



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 13, 2020



Hurricanes considering no fans, limited capacity

By Greg Wyshnski

General manager Don Waddell said that the Carolina Hurricanes are preparing for home games with a capacity that's intentionally limited due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"We have multiple plans. We have a task force that we've put in place internally to talk about all of these options. One of them is that we come back with no fans, and how we're going to deal with that. The second option is we come back and can only have -- pick the number -- five or eight thousand people in the building," said Waddell on a video conference call on Thursday. "The third option is that we can be totally open. We've talked at length and have plans for all of those situations."

The Hurricanes are one of the first NHL teams to discuss having home games with a limited capacity when the league returns from its season "pause" for the coronavirus. An email to the NHL for comment wasn't returned.

Even if the Hurricanes weren't to limit their capacity, Waddell said they're bracing for a potential downturn in attendance when fans are able to return to the arena for home games.

"We're modeling everything right now. Is it 10% less people? Is it 50% less people coming to games? We've done all kinds of models moving forward," said Waddell, whose team ranked 22nd in the NHL with 16,905 tickets distributed per home game. "Regardless of what the team does at this point, in society in general no one know how we're going to react to this. I'm a believer that we're going to find a cure in the near future where people are comfortable coming out of their

houses where if they get it, there's a way to remedy it. A vaccine would help solve a lot of our issues."

Along with the coronavirus infection rates in some cities, NHL teams are having to plan around local and federal guidelines on mass gatherings and social distancing. That's why the league has been exploring neutral-site games for a potential summer restart of the season, in places like North Dakota and New Hampshire.

"If you look around what's going on in the country, there are probably some cities that you don't think you can play in. If you're going to play regular-season games, it makes sense to come up with some neutral-site places. Obviously, if you're bringing 31 teams back, you're going to have multiple sites to go to," Waddell said.

The Hurricanes were one of the most impacted teams when the NHL paused its regular season on March 12. Eight of their final 14 games were scheduled for PNC Arena in Raleigh.

"Without a doubt, it's going to have a huge impact on us financially this year. We had eight home games left. That's 20% of your games. You have the gate, the food and beverage, the parking, the TV rights, the sponsorship ... when you're talking about 20% of your income going away, that's a real big number," Waddell said.



Hamilton '100 percent' to play for Hurricanes if season resumes

By Tom Gulitti

Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour and GM and Dougie Hamilton will be ready to play if the NHL is able to

resume the 2019-20 season, Carolina Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said Thursday.

Hamilton is recovering from a fractured left fibula he sustained against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Jan. 16.



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Waddell said the defenseman likely would have resumed skating already if the NHL hadn't paused the season March 12 due to concerns surrounding the coronavirus.

"It's all based on him, but 100 percent he'll be back," Waddell said. "If we were playing today, we would have sped up that on-the-ice performance over the last couple weeks. So he's ready to go. It's just a matter of time before we put him on the ice and move forward from there. But, yes, he'll be ready play when we drop the puck."

Hamilton has 40 points (14 goals, 26 assists) in 47 games this season and was among the leading contenders for the Norris Trophy as the NHL's top defenseman before he was injured.

"His rehab has gone very well," Waddell said. "He's done everything that he needed to do. He's been cleared. He has not taken the ice, yet. We talked about it last week and he said that he didn't want to rush on the ice because we weren't in any urgency. He knows we're not going to be playing for the next few months."

"So, we'll address that in the next few weeks and see how he feels."

Goalie James Reimer, who was close to returning from a lower-body injury he sustained against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Feb. 22, also will be ready to play whenever the season resumes, Waddell said. Defenseman Brett Pesce, who was also injured against Toronto and had season-ending surgery on his right shoulder March 5, remains on schedule to be ready for the start of next season. He was expected to need 4-6 months to recover.

"It's a rehab process," Waddell said. "He's not going to be back for this season, but the whole plan was to be ready when the season starts next year, and it certainly looks like we're on course for that."

Waddell and coach Rod Brind'Amour remain hopeful the NHL season will resume so Carolina will have a chance to compete for the Stanley Cup for a second straight season. The Hurricanes (38-25-5) won their final three games before the pause and were tied with the Blue Jackets for the first wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference, one point ahead of the New York Islanders.

As a result, they were feeling good about how they were coming together after adding forward Vincent Trocheck and defensemen Brady Skjei and Sami Vatanen, who has yet to play for Carolina because of a lower-body injury but is expected to be healthy if play resumes, in three trades on Feb. 24.

"I felt like the group was really playing well, maybe even our best, and all the things seemed to be firing really well that last week," Brind'Amour said. "The power play was good, the penalty killing was good, our overall game was really looking right. Justin Williams had [scored in five straight games] and he was looking like he had his legs under him. So, it was looking pretty good, and the acquisitions that we made at the [NHL Trade Deadline], which were huge additions, were starting to feel comfortable a little bit."

The Hurricanes went nine straight seasons without qualifying for the playoffs before advancing to the Eastern Conference Final last season, which included upsetting the defending champion Washington Capitals in seven games in the first round. Carolina, which won the Stanley Cup in 2006 and reached the Eastern Conference Final in 2009, hasn't qualified for the playoffs in consecutive seasons since 2001 and 2002, when it advanced to the Cup Final.

"This franchise has had a history where we make runs and then be out of the playoffs for multiple years," Waddell said. "So after making the run we did last year, it was important for us to get back to the playoffs this year and try to continue on what we (did) last year."

The Hurricanes have played two fewer games than the Blue Jackets, with the New York Rangers (two points behind) and Florida Panthers (three points) also in the wild-card race.

"I think we need to finish this year just to have some sort of closure to this year and move on. That's my opinion," Brind'Amour said. "If we are able to do that, that's a positive sign as far as just the bigger picture. Things would, obviously, be moving in the right direction. But I'd like to see some sort of finish to the year, whether we have regular-season games or not, and somebody win the Stanley Cup this year."

Brind'Amour, Berube, Tocchet say time as teammates had lasting impact

By Adam Kimmelman

First off, thank you.

Rod Brind'Amour, Craig Berube and Rick Tocchet were teammates with the Philadelphia Flyers at various points during the 1980s and 1990s and their friendship remains obvious.

The coaches for the Carolina Hurricanes, St. Louis Blues and Arizona Coyotes, respectively, spent time laughing, joking and reminiscing Friday during a videoconference set up by the NHL.

Brind'Amour and Berube even took a few shots at Tocchet for a recent inline skating mishap. Brind'Amour set up the



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joke when asked if skating was something he was doing to stay in shape.

"I think Rick's got to take this all the way," he said. "He's got the hands-on experience on this."

Tocchet explained: "Got a little cocky, I hit a little pothole, went down hard. I'm not going to lie to you, it still hurts. I got the big raspberry on the butt, down the leg."

Berube quickly chimed in, "He's toe-picked a few times."

Tocchet debuted for the Flyers in 1984-85, and Berube joined him as a rookie in 1986-87.

"[Tocchet] really took me under his wing," Berube said. "When I ended up staying there I moved in with him and he really looked after me. It was great for me to have a guy like that to live with and to learn from."

Berube's education began the summer before at development camp.

"Pat Croce was the strength coach and he would just put you through the ropes for a week," Berube said. "I got a rude awakening. He'd come up to me every day [and say] 'You'll never play for the Flyers you fat [expletive]', and was just all over me every day. I went home and I never trained so hard. I came back to camp, I weighed 190 pounds and I was ready to roll."

Tocchet and Berube helped the Flyers reach the 1987 Stanley Cup Final. They lost in seven games to the Edmonton Oilers, but Tocchet said their current teams reflect much of the mindset of that 1987 team.

"I'm not sure there's a harder working team that I've ever been on," he said. "We all pushed each other. Had a lot of young guys, we had some veterans sprinkled in there but a very hard-working team. Wayne Gretzky is a good buddy of mine, he always says that's one of the hardest-working teams he's ever played against."

"... If you look at [Brind'Amour's] team and [Berube's] team, the one thing I know they do, their teams work hard. That's

why St. Louis won the Stanley Cup, that's why Carolina's been one of the best teams the last couple years. They instill that and that's the stuff we're trying to do with the Arizona Coyotes. But that 1987 team to me is the way to approach the game, where from the first guy on the roster to the 23rd guy on the roster, they gave their all for the team. I really respected that team."

Brind'Amour joined the Flyers in a trade with the Blues on Sept. 22, 1991. He was going into his third NHL season and credited Tocchet, who was the Flyers captain, for showing him what it took to be a successful NHL player.

"I was a little younger, still kind of trying to find my way, and you don't realize as a young guy how important the older guys are really," Brind'Amour said. "He was so phenomenal just even with me and the way he handled the whole group. He took charge, and I look now, 20, 30 years later, but that's why he's a coach now. He was a leader back then. ... We weren't a great team but right away coming there I knew what it meant to be a Flyer. [Tocchet] instilled that in me."

Brind'Amour was traded to the Hurricanes on Jan. 23, 2000, and Tocchet was reacquired from the Phoenix Coyotes on March 8. The Flyers reached the 2000 Eastern Conference Final but lost in seven games to the New Jersey Devils. Berube, who scored four goals in 77 games that season, is remembered for scoring the winning goal with 7:02 remaining in the third period of a 3-1 Flyers win in Game 4.

"The funny part of that, I get back to the bench and Tocc is jumping up and down, happy for me, and [forward Keith] Jones is beside him and he's like, what is he even doing on the ice at that point in the game?" Berube said.

Brind'Amour said the good memories he had of playing with Tocchet and Berube in Philadelphia helped him as a player and help him now as a coach.

"They instill what it's about to be a Flyer," Brind'Amour said. "And I think those are things you take now, now that I've been in Carolina for a long time, trying to instill that kind of identity and that camaraderie."

Video: Brind'Amour Joins Coaches on NHL Pause

Rod Brind'Amour, Rick Tocchet, Craig Berube on NHL Conference Call

[VIDEO LINK](#)



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Hurricanes' Hamilton Ready to Play after Broken Leg

By Aaron Beard

Carolina Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell said All-Star defenseman Dougie Hamilton, who broke his left leg in January, would be ready to play if the season resumes.

Hamilton needed surgery and had been listed as out indefinitely before the season was suspended amid the coronavirus pandemic. In a video conference with reporters Thursday, Waddell said Hamilton's rehab has gone well and that he would soon start work on the ice.

Waddell said there was no need for Hamilton to rush back on the ice in his recovery with the season suspended.

"If we were playing today, we would've sped up that on-the-ice performance over the last couple of weeks, so he's ready to go," Waddell said. "And just a matter of time before we put him on the ice and move forward from there. But yes, he'll be ready to play when we drop the puck."

