



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 25, 2020

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Hurricanes sign brothers David, Jason Cotton to entry-level contracts

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes, continuing their hockey business during the NHL's suspension of play, on Tuesday signed brothers David and Jason Cotton to entry-level contracts.

David Cotton, a forward who played college hockey at Boston College, signed a two-year contract that will pay him \$700,000 in 2020-21 and \$832,500 in 2021-22 at the NHL level and \$70,000 at the American Hockey League level in both seasons. He received a \$185,000 signing bonus.

Jason Cotton, a Hobey Baker Award finalist at Sacred Heart this season, signed a one-year contract for the 2020-21 season that will pay \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$50,000 at the AHL level. The forward received a \$25,000 signing bonus.

"David and Jason both had very productive senior seasons this year," Canes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a statement. "We've been pleased with David's progress over his four years at Boston College, and his brother Jason was recently named a Hobey Baker Award finalist. We're excited to see what they can accomplish at the professional level."

David Cotton, 22, was named a Hockey East third-team all-star this season at BC, where he served as team captain. He had 15 goals and 24 assists in 32 games as a senior.

A native of Parker, Texas, David Cotton was a sixth-round draft choice by Carolina in the 2015 NHL Draft. The 6-4, 197-pound forward was named a Hockey East first-team all-star and second-team All-American as a junior.

Jason Cotton, 25, finished with 20 goals and 17 assists in 34 games at Sacred Heart this season and was the Pioneers' captain. The 6-3, 190-pound forward was named Atlantic Hockey Player of the Year and an Atlantic Hockey First Team All-Star.

Among Division I skaters, Jason Cotton was tied for first in shorthanded goals (3) and tied for sixth in goals (20) this season.

David Cotton considered signing with the Canes after the 2018-19 college season. Calling it a "difficult decision," he decided to return to BC, where the Eagles were 24-8-2 this season.

"Having this opportunity, especially being a captain, to achieve something as a team was a big part of my decision," he said at the Canes' prospects development camp in June.

## THE ATHLETIC

### The 2019-20 Hurricanes: 10 things we shouldn't forget about this team

By Sara Civian

What if I told you the Dave Ayres game happened just over one month ago?

I guess we'd first have to determine what day it is, and that is a challenge difficult enough in itself right now.

It's Wednesday, I think, and that means the Ayres game happened just over one month ago, and way less than two months ago.

When we look back on this 2019-20 regular season that's most likely dunzo, we will obviously remember that game. We will also remember that Andrei Svechnikov became the first in NHL history to do the Michigan — then "Oops! (He) did it again."

We all obviously understand why this had to happen, but we will also remember how much we missed hockey when it was abruptly taken away from us.

There's so much to remember here that I'm worried about what we might forget. I already chronicled the lost files. Now it's time for the might-get-lost files.

Here are 10 things we shouldn't forget about the 2019-20 regular season Carolina Hurricanes.

Haydn Fleury proved himself

This was the year Haydn Fleury could no longer pass through waivers without getting snagged. This was the year the Hurricanes' 2014, seventh overall pick had to put up or shut up, and he knew it.

I wouldn't have blamed him for showing a level of resentment for things out of his control, like the amount of NHL-caliber defensemen the Hurricanes had in their arsenal for the past few seasons, or that time coach Rod Brind'Amour played him for literally one shift then benched him. Mind you, that was the game after his first NHL goal. I get that it's all about winning games, but that scenario isn't exactly a breeding ground of confidence — and he didn't do anything wrong.

Regardless, the self-proclaimed "happy-go-lucky kid" tried to control what he could control and add a little more snarl to his game all season. As unfortunate as the losses of Dougie Hamilton and Brett Pesce were for the Canes overall, the depleted blue line forced Brind'Amour to play Fleury more.



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It was a silver lining.

The — our — one and only Dom Luszczyszyn finally weighed in on this topic after months of deafening silence.

Luszczyszyn: "So, Fleury has 10 games where his 5-on-5 ice time is greater than 15 minutes. In those games he has: 6 points, a 55% xG rate, and is +7 at 5on5 (12 gf 5 ga). His average game score is 1.14. In his 35 other games he has: 8 points, a 48% xG, and is -9 (9 gf, 18 ga). His average game score is 0.11. So obviously it's a very small sample, but you're onto something here. He's looked better, he's getting better results, better chances and producing more in the games he's earned more ice time."

Justin Williams was worth the money — duh

The one and only "Mambo No. 5" was blasting in the LCA dressing room after what would (probably) be the last Hurricanes game of the regular season. I didn't think it had a meaning at the time — they've played this one a few times before. Someone in the Hurricanes locker room loves this song, and I have a sneaking suspicion that it is Jordan Martinook.

Anyway, I tweeted about it and one of you suggested the glorious song played because Justin Williams was riding a five-game goal streak. Makes sense, then I was like, "Woah, let's stop and think about this for a second — Justin Williams is on a five-game goal streak."

And not just any five-game goal streak, that's six goals in five games to you, partner.

The Canes were maddeningly inconsistent after Williams' storybook return. Two wins, one loss, one win, one loss, two wins, one loss, one win, one loss, one win, one loss, one win. Then four straight losses. Often in Williams' career, he seems to emerge to fix whatever is ailing the team around him during these stretches. His five-game goal streak started during that third loss, and went strong as the Hurricanes ended the regular season on a three-game win streak.

There was a running joke in the Hurricanes locker room that the hot water ran out peculiarly close to Williams returning. "Thanks, Justin," etc. they'd joke.

I'd venture the cold showers paid off.

Of course, it wasn't just about the goal streak, but how it was happening — ugly tip-ins, deflections, vaguely standing in front of the net. While this can seem random, it usually isn't. The Canes were trying too hard to be too cute at this time of year, and I doubt they'd have ended in a playoff spot without the reminder that ugly makes things happen during the playoff push.

"I'm not really scoring them, did you see how when I have empty nets, I don't really shoot at them?" Williams joked at PPG Paints Arena after scoring two goals, and yes, missing an empty net. "I just kind of tip them in. That's how I like to do it. Nah, after I missed that one I really had to atone ... This time of year, that's what it is. It's dirty, it's grind, it's rebounds, it's all over the place. It's pretty rare to get the Tic-Tac-Toe goals — that hasn't really worked the last 15 games, I feel."

He ended up performing exactly as necessary for the Hurricanes after signing his mid-season contract. Whatever comes next, he did his thing.

Morgan Geekie rode off into the sunset as a franchise legend

Three goals and one assist (so generous) for four points in two total NHL games played. People don't forget.

Dougie Hamilton had a Norris-caliber start

A week before what was almost Dougie Hamilton's first All-Star appearance of his eight-season NHL career, just as the 26-year-old was on pace for a career season in goals, points and plus/minus, the Hurricanes defenseman suffered a broken left fibula in Carolina's 3-2 loss at Columbus on Jan 17.

He had Brind'Amour calling him the "most important player" on his team, which means a lot coming from Brind'Amour considering Hamilton had been branded an offensive defenseman while Brind'Amour was a defensive defenseman.

Those two were really figuring it out — Hamilton was proud to log minutes on the penalty kill because he knew that's a badge of honor to Brind'Amour. He'd also been crushing it on the power play and the entire unit took a hit when he went down.

The good news?

First off, it was a clean break, so the injury won't physically change him.

Second, Hurricanes GM Don Waddell told me there's a good chance he'll be ready to go when all of our quarantines finally end.

First-line Svech

Obviously, when we think about 2019-20 Andrei Svechnikov, we will think about multiple Michigans. But this was the season he really earned Brind'Amour's trust as a first-line player.

Yeah, he still messed up with the stick infractions — his 54 PIMs were second on the team to noted tough guy Joel Edmundson. But as Brind'Amour finally unleashed Svechnikov alongside Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, he'd always give you a look as to say: "What else did you want me to do?"

It seriously reminded me of when you used to pick Pablo Sanchez in the Backyard Baseball video game and the announcer would be like, "The kid can play!"

As Svechnikov chronicled after just missing a hat trick in Arizona a few days after Brind'Amour took the first-line Svech plunge:

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

The Athletic: "How are ya?"

Svechnikov: "Unbelievable, you?"

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

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



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

Svechnikov: "The best, yeah."

Coyotes reporter: "You said that, right?"

Svechnikov: "I mean, yeah."

(I'll never get tired of this.)

Sebastian Aho probably would've become the third player in franchise history to hit the 40-goal mark

Two goals away.

Unbelievable but true — Eric Staal and Jeff O'Neil are the two Hurricanes to have done it.

Aho will do it eventually.

Teuvo Teravainen was consistently a beast

I want every single person reading this to remember the time Teravainen messed up for the first time in maybe decades by not shooting the puck. He doesn't shoot the puck often, and you usually wince then get over it. We cut him a lot of slack around here for that, because he sauces it with the best of them in the league. But man, that empty net against the Avalanche on Feb. 28 was an all-timer.

Though the Canes would lose 3-2, Teravainen promptly made up for his own mistake with two, third-period goals — then it was right back to business as usual.

The Athletic: "Did you kind of think in the third, 'OK, I'm just gonna shoot it now'?"

Teravainen: "I don't know. If I see someone open, I'll still try to pass. But I'll probably shoot a couple, too."

OK, fine.

Teravainen finished right behind Aho in points, with 15 goals and 48 assists for 63 points (three behind Aho). What's more is he pulled weight when Aho went on negative streaks, and it's clear these two work with each other.

Aho and Teravainen were best together, and maybe that's best of all. This was the season of the power kill.

I walked out of the Scotiabank Saddledome after Warren Foegele scored two shorthanded goals, feeling like I had scored them myself.

The day prior I'd written about how effective the Hurricanes penalty kill is. It was a crazy game regardless, so as I was walking out of the arena the security guard said "Guess you won't struggle for a storyline tonight, eh (for real, eh)?"

I winked (when else will I be this correct), and said "Pal, I already did."

The Hurricanes penalty kill has been my favorite storyline of the season for a few reasons. No. 1, being right is awesome. But also — I appreciate the retro, Pavel Bure vibes. I respect playing your best players as much as you can and challenging them to do some full-court press and maybe snag a puck — because they do. I appreciate Brind'Amour's guts in all of this, and I appreciate Aho's and Teravainen's willingness to comply. I also appreciate the conditioning it takes to be them.

The tandem of Aho and Teravainen on the penalty kill had been brewing since 2017-18, but it flourished this season. It made the act of the Hurricanes committing a minor penalty actually fun. That would prove important, as the Canes took the second-most minor penalties in the league.

The Hurricanes ended up No. 4 in the league with an 84 percent penalty kill percentage, and No. 2 in shorthanded goals with 10.

None of this quite captures the electricity that is the Aho-Teravainen penalty kill tandem, though.

Aho totaled 122:44 shorthanded time on ice this season and Teravainen got 120:37. They were shifted together almost constantly.

Aho's last goal of the season was a shorty, mind you.

Brind'Amour: "You gotta give (Aho credit), but you gotta give 86 credit. They're a little bit of a tandem. You talk about special teams — they were a huge part of that."

Aho: "We play pretty well together, we can read each other. That's how we do it. We don't even need to talk that much — I kinda know where he's going to put pressure and he knows where I'm going to put the pressure."

Rod Brind'Amour seemed to be evolving as a coach

I saw this in aforementioned things, like first-line Svech. But it was also in his honesty when things went wrong. Scott Burnside really captured this for me.

Hockey will be back

And maybe we will appreciate it more than we ever have.



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## Hurricanes agree to entry-level deals with Cotton brothers

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes have agreed to entry-level contracts with brothers David and Jason Cotton.

The team announced deals Tuesday with the forwards who closed college careers this season.

David Cotton, 22, has a two-year contract paying \$700,000 in 2020-21 and \$832,500 in 2021-22 at the NHL level. The deal will pay \$70,000 at the American Hockey League (AHL) level in both seasons. There's also a \$185,000 signing bonus.

Carolina selected him in the sixth round of the 2015 draft, but he went on to play four seasons at Boston College.

