



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 7, 2019

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### It's Canes-Bruins, again, and the memories flood back for Scott Walker

By Luke DeCock

Any sentence that contains the words “Carolina Hurricanes” and “Boston Bruins” and “playoffs” is going to end up working its way around to Scott Walker eventually. The hard-headed forward was the epicenter of that playoff series 10 years ago, from his Game 5 punch of Aaron Ward to his overtime goal in Game 7, buffeted by waves of emotion no one other than his teammates understood.

Walker had just finished watching the junior team he co-owns, the Guelph Storm, play in the Ontario Hockey League championship series Monday night when he saw that the Hurricanes and Bruins would meet again, this time in the Eastern Conference finals, and it all came back to him in a rush.

When he scored that overtime winner in 2009, Walker and the Hurricanes knew – but no one outside the team knew – that Walker’s wife Julie had just been diagnosed with cervical cancer. She’s fine now, but it was a difficult time for the Walker family and a joyous time, all at once.

“It just brings up a lot of memories – good, bad, indifferent,” Walker said Monday night from Guelph, where the Storm won Game 3 of the OHL finals. “I just had Cory Stillman at my house yesterday and it’s amazing how you still talk about the good times. And it shows how people can band together in the tough times.”

Watching the Hurricanes in these playoffs – and he has been watching, closely – brought back memories for the 45-year-old Walker even before Monday night, who coached Guelph for five years and is now the director of player development for the Vancouver Canucks.

He wasn’t the only one who thought Jordan Staal’s game-tying goal in Game 7 against the Washington Capitals in 2019 was a dead ringer for Eric Staal’s game-winner in Game 7 against the New Jersey Devils in 2009 – or that Brock McGinn’s overtime goal to beat the Capitals looked an awful lot like Walker’s overtime goal to beat the Bruins, crashing the crease to knock the puck out of midair.

“He had to outdo me and do it in double OT,” Walker joked.

McGinn’s success is especially gratifying for Walker, having coached McGinn in Guelph five years ago and recommended him to then-Hurricanes general manager Jim Rutherford. But there are also former teammates Rod Brind’Amour and Jeff Daniels behind the Carolina bench, and a whole host of friends made in his four seasons in Raleigh.

Walker is not at all surprised at Brind’Amour’s adaptation to coaching, having admired Brind’Amour as a player. Walker

joked that he could never quite break through Brind’Amour’s shell as a teammate, but the then-captain-now-coach’s legendary work ethic pushed him and everyone else to work a little harder.

It’s a surprising admission from Walker, who never seemed like the type to take a shift or a workout session off. He was never the biggest player but played relentlessly, physically, always right on the edge, and he could score when given the opportunity. If that sounds a little like McGinn, it’s probably not a coincidence given the time they spent together.

Walker raves about McGinn’s toughness and willingness to play the game the right way, and McGinn’s parents and family, but while he sees McGinn back home in Ontario during the summer, Walker also never quite felt comfortable reaching out to McGinn after his game-winner, as much as it reminded him of his own.

“They get busy,” Walker said. “They’ve got their own lives. It’s hard in the playoffs to stay connected. I don’t know whether those guys love me or hate me. It’s hard for those guys to stay in touch. All’s I ever tried to do was teach those guys to be pros.”

Watching the Hurricanes, and Walker has watched closely, it’s hard to shake the memories of 10 years ago. He remembers sitting on the visiting bench near the end of Game 7 in New Jersey, his mind wandering between shifts to the drudgery of packing up the house for the summer. Then Jussi Jokinen scored. And then Eric Staal scored. And then Walker was hopping over the boards for handshakes.

In his 15-year NHL career, that was by far the longest playoff run he ever had. There’s something about going that deep that builds bonds that losing in the first round doesn’t, bonds that can’t be broken all these years later.

And watching this team going through the same kind of experience, for Walker, it all comes echoing back.

“Brock McGinn’s overtime game winner, just like mine, you just wonder if that’s a coincidence,” Walker said. “Just like me scoring that overtime winner with what my wife was going through, you wonder if there’s not something else happening. I’m working with the Canucks so I can’t cheer too hard for (the Hurricanes), but we’re not in the playoffs right now, so I can quietly. I definitely have a soft spot for the Hurricanes.”

Safe to say the Hurricanes fans who remember Walker still have a soft spot for him. It’s impossible to think about 2009 without thinking about Walker. So much so, it’s impossible to think about the rematch a decade later without thinking about him.



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## Eastern Conference finals set: Canes will face the Bruins, who beat the Blue Jackets

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes have an opponent for the Eastern Conference finals: the Boston Bruins.

The Bruins wrapped up their second-round series Monday with a 3-0 road victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets, clinching the series 4-2.

The Bruins will host the first two games of the conference finals. Games 3 and 4 will be played at PNC Arena. The NHL did not release a schedule Monday after the Bruins' win.

The Canes and Bruins last faced off in the playoffs in 2009, the Canes winning the second-round series in seven games as Scott Walker scored an overtime winner at TD Garden.

The Canes were 1-1-1 against the Bruins in the regular season. A look at those games:

OCT. 30, 2018, PNC ARENA -- BRUINS 3, CANES 2

The Canes led 2-1 but Brad Marchand's goal with 18 seconds left in the second period tied it 2-2 and Marchand scored again

in the third for the lead. Scott Darling was the Canes goalie, making 28 saves in his season debut after returning from injury, and Jaroslav Halak had 42 stops for the B's.

DEC. 23, 2018, PNC ARENA -- CANES 5, BRUINS 3

It was a festive night as the Canes wore the iconic Hartford Whalers jerseys. Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen each scored shorthanded goals and each had four-point games as the Canes rallied from a 2-0 deficit. Petr Mrazek had 27 saves to earn the victory.

MARCH 5, 2019, TD GARDEN -- BOSTON BRUINS 4, CANES 3 OT

In overtime, Jake DeBrusk stole the puck from the Canes' Justin Faulk and passed to David Krejci for the winner. Aho scored twice for a 2-0 lead but the Canes, again wearing Whalers jerseys, were 0-5 on the power play -- "That cost us the game," Aho said. Curtis McElhinney was the Canes' goalie and had 34 saves.

## Canes' Mrazek, Ferland at practice, say they're ready to play

By Chip Alexander

Goalie Petr Mrazek and forward Micheal Ferland were on the ice Monday when the Carolina Hurricanes resumed practice after two days off. That was a good sign for the Canes.

Forward Jordan Martinook then left during practice, in some discomfort. That continues to be a concern.

Mrazek started the first nine games of the Stanley Cup playoffs but was forced out of Game 2 of the second-round series with the New York Islanders with a lower-body injury. Curtis McElhinney came in for Mrazek and was the winner in three straight games as the Hurricanes finished off the sweep.

Ferland has been out longer, aggravating an upper-body injury that has lingered throughout the season in Game 3 of the first-round series against the Washington Capitals. Both Mrazek and Ferland said they felt fine physically after Monday's lengthy practice at PNC Arena.

The Canes will face the winner of the Boston Bruins-Columbus Blue Jackets second-round series in the Eastern Conference finals. The Bruins led 3-2 heading into Monday night's game in Columbus.

Mrazek said the injury was frustrating but that by the morning after the game he was confident "it wasn't anything bad." By

Monday's practice, he said, "I don't even think about it anymore."

Mrazek praised McElhinney's play, saying, "Mac was outstanding and I'm very happy he played like he did and we finished the series in four games."

Ferland said last week that he hoped to be able to return Friday for Game 4 against the Islanders at PNC Arena but was not in the lineup.

"I'm feeling really good," Ferland said Monday. "Good little break we had now and I feel good to go. Obviously the pace is going to be a lot higher after the games I've missed but I just want to get in, be physical and get in the game that way, be solid in the defensive zone, get pucks deep. Try to get the game speed back."

Martinook has been slowed by a chronic lower-body injury that has had him in and out of the lineup in the playoffs. He was able to play the final two games of the Islanders series.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Monday that decisions on who would play Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals, including the starting goalie, would be made "when we have to make decisions."



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## Hurricanes' conference-finals contingencies remain fluid

By Luke DeCock

The Carolina Hurricanes could start the Eastern Conference finals as soon as Thursday in Boston or Friday at home, and where and when all depends not only on what happens Monday night but on the NHL, NBA and NBC as well.

The Hurricanes would start on the road if the Boston Bruins win their second-round series, at home if the Columbus Blue Jackets win. Beyond that, there are a lot of moving parts but a few likely scenarios.

If the Bruins win Game 6 on Monday, the next round is most likely to start Thursday in Boston, with the second game on Saturday or Sunday and the Hurricanes hosting Games 3 and 4 the middle of next week. If the Blue Jackets force a Game 7, things get more complicated.

A Columbus win in Boston on Wednesday would potentially lead to the Hurricanes hosting Game 1 on Friday with Game 2 at PNC Arena on Sunday. A Bruins win would see the Hurricanes travel to Boston for Game 1 on Saturday with Game 2 on Monday or Tuesday and Games 3 and 4 at PNC on some combination of Wednesday-Thursday-Friday-Saturday.

All of these scenarios remain fluid as the NHL and NBC work through the schedule. The biggest complication – beyond the demands of NBC, which is also waiting on the Western Conference to resolve itself – is the Boston Celtics, who are down 2-1 in their second-round series with the Milwaukee Bucks going into Monday night's Game 4 but have a potential home games scheduled for Friday. Until the Celtics are eliminated, the Bruins have to negotiate TD Garden dates with their NBA roommate.



## Gold: Canes vs Bruins; a look back

By Adam Gold

Ten years ago, the last time the Carolina Hurricanes graced the Stanley Cup playoffs with their presence, the Canes eliminated the Boston Bruins in the second round. But, it was really more than that. Two games after a controversial knockout punch from the fist of Scott Walker to the face of Boston defenseman Aaron Ward, it was Walker who sent the Bruins home on a rebound goal at 18:46 of overtime in Game 7.

This will be the fifth time in history that these two franchises have clashed in the post season, the first two of which occurred when the team was the Hartford Whalers. In 1990, the Bruins beat Hartford in seven games. The following season it took Boston six to dispatch the Whalers.

The Bruins and Hurricanes met in the 1999 post season, with the North Carolina home games played in Greensboro, the season before the Hurricanes moved into their new home in Raleigh. Boston won a grueling Game 5 in double overtime at the Greensboro Coliseum when Anson Carter scored with just over five minutes left in the second extra period. Then, two nights later, the B's shut the Canes out and advanced in six games.

This year, the teams met just three times and each was noteworthy for different reasons.

Tuesday, October 30, 2018, PNC Arena, Bruins 3, Hurricanes 2.

The night before Halloween, the Hurricanes hosted the Bruins as Scott Darling made his season debut. No doubt, you recall the Darling struggles of the previous season in which he was officially the worst starting goaltender in the National Hockey League. Well, a lot was made of the off-season conditioning

program, and Darling's girlfriend moving to Raleigh to help him gain some stability in his personal life.

During the pre-season, it appeared that everything was progressing beautifully. The second year Carolina backstop turned aside 43 of 46 shots in three pre-season appearances before leaving midway through the final exhibition game with a strained hamstring. Exactly one month later, Darling was back in the crease, only this time it was for keeps.

Through a period and a half, Darling was spectacular. He looked like a man determined to make good on a leap-of-faith contract signed under the previous regime. But then, a little more than midway through the second period, David Pastrnak fired a bad-angle wrist shot that somehow got through Darling to tie the game at one. Ultimately, it ended up a deflating 3-2 Bruins win.

Sunday, December 23, 2018, PNC Arena, Whalers 5, Bruins 3.

Yes, that's right. The first of two "Whalers Night" games took place two days before Santa's midnight ride as the Canes donned throwback kelly green Whalers uniforms and played in front of more than 17,000 fans at PNC Arena, the largest home crowd since the opening night sell out.

It didn't start out well, as the Bruins tagged Petr Mrazek for a pair of goals in the first nine minutes of the game. But, Teuvo Teravainen scored later in the first to cut the lead in half and Carolina would score three straight in the 2nd period en route to the win. Teravainen AND Sebastian Aho each scored twice, each potted one shorthanded, and each had two assists as the duo dominated the game.

Tuesday, March 5, 2019, TD Garden, Bruins 4, Hurricanes 3 (OT).



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Again, decked out in the locally familiar bright green uniforms, the Whalers got off to a fast start. Sebastian Aho scored twice to open up a 2-0 lead. But, Boston scored the games next three goals to forge ahead, taking the lead on a Patrice Bergeron marker 2:45 into the 3rd period. Justin Williams would tie the score with just under eight minutes to play and the game would ultimately be decided in overtime.

A minute 46 into the 3-on-3, David Krejci finished off a Jake DeBrusk pass and the Bruins skated off with two points.

So, the Bruins got the better (slightly) of the Hurricanes over the course of the season, and they've taken three of the four post season series from their former neighborhood rivals. But, the last time these two saw each other in the month of May it was the Hurricanes who managed to advance.

Ten years later, the two teams who once upon a time shared a region will now share a 200x85 foot rink for the right to play for the Stanley Cup.



## Bruins will play Hurricanes in Eastern Conference Final

Boston eliminated Blue Jackets in Game 6 of second round; Carolina swept Islanders

by David Satriano

The Boston Bruins will play the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference Final.

The Bruins advanced with a 3-0 win against the Columbus Blue Jackets in Game 6 on Monday. It will be their first conference final since 2013, when they lost in the Stanley Cup Final to the Chicago Blackhawks in six games.

"It's going to be a hard series," said goalie Tuukka Rask, who made 39 saves in Game 6. "But trying to enjoy this now. Get back at it, whenever. But [the Hurricanes are] a good team. Any team who's playing at this point is a great team and brings a great challenge. Should be interesting."

The Hurricanes defeated the New York Islanders 5-2 in Game 4 on May 3 to sweep the second-round series and advance to the conference final for the first time since 2009, which had been the last time they qualified for the Stanley Cup Playoffs. They defeated the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals in seven games in the first round.

"I'm just so proud of these guys. I can't even tell you," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said after Game 4 against New York. "They just grind it. It wasn't pretty, but I think a break is what they need more almost mentally. They need a little rest. Will it affect us in our first game? We're going to hear about that

maybe. There might be a little rust there, but I think we need it."

The Bruins, who finished second in the Atlantic Division and defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs in seven games in the first round, will have home-ice advantage in the series against the Hurricanes, who were the first Eastern wild card.

Carolina was 1-1-1 against Boston this season. Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen each had four points (two goals, two assists) in a 5-3 win Dec. 23. Petr Mrazek made 24 saves in the win, which was his only start. Curtis McElhinney allowed four goals on 38 shots in a 4-3 overtime loss March 5. Aho had seven points (four goals, three assists) in the three games.

"We saw them towards the end of the year, I believe," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "The pace. They can skate. And they're physical. They're kind of a mix of ... Columbus is a lot more heavy, Toronto is more pace. I think they're a little bit of both. Young team. D get up the ice."

Brad Marchand led Boston with five points (two goals, three assists), and Patrice Bergeron had four (one goal, three assists). Jaroslav Halak was 2-0-0, allowing five goals on 81 shots (2.47 GAA, .938 save percentage). Tuukka Rask allowed five goals on 32 shots in the 5-3 loss.

The Bruins and Hurricanes have split two playoff series, with Boston winning in the 1999 Eastern Conference Quarterfinals and Carolina winning in the 2009 conference semifinals.



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## Mrazek practices with Hurricanes, eyes Game 1 return

Goalie missed past two games with lower-body injury, could be healthy for Eastern Conference Final

by Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Petr Mrazek practiced Monday, but the goalie's status for the Carolina Hurricanes for Game 1 of the Eastern Conference Final remains unknown.

"He was in (the) full practice today with no limitations, so that's a positive," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I'm not going to make any decisions today, but getting more guys back is nice."

The Hurricanes will play the Boston Bruins in the conference final. The Bruins won their second-round series in six games against the Columbus Blue Jackets with a 3-0 victory Monday.

Mrazek sustained a lower-body injury during the second period of Carolina's 2-1 win against the New York Islanders in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Second Round at Barclays Center on April 28.

"I felt very good today, good sign," said Mrazek, who is 5-3 with a 2.22 goals-against average and .913 save percentage in nine playoff games. "The injury wasn't that bad. I felt 120 percent today, to be honest."

Curtis McElhinney replaced Mrazek, making 17 saves while the Hurricanes rallied in the third period with two goals.

McElhinney won Games 3 and 4, each by a 5-2 score, to finish the sweep.

"(McElhinney) was outstanding those two games," said Mrazek, who skated with Carolina goalie coach Mike Bales on Sunday before practicing Monday. "I'm very happy he played like he did and we finished the series in four games."

McElhinney has a 1.56 goals-against average and .947 save percentage in his seven periods of playoff hockey this season. In Game 3, the 35-year-old became the oldest goalie to start his first Stanley Cup Playoff game.

Micheal Ferland, who sustained an upper-body injury during Game 3 of the first round against the Washington Capitals on April 15, also practiced.

"Feeling good," said Ferland, who has no points and 14 penalty minutes in three playoff games. "If we have another couple (of) good days here, I'll be able to get back for Game 1. We've got a couple days of practice here, so I've just got to keep making progress."

Ferland, who had 40 points (17 goals, 23 assists) in 71 regular-season games, skated on game-day mornings during the second round and practiced on April 30.

"I would hope that he would be ready to go, and probably the longer we wait the better for him, so that's good," Brind'Amour said.

Jordan Martinook left midway through practice. The forward has missed three playoff games with a lower-body injury, including Games 1 and 2 against the Islanders. He has three assists in his eight postseason games.

Practice Monday came after the Hurricanes spent the weekend off the ice while watching the Bruins and Blue Jackets extend their series to Game 6, and a possible Game 7 on Wednesday.

"Any time you can get a mental break, it's as important as the physical stuff," Brind'Amour said. "Hopefully we will see dividends."

The players did their best to take advantage of rare downtime during the postseason. Carolina had one day off between Game 7 of the first round against the Capitals and Game 1 of the second round against the Islanders, each of which was a road game.

McElhinney said he took his family to a Durham Bulls minor-league baseball game. Sebastian Aho said he and Teuvo Teravainen played golf at a par-3 course. Brind'Amour said he umpired his son's baseball game.

"Got away a little bit, and obviously right back yesterday and today trying to figure out a game plan for whoever we're going to see," Brind'Amour said. "It's not so important for me to be rested but it's real important for the guys to take the time."

The Hurricanes will try to find the balance between benefiting from rest and being fine-tuned for their first trip to the third round since 2009.

The Islanders had nine days between games after sweeping the Pittsburgh Penguins and then were swept by the Hurricanes.

"The challenge is going to be to ramp back up at the right time," Brind'Amour said. "With the injuries that we're still dealing with a little bit, the time (off) is going to be good."



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## Hurricanes injured goalie Petr Mrazek returns to practice

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Carolina Hurricanes goalie Petr Mrazek was back at practice after leaving a playoff game early with a lower body injury.

Coach Rod Brind'Amour said Monday there were "no limitations" on his goalie and Mrazek said he felt "120%, to be honest."

Mrazek, who has stopped 210 of the 230 shots he's faced in the playoffs, was hurt early in the second period of Game 2 of

the Hurricanes' second-round series with the New York Islanders on April 28.

Backup Curtis McElhinney closed out that victory, then won Carolina's next two games on home ice to polish off the first four-game playoff sweep in franchise history.

Brind'Amour says it's "not that imperative to make any decisions" with at least a few days before the Eastern Conference final begins.



## Coach's Corner: Glad that 'Bunch of Jerks' shirts are making money

Consider Don Cherry impressed by the latest Carolina Hurricanes stunt.

Cherry called out their fanbase on Saturday by saying they were "front runners" during the current playoff run. The Hurricanes had fun with the latest dig and decided to create a "Bunch of Front Running Jerks" T-shirt.

"That [Hurricanes] PR guy is pretty good," Cherry said on Monday's Coach's Corner segment on Hockey Night in Canada. "And they make a lot of money on [the shirts], and it's pretty good, I gotta admit."

This isn't the first time he's inspired a team in this regard, as pointed out by Cherry himself. On a Coach's Corner segment during the 1992-93 Stanley Cup Playoffs, he labelled Vancouver Canucks superstar Pavel Bure a "little weasel" –

albeit in a complementary manner – when he tripped up Winnipeg Jets forward Keith Tkachuk.

"[Bure] kicked his feet out from under him. That little weasel," Cherry said. "I'm telling you, he's doing a great job so far, that Pavel Bure."

This led to the Canucks fans producing "Power Weasel" rally towels during their series against the Jets.

"Somebody is making money off of somebody and I'm glad to see somebody is making money," said Cherry of the Hurricanes' newest shirt release.

Carolina will take part in their first Eastern Conference Final since the 2008-09 season after sweeping the New York Islanders in their second-round series.



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## The Boston Globe

### What you need to know about the Carolina Hurricanes

They boasted unique postgame celebrations at home this year and feature a familiar face in defenseman Dougie Hamilton.

By Andrew Mahoney

All that's standing between the Bruins and a trip to the Stanley Cup Final is a bunch of jerks.

OK. That label seems a little harsh, but it was given to the Hurricanes by veteran broadcaster Don Cherry, who took exception to Carolina's postgame, on-ice victory celebrations at home.

"This is the National Hockey League. These guys, to me, are jerks," said Cherry. "They're still not drawing [fans]. I'll tell you one thing, they better not do this in the playoffs," he said. "That is absolutely ridiculous. I know all the broadcasters are afraid to say something . . . I know what I'm talking about. You never do anything like that. They're still not drawing. They're still a bunch of jerks, as far as I'm concerned."

Cherry seemed to be the only one bothered by the "Storm Surge" demonstrations, which took place at home, after the opposing team had already left the ice.

It began simple enough, with the team gathering at center ice after a home victory and leading the crowd in a slow clap. They soon became more elaborate. One stunt featured the team getting bowled over by a helmet, another involved a basketball being dunked. The wins, and celebrations, continued to pile up as Carolina qualified for the playoffs for the first time since 2009.

The Hurricanes embraced Cherry's criticism, even printing up shirts. Alas, the team decided to limit the celebrations to the regular season. Maybe they just ran out of ideas. They would have needed at least eight more, as they defeated the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals in seven games, then swept the New York Islanders in the second round to reach the conference finals.

How they fared this season

The Bruins won two of the three meetings this season.

In the first meeting of the season on Oct. 30, Brad Marchand had a pair of goals, including the game-winner, as the Bruins won on the road, 3-2.

The lone win for Carolina came just before Christmas. The Bruins led, 2-0, on a pair of goals from Ryan Donato, but the Hurricanes rallied on a pair of shorthanded goals to outscore the Bruins, 5-1, the rest of the way for a 5-3 win.

The Bruins won the rubber match on March 5 on David Krejci's overtime goal to send Carolina, sporting throwback green Hartford Whalers uniforms, to a 4-3 defeat.