Additionally, Waddell said goaltender James Reimer is healthy again after being sidelined in February with a lower-body injury, noting he was close to returning when the season was suspended.



Video: Adam Gold with Rod Brind'Amour and Bret Hedican

By Adam Gold

[VIDEO LINK](#)



Checking in with Tripp

By Tripp Tracy

Tripp chats with Vincent Trocheck, Brady Skjei and Joel Edmundson

[VIDEO LINK](#)



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SportScan

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

Sportsnet.ca / Colby Cave's dreams for hockey, life ended far too soon

Mark Spector

April 11, 2020, 2:47 PM

EDMONTON — It's easy to be a great guy on the way up.

When you're walking into a palatial National Hockey League dressing room, your American League hockey bag slung over your shoulder and a few sticks in your other hand, everyone has a big smile for the Leon Draisaitls and Connor McDavid's waiting for them in The Show.

It's different when you're returning to the minors in Bakersfield, and the same guys you left behind less than a week ago are still there. The way Colby Cave did, time after time, after time.

"By my count it had to have been five or six times where he got sent back down to us," said Bakersfield Condors captain Keegan Lowe, whose experience spans seven AHL seasons. "It's no secret, sometimes guys in his shoes think they don't belong with players in the AHL.

"But he would walk into the room with that ear-to-ear smile on his face every time, just happy to be back with the boys. To do what he could do to get back up there and get another shot again."

We'll never forget Colby's last @NHL goal as he displayed some tremendous skill to help the #Oilers capture a big road victory in Pittsburgh this season.

pic.twitter.com/A5uZNMpZMI

— Edmonton Oilers (@EdmontonOilers) April 11, 2020

Cave, a 25-year-old Edmonton Oiler, died Saturday morning after being placed in a medically induced coma on Tuesday.

Married less than a year ago to his wife Emily, Cave failed to wake up Tuesday morning at the Barrie, Ont., home of Emily's parents. The young couple was quarantining there after making the trip up from Bakersfield, Calif.

Cave was rushed to hospital in Barrie, then airlifted to Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto where doctors removed a colloid cyst that was causing pressure on his brain. As concern mounted over brain damage caused by oxygen deprivation, on her Instagram account Emily Cave pleaded for her husband to "wake up."

"We need a miracle. Please pray for my husband and best friend," she posted.

"You just prayed for a miracle," said Mark Lamb, who coached Cave for four years with the Swift Current Broncos of the Western Hockey League. "He's just a good ol' farm boy from Saskatchewan. We used to laugh about how hockey was a way we could get out of work on the farm. I saw a lot in him of what I went through growing up.

"It just breaks my heart. You go through a lot in life, but when I heard this... It just tears at your heart."

Nicknamed "The Caveman" by teammates, he was an undrafted free agent who grew up on Al and Jennifer Cave's cattle farm outside Battleford, Sask., who found his way to the Boston Bruins rookie camp. After three AHL seasons, his NHL debut came on a line with former Broncos junior teammate Jake DeBrusk in a 2-1 shootout victory over Winnipeg. Cave was returned to the AHL following the game, a trend that would repeat itself throughout his young career.

"It's hard to be that player — you're spending a lot of time away from your wife," said Oilers teammate Matt Benning. "You can play a really good game, then get sent down because a player gets healthy. It's tough to keep a good attitude, but Colby always did.

"We were drafted to (WHL) Kootenay together — he was the first-rounder, I was the second-rounder. We were in Boston together, and then here," said Benning. "He was always crackin' jokes, chirpin' everyone who's not from Saskatchewan. Just a solid, solid human."

Typically, players of Cave's ilk — who have to scratch and claw for each of the 67 NHL games he played — find time to enjoy the little things in the game more. Where many of today's players quickly retire to the many areas of the dressing room that are off limits to media, Cave was that player who would tape a stick in his dressing room stall, lingering to kibitz with reporters or whomever visited the Oilers room.

He drank in the entire NHL experience, perhaps because it was for him so fleeting. On the ice, Cave was busy trying to replicate in the NHL the route he had taken to WHL success, where he was twice named the Broncos MVP and captained the team.

"He started out on the fourth line with a great attitude, and he was a good player. Then he turned into a checker. Then he got really good at faceoffs," remembered Lamb. "Then he just turned into the best player. At the end (of his WHL career) he was probably the best two-way player in the league."

In Edmonton, Cave was the opposite of so many high draft picks who have walked right into the NHL. He was patiently grooming his game as a trusty fourth-line centre, that support player every good team seems to have one of, from Craig MacTavish, to Manny Malhotra, to Guy Carbonneau, to John Madden.

He wasn't quite there yet, but Cave was making his way.

"As a coach, you look down the bench, and you're looking for people who are just going to give you everything they have. He was one of those guys," said Oilers head coach Dave Tippett, a fellow Saskatchewan native. "He's a Saskatchewan boy, living his dream as a professional hockey player, that he had to will and work himself into. Nobody gave him anything.

"He had a beautiful, young wife... You're livin' the dream that he'd worked so hard for. That's what makes it so sad, that it ended too early."

It was Lowe who pointed to a tweet on Saturday of Cave's first goal, when he was a rookie with the Bruins. The video shows pure joy, the elation of a kid who'd just realized a dream, snapping one past Carey Price at the hallowed Centre Bell.

Colby Cave's first NHL goal.



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That's the smile of a kid who was never drafted, putting one past Carey Price, no less. <https://t.co/L3bzyyO7n5>

— Mark Spector (@SportsnetSpec) April 11, 2020

"You see that massive smile and excitement, as anyone would feel with their first NHL goal," Lowe said. "But, anytime anybody scored a goal, it was that exact same face, that exact same excitement. He was just a teammate who was genuinely happy for anyone's success, not just his own. That's not something people are just noticing now — it's something we've always noticed about him."

Lowe, whose first-born is due in a couple of months, is only a couple of years older than Cave. He spoke of Emily, kids and family, all the things they talked about as the miles passed on those AHL highways.

"Down in the American League you spend a lot of time on the bus, just chattin' about whatever," Lowe said. "They had plans for the rest of their lives, just like anyone at that stage in their lives. Just thinking about all those things you never get to experience... There are no words to express that."

"I can't imagine how Emily, and his parents Al and Jennifer are feeling. I just hope they know that the thoughts of the whole hockey world — the Oilers and Condors organizations — are with them."

Sportsnet.ca / Quick Shifts: How McDavid would've treated 'wild' draft lottery differently

Luke Fox

April 11, 2020, 7:59 AM

A quick mix of the things we gleaned from the week of hockey, serious and less so, and rolling four lines deep. I'm exploring the possibility of securing my own private island to pen next week's column.

1. Far and away one of my most memorable writing assignments was covering the 2015 NHL Draft Lottery inside the Hockey Night in Canada studios. The tension inside Toronto's CBC headquarters was milkshake thick as prospects, executives and TV producers stiffly mixed and mingled.

And grand prize Connor McDavid — the focus of a circus in which he wielded no power — wore all that anxiety with a terrible poker face.

On Thursday, the very day the (since postponed) 2020 lottery was scheduled to take place, McDavid candidly reflected on that fateful night five years ago.

The superstar was memorably tight-lipped in those very public minutes after the Edmonton Oilers won him, so I appreciated him letting us into his thoughts on how he would've handled the process differently.

"If I were to do it over again, I would definitely not have gone to the studio. It was something we were hesitant on originally, and it turned out to be for good reason," McDavid said on a Zoom call.

"It was going to be an emotional time no matter what, whatever team was picked. And obviously Edmonton was one of the possibilities, and we were surprised.

"People thought I was upset and made a big deal about that, which wasn't the case at all. We were just more in disbelief than anything."

Rogers had recently purchased the NHL broadcast rights and, understandably, wanted to amplify such a franchise-altering lottery into a must-see TV event. So, they invited McDavid — and a handful of other highly touted prospects — to witness the big reveal in-person.

"My mom, dad and brother, we all went down to the studio. We had dinner beforehand. It was a long day. I mean, there's so many different possibilities. It's kind of the only time you can really just picture yourself on 16 different teams," McDavid recalled.

"It was definitely a different day. I think we ran the lottery test mock thing — it just has all the odds and spits out a team — I think we ran that thing probably 100 times that day. So, you obviously never know what's going to happen."

McDavid's stunned reaction to the logo on Bill Daly's golden placard spawned a zillion interpretations. And the following April, presumptive top picks Auston Matthews and Patrik Laine did not come into the studio for the event but instead conducted live interviews remotely.

"So, if I were to do it over again, I definitely wouldn't have gone into the studio," McDavid said. "But it was definitely a wild day for sure."

2. McDavid and his superhuman trainer Gary Roberts dropped a simple 15-minute workout that anyone can do to stay in shape during quarantine. The routine was actually the brainchild of McDavid agent, Jeff Jackson, who was trying to balance out his kids' video-game sessions.

"It's gone over well," McDavid says. "Hopefully kids and other people are doing it at home and trying to find a way to stay active during this time."

Here's our first 15 minute workout, be sure to tag us if you give them a try!

-10 x body weight squats

-45sec. wall-sit

-10 x push ups

-30 second split squat hold on each leg

-Repeat this set 4 times#stayhome #stayfit
pic.twitter.com/8ejOkH5CN9

— Connor McDavid (@cmcdavid97) April 6, 2020

3. The NHL is exploring all options for when, where and how to resume the season. Elliotte Friedman reported North Dakota and John Shannon added Manchester, New Hampshire, as neutral-site locales that are being investigated as potential playoff hosts if 2019-20 can be saved.

"It seems like a long shot, but I think having any option is a good option at this point, with all the uncertainty going around," says Norris Trophy frontrunner John Carlson, who lived the Olympic Village-style experience in 2014.

"It would be cool. We've all been away from each other a while now, and it'd be nice to have the abbreviated training camp and maybe play as many games as we need to. Something like that that would kickstart everyone back into gear."

College hockey writer Brad Elliott Schlossman responded with an informative piece that outlines why UND's Ralph Engelstad Arena would be well-suited to house a portion of the Stanley Cup tournament.

(A positive omen for Leafs fans: Toronto's assistant coach, Dave Hakstol, went a perfect 11-0 in playoff series at The Ralph before graduating to the Flyers.)

"It'll be a little funky," said Carlson, considering a summertime return. "It'll feel like a brand-new slate, I think. Doesn't matter if you were playing good or bad. We're all gonna kind of be at the same level in terms of what we're dealing with now, what we're dealing with in a training camp or whatever happens.

"It'll definitely feel like a new season almost."

4. Different coaches means different approaches to Joe Exotic and his untamed band of big-cat wranglers.



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"The Tiger King stuff, which, when I first heard about it, I thought it was going to be a documentary on Tiger Woods, which I thought would have been terrific to catch," Sheldon Keefe said this week.