Jason Cotton, 25, received a one-year contract that will pay \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$50,000 at the AHL level next season. There's also a \$25,000 signing bonus. He had started his college career at Northeastern before spending three years at Sacred Heart.



## Hurricanes sign David, Jason Cotton to entry-level contracts

The long pursuit of the Boston College captain has finally paid off for Don Waddell and company.

By Brian LeBlanc

For the past year, plenty of intrigue has swirled around the Carolina Hurricanes' sixth-round pick from the 2015 draft, Boston College senior forward David Cotton, who served as the Eagles captain this season. A season after losing Adam Fox to the Rangers when the defenseman wouldn't sign, there was no shortage of concern that the same thing would happen with Cotton, who was set to become an unrestricted free agent on August 15.

But it turns out that we were asking the wrong questions all along. Instead of asking if Cotton would sign, we should have been asking how many Cottons the Hurricanes would bring on board.

On Tuesday, the Hurricanes signed not only David Cotton, but his older brother Jason, a forward from Sacred Heart who was a finalist for the Hobey Baker Award this season, to entry-level contracts. David Cotton's deal will span two seasons, while Jason's will be for one, owing to the age difference between the two, and both contracts will become active next season.

David, 22, played in all but two games over his four years at Boston College, registering 127 points in 148 games including 39 points in 32 games in 2019-20. Jason, 25, led the Pioneers with 20 goals and 37 points in 2019-20. He spent three seasons with Sacred Heart after transferring from Northeastern in 2016 and sitting out the 2016-17 season following his transfer. He, like his brother, captained his team this season.

Jason Cotton was named one of ten finalists for the 2020 Hobey Baker Award, given to the top college hockey player in the United States. His 20 goals were sixth in scoring among all Division I hockey programs, and tied for the nationwide lead

with three shorthanded goals. Both Cottons were named to their conference's first team all-star squads, and Jason additionally was named Atlantic Hockey's Player of the Year.

The release from the team is below.

### CANES AGREE TO TERMS WITH DAVID AND JASON COTTON

Brothers finished NCAA careers in 2019-20

Don Waddell, President and General Manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, today announced that the team has agreed to terms with forwards David and Jason Cotton on entry-level contracts. David Cotton has been signed to a two-year contract that will pay \$700,000 in 2020-21 and \$832,500 in 2021-22 at the NHL level and \$70,000 at the American Hockey League (AHL) level in both seasons, and he will receive a \$185,000 signing bonus. Jason Cotton has been signed to a one-year contract for the 2020-21 season that will pay \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$50,000 at the AHL level, and he will receive a \$25,000 signing bonus.

"David and Jason both had very productive senior seasons this year," said Waddell. "We've been pleased with David's progress over his four years at Boston College, and his brother Jason was recently named a Hobey Baker Award Finalist. We're excited to see what they can accomplish at the professional level."

David Cotton, 22, was named a Hockey East Third Team All-Star after posting 39 points (15g, 24a) in 32 games during his senior season at Boston College in 2019-20. He served as the Eagles' captain this season, ranking second on the team in assists and third in goals and points. The 6'4", 197-pound forward led his team in goals (23) and points (36) during the 2018-19 season and was named a Hockey East First Team All-Star and Second Team All-American. He registered 127 points (57g, 70a) over four NCAA seasons from 2016-20,



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skating in 148 of the Eagles' 150 games during that span. The Parker, Texas, native was drafted by the Hurricanes in the sixth round, 169th overall, of the 2015 NHL Draft.

Jason Cotton, 25, was named a Hobey Baker Award Finalist after recording 37 points (20g, 17a) in 34 games with Sacred Heart this season. The 6'3", 190-pound forward served as the Pioneers' captain in 2019-20 and was named Atlantic Hockey

Player of the Year and an Atlantic Hockey First Team All-Star. Among all Division I skaters, he ranked tied for first in shorthanded goals (3) and tied for sixth in goals (20) this season. The Parker, Texas, native posted 81 points (41g, 40a) in 110 NCAA games over three seasons with Sacred Heart from 2017-20, and also skated in eight games with Northeastern during the 2015-16 season.



## Canes ink Cotton brothers to deals

By Ryan Henkel

During the league's continued suspension, the Carolina Hurricanes signed college seniors David and Jason Cotton, both forwards, to deals after their collegiate careers came to a close with the cancellation of the rest of the NCAA D1 men's hockey season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"David and Jason both had very productive senior seasons this year," said general manager Don Waddell in a press release. "We've been pleased with David's progress over his four years at Boston College, and his brother Jason was recently named a Hobey Baker Award Finalist. We're excited to see what they can accomplish at the professional level."

David Cotton, 22, has been signed to a two-year, entry-level contract for \$700,000 in 2020-21 and \$832,500 in 2021-22 at the NHL level and \$70,000 at the AHL level. In addition, he will receive a \$185,000 signing bonus.

David Cotton, who the Canes drafted in the sixth round of the 2015 NHL draft, served as the captain for the Boston College Eagles during his senior season, registering 15 goals and 39 points. David Cotton was also named a Hockey East Third Team All-Star.

Over his collegiate career, David Cotton registered 57 goals and 127 points and was a Hockey East First Team All-Star and Second Team All-American in the 2018-19 season. Over his four seasons with Boston College, David Cotton missed only two games, playing 148 of the Eagles' 150 games over that span.

"On behalf of Boston College hockey, I want to wish Dave all the best as he starts his pro career," said Boston College head coach Jerry York in a press release. "He has had a major impact on our program with both his on-ice play and his

leadership. Dave is one of the finest leaders I have had a chance to coach, and he is destined for a successful NHL career."

Jason Cotton, 25, has been signed to a one-year contract that will pay \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$50,000 at the AHL level. He will receive a \$25,000 signing bonus.

Jason Cotton, who was an undrafted free agent, also served as the captain for his team, the Sacred Heart Pioneers, and was named a Hobey Baker Memorial Award finalist for the top NCAA men's hockey player for the 2019-20 season with 20 goals and 37 assists. Jason Cotton was also named the Atlantic Hockey Player of the Year and was an Atlantic Hockey First Team All-Star.

In addition, Jason Cotton was the first player in Sacred Heart program history to sign an NHL contract.

The Parker, Texas natives are both character types, each having served as captain on their respective teams. They are also hard working, showing not only an ability to go to and be effective at the net, but also to support the team defensively with a two-way game. The exact type of players that Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour is a fan of.

To add to their odds, the brothers are bringing a bit of size to the table with David being 6 feet, 4 inches and 197-pounds and Jason being 6 feet, 3 inches and 190-pounds.

While the odds of either starting the season with the big club are extremely slim, the fact that the Canes have dealt out more than a few of the prospects and players from their AHL affiliate, the Charlotte Checkers, should mean that the Cotton brothers should find ample opportunities to set themselves up for success with bigger roles at the next stage of their careers.



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## Canes sign David and Jason Cotton to entry-level deals

by Nicholas Niedzielski

The Hurricanes made a pair of signings Tuesday morning, agreeing to terms with both David and Jason Cotton.

David, 22, was a sixth-round pick by Carolina in the 2015 draft and spent the last four years at Boston College. The 6-foot-4 forward totaled 127 points (57g, 70a) in 148 games over his time in college, including ranking third on the team in scoring as a senior in 2019-20 while serving as team captain. David was twice selected to a conference All-Star Team (First in 18-19 and Third in 19-20) and was named to the Second All-American Team as a junior in 18-19, a season in which he led BC in goals and points.

A Texas native, David spent one year in the USHL before going to college, logging 30 points (15g, 15a) in 48 games for the Waterloo Black Hawks in 15-16.

Jason, the 25-year-old brother of David, was an undrafted free agent coming out of college. After logging eight games as a freshman at Northeastern in 2015-16, the 6-foot-3 forward spent three seasons at Sacred Heart University, where he racked up 81 points (41g, 40a) in 110 games. Jason's senior season saw him lead his team with 37 points in 34 games and tie for sixth in the country with 20 goals, propelling him to be named a Hobey Baker Award Finalist and his conference's Player of the Year.

Jason also spent two seasons in the USHL where he recorded 17 points (7g, 10a) in 73 games for Tri-City and Youngstown.

Both of the brothers' contracts – a two-year entry-level deal for David and a one-year entry-level deal for Jason – begin with the 2020-21 season.

### TODAY'S LINKS

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<https://theathletic.com/1695843/2020/03/25/the-2019-20-hurricanes-10-things-we-shouldnt-forget-about-this-team/>

<https://apnews.com/8f991a1d975e67a4dc478a6dedd7a887>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2020/3/24/21192443/carolina-hurricanes-sign-david-cotton-jason-cotton-entry-level-contracts-boston-college-sacred-heart>

[http://www.technicianonline.com/sports/article\\_0379f320-6e24-11ea-a284-578143a4fa8c.html](http://www.technicianonline.com/sports/article_0379f320-6e24-11ea-a284-578143a4fa8c.html)

<http://gocheckers.com/articles/transactions/canes-sign-david-and-jason-cotton-to-entry-level-deals>



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## SportScan

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

1172858 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes sign brothers David, Jason Cotton to entry-level contracts

BY CHIP ALEXANDER MARCH 24, 2020 10:20 AM

David Cotton answers media questions at the Carolina Hurricanes prospects development camp on June 26, 2019. The forward has signed his entry-level contract with the team."

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Among Division I skaters, Jason Cotton was tied for first in shorthanded goals (3) and tied for sixth in goals (20) this season.

David Cotton considered signing with the Canes after the 2018-19 college season. Calling it a "difficult decision," he decided to return to BC, where the Eagles were 24-8-2 this season.

"Having this opportunity, especially being a captain, to achieve something as a team was a big part of my decision," he said at the Canes' prospects development camp in June.

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1172912 Websites

The Athletic / LeBrun: NHL assessing logistics for playing games through August

By Pierre LeBrun Mar 24, 2020 51

The NHL's conference call with GMs wasn't overrun with news but Tuesday did provide two notable nuggets of interest, according to sources:

The league on the call with GMs relayed that the current self-quarantine of clubs, which was originally scheduled to run through Friday, March 27, would be expanded by another 10 days;

The NHL asked teams for building availabilities through the month of August (as also reported Tuesday evening by colleague Bob McKenzie on Insider Trading).

On the first point, it's hardly surprising the self-quarantine of clubs will continue past Friday. That was always a possibility even in the original memo that went out to teams and players back on March 13. But what it means is that Phase 2 — when players can start skating in small groups at team facilities — will have to wait. And frankly, probably a lot longer than another 10 days but we'll see.

Regarding the second point, the NHL had previously asked for building availabilities through July. Now with the August ask the picture becomes somewhat clearer as far as potential options if indeed there's a season resumption.

It comes on the same day Olympic officials announced a postponement of the July 24-Aug. 9 Tokyo Games. You better believe NHL TV partner NBC would no doubt be hungry to fill some of that empty Olympic programming with some NHL playoff hockey if at all possible.

At the very least, the postponement of the Olympics gives the NHL more flexibility in eventually determining what a timeline for summer playoff hockey could look like.

That's if there is any hockey at all again this season. Again, let's understand that we may not have NHL hockey until next season. We just don't know yet as the COVID-19 crisis remains in its infancy.

But for now, the NHL will continue to plan as if a season resumption is possible, which means the potential for summer hockey.

One question: Can NHL buildings handle July/August ice conditions?

The simple answer is yes, according to one source on Tuesday. But it's not a simple answer, of course.

There would be extra utility cost both on refrigeration and the air conditioning for the buildings. It would certainly require extra diligence in terms of daily operations of those buildings and no doubt closer supervision from the NHL's hockey operations staff.



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But the sense is that it's doable. After all, most buildings plan on June ice in case their teams make it all the way to the Stanley Cup final. June is summer weather. It might require changing the routine of arena staff. Maybe the ice maintenance is completed at night on off days instead, for example.

In any case, the belief is that NHL rinks can handle the ice requirements in July/August.

As for Tuesday's GMs conference call, there were more questions than answers, which was expected. The GMs I spoke with understand that the league can't answer their most pressing questions right now, things having to do with the draft combine, the draft, the scheduling, the playoff format, the draft lottery, etc.