The man behind the bench

Rod Brind'Amour is in his first season as head coach after spending the previous seven years as an assistant in the organization. He played 21 seasons in the NHL, including the final 10 with the Hurricanes before retiring in 2010. He finished his playing career with 452 goals and 732 assists and won a Stanley Cup with the Hurricanes in 2006.

Who's in goal?

Goalies Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney essentially split up the duties during the regular season, with Mrazek posting a 23-14-3 record with a .914 save percentage in 40 starts, while McElhinney, 35, was 20-11-2 in 33 starts with a .912 save percentage.

Mrazek started the first nine games of the playoffs, including all seven of the first-round win over the Capitals. After Mrazek sustained a lower-body injury and was unable to finish Game 2 of the second round, McElhinney answered the call, getting the last three wins to close out the Islanders with a .947 save percentage.

Mrazek has been back practicing with the team, leaving Brind'Amour with a tough decision.

Players to watch

Sebastian Aho: In his third season with the Hurricanes, Aho, 21, had a career year, leading the team with 30 goals and 53 assists. He followed that up with four goals and five assists in 11 playoff games.

Teuvo Teravainen: Teravainen is Aho's linemate and was the second leading scorer with 21 goals and 55 assists.

Micheal Ferland: The 6-foot-2, 208-pound forward tallied 17 goals to go with 23 assists in 71 games, but he's missed the last eight playoff games with an upper body injury. He is targeting a return for Game 1 of the conference finals.

Justin Williams: The veteran forward, 37, was third on the team in scoring with 23 goals and 30 assists.

Jordan Staal: A concussion limited Staal to just 50 games during the regular season, but he was able to return to the lineup in late February and finish strong. That has carried over into the playoffs, where Staal has four goals and five assists in 11 games.

Familiar names

Dougie Hamilton: Taken with the ninth pick in the 2011 NHL Draft, Bruins fans were hoping Hamilton would become a No. 1 franchise defenseman and take some of the burden off Zeno Chara. But after Hamilton rejected the team's contract offer as he headed to restricted free agency, the Bruins



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shipped him to the Calgary Flames after the 2014-15 season ahead of the NHL Draft for a first-round pick and two second-rounders.

The Bruins selected Zach Senyshyn, Jakob Forsbacka Karlsson, and Jeremy Lauzon with the picks acquired in the trade, while Hamilton signed a six-year, \$34.5 million deal with the Flames. Hamilton never really blossomed into a franchise defenseman while in Calgary, and was traded to the Hurricanes last summer.

He caught some flak in Carolina's first-round win over the Capitals when he pulled up and gave up on retrieving the puck rather than take a hit from Alex Ovechkin. But he came out on the right end of a playoffs moment after the Hurricanes swept the Islanders in the second round.

In Game 3 of the series, the Islanders' Brock Nelson celebrated a goal from teammate Josh Bailey by patting McElhinney on the head as he skated through the crease. It was a move that stuck with Hamilton, apparently. After Carolina completed a sweep of the Islanders, Hamilton made sure to return the favor, patting Nelson on the top of the head as he passed him in the handshake line.

Trevor van Riemsdyk: Just as his older brother James did before him, van Riemsdyk played at University of New Hampshire and helped the Wildcats reach the NCAA Tournament in 2013.

Patrick Brown: The forward played for Boston College from 2010-2014. His father Doug and uncle Greg also played at BC before going on to the NHL. He is a cousin to actresses Kate and Rooney Mara.



## Carolina Hurricanes to face Boston Bruins in Eastern Conference Final

The Jerks are headed to Boston, where they will undoubtedly find more than their share of kindred spirits.

By Brian LeBlanc

After a pair of series against first-time opponents in rounds 1 and 2 of the 2019 NHL playoffs, the Carolina Hurricanes will face an old nemesis for the right to play for the Stanley Cup.

The Boston Bruins locked up their spot in the Eastern Conference Final on Monday night by defeating the Columbus Blue Jackets 3-0 in Game 6 of their second-round series. As a result, the Hurricanes will again face the Bruins, who they have now faced in three of their five playoff seasons since moving to North Carolina in 1997, the second-most frequent opponent for the Hurricanes behind the four meetings with the New Jersey Devils.

The schedule for the series is not official yet, but based on arena availability around the league, we believe Game 3 will be next Tuesday and Game 4 next Thursday at PNC Arena. That sets up the following schedule for the first four games:

- Game 1: at Boston, Thursday, May 9, 7:30 p.m., NBCSN
- Game 2: at Boston, Sunday, May 12, 3:00 p.m., NBC
- Game 3: at Carolina, Tuesday, May 14, 7:30 p.m., NBCSN
- Game 4: at Carolina, Thursday, May 16, 7:30 p.m., NBCSN

The remainder of the schedule will be released by the NHL on Tuesday, and this article will be updated at that time.

## Comparing the 2009 Hurricanes and the 2019 Hurricanes

Ten years later, the Hurricanes are back in the postseason. And this time, they're here to stay.

By Brett Finger

Ten years is a long time in the world of professional sports, and no one knows that better than the Carolina Hurricanes.

A decade removed from their last playoff run, the Canes are back and they're making the most of the present, just like they did in 2009. The goal now for Carolina is to sustain the success they are currently having - something they absolutely failed to do in their last time around.

Perhaps it's premature to be saying, "okay, but what's next?", but I don't care. Let's talk about the similarities and differences between this year's Hurricanes team and the team that made its way to the 2009 Eastern Conference Final.

Spoiler alert: there's a lot to like with the 2019 Carolina Hurricanes.

### NHL Team Comparisons

Back in 2009, the Hurricanes finished with a record of 45-30-7, which was good for 97 points and the sixth seed in the Eastern Conference. They were also second place in the Southeast Division, just in case you needed another reminder of how long ago this was.

This season, the Canes finished 46-29-7 (one win better than the '09 team) with 99 points and the seventh seed in the East.

Here's how the other numbers compare:

Statistically, there are a lot of similarities - it's almost scary.

Both teams ranked 16th in the NHL in goals for and 8th in goals against, though the 2019 team scored more goals over the course of the season. Both teams also ranked identical in penalty killing and were in the same ballpark on the man advantage.



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The real differences come with age, and those differences are pretty massive.

This year's forward group is, on average, five years younger than the 2009 team. On the blue line, this year's team is almost four years younger.

In 2009, the team's top-six point-producing forwards (Ray Whitney, Eric Staal, Tuomo Ruutu, Rod Brind'Amour, Sergei Samsonov, Matt Cullen) had an average age of 30.8 years old. The only sub-30 forwards in that group, of course, were Staal and Ruutu.

2019's top-six point producers up front (Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, Justin Williams, Micheal Ferland, Andrei Svechnikov, and Nino Niederreiter) clock in at an average age of 25.3 years old. For my non-math majors out there, that's 5.5 years younger than the club from a decade ago. In contrast to that team, of this year's top-six forwards (in points), five of the six are under the age of 30 and none of those players are older than 26. Justin Williams is the lone member of that group on the wrong side of 30 (though, in his case, you could maybe argue that both sides of 30 are his right side of 30).

Much of that young forward group is locked into contracts. Teravainen signed an insanely valuable five-year extension earlier in the season, Niederreiter signed a long-term deal with Minnesota before being traded, and Svechnikov has two years left on his ELC. Aho is a pending RFA whose AAV could eclipse \$10 million, but he's just 21 and his 83 points this season was more than any player on the 2009 team, including a then-24-year-old Eric Staal. Ferland is likely out the door, though. Williams isn't going anywhere.

On the blue line, Carolina's current biggest strength, the 2019 team saw four guys (Dougie Hamilton, Justin Faulk, Jaccob Slavin, and Brett Pesce) finish with 30+ points (Pesce had 29 points in 73 games so I'm counting him) and those four guys are under contract beyond this season and have an average age of 24.8 years old. The 2009 team had a strong offensive output from the back end as well with three blue-liners finishing north of 30 points. The difference lies in age as Joe Corvo, Anton Babchuk, and Joni Pitkanen had an average age of 26.7 years old and Babchuk's contract dispute led to him playing in Russia the next season before coming back to Carolina in 2010-11 and eventually getting traded.

On top of this year's Carolina blue line being young and extremely productive on both ends of the ice, they're all locked in for next season and beyond. In Slavin and Pesce's case, they're two pillars for this team and they're under long-term, team-friendly contracts.

In net, the 2009 Hurricanes had their flag firmly planted in Cam Ward, whose .916 save percentage had him in the Vezina Trophy conversation. Michael Leighton's .901 save percentage was far from stellar in his backup role.

We have another big contrast this year. Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney largely split starts this season and they both finished with above-average save percentages at .914 and .912, respectively. They are both pending UFA's, so the future isn't quite as certain here. Mrazek will almost assuredly be brought back given his excellent regular and

postseason run at a still very young age at 27. McElhinney is a question mark.

Cap construction is a big part of the equation, as well. For the life of me, I couldn't find any reliable cap numbers from the 2008-09 season, but the 2019 Hurricanes are positioned to be fine with the salary cap given the long-term smart-money deals on the blue line and no outrageous deals signed, outside of Scott Darling who has been buried in the minors. The Canes are projected to have just shy of \$30 million available in cap space this summer to take care of guys like Aho, Mrazek, Williams, and Ferland who are among the players in line for new deals.

## In the System

One of the good things about being terrible for a decade is that you're given an opportunity to select key players higher up in the seven rounds of the draft. Under Ron Francis, the Canes managed to do that.

Among the young core of recently drafted players in Carolina now are Aho, Svechnikov, Foegele, and Wallmark. Back in 2009, the list was much shorter and included the likes of... Brandon Sutter (whose rookie NHL season was comprised of 50 games and 9 total points)? There really weren't many young, recently drafted and developed players on the 2009 team, as the average age of the club would suggest. Eric Staal certainly wasn't a new player in the league at that point as he had five seasons in the league under his belt and was 25 years old in October of that season.

In the farm system, the Canes had little to offer, as well. Jamie McBain, Zach Boychuk, Zac Dalpe, Drayson Bowman, Chris Terry, Jerome Samson, Michal Jordan, and Justin Peters were among the notable prospects in the Carolina system at the time. Ten years later, they're all out of the NHL.

The 2019 farm system, however, is extremely promising.

At the top of the list, you have Martin Necas, who projects to be a top-six offensive force in the NHL as soon as next season thanks to his great rookie year in Charlotte. Julien Gauthier, Aleksii Saarela, Janne Kuokkanen, Morgan Geekie, Stelio Mattheos, and Nicolas Roy are all forwards in Charlotte who project as future NHLers. Some could be top-six or top-nine contributors, some could be role players at the bottom of the depth chart, and some may never make it even that far. Regardless, this iteration of the Carolina farm system offers a lot more upside than it did ten years ago, and it's really not even close.

Adding in defenseman Jake Bean, who had a banner rookie season with the Checkers, makes things look even better, as does the development of goalies Alex Nedeljkovic and Callum Booth. Nedeljkovic could be a full-time NHLer as soon as next season, depending on what happens with Carolina's goalie situation over the summer.

## Conclusion

Obviously, more goes into team construction and a team's future than current results, age, and farm systems. Coaching is huge, as is the state of the front office. Fortunately for the Hurricanes, Brind'Amour's rookie year behind the bench has been unbelievably impressive and Waddell and company's work up top has seen wins in the trade realm



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(i.e. Niederreiter for Rask and the Flames trade which brought in an offensive dynamo on the blue line in Hamilton).

The 2009 playoff run for the Hurricanes was exciting, but it was also very different from what the 2019 playoff run is. Ten years ago, it was a veteran group of players who had been around the block and were looking to make one of their final pushes in the postseason. This year, it's a young team full of a talent that is making its first run of what should be many to come thanks to how well this team has been constructed, the age of those involved, and the salary cap structure.

Regardless of how this postseason ends, you can feel comfortable knowing that this is not going to be another 10-

year playoff drought in the making. This is the beginning of what will be sustained success for the Hurricanes unlike anything that we've seen from this franchise... ever?

With core pieces like Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, Andrei Svechnikov, Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce, Nino Niederreiter, Jordan Staal, and Dougie Hamilton in place and the likes of Martin Necas, Julien Gauthier, Jake Bean, and Alex Nedeljkovic on the way, I don't think there's ever been a more stable time in this club's history. This organization is built the right way on the ice and on the spreadsheets and they're already experiencing success at all levels.

## Who's Next? - A Look at the Possible Opponents in the Eastern Conference Finals

The Hurricanes are in the conference final, but they still don't know who their opponent will be. How would the two contenders measure up against the Canes?

By Andy House

While the Carolina Hurricanes rest up following their round two sweep of the New York Islanders, the battle on the other side of the bracket rages on as the Boston Bruins and Columbus Blue Jackets continue to fight it out for the right to meet the Hurricanes. With the Bruins currently holding a 3-2 series lead, a Bruins win in Columbus on Monday night would set the stage for the Conference Finals, while a Blue Jackets home victory would result in a Game 7 in Boston on Wednesday. Below is a breakdown of the two teams, and a bit about which may well be a better matchup for the Canes.

In this corner...

Boston Bruins

While it has been six years since the Boston Bruins last advanced beyond the second round of the playoffs, the veteran squad from Beantown does have a significant history in the postseason. A team that has shown time and again that their toughness and defensive style can control games, the B's have already participated in six one-goal games in the postseason. With a veteran core group of players that include Patrice Bergeron, Brad Marchand, the ageless Zdeno Chara, and David Krejci, the past few seasons have seen the influx of the next generation of Bruins stars with David Pastrnak, Jake DeBrusk and Charlie McAvoy picking up a heavier load in terms of offensive production and defensive responsibility.

For the second season in a row, Pastrnak led the Bruins in goals (38 goals), as he has quickly become the most dominant offensive talent on the roster. His all-around offensive game continues to allow him to not only convert his chances, but create excellent opportunities for others. With three goals and four points in the past two victories over Columbus to help build the 3-2 series advantage, it is clear that Pastrnak is the go-to offensive weapon in Boston.

Defensively, the Bruins have put together the typical successful defensive system along with effort that makes scoring in the postseason so difficult. By making it hard for teams to enter the zone with any sort of speed in the neutral zone, they are forcing more dump-ins and relying on massive

bodies like Chara and Brandon Carlo to win those battles and make generating offense that much more difficult for their opponent.

Tuukka Rask, who has often been maligned in Boston, has put together a terrific playoff performance to date. His .932 save percentage has consistently given the Bruins a chance each night in the postseason, even when Boston has struggled scoring themselves. He has also played a big part in bailing out his teammates who, at times in both the Columbus and Toronto series, have gotten careless with turnovers when exiting the defensive zone.

Boston entered play with the Blue Jackets coming off of a grueling seven game series with the Leafs. If the Jackets can hold serve at home in Game 6, Boston would again be pushed to a Game 7 at home. Would fatigue become a factor should they advance?

And in this corner...

Columbus Blue Jackets

While the Blue Jackets entered the postseason as the final entrant from the Eastern Conference, they announced their presence with resounding authority as they ousted the President's Trophy-winning Tampa Bay Lightning in a four-game sweep. Buoyed by significant trade deadline acquisitions in Matt Duchene, Ryan Dzingel, and Adam McQuaid (out thus far in the playoffs due to injury), the Blue Jackets shrugged off their uneven play and trade rumors for their own impending UFAs in Artemi Panarin and Sergei Bobrovsky to secure the second wildcard in the East.

In the playoffs, they have been nothing short of spectacular, led by the incredible work from Bobrovsky in net. His .928 save percentage and 2.33 goals against average do not accurately tell the picture of the terrific work the two-time Vezina winner has done. Operating in the John Tortorella system that places a high value on blocking shots in front of the goaltender leads to maximum buy-in on the defensive end, but also can lead to a number of screened shots towards the net if the attempt isn't blocked. Bobrovsky has been a wizard with his positioning and rebound control, while also making the occasional spectacular save on deflections and rebound attempts.

The bottom line is, the Blue Jackets will continue to ride their goalie as far as he can take them.



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Offensively, Columbus has been much quieter against Boston, having not scored more than three goals in any one game and a total of 11 goals in the first five games. The attack has been led by the two guys you would expect to have a big role. Duchene and Panarin each have tallied five goals to date, including two pivotal goals from Duchene in the two wins against Boston (OT winner in Game 2, and the game winner in Game 3).

The other star that has blossomed in the postseason run thus far has been defenseman Seth Jones. Averaging 28:30 of ice time in the playoffs, Jones has been a warrior for the Blue Jackets as he plays on every unit for the team. His nine points (three goals, six assists) only provide a small view of what he has provided his team as the most valuable skater on the ice.

In order for the Blue Jackets to advance past Boston, however, they will need more production from the rest of their roster. Cam Atkinson only has two goals in nine playoff games after scoring 41 during the regular season. Dzingel, Josh Anderson, and Boone Jenner, all important secondary scorers for the Blue Jackets, have combined for only three points in the entire second-round series. Without getting production from those players who were so valuable all season, the Jackets will fight an increasingly uphill battle against the Bruins.

What Outcome is Best for Carolina?

While both teams will present significant challenges (of course they will, it is the Eastern Conference Finals!), I believe the nod will go towards Columbus being the favored opponent at this time. Two reasons for this:

1) The Hurricanes would hold the home-ice advantage over the Blue Jackets, meaning Games 1, 2, 5, and 7 would be in Raleigh, where the Canes are currently unbeaten in postseason play.

2) The familiarity of a divisional opponent would turn the contest into more of a battle of wills, as neither team will be able to present many surprises to the other. Both teams are what they are at this point, it will only come down to who executes their game the best.

Above all else, Canes fans should root for a Columbus victory in Game 6 to push this series back to Boston. Canes fans are surely aware of the toll the seven-game has on a team after the Canes first round victory, but Boston would be pushing themselves to the limit in back-to-back series. Although the edge gained could be small, every detail matters at this time of year. Also, who doesn't want an extra game! Enjoy the hockey!



## Carolina Hurricanes playoff history against the Boston Bruins

Bruins lead all-time postseason series with Hurricanes 3-1

By Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – Well, the Carolina Hurricanes' rest between Stanley Cup playoff series is over.

The Hurricanes will face the Boston Bruins in the Eastern Conference Final, marking the fifth head-to-head postseason meeting between the franchises.

The Bruins own a 3-1 edge in the four previous series, matchups that each required no fewer than six games.

For the nostalgic ones, two of those series took place prior to the 1997-98 season when the Hurricanes franchise played in Hartford – a part of the history of the former 'Battle of New England' rivalry.

Some interesting notes (via NHL.com) from those past meetings between the two clubs:

- In the 1990 Division Semifinals, the Bruins rallied from 1-0 and 2-1 series deficits before earning a 3-1 win in Game 7 to eliminate the Whalers. Bruins President and Alternate Governor Cam Neely and future Whalers/Hurricanes defenseman Glen Wesley assisted on the series-clinching goal by Craig Janney – a native of Hartford.
- In the 1991 Division Semifinals, Neely led all Bruins players with five goals (5-3—8 in 6 GP) as Boston skated to a six-game triumph over Hartford.

- In the 1999 Conference Quarterfinals, Anson Carter scored the double-overtime winner in Game 5 as Boston took a 3-2 series lead over Carolina before Bruins goaltender Byron Dafoe earned a series-clinching shutout in Game 6.

Overtime finishes

In the 2009 Conference Semifinals, Scott Walker scored the overtime winner in Game 7 to power the Hurricanes past the Bruins, marking Carolina's last postseason series win prior to the 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Walker became the first player in Hurricanes/Whalers franchise history to score an overtime goal in a Game 7 – a feat Canes forward Brock McGinn also accomplished in the 2019 First Round series win over the defending Stanley Cup-defending Washington Capitals.

2018-2019 regular season

The Bruins held a 2-1-0 edge in the three-game season series with the Hurricanes during the regular season (CAR: 1-1-1).

Carolina donned vintage Hartford jerseys for two of those contests, including on Dec. 23, 2018 when Sebastian Aho (2g, 2a) and Teuvo Teravainen (2g, 2a) each collected four points and led the Hurricanes to victory on Whalers Night at PNC Arena.



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## AHL suspends Dennis Robertson for one game

by Nicholas Niedzielski

The AHL today announced a one-game suspension for Checkers defenseman Dennis Robertson.

The suspension comes as the result of a match penalty assessed to Robertson for a check to the head in Game 2 on Saturday.

The defenseman will miss Tuesday's Game 3 in Hershey, as

will Bears defenseman Tyler Lewington, who was also suspended for one game as a result of his actions in Game 2.

With Robertson suspended, the Checkers have the option of dressing one of their tryout options in Eric Williams, a Northeastern University product who has played two playoff games thus far, or Jesper Sellgren, a Hurricanes draft pick who played in the Swedish Hockey League this season but has yet to make his North American debut.

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## SportScan

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

1144016 Carolina Hurricanes

It's Canes-Bruins, again, and the memories flood back for Scott Walker

BY LUKE DECOCK

Any sentence that contains the words "Carolina Hurricanes" and "Boston Bruins" and "playoffs" is going to end up working its way around to Scott Walker eventually. The hard-headed forward was the epicenter of that playoff series 10 years ago, from his Game 5 punch of Aaron Ward to his overtime goal in Game 7, buffeted by waves of emotion no one other than his teammates understood.

Walker had just finished watching the junior team he co-owns, the Guelph Storm, play in the Ontario Hockey League championship series Monday night when he saw that the Hurricanes and Bruins would meet again, this time in the Eastern Conference finals, and it all came back to him in a rush.

When he scored that overtime winner in 2009, Walker and the Hurricanes knew – but no one outside the team knew – that Walker's wife Julie had just been diagnosed with cervical cancer. She's fine now, but it was a difficult time for the Walker family and a joyous time, all at once.

"It just brings up a lot of memories – good, bad, indifferent," Walker said Monday night from Guelph, where the Storm won Game 3 of the OHL finals. "I just had Cory Stillman at my house yesterday and it's amazing how you still talk about the good times. And it shows how people can band together in the tough times."

Watching the Hurricanes in these playoffs – and he has been watching, closely – brought back memories for the 45-year-old Walker even before Monday night, who coached Guelph for five years and is now the director of player development for the Vancouver Canucks.

He wasn't the only one who thought Jordan Staal's game-tying goal in Game 7 against the Washington Capitals in 2019 was a dead ringer for Eric Staal's game-winner in Game 7 against the New Jersey Devils in 2009 – or that Brock McGinn's overtime goal to beat the Capitals looked an awful lot like Walker's overtime goal to beat the Bruins, crashing the crease to knock the puck out of midair.

"He had to outdo me and do it in double OT," Walker joked.

Game 7, 2009 Eastern Conference semifinals at Boston, 5/14/09. Scott Walker scored the overtime game-winner to move the Hurricanes into the conference finals.

McGinn's success is especially gratifying for Walker, having coached McGinn in Guelph five years ago and recommended him to then-Hurricanes general manager Jim Rutherford. But there are also former teammates Rod Brind'Amour and Jeff Daniels behind the Carolina bench, and a whole host of friends made in his four seasons in Raleigh.

