If the season resumes and Carolina recaptures that magic it likely means games being played in July and perhaps even August.

"That would probably be one of the bigger challenges we would ever have to deal with in this building," Dupre readily admits.

TSN spoke with Dupre by phone on Monday. The following is an edited transcript of the interview.

What's the biggest issue if games are played in the summer?

"Our biggest problem here in North Carolina is the humidity we face at that time of year. Typically in July and August we can have temperatures anywhere from 90 degrees (Fahrenheit) to 115 with 65 per cent humidity outside. We all like to joke about the fact that, 'Hot and humid, plenty of sunshine, chance of afternoon thundershowers,' is pretty much the weather forecast from about the end of May to the beginning of September on a daily basis."

What can you do to combat that humidity?

"Our building has desiccant dehumidifiers on the roof and we try and pull the temperature down and the humidity out of the building, but once the doors open it's basically null and void. Because once the doors are open and all that hot, humid air starts coming in, we can't pull it back out with the people in here. You get 15,000-plus people in the building for a game, you're adding to the humidity with people talking and yelling and screaming and the general body heat warming the air."

TSN Hockey Insider Bob McKenzie joins Andi Petrillo and Dave Feschuk to discuss the message the NHL is giving the players regarding travel, if and how they should be staying active and if there is any kind of deadline on when the NHL needs to be cleared to resume play.

And this isn't just a problem in North Carolina, right?

"Any of the southern teams on the Eastern Seaboard here are dealing with the same issues this time of year."

If the NHL returns, but there are no fans at the game, how much would that help?

"It would probably help, because we wouldn't have that hour when we have our exterior doors open for the fans to ingress into the building. I couldn't judge how significant it would be, but it would definitely help us, because we wouldn't be increasing the temperature in the building, we'd be better able to regulate the temperature."

The NHL recommendation is for ambient air to be between 60 and 64 degrees at 40 to 44 per cent humidity. How close could you get to that in the summer?

"I couldn't tell you, off the top of my head, what it would be for that time of year. Obviously, the last time we were that deep into the playoffs and it was that warm outside was 2006 when we won the Cup and (chuckle) I wasn't the person in charge of worrying about those things at that time."

How did the ice hold up last year when the team played until May 16?

"We didn't have any issues come up. We did our best to try and control the arena environment to the best of our abilities with the equipment we have on hand. I mean, I didn't hear any negative feedback, but I also didn't hear any positive feedback. It was never really that warm outside. We were kind of lucky in that aspect so we never really had a whole lot of issues."

So, would there be a dramatic drop in the ice quality between May last year and July this year?

"It's kind of anybody's guess, because of the uncertainty of what the weather's going to do. But, definitely the humidity's going to affect the surface."

With the NHL season on pause, players and some governors alike believe that an August-to-September finish could make sense, assuming the global pandemic subsides. But as our Darren Dreger, Pierre LeBrun and Frank Seravalli explain, that is only one of many ideas being thrown around in such a unique situation.

What happens to the ice now?

"We actually made the decision to take our ice surface out of the building last Wednesday. The higher-ups weighed the options and the smarter option was to take it out and put it back in if needed."

What went into that decision?

"The thought process was it's going to be more cost effective to take it out and not leave it covered with the compressors running or leave it uncovered and have to groom the ice from time to time. It was just a cost-effective decision and we weren't the only ones in the league, there were several other teams that made the same decision or are making that decision this week."

How long does it take to get the ice back in if you get the green light?

"Typically, it would take us a day to get the compressors back on and get the system to start cooling the floor. It will take roughly 24 hours to pull the floor back down to (the right) temperature before we can start making ice and then you're looking at a minimum of 24 to 36 hours before the sheet is able to be skated on."

Are ice makers around the NHL close?

"Without a doubt. The ice makers and the operations departments in the buildings, we all stay in touch with each other, everyone's friends on Instagram and Facebook. Our facility operation managers association normally gets together right at the end of the season in different locations across the country to meet, strategize and brainstorm."

Is there a lot of talk among ice makers about the challenge of hockey in the summer months?