The league reiterated on the call Tuesday that it just doesn't have answers to any of that just yet.

As one GM pointed out to me Tuesday, there are just so many different things that eventually will need to get ironed out if the normal critical dates calendar is affected and obviously it would if there's summer playoff hockey. For example, the GM said, what about player contracts expiring on June 30? What do you do with a player whose contract technically expired June 30 but is playing playoff hockey in July/August?

That's really just the tip of the iceberg and much of it will be negotiated between the NHL and NHL Players' Association as part of the "transition rules." Which would also include agreement on the salary cap and a host of other items.

In the meantime, the conversations over potential scheduling/format options will continue. One team executive I spoke with on Tuesday was the very first front office person since the season was paused to suggest to me that he wanted the regular season played out if the season can be resumed and didn't want to just jump to the playoffs like pretty much every other team executive believes should be the case.

Get all the regular season revenue in all 31 markets including sponsorships and suites, he argued. Get every market back involved and not have some teams off six months and other teams off one month when the 2020-21 season starts. Even play a shortened playoff format if need be. Why? Playing out the regular season, as he puts it, allows every owner to bring in some cash (assuming fans are in the building). It allows all 31 markets to reconnect with their fan base. And it also makes it fair as to who ends up making the playoffs if 82 games are played. No need to reinvent the playoff format, just 16 teams as always after a full regular season. Plus it gives players games to get themselves up to speed before the craziness of the playoffs.

OK, I get his argument here. But there are two flaws in it. First, I think the calendar itself won't allow enough time to squeeze in regular season hockey plus playoffs even if the playoffs as he suggested get shortened. Secondly, I've already heard from some who feel it makes no sense to have players on teams who are clearly out of the playoff picture to go three-plus months without playing and then return for a dozen or so meaningless games before shutting it down again. What's their motivation (other than it's their job to play)?

While I understand this team executive's argument, I think it's way more likely that if there's hockey again this season it's straight to the playoffs in whatever format the league decides on: 16 teams, 20 teams, 22 teams, 24 teams, etc.

Meanwhile, things are just as busy at the NHLPA offices. There was an executive board call last week (player reps on the 31 teams) followed by individual calls by team with players late last week. Overall, the NHLPA spoke with hundreds of players over the past week trying to answer the most pressing questions. Another executive board call is scheduled for this week.

Lots of questions on both sides, very few answers.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.25.2020

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The Athletic / NHL stars offer insights on being 'creative' during COVID-19 quarantine workouts

By Joe Smith Mar 24, 2020 8

By now, you've seen the videos.

There was Devils defenseman P.K. Subban, lying on his back, pressing his fiancée Lindsey Vonn above his head. There was Kings center Anze Kopitar participating in the viral pushup challenge with his two young kids on his back. Montreal's Tomas Tatar juggled toilet paper rolls. The Panthers' Sasha Barkov shot some rolls into a net in his garage. Some did pull-ups from the ceiling in their kitchen. Others are doing squats while holding their dogs. Former NHLer Brooks Laich is posting daily home-gym workouts on Twitter.

The Lightning's Mikhail Sergachev has been rollerblading around Tampa, including along Bayshore Blvd. You can bet winger Nikita Kucherov is wearing out the synthetic ice in his garage by now, taking countless shots.

When it comes to NHL players trying to stay in shape during this coronavirus-sparked self-quarantine, you have to get creative. And try not to go crazy.

"I'd be dying if I had to stay home," said Hall of Famer Martin St. Louis. "I have a tough time believing Kucherov is not skating right now. I would be going crazy, probably put up a shooting room in my garage. You don't know when the start is going to be."

St. Louis said this reminded him of the NHL lockout in 2004-05. Obviously, there are many differences, with this being a worldwide pandemic as opposed to a work stoppage. Back then, players could still rent their own ice or play overseas if need be. But the uncertainty of when (or if) your season will start and how to remain in hockey shape are significant challenges.

The NHL's self-quarantine was initially supposed to last until this Friday, when they would consider figuring out options for small, voluntary workout groups. But that depends a lot on what health agencies like the CDC recommend. Whether there's a season or not — even if it resumes in July with the playoffs in August and September — remains up in the air.

In the meantime, players are taking cues from their team's strength and conditioning coaches and trainers (in the Lightning's case, it's Mark Lambert). Their offseason personal trainers help provide tips, too. Judging from the strong-man circuit workout Lambert put me through back in October, Tampa Bay players are in good hands, though Lambert wasn't made available for this story.

"Most guys don't have much of a home gym, so it's been bodyweight stuff, bands, stretching, breathing," said longtime hockey trainer Ben Prentiss, who has worked with the likes of St. Louis, Max Pacioretty and current Lightning defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk. "You have to be creative. I have some guys pushing their trucks. We have one guy squatting his patio furniture. Some guys have been ordering stuff, so we add it as it comes."

"It's basically giving them something every day, whether it's strength, energy system work, stretching, breathing, etc. Obviously, there's a ton of unknown, so we just try to keep them busy."

Players have been told to do workouts at home or, if they're outside, to stay six feet away from other people. As much as they're making do with what they have, there's nothing that can replicate what they'd been doing for the last five months during the season.





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"I don't know how you can be ready if the season got back going in a month," said former Lightning captain Vincent Lecavalier. "Not a lot of guys have a full gym at their house. And even if you do, it's not like skating on the ice. It's going to be really tough for them to stay in shape like they were two, three weeks ago."

"You've got to do as much as you can as a player to be physically ready. There's nothing like skating if you don't skate. It's hard to stay in that hockey shape."

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— NHL (@NHL) MARCH 20, 2020

St. Louis said for players, the stress is not just physical, but mental. You're juggling taking care of your families, small children, naturally worrying how loved ones in other states and countries are handling it. And the hyper-competitive side that made you an elite player is insatiable.

After St. Louis led the Lightning to the 2004 Stanley Cup, winning the Hart Trophy and scoring the franchise's biggest goal, he had to anxiously wait until the league finally canceled the next season in February.

"You don't know when you're starting again, (and) you're counted on to do great things, right?" St. Louis said. "The top guys have so much pressure on what they're doing with the uncertainty, how they stay off the ice. For me, anxiety builds. I was scared I wasn't doing enough because as soon as we hit the ground running, I had to be ready."

"It has to be tough. And it seems like everything is changing every day. So it's hard to plan. I always have to have a plan, so I would find it extremely difficult."

Lecavalier said maintaining cardio will be key, doing sprints, lifting weights, hoping not to lose the muscle mass you had built. When players get back on the ice, likely for an abbreviated training camp, that might not even be enough.

"It's not like you can just put on your skates and in a week or so feel like you were after 50 games," Lecavalier said. "I remember it'd take me 10-15 games to start to feel good. To stop like that and then start again? It'll be tough for a player to get at the same level. Players know if you don't skate for two days, you feel terrible on the ice."

Both St. Louis and Lecavalier said that it's not only about workouts and cardio, but maintaining your hands, making sure you have a stick in your hands as many days as you can. Hence guys like Tatar juggling toilet paper on his stick or the Hurricanes' Andrei Svechnikov with a tennis ball.

"I'd be following a regimen of a trainer that I trust and try to keep the cardio going with some sprints," St. Louis said. "But you can't duplicate that stuff on the ice. I would make sure I had a stick in my hand not every day, but every other day, an hour here, an hour there."

"Just to feel the puck," Lecavalier said. "It takes three, four, five weeks in the summertime to get your legs feeling better, and (using your hands) gives you an idea of what you can do with the puck with guys coming at you. A lot of guys can slow plays down, like Kuch and (Steven Stamkos). When you haven't played in a while, that's tougher to do."

Lecavalier played in Russia during the lockout, which ended the Lightning's chance of trying to repeat at Stanley Cup champions. It was heartbreaking for the team and their fans, not only the fact they couldn't fittingly celebrate their title together but that they then had to watch the team break up a bit due to free agency and the new salary cap (goaltender Nikolai Khabibulin left for Chicago as a free agent, for example). It took seven years for the Lightning to win another playoff series.

"It definitely hurt for closure, to not have that chance," St. Louis said.

"We could have made another run," said Lecavalier.

The current Lightning team, which is heading into its toughest salary-cap crunch in years, hopes it won't be facing another lost season in its championship window. "Right now, the main thing is making sure everything is handled properly," said wing Alex Killorn. "There are more important things. The safety and lives of people in this country are more important than that."

For now, the players will have to wait and see. They hope they'll have a chance to finish the season.

"The only thing I can relate to was the World Cup after we won the Cup (in '04)," Lecavalier said. "It took like a month and a half off, and then we had the World Cup. I had only been skating for a month — or not even three weeks — and you're right at it. For me, it was the adrenaline that got me through it."

"Maybe it's going to be the way guys come back, like, 'We have no choice.' You do a 12-15 game season, sprint to the end and then go with adrenaline and go to the playoffs. In the playoffs, your adrenaline is through the roof. You're definitely not going to be in the same shape as what they were, but they'll just have to go through that adrenaline."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.25.2020

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The Athletic / Duhatschek: If you started from scratch, which 32 cities would get NHL teams?

By Eric Duhatschek Mar 24, 2020 249

Back around 1983 or '84, when Bob Johnson was coaching the Calgary Flames, he had a fascination with the city of Phoenix. He liked it for the climate, the warmth and the geography. Once or twice a year, Badger Bob would come up to me and George Johnson, my writing counterpart at the Calgary Sun — and in that big, booming theatrical voice of his, would loudly predict that one day, there'd be an NHL team in Phoenix. Badger would then lean in close and — in a much lower voice — predict that he would coach the team and that he intended to bring George and me along as his writers. Usually, that would be our cue. The three of us would howl like the witches at the start of Macbeth, before collectively bursting out in laughter at the absurdity of the notion.

An NHL team in Phoenix? Dream on. And then we'd go back to our regularly scheduled business, trudging through a cold northern winter in a traditional hockey city.

Well, you know the rest of the story. Five years after Johnson's death in 1991, Barry Shenkarow sold the Winnipeg Jets and — against all odds — they did relocate to Arizona.

For better, but mostly for worse, there has now been an NHL team in Phoenix for going on 25 years.

A handful of times during their stay in the Valley of The Sun, it looked as if the Coyotes might disappear — either into bankruptcy or via relocation to another market. So far, that hasn't happened. In recent years, they've become far better capitalized and although attendance still isn't what they need it to be to sustain the franchise long term, the hope is that an improving team operating in a new arena eventually might make the Coyotes a more viable franchise than they are today.

Because, right now, if you were to rank NHL franchises from 1-to-32 in terms of financial feasibility, the Coyotes would be near the bottom — one of the teams that rely on revenue sharing from the stronger teams to survive.



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Accordingly, with the actual NHL on pause at the moment as a result of the coronavirus – and all of us diving down the rabbit hole of “what if” scenarios – the question came up here at The Athletic:

What if the NHL were to start from scratch right here and right now?

Where would you place the franchises to make the league as strong – and sound – as possible?

It’s an intriguing exercise, even if it means you’re going to become public enemy No. 1 in all markets that are – hypothetically – about to lose their franchises. Please remember, before you scroll down to the bottom and “meh” the story, this is a dream sequence only.

Real-world economics will ultimately decide which teams survive and which don’t, and as long as there is a well-heeled owner with a good financial plan who is willing to take advantage of the rules and regulations that support the so-called smaller markets, any team can survive.

And by the way, all of you soon-to-be-unhappy fans in Phoenix and Ottawa and New Jersey and Anaheim are going to have an unlikely ally to help you vent your collective displeasure at me: NHL commissioner Gary Bettman.

Let’s face it: No one has fought longer or harder than Bettman to sustain NHL businesses in their current markets – even if it’s meant a lot of investors have poured a lot of dollars down the drain, trying to make the numbers work in cities that annually feature too many empty seats. Watch to see if Gary B. offers a comment below (or if he doesn’t, try to guess which of the negative responses came from Bettman’s The Athletic burner account).