Walker is not at all surprised at Brind'Amour's adaptation to coaching, having admired Brind'Amour as a player. Walker joked that he could

never quite break through Brind'Amour's shell as a teammate, but the then-captain-now-coach's legendary work ethic pushed him and everyone else to work a little harder.

It's a surprising admission from Walker, who never seemed like the type to take a shift or a workout session off. He was never the biggest player but played relentlessly, physically, always right on the edge, and he could score when given the opportunity. If that sounds a little like McGinn, it's probably not a coincidence given the time they spent together.

Walker raves about McGinn's toughness and willingness to play the game the right way, and McGinn's parents and family, but while he sees McGinn back home in Ontario during the summer, Walker also never quite felt comfortable reaching out to McGinn after his game-winner, as much as it reminded him of his own.

"They get busy," Walker said. "They've got their own lives. It's hard in the playoffs to stay connected. I don't know whether those guys love me or hate me. It's hard for those guys to stay in touch. All's I ever tried to do was teach those guys to be pros."

Watching the Hurricanes, and Walker has watched closely, it's hard to shake the memories of 10 years ago. He remembers sitting on the visiting bench near the end of Game 7 in New Jersey, his mind wandering between shifts to the drudgery of packing up the house for the summer. Then Joni Pitkanen scored. And then Eric Staal scored. And then Walker was hopping over the boards for handshakes.

In his 15-year NHL career, that was by far the longest playoff run he ever had. There's something about going that deep that builds bonds that losing in the first round doesn't, bonds that can't be broken all these years later.

And watching this team going through the same kind of experience, for Walker, it all comes echoing back.

The Carolina Hurricanes' Scott Walker (24) puts the game-winning shot past the Boston Bruins' Dennis Wideman (6) and Tim Thomas (30) during overtime of Game 7 in Boston, Thursday May 14, 2009. The Canes beat the Bruins 3-2 in overtime to advance to the Eastern Conference finals in the Stanley Cup playoffs. N&O file photo

"Brock McGinn's overtime game winner, just like mine, you just wonder if that's a coincidence," Walker said. "Just like me scoring that overtime winner with what my wife was going through, you wonder if there's not something else happening. I'm working with the Canucks so I can't cheer too hard for (the Hurricanes), but we're not in the playoffs right now, so I can quietly. I definitely have a soft spot for the Hurricanes."

Safe to say the Hurricanes fans who remember Walker still have a soft spot for him. It's impossible to think about 2009 without thinking about Walker. So much so, it's impossible to think about the rematch a decade later without thinking about him.

LUKE DECOCK

News Observer LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144017 Carolina Hurricanes



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 7, 2019

Eastern Conference finals set: Canes will face the Bruins, who beat the Blue Jackets

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

The Carolina Hurricanes have an opponent for the Eastern Conference finals: the Boston Bruins.

The Bruins wrapped up their second-round series Monday with a 3-0 road victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets, clinching the series 4-2.

The Bruins will host the first two games of the conference finals. Games 3 and 4 will be played at PNC Arena.

The Canes and Bruins last faced off in the playoffs in 2009, the Canes winning the second-round series in seven games as Scott Walker scored an overtime winner at TD Garden.

The Canes were 1-1-1 against the Bruins in the regular season. A look at those games:

OCT. 30, 2018, PNC ARENA -- BRUINS 3, CANES 2

The Canes led 2-1 but Brad Marchand's goal with 18 seconds left in the second period tied it 2-2 and Marchand scored again in the third for the lead. Scott Darling was the Canes goalie, making 28 saves in his season debut after returning from injury, and Jaroslav Halak had 42 stops for the B's.

DEC. 23, 2018, PNC ARENA -- CANES 5, BRUINS 3

It was a festive night as the Canes wore the iconic Hartford Whalers jerseys. Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen each scored shorthanded goals and each had four-point games as the Canes rallied from a 2-0 deficit. Petr Mrazek had 27 saves to earn the victory.

MARCH 5, 2019, TD GARDEN -- BOSTON BRUINS 4, CANES 3 OT

In overtime, Jake DeBrusk stole the puck from the Canes' Justin Faulk and passed to David Krejci for the winner. Aho scored twice for a 2-0 lead but the Canes, again wearing Whalers jerseys, were 0-5 on the power play -- "That cost us the game," Aho said. Curtis McElhinney was the Canes' goalie and had 34 saves.

Carolina Hurricanes Haydn Fleury (4) talks about his playoff experience and team chemistry. By

CHIP ALEXANDER

News Observer LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144018 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes' Mrazek, Ferland at practice, say they're ready to play

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

RALEIGH

Goalie Petr Mrazek and forward Micheal Ferland were on the ice Monday when the Carolina Hurricanes resumed practice after two days off. That was a good sign for the Canes.

Forward Jordan Martinook then left during practice, in some discomfort. That continues to be a concern.

Canes

Mrazek started the first nine games of the Stanley Cup playoffs but was forced out of Game 2 of the second-round series with the New York Islanders with a lower-body injury. Curtis McElhinney came in for Mrazek and was the winner in three straight games as the Hurricanes finished off the sweep.

Ferland has been out longer, aggravating an upper-body injury that has lingered throughout the season in Game 3 of the first-round series against the Washington Capitals. Both Mrazek and Ferland said they felt fine physically after Monday's lengthy practice at PNC Arena.

Carolina Hurricanes Haydn Fleury (4) talks about his playoff experience and team chemistry. By

The Canes will face the winner of the Boston Bruins-Columbus Blue Jackets second-round series in the Eastern Conference finals. The Bruins led 3-2 heading into Monday night's game in Columbus.

Mrazek said the injury was frustrating but that by the morning after the game he was confident "it wasn't anything bad." By Monday's practice, he said, "I don't even think about it anymore."

Mrazek praised McElhinney's play, saying, "Mac was outstanding and I'm very happy he played like he did and we finished the series in four games."

Ferland said last week that he hoped to be able to return Friday for Game 4 against the Islanders at PNC Arena but was not in the lineup.

"I'm feeling really good," Ferland said Monday. "Good little break we had now and I feel good to go. Obviously the pace is going to be a lot higher after the games I've missed but I just want to get in, be physical and get in the game that way, be solid in the defensive zone, get pucks deep. Try to get the game speed back."

Martinook has been slowed by a chronic lower-body injury that has had him in and out of the lineup in the playoffs. He was able to play the final two games of the Islanders series.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Monday that decisions on who would play Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals, including the starting goalie, would be made "when we have to make decisions."

News Observer LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144019 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes' defensive group a good fit for faster, younger NHL

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

Younger, faster, agile, mobile — those are words often used about the changing face of the National Hockey League as the game continues to become more about speed, skill and skating.

They're also the right words to describe the Carolina Hurricanes' defensive corps.

It's a mix of defensemen, none older than 27, who all have good size and can move. Some were drafted and developed by the Canes and others brought in by trades and free agency. And, yes, it's a well-paid group at more than \$27 million.

While some might call it a no-name group other than perhaps Dougie Hamilton, they're all well-known by opposing coaches and prominently mentioned in scouting reports. Justin Faulk is a former NHL All-Star. Jacob Slavin should soon be one.

"Now that we're actually making some noise, because we're still hanging around, you can't not notice those guys because they are so good,"



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Monday after a team practice at PNC Arena.

After the Canes swept the New York Islanders in the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs, Isles coach Barry Trotz was talking about his team's problems in getting good offensive shifts in the series.

"They're a quick, high-pressure team that forces you to execute," Trotz said. "They close on you quick. They block shots. They have great sticks, especially the defensemen and especially the top four."

That would be Hamilton, Slavin, Faulk and Brett Pesce. They've gotten the top-four minutes. But Calvin de Haan, after returning to the lineup from injury in the Washington series, has been solid and Haydn Fleury the same late in the Isles series.

The Canes, awaiting the winner of the Boston Bruins-Columbus Blue Jackets series in the Eastern Conference finals, have allowed 14 goals in five-on-five play in the 11 playoff games while scoring 26.

"We've got a lot of big brains on that back end and guys who can think the game well," de Haan said Monday. "I wouldn't say anyone is super flashy out there. Everyone just gets the job done, it seems like. That's all you can really ask for. We've got a pretty mobile group back there. Really solid.

"In the (Isles) series it wasn't pretty at times but we seemed to keep them toward the perimeter of the rink and didn't give them much down the middle. That's Defense 101."

Trevor van Riemsdyk was a fixture in the third D pairing before being crunched into the wall by the Isles' Cal Clutterbuck in Game 2. Van Riemsdyk, who left the ice clutching his left shoulder, underwent surgery last week, his season over.

"He never gets a lot of credit but he's a guy you win with on your team," de Haan said.

Fleury, watching from the upper level at the Barclays Center, said he had two quick thoughts when van Riemsdyk went into the wall. The first was the shock and sorrow of seeing a teammate hurt. His second: next man up, again.

"I felt so bad, he was in so much pain," Fleury said Monday. "I don't think he missed many games this year and he is such a pro and puts so much dedication into this game. He's my best friend on the team and was playing probably the best hockey of his life."

Fleury played the first three games of the first-round series against the Capitals before de Haan was able to return. Now, van Riemsdyk is out.

Fleury said after the 2-1 victory over the Isles that Brind'Amour came up to him and said, "Are you ready to go, bud?" Fleury, a former first-round draft pick by the Canes, stepped back in and was a part of 5-2 victories in Game 3 and 4 -- albeit with limited minutes -- as the Canes wrapped up the Eastern Conference semifinal series.

"When you look at their defense, it's as mobile as any in the National Hockey League," NBC hockey analyst Eddie Olczyk said. "They play super fast and a lot of that starts on the back end. The way Roddy (Brind'Amour) wants to play is straight-ahead, get the puck, get it off your stick, get it up and get in the foottraces."

The Canes usually win many of those races.

"You think you're on the forecheck and then two seconds later you're chasing a defenseman from behind," Edmonton Oilers coach Ken Hitchcock noted this season. "They've got so much size and mobility back there and they use it to their advantage."

Slavin and Hamilton have been the top pair, and Slavin has 11 assists in the playoffs -- initially was credited with 12 but later had one taken away. Slavin's stickwork has been eye-opening at times, his instincts so keen and his hand/eye coordination so good.

Faulk and Pesce have been used together and both are right-handed shooters, causing Pesce to play the left side, his offside.

"I've grown used to it," Pesce said. "In the offensive zone you're already corked and ready to shoot it in a more comfortable position, and can get more pucks on net."

Pesce was ready on the right side Friday in Game 4, unloading a shot that Isles goalie Robin Lehner stopped but couldn't hold. Greg McKegg, positioned in front of Lehner, popped in the loose puck for a 3-1 lead in the decisive second period.

The Canes can only wait out the Bruins and Blue Jackets. De Haan said he'd be watching Game 6 on Monday night.

"It's playoff hockey, man, the best time of year," he said.

News Observer LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144020 Carolina Hurricanes

Quiet Wallmark lets play speak for itself, except for one 'Woo!'

BY LUKE DECOCK

It was perhaps the least expected face to appear in one of Jordan Martinook's postseason postgame videos, this one from a raucous post-sweep party at his house Friday night. Martinook, yelling into the camera, randomly turns his phone to face Carolina Hurricanes teammate Lucas Wallmark, who offers a "Woo!" of his own, almost in surprise.

"You never know with Marty," Wallmark said Monday, about as verbose as the quiet Swede ever gets.

The video might have been the most noise Wallmark, 23, made all year.

"He's a little bit quiet most of the time," said teammate Warren Foegele. "I think he was just having some fun."

In a dressing room that has some increasingly boisterous personalities, Wallmark tends to recede into his locker, fading into the background at the same time he continues to assume an increasingly important role for the Hurricanes, who await their opponent in the Eastern Conference finals.

On the ice, he may be the player talked about least on the entire team, and yet in his first full NHL season -- he played 19 games a season ago -- Wallmark has become an absolutely essential part of not only the Hurricanes' postseason success but how they got into the playoffs in the first place. It's hard to think of anyone on the team who gets less credit for doing more, but it's not as if Wallmark calls attention to himself, either.

Bonus Content from last night's MARTY PARTY!!!  
[pic.twitter.com/Jg0JthY81E](https://pic.twitter.com/Jg0JthY81E)

— Carolina Hurricanes (@NHLCanes) May 4, 2019

"He's probably one of the quietest guys I've ever met, to be honest," defenseman Brett Pesce said. "I've never heard him raise his voice. He just does his thing. I respect him for it. His play speaks for itself."

No player on the team has seen his role grow more over the course of the season than Wallmark, who started the season as a fourth-line center in limited duty and ended up being thrust into, essentially, Jordan Staal's role while Staal was out for two months, relying on his hockey sense and a summer spent working on his explosiveness to carry him through.

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour couldn't lean any more heavily on Staal, sending him out against the opposition's best players, asking him to take all the defensive-zone draws, heaping responsibility on his



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shoulders. In the absence of any other options, for those two months he did the same with Wallmark, the season essentially hanging in the balance.

"We basically put him in doing everything Jordan was doing and he didn't miss a beat," Brind'Amour said. "For me that was the critical point of this whole season. He was able to pick up that role and fill in the slack and the reason he can do it is because he's a very smart player. He's not overly big and not overly strong but he knows how to play the game. He's been a real instrumental part of us still playing hockey."

Brind'Amour talks with the media about Lucas Wallmark's success this season  
By

Wallmark finished the season with a respectable 10 goals and 18 assists and has one goal and four assists in the playoffs, where he has been a solid third-line presence down the middle, seeing time on the power play and penalty-kill, taking on a defensive role in some games, an offensive role in others, taking on heavy duty in the faceoff circle while playing with a rotating array of linemates.

In 11 games, he has recorded five points while starting games with eight different wingers – Clark Bishop, Micheal Ferland, Warren Foegele, Saku Maenalanan, Martinook, Brock McGinn, Greg McKeeg and Andrei Svechnikov – and playing situationally with several more while ranking seventh among forwards in postseason ice time at 14:57 per game.

Through all of it, he just keeps plugging along, quietly, contributing, error-free, the best kind of invisible. If anything, his hockey sense and attention to detail matters more now than it did a month ago.

"Every game is tight out there, it's not much room," Wallmark said. "I kind of expected that, but it's tight, and every detail is important out there. ... I'm taking a lot of draws out there, trying to play my game, PK, power play. Trying to, like I said, play my game."

His game is solid on the ice and quiet off of it, a man of few words and growing responsibilities.

News Observer LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144021 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' conference-finals contingencies remain fluid

BY LUKE DECOCK

RALEIGH

The Carolina Hurricanes could start the Eastern Conference finals as soon as Thursday in Boston or Friday at home, and where and when all depends not only on what happens Monday night but on the NHL, NBA and NBC as well.

The Hurricanes would start on the road if the Boston Bruins win their second-round series, at home if the Columbus Blue Jackets win. Beyond that, there are a lot of moving parts but a few likely scenarios.

If the Bruins win Game 6 on Monday, the next round is most likely to start Thursday in Boston, with the second game on Saturday or Sunday and the Hurricanes hosting Games 3 and 4 the middle of next week. If the Blue Jackets force a Game 7, things get more complicated.

A Columbus win in Boston on Wednesday would potentially lead to the Hurricanes hosting Game 1 on Friday with Game 2 at PNC Arena on Sunday. A Bruins win would see the Hurricanes travel to Boston for Game 1 on Saturday with Game 2 on Monday or Tuesday and Games 3 and 4 at PNC on some combination of Wednesday-Thursday-Friday-Saturday.

All of these scenarios remain fluid as the NHL and NBC work through the schedule. The biggest complication – beyond the demands of NBC, which is also waiting on the Western Conference to resolve itself – is the Boston Celtics, who are down 2-1 in their second-round series with the Milwaukee Bucks going into Monday night's Game 4 but have a potential home game scheduled for Friday. Until the Celtics are eliminated, the Bruins have to negotiate TD Garden dates with their NBA roommate.

LUKE DECOCK

News Observer LOADED: 05.07.2019

1143984 Boston Bruins

Bruins' Charlie McAvoy landed a big hit; will he be taking the next one from NHL?

By Kevin Paul Dupont Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 11:50 p.m.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Charlie McAvoy landed a big hit Monday night, one that likely will resonate for another day or two, and it could keep the Bruins' talented second-year defenseman relegated to the sideline with a suspension for the upcoming Eastern Conference final against the Hurricanes.

McAvoy felt the hit was clean. Not that anyone with Black-and-Gold sunglasses will find that a surprise.

"It was a hockey play," said the ex-BU back liner. "I had my elbow tucked. I was hitting through him."

Jarmo Kekalainen, the Blue Jackets general manager, made it clear he didn't like the hit, but refused to offer a full-throated opinion amid his greater disappointment, the Bruins sending his team home for the summer.

"I don't want to start complaining about hits after the game," said the ex-Bruins forward. "But it was pretty. ... if you watched the video of it, I don't think there's any ... I mean it's pretty clear-cut to me."

Of-acerbic Columbus coach John Tortorella was uncharacteristically close-mouthed, noting only that it was a "big moment in the game," but otherwise refusing to discuss it.

So what we have here, in the midst of the Bruins high-stepping off to the ECF for the first time since 2013, is yet one more controversial he-said, he-said what-the-heck hit that the league's Department of Player Safety may or may not deem worthy of supplemental discipline.

On the ice, referees Kelly Sutherland and Steve Kozari, after a lengthy chat in concert with linesmen Pierre Racicot and Trent Knorr, tagged McAvoy with two-minute minor for the big smack on Josh Anderson. The infraction: illegal hit to the head, two-minute minor penalty.

The view here: it appears McAvoy left his feet upon delivering the forceful blow, and that could work against him if DOPS opts to review it Tuesday or Wednesday and consider it for supplemental discipline (in tandem with a phone hearing with McAvoy). As for the contact, it appeared McAvoy aimed for Anderson's far shoulder, and it looked as if much of the blow was across the winger's high chest, toward that shoulder. As McAvoy drove through with his own shoulder, Anderson's head dipped and took contact.

The hefty Columbus winger (6 feet 3 inches, 220 pounds) hit the deck and an agitated, animated Tortorella, his club trailing, 1-0, and season slipping away, pointed to his own head. He no doubt was hoping for a five-minute power play (intent to injure). He didn't get it. Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno, up in Sutherland's face at center ice, was gently



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pushed away by the referee. He was dangerously close to getting tagged with at least a minor himself.

Ultimately, McAvoy probably skates free on it, or is suspended for one game at most. The league is ever mindful of criticism, some fair and some not, regarding how it views contact to the head and its overall diligence regarding concussions.

Working in McAvoy's favor: Anderson was not concussed. He took the belt with only 20 seconds remaining in the second period. He was back on the bench for the start of the third, finished with a beefy 22:06 of ice time (more than any Boston forward), and was all smiles as he chatted amicably with McAvoy in the handshake line. They shook hands and patted one another's shoulders. Like two guys who enjoyed the pluck and strum.

What did the two say?

"Uhh . . . that's between me and the individual," said McAvoy. "We went at it pretty good this series. I have a lot of respect for him. He plays the game as hard as anyone. I mean, it was good to see him back out there."

McAvoy made it through the entire postgame handshake line with what looked like an NHLPA brotherhood meeting. He exchanged quick bro hugs with two or three of the CBJs, including his old pal Zach Werenski.

So it may be red meat for some — particularly the Columbus fan base — but it sure looked like a big ol' nothing burger based on all the attaboys in the hail-fellow-well-met line.

"I put my shoulder into him," said the 6-foot, 210-pound McAvoy when I asked where he targeted the hit. "When I hit, I do my very best . . . I keep my elbow tucked so I don't get it out there. I hit with my shoulder and try to, you know, hit with as much power as possible. He's a bigger guy . . . it was a hockey play. I tried to deliver a check. I was penalized two minutes for it. I served it and came back and played."

McAvoy emerged as one of the club's top three players in the series, particularly after the Blue Jackets took a 2-1 series lead. He grew more confident and bold with his skating and his shooting, the latter an asset he sometimes has been reluctant to use over his first two seasons.

The collision was similar to one last year when Los Angeles defenseman Drew Doughty put a big pop on Vegas winger William Carrier. Doughty was tagged with a one-game suspension.

"Looked like his elbow was down and he went through the body," said coach Bruce Cassidy, his Bruins with three straight wins over a playoff opponent for the first time since dismissing the Red Wings in 2014. "We killed it off, and off we went."

So we're on to North Carolina, the distant sons of the Hartford Forever .500s. The Bruins will need McAvoy to be at least the player he was in the series vs. Columbus. They just may have to wait until Game 2 to get him in the lineup. Maybe.

Kevin Paul Dupont

Boston Globe LOADED: 05.07.2019

1143985 Boston Bruins

In Game 6 shutout, there was no denting Tuukka Rask's iron-clad brilliance in net

By Tara Sullivan Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 11:44 p.m.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Bruins' captain Zdeno Chara was the first one to turn and head toward his own goal late Monday night, certain as he was

the final seconds were ticking away in this final second-round playoff game against the Blue Jackets and no longer held any suspense for the outcome, eager as he was to thank the man most responsible for clinching Boston's ticket to the Eastern Conference Final.

Chara skated straight into Tuukka Rask's crease and straight into a hug with his veteran teammate, and within moments, the two Bruins were encircled by the rest of the roster, all of them waiting for their turn at Rask, the man who had just owned that space so completely and so dominantly that the hometown Blue Jackets never had a chance at extending this series to a seventh game. If we've seen the best of the Bruins across these past three games, three straight victories topped by Monday's 3-0 shutout to pave the way to the franchise's first conference final appearance since 2013, we've seen it because we've seen the best of a goaltender who has found ways to top himself night after night, this time with a 39-save shutout.

So on the Bruins go now, ahead to a Hurricanes team idling since its sweep of the Islanders, into the penultimate step to a Stanley Cup journey that has felt at times almost inevitable, when the first-round carnage left Boston as the top remaining seed in the conference, at times almost impossible, down three different times to Toronto in the first round, down 2-1 again in this series against a streaking Columbus team anchored by its own outstanding goaltender.

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But if Bob — otherwise known as Sergei Bobrovsky — stole the headlines in those first three games, Rask rose up to eclipse him in the last three, a quiet, confident human brick wall with a little dose of street fight thrown in. Undeterred by the opponents flying into his kitchen, unflappable in the face of the pucks flying at his face, and unbowed by the doubts that have long been cast his way, Rask was here to remind you this is the kind of play that wins Cups.

"Outstanding again," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said, wearing the look of a man delighted to get his team past the hurdle that tripped them up last postseason, but one barely ready to concede this journey is over yet. He wants more, and the way his offense shrugged off a disallowed goal in the first period and nursed a 1-0 lead through the second, the way his special teams withstood an ugly penalty by defenseman Charlie McAvoy and killed the two-minute disadvantage just the way they'd killed off three other Columbus power plays, the way his roster burst out of the tunnel and put Columbus immediately on its heels essentially putting a mute button on a sold out Nationwide Arena, and ultimately, the way the entire team rallied to add two third-period insurance goals, he believes he can get it.

It all starts with Rask.