Once the Maple Leafs coach learned the nature of things, he figured it wasn't worth the \$9.99-per-month investment.

"I'm not up to speed on those types of things, so I don't know if I'm proud or embarrassed about the fact I don't have a Netflix account," Keefe said.

Capitals coach Todd Reirden, however, decided to take a rare break from studying game tape and "did take myself through the Tiger King" — not for entertainment but for work.

"I watched that one on my own. I did not have my wife and son on that one. I wanted to be prepared for discussion points for the players if they had seen it.... I'll just leave it at that."

Reirden has stayed in touch with the Caps via text and phone, mostly checking in on their health and training. Although he isn't planning a "full-blown discussion" about Carole Baskin's secrets with his team, he does make a point of trying to stay in the loop with what athletes are consuming and talking about every off-season.

"Because you know that they're all have watched it," Reirden said. "It's all different ways to be able to relate and have conversations and connect with players. If you know that they're doing something, then you want to make sure that you can share in that conversation."

5. In case you forgot, this crisis has reminded us all: Hayley Wickenheiser is a national treasure.

Her selfless plea for donations of personal protective equipment certainly shoots her to the top of the list of hockey players going above and beyond at this time, and Wickenheiser's medical studies have put her more in touch with the challenges of the pandemic than most of us.

But Wickenheiser's insight and availability has also been invaluable to the Maple Leafs, who employ her as assistant director of player development. She and the club's medical staff, led by Dr. Noah Forman, have been answering any questions the players might have about COVID-19 and its impact.

"The players who've been on the ice with her and know Hayley have a great relationship. So, she's a great resource," GM Kyle Dubas said. "I'm not qualified to give any sort of insights into these things, but Hayley and Dr. Forman do have those qualifications, as well as some of the infectious disease experts the league and MLSE have provided for us."

With travel now frozen, not every Leafs player finds himself in the same living situation, with a full support system. (Hence, Frederik Andersen's bunking with Auston Matthews.)

"You've got European players who are here by themselves and in a condo by themselves, so you worry about them a little bit. And you worry about whether everyone has the resources that they need, and then you worry about everybody abiding by the very, very important rules of physical distancing and staying inside and staying at home," Dubas said.

"So there's concern from our end that we're doing our part to educate our staff and players on what we need to be."

Lead Off with Ziggy and Scotty Mac

Hayley Wickenheiser on scoring medical supplies for healthcare workers

April 07 2020

Your browser does not support the audio element.

6. A couple notes from Russia.

Highly anticipated Vancouver Canucks prospect and rising SKA star Vasily Podkolzin has linked up with local volunteers to help ensure elderly residents of St. Petersburg are getting food delivered to their front door. Character move by the 18-year-old.

He hopped on Instagram to encourage others to do the same and to explain how easy it is to get involved.

With the Maple Leafs wooing KHL free agent Alexander Barabanov away from the mob of suitors, we checked in on another Russian star of interest.

Undersized goaltender Timur Bilyalov garnered interest on this side of the pond with his ridiculous 2019-20 stat line: 19-4-4, 1.45 goals-against average, .943 save percentage. The undrafted 25-year-old was showing even better in the playoffs (4-0, 0.71 goals-against average, .975 save percentage) before the KHL cancelled its season.

Bilyalov decided to re-up with AK Bars for one more season, his agent Alexander Chernykh writes, "since we do not understand when the season in NHL will begin and how the virus will affect KHL and NHL. But we do not exclude the possibility of pursuing a career in the NHL."

7. Under the radar, Pittsburgh's Bryan Rust was having just a fabulous breakout season, scoring at a point-per-game pace (27-29-56 in 55 games) and garnering some Selke chatter.

Rust and his wife, Kelsey, not only have a couple of dogs of their own, but they've opened their quarantined home to Kelsey's brother and one of Rust's teammates, Zach Aston-Reese, who comes with a puppy.

"So, there's a bit of a full house," Rust said on a conference call.

Despite a career year interrupted, the 27-year-old winger sounds like a man thoroughly enjoying a break. The young men have kept busying playing street hockey, board games, and dealing cards.

"Back to being kids," Rust smiled.

Rust considered the notion of returning to a work environment free of fans.

"Home-ice advantage might be taken out of it. The ability to ride the momentum of the crowd is so much more amplified in the playoffs," Rust said. "When the crowd gets on your side, and you have a big shift or a big play and you're riding that momentum... I think in an empty building, there wouldn't be as much of that. You'd gotta try and create your own energy. So that would definitely be a factor."

8. We've touched on this before. One of the rare good-news angles of the NHL's pause is the benefit of healed bruises and rehabbed injuries.

"If we can ever get back to playing," Flames captain Mark Giordano said, "this is going to be one of the best playoffs ever, because every team is going to have all their guys healthy and ready to go. You're truly going to be playing the best version of every team."

To Giordano's point, Columbus's Seth Jones (ankle surgery) feels good and has been one of the lucky few with access to ice. Carolina's Dougie Hamilton (broken fibula) and James Reimer (lower body) have now both recovered and are ready to go.

And St. Louis's Vladimir Tarasenko, who hasn't laced 'em up in a game since Oct. 24, is all set to return from his shoulder surgery.

"It's been pretty hard year not playing all year," Tarasenko said during Wednesday's Zoom reunion with the 2019 champs. "I was lucky enough to travel a couple road trips before this all started to feel like a part of the team again more. Just looking [forward to] joining the guys on the ice, practice normally and hopefully play some hockey. It's been a long year, but hockey will start some day and we're just waiting for the day."

Because so many readers of this site care about the Maple Leafs, here's another injury update: Coach Keefe confirms that both Ilya Mikheyev (wrist) and Jake Muzzin (foot) completed their rehabilitation and will be ready to contribute if and when the season resumes.

Not every injured player will be healed, however. Carolina's Brett Pesce is still targeting a 2020-21 return, and Boston defenceman Kevan Miller has endured some setbacks in rehabilitation.



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Miller, 32, is an impending UFA trying to make a return in the fall. Bruins GM Don Sweeney said Friday he will make Miller a contract offer to keep him in the fold.

9. Watching Sergei Bobrovsky trying to keep his glove hand sharp on an Instagram video shot by his wife, Olga, feels... kinda sad.

As much as we envy the shorts-and-T-shirt weather, we find it difficult to believe that catching tennis balls pumped out of a ball machine is doing much to prepare Bob for denying, say, the Bruins' power play.

"As a goalie, it's a little bit harder to train alone," Bobrovsky said on a conference call. Yet he's still working out twice daily.

"You need somebody to shoot on you. You need to see the puck and read the players. At this moment, I don't have that possibility. So, I can only build my body to be strong, to be fast, and to be quick."

10. Auston Matthews on superfriend Justin Bieber's chances in the much-talked-about 10-puck shootout against Jordan Binnington: "I think he gets at least one."

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11. One of my favourite Leafs hockey players athletes to speak with has been Connor Carrick, who carefully considers reporters' questions and delivers thoughtful, insightful responses. I never got the sense Carrick found these conversations a chore. He's always been present, curious.

So, it was great to learn that Carrick — a 25-year-old beyond his years — is launching a guest-focused podcast this weekend in which he'll reach out to high performers in the sports and business world.

The New Jersey Devils defenceman has actually enjoyed this pause and how it's made him take stock of his own life and habits. A lover of the power of ideas and stories, another reason Carrick is starting the podcast is because he wants to learn to become a better listener.

"You can call anybody up, and they'll pick up the phone and lend an hour of time," Carrick explains. "You want to talk to cool, interesting people."

Check out Episode 1 out here:

12. Happy Easter, everyone. Stay safe.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.12.2020

The Athletic / 50 hockey Twitter accounts to follow right now

By Mark Lazerus, Scott Powers and Harman Dayal Apr 10, 2020

Most of us are bored.

Most of us are scrolling.

Scroll, scroll, scroll, stay away from the trolls, scroll, scroll, scroll.

Hockey Twitter is certainly different than it would normally be this time of year, but there are still plenty of accounts to keep us entertained and informed. We've chosen 50 of them that we've especially been impressed by during the pandemic — some perhaps lesser-known names that are worthy of your attention. We've excluded our full-time Athletic writers and most big-name insiders, because we're assuming you probably follow them already. We also realize we've probably missed a ton of other great follows. Please share your own favorite accounts in the comments.

Ryan Hardy

Hardy, the Chicago Steel (USHL) general manager, was recently featured as "the most interesting Twitter account you're probably not following." He has some interesting thoughts about hockey and with a lot of time in hand has been quite willing to engage in recent weeks.

Zac Bell

The 19-year-old Bell has become an internet hit with his trick shots. He's been posting many to keep us occupied in recent weeks. See if you can do any yourself, but please keep social distancing.

Alison Lukan

Lukan covers largely the Columbus Blue Jackets, but her feed is full of interesting and informative hockey content from herself and others. She's also just very positive and supportive.

Hockey Fights

If hockey fighting is your thing, you can still find plenty of content here. They've recently been running a tournament bracket for best fight ever.

Black Girl Hockey

A welcoming place for a woefully underserved part of the hockey-fan community. Partnered with the Pittsburgh Penguins last week for a virtual meetup.

Connor Carrick

Carrick, a New Jersey Devils player, was already more active on Twitter than a lot of NHL players, but he's been even more so since play was suspended. He's even starting a podcast.

Nick Mercadante

Mercadante is always a quality follow for goalie information, but he's become even more useful now for his expertise as a health-care provider.

Igor Eronko

There's still hockey news in all parts of the world, and Eronko provides a lot of it from Russia. The KHL is expected to have a number of players join the NHL next season.

Hayley Wickenheiser

Wickenheiser, a 2019 Hockey of Fame inductee, is making a real difference in Canada during the pandemic.

Edmonton Oilers

Every NHL team is trying to stay active and relevant on social media. The Oilers have been doing it better than most.

BU Women's hockey

This is another team account that does it right.

Evolving Wild

Their work drives a lot of hockey analytics discussion and even other Twitter accounts, but this is the source. Their free-agent contract projections are invaluable for armchair general managers everywhere. They also shared recently they have other interests outside of hockey.

Sean Tierney

Tierney creates hockey charts that are easy to read and understand. His website has a ton of them, but he also continues to make some of them available for free on Twitter.

Mick Kern

Bless any hockey-only radio host during these times as they come up with content. Kern has filling up the airwaves on Sirius XM and showing off his impressive jersey collection while playing in the KXHL, a fictional hockey video game hockey league, with his son.



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Chris Watkins

Watkins likes to stir it up on Twitter pretty much about every topic and he's probably seen as a contrarian when it comes to his hockey viewpoints, but he's smart, funny and ignites discussions.