Before we go any further, I also want to first address – and then dismiss – the idea that if you could pick 32 cities to build an NHL, they wouldn’t all necessarily have to be in Canada and the United States.

Or to put it another way, if it’s a blue-sky exercise anyway, is this the time to ruthlessly pare down the North American content of the league and put half-a-dozen teams in some of the great cities of Europe or Asia?

Last year, I did explore that option in greater detail, trying to imagine that the NHL might look like in 2067. Logically, by then, the NHL will be a worldwide brand and there could be three separate but linked entities operating under the NHL brand – NHL North America, NHL Europe and NHL Asia. Each could play mostly within its own geographic region, but every year, make a swing through a different continent – in much the same way as teams play exhibition games in China or regular season games in selected European markets. Globalization is probably coming to the NHL eventually but in 2020? No. The complications would be far too great.

One final caveat before we get underway:

The longer I weighed the pros and cons of every current NHL market, the more I realized that the process of natural selection hasn’t done too bad a job with the current incarnation of the league. Once I dismissed the European option and started to dig more deeply into NHL markets that would be workable options for the ones that are floundering today, I made fewer changes than I originally anticipated.

Let’s begin at an unexpected point, with a team – the Seattle something-or-others – that won’t even begin play until the start of the 2021-22 season. Officially, Seattle was added as an NHL expansion franchise in December 2018, after agreeing to pay a record \$650 million fee to join as franchise No. 32.

When season tickets went on sale, they were snapped up instantly. Seattle’s going into a new building, has a long history with hockey and looks as if the new team will instantly become one of the strongest franchises in the league. So, Seattle stays. The same holds true for Vegas. The Golden Knights are only three years into their incarnation and even the naysayers who thought they had no shot at being a viable franchise must realize the error of their ways.

Instead, the Knights have been spectacular at the box office, they are well-financed and have been an overwhelming success story – finding traction in the community, in addition to becoming a popular vacation destination for hockey fans around North America.

Overall, I estimate roughly three-quarters of the league is solid and stable in the markets they’re in.

The Original Six would naturally stay.

Every Canadian market except Ottawa is strong, year after year. Several teams that went into non-traditional markets have done an excellent job of becoming part of the fabric of their communities – Nashville and Tampa Bay are two that really stand out.

But there are also problem spots. If you review attendance data over the past 10 years or so, a handful of teams are perpetually in the bottom third. Now, over time, teams have become far less reliant on box-office receipts than they once were, but ticket sales still make up a big part of the revenue stream that teams rely upon. Softness at the box office is one red flag. Perpetually siphoning dollars out of the revenue-sharing pot is another. Once I weighed the pros and cons of each team individually, I identified eight that I considered on the bubble. They were: Ottawa, Arizona, Florida, the New York Islanders, New Jersey, Anaheim, Carolina and Columbus.

Over the years, what you find when parsing attendance data is that often, in the struggling markets, a team’s popularity tends to ebb and flow, depending upon results.

Carolina, for example, was having a decent year at the box office in 2019-20 because the so-called “bunch of jerks” had captured everyone’s imagination the season before, first, by qualifying for the playoffs and then by advancing to the conference final. Carolina’s been able to slowly rebuild its fan base in the community, largely because of that result. A deeper look back paints a different picture – and also explains why, for the longest time, Peter Karmanos Jr. was looking for an investor in his franchise. Then Tom Dundon came along and things are improving. But are they solved? The jury’s out.

Perhaps not coincidentally, three of the eight bubble teams are in markets where a more established team dominates. For example, the Rangers are bulletproof in New York, while the Islanders and Devils can see their attendance figures wax and wane. Both teams do have small and extremely loyal fan bases, but it hasn’t translated into full houses in either of their locations – and things have been far more complicated with the Islanders recently, as they’ve shuttled back and forth between a building in Brooklyn and one on Long Island.

It’s a similar story in the greater Los Angeles area, where the Kings are a well-established franchise operating out of Staples Center while the Ducks are out in Anaheim, playing to a smaller core group of fans in Orange County. In terms of performance in the standings, the Ducks have been surprisingly consistent – the No. 1 team in the Pacific for five consecutive seasons, beginning in 2012-13 and ending in 2016-17. Last year was the first year they missed the playoffs since the 2011-12 season. It wasn’t Detroit’s incredible streak of postseason appearances, or even San Jose’s, but it was pretty good. However, you have started to see more empty seats as the Ducks start down a rebuilding path.

One of the great conundrums in the current composition of the NHL is: Why does the metropolitan New York area have three teams, the metropolitan Los Angeles area have two teams and the metropolitan Toronto area just one? It makes no sense. And longtime readers will soon notice me jumping aboard a familiar soapbox here. Wikipedia will tell you that the urban area in southern Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe (which circles the northwestern shore of Lake Ontario) has a core population of 7.8 million people and a total of 9.2 million people in its greater area. That’s a little more than 21 percent of the entire population of Canada.

People sometimes mockingly call Toronto the centre of the hockey universe, but there is no disputing the fact the city and its immediate



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environs boast the largest concentration of population in a hockey-mad country. Toronto has suffered through lots more bad times than good on the ice since last winning the Stanley Cup in 1967, but the Maple Leafs brand is extremely strong – and in terms of financial strength, the franchise is one of, if not the best, in the NHL.

In short, this is a market that's vastly underserved and could easily sustain a second team.

Now, here's the age-old question: Are people in the Greater Toronto Area hockey fans? Or simply Leafs fans? Asking that question always gets me in trouble – but it really would be the ultimate litmus test of whether a second team in the market would struggle or take off.

I believe it would take off – for a few different reasons. One: Not everybody in the Toronto area loves the Leafs. Some actually find their arrogance a little hard to swallow. In the same way that not every New Yorker is a fan of the Yankees – and that the Mets have built a pretty good brand as an option or alternative – the same could happen in Toronto. Now, where does this proposed second team play? In an arena on the edges of town – Mississauga or in Vaughan, which is west and north? No: Put them in Scotiabank Arena as a shared tenant with the Leafs, in the same way multiple professional teams (the NHL's Kings, NBA's Clippers and Lakers and the WNBA's Sparks) operate successfully out of Staples Center in Los Angeles.

The location is too perfect to waste – downtown and great access via public transportation. And as busy as Scotiabank Arena is, 45 extra dates to go alongside the Leafs and NBA's Raptors would be doable. Now I briefly considered putting that second Toronto team in Hamilton, which was an option back in the early 1990s, when Ottawa was originally admitted to the league.

In theory, Hamilton could draw from a variety of bedroom communities in the general area. But I wonder if a team there might also cannibalize some of the support that Buffalo as a border city enjoys, drawing Canadian supporters from the other side of the Peace Bridge. I'd be reluctant to damage a viable franchise in Buffalo and I cannot see putting four franchises – two in Toronto, one in Hamilton and one in Buffalo – in such a concentrated area. Instead, what I would do is shift Ottawa to Quebec and relocate one of the weaker U.S. franchises to Toronto. That would give Canada eight of the 32 teams.

Some of you suspicious sorts might believe that I'm making the case for Quebec only because I want to start dining at La Maison de Serge Bruyere again. You are so mistaken!

Remember, when the NHL started soliciting expansion bids in July 2015, it received 16 expressions of interest, but only two bona fide applications: One from Vegas and the other from Quebec City. The league accepted Vegas and rejected Quebec City. Officially, there was all kinds of blather about why they said no, but really it came down to money. Deep down, they didn't think a franchise in Quebec City could be financially sustainable based on what the league was charging for entry – \$500 million U.S., which translated into almost \$700 million Canadian, with the currency exchange.

The Jets paid a fraction of that to get into the NHL after True North Sports & Entertainment purchased and then relocated the failing Thrashers from Atlanta to Winnipeg. The fan support has been remarkable – the Jets finally had a game this season which didn't sell out. The building is small but it still fills up. By maximizing revenues, the Jets can provide a reasonable return on the investment there. But they are doing just OK on the ledger sheet – not wowing anyone.

If Quebec had to pay twice as much or more to get in, logically, they might struggle to operate in the black – even if the bidder, Quebecor Inc., was a media giant that spun off a lot of cash flow. Otherwise, though, Quebec checks all the same boxes as Winnipeg did. It probably has a better building and a similar history of fervent fan support, dating back to its previous NHL and WHA incarnations. If Quebec had been able to land a franchise via relocation at the same price and at the same time as

Winnipeg did, it could easily have been just as successful. In my model, Quebec is back in.

Next step: Other than Seattle, which is on its way, is there another city or two in the United States where you'd put a franchise if you could? Houston is the easy obvious first answer. The fourth-largest city in the U.S., a major television market, with a history of minor-league hockey and a natural regional rival for Dallas. Minor hockey has had a remarkably successful run in tiny enclaves in Texas, so there is a reasonable argument to be made for giving Houston a franchise. The fact is, a lot of us believe if Arizona doesn't get its building issue resolved, that's where the Coyotes might end up anyway. For this model, rather than wait, let's move them now.

Just four places down from Houston on the list of most populous U.S. cities, you find San Diego, home to the Ducks' main minor-league affiliate, the Gulls of the AHL. The Gulls play at the Pechanga Arena, with a capacity of 12,920 for hockey. If we could wave a magic wand and solve the building issue, wouldn't it make sense to flip the two? Put the NHL team in San Diego, which also has a rich minor-hockey history, and put the farm team in Orange County. It would certainly help fill in Bettman's geographic footprint and there's an opportunity for growth with the recent departure of the NFL from the market. Again – all you suspicious types – if you think I'm a fan of San Diego just because I want to sample the lobster roll at Tidal, you are mistaken!

OK, let's pause here to do the arithmetic so far: We've moved Ottawa to Quebec, Arizona to Houston, Anaheim to San Diego and we've put the second team in Toronto, which means someone else is losing their franchise. But who? If you had to vote among the five remaining bubble teams – Devils, Islanders, Panthers, Blue Jackets and Hurricanes – which one draws the short straw?

It's time now to think of it as "Survivor" in reverse and I'm awarding the Islanders a win in the first immunity challenge. They're on their way back, I believe, and once they get the arena sorted out, they'll be fine. Columbus? The Blue Jackets fans proved during last year's playoff run – and the patience they've demonstrated with this year's no-name, hard-working bunch – that hockey has a home in Columbus. They're safe too.

It leaves three: Devils, Panthers and Hurricanes.

I briefly considered the possibility of putting one of the three in Kansas City because there is a building there, needing a tenant. Right at the moment, the hockey option in Kansas City is an ECHL team, the Kansas City Mavericks. Kansas City had a brief life as NHL franchise, joining the league in 1973-74, alongside the Washington Capitals.

But while the Caps survived, Kansas City moved to Denver to become the Colorado Rockies and then subsequently shifted to New Jersey to become the Devils. It's been a rough ride for the Devils at the box office ever since. Can they survive? Any team, properly funded, can. But should they survive, at the expense of either Florida or Carolina?

Whenever there was talk of the Panthers possibly pulling up stakes – and maybe moving to Quebec – people would remind you that there's a favourable lease deal in place in Sunrise, which helps mitigate some of the losses. For the purposes of this exercise, lease deals don't matter.

But what I do believe is that if the Panthers were operating out of a downtown Miami arena, it would be a different story. I was actually in the building the day the 'rat craze' started – Oct. 8, 1995, a game in which Florida defeated the Calgary Flames 4-3 in their opening game of the 1995-96 season. That day, Panthers forward Scott Mellanby killed a rat with his stick prior to the game and then used the same stick to score two goals in the win. After the game, goaltender John Vanbiesbrouck dubbed it a "rat trick" – which started the tradition of plastic rats raining down on the ice whenever a Panthers player would score during their unexpected run to the 1996 Stanley Cup final.

The franchise hasn't been able to duplicate that success since then, but the memory of that partisan fan support makes me believe that if the



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team was operating out of downtown again, it would have a far wider appeal than being stranded out in Sunrise.

So, Florida survives, but in Miami, not Sunrise. And I'm going to give Dundon the benefit of the doubt in Carolina because he is a disrupter and the world seems to favour that brand of entrepreneurship these days. Initially, when I started this exercise, I probably had Carolina losing its team. But once I started shuffling the pieces around, I ultimately decided to give them a reprieve. That means New Jersey moves north to become the second team in the Toronto area.