"You need your goalie to deliver," Cassidy said. "I think that's stating the obvious. He did. He keeps us in the games. He looks real composed. They've been bumping him. They hit him hard tonight going to the net, they got called for it. He kept his composure. I think there was some gamesmanship most teams go through to try and get a goalie off his game. He was able to play through that as well.

"He was definitely our most consistent player throughout the whole series. We had guys give us good performances game to game but he was there every night. He deserves whatever accolades come to him. I'm proud of him."

Remember, this was a man who was supposed to have been "dented" by the small flurry of goals he surrendered in Saturday night's wild third period back at TD Garden, a flurry that came about more from bad luck and bad bounces than bad play, but that emboldened Columbus coach John Tortorella to opine Monday morning that Rask's armor had been weakened. Except the only thing that ended up dented Monday were the posts of Rask's net, the only sliver of space he seemed to leave available for Blue Jacket shooters.



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"You should know by now I don't read any comments," Rask smiled afterwards, insisting the postgame question about Tortorella's comments were the first time he'd heard them. "It didn't affect me.

"It's the playoffs. Mind games, always. That's entertaining. Entertainment industry, I guess. That's what the fans and media want. When I'm playing, I don't read it. But when I'm a spectator, I like to read it because it's entertaining."

Was it really only a postseason ago Rask was tossing his skate blade across the ice? He seems so different this time around, so much calmer, more in control not simply of his game, but of his mind.

Asked if he's playing the best hockey of his life, he answered simply, "I feel good. Yeah. You guys can make that call. I just try to, game-by-game, be there."

A follow up about earning a reputation as a big-game goalie, one a certain Boston fan base has long questioned he would ever own, earned a smile, but not much else. "Better than sucking I guess," he said. "It's like, you play enough in this league, regular season, playoffs, you gain that experience, and you learn to think it's not all about you, you don't have to do anything spectacular. It's a team sport and you play for each other. That's helped me a lot."

So that's something you're better at now than in the past? "Oh for sure yeah. It's maturity, experience."

Cassidy, in his second full season and third overall, has been a happy witness to the evolution. Even as his team hung onto that slim one-goal advantage, the coach never doubted it would be enough.

"Just the way [Rask] was going," the coach said. "You're not sitting there trying to nurse it by any means, but I wasn't worried about Tuukka. You could tell this whole playoff he's been a real good place, consistent. Solid. No issues. He doesn't seem to be bothered by anything. He really seems to be in his own zone right now where he's just going to go out and stop the puck, not worried about all the banging in the crease or goals disallowed, any of that stuff. He's done a terrific job for us in that regard. Hope it continues."

Tara Sullivan is a Globe columnist.

Boston Globe LOADED: 05.07.2019

1143986 Boston Bruins

What you need to know about the Carolina Hurricanes

By Andrew Mahoney Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 9:50 p.m.

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The Carolina Hurricanes celebrated after they eliminated the Washington Capitals in seven games.

All that's standing between the Bruins and a trip to the Stanley Cup Final is a bunch of jerks.

OK. That label seems a little harsh, but it was given to the Hurricanes by veteran broadcaster Don Cherry, who took exception to Carolina's postgame, on-ice victory celebrations at home.

"This is the National Hockey League. These guys, to me, are jerks," said Cherry. "They're still not drawing [fans]. I'll tell you one thing, they better not do this in the playoffs," he said. "That is absolutely ridiculous. I know all the broadcasters are afraid to say something . . . I know what I'm talking about. You never do anything like that. They're still not drawing. They're still a bunch of jerks, as far as I'm concerned."

Cherry seemed to be the only one bothered by the "Storm Surge" demonstrations, which took place at home, after the opposing team had already left the ice.

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It began simple enough, with the team gathering at center ice after a home victory and leading the crowd in a slow clap. They soon became more elaborate. One stunt featured the team getting bowled over by a helmet, another involved a basketball being dunked. The wins, and celebrations, continued to pile up as Carolina qualified for the playoffs for the first time since 2009.

The Hurricanes embraced Cherry's criticism, even printing up shirts. Alas, the team decided to limit the celebrations to the regular season. Maybe they just ran out of ideas. They would have needed at least eight more, as they defeated the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals in seven games, then swept the New York Islanders in the second round to reach the conference finals.

The Bruins won two of the three meetings this season.

In the first meeting of the season on Oct. 30, Brad Marchand had a pair of goals, including the game-winner, as the Bruins won on the road, 3-2.

The lone win for Carolina came just before Christmas. The Bruins led, 2-0, on a pair of goals from Ryan Donato, but the Hurricanes rallied on a pair of shorthanded goals to outscore the Bruins, 5-1, the rest of the way for a 5-3 win.

The Bruins won the rubber match on March 5 on David Krejci's overtime goal to send Carolina, sporting throwback green Hartford Whalers uniforms, to a 4-3 defeat.

The man behind the bench

Rod Brind'Amour is in his first season as head coach after spending the previous seven years as an assistant in the organization. He played 21 seasons in the NHL, including the final 10 with the Hurricanes before retiring in 2010. He finished his playing career with 452 goals and 732 assists, and won a Stanley Cup with the Hurricanes in 2006.

Who's in goal?

Goalies Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney essentially split up the duties during the regular season, with Mrazek posting a 23-14-3 record with a .914 save percentage in 40 starts, while McElhinney, 35, was 20-11-2 in 33 starts with a .912 save percentage.

Mrazek started the first nine games of the playoffs, including all seven of the first-round win over the Capitals. After Mrazek sustained a lower body injury and was unable to finish Game 2 of the second round, McElhinney answered the call, getting the last three wins to close out the Islanders with a .947 save percentage.

Mrazek has been back practicing with the team, leaving Brind'Amour with a tough decision.

Players to watch

Sebastian Aho: In his third season with the Hurricanes, Aho, 21, had a career year, leading the team with 30 goals and 53 assists. He followed that up with four goals and five assists in 11 playoff games.

Teuvo Teravainen: Teravainen is Aho's linemate and was the second leading scorer with 21 goals and 55 assists.

Micheal Ferland: The 6-foot-2, 208-pound forward tallied 17 goals to go with 23 assists in 71 games, but he's missed the last eight playoff games with an upper body injury. He is targeting a return for Game 1 of the conference finals.

Justin Williams: The veteran forward, 37, was third on the team in scoring with 23 goals and 30 assists.

Jordan Staal: A concussion limited Staal to just 50 games during the regular season, but he was able to return to the lineup in late February



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and finish strong. That has carried over into the playoffs, where Staal has four goals and five assists in 11 games.

### Familiar names

**Dougie Hamilton:** Taken with the ninth pick in the 2011 NHL Draft, Bruins fans were hoping Hamilton would become a No. 1 franchise defenseman and take some of the burden off Zdeno Chara. But after Hamilton rejected the team's contract offer as he headed to restricted free agency, the Bruins shipped him to the Calgary Flames after the 2014-15 season ahead of the NHL Draft for a first-round pick and two second-rounders.

The Bruins selected Zach Senyshyn, Jakob Forsbacka Karlsson, and Jeremy Lauzon with the picks acquired in the trade, while Hamilton signed a six-year, \$34.5 million deal with the Flames. Hamilton never really blossomed into a franchise defenseman while in Calgary, and was traded to the Hurricanes last summer.

He caught some flak in Carolina's first-round win over the Capitals when he pulled up and gave up on retrieving the puck rather than take a hit from Alex Ovechkin. But he came out on the right end of a playoffs moment after the Hurricanes swept the Islanders in the second round.

In Game 3 of the series, the Islanders' Brock Nelson celebrated a goal from teammate Josh Bailey by patting McElhinney on the head as he skated through the crease. It was a move that stuck with Hamilton, apparently. After Carolina completed a sweep of the Islanders, Hamilton made sure to return the favor, patting Nelson on the top of the head as he passed him in the handshake line.

**Trevor van Riemsdyk:** Just as his older brother James did before him, van Riemsdyk played at University of New Hampshire and helped the Wildcats reach the NCAA Tournament in 2013.

**Patrick Brown:** The forward played for Boston College from 2010-2014. His father Doug and uncle Greg also played at BC before going on to the NHL. He is a cousin to actresses Kate and Rooney Mara.

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1143987 Boston Bruins

Bruins eliminate Blue Jackets in Game 6, advance to Eastern Conference finals

By Matt Porter Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 9:50 p.m.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Speaking about his team's newfound offensive confidence from its third-period flurry the previous game, Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella declared before Game 6 that Columbus had "dented" Tuukka Rask, just as the Bruins had "dented" Sergei Bobrovsky.

He believed they had solved Rask.

That was as wrong as his declaration that there would be a Game 7.

Boston's netminder saved 39 shots in a shutout, lifting the Bruins to the Eastern Conference finals for the first time since their Stanley Cup Final run of 2013. The final score: Bruins 3, Blue Jackets 0, in Game 6 at Nationwide Arena.

They won this second-round series, 4-2, over a club that swept record-setting Tampa Bay out of the first round. The only time the cannon sounded here was during warm-ups.

"I didn't even pay attention," Rask said.

Rask, his name mud in some New England quarters for some of this season, has been the best goalie in the second round of these playoffs. He finished the series with a .948 save percentage and 1.71 goals

against, his best numbers since the 2014 first round against Detroit. On Monday, Rask produced his first playoff shutout since that series.

He was unconscious in the third period of Game 6, foiling a do-or-die surge by Columbus. He also did the heavy lifting as the Bruins killed four penalties, running their streak to 12 for 12, despite their struggles in getting a clear. He outdueled Bobrovsky, which was no small feat.

"He was there every night," coach Bruce Cassidy said. "I'm proud of him."

Franchise mainstay David Krejci, the third-longest tenured Bruin, gave Boston a 1-0 lead midway through the second, hammering home a long rebound after Jake DeBrusk hit the post.

"I was comfortable with the one-goal lead, the way [Rask] was going," Cassidy said.

Marcus Johansson, a trade deadline acquisition, doubled the edge of 8:58 of the third. Set up by linemate Charlie Coyle, he sent a running wrister off Bobrovsky's leg and in.

Old hand David Backes, striking redemption yet again, made it 3-0 at 10:39, depositing a slick feed from Torey Krug.

And that was it. Columbus made the second round for the first time, but that's as far as they went. Boston will continue its quest for its first Stanley Cup since 2011.

"I don't think you get this far by accident," Cassidy said of Carolina, their opponent in the conference finals. "We'll have our hands full."

Yes, it'll be the Boston against the distant sons of the Hartford Whalers, the Bruins against the Bunch of Jerks, old-school vs. new traditions. We know which team Don Cherry will be backing.

In praising his team for starting fast in Game 6, Cassidy used Hurricanes-like language.

"I hear people saying when you go into another team's building, 'You've got to weather the storm.' We want to create the storm. We're not interested in weathering any storm."

Both Columbus and Boston stormed in the first 10 minutes, and both goalies were dented.

After a Bruins power play expired — for Pierre-Luc Dubois running into Rask — the Bruins took an apparent 1-0 lead at 8:53 on Sean Kuraly's putback in traffic. It was overturned on a goaltender interference call.

The rest of the scoreless period was all Boston. Columbus, chasing the puck, had a 24-8 edge in hits and blocked five shots. Kuraly told 98.5 The Sports Hub at intermission, "We'll have to get another one."

Krejci did at 12:13 of the second. The veteran beat Bobrovsky with a rocket, far side. No reason for a review there.

Columbus was wailing for officials to take another look with 20 seconds left in the period, after Charlie McAvoy made an illegal check to the head of Josh Anderson and was whistled for a minor, not a match-and-ejection. McAvoy could face additional discipline, but the two shook hands at center ice afterward, and lingered to chat for a few moments.

They were a loose bunch of Bruins, then and before. Matt Grzelcyk and his Boston University pal, McAvoy, were the last two on the ice for a pregame skate. Their teammates, gathered at center ice, greeted them with a razzing round of stick taps.

They have a lot of fun in Carolina, it is said.

The Bruins are about to find out how much.

"It's awesome. If you're playing this time of year, you're doing something right," Rask said. "We're trying to keep the train rolling."

Boston Globe LOADED: 05.07.2019



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 7, 2019

1143988 Boston Bruins

Veteran David Backes finds his place at the finish

By Matt Porter Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 6:48 p.m.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — From fringe player to key contributor.

From sitting in the press box with a \$6 million paycheck, to looking out of place in a speedy playoff series against Toronto . . . to scoring a critical goal in a clinching game.

So has gone the resurrection of David Backes.

The 13-year veteran, scratched several times this season because his 35-year-old legs weren't keeping pace, played the final three games against Columbus and gave the Bruins three points in limited minutes. All of them were timely, but his first goal of the postseason made it 3-0 in a clinching Game 6.

"It's even better when a guy like him scores the goal where you think, OK, that's the nail in the coffin," he said. "Guys are very happy for him. I'm happy for him. Hopefully he continues to deliver."

Backes played just 8:39 on Monday, but was effective on the forecheck and was heavy around the net. He didn't want to revisit the days he was scratched — Games 1, 6 and 7 against Toronto, and the first three games of this series. He was looking for more.

Brad Marchand is letting his play do the talking.

The mischievous winger, who has been displeased with the media of late — teammate David Pastrnak described him as "crispy" — gave a series of one- and two-word answers in an interview in front of his locker.

To wit:

Could you describe (Rask's) play?

"Great."

Would you care to elaborate?

"Nope."

Would you be here without his play?

"No."

Did he look dented to you?

[chuckles] "Obviously not."

Why the short answers, Brad?

"Next."

How good does it feel to be in the conference finals?

"It's good."

Where'd you get that (red) suit?

"China."

Was he feeling extra crispy?

"Oh, yeah."

Why's that?

"Just 'cause."

And so on. A few reporters tried to get something more. Marchand was asked if he made a bet with someone to say as few words as possible. "Maybe," he replied, smirking.

Monday's irritation seemed to stem from a pregame interview with Sportsnet, during which he skated away after a reporter made a lighthearted comment about his skates being sharp. Marchand drew widespread attention for his skate stomp on Cam Atkinson's stick in Game 1.

False start

The Bruins appeared to strike in the first period, but Sean Kuraly's goal 8:53 in was overturned after a video review because Joakim Nordstrom was determined to have interfered with Sergei Bobrovsky.

Nordstrom — who had a 2-on-0 shorthanded chance with Kuraly in the same period — was ruled to have knocked into the netminder at the edge of his crease.

The NHL Situation Room in Toronto said the "actions of Nordstrom impaired" the Columbus goalie's "ability to play his position." Columbus retained its timeout after the challenge, but never used it.

Rebuffed it out

Rask didn't know Tortorella said he was "dented." Asked what he thought, he shrugged it off.

"Entertainment industry, I guess," Rask said. "That's what fans and media want. When I'm playing, I don't read it. When I'm a spectator, I like to read it, because it's entertaining."

He also had a typically Tuukka line when asked if he feels it's important to be a "big game goalie."

"Yeah, well," he said, seemingly amused by the question. "It's better than sucking."

Positive thinking

Tortorella's post-Game 5 guarantee that the series would head back to Boston had people talking.

"Is there any way else to feel?" Duchene asked. "I mean, we're not going to come in and say, 'Great season boys, she's over the next game.' We're one game from being eliminated, but we're two games from moving on."

On a conference call Sunday, Tortorella's boss, Columbus general manager Jarmo Kekalainen, flipped it around.

"What's he supposed to say — 'we won't be back?' " Kekalainen asked. "We might be back?"

Said defenseman Seth Jones: "We don't have to hear him say it for us to believe it."

Influential figure

Though he was in the heat of the playoffs, Chara was in a reflective mood before Game 6 — in which he logged 26:04, leading all Bruins skaters and his highest workload in a three-period game this postseason.

An Instagram post by boyhood idol (and former Bruins teammate) Jaromir Jagr had Chara thinking about the impact the Czech great has had on his life.

Jagr posted a selfie on the Great Wall of China, where his hockey ambassadorship with the Czechs has taken him before the 2022 Beijing Olympics. According to a Google translation of his post, Jagr said he hoped to inspire young hockey players in communist China the same way Mario Lemieux opened Jagr's eyes in 1985, when he played in the World Championships in Prague.

The polyglot Chara, writing in Czech, replied that he idolized Jagr, who won Stanley Cups with Lemieux in his first two seasons in Pittsburgh. Chara wrote that he wore his No. 68 as a child while playing street hockey in communist Czechoslovakia.



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"Back then, we didn't get much coverage of the NHL, but we knew guys coming out of Czechoslovakia back then," Chara said, also name-checking Bobby Holik and Peter Bondra. "You idolized guys like that. As a kid playing street hockey, you were pretending to be one of these guys. I was one of them."

"I had a huge — I don't want to say crush — but [Jagr] was the guy everybody loved to be. Young age, so dominant, so strong, scoring big goals at the right moments."

Chara was overjoyed in 2013 when the Bruins dealt for Jagr at the trade deadline.

"After battling him for so long, finally we were on the same team," Chara said. "Became good friends, stay in touch. Once in a while, we get in touch and talk about things. It's cool."

Ice chips

Monday could be the last game in Columbus for free agents-to-be Duchene, Artemi Panarin, Bobrovsky and Ryan Dzingel . . . Panarin might have dented McAvoy's foot with a slapper in the dying seconds of Game 5, but McAvoy played 24:42 in Game 6 . . . Kuraly led the Bruins in faceoff percentage (65 percent, 11-for-17) in Game 6 . . . Eight Bruins factored in on the scoresheet including Connor Clifton, who had an assist for the second game in a row . . . Columbus' Seth Jones logged another impressive night (28:49, seven shots, three hits, two blocks) . . . Cassidy had no update on defenseman Kevan Miller, who has not played since crashing knee-first into the boards on April 2 in Minnesota . . . Third-pair defenseman John Moore and fourth-line winger Noel Acciari are both day-to-day with upper body injuries. Acciari, who missed Game 5, was not present for the morning skate. Moore skated on an extra D pair with Steven Kampfer. Trent Frederic joined fellow rookie Karson Kuhlman as a spare.

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1143989 Boston Bruins

Bruins' Sean Kuraly had goal disallowed after a review

By Matt Pepin Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 8:13 p.m.

The Bruins appeared to strike first in Game 6 of their Eastern Conference semifinal series Monday against the Blue Jackets at Columbus, Ohio.

But Sean Kuraly's strike at 8:53 of the first period was overturned after a video review because Joakim Nordstrom was determined to have interfered with Blue Jackets goalie Sergei Bobrovsky.

Here's the ruling, according to the NHL's "situation room."

"After reviewing all available replays and consulting with the referees, the situation room determined that the actions of Nordstrom impaired Bobrovsky's ability to play his position in the crease. According to Rule 78.7, 'The standard for overturning the call in the event of a goal call on the ice is that the NHL situation room (which shall include a former referee in the officiating department in the decision-making process), after reviewing any and all available replays and consulting with the referee who made the original call, determines that the goal should have been disallowed due to interference on the goalkeeper."

Nordstrom was pushed forward prior to making contact with Bobrovsky, who then lunged to try to stop Kuraly's shot. The Blue Jackets requested the video review, and retained their timeout when the challenge was upheld.

Neither team scored in the first period.

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1143990 Boston Bruins

What drives the Bruins' Zdeno Chara at age 42? Love (of the game)

By Tara Sullivan Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 7:31 p.m.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The eternal inspiration who had Zdeno Chara talking Monday was former NHL great Jaromir Jagr, with the 42-year-old Bruins captain reminiscing about how much Jagr inspired him back when Chara was just a fellow European kid learning how to skate. That Chara would have a chance to be teammates with Jagr for a season in Boston remains a career highlight, as well as a reminder of how much Chara can still contribute to the Bruins considering Jagr played in the NHL until he was 45.

But after the Bruins moved within a game of advancing to the Eastern Conference finals with a crazy Game 5 victory over the Blue Jackets Saturday night at TD Garden, it was a different veteran pro athlete who was sending the love Chara's way. Tom Brady might not have the hockey pedigree of his counterparts on the ice, he does have the best championship résumé of them all. So when the 41-year-old Patriots quarterback left a response under Chara's celebratory Instagram post (one containing a certain four-letter word that can't be printed here), it was like getting a peek behind the curtain of an exclusive sports club.

Brady just led the Patriots to the sixth Super Bowl title of his 18-year career. Chara is trying to get the Bruins to a second Stanley Cup title in his Boston tenure. While plenty of this incredible New England sports Renaissance is fueled by youthful legs and emerging stars, players like Chara and Brady remind you it doesn't always have to be a young man's game. Brady, for all his greatness, devotion to physical fitness, adherence to film study etc., has the added help of playing a position more protected by the rules than any other in football. Chara? In the brutal, bruising, exhausting world of hockey, what he is doing is every bit as impressive as his football counterpart, and that he continues to do it at a high level should not go unnoticed as the Bruins continue on this playoff quest.

"Watch the pregame skate today and he's battling as hard as anyone out there, probably harder than anyone," Bruins forward David Backes said prior to Monday night's Game 6, where the Bruins were hoping to close out the series. "You love to see that. He sets the tone. He's the captain of the team. At 42 years old and doing what he's doing, it is freakish. He's a giant of a man that's taken care of himself. He's earned every game he's played in this league and continues to be a factor. He's one cog in the wheel in something that we believe is special."

Giant? Freakish? They might sound unkind if they weren't so darn true. Chara, at 6 feet 9 inches, is the tallest player to play in the NHL, and has to get a special exception to play with his outside-the-rules extra-long stick. Years of tough but loving tutelage under his dad Zdenek, a former Grego-Roman wrestling who set up special workout apparatus in the yard of their home in the former Czechoslovakia (they lived in Trencin), developed a love for the game deep enough to eschew the many and varied encouragements to switch to a sport more befitting his frame, such as basketball. That joy in hockey is what keeps Chara playing now and beyond — he recently signed a one-year contract through next season — what keeps him up for the daily grind of the playoffs.

"You got to enjoy it," he said following the team's morning skate Monday. "That's the fun part of the year. It's hard, it's grueling, but you got to love it."

"What's my secret? I love the game. I love playing it. I have a lot of passion for it. I'm enjoying being out there and competing."



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There have been challenges, for sure, a few late-game mistakes, probably because of fatigue, that have proved costly. An adjusted Columbus game plan to attack him more and take advantage of his slowed skates, rather than allowing him to use the physical force we saw, say, in the first-shift hit he laid on former teammate Riley Nash in Game 2. A constant attention to minutes by coach Bruce Cassidy and his staff, so that they can always have Chara available for when they need him most, such as the penalty kill.

"Absolutely," Cassidy said. "He'd play 30 minutes every night if he could. He prides himself, he's in great shape. At the end of the day I think it's hard for any player to go anything above 25 minutes. You're probably conserving somewhere along the line.

"We've tried to progressively get him over the last couple of years closer to 20. It's an arbitrary number some nights, but it's what we use simply for the long haul of the season. I think some nights he's played as little as 17, 18, and up to 25 sometimes. We're always going to stay in the moment with things but we don't want it to be a regular occurrence where's up at 25.