Topher Scott

Scott has a brilliant hockey mind, and he shares it publicly in a variety of ways. He's been active in the last few weeks, and you can find a variety of content on his feed.

Michael Grabner

Grabner has been another entertaining NHL player. He's been engaging, funny and self-deprecating.

William Douglas

Now blogging for NHL.com, Douglas has for years been shining a spotlight on hockey players of color from the game's past, present and future. An important voice in the Hockey is For Everyone campaign.

Michelle Jay

Jay does a little of everything in women's hockey coverage. She shoots photos. She writes. She's also set up virtual trivia to pass the time.

Flames Alumni

This probably only interests if you're a Calgary Flames fan, but this is how an alumni account should be run. It only started in February and has a small amount of followers, but it has a lot of interesting content from Flames alumni.

Jen Conway

A daily treasure trove of fascinating and/or hilarious old photos and interviews. If there's an embarrassing draft-day photo or a bizarre behind-the-scenes story, Jen knows it, has it and shares it.

Allan Walsh

A prominent NHL player agent — some of his clients include Marc-Andre Fleury, Max Pacioretty and Jonathan Huberdeau — rarely holds back with his opinions, regularly unleashing on the NHL and Gary Bettman, and anyone else in his crosshairs. Be prepared for silly client-centric hashtags.

Catherine Silverman

Silverman is tweeting a little less hockey these days like a lot of us, but she's an entertaining follow regardless. As a goalie expert, she's one of the precious few people who can translate "voodoo" into English so that regular humans can understand it. She also co-hosts a podcast and has been working on perfecting a headstand during the pandemic.

Dimitri Filipovic

Filipovic is worth a follow just based on his entertaining tweets alone, but he's also creating excellent content on his podcast by doing deep dives of some of the best playoff classics of the past decade.

Ray Ferraro

Ferraro is one of the best analysts in hockey and his account features a collection of diverse, intelligent and funny tweets.

Micah Blake McCurdy

Unique visualizations of advanced stats that go beyond the X and Y axis. Also, lots of shot heat maps that look like melting faces from a Salvador Dali painting.

Hannah Stuart

A savvy prospect evaluator and all-around engaging follow. Hannah's also a helpful gateway to other prospect evaluators and game-trackers.

Pavel Barber

Barber is a stickhandling wizard who's trained NHLers like Jonathan Toews and Jake Virtanen and is still posting mesmerizing highlights of his dangles as well as drills that people can do from home.

Cam Robinson

Robinson is still pumping out prospect coverage including NHL Draft rankings for DobberHockey and Elite Prospects.

Think Less, Play Fast Hockey

This account posts regular breakdowns of systems play so you can understand the tactics of hockey as well as the technical skill individual players possess.

Shayna Goldman

Goldman writes for an assortment of hockey outlets and shares a lot of her work and opinions in her feed. She also tweets a good mix of everything.

Will Scouch

Scouch is another great NHL draft and prospect follow. He especially shares a lot of information and thoughts in his Scouching reports.

Sidney Crosby Parody Account

There aren't a lot of good parody accounts in the Twittersphere, but this one for Sidney Crosby is definitely the cream of the crop. It's active, but won't spam your feed with low-quality tweets and above all, serves as a humorous antithesis to Crosby's reserved personality.

Roberto Luongo

If you're searching for a funny account that's perhaps rooted more firmly in reality, look no further than Luongo. The legendary goalie won't tweet very frequently, but each self-deprecating post makes you laugh harder than the last.

Brian5or6

Brian5or6 is a Senators fan who gained notoriety after a passionate tirade pleading the team not to trade Erik Karlsson and has since built up a devoted league-wide following for creative and funny skits.

Alyssa Turner

Turner helps create content for the NWHL. She's an interesting and entertaining follow herself, too.

JFresh

JFresh posts visualizations for individual players that feature a multitude of analytics, but also for rosters of various NHL teams of the past and present. The account is in the midst of breaking down one team every day of the month in April.

P.K. Subban

Voted the best social media follow by the NHLPA, Subban's quirky personality is on full blast in each one of his tweets. One of the best ambassadors of the game with his outgoing personality and generous humanitarian work.

Mike Commito

Commito reels off daily tweets reminding people of the historic NHL events that happened on each day of the year.

The Point Hockey

This account gives a peek behind the curtain at Sportlogiq's proprietary data. Fantastic data-driven analysis and they're getting set to apply it to classic games to keep you entertained in the quarantine.

Meghan Chayka



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A co-founder of analytics company Stathletes, Meghan is an evangelist for analytics, working to educate fans and elevate other voices in the statistical community. Currently hosting analytics-centric webinars during the quarantine.

Pete Blackburn

He has branched into other sports in his role at CBS Sports, but he still brings plenty of sharp-tongued hockey and pop-culture takes, and still dabbles in the occasional in-game GIF. Also, it's been fun to watch him slowly and steadily break down over Tom Brady's decision to leave New England.

Jim Cornelison

Cornelison, the Blackhawks' national anthem singer, has been posting videos of him signing a variety of songs. He also regularly engages with fans.

SUNDAY SOUNDS

RMNB

A Capitals-centric blog curating news, analysis and assorted fun items. The name "Russian Machine Never Breaks" comes from an Alex Ovechkin quote.

Aivis Kalnins

Kalnins is another reporter plugged into the KHL and European hockey news. Is your NHL team adding a KHL player? He'll probably know.

Hockey 50 Years Ago

Rick Cole provides "real-time" NHL tweets on NHL news, stats and fun facts from a half-century ago. And no, 50 years ago isn't when the NHL went on hiatus. It only feels that way.

Rachel Doerrie

An analyst who worked for the New Jersey Devils, Doerrie is one of the brightest up and coming hockey minds. She blends the eye test and analytics in the Staff and Graph podcast which she hosts with Ian Tulloch — a show that's currently breaking down modern tactics.

Jashvina Shah

Shah is a great follow for college hockey and hockey in general. As you wait for college hockey to come back, this bracket should help fill your time.

Corey Sznajder

Sznajder has been catching up on all his game tracking and sharing some of the information in his feed.

Bailey

The Los Angeles Kings' mascot is the most prolific NHL mascot on Twitter. He's a good follow for some lightheartedness right now.

The Athletic / Down Goes Brown: The worst players to wear every jersey number in NHL history

By Sean McIndoe Apr 10, 2020

With no games to cover, we've spent a big chunk of the last few weeks debating the best players to wear every number. A group of us put together a list that covered the entire NHL, and various team sites have done lists for individual franchises. As a confessed history nerd, it's all been a fun trip down memory lane. It's always nice to remember the greatest to ever lace up the skates.

But really, why should the best of the best get all the attention? We all know about the legends who wore numbers like 99, or 4, or 66 or 77. But what about the other 99.9 percent of NHL players who never came close to making their numbers iconic? They deserve some attention too.

Today, they're going to get it, as I work through the very worst players to wear every number in NHL history.

Of course, "worst" is subjective, especially when you're talking about guys who managed to crack the highest level of pro hockey in the world. In some cases, they might actually be the worst, based on their career output. In others, they'll be players who had an especially bad game or stretch or season while wearing a certain number. A lot of these are just names I remember and want to tell you a story about. Honestly, this whole thing is pretty much just an excuse to Remember Some Guys. Please don't be mad at me if somebody you know is on the list.

With all that said, let's settle in for some NHL History 101. Literally ... that's how many numbers we've got to go through. Let's see how many I can get you to agree with.

(Unless otherwise specified, all jersey number data is via hockey-reference.com.)

0: Neil Sheehy

The only No. 0 in modern NHL history was a decent player and went on to become a better agent. He was also way too into getting his teammates to do weird lip-synch videos, both in Calgary and later in Washington. He even got a producer credit. I'll leave it to the reader as to whether that's a good thing.

00: Martin Biron

This is such a good number for a goaltender, but only Biron and John Davidson ever wore it. Biron lasted just three games and posted a 5.05 GAA, so maybe switching wasn't the worst idea.

1: Rick DiPietro

Here's the thing about DiPietro's career: It was better than you remember it. He obviously never lived up to the crazy contract, but he played for over a decade and had some good years, including one where he finished in the top ten in Vezina voting. He did all that wearing No. 39, though; it was only his rookie season where the Islanders had him wear No. 1, apparently to remind everyone that they'd just used the first overall pick on him. No pressure, kid. He went 3-15-1, which seems like a bad sign, before switching numbers early in his second season.

2: Gilles Marotte

Marotte was a solid defenceman who bounced around the NHL for 12 seasons (and one monster trade), playing for five teams and wearing five different numbers in the process. But it was while he was wearing No. 2 in Chicago in 1967-68 that he set a dubious single-season record that still stands by taking 154 shots on goal without scoring once.

3. Bennett Wolf

Wolf played two partial seasons with the Penguins in the early 80s while wearing No. 6, and that was apparently enough to earn him a promotion to the more traditional defenceman's No. 3. He lasted five games, had zero points, got in a crazy fight with John Wensink in which he both pulled his hair and punched him in the package, and was never seen in the NHL again.

4. Bill Mikkelson

Some records will never be broken. Gretzky's 92 goals. Brodeur's 691 wins. Mikkelson's -82 in just 59 games for the 1974-75 Caps. Good news: He switched numbers and wore No. 3 for the rest of his NHL career. Bad news: That lasted one game.

5. Yan Golubovskiy



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You may remember Yan from our "worst players ever traded straight-up for a Hall-of-Famer" post. In his case, that was Igor Larionov, who went from Florida to Detroit for Golubovsky in 2000. The Wings got three seasons of Larionov, including a triple-overtime winner in the Stanley Cup final. The Panthers got six games of Golubovsky before he headed back to Russia. Slight edge Detroit.

6. Martin Strbak

He lasted one NHL season and the most memorable thing about him is that his name looks like what would happen if your hand slipped while trying to type "Martin Straka." Here's the thing: He was once actually traded for Martin Straka. This bothers me more than it should.

7. Alan Hepple

Hepple's NHL career consisted of three games played over three seasons while wearing three different numbers: six, seven and five, in that order. Pick a lane, Alan. Here's hoping the indecisive Hepple got better at making picks later in life. (Googles him.) Huh. Apparently, he did.

8. Lew Morrison

Hockey has never lent itself especially well to catch-all WAR-style metrics, and points share is far from a perfect stat. Still, it's interesting that the list of all-time worst point share players is basically a who's who of enforcers and then Morrison, a winger who wore No. 8 for the Flyers and Flames in the 1970s and apparently didn't do much else.