What the exercise demonstrated to me is that the NHL franchise base doesn't actually need major surgery, even if you could start over from scratch — and that natural selection has mostly put the teams in the markets where they belong.

The one thing that I would change for sure is the division names.

In our new NHL world, we would either go back to historical names of the past (Adams, Patrick, Norris, Smythe) or switch to iconic names of a more recent era, in which case the Adams would become the Orr (for Bobby) the Patrick the Lemieux (for Mario) the Smythe the Gretzky (for Wayne) and the Norris the Howe (for Gordie — and as a nod to our new entry from Houston, where Howe played for the WHA Aeros). I could also be coaxed into renaming the Norris for the Hull (because Bobby was the face of the Blackhawks franchise for so long and Brett was the face of the Blues. Ultimately, here's what the 32-team NHL might look like if it started over today:

The Athletic LOADED: 03.25.2020

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The Athletic / Canadian minor hockey faces uncertain start, shorter season in face of COVID-19

By Sean Fitz-Gerald Mar 24, 2020 3

There was not enough time for Jason Nobili to read the whole note before the game, so he skimmed it on his way to the bench. He read it more thoroughly at intermission, which is when it became clear he was coaching in one of the last minor hockey games that would be played anywhere in Canada.

The coaches told the team captain, who suggested they not tell the rest of the players. It was a playoff game between two under-18 teams in the Greater Toronto Hockey League, and it was the day Hockey Canada cancelled all sanctioned activities — every practice, every game — because of COVID-19.

They told the players in the third period. They spoke with the other team's coaching staff. For some of the players, that night in Mississauga, Ont., would be the final game of their minor hockey careers. So the two teams, filled with students in Grade 11 and Grade 12, hatched an unusual postgame plan.

"This is kind of a surreal moment here: Let's do a big group picture," Nobili said with a chuckle. "All the boys were climbing around each other at centre ice. We took pictures. Sort of made the best of it."

Arenas across the country have shuttered in reaction to a pandemic that has gripped the world, and the organizations in charge are not sure when they might re-open. They are developing contingency plans, determining the fate of postseason banquets and high-performance camps, new try-out schedules and the financial fallout from an unfolding global catastrophe.

At this point, it is not clear whether next season will begin on time.

"It's really, really difficult to say, 'This is what we're going to do, and this is when we're going to do it,'" said Glen McCurdie, senior vice-president, insurance and risk management at Hockey Canada. "Because the reality is: We have no idea."

The most optimistic estimates begin at eight weeks. Others go deeper into the summer and beyond.

"We're the same as everybody else," McCurdie said. "It's really tough to put a contingency in place when you don't know when it's going to start."

Hockey Canada has been holding three calls a week with its members — on Monday, Wednesday and Friday — to exchange real-time information about the challenges at the grassroots level. (Questions at the national level will also have to be answered, with the possibility of delaying annual camps.)

Scott Oakman is executive director at the GTHL, the largest minor hockey league in the world, with an enrollment of more than 40,000 players. For now, he suggested the ideal plan would be for things to be up and running again by mid-to-late August.

"Even with that, I think it would require us to do some season modification," he said. "Maybe a shorter season — not significantly shorter, but we're trying to map that out now."

Spring tryouts have been cancelled in Ontario, which means the entire, cascading system would have to be moved to the fall. The change in the rhythm of hockey's schedule will likely be felt before then, with clubs and associations not able to collect registration fees like they normally would in the spring.

Many of those organizations have to place deposits on ice for the fall, Oakman said, and without those registration fees, some may experience serious cash flow issues. He said the GTHL would look at ways it might be able to help ease some of those challenges.

In the meantime, the GTHL has closed its offices, with all staff working from home.

"I've said to people along the way: Hopefully people judge this as over-reacting," Oakman said. "Because that will determine the steps we took had an impact on how this played out, and I'd rather be guilty of that in this day and age, in what we're facing."

The NHL announced it was suspending play the same day the GTHL held its final games. But unlike its minor hockey counterpart, the NHL announced it was merely placing its games on "pause," with hopes of restarting once the worst of the pandemic had passed.

"The word 'pause' is one we were thinking of using," said Ken Wolff, a member of the GTHL's board of directors. "That was where we went at the very beginning."

He said it did not make sense for long, though. Hockey Canada cancelled the season the same day the provincial government in Ontario announced all public schools would remain closed for another two weeks after March Break.

If the children were not in school, it did not make sense to think they should be inside a hockey rink.

"It's kind of hard to describe, because sitting here today with what's happening around the world, it seems like it should have been straightforward," said Wolff. "If you look back on it, 'Well, of course you shouldn't be gathering in groups of people.'"

"It looks now like, 'Why didn't you think about it immediately?' But it certainly was harder at that moment to try to figure out what we should do."

It was the right decision, he said, adding the GTHL received minimal protest.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Nobili did not protest, either. He is the coach of the AAA Toronto Titans, the U18 team that was en route to a 4-1 win over the Toronto Young Nationals the night the season reached its sudden finale.

It had been a good series with the Young Nationals. Too good to end with a simple handshake. Before social distancing became a part of everyday life, they gathered together in a common embrace at centre ice for a picture.

"It just felt right," Nobili said. "The boys, they just sort of inter-mixed among each other. They seemed to have a little fun with it, too."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.25.2020

1172916 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers all-time Dream Team for Game 7 of Stanley Cup Final

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec March 24, 2020, 4:22 PM

EDMONTON — When you are picking a team to take into a Game 7 from the Edmonton Oilers' all-time roster, it's not the same as if you were choosing on behalf of 95 per cent of National Hockey League organizations.

Because 95 per cent of the other organizations can't count eight Hockey Hall of Fame players that have laced them up in their uniforms since 1987, a list that includes short-term Oilers Chris Pronger and Adam Oates. And very few have a pair of players on their current roster with chops like Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl — a Hart Trophy winner and another who stood as the Hart favourite and Art Ross leader when the 2019-20 season was paused, not to mention another Hart winner in Taylor Hall.

So when we took on this assignment of building a team to take into a Stanley Cup Final Game 7, with instructions to construct a "team," and not just a bunch of good players, it reminds of how Canada's Olympic roster is built every four years — or whenever the NHLers are participants.

Someone has to kill a penalty, right?

With the Oilers team, as with a Team Canada, there are too many qualified top-six forwards to simply leave some at home in favour of a prototypical third-line role player. Take the centre ice position:

You have Hall of Famers Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier, who have 10 Stanley Cups between them. You have Doug Weight, a three-time U.S. Olympian. You have Oates, a 1,420-point Hall of Famer. You have McDavid and Draisaitl — and none of the above fill the penalty-killing, draw-winning skates of a Craig MacTavish, the kind of centreman vital to a good playoff team.

So we've moved some centres to the wing, just the way Team Canada does.

The rest fall into place. Here's a look at how:

Forwards

First line: Leon Draisaitl, Wayne Gretzky, Jari Kurri

This is a scoring line with the NHL's all-time leading scorer — and all-time assists man — between two players who combined to achieve nine 40-goal seasons in 15 seasons with Edmonton. If your No. 1 line is about creating offence, how would this line function — especially when you consider that Draisaitl is equal parts passer and shooter? Yikes!

Second line: Mark Messier, Connor McDavid, Glenn Anderson

Sorry — this is another flat-out offensive juggernaut. We've kept Anderson and Messier together because they were so deadly back in the '80s, and if you consider that duo was one of the fastest offensive pairings of their day, throwing McDavid in between No. 11 and No. 9 would make this quite possibly the greatest combination of skill and speed the game has ever seen.

Third line: Ryan Smyth, Doug Weight, Bill Guerin

So now we mix some grit into the lineup, with the ultimate gamer Ryan Smyth slotting in with two pillars of the U.S. Olympic team over the years. Guerin was tough, gritty and had six 30-goal seasons (pro-rated), while Weight was an underrated player due to his time on some poor Oilers clubs, yet was one of the game's top passers in the seasons surrounding the turn of the century.

Fourth line: Kelly Buchberger, Craig MacTavish, Esa Tikkanen

Here are your penalty killers, your top faceoff man to protect that late lead and a world-class pest who can go after the other team's top players. We flirted with having Hall on this team, but he could not beat the top three left-wingers, and although he is more skilled than Buchberger, championship teams have players like Bucky on the fourth line. Hall is a heck of a player, just not a fourth-liner, that's all.

Defence

First pairing: Paul Coffey, Charlie Huddy

How can you not go back to the best pairing in Oilers history — the Hall of Fame scorer who broke a couple of Bobby Orr's records, and the guy who freed up Coffey's skills by blocking the shots, retrieving the pucks and doing the dirty work that allowed former to roam.

Second pairing: Chris Pronger, Jason Smith

This pairing has it all: Skill, size and more toughness than should be allowed. Pronger was only an Oiler for one season on 2005-06, but had they won that Game 7 at Carolina, he would have carried home the Conn Smythe Trophy. Smith was a true leader, one of the all-time hardest Oilers to play against and the perfect defensive-minded partner for Pronger.

Third pairing: Kevin Lowe, Reijo Ruotsalainen

This was tough, with players like Steve Smith, Oscar Klefbom, Igor Kravchuk, (all left shots) and righties Jeff Beukeboom and Lee Fogolin available for selection. Lowe has to be on this team — period. So we paired the hard-rock, defensive specialist with an offensive righty in Ruotsalainen — only the second right-shot D-man in this group. We hated to leave Steve Smith out, and we're not sure he shouldn't be on his wrong side with Lowe.

Goalies

Grant Fuhr, Bill Ranford

Honourable mention for Curtis Joseph here, but our starter is a no-brainer: the Hall of Famer and Canada Cup star Fuhr. No one played better behind an offensive machine that left him alone on so many nights than Fuhr.

Ranford, meanwhile, won the Conn Smythe Trophy in 1990. He gets the nod over CuJo — by a toe save.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.25.2020

1172917 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens well-positioned to deal with salary-cap realities in 2020-21



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 25, 2020

Eric Engels | @EricEngels March 24, 2020, 2:17 PM

Imagine the Montreal Canadiens being the envy of National Hockey League teams for being as well as or better positioned than just about anyone to deal with a flat salary cap for next season.

They used to be the envy of the league for winning the Stanley Cup on the regular, but now there's this.

Consider it the consolation for three consecutive playoff whiffs — barring a crazy format that allows Montreal to participate in the 2020 playoffs — for a Canadiens team that hasn't spent to the cap since 2017.

Le sigh.

Having space has had its benefits over the last few years (looking at you, Joel Armia, who came to Montreal in 2018 and has since produced consecutive career seasons with the Canadiens in exchange for a D-level prospect and goaltender Steve Mason's expiring \$4.1-million cap hit from the Winnipeg Jets). But it would be a stretch to say general manager Marc Bergevin has been able to weaponize it (looking at you, Sebastian Aho, who still plays for the Carolina Hurricanes after Montreal's meekly structured 2019 offer sheet was laughed at by the Hurricanes front office — and everyone else — and then promptly matched).

John Tavares wouldn't even take the Canadiens' call in the summer of 2018, and Matt Duchene left them as bridesmaids when he married himself to the Nashville Predators with a seven-year, \$56-million contract in the summer of 2019.

But that's all in the past now, and the opportunity to add looms for a team that desperately needs some help.

Before we consider how the Canadiens might do that, there are pieces of internal business that must first be settled once the COVID-19 pandemic (hopefully goes away and never comes back) dissipates, and once upper and lower limits of the cap get set and the off-season and 2020-21 season get scheduled:

- A new contract for Max Domi.
- A new contract for Victor Mete.
- Decisions on whether or not to qualify restricted free agents Charles Hudon and Xavier Ouellet.
- Decisions on whether or not to make offers to unrestricted free agents Dale Weise and Christian Folin (we're just going to take for granted that Keith Kinkaid won't be back).