Like any player this time of the year it's a balance. But tonight, he goes out, needs to play 28, that's the situation, shutdown hockey, taking a lot of penalties, then that's what we'll play him."

Tara Sullivan

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1143991 Boston Bruins

Frozen in time: Bruins players remember their first pair of skates

By Kevin Paul Dupont Globe Staff, May 6, 2019, 3:12 p.m.

As a child, the fast-growing Zdeno Chara had trouble fitting into his skates. "My feet were mangled," he recalled.

Zdeno Chara grew up in Trenčín, Slovakia, just east of the Czechia border, and first wore skates to zip along the frozen, serpentine Váh River, unaware as a toddler of the riches and fame that his skating ultimately would bring him.

But it's not that pair of beginner's blades that the Bruins captain best remembers. The pair that he's held on to, more than 25 years later, serve as a reminder of aching feet, promises broken, and the perseverance it took to follow his dream.

"I had been cut so many times from so many teams," said Chara, thinking back to his teens, when local B-level squads dismissed his desire to play, teasing that a boy so tall was meant to play basketball.

"Players on the A teams were allowed to get new skates from the team, but I never got them. They'd tell me I was entitled to a good, healthy pair of skates, but they'd never give them to me."

So he kept on skating in his old, broken-down pair of Bauers, through his growth spurts of 2 inches or more per year, through ever-lengthening feet that nearly curled his toes under the inside battered tips of his skates.

"My feet were mangled," recalled Chara. "I had those bone spurs. It was so painful, because eventually the skates were two or three sizes too small.

"The blade holders ripped off and I literally had to screw them back on — and I could feel the screws coming into my feet. And teams would tell me, 'Nah, you're on B team.' And my dad couldn't pay for new skates, couldn't afford it. Just too expensive."

The skates Chara wears now (above) are a far cry from his original ones.

The skates Chara wears now (above) are a far cry from his original ones. (JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF)

The Globe asked many Bruins players this winter what they remembered of their first pair of skates. Answers were all over the sheet, including Brad Marchand's old-style double runners, Kevan Miller's rentals during a family vacation, David Pastrnak's figure skates, and the hand-me-down "player" skates that a 5-year-old Jaro Halak couldn't wait to swap for a pair of goalie skates.

Jake DeBrusk, whose dad Louie was playing for the Edmonton Oilers when he was born in 1996, recalled loving his first pair of skates so much that he tried to wear them to bed.

"I didn't take them off," said the left winger. "I got in the house and literally kept them on the entire night. I tried to go to sleep in them. They were some sort of Reeboks, not the pumps, and I was planning for the upcoming season. I was super excited."

Thankfully, recalled DeBrusk, there was an abundance of carpet in the family home.

"So that made it a little bit OK," he said. "But my parents also gave me a little talking to, and said, 'OK, buddy, we love that you love the gift, but you need to chill. Your feet are going to get sore.'"

Patrice Bergeron was 4½ when his parents bought him his first pair of CCM hockey skates.

"Brand new, right out of the box," recalled Bergeron. "Didn't make me a better player, I'll tell you that. And after the fact that I grew in, like, three months, they kind of regretted it."

His next skates were second-hand, in part because Bergeron's parents weren't initially convinced their son, today a four-time Selke Trophy winner, really cared for the sport. In fact, the first time they enrolled him in hockey, Bergeron spent the first three-quarters of the season sitting on the ice during games, stacking pucks around the net, watching everyone else race around the sheet.

"My parents we're, 'Let's go with the second-hand skates right now, and figure out if he really likes it,'" said Bergeron. "Then after that, they were always buying brand-new equipment for me. Which I'm very grateful for, because it was a lot of money for them, especially back then, and it meant a lot to me."

By age 18, Bergeron was a Bruins rookie winger, with an uncanny knack for knowing where everyone was at all times. All the watching paid off. He also played day and night outdoors, typically with his brother alongside, be it ball hockey in the summer or winters on the community outdoor rink in his Quebec City neighborhood.

"It was lit up at night, so you could stay out there forever," he recalled. "Many times my parents would drive down to get us because we had to finish homework or eat dinner. It was fun times."

David Pastrnak's current skates; he began with figure skates.

David Pastrnak's current skates; he began with figure skates. (JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF)

David Krejci's first blades were wide-track double runners when he was age 2-3. There was no backyard rink because the Krejcis in those days lived on the fifth floor of an apartment building in the far eastern part of Czechia.

"But my dad used to be a referee, and he would take me on the ice after the game," said Krejci, "and just kind of push me around. I know I had those skates with two blades and I was wheeling around."

It wasn't long, recalled Krejci, before he eyed a pricy, stylish pair of CCM hockey skates.



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"Black and white with a stripe — they were really cool — and I never got them," said Krejci, who today leads all Bruins money-earners with a salary cap hit of \$7.25 million a season. "My teammate when I was 12 years old had them, and he got hurt for a little bit, or he got sick, so I was able to wear his for a couple of games."

Patrice Bergeron's CCM skates.

Patrice Bergeron's CCM skates.(JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF)

Growing up on Long Island, Charlie McAvoy was a New York Rangers fan. He doesn't recall his very first pair of skates, but he still has his first hockey gloves, in Ranger red, white, and blue.

"My parents moved over the summer," said McAvoy. "So I actually had to go through my old room. So I kept the gloves, my first pair of shoes, little things that I made in wood shop at school and stuff like that."

As for skates, McAvoy best recalls the Vapors (X's or 20s) that he wore at age 5-6 as a mini-mite.

"They had just come out," said McAvoy. "And we were at the Ice House in Hackensack, N.J. We were playing a game there and we went into the pro shop, and I needed new skates badly because I had skated out of my old ones, and he got me those."

"I remember how excited I was. I was so young and so naive, little did I know he was spending a whole paycheck on a pair of skates."

Earlier, recalled McAvoy, he'd worn hand-me-downs from cousins or found what he needed at the recreation department affiliated with the Long Beach, N.Y., rink where he first played. He saw some of that old gear last summer when he cleaned out the attic during the family move.

"Piles and piles of hockey gear," he said. "So we separated all of it — tons of skates, shin pads, shoulder pads, jerseys — and we bagged it all up and brought it over to Long Beach Recreation, and dropped it all off there."

"So it was kind of like a generational thing. I started with hand-me-downs from there and now hopefully someone will be able to start with my old stuff."

For now, Chara is holding on to his old skates. No one would want them. Too battered. No hockey left in them. They're home in an apartment he keeps in Slovakia, sealed in a plastic bag, and figures he might bring them back to Boston next summer and show his kids.

"I looked at them over the summer and I couldn't believe it, I swear," said Chara. "Someone would think, 'This is not possible to play for three years with these skates.' The screws and everything sticking out. Oh my God. But I keep them because . . . that's the memory."

Some other first skates memories

- Sean Kuraly: Hand-me-down CCMs.

He grew up in Ohio, but first skated on the pond behind his grandparents' home in Caledon, Ontario.

"I'd push around a chair. We went out there at Christmastime, and those were my first strides. It was me, my older brother, aunts and uncles, younger cousins . . . all of us out there having a blast."

- David Pastrnak: White figure skates, age 3-4.

"Because my feet were so small, we couldn't find hockey skates."

- Brad Marchand: Wide-track double runners, age 2.

He grew up in Sackville, Nova Scotia, 10-12 miles outside Halifax, and first skated at a nearby indoor arena. His dad put up a backyard rink for a few years, until the family moved to a house bordering a pond.

- Jaro Halak: Used hockey skates, age 8. Not goalie skates.

He grew up in Bratislava, Slovakia, and knew at age 3 he wanted to be a goalie.

"I was a goalie right away, but just in player skates. Back then, it was a little bit harder to find goalie skates. It took a couple of weeks to find them. A used pair. At that age, your feet are growing so fast, so we got them a little bit bigger and I wore thicker socks."

- Kevan Miller: Rentals at outdoor rink in Idaho, age 5.

"Sort of like a snowboarding boot with clamps. It was me and my two brothers. We'd roller-bladed before, but never skated on ice. So we started out pushing chairs, and 20 minutes later we were doing laps. Freezing cold, but we had a blast."

- Torey Krug: Roller skates, age approximately 18 months.

"Those are the first I remember, playing on the street outside our house."

- Brandon Carlo: Inline skates, age 4.

He grew up in Colorado Springs, and was introduced to street hockey by next-door neighbors, transplants from Massachusetts. Close pal Hadan Jordan, originally from Marshfield, is now a junior defenseman at St Michael's College.

"Hadan was pretty good, and I'd just jump into the teams he was playing for. Especially with ice hockey, the first year, I would just be working on skating at center ice while everyone else was having a regular practice. I had to get up to speed."

- John Moore: Hand-me-down Bauers, age 2-3.

He was raised in Winnetka, Ill., where he first skated on a nearby field that the local fire department flooded each winter.

"I got the skates from our neighbors, the Tuttle. They had twin boys who were three years older than me. Any sporting goods needs, I would get their hand-me-downs."

- Steve Kampfner: Used CCM Tacks, bought at the local rink in Jackson, Mich., age 2.

For the better part of a decade, his grandfather would buy him a new pair of skates each year for his birthday, until he was in his mid-teens.

"It was awesome. Every year I needed a new pair. We would always buy it a size too big, and my parents would make me wear really thick socks for the first half of the season until my feet started to grow."

- Danton Heinen: Hand-me-down wide-track double-runners, from his older brother Cody.

He grew up just outside Vancouver, and skated predominantly indoors.

"We didn't get to skate outdoors too much, but it's the best when you're a kid — just playing for fun."

- David Backes: Rentals, age 2-3, from Fogerty Arena, down the street from the family home in Blaine, Minn.

"All I can remember is that the logo was a little yellow triangle, and I thought that was cool."

- Matt Grzelcyk: CCM Tacks or Ray Bourque Bauers.

He first began to play at the MDC rink in his hometown of Charlestown.

"I used to hang out there all the time. That's pretty much where me and all my friends would spend our time. We were obsessed with sticks and stuff like that."

- Tuukka Rask: Plastic ski-boot-like children's skate, with buckle, age 2-3, still stored at his family's home in Savonlinna, Finland.

"The ice was maybe a five- or 10-minute walk, and we did that every day for, like, five or six hours. That was the only thing to do, really. As soon as we were old enough to leave the house, age 6. It would be minus-30 Celsius, and it would be only me and my buddy, and my brother. There would be no one else out there but us."



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■ Noel Acciari: Hand-me-downs from his brother, 7 years older, who likely got them from older cousins.

"We just kept handing 'em down and down and . . ."

■ Joakim Nordstrom: Plastic ski-boot-like, with buckles, age 2.

He first skated on an outdoor rink in suburban Stockholm, where the town maintained a hockey rink and also flooded a soccer field.

"I still have the skates. My parents gave them to me a couple of years ago. Honestly, I wouldn't have remembered them unless they'd kept them."

■ Chris Wagner: Koho hockey skates, age 3.

First used at learn-to-skate lessons at the Ponkapoag rink in Canton.

"Yeah, you know, pushing the milk crates around."

Kevin Paul Dupont

Boston Globe LOADED: 05.07.2019

1143992 Boston Bruins

Tuukka Rask zeroes in, leads Bruins to conference finals

By STEVE CONROY | [sconroy@bostonherald.com](mailto:sconroy@bostonherald.com) | Boston Herald

COLUMBUS, Ohio — If that's how Tuukka Rask plays when he's dented, then the Bruins should keep a rubber hammer handy to give him a good whack every now and then.

On the morning of Monday's Game 6, Columbus Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella was looking to seize on anything positive on which his team could latch going into their elimination date with the Bruins at Nationwide Arena.

"The biggest thing from the last game, Game 5, was that we dented their goalie," Tortorella said.

Well, you can't blame the coach for trying, but in the end, it was all wishin' and hopin'. For in a series in which Rask was in contention for the No. 1 star every night, he played his best game of the six to lead the B's to a 3-0 victory to boot the dangerous Blue Jackets out of the playoffs, stopping all 39 shots he faced and standing tall against four Blue Jackets power plays.

This was a hard-fought series that probably deserved a Game 7, and if Rask was a hair off his game, it very well might have been the Bruins with the long faces in the handshake line Monday.

But right now Rask just might be playing the best hockey of his career, one that already includes a Stanley Cup finals appearance and Vezina Trophy.

"Outstanding, again," coach Bruce Cassidy said. "You need your goalie to deliver, and I think that's stating the obvious. He looks real composed and they were bumping him. They hit him pretty hard tonight and they got called for it, but he kept his composure. I think there was some gamesmanship that most teams go through to try and get a goalie off his game and it seems he was able to play through that as well.

"He did a real nice job for us and we ended up rewarding him for some goals. We didn't leave it to chance. That's what I liked about our third. We still attacked and extended the lead. He was definitely our most consistent player through the whole series. We had players have good performances from game to game but he was there every night and he certainly deserves whatever accolades he has coming to them."

Faced with elimination and an uncertain offseason with big free agents Artemi Panarin, Sergei Bobrovsky and Matt Duchene all up for new contracts, the Jackets came at Rask hard. In the first period Pierre-Luc DuBois, an agitating presence all series, hit the side of the net and just kept rumberling straight into Rask, getting a two-minute penalty for goalie interference, the only power play the B's got all night.

But the refs can't take care of everything in a physical playoff series like this and, in a second period in which the Jackets outshot the B's 17-5, Rask took matters into his own hands. When Nick Foligno infringed upon his space after the whistle, Rask went full Tim Thomas on him, throwing several blocker shots at the Columbus captain.

"I was just trying to have fun with Foligno there a couple of times," said Rask, aided by three pipe shots from Columbus. "I think as the series went on, they kind of felt that they needed to do that to get in my head a little bit, but it's funny when that happens because you know you have the better of them at that point. But if they start running you, you've got to defend yourself and throw a couple of shots. I gave Foligno a couple of body shots, for sure."

And speaking of gamesmanship, he was asked about Tortorella's comments from the morning and, as usual, he claimed he doesn't read any of those things. But if he took a spoonful of truth serum, you might find out he was apprised of them, one way or another. Whether he knew beforehand or not, Rask was told of them in the media scrum after the game.

"It's the playoffs and it's mind games, always," Rask said. "It's entertaining. It's the entertainment industry I guess. That's what the fans and media want. When I'm playing, I don't read it. But if I'm a spectator, I like to read it because it's entertaining."

Somehow, Rask had developed a reputation as a guy who would not come through in the clutch. But if there are any Rask-haters left in Boston, they've probably disappeared into the weeds, hoping maybe he'll slip up in the next series against the upstart Carolina Hurricanes.

But now, with the B's halfway to their goal of the Stanley Cup, it's hard to keep that narrative going. Rask gave up one goal on 33 shots in a Game 7 win against Toronto and now zero goals on 39 shots in the elimination game against the Blue Jackets, against whom no one wanted another Game 7, whether it was at home or not.

Asked if being known as a big-game goalie was important to him, Rask became a bit philosophical, talking about maturing and realizing it's a team game and everything doesn't have to be on his shoulders. Interesting stuff.

But before that, Rask grinned and delivered the line of the night: "Better than sucking."

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Steve Conroy

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1143993 Boston Bruins

Tuukka Rask, Bruins blank Blue Jackets to advance to conference finals with Game 6 win

By MARISA INGEMI | marisa.ingemi@bostonherald.com | Boston Herald

COLUMBUS, Ohio — For all the cannon talk, it was rather silent Monday night.

The Bruins withstood an onslaught from the Blue Jackets and survived a goal being taken off the board in the first period of Game 6 to win, 3-0 and take the series 4-2.

"Big focus tonight in the room, it was talked about, we have to play our best game of the series," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "I'm not saying we did or didn't. But that was the mindset we had to have."

The win gives the Bruins a berth in the Eastern Conference finals against the Carolina Hurricanes, who swept the Islanders in their second-round series.

Tuukka Rask made 39 saves to help the Bruins close out the series on the road with three straight wins. The B's fell behind in the series 2-1 after dropping Games 2 and 3, but responded with two victories on the road to sandwich a Game 5 win on home ice.

"He kept us in the game," Cassidy said. "He looks real composed. They couldn't hit him or bump him, and they hit him hard tonight going to the net, got called for it, and he kept his composure. I think there was some gamesmanship most teams go through to try to get a goalie off his game. He was able to play through that."

David Krejci scored the game-winner in the second period, then Marcus Johansson and David Backes added insurance goals in the third.

But for the third consecutive game in the series, there was a goal controversy.

Following an anemic power play, the Bruins sent out their fourth line. The group crashed the net and eventually Sean Kuraly notched a rebound off Sergei Bobrovsky's pads and the Ohio native looked to have put the Bruins ahead 1-0 with 11:07 to play in the first.

Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella called for the review that Joakim Nordstrom had pushed Bobrovsky, even though the Jackets goalie was out of his crease, and the officials waved the goal off the board.

One of the Bruins' best scoring chances came while shorthanded in the second period.

With David Pastrnak in the box for a tripping call, Kuraly and Nordstrom couldn't connect on a 2-on-0 breakaway, leaving the game scoreless with 16:10 to play in the middle frame.

With 7:47 to play in the second, the Bruins got on the board, replay-free.

Jake DeBrusk entered the zone and blasted a shot off the post, which ricocheted to Krejci at the right circle, and he fired in his fourth playoff goal for a 1-0 lead.

The period wasn't going to end without more angst toward officiating.

Charlie McAvoy came up high on a hit to Josh Anderson with 20 seconds left in the frame, and instead of a five-minute major or ejection of any kind, it was ruled just a two-minute minor.

"I saw the replay, it looks like his elbow is down, went through the body," Cassidy said. "They call the minor, we killed it off, off we went."

The Bruins killed that penalty — and a Nordstrom slashing call right after — to keep it a one-goal game.

Nearly halfway through the third, the Bruins expanded on their lead.

Johansson wristed a shot off Bobrovsky's pads that slipped behind him and trickled into the net for the 2-0 advantage.

A couple of minutes later, the Bruins lineup options paid dividends.

Backes beat Oliver Bjorkstrand to a pass from Torey Krug and tapped it in with 9:21 to go to push the lead to 3-0 and give the Bruins some breathing room.

Bruins try to eliminate Blue Jackets in Game 6

Columbus pushed at the end, but the Bruins — woefully outshot in the second period as it was — weathered the storm and held on. The Blue Jackets finished with a 39-29 advantage in shots.

The Bruins finished 2-1 on the road in the series, just as they did against the Maple Leafs in the first round. Columbus didn't hold a lead at any point after winning Game 3 at home.

"I hear people say they go into another team's building, they want to weather a storm. We want to create the storm," Cassidy said. "We don't want to weather the storm, we want to go out there and play and be aggressive and assertive. We did a pretty good job of that."

The Bruins went 2-1-0 in the regular season against the Hurricanes. It's the first time the B's have gone to the conference finals since they beat the Penguins in 2013 to get to the Stanley Cup finals.

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1143994 Boston Bruins

Bruins collective defense an unsung hero

By MARISA INGEMI | marisa.ingemi@bostonherald.com | Boston Herald

COLUMBUS, Ohio — While the Blue Jackets defense and goaltending has been a plot point, the Bruins defenders — especially the young ones — have become a force.

Tuukka Rask has been the Bruins' best player for some time — confirmed by Charlie McAvoy before Game 6 — but the continued development of the young defensemen has kept the Blue Jackets at bay.

An illustration of how hard the D has been to play against is McAvoy's block in the waning seconds of Game 5. He was healthy enough to play in Monday's Game 6 and said he didn't have any ill effects from making the play.

"That was a great block," Rask said. "We kind of turned the puck over a couple of times there. Definitely didn't want to do that, but he sacrificed and made a great block. He's one of the best players shooting the one-timer, so who knows what would have happened."

While it's easy to zero in on such a visible play, overall composure from the group has gone a long way. Brandon Carlo forced the puck away from Artemi Panarin to lead to David Pastrnak's winning tally in the third period of Game 5, and Connor Clifton, who had just 19 NHL games before the postseason, has been involved on offense and defense.

"He's a good hockey player, he can make some plays," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said of Clifton. "The guys out there a lot of times defer to



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their partner and not want to. ... But he's shown he can play, now play to your strengths. If you see ice, take it. He's done a good job being physical."

That confidence for a guy who has played in eight postseason game can be amplified by the way the rest of the defense has shown up. Aside from 42-year-old Zdeno Chara and Torey Krug, the Bruins' entire active defense corps doesn't have loads of experience.

Matt Grzelcyk and Clifton have formed a perfectly capable complimentary third pairing while John Moore and Kevan Miller have been out, with Grzelcyk following up on his strong sophomore campaign and Clifton growing.

What Carlo and McAvoy have done, though, to become shutdown defenders in the postseason despite minimal — or in Carlo's case, zero — playoff experience has been remarkable.

"We use (McAvoy) in all situations. ... I think he's transitioning the puck well," Cassidy said. "He's doing a good job between the blue lines, making some plays, he'll carry it deep, so his full 200-foot game. I know it sounds cliché, but he'll play 25 minutes generally against better players. His puck management has been excellent, can't remember any silly plays that came back at us. I think that's a sign of maturity. Just steadiness."

### Injury update

Cassidy gave a brief update on Miller, who wasn't available at any point against the Blue Jackets, and there still is no timetable.

Noel Acciari missed Game 6 after sitting out the win in Game 5 as well with an upper-body injury, and he's day-to-day. Chris Wagner stepped into the lineup again for Acciari.

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1143995 Boston Bruins

Tuukka Rask-Sergei Bobrovsky matchup a game within the game

By STEVE CONROY | [sconroy@bostonherald.com](mailto:sconroy@bostonherald.com) | Boston Herald

COLUMBUS, Ohio — After a tough loss in Game 3 against the Columbus Blue Jackets in which the Bruins managed only one goal, B's defenseman Brandon Carlo raised some eyebrows when he said that he was confident Columbus goalie Sergei Bobrovsky would "crack" if the B's kept getting opportunities.

In the next two games, the B's scored eight goals against Bobrovsky to take a 3-2 series lead going into Monday's night Game 6 at Nationwide Arena.

And in looking for positives on which his team could build after their 4-3 loss in Game 5, Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella went down the same road as Carlo did, stating his belief that his team finally got to goalie Tuukka Rask.

"I think one of the biggest points in our last game, in Game 5, is that we dented their goalie. That is very important. I think they dented our goalie, and we've dented their goalie in that third period, which is very important going into Game 6," Tortorella said.

In neither instance did it seem like Carlo or Tortorella were consciously engaging in gamesmanship, but they were rather simply stating what they believed. But with words like "crack" and "dented," it was bound to be translated that way.

How much they "dented" Rask with their three-goal third period is debatable. The Jackets got on the board with a fluky short-side tally on a Seth Jones goal line shot from the corner that deflected off Matt Grzelcyk's stick. The second goal was a terrific roof shot from the previously goal-less Ryan Dzingel (another potentially positive development for Columbus). And the third one was a wide-open slapper from just above the hash marks by Dean Kukan.

The B's certainly didn't see it the way Tortorella did. The issues were in front of Rask, not Rask himself.