9. Alexander Suglobov

This is arguably hockey's greatest number, worn by legendary wingers like Rocket Richard, Bobby Hull and Gordie Howe. To wear this number, especially for an Original Six team, you have to be a true sniper. Or you could have zero points in 14 games like this overhyped bust.

10. Steve Brule

No, not that guy. The NHL's Brule was a winger who was drafted by the Devils in 1993 and then waited seven long years to finally make his NHL debut. That turned out to be the only game he'd ever play for New Jersey, but it came in that infamous 2000 conference final against the Flyers, meaning Brule got his name on the Stanley Cup as a Devil – listed right after Martin Brodeur – without ever playing a regular-season game for them.

11. Vern Stenlund

He played four NHL games for the Cleveland Barons in 1977 and didn't record a point. What a chump! Then he went on to earn his doctorate, become a professor and write a best-seller with Bobby Orr. When "making the NHL" is like your fourth most impressive career accomplishment, you've done OK.

12. Thomas Rundqvist

His NHL career lasted two games, both for the 1984-85 Habs. That's not all that bad for a guy who was the 198th pick in his draft. Unfortunately, the guy who went one pick after him at 199th turned out to be slightly better.

13. Patrik Stefan

Fun fact: The consensus pick as the single greatest bust in draft history wore No. 13 for the first three years of his career, then tried to change his luck by switching to No. 27. In that first season away from his unlucky original number, he scored 13 goals. That's the hockey gods telling you that you can't outrun your destiny.

14. Steven Halko

This Hurricanes defenceman lasted 155 games and wore No. 14 for all but the final six of them. That means he switched numbers more often than he scored; he holds the NHL record for most games played by a skater in a career without ever getting credit for a goal.

15. Martin St. Louis

He wore the number for two forgettable seasons in Calgary, during which time he managed four goals before being allowed to walk as a free agent. He switched to No. 26 in Tampa and did marginally better.

16. Randy Wyrozub

In addition to having a name that sounds like something you'd run into during a PG-13 game of Dungeons and Dragons, Wyrozub's claim to fame is that he spent four seasons with the Sabres and changed numbers every single year. He wore No. 16 for more games than any of the others, but his career only lasted 100 games. Maybe it wasn't the numbers, Randy.

17. Pat Falloon

He wasn't as bad as you might remember, hitting the 20-goal mark four times. But when you're the second overall pick in a draft where one, three and six all make the Hall-of-Fame, it's going to leave a mark.

18. Gary Croteau

Croteau was actually a pretty decent player, and his problems had less to do with the number on the back of his jersey than with the logos on the front. Man, did he play for some awful teams. Croteau spent the 1970s wearing No. 18 for the California Golden Seals, Kansas City Scouts and Colorado Rockies. Yes, kids, those are real teams, ask your grandparents about them. All told, Croteau played 12 NHL seasons and, with the exception of a midseason trade to the Red Wings in 1969-70, was never on a team that finished with more than 60 points.

19. Jack Lynch

Lynch played 382 NHL games, and only wore No. 19 for twenty of them. But man, what a twenty games it was. After being traded to the historically awful Capitals midway through the 1974-75 season, Lynch managed to post a -54 rating in just those 20 games. In other words, he was on the ice for an average of almost three more goals against than goals for, every night, for two months. He changed numbers the next season. It's a minor miracle he didn't change professions.

20. Andrei Zyuzin

OK, so we already mentioned Pat Falloon, but why does nobody ever talk about the other Sharks second overall pick to be a huge bust? Zyuzin topped out as a journeyman third pairing guy who bounced around a half-dozen teams, and San Jose took him second overall when they could have had... (checks 1996 draft results)... you know what, I think they made the right pick, let's never speak of this again.

21. Ron Francis

Francis is a legend who had his best years in Hartford and Pittsburgh wearing his iconic No. 10, and it remains deeply weird that when he returned to his original franchise by signing with Carolina they made him wear a different number for two seasons.

22. Harrison Gray

Back in the days before backup goalies, Gray was pulled out of the stands in Detroit to play for the Red Wings after Terry Sawchuk was hurt. He played two periods and gave up five goals to take the loss; the official box score records him as wearing No. 22, maybe because it was the only spare jersey the Wings had available. He's often cited as the last non-roster emergency goalie to actually see the ice until the Hurricanes used equipment manager Jorge Alves for the final seconds of a game in 2016.

23. Jeff Ware

There was a time in the mid-90s when both the Maple Leafs and the Blue Jays had top prospects and former first-round picks named Jeff Ware. Both were busts. The baseball guy at least once gave up a home run to Michael Jordan. I don't think the hockey guy did, but it's the Leafs, so I can't rule it out.



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24. Don Cherry

Career minor-leaguer. Cracked an NHL lineup for one playoff game for the Bruins. Never heard from again.

25. Shawn Chambers

Chambers wore No. 25 for just two games of his 13-season career, those coming with the Capitals in 1991-92. But that doesn't matter, because it's not his time in Washington that earns him this honour. No, it's his more famous stint as the worst video game athlete of all-time, when he was rated a "1" overall with the Lightning in NHLPA 93. The game had him wearing No. 25, even though he actually wore No. 22 that year with Tampa. Real-life Chambers was a decent player. But it's video game Chambers who remains a legend.

26. Gary Veneruzzo

He played seven NHL games, all with the Blues, and he wore four different numbers while doing it. I don't know why this upsets me but it does.

27. Craig Adams

Adams wore this number while becoming one of only two forwards in NHL history to play 80+ games in a season without scoring a goal, doing so with the Penguins in 2009-10. And he also wore it while becoming one of just three forwards in NHL history to play 25 playoff games without a goal, with the Hurricanes in 2006. He won a Cup with both teams, so maybe scoring is overrated.

28. Hugh Jessiman

It's fine, Ranger fans, it wasn't a very deep draft.

29. Bruce Racine

Racine was the Blues backup goalie for most of 1995-96. That wasn't a very important job, because that was the year that Mike Keenan decided to just start Grant Fuhr every game. No, literally, he decided that the 33-year-old Fuhr would just play each and every game. It lasted all the way until the end of the season, when Fuhr was hurt with a few weeks left and the Blues brought in Jon Casey as a veteran insurance policy. That left Racine a unique stat line: He appeared in relief of Fuhr 11 times, but never started. It was the only NHL season of his career, leaving him with the all-time record for goaltending appearances without ever getting a start.

30. Bernie Wolfe

Wolfe was the goalie for several of those awful 1970s Caps teams, so it goes without saying that his stats weren't very good, even though he was generally viewed as a decent player. He retired in 1979 and became a financial planner. Then he re-signed with the Capitals in 1992 as part of David Poile's attempt to defraud the expansion draft. It's a long story.

31. Zac Bierk

He wore the number in his one and only game with the Minnesota Wild, got shelled for six goals, took a penalty and didn't get back to the NHL for almost two years, and it doesn't matter because his brother is cooler than yours.

32. Daniel Berthiaume

The Bandit had a cool nickname and some decent years wearing other numbers, but he finished his career wearing No. 32 with the expansion Senators. His numbers in year one were bad, as he posted a 4.30 GAA. His numbers in year two were worse. A lot worse. Far worse than any NHL goalie in history, actually. That's because Berthiaume's entire 1993-94 season consisted of entering a game against the Islanders with his team trailing 4-0, giving up two goals on two shots to Pierre Turgeon in 39 seconds, and then being yanked. His final numbers for the season: one game played, a save percentage of zero, and an almost impossible GAA of 184.62. That's not a typo.

33. Doug Soetaert

Another goalie with a reasonable career but a historically awful game, Soetaert went into Minnesota on Nov. 11, 1981 and made 36 saves for the Jets. Unfortunately, he faced 51 shots that night, allowing a modern NHL record 15 goals in a single game.

34. Gordie Dwyer

He holds the record for most NHL games by a forward who never scored a goal, with 108. But he did once take a 23-game suspension, so he's got that going for him.

35. Martin Houle

His entire NHL career consisted of making one relief appearance for the Flyers, playing two minutes, and giving up one goal to take the loss. He finished with a GAA of 27.27. Or, as Philadelphia fans call it, middle-of-the-pack numbers.

36. Bobby Clarke

The Hall-of-Famer spent 1,142 games wearing his iconic No. 16. There were also two games in 1981 when his jersey was stolen on a road trip and he had to wear the only replacement available.

37. Jean-Claude Bergeron

He was fine in his 18 appearances for the Habs in 1990-91. Honestly, I just want someone to tell the Bruins fans that I picked "Bergeron" as the worst player to ever wear No. 37 and watch them all lose their minds.

38. Scott Gruhl

He played 20 NHL games and this was one of five numbers he wore. I'm invoking the Gary Veneruzzo Rule, that's too many.

39. Peter Laviolette

Twelve games for the 88-89 Rangers. No goals. No assist. No points. No real future in the NHL that I can see.

40. Tie Domi

Domi had a hell of a career, one that saw him fight everyone from Bob Probert in an MSG heavyweight title bout to a Flyers fan in a penalty box. But this was before that, when he was a fresh-faced kid showing up in the Leafs lineup for two measly games in 1990 and easing his way into the enforcer ranks with just (checks notes) 42 PIM.

41. Jarrod Skalde

Back in 1998, Dallas claimed Skalde on waivers, dressed him for one game during which he played four minutes, then lost him on waivers a few days later, ending his Stars career. In all, he was claimed on waivers five times in six weeks that winter. I guess it's nice to be wanted.

42. Sean Avery

What's the secret to life, the universe and everything? Probably not starting your career in Detroit by having 15 points in 75 games, annoying everyone in the league and getting schooled on trash talk etiquette by Brett Hull.

43. Bob Beers

It's not that he was a bad player. It's just that nothing he could do in real life could ever measure up to the urban legend of him and Paul Coffey showing up on the NHL 94 streak screen as "HOT Coffey, COLD Beers."

44. Nick Boynton

He knows what he did.

45. Chris Durno

A living legend who made an impact on Hockey Night in Canada at a young age, he didn't succeed in the NHL only because the Avalanche



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foolishly gave him this nondescript number instead of that childhood No. 8.

46. Pavel Skrbek

The highly rated blue line prospect never worked out in Pittsburgh or anywhere else in the NHL, but was traded for a future head coach.

47. Tim Ramholt

The defenceman played one game for the 2007-08 Flames, lasted one shift, gave up one goal against, got benched by Mike Keenan and never saw the ice again; his NHL career lasted just 45 seconds. Now he's the lead singer of a rock band.

48. Nikos Tselios

The first draft pick in Carolina Hurricanes history lasted two games in the NHL, falling just 1,649 short of the family record held by his cousin.

49. Danny Bois

He played one game for the 2006-07 Senators, spent four minutes on the ice, and seven more in the penalty box after holding his own in a fight against Donald Brashear. Hey, that's more than you could have done.