We're not exactly looking at a conundrum here. The Canadiens already have 16 players locked into their NHL roster for a total of \$63.14 million, and there's little of the business outlined above that will end up having a considerable impact on the heavy lifting that Bergevin and capologist John Sedgwick need to do in the summer of 2021, when Armia's, Tomas Tatar's, Brendan Gallagher's, Phillip Danault's, Jeff Petry's, Jesperi Kotkaniemi's and Ryan Poehling's contracts are set to expire.

Domi's new deal represents the only complex bit of business, if we can even call it that. After all, when our Elliotte Friedman asked Bergevin if he foresaw any difficulty getting the 25-year-old restricted free agent signed, he responded with an authoritative "No."

It's just that there is potential for negotiations to be contentious, assuming Domi isn't traded before they happen. The Winnipeg native's status as an arbitration-eligible free agent who can become unrestricted as of July, 2022, combined with the considerable variance in production between his first season (28 goals and 72 points in 82 games) and his second season (17 goals and 44 points in 71 games) with the Canadiens, could throw a wrench into things.

That said, you could see it being advantageous for both sides to agree to a one-year deal, if the plan is to keep Domi in the fold.

Assuming that is in fact the plan, and that it would cost the Canadiens upwards of \$7 million to do it (it'll likely be less), they'd still have roughly \$10 million to play with before hitting the \$81.5-million upper limit of the salary cap.

They'd have even more flexibility if they were to move Domi for... say... Minnesota Wild defenceman Jonas Brodin (\$4.16-million AAV through 2021), as a move of that nature has been widely speculated since Bergevin told La Presse in February he'd consider trading a forward this summer for some help on defence.

What the Canadiens would do with their space is the big question. We don't expect they'll be big players in unrestricted free agency, with Bergevin saying in the above interview that, "More and more, July 1 has become a waste of time."

That's not to say the GM won't turn to the market to make a value addition or two, like he did in signing Ben Chiarot to a three-year, \$10.5-million contract last summer. As we reported on Monday, it's all but assured Ilya Kovalchuk will be back with the Canadiens will be back in Montreal on a bonus-laden contract next season. And it's a strong likelihood the team will attempt to add one of the 51 impending unrestricted-free-agent goaltenders not named Kinkaid to serve as a backup to Carey Price.

But if the Canadiens are going to improve considerably, they can't strike the possibility of going down the offer-sheet road again. Though, it's a given they'd be wasting their time going after a premiere player like New York Islanders centre Matt Barzal if they weren't willing to put in a max offer.

As for teams Bergevin can take advantage of through trade — provided compliance buyouts, which offer cap relief, are only permitted if the cap for the 2020-21 season goes down versus just remaining flat — a few come to mind. The Toronto Maple Leafs, for example, seem dead set on keeping Tavares, Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner and William Nylander in place, but they're tight against the cap and still have holes to fill on their roster. That might incite them (or actually force them) to sell cheap on a player or two to clear up some room, which is a subject that was well-covered by Sportsnet's Luke Fox here.

The Tampa Bay Lightning would be in a particularly precarious position, with just over \$76 million tied up in 15 players and restricted free agents Anthony Cirelli, Eric Cernak and Mikhail Sergachev due substantial raises. And the Vegas Golden Knights have close to \$73 million invested in 14 players for next season.

Though new contracts for Ryan Reaves and Deryk Engelland (should they choose to re-sign them) aren't likely to break the bank, Golden Knights GM Kelly McCrimmon won't be left with much wiggle room to fill out — and improve — the roster.

That could make for a ripe opportunity for Bergevin to pounce on. And surely there are other scenarios for him and his associates to entertain.

The good news is the Canadiens don't have much to worry about on the home front if the salary cap remains flat next season.

Not that the fact should be celebrated with a parade down Saint Catherine Street.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.25.2020

1172918 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Five intriguing Senators prospects to WATCH: Josh Norris developing fast

Wayne Scanlan March 24, 2020, 12:37 PM



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 25, 2020

We have reached that time in the sports impasse when we need to find topics that serve as a distraction to daily pandemic news as well as a reminder that there will be brighter days ahead.

Sports will matter again at some point.

Teams, rosters and prospects will strive to pick up where they left off, even if the normal ebbs and flows of every season is off kilter.

The best players will still be the best.

And prospects in the pipeline will continue to stimulate fan bases with what the future might hold. More than ever, we all long for that future when such simple pleasures as development camps and rookie training sessions are underway again.

With that in mind, we take a look at five of the most interesting Ottawa Senators prospects. Not the top five, not the five most imminent NHLers (that would start with Drake Batherson and run through several other AHL Belleville Senators teammates).

What we are listing here, in a highly subjective way, are five prospects we find intriguing. In some cases, we haven't seen as much of them because they are not as far advanced in the development process. There is one AHL player on the list because he has progressed at a rate no one could have foreseen after undergoing season-ending shoulder surgery just a little more than a year ago.

C – Josh Norris, 20

GP: 59 | G: 31 | A: 30 | Pts: 61

Belleville Senators (AHL)

Draft: San Jose, 19th, 2017

6-2, 192 lbs

With the picks and players acquired from the San Jose Sharks in the massive trade for Erik Karlsson on Sept. 13, 2018, Norris got a chance to fly under the radar. There were no outsized expectations for the young centre because he had played so little hockey in 2019.

Consider that, just last June, Norris was kept out of contact drills at Ottawa's development camp. In September, he was cleared to play in the Senators' rookie tournament, which marked his first game of any kind since playing for Team USA in the World Junior Championships the previous winter. After just one-and-a-half seasons of experience at the University of Michigan and a lost half-season, all Norris did as an AHL rookie was finish third in the AHL scoring race in goals and points (tied).

The B-Sens' scoring leader is intriguing for a number of reasons. Unlike many of his teammates — Drake Batherson, Logan Brown, Vitaly Abramov, Rudolf Balcers, Erik Brannstrom etc. — Norris didn't get much of a look in the NHL this season, with just three games played. Yet, head coach DJ Smith gave him front-line minutes in those games, nearly 18 minutes per night, and there were flashes of his play-making vision and sneaky-dangerous shot on display.

Can the 20-year-old thrive at the NHL level as he has as a rookie pro? Can he step in as soon as next season? The former Sharks first-rounder is going to be an interesting player to watch.

D – Jacob Bernard-Docker, 19

GP: 32 | G: 7 | A: 18 | Pts: 25

North Dakota Fighting Hawks (NCAA)

Draft: Ottawa, 28th, 2018

6-1, 195 lbs.

Bernard-Docker, drafted 26th overall (Ottawa's second first-round pick, 2018), is a great example of how a player can excel without playing major junior. 'JBD,' as he is known, became the best defenceman in

Alberta provincial junior hockey with the AJHL Okotoks Oilers and rode that to a Division 1 scholarship at North Dakota. As a freshman in 2018-19, this right-shot defenceman became a key starter and then a sophomore leader at highly ranked ND — first-unit power play, first-unit PK.

He evolved into a major role on Team Canada's gold-medal world-junior roster, moving up to the top pairing. As the tournament wore on, head coach Dale Hunter increasingly relied on Bernard-Docker in all situations, including late in the final, preserving a one-goal lead.

Watching JBD deliver a massive open-ice hit on Russia's Kirill Marchenko reminded us that Okotoks is a Siksikáí'powahsin word meaning "rock." And that fairly describes Bernard-Docker, a reliable, two-way defenceman who is going to get an opportunity to develop as a pro, perhaps as early as next fall with the B-Sens.

C – Shane Pinto, 19

GP: 33 | G: 16 | A: 12 | Pts: 28

North Dakota Fighting Hawks

Draft: Ottawa, 32nd, 2019

6-3, 195 lbs

This isn't the first time the Senators have had multiple prospects at the same school. Think back to Ohio State University six and seven years ago when teammates Ryan Dzingel and Max McCormick caught the eye of Ottawa scouts as late-round picks in 2011.

Though Bernard-Docker and Shane Pinto were drafted one year apart, they have quickly developed a chemistry, often combining to score goals, especially on the power play, with JBD as quarterback and Pinto the shooter. As a freshman in 2019-20, Pinto led North Dakota with five power-play goals, and was tied for the team lead in goals with 16. That helped earn the right-hand centre a place among the NCHC rookie-of-the-year finalists.

The Senators went off the board to draft Pinto early in the second round, based on his USHL play. Pinto loves to shoot the puck (91 shots, third on his team) is physical (second in penalty minutes, with 46) and leads his team in major penalties, with two. His faceoff numbers are remarkable for a college freshman — 61.1 per cent as regular-season play ended, and ultimately the season.

Like Bernard-Docker, Pinto had a strong world-junior tournament, but with a different nation: USA. He finished with four goals and seven points in five games.

Considering he doesn't turn 20 until November, Pinto could use another strong college season, although he already has pro size and instincts.

D – Lassi Thomson, 19

GP: 39 | G: 7 | A: 6 | Pts: 13

Ilves Loan, Liiga

Draft: Ottawa, 19th, 2019

6-0, 182 lbs

After drafting a 'Lassi(e)' and a 'Pinto' in rather quick succession last June, the Senators were bombarded with animal jokes on social media. Nobody is laughing anymore as these prospects continue to develop.

After a strong 2018-19 season (17 goals, 41 points) with the WHL Kelowna Rockets, Thomson returned to Finland in 2019-20 to play against grown men, except for his sojourn to the WJC. Thomson was named captain of the Finnish juniors and played seven games, recording one assist, for a persistent Finnish team.

A smooth skater, Thomson provides another right-hand shot out of the defence position, and what a shot it is — a boomer from the point that belies Thomson's slight build.



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Thomson himself didn't expect to get drafted this high, but the Senators scouts liked the way he adapted quickly to the North American game as an 18-year-old in junior, and is the type of skating, puck-moving D-man that every pairing in the NHL must have to be competitive.

It's early in the going, Thomson still has to prove himself as a North American pro, but with his skill set and shot, he looks like he could be part of a young future D-corps that includes Thomas Chabot, Erik Brannstrom and Bernard-Docker.

G – Mads Sogaard, 19

GP: 31 | W: 21 | L: 13 | OT: 2 | GAA: 2.53 | SV%: .908

Medicine Hat Tigers (WHL)

Draft: Ottawa, 37th, 2019

6-7, 200 lbs

We started this exercise talking about intriguing prospects in the Senators organization. While they are deep in goaltenders at the NHL and AHL level, few are as intriguing as Sogaard, by virtue of his size.

With 6-6 Anders Nilsson likely starting next season as Ottawa's No. 1 goalie, this even larger specimen looms in the system.

Because of their less predictable development, goalies tend to go lower in the draft. Last June, American Spencer Knight became just the seventh goaltender to be chosen in the first round over the past decade. The Senators wasted no time getting the second-rated goalie available, Sogaard, in round two.

As a Medicine Hat rookie in 2018-19, Sogaard was sensational, 19-8-2 with a .921 save percentage. This season, he has been slightly less consistent, but was coming on strong. As recently as March 2, Sogaard was named WHL goaltender of the week with a 2-0-0 performance, 1.00 goals-against and .947 save percentage.

Scouts love Sogaard's net presence, rebound control and his agility for a big man. Comparisons have been made to Nashville's Pekka Rinne.

Organizationally, the Senators are deep at this vital position: with Nilsson and Craig Anderson (a pending UFA considering retirement), plus Marcus Hogberg, Joey Daccord and Filip Gustavsson close to readiness. In junior, Kevin Mandolese had a sensational season with Cape Breton of the QMJHL — 26 wins and a .925 save percentage. The internal goalie competition will be fascinating to watch over the next few years.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.25.2020

1172919 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames all-time Dream Team for Game 7 of Stanley Cup Final

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis March 24, 2020, 11:55 AM

It's Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final and you, as coach of the Calgary Flames Dream Team, can ice a lineup of players from any era you want.

With the score tied late in the second period of an intense 2-2 game, you tap the backs of a trio you've silently considered your secret weapon.

The fans, well, they'll have other names for them.

Third-line centre Doug Gilmour jumps over the boards, followed by Theo Fleury and Matthew Tkachuk, making up one of the most hated lines in the history of hockey.