"I don't think he's been dented," coach Bruce Cassidy said. "He got beat three times the other night. A post got dented by (Matt) Duchene, a break went our way. And he made a big stop on (Cam) Atkinson. That's what I remember from the last 10 minutes for the most part. We had our share of offense as well. The game got away from us a little bit and how we wanted to play, but they made some good plays. They've got some good players. It's going to happen. You have to play through it and I thought we did a good job responding after they got the two goals and we were able to win the game because of that."

David Backes concurred.

"They might have dented the guys who were giving up quality chances in front of him there for a minute there, but I think we responded well," Backes said. "The shots were one that squeaks in by the post — I still haven't seen video that shows it's in — but the shot from the goal line that's right under the bar, that's a heck of a shot. The one-timer that's right at the elbow, that's a heck of a shot. I don't know that that's on Tuukka at all. It's more on the guys in front of him. Well take that blame. Tuukka's been rock solid for us."

The truth of the matter is both goalies have been tremendous, in this series and in their respective playoff runs. Rask carried a .932 save percentage in the playoffs into Game 6 on Monday, and Bobrovsky on a .928 SA with probably a dozen highlight reel saves just in this series alone.

But both men are beatable, and both Carlo and Tortorella know it doesn't hurt the frustrated shooters to hear that every once in a while.

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1143996 Boston Bruins

Bruins pregame notes: B's can advance with a win

By MARISA INGEMI | [marisa.ingemi@bostonherald.com](mailto:marisa.ingemi@bostonherald.com) | Boston Herald

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Bruins are in a spot they have yet to be in the entire playoffs.

A chance to close out a series without the backs against the walls themselves.

The B's survived a late onslaught from the Blue Jackets to take Game 5 and go up 3-2 in the second round series, and now it shifts to Columbus, where the Bruins went 1-1 in Games 3 and 4.

There's urgency, of course; a win tonight, and the Bruins have a date with the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference Finals. Having won Game 5, however, gives them a bit of a cushion if things go awry on the road.

Stepping on the Blue Jackets throat to avoid a Game 7, though, would save a lot of potential stress.

"I know how it feels when you're down, so your season's on the line," said Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy. "I guess we can use that in



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here, knowing what it feels like.... It's a massive game for us. It's an opportunity to take a step forward to where we want to go. We have a chance to end these guys' season, so we have to have that killer instinct. We have to be ready to go tonight, and we will be."

The Bruins did blow a 2-0 and then 3-1 lead in the third period, with the Jackets scoring three goals in a span of 3:27 in Game 5. Those blown leads have been a concern in the past, during the regular season and again in Game 4 against the Maple Leafs where the Bruins survived surrendering a 2-0 lead on the road.

They might not get away with that against a team like the Blue Jackets in their building. The Bruins dodged a bullet, and now have an opportunity to put the series to rest and advance to another challenge against the Hurricanes.

The Jackets have never backed down all the playoffs, since they trailed 3-0 in the first period of the first game against the Lightning. Likely, the Bruins won't get away with some of the issues that plagued them in Game 5.

### Game notes

For the second straight contest, David Backes and Chris Wagner will both be in the lineup. Noel Acciari didn't participate in morning skate and is still out with an upper-body injury.

Bruins head coach Bruce Cassidy also mentioned there still isn't a timetable for Kevan Miller, who has been out the entire postseason, and he won't return at any point in the next two possible games in the series with Columbus.

### About the Blue Jackets

The Jackets went with 11 forwards and seven defenders in Game 5, which meant some of their stars, like Artemi Panarin, had more ice time and the Bruins had to zero in all the more.

"If he's fatigued, force him to play in his own end, force him to re-load a lot and backtrack," said Cassidy. "There's some things you can do to counter that, if you can neutralize him, which is easier said than done. He's a good player."

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Breakfast Podcast, May 6, 2019: Bruins moving on to conference final; It's do or die for the Celtics

By NBC Sports Boston Podcast Network May 07, 2019 12:47 AM

1:18 - The Boston Bruins are moving on to the Eastern Conference Final after defeating the Columbus Blue Jackets in six games. Tom Giles, Danielle Trotta and DJ Bean discuss the win and later Michael Holley is joined by Joe Haggerty to talk about Tuukka Rask's performance in the series.

9:15 - Meanwhile, the Celtics dropped another game to the Milwaukee Bucks and are now face elimination in the series, down three games to one. Chris Forsberg and A. Sherrod Blakely join Tom Giles and Danielle Trotta from the TD Garden to break down the Celtics third-quarter struggles.

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1143998 Boston Bruins

Talking Points from the Bruins' series-clinching 3-0 win in Columbus

By Joe Haggerty May 06, 2019 11:59 PM

Here are Joe Haggerty's Talking Points from the Bruins' series-clinching 3-0 win against the Blue Jackets Monday night.

**GOLD STAR:** Blue Jackets forwards Nick Foligno and Boone Jenner were really mixing it up with Tuukka Rask around the Bruins net, and clearly trying to rattle the cage of the Bruins goalie. The same goes with John Tortorella saying they "dented" Rask in the third period of Game 5 headed into Monday night's Game 6 in Columbus. It clearly didn't work as he's made 39 saves in a playoff shutout performance where he truly stood on his head. I guess he wasn't dented after all, Torts. Instead Rask played extremely well as he's done all throughout this second round series against Columbus, and he's outplayed Sergei Bobrovsky at every turn in this series. Credit Rask for being as good as he's ever been in the postseason for the Black and Gold and one of the big reasons they're headed to the conference finals for the first time in six years.

**BLACK EYE:** It was a tough couple of days for John Tortorella. First, he was wrong about the series being headed back to Boston for a Game 7, and then he was wrong when he assumed that the Bruins had "dented" Tuukka Rask after scoring some goals against him in the third period of Game 5. Instead, the Bruins and Rask tossed a 3-0 shutout win over the Blue Jackets where they overcame an early goal getting called back by goalie interference, and ran roughshod over a raucous Columbus home crowd that was trying to push their team to victory. Instead, Rask and the Bruins completely quieted the Columbus crowd and completely shut down Tort's prediction attempts, so now the Blue Jackets are getting their tee times ready.

Rask makes history in Game 6 shutout

**TURNING POINT:** For the Bruins it was their ability to come back from a first-period goal that was overturned by a coach's challenge. Sean Kuraly appeared to have scored the first goal of the game in the first period, but instead it was overturned because Joakim Nordstrom crashed into Sergei Bobrovsky prior to Kuraly's second effort shot getting through him. It was a close call with some extenuating circumstances, but it was also probably the right one after multiple reviews of the replay. Still it could have really taken the air out of Boston's sails, but instead buoyed them to bigger and better things against the Blue Jackets. David Krejci finally busted through in the second period and the rest is history.

**HONORABLE MENTION:** David Krejci has always been renowned as a big game playoff performer, and he proved that again with his extra performance in Game 6. It was Krejci that scored the B's first goal and ultimately the game-winner when he rifled one in under the arm of Sergei Bobrovsky after Jake DeBrusk had hit a post on the other side of the net. Krejci added an assist on the David Backes insurance goal late in the third period, and finished with a plus-2 in 13:12 of ice time to go along with two shots on net, a blocked shot and 5-of-10 face-off wins in a strong secondary scoring role where he provided some offensive support.

**BY THE NUMBERS:** 6 – the number of career playoff shutouts for Tuukka Rask after tonight's effort, his first postseason blanking since the 2013-14 playoff run.

**QUOTE TO NOTE:** "Great." –Brad Marchand, who used 39 words to answer 19 questions in his postgame scrum in an extremely laconic media availability.

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Bruins' Tuukka Rask has perfect response to question on being big-game goalie

By Nick Goss May 06, 2019 11:34 PM

Boston Bruins goaltender Tuukka Rask made 39 saves in a Game 6 shutout Monday night to propel his team past the Columbus Blue Jackets and into the Eastern Conference final.

He was Boston's best player in its second-round matchup versus Columbus, and the netminder's performance in the series-clincher was among the best in his playoff career.

Rask was asked in his postgame media scrum about being a big-game goaltender, and he gave a perfect response:

Rask, asked if he thinks it's important to be known as a Big Game Goalie:

"Yeah, well. It's better than sucking."

— Matt Porter (@mattports) May 7, 2019

He's not wrong.

Rask now has two series-clinching shutouts in his career, which is tied with Gerry Cheevers and Tim Thomas for the most such wins in Bruins playoff history. His 39 saves also are tied for the fourth-most in a series-clinching shutout since 1954-55.

The Bruins will be favored in their conference final series with the Carolina Hurricanes, and the advantage Rask gives Boston in net is among the reasons why.

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1144000 Boston Bruins

Bruins: Tuukka Rask makes history with shutout in Game 6 vs. Blue Jackets

By Jacob Camenker May 06, 2019 11:14 PM

Tuukka Rask is coming off one of the best postseason series of his career. In six games against the Columbus Blue Jackets, the Boston Bruins netminder stopped 201 of 211 shots, good for a .948 save percentage, and helped to spark the Bruins' victory in Game 6 with a 39-save shutout.

And with that performance, Rask wrote himself into both the Bruins' and NHL's history books.

Marchand is a man of few words after game

According to the NHL PR Twitter account, Rask's 39 saves in Game 6 are tied for the fourth-most in a series-clinching shutout since the 1955-56 season. He joins some very talented goaltenders on that list.

Tuukka Rask's 39 saves in a series-clinching shutout matched the NHL's fourth-highest total since 1955-56. #NHLStats #StanleyCup pic.twitter.com/UvZTHFVEV0

— NHL Public Relations (@PR\_NHL) May 7, 2019

In addition to the company that Rask is keeping there, he recorded his sixth postseason shutout as well. Only Gerry Cheevers has more

shutouts in his postseason career (8) and Rask matched Tim Thomas and Tiny Thompson on the list with six.

Rask also became the third goalie to record two series-clinching shutouts during his Bruins career, joining Cheevers and Thomas on that exclusive list.

Though Rask has had his fair share of detractors over the years, it's numbers like these that prove he can be one of the best goalies in the game and has already made a name for himself as one of the best goalies in Bruins history. He will get a chance to continue his hot streak in the Bruins' Eastern Conference Final matchup with the Carolina Hurricanes.

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1144001 Boston Bruins

Zdeno Chara, David Pastrnak celebrate Bruins' win with awesome Instagram video

By Nick Goss May 06, 2019 10:45 PM

The Boston Bruins are headed to the Eastern Conference final, and two of the team's best players already have shared their excitement on Instagram.

B's forward David Pastrnak and defenseman Zdeno Chara celebrated Monday night's Game 6 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets in a video posted to the Bruins captain's Instagram account shortly after the second-round Stanley Cup playoff series ended.

Pastrnak will be making his first career appearance in the Eastern Conference final. Chara is about to make his fourth appearance (third with the B's).

The Bruins will face the Carolina Hurricanes, including an old friend in Dougie Hamilton, in the conference final.

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1144002 Boston Bruins

Brad Marchand not in a talking mood after Game 6 win

By Joe Haggerty May 06, 2019 10:12 PM

COLUMBUS – The Bruins are headed to the Eastern Conference Final for the first time in six years, so clearly there were smiles in the B's dressing room following their 3-0 dispatching of the Columbus Blue Jackets in Game 6 at Nationwide Arena.

But there was also a "crispy" Brad Marchand, who used 39 words to answer 19 questions in an unusually laconic approach to his media availability despite the happy moment in the Boston dressing room. Marchand used "great" to describe Tuukka Rask's performance, and said "obviously not" when asked if the Bruins goaltender looked "dented" during his 39-save.

Here's a few more of his greatest hits while channeling the "I'm just here so I don't get fined" vibe from Marshawn Lynch:

Talking Points from the Bruins' 3-0 in Game 6



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What was the difference turning around the series after we were down 2-1 in the series? "We won."

How good does it feel going to the conference finals for the first time in a while? "It's good."

Do you have a bet on how few words you're going to use in this availability? "Maybe."

Anybody say anything interesting to you in the handshake line? "Nope."

What do you think about Carolina? "They're good."

Are you feeling a little crispy tonight? "Oh yeah."

Brad Marchand, a man of many words. [pic.twitter.com/rNjGhc9Jl](https://pic.twitter.com/rNjGhc9Jl)

— hockeyfights (@hockeyfights) May 7, 2019

It would appear that the incident stems from a Game 2 pregame interview where a Hockey Night in Canada reporter asked him if he'd had his skate blades sharpened prior to the game after he'd stomped on Cam Atkinson's stick in Game 1 of the series. But there's no real explanation as to why it carried over to tonight with both the walk-off interview, and with the usual postgame availability afterward.

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1144003 Boston Bruins

Crazy stat shows Patrice Bergeron's defensive dominance for Bruins in playoffs

By Nick Goss May 06, 2019 10:04 PM

Boston Bruins center Patrice Bergeron is the best defensive forward in the NHL, and he's provided further proof of that during the 2019 Stanley Cup playoffs.

Bergeron is a four-time winner of the Frank J. Selke Trophy as the top two-way forward in the NHL, and he's a finalist again in 2019. If playoff performance was included in the voting for this award, Bergeron would be the runaway winner (he'll probably win anyway).

Check out this crazy stat on Bergeron's defensive masterclass in the postseason so far (numbers below are from 5-on-5 action):

In a collective 263 minutes playing against Patrice Bergeron..... Tavares, Marnier, Panarin, Atkinson, Matthews, Jenner, and Duchene have been on-ice for a combined 4 goals.

— Bruins Stats (@bruins\_stats) May 7, 2019

Those seven players are among the best offensive threats in the NHL, and as a group they combined for 226 goals in the regular season.

Bergeron spent most of his 5-on-5 ice time in Monday night's Game 6 against the Columbus Blue Jackets matched up with the Nick Foligno, Boone Jenner and Cam Atkinson line. This line was unable to score against Bergeron as the B's earned a 3-0 victory to end their second-round series.

Bergeron, and his linemates Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak, will soon match up against one of the top lines of the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference final. Carolina's trio of Nino Niederreiter, Jordan Staal and Teuvo Teravainen probably is the most likely matchup for Bergeron in that series.

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1144004 Boston Bruins

Bruins to play Hurricanes, Dougie Hamilton In Eastern Conference final

By Nick Goss May 06, 2019 9:42 PM

The Boston Bruins are going to the Eastern Conference final for the first time since 2013.

The B's eliminated the Columbus Blue Jackets in Game 6 of their second-round Stanley Cup playoff series with a 3-0 victory, setting up a matchup in the next round with the Carolina Hurricanes.

Yes, you read that right.

A Bruins-Hurricanes conference final was not among the most predicted matchups, but both teams have fought through some tough series to reach this point. Boston defeated a very good Toronto Maple Leafs team in seven games in the first round before dispatching the scrappy Blue Jackets in six games. Carolina eliminated the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals by winning a Game 7 on the road, and then it blew past the New York Islanders in a four-game sweep.

The B's will be aiming for their first Stanley Cup Final appearance since 2013, while the 'Canes are hoping to return to the Cup Final for the first time since 2006 (when Carolina won its first championship). These teams last met in the playoffs during the second round in 2009, when the Hurricanes won Game 7 in Boston thanks to a Scott Walker goal.

The Bruins have home ice advantage for this series, and we should expect a spirited reaction from Boston fans when former B's defenseman Dougie Hamilton takes the ice at TD Garden for the first time as an opponent in the playoffs.

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1144005 Boston Bruins

Blue Jackets DJ trolls Brad Marchand after penalty

By Jacob Camenker May 06, 2019 8:33 PM

In the early stages of the 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs, Brad Marchand did a great job of avoiding penalties. In the entire seven-game series against the Toronto Maple Leafs, he avoided the penalty box. Against the Columbus Blue Jackets, it has been somewhat of a different story.

How does Cassidy make sure Marchand doesn't cross the line?

Marchand didn't commit a penalty in the first contest against Columbus, but he logged eight penalty minutes in the next four games. He added to that total in Game 6 by slashing a Blue Jacket in the second period, and the Nationwide Arena DJ responded by brilliantly trolling him, per Joe McDonald of The Athletic.

For those that aren't familiar with the song, there is a lyric in the chorus that repeats this phrase, "Despite all my rage I am still just a rat in a cage."

Marchand has been called a rat by some, so the DJ is clearly taking a shot at him for being in the penalty box (the metaphorical cage). The Blue Jackets did this earlier in the series as well, so it's clear that they were thinking long-term with their joke.



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While this was a funny move by the stadium music staff, the Bruins got the last laugh. They were able to kill off Marchand's penalty and David Krejci broke a scoreless tie shortly thereafter.

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1144006 Boston Bruins

Highlights from the Bruins' 3-0 win over the Blue Jackets in Game 6

By Michael Deprisco May 06, 2019 7:14 PM

The Bruins had a goal taken off by the board by a controversial coach's challenge. It looked like Sean Kuraly scored on a second effort play in front while Joakim Nordstrom jamming in front of the net. But Nordstrom made contact with Sergei Bobrovsky at the corner of the crease, and it looked like the Columbus goalie didn't have enough time to recover and get back into the play. There was a bit of a shove from behind on Nordstrom by Scott Harrington as well, but it was way before he crashed into Bobrovsky and essentially took him out of the play. I thought it was the right call to take the goal off the board after watching the replay a couple of times, but I'm sure most of the B's fans out there disagree with me. The B's never let it rattle them and instead pushed in goals from David Krejci, Marcus Johansson and David Backes to power past Columbus.

Everybody will be talking about the Charlie McAvoy play. He drilled Josh Anderson with a high hit as he battled Zdeno Chara to carry the puck into the offensive zone. It was a shoulder check to the chest and head with Anderson going down in a heap afterward. McAvoy was lucky he only received a two minute minor for a check to the head, but he also might definitely be hearing from the Department of Player Safety about a possible suspension for a headshot.

Blue Jackets forwards Nick Foligno and Boone Jenner were really mixing it up with Tuukka Rask around the Bruins net, and trying to rattle the cage of the Bruins goalie. It's clearly not working as he's made 27 saves and counting through two periods without letting up a goal. I guess he wasn't dented after all, Torts. Instead Rask stood on his head just as he's done throughout this second-round series against Columbus and their stellar goalie, and he's outplayed Sergei Bobrovsky at every turn in this series. Credit Rask for being as good as he's ever been in the postseason for the Black and Gold.

The Boston Bruins opened the scoring in the first period of Game 6 against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday night, but the euphoria was short-lived for the Original Six club.

Bruins forward Sean Kuraly beat Blue Jackets goalie Sergei Bobrovsky to put Boston on the board, but the call was reviewed for goalie interference. The referees determined Bobrovsky was interfered with and reversed the call, thus taking the goal away from Boston.

Check out the play in the video below:

Kuraly goal overturned for goaltender interference  
[pic.twitter.com/2uos1h3oNz](https://pic.twitter.com/2uos1h3oNz)

— Marina Molnar (@mkmolnar) May 6, 2019

Bruins forward Joakim Nordstrom clearly made contact with Bobrovsky. However, did the Columbus goalie have enough time to reset himself after the bump, and was he too far out of the crease? Clearly, the referees saw enough compelling evidence to overturn the original call of a good goal.

The Bruins have been on the wrong side of a few reviews/challenges in the 2019 Stanley Cup playoffs, and this instance isn't the first time

Boston has had rough luck on goalie interference calls. It also happened in the first round versus the Toronto Maple Leafs.

ICEBREAKER! @AM34 gets the @MapleLeafs on the board.

Stream it here: <https://t.co/G9ziycoCrp> [pic.twitter.com/lssCk8HaWt](https://pic.twitter.com/lssCk8HaWt)

— #StanleyCup on NBC (@NHLonNBCSports) April 20, 2019

The Bruins entered Monday night's game at Nationwide Arena with a 3-2 series lead. A victory would send Boston to the Eastern Conference final, where the Carolina Hurricanes are waiting.

UP NEXT:

Eastern Conference Final vs Hurricanes

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144007 Boston Bruins

Bruins vs. Blue Jackets live stream: Watch Stanley Cup playoffs Game 6 online

By Nick Goss May 06, 2019 3:44 PM

The Boston Bruins will earn an Eastern Conference finals berth for the first time since 2013 if they beat the Columbus Blue Jackets in Game 6 of their second-round Stanley Cup playoff series Monday night at Nationwide Arena.

The Bruins were at one point trailing 2-1 in this series, but back-to-back wins for Boston have pushed Columbus to the brink of elimination for the first time this postseason. The difference for the B's over the last two games has been the offensive resurgence of the top line, which consists of David Pastrnak, Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand. This trio combined to tally three goals and three assists in a 4-3 victory in Game 5 on Saturday night.

Teams that take a 3-2 series lead with a Game 5 win go on to reach the next round almost 80 percent of the time, so history is on Boston's side. However, the Blue Jackets have shown throughout the playoffs that they don't quit, so we should expect Game 6 to be the toughest matchup of the Bruins' season so far.

Here's how and when to watch Bruins vs. Blue Jackets Game 6 online. Be sure to watch "Postgame Live" with Michael Felger, Tony Amonte and Meghan Duggan on NBC Sports Boston after "Celtics Postgame Live."

When: Monday, May 6 at 7 p.m. ET

TV Channel: NBC Sports Network

Live Stream: NBC Sports App

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144008 Boston Bruins

Noel Acciari out for Game 6; Charlie McAvoy good to go for Bruins

By Joe Haggerty May 06, 2019 3:19 PM

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Bruins will be without hard-hitting, physical fourth-line energy guy Noel Acciari for the second straight game with an



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upper-body injury. That's the bad news for the Bruins in Game 6 tonight at Nationwide Arena in Columbus.

The good news is that Charlie McAvoy appears perfectly fine after blocking a shot with the inside of his right foot in the closing seconds of Boston's Game 5 win, and he will be good to go as the B's attempt to close out the Blue Jackets up 3-2 in the best-of-seven series.

"He plays 25 minutes generally against better players. His puck management has been excellent. I don't remember any silly plays that have come back at us, so that's just a sign of maturity. He's been rock-solid and steady," said Bruce Cassidy. "Everybody is going to get beat from time-to-time out there, but we just remind him occasionally to play from the middle of the ice out, and that's that."

Torts: Blue Jackets 'dented' Rask in Game 5

Once again Chris Wagner will fill in for the injured Acciari after the Walpole kid posted a team-high six hits and a couple of blocked shots in 12:32 of ice in the Game 5 win. So the Bruins will go with the exact same lineup from Game 5 as they head into a loud, raucous Columbus arena looking to close out the Blue Jackets in six games, and perhaps earn a couple of days of rest for themselves prior to a date in the Eastern Conference Final.

Here are the Bruins projected line combos and D-pairings vs. the Blue Jackets for Game 6 based on Monday's morning skate at Nationwide Arena:

Marchand-Bergeron-Pastrnak

DeBrusk-Krejci-Backes

Johansson-Coyle-Heinen

Nordstrom-Kuraly-Wagner

Chara-McAvoy

Krug-Carlo

Grzelcyk-Clifton

Rask

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144009 Boston Bruins

Tortorella believes Blue Jackets 'have dented' Rask headed into Game 6

By Joe Haggerty May 06, 2019 1:36 PM

COLUMBUS, Ohio – John Tortorella and the Columbus Blue Jackets are backed into a corner with the Bruins holding the upper hand in the series, and Columbus on the brink of elimination while down 3-2 in the best-of-seven series with Game 6 on tap at Nationwide Arena on Monday night.