50. Bob Jay

The undrafted defenceman played three games for the Kings on a 1993 road trip, then disappeared right around the time these guys showed up. Hmm ...

51. Mikael Lindholm

Elias's dad had an 18-game NHL career that saw him earn four points with the Kings, three of which featured primary assists by Wayne Gretzky. Not bad work if you can get it.

52. David Emma

The former Hobey Baker winner and U.S. Olympian wore this number while going pointless with the Bruins. His NHL career ended in 2001; Emma has been one of the most popular names in America since 2002. Coincidence? Well ... yeah.

53. Andre Racicot

A .500 save percentage and a 14.21 GAA. No, those weren't Red Light Racicot's career numbers; he wasn't that bad, despite being stuck with an all-time nickname. But it was the stat line he put up while making his debut wearing 53, the first goalie to ever have the number.

54. Andre Savage

It sounds like a dream 1980s Wrestlemania main event. Instead, it's a center who managed one point in six games for the 1998-99 Bruins before finishing his career wearing numbers in the 20s.

55. Felix Potvin

56. Marcel Cousineau

The 1998-99 Islanders had a goaltender who wore No. 55 and a goaltender who wore No. 56 and that is completely unacceptable.

57. George Parros

He wore the number at each of his first two NHL stops, with the Kings and Avalanche, before wearing lower numbers for the rest of his career. The experience apparently left such an impact that he's dedicated his post-playing career to handing out numbers that are always lower than they should be.

58. Ben Hanowski

Any time you can trade a franchise icon for a package highlighted by 16 games and one goal, you have to do it.

59. Robert Dome

The Penguins picked him in the first round in 1997 and when he made the team that year, they gave him No. 15. He scored five goals and spent the entire next season in the minors, and when he made it back to Pittsburgh in 1999 they gave him 59 instead. This is called taking a hint.

60. Brendan Mikkelson

That's right, I'm picking on Bill Mikkelson's son, because I figure anyone who's read this far deserves some character continuity. He wore this number for three seasons and 67 games in Anaheim, during which he was a -6. Or, as his dad would call it, "a solid game."

61. Corey Perry

You give a kid one bad number for his rookie season, and he spends the rest of his career lashing out at everyone around him.

62. Vaclav Nedorost

Would this former 14th overall pick have had a more successful career if he'd been named Ned Vaclavorost? We'll never know for sure, but scientists agree that it's likely.

63. Matt Herr

His three-game stint in 2002-03 made him the second Boston player to ever have this number after Patrick Traverse in 2001, and to this day he remains the most recent Bruin to wear it without running around licking people like some kind of deranged weirdo.

64. Jason Bonsignore

Yeah, I know, you thought I would go with Nail Yakupov. But one time I was playing pickup hockey with a bunch of guys I mostly didn't know and my friend told them I was petty good, so when we were choosing teams they made me one of the first picks and then midway through the game when I hadn't scored one of them called me "Bonsignore" and it was the most devastating insult I've ever received. Seriously, stop giving this number to your prospects, Edmonton.

65. Emerson Etem

Yeah, I know, he's a decent player, but I'm sorry, he's been forever ruined for me by that Sean Gentile tweet. No, I'm not linking to it. You know the one.

66. Milan Novy

There are only six names to choose from, as Mario Lemieux all but put this number on lockdown. I like Josh Ho-Sang, T.J. Brodie is good, Yanick Dupre is a tragic story and I'm damn sure not looking to pick any fights with Gino Odjick. That leaves Novy by default; the Czech legend beat Lemieux to the number by two years, becoming the first NHLer to ever wear it in his one season in Washington.

67. Brandon Kozun

Wearing this number for the Maple Leafs is some Grade A trolling and I respect it.

68. Jamie Tardif

This will always be Jaromir Jagr's number, but 19 other players have worn it over the years. That included Tardif, who wore it for two games with the Bruins in 2013. A few weeks later, they traded for Jaromir Jagr. I don't think you're getting your number back, kid.

69. Mel Angelstad

Oh grow up.

70. John Albert

He's the only player with the last name "Albert" in NHL history, and he managed one point in nine games. Huh. I guess the commercial lied.

71. David Clarkson



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One of the most annoying trends on social media is people who insist on combing the archives and responding to any prediction that didn't turn out to be 100 percent accurate with a sarcastic "Oh this didn't age well." That said, holy crap this did not age well.

72. Ben Walter

Are you noticing a lot of Bruins on this list? You're right, there are a lot of Bruins. Here's the deal: It turns out the Boston Bruins really love giving weird numbers to random guys for a few games. I don't know why – if anything you'd figure an Original Six team would be sticklers for tradition – but it's definitely a thing. For example, only 41 players in NHL history have worn this number, and seven of them did it for the Bruins. That includes our friend Ben here, who had it six games in 2005-06 before getting upgraded to, uh, No. 56.

73. Kyle Clifford

He was wearing this number when he ran over Petr Mrazek, and now I'll never be able to hear the word "Zamboni" again without feeling deep shame.

74. Paul Coffey

He wore No. 7 with the Oilers and No. 77 everywhere else, then finished his career wearing No. 74 during 18 forgettable games for the Bruins. They love weird numbers in Boston, sure, but this one actually makes sense; apparently some other guy had been wearing No. 77 there recently and they weren't quite over it.

75. Brett Lindros

Was Lindros the first top prospect to do the "birth year as jersey number" thing? I think he might have been, which is a neat historical legacy. Concussions derailed a promising NHL career, which ended after just 51 games and two goals.

76. Kris Vermaarsky

Another Bruin. This one was drafted by the Leafs, then was traded to Boston and scored one goal in his career. To this day, it's the only Leafs/Bruins trade that doesn't make every Toronto fan cry.

77. Rob Cowie

I just kind of love the fact that the Kings had living legend Paul Coffey for a few years, and when he left they almost immediately gave his No. 77 to Cowie. Eh, close enough.

78. Evgeny Grachev

The towering center's NHL career lasted only 34 games, including 26 wearing this number for the Blues. He scored just one goal, and it came against Andrew Raycroft so it barely counts.

79. Alexei Yashin

OK, worst player might be harsh, since he had a few decent years for the Islanders after switching from No. 19 to No. 79. Worst trade, worst contract and worst buyout? Probably.

80. Ben Maxwell

Only 15 players have ever worn this number, and a third of them debuted it this season. That's slim pickings for the rest of the list, but I'll go with Maxwell, if only because his career also included stints wearing No. 61, No. 49, and then No. 49 again for a different team. I like your style, Ben.

81. Enver Lisin

He was a reasonably well-hyped prospect who just never made it. He and Marcel Hossa are the only Rangers to ever wear this number, because they don't go handing weird numbers out to everyone who walks in the door like some Original Six teams I could mention.

82. Trent Frederic

Seriously Boston, calm down already.

83. Cody Ceci

There are certain NHL jobs that have so much history that they just feel more important than others. Montreal Canadiens goaltender. Edmonton Oilers first-line center. Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman who gets blamed for every goal against whether he was on the ice or not.

84. Corey Locke

This was the last NHL number to be worn for the first time, by Guillaume Latendresse in 2007. It's not easy to diminish the legacy of Latendresse, but Locke managed to do it.

85. Morgan Ellis

Only seven players have ever worn this number, and Ellis is the only one to do it for just a single season. That's enough to earn him the nod over the Oilers version of Martin Marincin.

86. Nikita Nikitin

Only 16 players have ever worn No. 86, but three of them are named Nikita, including this guy who doubles up on it. Also, this song came out in ... 1986. This means something. I'm still working on what that might be.

87. Vadim Shipachyov

Remember when he lasted three games before heading home and we all laughed about how Vegas clearly didn't know what they were doing?

88. Garry Howatt

Howatt wore the number for one season with the Devils in 1982-83, and he wasn't much of a player, with just five points in 38 games. But on one very weird night that season, he was a surprisingly decent linesman; he and Mickey Volcan remain the only two players to ever be forced by a very obscure NHL rule to officiate their own game.

89. Zdenek Blatny

Yet another Bruin, and I'm pretty sure this one isn't even a real guy.

90. David Ayres

An .800 save percentage and 4.18 GAA? You'll never beat a real Cup contender with numbers like that, rookie.

91. Kris Draper

He wore the number for two partial seasons in Winnipeg, putting up two points. The Jets sold him to the Red Wings for \$1, then watched him play over 1,100 more games while winning a Selke and four Cups. But, you know, they did get a dollar.

92. Steve Ott

He had one point as a Hab after coming over at the 2017 deadline, but I have to say I kind of love the idea of a career bottom-six grinder deciding to upgrade to a superstar 90s numbers at the very end of his career. Shoot your shot.

93. Alexander Godunov

When he first showed up in Toronto wearing this number in 1991, we were all like "Wow, that's kind of cool, this guy must be really good." And sure enough, within just a few years, everyone in Toronto was wearing a 93 Leafs jersey. I may have left some details out of the story.

94. Stan Neckar

The mid-90s Senators apparently figured that if they gave high numbers to everyone, their fans wouldn't notice that they had no good players. So the roster had a 91, 82, 61, 76 and a 78. Might as well give the teenaged defensive defenceman No. 94 while you're at it, who even cares.

95. Olivier Michaud



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His NHL career lasted just one game, a relief appearance for the Habs in 2001. But he stopped all 14 shots he faced, leaving him tied at the top of the NHL's all-time leaderboard for most career saves without ever allowing a goal.

96. Fabian Brunnstrom

His NHL career began with a spirited offseason bidding war for his services, and a hat trick in his very first game. That's pretty much where it ended too.

97. Per Ledin

There are only seven players to choose from, and I'm told that a few of them are pretty good. Let's go with the guy who played three games and had no points and sounds like me drunkenly trying to tell Siri to text Pierre LeBrun.

98. Brian Lawton

Maybe this should be Jesse Puljujarvi. But I just love the audacity of a guy being picked first overall in 1983 and immediately being handed number 98. Is he going to be the next Wayne Gretzky? Almost! After two seasons and just 15 goals, the North Stars reconsidered and gave him a normal number.

99. Rick Dudley

Only three players in modern history have worn the number (although a few others apparently had it for the Habs back in the pre-Original Six days). Dudley only wore it for a few games in Winnipeg at the very end of his career, so he edges out Wilf Paiement, who actually had 40 goals and 97 points wearing the number back 1980-81. That's probably the record, remind me to look that up sometime.

Sportsnet.ca / In Conversation: Connor McDavid and Brett Kissel's Italian connection

Sportsnet Staff | April 10, 2020, 6:37 PM

In Friday's episode of In Conversation, Ron MacLean was joined by Edmonton Oilers captain Connor McDavid and Canadian country musician Brett Kissel.