Shockingly, a post-whistle scrum gets all three involved before an opponent is singled out for crossing the line. Suckered again.

The Flames vaunted power play hits the ice with three Hall of Famers upfront — Jarome Iginla, Joe Nieuwendyk and Lanny McDonald. At the back, Norris Trophy winners Al MacInnis and Mark Giordano. Things are looking good.

At a time when all we can do is dream about hockey, the exercise is simple: summon anyone from the list of the more than 600 gentlemen who've suited up for the Flames over the last 40 years.

Pick each player based on their prime years as a Flame, and be mindful of the fact this isn't simply an all-star squad or a list compiled by looking at the franchise's all-time scoring leaders. You are in search of the best team, meaning various roles need to be filled, such as checkers, penalty-killers and heart-and-soul fellas who will lay it all on the line for the big game.

Although the Flames only have one Stanley Cup win in their history, my lineup features eight 50-goal scorers, five Hall of Famers, a pair of Norris Trophy winners and one of the most dominant netminders of his era:

Forwards

First line: Gary Roberts, Joe Nieuwendyk, Jarome Iginla

Three 50-goal scorers on one line, with the added bonus of having three of the most competitive players the organization has ever seen. Interestingly, Iginla was traded to Calgary from Dallas for Nieuwendyk in 1995 in a swap of Hall of Famers that served everyone involved brilliantly. Nieuwendyk won Cups with three organizations, including Calgary where he did it alongside Roberts in 1989 as a youngster. Iginla, the franchise points leader, carried the Flames on his back in 2004 when his squad fell one game short of the Stanley Cup. If given one more shot at a Game 7, you can bet he'd rise to the occasion again like he did in overtime of the Olympic gold medal game at the 2010 Vancouver Games.

This fierce, talented line could dominate in so many ways.

Second Line: Johnny Gaudreau, Hakan Loob, Lanny McDonald

A dream assignment for former 66-goal scorer McDonald, who will line up alongside two of the most skilled playmakers in Flames lore.

It's not without controversy though.

Noticeably absent from the line — and the starting lineup — is Kent Nilsson, who is widely considered the most skilled player ever to play for the Flames. However, the man they call The Magic Man also had a knack for disappearing in big games. More on that later.

Loob is a 50-goal scorer who came with some jam and endless skill worthy of a second-line assignment.

Gaudreau is another controversial piece on the second line. Despite being one of the most exciting and skilled players in Flames history, the jury is still out on whether he can be counted on to excel when the games matter most. Lanny's leadership, goal-scoring ability and experience in big NHL and international games makes him a no-brainer on the second unit.

Third line: Matthew Tkachuk, Doug Gilmour, Theo Fleury

While many will debate the merits of having Tkachuk on this roster with just four years of service, no one can argue the fact it would instantly be considered one of the most hated trios in hockey history.

All three can create offence as easily as they can infuriate the opposition with an endless array of tactics aimed to throw opponents off their game and into a tizzy.

Every coach would relish having a shutdown line as talented and versatile as this.





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Surely as a group, they'd be able to draw a big penalty or two in the big game that could be the difference. Few hated to lose more than any of these three.

Fourth line: Jim Peplinski, Joel Otto, Joe Mullen

A nice balance of grit, scoring ability and defensive responsibility.

As a Hall of Famer and 50-goal scorer who potted 16 goals in the Flames' 21 playoff games en route to the 1989 Stanley Cup, Mullen likely deserves higher billing than the fourth line. Alas, it's obviously a deep group that has the luxury of pairing the Hall of Famer with Otto, the organization's answer to Mark Messier and every other top centre in the league. Peplinski, a tough-as-nails Flames captain who scored 30 one year while amassing 1,400 career penalty minutes, was the only one drafted in the trio.

Healthy scratches: Kent Nilsson, Martin Gelin

Nilsson's 49 goals and 131 points in his second NHL season led Wayne Gretzky to famously say, "Skills-wise, he might have been the most skilled hockey player I ever saw in my entire career." Alas, Nilsson's work ethic and mindset frustrated teammates, who knew they couldn't count on him when the chips were down.

Thus, he'll watch this dream matchup from the press box alongside Martin Gelin.

No teammate ever questioned the way Gelin approached the game, giving it everything he had every shift. That hard work paid off in 2004 when he scored the series clincher in each of the first three upsets before appearing to score a goal in Game 6 of the Final that should have been reviewed and very well have counted as the Cup-winner.

The Eliminator would be a great add to this lineup if an injury occurred.

Defence

First pairing: Gary Suter, Al MacInnis

These lads played together for the better part of nine seasons, so they have a bit of chemistry, not to mention one of the most feared shots in hockey history, even with a wooden stick.

Second pairing: Mark Giordano, Paul Reinhart

Two offensively gifted, yet complete defenders who care as much as anyone.

Third pairing: Robyn Regehr, Jamie Macoun

This is one punishing duo that will make life hell for the opposition.

Healthy scratch: Brad McCrimmon

No one would have wanted to be the one to tell McCrimmon, the ultimate competitor, he was sitting this one out.

Beloved in the room, Beast was a monster who terrorized opponents and would do anything for the team.

Goalies

Miikka Kiprusoff, Mike Vernon

Vernon backstopped the Flames and Red Wings to Stanley Cups, but will watch from the bench as Kiprusoff gets the start.

No one in Flames silks has ever dominated more than the fantastic Finn did over a decade of service in Calgary.

Forever calm and in control, few goalies of his era stole games with as much regularity as he did, making him the easy decision in goal.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.25.2020

Sportsnet.ca / Top 11 (purely hypothetical) NHL compliance buyout candidates

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjokebox March 24, 2020, 2:38 PM

The last time the National Hockey League endured such a severe interruption of action — and the inevitable economic sucker-punch that goes with it — the general managers were granted a get-out-of-jail-free card. Two of them, in fact.

In the summer that followed the 2012-13 lockout and truncated season, the players and governors agreed that each club would be permitted two compliance buyouts to help free up salary-cap space in the face of a stagnant cap ceiling. These could be used in the summer of 2013 and/or the summer of 2014, as the cap ceiling waited two seasons to resume its upward trajectory.

With aid of this handy buyout tool, a whopping 28 overpaid players were granted early free agency — on the condition they didn't re-sign with the same team that bought them out within a full calendar year.

Household names like Martin Havlat, Daniel Briere, Brad Richards, Scott Gomez, Tomas Kaberle, Ilya Bryzgalov and Christian Ehrhoff were among those who had to find new employment.

Is there anything more wonderful than a mulligan?

With the 2020-21 cap expected to take a COVID-19 hit, there are rumblings the league may consider implementing a similar option in the near future — with the NHLPA's blessing, of course.

And while a throwback to the compliance buyout is purely hypothetical at this stage, we found ourselves with enough time on our hands to sift through the rosters and drum up a list of potential candidates.

Here is a breakdown of 11 players who might be considered for an amnesty buyout, and the pros and cons of pulling the trigger on arguably the most uncomfortable tool at a GM's disposal.

(For all the nitty-gritty details on buyouts and a handy buyout calculator, head over to the excellent CapFriendly.com.)

Loui Eriksson, two years at a \$6-million cap hit

In the summer of 2016, Vancouver signed a 30-goal, 63-point stud out of Boston. In four runs as a Canuck, Eriksson has never scored more than 11 goals or 29 points. His slowing feet have also led to an increase in minor penalties and occasional benchings.

That Eriksson's actual annual salary drops to \$4 million in 2020-21 and 2021-22 makes him slightly more tradeable, but the 34-year-old winger is long past his prime — and an exciting Vancouver core is starting to come into its own.

Jim Benning is a spender, and he's up against it with Roberto Luongo's cap-recapture penalty and his highest-priced forward under-delivering.

With Jacob Markstrom, Chris Tanev, Josh Leivo, Tyler Toffoli and Jake Virtanen all heading toward free agency, its arguable that a compliance buyout window could help Vancouver more than any other club.

Justin Abdelkader, three years at a \$4.25-million cap hit

Because the rebuilding Red Wings are in no rush to spend to the cap and assemble an immediate contender, and because they'll also have a bunch of expensive contracts coming off the books this summer (Jimmy Howard, Jonathan Ericsson, Trevor Daley), they can still absorb overpaid veterans like Abdelkader and Frans Nielsen (two more years at a \$5.25-million hit) with ease.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 25, 2020

Here's the question: Does Steve Yzerman still want a 36-year-old Abdelkader taking up cap space in 2023?

It's easy to look at Abdelkader's 2019-20 numbers — zero goals, three assists, minus-14 rating — and start dreading another three declining years of overpaying a depth winger.

There could be sentiment at play here, with Abdelkader being a loyal, career-long Wing and a respected leader. But remember this: Yzerman used a compliance buyout on local hero Vincent Lecavalier when he served as Tampa's GM.

Brent Seabrook, four years at a \$6.875-million cap hit

First, a caveat: Injured players are ineligible for buyouts. Yet Seabrook, 34, seems to be recovering nicely from his three shoulder surgeries, judging by his push-up challenge video (Watch below).

In addition to Alex DeBrincat's monster raise kicking in for 2020-21, cap-tight Chicago has a few young players in need of a pay bump this summer: Dominik Kubalik, Dylan Strome and Drake Caggiula.

Be it this off-season or next, buying out Seabrook could be an option.

Looks like Brent Seabrook's recovery is going well, as he's out here dishing the #PushUpChallenge to @kdach77

(: @kdach77 /IG) pic.twitter.com/ZyNGKZCRyz

— Blackhawks Talk (@NBCSBlackhawks) March 23, 2020

Milan Lucic, four years at a \$6-million cap hit

The underwhelming Lucic has a full no-movement clause until June 1, 2021, at which point it becomes modified. And while last summer's change of scenery has done both he and James Neal some good, the power forward is nowhere near the \$6-million threat he's getting paid to be.

Lucic, 31, totalled 20 points in 68 games with Calgary and, after a six-year run as a plus, has been a minus player four seasons running.

Considering the Flames' urgency to contend and GM Brad Treliving's willingness to buy out mistakes (Troy Brouwer, Michael Stone), Lucic would rank high on a candidates list should the NHL grant compliance buyouts.

#StayAtHomeChallenge thanks @ToreyKrug ... @justinbieber in the background (daughter has 'Never Say Never' on repeat) pic.twitter.com/6BdhsLpBww

— Milan Lucic (@27MilanLucic) March 21, 2020

Karl Alzner, two years at a \$4.625-million cap hit

Although Alzner did work his way back to the NHL for four games this winter, there is no mistaking the defenceman has been a supreme bust, a classic July 1 overpay. In the summer of 2019, he ranked second to Lucic among CapFriendly.com's most-searched buyouts.

After eight years of perfect NHL attendance, Alzner was scratched on opening night of the 2018-19 season and appeared in just nine big-league games for the organization before being demoted to Laval, where he's quietly put in solid if overcompensated work for two seasons.

Andrew Ladd, three years at a \$5.5-million cap hit

That Ladd was nearly dealt to Minnesota at the trade deadline in a complicated transaction for Zach Parise is a strong indication of how the organization views the veteran.

Ladd, 34, is just 50 games away from joining the NHL's 1,000-game club. He did score 11 goals in 34 appearances with AHL Bridgeport this season, and once in his four Islanders games. Perhaps, at a reasonable cap hit, he could play a valuable bottom-six role.

But the Maple Ridge, B.C., native is still making money in line with his 20-goal, 60-point Winnipeg days of 2014-15. And in the coming months,

GM Lou Lamoriello is going to add about three zeros to Mathew Barzal's salary.

Kyle Okposo, three years at a \$6-million cap hit

A scan of the Sabres' recent buyout history — Christian Ehrhoff, Ville Leino and Cody Hodgson all had line items this season — is a reminder of the franchise's love for a good overpay.

God bless Okposo, but the injury-plagued pro has fallen into the same pattern as Matt Moulson: great years next to John Tavares on Long Island, followed by an inability to live up to his contract in Buffalo.