So it's in moments like these when Tortorella starts getting brash and employing the mental warfare tactics. First he guaranteed there would be a Game 7 after losing Game 5 at TD Garden on Saturday night, and now on the morning of Monday's Game 6 he's referring to Bruins goaltender Tuukka Rask as "dented" after giving up three goals in the third period Saturday night.

Truth be told, the three goals scored by Columbus were more about a defense in front of him that was breaking down, and Rask still holds a dominant .936 save percentage thus far in the second-round series. There were no soft goals allowed by Rask during that sequence, and any

notion that he's been dented like an old clunker of a car is perhaps reaching for something.

Why the 2nd period is an 'area of concern' for B's

Still it makes sense that Tortorella was attempting to get inside the goalie's head with the Blue Jackets looking to get every edge in a do-or-die Game 6, and perhaps pump his own offensive players up a little bit at the same time.

"One of the biggest points in our last game, Game 5, is that I think we dented their goalie. I think that is very important," said Tortorella. "I think they've dented our goalie and we dented their goalie in the third period. I think that's very important going into Game 6."

Tortorella went on to ring that bell again in the final question of his Monday morning press conference as a parting shot before the two clubs take the ice tonight.

"We've got to get some goal-scoring. We've two of the best goalies in the playoffs playing each other here. They have found a way to score some goals with their top guys. We have got to find a way to score some goals with our guys," said Tortorella. "[Game 5] was a tough loss for us because we had a chance to go up 4-3, and we had chances to tie the game. But the biggest thing is that I think we put a dent in [Tuukka] Rask coming into Game 6 here. That's so important for offensive people."

Pastrnak's early playoff career features eye-popping numbers

"They might have dented the guys giving up quality chances in front of him for a minute there," said David Backes with a light chuckle when appraised of Tortorella's comments. "But I think we responded well. I don't know that [the goals] were on Tuukka as much as they were on the guys in front of him. We'll take that blame. I think Tuukka has been rock-solid for us the whole series, the whole playoffs and the whole year."

Certainly, the experienced Blue Jackets bench boss is going to preach whatever he thinks will motivate his players, and get in the heads of his opponents at the same time. In the past there have been questions about Rask's big game ability in the postseason, but he was solid in Game 7 vs. Toronto and he's been stellar against Columbus in this series while outplaying Sergei Bobrovsky.

Tortorella may be grasping at straws while trying to gain an edge in an elimination game for his team, but truth be told the only goalie that seems "dented" right now in this series is the one that's given up four goals in back-to-back games: Sergei Bobrovsky.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144010 Boston Bruins

What changed the series for Bruins? It started with Tuukka Rask's dominance

By Joe McDonald May 6, 2019 3

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The turning point in this series was Tuukka Rask.

Through the first two rounds of the playoffs, the Bruins goaltender — who has backstopped his team to three straight wins — is playing his most consistent postseason hockey of his career, and that includes when he guided Boston to the Stanley Cup Final in 2013. He finished with 39 saves en route to a 3-0 shutout performance in Game 6 to close out the Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday.

Rask doesn't like discussing his individual success but had a colorful way of describing his performance in the second round.



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"Better than sucking," he said with a smile.

Overall, the Bruins did not suck and that's why they're about to face the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference final. Everything is coming together nicely for the Bruins. Special teams were key against the Blue Jackets, especially Boston's penalty-killing unit that went 11 for the last 11. Secondary scoring was timely for the Bruins too. And, it helps that the players are relatively healthy as they approach the next series.

"That's the type of team that we are," alternate captain Patrice Bergeron said. "We rely on everybody to do the job and everyone's buying in, and at this time of the year, you can't say enough about that. Those are things that don't go on the score sheet, but it doesn't go unnoticed in this locker room, and those are the things you need going forward to win hockey games. And guys are doing that."

Basically, Rask was the Bruins' most consistent player throughout the entire second-round series. He made timely saves. He made highlight-reel saves. He stole games. He outshined Blue Jackets goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, who will become an unrestricted free agent on July 1 and will earn a massive payday.

If the Bruins are able to beat the Hurricanes, advance to the final and hoist the Stanley Cup, Rask would be a candidate for the Conn Smythe as MVP if this performance continues.

"Outstanding again," Bruce Cassidy said. "You need your goalie to deliver – that's stating the obvious – and he did."

Rask was on the receiving end of gamesmanship on and off the ice from the Blue Jackets in an attempt to get him off his game. It didn't work. Columbus coach John Tortorella said before Game 6 that his team had "dented" Rask in the previous game.

But there were no dents on Monday night. Rask stayed composed and showed an edge that rarely presents itself.

"As the series went on, they kind of felt maybe they needed to do that and try to get in my head a little bit, but it's funny when that happens because you know you have the better of them at that point," Rask said. "If they start running you, you've got to defend yourself and take a few shots."

When the Blue Jackets crashed the net, Rask wasn't shy about throwing his blocker or getting in the opposition's face. It normally doesn't happen as often as it did earlier in his career, but when he has those type of episodes, his teammates know Rask is focused.

"I like when he has a little fire," Cassidy said. "I've told you that all along. There's a fine line there. If he plays with some of that fire in his belly, the guys can feed off that, as long as it's not reckless."

Rask did everything well. When he was forced to play the puck, which usually isn't one of his strengths, he was effective, especially helping the team on the breakout several times during this series.

"When Tuukka's invested in the whole game, not just stopping the puck, getting out, helping his (defense), all those little things matter and our guys feed off those things when he's on," Cassidy said.

Sticking with the veteran presence, forward David Krejci is also playing his best postseason hockey in a long time. In fact, he's played well the entire season, but he's elevated his game to a new level and it was on display during Game 6 against the Blue Jackets.

"It's his composure," Cassidy said. "Guys are playing at a higher pace out there. There's more physicality, so everyone ratchets it up and there's noise all night. He's got that ability to block that stuff out. It's one of his unique gifts; he can slow the game down. At this time of the year it's that much more important."

Krejci's secondary assist on David Backes' goal to give the Bruins a 3-0 lead at 10:39 of the third period sealed the victory for Boston. It was a vintage Krejci performance. He showed patience with the puck, allowed

the Bruins to set up deep in the offensive zone, before dishing the puck to a streaking Torey Krug, who passed it to Backes for the tip-in tally.

"He's the type of player that it doesn't matter if it's a Stanley Cup Final Game 7, or a regular-season game No. 2, he plays the same way," Rask said. "That's his biggest asset. He slows the game down."

Similar to Rask, Krejci doesn't want the attention. He only wants to win. There's never a doubt about his ability to perform in the postseason.

"I don't care about myself," he said. "I just want to go out there and help the team in whatever way I can to help get a win. That's pretty much what every single guy wants to do here. We don't need any heroes here. We want to do it as a team."

Oh, and one last thing: The Bruins had their share of puck luck in this series, and you can't underestimate how important that is for the team that eventually wins the Stanley Cup.

"We battled for each other all year and it's no different now," Rask said. "I'm trying to make a save, guys are blocking shots, trying to make the right play offensively, defensively – everybody's playing for each other. It was a great team effort – again."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144011 Boston Bruins

Bruins Game 6 report card: Little went wrong in closeout of Blue Jackets

By Fluto Shinzawa May 6, 2019 1

Yes, Tuukka Rask had help from his net. The Columbus chapter of Iron Workers hammered Rask's posts and crossbar four times in Game 6.

But Rask bricked up every other available square inch of his net. Ten Foot Tuukka, perfect on 39 shots, gave his opponent no room. No belief. No life.

And so after a 3-0 victory Monday, Rask and the Bruins advance to an Eastern Conference final showdown against Carolina, which is compromised in net. Petr Mrazek, injured in Game 2 against the Islanders, did not appear in the Hurricanes' final two wins of their second-round series. Mrazek has since returned to practice, but it's unknown whether he or Curtis McElhinney will start Game 1.

Either way, whoever mans the Carolina net will be opposed by an ace who's standing taller than the Eiffel Tower. At 5-on-5, Rask has a .945 save percentage through two rounds. The Black-and-Gold gold standard, of course, was Tim Thomas' .950 5-on-5 save percentage during the 2011 Stanley Cup run.

According to Natural Stat Trick, Toronto and Columbus were expected to score 34.37 goals on Rask in all situations based on their location and quality. They scored only 27.

Rask is unconscious.

Plus

- Tuukka Rask. Best player in Game 6 and best player in the series. He sparkled throughout the shutout Monday but had his best stuff during Joakim Nordstrom's slashing penalty in the third. Columbus had multiple sniffs to tie the score at 1-1 — Matt Duchene's pump fake and follow-up off the rush, Seth Jones' ripper off Rask's mask, Josh Anderson's rebound attempt after Zach Werenski's post strike. Rask denied all of them.

- David Krejci. A complete effort by the No. 2 center. Started the second-period breakout that he ended with a one-timer past Sergei Bobrovsky's



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blocker. Made a clever entry in the third that led to David Backes' insurance goal. Poised, controlled, sublime.

- Marcus Johansson. Sucked the life out of the Blue Jackets by making it 2-0. Made a nice criss-cross move with Charlie Coyle, then sailed a wrister through Scott Harrington that got past Bobrovsky. Killer goal for Bobrovsky to give up.

- Jake DeBrusk. Was flying after taking Krejci's outlet pass and rattled the puck off the post. Columbus could not recover in time to defend Krejci's goal because of DeBrusk's speed.

- Sean Kuraly. Buzzsaw in all three zones. A first-period goal was wiped out after video review concluded that Nordstrom interfered with Bobrovsky. Almost scored a shorthanded goal in the second. Had a team-high four shots. Likes to drink an Americano before each game. It must have 18 shots in it.

- Joakim Nordstrom. Very good pace and energy throughout the game. Got a shove in the back from Harrington that led him into Bobrovsky, which wiped out Kuraly's goal. Nice dish to set up Kuraly for a potential shorthanded goal.

- David Backes. Played a team-low 8:39 but provided bang for the buck by driving to the net, beating Oliver Bjorkstrand and netting the third goal.

- Brandon Carlo. Was second in ice time with 24:14. Did not allow Artemi Panarin to do anything around the net.

- Charlie Coyle. Pushed the puck into the offensive zone with purpose on Johansson's backbreaker. Had several good down-low looks in the second. Moved up to No. 1 right wing when Columbus pulled Bobrovsky.

- Torey Krug. Took a wicked lick from Pierre-Luc Dubois early in the second. But shook off the hit and moved the puck well alongside Carlo. Skilled dish to spring Backes in the third.

- Danton Heinen. Held his ground and passed to Coyle from the boards just before Anderson ran him over. Moments later, Johansson buried the dagger. Courageous play.

- Connor Clifton. Chipped the puck from behind the net out to Krejci an instant before he was decked by Brandon Dubinsky. Clifton was rewarded for his bravery when Krejci scored on the play.

### Even

- Patrice Bergeron. Was underwater at 5-on-5 against Nick Foligno, Boone Jenner and Cam Atkinson (30.0 Corsi For rating, per Natural Stat Trick). But played an important role on the penalty kill, where he logged 2:55 of action.

- Brad Marchand. Like Bergeron, spent more time than usual defending. Only one shot on net. Played 3:02 on the penalty kill.

- Zdeno Chara. Led all Bruins with 26:04 of ice time. Wasn't as leaky as he was in Game 5.

- Chris Wagner. Decent north-south pace on the fourth line.

- Matt Grzelcyk. Played only 11:42 but helped to control the play at 5-on-5 (team-leading 66.67 CF%).

- David Pastrnak. Quiet night on offense (two attempts, one shot).

### Minus

- Charlie McAvoy. Marred another excellent performance with his second-period clock-cleaning of Anderson. Fortunate to be called for only a minor for an illegal check to the head instead of a match penalty. The Bruins killed off the two minutes. But McAvoy's availability for Game 1 against the Hurricanes could be in question if the Department of Player Safety looks for justice.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144012 Boston Bruins

'People hate him': In the penalty box, Brad Marchand makes for juicy target for Columbus fans

By Joe McDonald May 6, 2019 86

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Brad Marchand may be the most disliked person in the Buckeye State.

With Game 6 set between the Bruins and Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday night, fans are hoping No. 63 returns to the penalty box, or what they describe as "The Rat Trap."

"No issues when it's (Patrice) Bergeron or (Zdeno) Chara," said an NHL off-ice official.

Marchand, however, is a different story. A Nationwide Arena security guard stationed in the stands behind the penalty box said it's chaos when he's in the box, with fans banging on the glass and yelling obscenities while attempting to throw food and beers on Marchand.

He was penalized three times during Boston's 4-1 win over the Blue Jackets in Game 4, and when he served, fans were waiting to verbally torture the player for two minutes each time. His first penalty, a tripping call on the Blue Jacket's Boone Jenner at 6:52 of the first period, resulted in a penalty shot. The other two times, fans were waving, yelling and signaling Marchand to come to the box, eager to play their roles in dishing out his punishment.

Christian Schafer, of Sandusky, Ohio, was sitting in Row B, Seat 11, only two down from the penalty box.

"One, he's a Bruin, and two, nobody likes a rat face," said Schafer. "Everyone was banging on the glass and booing him. They just hate him. People are crawling over seats just to get a picture of him sitting in there. It's crazy."

Another fan sitting nearby described the atmosphere as legitimately hostile. Sometimes the jeers toward Marchand were harmless. Sometimes they crossed the line.

"One fan knew his wife's name, his middle name, date of birth and insulted his family," the fan said. "He was being heckled. It was kind of scary. That's going too far."

It's nothing new to Marchand to hear boos from opposing fans. It comes with the territory when you're the villain, and Marchand is used to playing that role. Every fan base has a visiting player it despises and heckles. That hatred increases during the playoffs and it only rose against Marchand when he punched Blue Jackets' Scott Harrington in the head during Game 3. He was not disciplined by the league.

That's why Marchand received a particularly rough reception throughout Game 4, one that was at its worst during his time in the penalty box.

"You can't really hear it. It's just such a blur – everywhere," Marchand said. "That's what fans don't realize — you can't hear anything that's said (when you're) on the ice. There's so much noise everywhere."

Even when a player is sitting in the penalty box, Marchand said he couldn't hear anything.

"No," he said. "If someone said something I didn't like, water in the face."

Randy, who asked to be identified by only his first name, is a season-ticket holder and his seats are in the row directly behind the penalty box. He shared some of the remarks against Marchand.

"Rat face and weasel dick," explained Randy. "Before the game, they had a picture of him licking a guy."



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Marchand sat stoic and did not acknowledge the screaming fans around the penalty box.

"Nothing," Randy said. "He didn't respond at all. People were banging on the glass before security came over and put a stop to it. People hate him. Every time he touches the puck everyone boos."

In his experience as a season-ticket holder, Randy believes Marchand is the most disliked opposing player who comes to Nationwide Arena.

"I think so, for sure, yeah," Randy said. "Some people take it a little too far."

When Marchand went to the box for his third penalty at 18:01 of the second period in Game 4, he had a cut on the bridge of his nose and was bleeding.

"He has a certain rodent feature that people like to point out," said one fan who wanted to remain nameless in the seat right next to the box. "He's sitting there bleeding like a bitch."

Katie Graham is a season-ticket holder in the first row on the glass, her seat only a few down from the penalty box. Jokingly, she said she was the one to finally get a response with one of her chirps toward Marchand.

"Everybody's cussing at him and being aggressive, but the minute I said my daughter is taller than him he was like, (surprised face)," explained Graham.

Since special teams have been a deciding factor in most games, and will likely affect the final outcome, it's important for both teams to stay disciplined — but staying out of the box has been a tough test considering how physically both teams have played. For Marchand that may be extra important, lest he have to again brave the food-throwing, insult-spewing hecklers of Nationwide Arena.

(Top photo of Marchand being escorted to the penalty box: John E. Sokolowski / USA Today)

What did you think of this story?

The Athletic LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144013 Boston Bruins

Blocking shots is going to hurt, but in the NHL playoffs, the pain is worth it

By Joe McDonald May 6, 2019 10

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The ability and willingness of players across the NHL to block shots has changed from a decade ago.

At that time, when a defenseman was about to take a shot, an opposing player would completely lay out on the ice in an effort to block the puck. Coaches and players quickly learned it was a counterproductive practice, because the player was taking himself out of the play by lying on the ice even if he successfully blocked the shot.

In today's game, most shot blockers remain on their skates or only drop to one knee.

During the playoffs, however, players will do anything to block a shot. Case in point: Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy looked like he was sliding into second base when he stuck his right skate in the air and blocked a shot attempt by the Blue Jackets' Artemi Panarin with six seconds remaining in regulation to help the Bruins close out a 4-3 Game 5 win on Saturday.

It hurt and will likely sting for a bit, but the pain is worth it.

"You want to leave your imprint on the game in any way possible," McAvoy said. "I got lucky. I threw my body out there and was fortunate enough that it hit me. Whatever it takes, right?"

McAvoy described that type of effort as "winning hockey."

Some players wear added protection on their skates and gloves at this point of the season. In fact, many teams are making it mandatory, according to one glove manufacturer representative. It's not only to protect the hands and wrists from a blocked shot but also from an opponent's slash.

Basically, a plastic plate is added to the back of the glove, which is why most shot blockers have their hands turned in that direction — as opposed to palm out, where there's zero protection. Most skilled players don't like the added protection because they want a lighter glove in order to feel the puck on their stick. Normally, it's the bottom-six forwards and penalty killers who seek the added protection.

"Some guys don't like it because they like to move their hands more. For me, it's more meat and potatoes," said the Bruins' Noel Acciari, who has experienced his share of broken bones due to blocked shots. He missed 13 games at the start of the 2017-18 season and needed surgery on his left index finger after breaking the digit in the first game.

In his first contest back, he blocked a shot in the exact spot.

"It was bruised but nothing happened because of that extra padding," explained Acciari. "My finger's already messed up, but I don't need to lose another month of hockey for something that can be avoided."

Linemate Sean Kuraly missed the final eight games of the regular season and the first four games of the playoffs after breaking his right hand on March 21 against the New Jersey Devils. When he returned for Game 5 against the Toronto Maple Leafs in the first round, he was supporting a new pair of gloves.

"It's a balance between protection and not wanting to wear heavy gloves," explained Kuraly. "If you can keep your gloves light and increase protection, I'm sure that's something players would be interested in."

There have been a total of 165 blocked shots through the first five games of this second-round series between the Bruins and Columbus Blue Jackets. It wouldn't be a John Tortorella-coached team without players sacrificing their bodies to great lengths.

"Shot blocking is a huge part of the playoffs. Shot blocking is a huge part of hockey, but in the playoffs, it's even more pushed, as far as how you find a way to compete in games and try to win games," Tortorella said.

Every Bruins fan can recall the image of Gregory Campbell in agony after he suffered a broken leg while blocking a shot during Game 3 of the 2013 Eastern Conference final. He remained on the ice for another minute to help kill a penalty against the Pittsburgh Penguins, which added to his legend. The Bruins won that series and advanced to the Stanley Cup final before losing to the Chicago Blackhawks.

If the Bruins win this second-round series against the Blue Jackets and advance, perhaps McAvoy's heroics will resonate like Campbell's.

"It hurts to win," said Bruins defenseman Torey Krug. "Sacrificing the body, blocking a big shot — who knows what happens if (the puck) gets by Chuck."

What did you think of this story?

The Athletic LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144092 NHL

Wonder Woman's husband, 'hero' lawyer: Meet some of the owners for Seattle's NHL team



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 7, 2019

By Geoff Baker

### Inside the NHL

If ownership has its privileges, then there must be plenty of folks feeling privileged when it comes to Seattle's NHL team.

That team has taken on a slew of additional minority owners locally, nationwide and in Canada that have yet to be formally announced. The Seattle Times reported a few months back that Montreal lawyer Mitch Garber, the longtime head of Cirque du Soleil and one of those trying to revive the MLB Expos in that city, had joined the Seattle group headed by billionaire investment banker David Bonderman and Hollywood producer Jerry Bruckheimer.

But it turns out there are plenty more owners beyond Garber, many with interesting stories. One is married to the actress that first played Wonder Woman, another got his fingertip bitten off rescuing a restaurant employee from a man threatening her, while yet another paid a princely sum for Beyoncé and Jay-Z's rental house.

There's also the recycling king of Toronto and, for local flavor, the head of Seattle-based Zillow in addition to a former vice president of the Bellevue High School football team's booster club.

"We've said from the beginning we were going to add additional owners, and that's what we've done," NHL Seattle president and CEO Tod Leiweke said. "Keep in mind that a lot of these people were there from the beginning and some were added later on."

The NHL mandated a minimum \$5 million buy-in price for ownership stakes.

Some of the owners were already known to Leiweke. Others were more familiar with his brother, Tim, head of the Oak View Group developer that is redoing KeyArena, or to Bonderman and Bruckheimer and bigger local owners such as Adrian Hanauer and the Wright family.

The money paid by the additional owners taken on will no doubt help efforts to pay those additional costs of the \$900 million KeyArena overhaul. At least some of the cost increase was self-inflicted, driven by spruced-up luxury amenities inside the arena any owner would be proud of.

Among the more interesting of the previously undisclosed owners is Robert A. Altman, married since 1984 to actress Lynda Carter, who famously played the original Wonder Woman on the 1970s television series. The pair have two children and reside in Maryland, where they are known as a D.C. "power couple" for their Democratic Party work. Altman is a co-founder and CEO of video-game publisher ZeniMax Media and heavily involved in the region's gaming innovation and design sector.

Another owner is Toronto lawyer Peter Brauti, one of Canada's top criminal defenders of police officers and an owner of several restaurants. In 2007, the 6-foot-3, 230-pound Brauti was hailed a "hero" for twice grappling with a drunken McDonald's patron that had threatened an elderly female cashier.

Brauti physically threw the patron out of the restaurant, only to have him return. He was in the process of throwing him out a second time when the patron bit off the tip of his finger.

Another Toronto owner of our incoming NHL team is Ted Manziaris, co-founder and president of the Turtle Island Recycling company. Manziaris and a college buddy got their fledgling company launched big time in the early 1990s by agreeing to a last-minute overnight cleanup of Maple Leaf Gardens before Bobby Orr's annual charity event. They had only just randomly handed their business cards to the head of janitorial services at the fabled former NHL arena and got a call back at 11 p.m. that night. A book mention of the anecdote quotes Manziaris saying they "rounded up

some homeless guys" and got the job done by morning — landing the arena's full-time cleaning contract.

There's also Behdad Eghbali, the San Francisco-based head of Clearlake Capital, who last August made headlines with a \$50 million purchase of the 14-bedroom Malibu rental home used by singer Beyoncé and her mogul husband, Jay-Z.