McDavid and Kissel reminisced about meeting up in Rome and how Oilers Nation fuels their love of the game.

In Conversation with Ron MacLean is a new digital roundtable show airing exclusively on Sportsnet's Facebook page, YouTube channel, SN NOW and sportsnet.ca on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 7 p.m. ET/ 4 p.m. PT.

In the 20-30 minute show, MacLean will interview notable Canadians from all corners of the sports and entertainment worlds.

Future guests will be regularly announced on Sportsnet's Twitter account.

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens confident arrival of top prospect Alex Romanov is imminent

Eric Engels | April 10, 2020, 2:33 PM

MONTREAL— Let's just squash the ambiguity once and for all, because it's abundantly clear there will be skepticism in the Montreal Canadiens' fan base about Alexander Romanov signing with the team until he actually puts pen to paper and an announcement is made that it's a fait accompli.

The 2018 second-rounder is going to be in that bleu-blanc-rouge uniform in short order. The only question is: Will it be for whatever remaining games get played in the 2019-20 season, or will his new contract commence once the 2020-21 season gets underway?

"It looks like the GMs are in favour of having some kind of a regular season, and then as many as 24 teams would possibly make the playoffs," Romanov's agent, Dan Milstein, told Sportsnet Friday morning. "If I was Montreal, I'd probably be calling Romanov for this year."

As of right now, the rules wouldn't allow for the Canadiens to sign Romanov and play him for the remainder of the 2019-20 season. But that could change if and when the season is resumed.

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

If it does, Milstein doesn't believe the Canadiens would be concerned about Romanov burning the first year of his entry-level contract.

"He's not going to get to 40 games and get a year closer to being a UFA (by playing right away). So if they burn a year, it doesn't mean much."

"I haven't discussed it with Montreal, but I will when the time comes," Milstein added. "It's just, right now, I'd rather he plays this year. Why sit out and wait until October?"

"He's definitely coming. He's coming to be an NHL player, and so it's just a matter of when."

All that means is that until we know what will become of the remainder of the season, it's highly unlikely a deal between Romanov and the Canadiens will be formalized.

It's also not a stretch to believe that, like Milstein, the Canadiens would want Romanov playing for them as soon as possible.

"The team loves him. You know (Canadiens GM) Marc Bergevin told Alex at dinner they have a name for him," Milstein said. "The Destroyer" is what they called him after the U20s (World Junior Championship)."

The Montreal brass has been high on Romanov dating back to 2017, when Russia-based scout Artem Telepin began vaunting his abilities to Canadiens assistant general manager Trevor Timmins.

The Canadiens' belief in Romanov picked up tremendous steam in the lead up to the 2018 Draft. It was rooted in his steady progression in Russia's top junior league, reinforced by his performances in the various under-18 tournaments, and outright confirmed at the team's privately-held European combine.

"He just blew us away with his personality (and) his competitiveness in doing some of the fitness testing," Timmins said during a 50-minute conference call with Montreal reporters Thursday. "Not only that, but being a team guy cheering on the other draft prospects that took part in our European combine that year—it was really impressive."

It's why when the Canadiens saw NHL Central Scouting's final draft rankings and noticed the 5-foot-11, 185-pound Romanov listed as the 115th-best European prospect (not including goaltenders), they snickered.

So did Milstein.

Romanov, however, wasn't sure what to make of it.

"You know what he said to me, because I told him he should come to the draft? He said, 'Well, what if I don't get drafted?'" recounted Milstein. "I said, 'I'm going to buy you ticket and you're going to get on a plane to train and spend some time with me, and we're going to fly to Dallas for your draft.' And he says, 'Well, if I don't get drafted, at least I can go to buy new sneakers at the mall.'"



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"All jokes aside, we knew Montreal—their Russian scout was so high on him since September of his draft year that they were all over him and basically saying they're drafting him 100 per cent.

"Usually it never happens this way. Usually, you don't know until your name is called up. And during those final interviews, everyone says the same thing—that they'll draft you if you're there when they're called up to the draft—and then they pass on you. But we knew that Montreal was going to draft him no matter what, but it was just a matter of where. When we got to Dallas and had final exit meetings with Columbus and Las Vegas, because I always take my guys and do final meetings with teams that want to meet with them because it always helps, we knew he was going to go early. We just didn't know how early."

Timmins said on the day the Canadiens drafted Romanov 38th overall that it was because they were following their draft board and that's where they had him slotted. He confirmed that with Sportsnet on Friday, and said that, because several other teams had the opportunity to see Romanov play live on the international stage that year, it didn't surprise him that at least a couple of others were as high on him.

It's now fair to say everyone is high on Romanov. The 19-year-old Russian is widely considered to be one of the best players currently outside of the NHL.

That perception has largely been founded on what Romanov showed in each of the last two world junior tournaments and, as Timmins pointed out on Thursday, it hasn't been tainted by Romanov's KHL club (CSKA Moscow) diminishing his role from last season to this season.

"I think everyone over there was in the know that Alexander was going to come to the NHL the following season, so I don't think there was an impetus to put... they weren't going to use him as much as in the past. That's my personal opinion," said Timmins. "But we've all seen him at the world juniors, so... I wouldn't put any weight into his ice-time (with CSKA Moscow)."

Milstein would be in the best position to say whether or not Romanov's Russian team was aware of his player's intentions for after this season.

"I have to agree with Trevor's assessment," he said. "It was clear this year he could have been a top-four on that team."

Regardless of how anyone feels about that, the Canadiens feel it won't be too long before Romanov is a top-four defenceman on their team.

For now, as Bergevin told La Presse in this interview at the end of February, the Canadiens see him coming over and starting on their third defensive pairing.

And it's clear the management's team excitement about that plan isn't solely based on the player's on-ice accolades.

"He's such an energetic guy," said Timmins. "He's always smiling. His personality is a lot like Gally (Brendan Gallagher). He's always smiling, he's full of energy, and he's fun to be around. So we're hoping for the best for him and rooting for him, and hopefully, he can have a solid career and help our hockey team to get to the next level."

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Sportsnet.ca / 5 most intriguing Toronto Maple Leafs prospects to watch in 2020-21

Luke Fox | April 10, 2020, 9:08 AM

Few NHL teams depend on an annual influx of prospects to the big time as the Toronto Maple Leafs do — and that is by design.

Since Kyle “We Can and We Will” Dubas committed to four high-priced core forwards, an emphasis on filling in the roster gaps with value talent on entry-level contracts has become a necessity to the club’s salary-cap puzzle.

Glancing ahead to 2020-21 — when we expect NHL newbies like Rasmus Sandin and Timothy Liljegren to graduate to the full-time roster — let’s look at the five most intriguing prospects within the Maple Leafs’ system.

To be clear, this isn’t a ranking of the best prospects or the ones most likely to make the cut out of training camp, but rather the five players whose development we’re most interested in seeing play out in 2020-21.

5. Joseph Woll, G

GP: 32 | RECORD: 11-16-3 | GAA: 3.75 | SV%: .880

Goaltending depth — or lack thereof — has been a significant talking point around the Maple Leafs since Oct. 2, 2018, the day the organization lost both Curtis McElhinney and Calvin Pickard on waivers. Hopes that Garret Sparks or Michael Hutchinson could become a solid No. 2 were dashed, so GM Kyle Dubas traded for Jack Campbell this year and brought some stability to the position.

But Campbell’s contract is up in a couple years, and undisputed No. 1 Frederik Andersen will be due a significant raise under tight cap circumstances in 2021. Just ask the Philadelphia Flyers how nice it would be to have an entry-level goalie supplying wins.

Toronto is taking its time to groom the 21-year-old Woll, whose stellar showing for Boston College didn’t immediately translate to pro showings.

Playing behind a severely depleted Marlies blue line in 2019-20, Woll had a losing record and a sub-.900 save rate but didn’t lose his optimism or desire.

“He works incredible hard every day. His attitude is great,” Marlies assistant coach A.J. MacLean said. “He smiles all the time. You literally have to drag him off the ice every day. He’s a true professional. I have no doubts in his game any time he’s in the net.”

The athletic Woll has an opportunity to take a giant step in his second pro campaign and alter how we view the organization’s goaltending depth chart for the future.

4. Alexander Barabanov, RW

GP: 43 | G: 11 | A: 9 | PTS: 20

The 25-year-old Olympic gold medalist selected Toronto over several other franchises that expressed interest as his contract with SKA St. Petersburg expired in Russia.

Dubas signed the undersized talent to a \$925,000 one-year, entry-level deal on April 7 and hopes Barabanov can follow in the footsteps of 2019’s KHL import, Ilya Mikheyev: overachieve in third-line minutes, pitch in on the penalty kill, create scoring chances and help alleviate the club’s salary-cap challenges.

“We’re really excited to add another player to the fold here that we think’s got great experience and a great skill-set; very high character as well,” coach Sheldon Keefe said. “He just checks a lot of the boxes that you’re always looking for when you’re adding a player that you fully expect to step in and be an important part of your team.”

Despite his soft shot and short height (five-foot-10), the two-time Gagarin Cup champ will be given a long look in camp to make the cut.

“Barabanov’s definitely got what it takes to be a full-time NHL player,” tweeted KHL reporter Igor Eronko. “He won’t be a star, but he could become a great third-line player with ability to move up to replace injured guys. His skating is great as well as his work ethics, he’s very strong, he’s a beast one on one.”

3. Semyon Der-Arguchintsev, C

GP: 55 | G: 12 | A: 63 | PTS: 75

Playing Adam Oates to Nick Robertson’s Brett Hull on the Peterborough Petes, Der-Arguchintsev’s lopsided stat line screams puck distributor: 18 goals to 103 assists over his past two OHL seasons.

Adorable isn’t an adjective normally associated with hockey players, but the kid they call ‘SDA’ is as likeable as he is diminutive. That the 19-year-old’s skill is so outsized in relation to his five-foot-10, 163-pound build makes him a fascinating test case for the prototypical Dubas prospect.

Der-Arguchintsev can’t learn much more in juniors after four tours, but how he swims around the angry shoulders of professional grown-ups will be something to see.

Skill. Determination. Ambition.

Semyon Der-Arguchintsev sits down with @HockeyCrock to talk about his development and the decision to come to Canada. pic.twitter.com/9OjbnardHn

— Toronto Maple Leafs (@MapleLeafs) August 7, 2019

2. Jeremy Bracco, RW

GP: 44 | G: 4 | A: 30 | PTS: 34

The 23-year-old finds himself high on our ‘intriguing’ list for not entirely great reasons.

It is telling of how the organization views Bracco that of the six Marlies forwards given a look with the big club in 2019-20, he was not one — even after his record-setting 2018-19 performance in the AHL, in which he posted a line of 22-57-79.