"Yeah, I mean, everybody's kind of in that uncertainty area right now, not sure what's going to happen and what the next steps are going to be, but we're all hoping we get back up and running at some point here sooner rather than later."

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TSN.CA / Yost: In appreciation of some memorable goaltending duels

Travis Yost



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 24, 2020

Yes, scoring is up in recent years in the National Hockey League and it has become a more offensively prolific league, relatively speaking. But the last decade has still offered its fair share of incredible goaltender duels – a few of which are already part of hockey lore.

With hockey paused for a presumably extended period of time, I went back and dusted off nearly 12,000 regular-season games from the start of the 2010-11 season through March 11, 2020. Every game was scored through three criteria – the number of shots (or, workload) respective goaltenders faced, the stop rates of the goaltenders cumulatively, and the goals saved above expectations (expected goals net actual goals) to capture shot quality.

The two most compelling games based on these criteria both came, coincidentally enough, from the 2013-14 regular season – the first involving a duel between Jimmy Howard and Henrik Lundqvist, the second involving Ryan Miller and Craig Anderson. But there was plenty of competition from other years:

The winner, by the narrowest of margins, was the aforementioned Jan. 16, 2014 game between the Detroit Red Wings and New York Rangers. A third-period goal by Mats Zuccarello – the only goal scored in the game – gave the Rangers the regulation victory, but the performances of Howard (stopping 47 of 48 shots) and Lundqvist (a 38-save shutout) stole the show.

That game was really about the sheer volume of shots that both goalies had to turn away, and how effective they were in doing so. But if you were curious about the game that saw the biggest swing between actual goals scored and expected goals, that honour belongs to Nashville's Pekka Rinne and Chicago's Corey Crawford from this season. The Feb. 21 game saw Rinne and Crawford concede three goals – the game winner going to Blackhawks forward Alex DeBrincat in overtime – but on a base of far more difficult shots.

I went back and pulled the heat maps of where shots were emanating from between the likes of Nashville and Chicago. This is, in one word, insane – and this is just an even-strength sampling (via HockeyViz).

It's not surprising to see Chicago involved in a game where a fantastic goaltender performance erased an otherwise distressing defensive performance – that has been, after all, Chicago's calling card for the past few seasons.

But that wasn't the only game that registered for the Blackhawks this season. Three months prior, Robin Lehner – prior to his trade to Vegas – battled with Dallas' Anton Khudobin in an eerily similar "defence optional" type of game.

More generally: as you start thumbing through the games, you are reminded of how flush the NHL has been with elite goaltending over the past decade. Goaltenders like Miller (four), Crawford (four), Lundqvist (three), Marc-Andre Fleury (three) and Sergei Bobrovsky (three) have been household names for quite some time, and each has participated in a number of exceptional performances over the past 10 seasons.

And with a stroke of luck, we may get a few more memorable goaltending duels before this season truly comes to a close.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.24.2020

1181559 Websites

USA TODAY / NHL on NBC play-by-play announcer Mike Emrick calls windshield wiper replacement

Jace Evans

The absence of live sports due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic means there's not a ton for sports play-by-play announcers to do.

Joe Buck, Fox Sports' top play-by-play man, put out a request to people to send him personal videos that he will call. A London-based rugby announcer has gone viral for doing a similar thing.

On Monday, "The NHL on NBC Sports" released a video that should brighten every hockey fan's day in the absence of actual games: Mike Emrick calling a trip to the auto shop.

In the undated video, Emrick – affectionately known as "Doc" and the No. 1 man calling the NHL for NBC – did play-by-play for the replacement of a windshield wiper.

The 73-year-old Emrick narrated the action with the stately flair that has become his trademark.

"This is like having Gordon Ramsay come to your house and having make microwave popcorn," Emrick said of the technician he said had 34 years of experience replacing the windshield wiper.

It was a small bit of fun from the legendary announcer – who in 2008 was honored by the Hockey Hall of Fame with the Foster Hewitt Memorial Award – that should help in what has been a trying time for everyone.

Should the NHL season resume, Emrick's voice should be front-and-center on NBC's coverage. We hope to hear it more soon.

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