Okposo, 31, is making top-line dollars but put up nine goals and 10 assists in 52 games this season, the fourth consecutive year his point total has dropped.

The Pegulas could also consider a do-over on the Jeff Skinner contract (seven more seasons at a \$9-million hit), but the underwhelming winger (14 goals) is only 27 and has a history of up-and-down production.

Sergei Bobrovsky, six years at a \$10-million cap hit

Buying out the remaining six (!) years of Bobrovsky's mega-deal would save the cash-conscious Panthers \$11 million over the course of the payments. More important: it could correct 2019's free agency wrong.

No goalie — not even a two-time Vezina champ — should eat up an eight-figure chunk of a team's salary cap in this era. The position is too unpredictable and too injury- and slump-prone, and the cap space is too valuable.

That Bobrovsky's 2019-20 record and save percentage (23-19-6, .900) paled next to those his backup, recent ECHLer Chris Driedger (7-2-1, .938), has underscored the danger of betting so big on the position.

leaves-john-tavares-shoots-on-panthers-sergei-bobrovsky

Toronto Maple Leafs centre John Tavares (91) moves in on Florida Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky (72) as Panthers defenceman Anton Stralman (6) ties up Maple Leafs left wing Pierre Engvall (47) during second period action in Toronto, Monday, Feb.3, 2020. (Frank Gunn/CP)

Henrik Lundqvist, one year at a \$8.5-million cap hit

This one is more about carving out space than saving money.

When the virus hit pause on the 2019-20 campaign, the Rangers were surging out of their rebuild while awkwardly carrying three NHL-calibre goaltenders. An affordable young duo of Igor Shesterkin and Alexander Georgiev could set the Blueshirts' crease up well for years to come.

Buying out the King would bring an unceremonious — and potentially friction-sparking — end to a Hall of Fame career, but it could also be coldly chalked up to the business of sport.

James Neal, three years at a \$5.75-million cap hit

No stranger to the buyout as a means to cap comfort, the Oilers are currently paying five players to not be in Edmonton: buyouts Benoit Pouliot, Eric Gryba and Andrej Sekera, plus retained-salary trades Lucic and Sam Gagner.

No doubt, Neal bounced back nicely with 19 goals in 2019-20, but he's a dash-20 winger on the books until age 35. There are better ways than a power-play specialist to allot that salary during Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl's prime.

Note: Then GM of the Red Wings, Ken Holland used both his amnesty buyouts in 2013 and '14.

David Backes, one year at a \$6-million cap hit

The urgency to buy out Backes, previously a strain on the Bruins' cap structure, is not as severe as you might imagine.



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The Ducks have a room full of young forwards who could benefit from Backes's mentorship, work ethic and experience. Further, the guy only has one more season left on his deal, and Anaheim is not expected to be a contender/spender in 2020-21.

Absolutely, Backes is overpaid. He scored once and played a scant 22 games in 2019-20. But he'll "only" make \$4 million in real money next season.

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Sportsnet.ca / Wayne Gretzky concerned for father during COVID-19 pandemic

Sportsnet Staff | @Sportsnet March 24, 2020, 4:50 PM

Monday marked the 26th anniversary of Wayne Gretzky breaking Gordie Howe's record for most goals in NHL history, however, there are other things on The Great One's mind these days as the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's kind of an eerie feeling. Obviously, it's something that nobody saw coming and this is something that our generation has never seen anything like," Gretzky told Writers Bloc on Tuesday.

Gretzky said he has been doing the responsible thing and is holed up at his home in California.

"We're all trying to do our part," Gretzky said. "Our community is pretty much in a lockdown other than getting things that you have to have, but everything is closed and it's kind of eerie right now. We've all got to do a small piece and, hopefully, all those small pieces add up to getting rid of this pandemic and we can go back to somewhat of a normal life. Hopefully, like everyone, we all stay safe and stay healthy."

Gretzky added that his biggest concern is the health of his father, Walter, the most famous hockey parent in Canada, who is 81 and was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2012.

"That's our biggest concern, obviously, like anybody else who's got elderly parents and elderly parents who are battling some sort of scenario," Gretzky said of his father who resides north of the border in Ontario.

"My sister's got an eye on him, my brothers have got an eye on him. They've pretty much locked him down and locked out the house and we're trying to keep him, like every other elderly person in the world and in Canada, safe and hopefully we can get through this because it is trying times for everyone."

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TSN.CA / Pain and perspective: Andre Tourigny talks lost 67's season, Rossi's potential and 2021 WJC

Mark Masters

Andre Tourigny is feeling pain, but also keeping perspective as he continues to process the events of this month.

The Ottawa 67's head coach had been gearing up to lead his juggernaut squad on a championship quest. The team racked up 50 wins, tying a franchise record before their OHL regular season was halted six games early due to the coronavirus outbreak. A chance at history was washed away, but at least there was still the possibility to avenge last year's loss in the league championship series. Then on Monday that dream died as well with the CHL announcing the cancellation of its playoffs and, for the first time ever, the Memorial Cup.

— CanadianHockeyLeague (@CHLHockey) March 23, 2020

"It was heartbreaking," Tourigny said. "My thoughts were with our graduating players, players who have played their last game in the barber pole jersey, it's heartbreaking. We have really good people, people who worked really hard for years to help us to build a good program ... I feel for the guys who ... it was their last kick at the can. It's tough."

There's a lot of time for Tourigny to play the what-if game amid the physical distancing of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I guess, it's like everybody," he said of his new reality. "My wife works a lot, but for my boys, my daughter and myself we're in the house and doing a lot of reading, a lot of Netflix, a lot of gaming so a lot of nothing happening in the house, but that's what's needed right now."

Tourigny understands this all too well, because his wife is a nurse at a hospital in Gatineau, Que.

"She has a lot of courage with this job and being on the frontlines," he said. "We're behind her and it's not that easy to work that many hours. She has a lot of courage."

With all this weighing on his mind, Tourigny took some time to speak with TSN on Tuesday. He shared his insight on a magical season that ended prematurely while offering a scouting report on two draft-eligible prospects in Marco Rossi and Jack Quinn. Plus, Tourigny looked ahead to the 2021 World Juniors in Edmonton and Red Deer where he will coach Team Canada.

The following is an edited transcript of the phone interview.

The Ottawa 67's did a video conference with the team yesterday. What was the message?

"It was really short, because not much can be said. We're really fortunate because our owners said they want to bring everybody back to Ottawa when it's possible to have a celebration of our season so that was a relief for the players. They will have a chance to see each other, but at the same time it's not the same thing, it's the best we can do under the circumstance so that was one of the messages. The other message was about exit meetings and we will do it by video conference and we will send them a few things to prepare for that. As for the rest, I gave them a message about how bad I felt about it and how proud I was of them all season with the way they worked. That was it."

Jack Quinn, another draft-eligible forward, went from scoring 12 goals last season to 52 this season, second in the OHL, where did he grow the most?

"He got inside more. He always had the skill, he always had that hockey sense, but now he's getting inside, he's getting to the dirty area, he has a more complete game. Back then he was a skilled player, who was really smart, but now he's a skilled player, who's really smart, who's getting dirty every day. That's where his game grew the most."

Alexis Lafreniere takes top spot in Bob McKenzie's mid-season draft rankings, he explains why his performance at the World Juniors helped separate himself from Quinton Byfield and Tim Stutzle in the top three.

You spoke about how playoff experience is so important so with that in mind, how will the cancellation impact the evaluation process for the World Junior team?



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"We will never know. We will never know if Player A would've scored 25 goals in the playoffs, it will have for sure improved his value and if Player B scored zero goals in the playoffs and had not done the job then that, for sure, would decrease his value, but we'll never know. I guess it's even for everybody. We'll have to go from what we know. But it's a great experience. A player who gets to live a Game 7 or a long run or a victory in the playoffs when they arrive at the World Junior the following year and they're in a do-or-die game, that's really important experience, but we will all be on the same page, I guess."

Will it put a greater emphasis on the start of next season assuming it is able to start on time?

"It was going to be important (anyway). The chance we have in Canada, the opportunity we have is we have a lot of depth so between the No. 9 forward and forward No. 20 is about the same. The difference between those 11, 12, 15 players is so thin so to make a difference between all of them, it's always tough, it's always a lot of viewing and a lot of feeling and you ask a lot of people their opinion and from there you make your opinion. So, that will still be the case, it'll be tough to know the final roster but, at the end of the day, that's a good problem to have."

What did you learn from serving as an assistant coach during the run to gold in Ostrava this year?

"Well, I learned to stay level. I think it's not stuff we didn't know, but it proved that if you stay the course and you keep playing the way you should and you stay level I think good things can happen. When we were down 3-1 (in the gold-medal game) we stayed level and when we went up 4-3 as well we stayed level. Nobody panicked, nobody was too high or too low on the bench, we just stayed level so that's the biggest take for me."

What was it like working with head coach Dale Hunter?

"It was great. He's not the guy who talked the most on the bench, but he's really fun to be around every day. He likes to chirp, he likes to have fun, he has no ego, he's a really down-to-earth guy so it was fun to be with him."

The Great Quebec Hope: Alexis Lafreniere

There is no player in the World Junior Championship who faces more scrutiny than Alexis Lafreniere. Not only is the prospective 2020 No. 1 draft choice being watched closely by NHL scouts. Lafreniere is The Great Quebec Hope.

What did you enjoy about coaching Alexis Lafreniere?

"I've had the chance to coach him twice and what I like about Laff is he's a money player, he's a clutch player. At key moments, that's when he shined the most. I really liked his resilience this year after his injury, the way he came back, he gave a lot of energy to the team, not just that he came back, but the way he did it. The way he played the first shift and the physicality. I like a lot of things about Laff, but if there's one thing it's his enthusiasm every day, his smile every day and he loves to play hockey, has a passion for the game and that is what makes him so special to be around."

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.25.2020

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USA TODAY / Sixers, Devils back down on temporary salary cuts for employees

Steve Gardner

Bowing to public pressure Tuesday afternoon, the parent company of the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers and NHL's New Jersey Devils reversed a planned 20% pay cut for the teams' salaried employees announced earlier in the day.

"Our commitment has been to do our best to keep all of our employees working through this very difficult situation," Josh Harris, founder of Harris Blitzer Sports Entertainment, said in a statement.

"After listening to our staff and players, it's clear that was the wrong decision. We have reversed it and will be paying these employees their full salaries. This is an extraordinary time in our world - unlike any most of us have ever lived through before - and ordinary business decisions are not enough to meet the moment. To our staff and fans, I apologize for getting this wrong."

Upon learning of the planned salary cuts, Sixers star Joel Embiid -- who had already pledged \$500,000 to coronavirus medical relief -- committed to helping team employees who would have suffered financial hardships.

After the announcement, Embiid was one of the first to praise the team for "doing a 180."

The NHL and NBA have suspended operations indefinitely amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and all events at Prudential Center, which is owned and operated by HBSE, have been canceled or postponed through March.

As part of an effort to do that we asked salaried employees to take a temporary 20% pay cut while preserving everyone's full benefits -- and keeping our 1500 hourly workers paid throughout the regular season.

USA TODAY LOADED: 03.25.2020

1172924 Websites

USA TODAY / Report: NHL is slashing salaries of league office employees

Chris Bumbaca

The NHL is temporarily slashing the salaries of league office employees by 25 percent, according to ESPN.

With regular-season games suspended since March 12 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the league is taking the measure to hopefully prevent layoffs, per ESPN, beginning April 1.

While the NHL has not yet punted on finishing the 2019-20 season in some capacity, it has placed a priority on maintaining a full 82-game schedule in 2020-21.

The ramifications of the suspended season will not only be felt in the league office. On Monday, it was revealed the New Jersey Devils (and the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers, which operate under the same ownership group) were temporarily reducing pay by 20 percent for its "at-will" employees -- those making \$50,000 or more -- from April 15 through June.

However a few hours later, 76ers managing partner Josh Harris said in a statement:

"After listening to our staff and players, it's clear that was the wrong decision. We have reversed it and will be paying these employees their full salaries."

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So far, two NHL players – both unnamed members of the Ottawa Senators – have tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

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