Bracco, who terrorizes defenders on the power play, followed that up with just four goals, 34 points and a minus-10 rating this season. He found his name volleyed in trade rumours (undenied) and took some time away from the Marlies in February on a personal leave.

The kid’s hands and vision are such that it’s too early to write him off, but Bracco will need a resounding bounce-back, a change of scenery or both in 2020-21. An up-and-down prospect trajectory that’ll be worth following in the coming months.

1. Nick Robertson, LW

GP: 46 | G: 55 | A: 31 | PTS: 86

We’ve written extensively about Toronto’s 2019 second-round knockout pick, whose history is even more fascinating than his future.

When you treat the Ontario Hockey League like your own personal bubble-hockey game and rip 55 goals in 46 games, you’re going to garner a little attention as an 18-year-old.

The last player under age 19 to match Robertson’s 1.20 goals-per-game pace in the OHL was some guy named Eric Lindros, who set the historic mark of 1.25 way back in 1990-91.



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Dubas said last week he will give Robertson every opportunity to make the Leafs' opening-night roster in 2020-21, and the left flank of the club's top nine does present more room for improvement than the right.

Robertson has the shot, determination and personality to survive under the bright lights as a teenager. His size, strength and defensive responsibility will all be challenged.

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Sportsnet.ca / Breaking down P.K. Subban's rapid decline, why he could still be effective

Andrew Berkshire

In last week's analytics mailbag, I mentioned that I got a lot of questions about P.K. Subban. It's probably a little fortunate for Subban that he's been in a smaller market like New Jersey this season, because outside of Montreal Canadiens fans who either still love him or want to relitigate the trade that sent him to Nashville, there hasn't been too much attention on a disastrous season for him.

I touched on Subban's season back in early December in a piece on the players who had been most unlucky at that point in the season, and it's true that a big part of what ailed Subban's surface-level numbers was about on-ice percentages more than individual performance, but that doesn't mean that nothing was wrong.

In order to see what, if anything, has changed in Subban's game, let's look at the broad strokes and compare him to his peers in league ranks, expressed as percentiles. What this means if you're unfamiliar is that if a player ranks in the 99th percentile in a specific statistic, they are within the top one per cent of all players in their position in that statistic.

With SPORTLOGiQ data we can reach back five years into the past to Subban's final season with the Canadiens, and contrast each of the following seasons.

There are some areas where Subban hasn't really fallen off compared to his past self, like his overall success or failure rate on plays — which measures both volume of plays a player is involved in and how often they are successful in their attempts — along with maintaining a very strong defensive-zone-turnover rate compared to his peers, even before adjusting for team structure, which usually rockets Subban up the rankings even more.

Then there are the areas which are a bit more obvious to the eye, like Subban going from the 99th percentile in offence-generating plays in his last season in Montreal down to around 70th for the following three seasons in Nashville, down to below 60th this season. Those are steep drops in offensive contributions.

The drop upon landing in Nashville is probably partly due to joining a team that already had Roman Josi there as the primary offensive contributor from the back end, forcing Subban to take a decidedly less-risky approach to his game, which is reflected in going from the 80th percentile in defensive-zone-turnover rate to an average of 95th percentile while in Nashville.

Subban went from a wheeling and dealing risk taker, who was still excellent with the puck but also prone to some pretty big turnovers, to a lock-it-down defender who also managed to produce a strong amount of offence. It was a stylistic change that didn't really mark a drop-off in his game overall for the first couple of seasons, despite some struggles in the first year during the regular season, and even led to a Norris Trophy nomination in 2017-18.

Last season however, he saw a gigantic drop in his ability to move the puck, down to the 53rd percentile in transition plays, barely above an average defenceman, despite his strength of opposition dropping a little.

This season has actually seen a return to form in moving the puck, with Subban back to approaching the 80th percentile there, but with his offence dropping off significantly it's clear that most of his involvement isn't showing up in the offensive zone.

At the same time, Subban has seen the highest strength of opposition of his career, while seeing more defensive struggles than he's ever dealt with before. In the past, Subban was about average at defending his own blue line, while this season he's in the bottom 4.5 per cent of all defencemen in denying entries into his defensive zone. That porous defence at the blueline has cascaded into other problems, which has resulted in Subban posting among the worst on-ice slot-passes-against per 20 minutes in the league.

In terms of shots, he's still posting very strong numbers relative to his teammates, but the passes have been a big issue for him, so the shots against that do happen while he's on the ice end up being far more dangerous than most. That isn't typical for Subban either, who usually posts strong numbers in that area.

However, the number of slot passes against a player is on the ice for is highly correlated with the strength of opposition they face, so some of his struggles there can be attributed to tougher minutes with weaker teammates, but obviously not all.

The porous defence and lack of offence has sort of reduced Subban to a high level transition player this season — if you read any of the top-20 player rankings by position I used to do, you would know transition was Subban's weakest area over the last few seasons overall. The biggest reason for that has always been his reliance on dumping the puck out of the defensive zone instead of making a controlled play, but still it was the offensive and defensive zones that he exerted most of his impact in his prime.

Turning 31 in mid-May, decline is the normal pattern for a defenceman Subban's age, but that doesn't mean a player is no longer effective. Mike Green, for example, hasn't been anywhere near what he was for the Washington Capitals in his prime, but has been an excellent defenceman into his mid-30s, still a decent No. 2 on a lot of teams at this point despite his offensive game evaporating.

Subban's decline does seem rapid the last two years though, with steep drop-offs in specific areas that should be a little jarring to anyone who saw him in his prime. The cause behind those struggles has been speculated about for years with well-known issues with his back, and I do wonder if he ever fully recovered from that collision with Alexei Emelin on his last shift with the Montreal Canadiens.

The time where Subban was among the super elite defencemen in the NHL is likely over, but as he recovered his transition game this year following a steep drop-off last season, I don't think I would throw in the towel on him finding ways to adapt and get other areas of his game back to a reasonable area.

If the back issues are the reason behind it all, perhaps this extended time off caused by the global pandemic we're all mired in will be a blessing in disguise for the charismatic defenceman

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WHEN SPORTS PAUSED: Coronavirus causing indefinite break from high school sports

By Tim Dumas

The interruption for 9/11 was small. Nothing compared to the current situation concerning the coronavirus.



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Editor's note: The Daily News recently spoke to players and coaches who were part of championships during the fall of 2001, when sports paused briefly for the 9/11 attacks.

Celebration was the original plan.

Chris McCann was set to take his driver's test. Jill Masterson was turning 17.

The attacks on our country that day – Sept. 11, 2001 – turned any festive ideas upside down.

Everyone remembers where they were on that late-summer Tuesday. And how life stopped.

But it didn't take long for high school sports to return, despite all professional sports and most college games being canceled the following weekend.

Many high school football games went on as planned that Friday and Saturday, although some practices were canceled.

The interruption was small. Nothing compared to the current situation concerning the coronavirus.

The end of winter high school sports was cut off. While swimming, track and field, gymnastics and wrestling were able to complete their seasons and crown state champions, the same was not true for ice hockey and basketball.

Two basketball state championship games were played in empty arenas, but four others were canceled. The entire girls and boys hockey finals were scrapped.

For spring, not a single practice has been held. There is a chance the entire season may be lost. (Schools are closed until May 4.)

"My first thought is of weddings and (high school) seniors playing sports," said Tara (Dunn) Brauning, who played on a state championship volleyball team at Medway High in 2001.

Darren Eng, who won a state soccer title at Wayland that year, says the routine of going to school, then playing sports after class is the type of schedule many young athletes crave.

He's not sure what he would have done in the current situation.

"I've got to imagine that it's really tough to have something that you look forward to after school every day that you rely on as your outlet – it's got to be taking a huge toll," he said. "I feel terrible for everyone. It's not an easy time."

Phil Marchegiani, whose Marian High football team – with McCann at quarterback – won the EMass Division 6 Super Bowl in 2001, wonders about the future of contact sports like football once the COVID-19 scare ends.

There are many questions with few answers.

"What about team hand shakes? Should there be a ban on water bottles?" Marchegiani said. "What's the protocol for trainers, who already have enough on their plate. First there was how to handle the heat, then concussions, and bullying. This will be another type of protocol."

Still a chance

High school athletes across the state are clinging to the hope that the spring season can start May 4. The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association voted unanimously on March 30 on a season that extends an extra week (to June 27) to accommodate playoff tournaments.

Returning state champions (Hudson softball, Lincoln-Sudbury boys lacrosse, Wellesley girls track) and those that reached state finals (Hopkinton and Medway baseball, Algonquin girls tennis, Natick boys volleyball, L-S rugby) last spring are pining for the chance for additional success.

Fans would hate to miss out on seeing Franklin's Brennan Rivera rack up strikeout totals and Natick's Will Haskell (.445 batting average last year) rake at the plate. Another look at lacrosse All-Americans Matt Lazaro (Franklin) and Erin Walsh (Franklin) would be must-see opportunities.

On the tennis court, Olivia Almy (Algonquin), Kirstin Hailey (AMSA), Jack Figgins (Hopedale) and Aryan Nijhawan (Westborough) have more strokes to savor. On the track, Jules Hogan (AMSA), Schuyler Gooley (Hopkinton) and Tyler Brogan (Franklin) have plenty in the tank for another run - or in Hogan's case, leap – at All-States.

Haley Lee-Burke of Westborough/Algonquin was a top-10 player at golf's All-States a year ago and is a current senior.

And Milford boys volleyball is annually near the top of the standings.

All deserve another chance to showcase their talents, if only for a limited time.

But will they?

No matter what the month of May brings, this is not a time to take the larger view for granted.

Ricky Santos, who led Bellingham High to a EMass Super Bowl title in 2001 and is now the interim head football coach at the University of New Hampshire, calls the current situation for athletes "very challenging."

"The kids' mental well-being is a huge concern. We tell them to control what you can control," he said. "Take this opportunity to realize you are blessed that you're healthy. It's an opportunity to take a step back and realize you have it pretty good."

Santos is normally in the middle of Spring Practice this time of year, but feels fortunate to be able to spend more time with his two-year-old daughter.

And Medway High alum Brauning, who teamed with fellow senior Masterson to win that state volleyball title in 2001, hopes current athletes get the chance to take the field next month.

She cannot imagine not having that lasting memory of competing with teammates in a sport she loves.

"That was one of the best years of my life. I would relive that year all over again," she said. "I can't imagine giving that up."

9/11 led to a brief pause. The coronavirus has caused a break in the action that has left athletes in limbo for an indefinite period.

"I always take something positive out of things in life," Brauning said. "How are they going to take something positive out of this?"