Former longtime Fox Sports executive David Nathanson, instrumental in landing FIFA World Cup rights for the network and who now serves as chairman and CEO of Falcon Water Technologies, is another new owner. So is real-estate scion and film producer Sam Slater.

More locally, there's Joe Razore, vice president of the Bellevue-based Broderick Group commercial real-estate firm and whose father, Warren, ran one of the nation's largest private garbage-collection companies before selling for a reported \$400 million in 1998. His family was involved for years in coaching Bellevue High's football team and funding its booster club — with Razore serving as the club vice president — until being named as part of an independent investigative report that resulted in sanctions against the program.

Beyond Razore, there's Lee Rolfe, a trustee at the Seattle-based philanthropic Grousemont Foundation and member of the Space Needle-owning Wright family. Her brothers, David and Jeff, are also NHL Seattle minority owners, while her husband, Stuart Rolfe, manages the Wright Hotels chain that owns the downtown Sheraton and Cedarbrook Lodge.

Zillow co-founder Lloyd Frink is another local owner, as are real-estate mavens Len Evans and the Lott Family. Rounding out the locals is John Meisenbach, president of financial-services company MCM.

Additional owners from outside Seattle include Todd Sisitsky, an executive with Bonderman's TPG Capital firm. There's also Isser Elishis, managing partner of the Toronto-based Waterton Global Resources private equity firm, as well as hedge-fund chief Marc Stad of Dragoner Investment Group, who recently appeared in Fortune magazine's "40 under 40" segment of up-and-coming business leaders.

Safe to say, it could get awfully crowded in the owners' suite come opening night.

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The Athletic / Down Goes Brown: What was the most unexpected final four in NHL playoff history?

By Sean McIndoe May 6, 2019

It's been the year of the wildcard in the NHL playoffs. The Hurricanes are already through to the conference final, having knocked off the Metro's top two seeds along the way. The Dallas Stars have a chance to head to the Western final if they can win tomorrow night's Game 7. And the Blue Jackets and Avalanche are still alive in their quests to win divisions they aren't even in.

It's all added up to a postseason that's been, to borrow a technical hockey term that the insiders use, "weird-ass." And if all four wildcard teams make it through to the conference finals, it would be safe to call this year the most unpredictable postseason we've ever seen. It wouldn't even be all that close.

But even if a few of the favorites survive, this season will still have a solid claim to the "most unpredictable" crown. Today, let's take a look back through the history books and try to figure out which other seasons are in the running.



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There are a few ways you could do this, including just trying to remember which years felt the most surprising. But that's tricky because hockey fans are good at fooling ourselves into thinking we knew more than we did. Instead, let's stick with something objective.

I went back through all the postseasons since the league went to a full sixteen-team format in 1979-80 and looked at where each of the final four teams finished in their conference standings. If they had the best record, they get one point. The second best is two, down through to the team with the eighth-best record among playoff teams in the conference. Add those four scores up and you've got a pretty decent idea of just how unlikely that season's conference finalists were.

The highest possible score would be 30, from two sevens and two eights. If all this year's wildcards make it through, that would give this season an unpredictability score of 29. (The Stars were a wildcard but actually had the sixth-best record in the West, ahead of Vegas.) It won't surprise you to know that that would be the highest score ever by a wide margin. But what if the three remaining favorites all make it through? That drops us down to a seven (Carolina), five (St. Louis) and a pair of twos (Boston and San Jose), for a total of 16. Still not bad.

Not bad, but not the best. I could find ten seasons that could beat that total, which seems like a good place to draw the line. Let's revisit some of those other seasons that left us scratching our heads and trashing our brackets, as we work our way up to the highest score.

1988-89

The final four: Calgary (1), Chicago (8), Montreal (1), Philadelphia (7), giving us a total of 17 points.

The path there: This was a weird year, with two top seeds that finished miles ahead of the pack and that everyone expected to see in the conference final and then two longshots who both made unexpected runs. The Flyers' push wasn't all that shocking; they'd been a decent team during the season and only had to navigate a lukewarm Patrick Division and they'd been to the Cup final in 1985 and 1987. But the Hawks had finished with just 66 points before knocking off the Wings and Blues to win the typically terrible Norris.

Fair warning: For reasons I'm not quite clear on, the Hawks show up in these seasons a lot.

The epilogue: Do you believe in miracles? No? Good, because the Flames and Canadiens both advanced, giving us a rare Cup final between the league's two top teams. The Flames won that one in six.

2009-10

The final four: San Jose (1), Chicago (2), Philadelphia (7) and Montreal (8), for a total of 18 points.

The path there: This might have been one of the first seasons that popped into your mind when you saw the premise for this piece. And rightly so, since it's the only season (until maybe this year) when one conference saw its two worst playoff teams by regular season record meet in the conference final. The Flyers and Habs were both big underdogs who wrote stunning playoff stories, Montreal on the strength of Jaroslav Halak's red-hot goaltending and Philadelphia by coming back from down 3-0 to stun the Bruins.

Unfortunately for our rankings, while all that was going on the West played out exactly as expected, with the top two teams rolling through the early rounds. Therefore, this season won't rank as high on our list as it probably deserves to.

The epilogue: Halak's magic dried up and the Flyers won the battle of the underdogs. But they couldn't finish the story against the Hawks, who swept the Sharks and then ended their 49-year Cup drought with Patrick Kane's overtime winner. It was a fittingly weird end to an unpredictable postseason.

1991-92

The final four: Pittsburgh (4), Boston (6), Chicago (3) and Edmonton (6), for a total of 19 points.

The path there: This one looks more surprising on paper than it felt at the time. The Bruins/Penguins conference final was a rematch of the year before, so not exactly a shocker there. The Oilers had won five of the last eight Cups, so even in the post-Gretzky era, it wasn't that stunning to see them advance. And the Hawks were a decent enough team.

Still, the 1992 postseason marked the first time in the 16-team era that neither conference sent a top-two team to the final four. And even in the pre-loser point days, it was at least a little bit odd to see that none of the four finalists even cracked 90 points.

The epilogue: This may have been the worst final four of all time. Both conference finals ended in sweeps, and then the final did too, with Mario Lemieux and the Penguins knocking off the Hawks to win their second straight Cup.

1981-82

The final four: Vancouver (4), Chicago (7), the Islanders (1) and Quebec (7), a total of 19 points.

The path there: It was the Kings who did the heavy lifting here, knocking out the powerhouse Oilers in the first round thanks to the Miracle on Manchester. That opened a path for the 77-point Canucks, who lost just once while knocking out the Flames and Kings. The Nordiques knocked off the heavily favored Habs and then survived the Bruins, while the top-seeded Islanders handled their business. Meanwhile, the 72-point Hawks only had to escape the Norris, which they did by knocking off the North Stars and Blues.

The epilogue: This was the mid-dynasty Islanders of Al Arbour, Mike Bossy, Denis Potvin and Bryan Trottier, so when they arrived in the conference finals to find all these scrappy underdogs waiting for them, they probably weren't too worried. They shouldn't have been; they didn't lose a game the rest of the way while rolling to their third straight Cup.

2005-06

The final four: Anaheim (6), Edmonton (8), Carolina (2) and Buffalo (3), giving us another 19-point total.

The path there: This is another memorable postseason that you might expect to have higher on the list. You could make a case that it should be, since the Sabres were technically the four-seed in the East because of the three-division format. But they had the conference's third-best record, so they earn three points towards our total. And the Hurricanes only contribute two, because while most fans seem to remember their Cup win being a big surprise, they were actually a really good team that year, racking up 112 points.

But the real action was in the West, where the Oilers shocked the 124-point Wings in a first-round in which all four underdogs advanced. If you wanted to call the 2006 West the craziest playoff year that any one conference has ever seen, I wouldn't argue with you. But the East was relatively straightforward, so they bring down the overall total.

The epilogue: The Oilers dispatched the Ducks fairly quickly, while the Hurricanes barely held off the Sabres. That left us with a Carolina/Edmonton final that gave us one of the worst-timed injuries ever, Gary Bettman's most awkward Cup handoff and the start of a decade of darkness.

2016-17

The final four: Pittsburgh (2), Ottawa (6), Anaheim (3) and Nashville (8), for a total of 19.

The path there: Both conference finals ended up featuring one favorite and one underdog. The Predators had already swept the top-seeded Hawks and then knocked off the Blues, so people were taking them seriously by the time they faced off with the Ducks. Meanwhile, the Senators had come into the postseason as the only playoff team with a



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negative goals differential and plenty of naysayers but had knocked off the Rangers and Bruins to set up a showdown with the defending champion Penguins.

The epilogue: We very nearly got one of the most surprising Cup final matchups ever, as the Predators knocked off the Ducks and the Senators came within a goal of shocking the Penguins. The Pens would hold onto their title by beating the Predators in six, completing the first repeat of the cap era.

The Predators built on their unexpected success and won the Presidents' Trophy the next year. The Senators did not do that.

2011-12

The final four: The Rangers (1), New Jersey (5), Phoenix (6) and Los Angeles (8), for a total of 20.

The path there: This is another year where our simple system turns out to be something less than simple, thanks to the NHL's weird seeding system. The Devils were actually the six-seed in the East but finished tied with the Bruins for the conference's fourth-best record. And the Coyotes were technically the three-seed thanks to winning the Pacific, but had the West's sixth-best record. I do not miss the six-division format.

Anyway, the top-seeded Rangers actually had the toughest path to the conference final, needing a pair of Game 7 wins to get past the Sens and Caps. The Devils and Coyotes had easier times, but the real stars of the show were the Kings. They rolled through the West's top seeds on a run that absolutely nobody saw coming. (Sit down, analytics guys, we're trying to build a narrative here.)

The epilogue: The Kings finished it off by beating the Devils in the final, taking home the first Cup in franchise history.

1985-86

The final four: Calgary (2), St. Louis (5), Montreal (5) and the Rangers (8), adding up to 20 points.

The path there: The Flames were the conference's second-best team, but they finished 30 points behind the powerhouse Oilers and needed one of the craziest moments in NHL history to pull off the upset. The Blues knocked off the Leafs and the North Stars. (Fun fact: Toronto was one of three teams in the conference who made the playoffs with fewer than 60 points that year.)

In the Wales, the Canadiens rode a rookie goalie named Patrick Roy to knock off the Bruins and Whalers. But the Rangers were the big surprise, knocking off the 110-point Flyers and 107-point Caps. The eighth-seeded Rangers weren't even the conference's eighth-best team, having also finished two points back of the Sabres, who didn't make the playoffs thanks to the division format.

The epilogue: The Flames needed another seventh game to knock off the Blues. But Roy and the Habs proved unstoppable, rolling through the last two rounds in just ten games to capture their 23rd Cup.

2013-14

The final four: Chicago (5), Los Angeles (6), Montreal (4) and New York (5), a total of 20 points.

The path there: Admittedly, this one feels a little bit out of place. After all, the Hawks and Kings had combined for the last two Stanley Cups and both had 100 points, so they weren't exactly rag-tag underdogs. Still, 2014 remains one of just two times in NHL history that neither conference sent one of their three best teams to the final four. And it featured four of the league's biggest markets, which I'm guessing the TV executives didn't mind.

The epilogue: The Kings/Hawks series was a classic, one that gave us the greatest overtime ever (that none of the players remember). Los Angeles would win in seven, their third straight series that had gone the distance. Meanwhile, the Rangers beat the Canadiens by cheating, or at

least that's how it's been explained to me by Montreal fans. The Kings would go on to win their second Cup in five games.

Before we get to the high score ...

Before we get to the highest-scoring season on our list, let's answer a question that I'm guessing a few of you might have been wondering about: What season would have the lowest score, making it the least surprising final four?

As it turns out, the lowest score I can find is eight, which happens twice. Maybe not surprisingly, one of those comes way back at the start of our sample, back in days when dynasties ruled and hockey fans had never heard the word parity. In 1979-80, we ended up with conference finals matchups featuring the Islanders (1) against the Sabres (2) and the Flyers (1) facing the North Stars (4). The other was in 2006-07 when we wound up with the Wings (1) and Ducks (3) on one side and the Sabres (1) and Senator (3) in the other.

There have been a few seasons that delivered a score of nine, including in 1982-83, 1995-96 and most recently just last year, when we got Tampa Bay (1) against Washington (3) and Winnipeg (2) against Vegas (3). That postseason felt surprising because the Knights were an expansion team, but based on their 109-point season we probably should have been ready for it. Seeing 1995-96 on the list might also seem odd since that was the year that the Panthers went to the final, but they actually had the fourth-best record in the East, while the Penguins (2), Wings (1) and Avalanche (2) were all favorites.

OK, on to our winner ...

1992-93

The final four: Montreal (4), the Islanders (6), Toronto (4) and Los Angeles (7), for a total of 21.

The path there: OK, first things first – I swear I didn't set this whole thing up just so I could find another excuse to write about the season I've called the best in NHL history. I didn't realize this season was going to win until I ran the final numbers.

But maybe I should have because this was the year that the playoffs got crazy. It was the year of the May Day goal, the Habs' ridiculous overtime streak, David Volek shocking the Penguins and the 106-point Hawks getting swept by the Blues. The Leafs were a better regular season team than you probably remember, finishing with a then-franchise record 99 points, but we're still underdogs in the Norris. And the Kings had barely looked like a playoff team while Wayne Gretzky missed much of the season with back problems.

It was a hell of a year. And it delivered what stands as the most unlikely conference finals we've seen ... at least for a few more days.

The epilogue: We all learned that using your stick to carve up the other team's best player's face was legal but having too much of a curve on the blade was not. I don't remember who won the Cup that year.

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The Athletic / Wheeler: Final ranking for the 2019 NHL Draft's top 100 prospects

By Scott Wheeler May 6, 2019

Welcome to my 2019 NHL draft package!



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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This top 100 ranking (plus its 25 honourable mentions) follows last summer's tentative top 31, November's preliminary top 62 and February's midseason top 62 as the culmination of this season's draft evaluations (plenty More Coverage to come).

To get set for this week's content, which will include a Tuesday look at my 10 late-round sleepers and a live Q&A on Wednesday, check out my updated guide to scouting. The guide details everything from my process to how I view player evaluation in today's game. It serves as a companion piece to the evaluations you'll read below.

This year's final top 100 includes 64 forwards, 30 defencemen and six goalies. For a better sense of where those 100 players come from, here's a breakdown by nationality, including a total tally that counts each of the country's appearances within four different tiers to give you a weighted look at the strength of each country's class:

Below are my evaluations of the top 50, followed by the complete top 100 (including each player's movement versus their midseason ranking).

Note: Though I consult scouts and coaches throughout the year on many of these players, these rankings represent my evaluations of each of the players listed.

### 1. Jack Hughes — C, USDP, 5-foot-10

If Hughes hadn't solidified his spot as the top prospect in the NHL draft before the under-18 world championships (hint: he had), then his 20 points in seven games, which made him the tournament's all-time leading scorer with 32 and nearly tied Nikita Kucherov's single-tournament record of 21, definitely helped. I was actually disappointed with how Hughes began his draft season. He was dominant but he wasn't unstoppable. By year's end, that had changed and he was the national development program's all-time leading scorer (by 39 points!). Hughes is a brilliant skater who uses sharp edge work and a light stride to pull away from opposing players off the rush or break them down laterally with a quick cut. He can take over a shift with his ability to hang onto the puck and break teams down as a puck handler, or he can break open an otherwise unspectacular shift with a pass that nobody on the ice sees coming. Because of his ability to evade contact and win races, he also doesn't get pushed around, which gives me full confidence that he'll be an All-Star calibre centre at the next level despite lacking strength.

### 2. Kaapo Kakko — RW, TPS, 6-foot-2

While Hughes was playing at under-18 worlds, Kakko was playing friendlies and practicing with Finland's national team ahead of the senior world championships after an excellent five-game, four-goal performance in Liiga's playoffs. In the final three of those games that I tracked, he averaged 22:36 time on ice and attempted 17 shots. Kakko is that rare blend of power and creativity. He can use his strong, extended stride to build momentum and drop his shoulder to drive the net but he can also feign the net-drive play only to make a deft pass to a teammate. Kakko is also lethal from the right-wing circle (where TPS used him on the power play) and gets low to leverage his one-timer and extend through pucks, which gives him a different kind of game-breaking talent than Hughes, even when he's not playing well. Both of his final two goals of the playoffs came from that spot.

Here's that one-knee one-timer I was talking about.

And here's his standstill shot, which can also beat goalies cleanly, as well as a flash of his stick handling ability (and some impressive footwork) to evade the pressure.

Kakko needs to correct the pitch-fork he has developed in his straightaway stride but he has all of the tools needed to be one of hockey's dominant wingers.

### 3. Alex Turcotte — C, USDP, 5-foot-11

When Turcotte missed much of the first half of the season due to injury, I expected it would take him some time to adjust and find his game after he returned, especially given the way Hughes and Trevor Zegras were playing down the middle for the program. That wasn't the case ... at all.

Turcotte was, from the moment he returned to game action, the program's biggest driving force behind Hughes. There were a number of games when Zegras, Cole Caufield, Matthew Boldy or Cam York would grab the attention. There were plenty of them, frankly. But Turcotte was the most consistent of the bunch. He doesn't have the finishing ability of Caufield or the cross-ice playmaking ability of Zegras, but he's a significantly better two-way player than both while remaining an exciting offensive threat as a passer and a shooter. Turcotte is strong on the puck, powerful when he chooses and careful when he needs to be. Add that to the way he fights to win pucks back and keep plays alive and you've got arguably the most complete player in the draft.

### 4. Dylan Cozens — C, Lethbridge Hurricanes, 6-foot-3

The list of under-18 WHL players who've outproduced Cozens in the last four drafts is a short one. It consists of just Nolan Patrick (second overall) and Cody Glass (sixth overall). Cozens ranked third in my midseason ranking and remains one of the three players I strongly considered for that slot on the final list. Though he's less of a scorer than Patrick was at the same age and less of a playmaker than Glass was, Cozens is an inch taller, a better skater and arguably as strong as both players (with room to get stronger and add some muscle). Though I don't think he projects as a 1C on a contending team at the next level, Cozens has the makings of an up-tempo playmaking centre whose vision and puck protection (both in tight and out wide) can keep up with his feet and carry a top-six line offensively. He makes his wingers better and that will translate quickly to the NHL game (though he almost certainly goes back to junior for one more year).

### 5. Bowen Byram — LHD, Vancouver Giants, 6-foot-0

I've already broken down Byram's game as the best defenceman in the draft and a frontrunner for third overall in considerably more detail here but the short of it is that while there is still work to be done on his defensive play, particularly with his effort and his spacial awareness within defensive zone schemes, Byram is one of the better goal scoring defencemen the NHL draft has seen in recent memory. Furthermore, he is an excellent three-zone passer and a strong skater who can recover from mistakes made pushing the play into the high slot if the puck goes back the other way. And he just keeps getting better, and better and better. The Byram of the last half of the season and into the playoffs was one of the best players in junior hockey.

### 6. Peyton Krebs — C, Kootenay Ice, 5-foot-11

Krebs is one of those kids whose production (1.06 points per game) and minus-50 rating raise questions with casual fans over his merits as a top-10 pick. But he's also a perfect example of what I talked about in my scouting guide regarding team-to-team variance in the CHL because Krebs played on a Kootenay team that, in its final season ahead of relocation to Winnipeg, finished 21st in the 22-team WHL and was outscored by 143 goals. Krebs, meanwhile, contributed on nearly 40 percent of his team's goals and paced to outscore his nearest teammate by 20 points over the course of a 68-game season. The WHL's 2016 first-overall pick, Krebs led all rookies in scoring in 2017-2018 and has been dominant in all three major international tournaments he has played in, combining for 21 points in 17 games at U17s, U18s and the Hlinka Gretzky Cup. Krebs can score with his quick, no-drawback, low-kick release in transition (he lacks a one-timer but that's fine in the grand scheme of things because of the way he gets open), makes plays at full speed (with an impressive top speed) and draws a lot of attention away from his linemates.

### 7. Matthew Boldy — RW/LW, USDP, 6-foot-2

Boldy's biggest skill has quickly become being whatever the national program needs him to be. Last year, that meant being the U17 team's go-to offensive winger when Caufield played for the U18 team. This year, it meant being a jack-of-all-trades. On some lines he became a slot-option scorer, on others he became a forechecking passer. By year's end, on a new line with Turcotte and Bobby Brink, he was exposing teams as the third-leading scorer at U18 Worlds. Boldy's versatility is a tremendous asset. He put up big numbers without getting the offensive



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opportunities afforded to a player like Caufield. Though Boldy lacks the high-end speed of many of the players near the top of this draft, I wouldn't say his skating holds him back because he does such a good job finding space and getting open (he doesn't need to blow by a defender for a breakaway in order to generate). Boldy and Alex Newhook are going to complement each other extremely well at Boston College next season and I wouldn't be surprised if either of them are one-and-done.

8. Kirby Dach — C, Saskatoon, 6-foot-4

A 6-foot-4 playmaking centre whose stride isn't awkward and heavy? GASP. There are good odds Dach goes higher than his ranking here (as high as the top five) on the basis of those tools — and it would be hard to blame the team that takes him. He's huge, he's strong on the puck, he handles it well in tight (rare for a player his size), he's a better skater than he gets credit and his length makes him a lot to handle when he drives the net (which he needs to do more often) or controls the puck on the cycle. He's also a player coaches lean on defensively because he uses his stick effectively to disrupt plays and win battles. Dach has also begun to play more physically and use his frame more effectively along the wall, which was one of the things I'd have liked to see more of last season. My biggest concern with his game is one of upside. Dach's going to be an NHL centre. A good one. But his growth hasn't been pronounced enough for me to be confident that he has the dynamic ability needed to be a 1C at the next level. It's easy to imagine him as a productive 2C, though, and given all of the other elements he offers, that makes him an extremely valuable prospect nonetheless. The Blades are going to lose standout overagers Dawson Davidson and Max Gerlach next season and the team will be handed over to Dach, so I'm intrigued to see just how dominant he can become in that role.

9. Cam York — LHD, USDP, 5-foot-11

It's hard to believe, given just how great York's season was, that I still think he has flown under the radar in scouting circles in terms of just how talented he is. Part of that is probably driven by the strength of this national development program forward crop but York is a star in his own right and is clearly the second-best defencemen in this draft for me. While Hughes and Caufield were making headlines for their record-breaking seasons, York was putting together a campaign (1.03 points per game) that surpassed Erik Johnson (0.94) and Adam Fox (0.92) to set the national program's record for points by a defenceman with 65. He should have been named the top defenceman at U18 Worlds over Philip Broberg, too. York doesn't have the flash, the speed, or the lateral quickness of program alum Quinn Hughes but he plays one of the most efficient games you'll see out of an 18-year-old defenceman, he picks his spots to activate as a shooter, he find forwards in transition or across the zone without hesitating and he's an excellent man-on-man defender despite lacking strength. He's going to be really, really good in today's NHL.

10. Cole Caufield — RW, USDP, 5-foot-7

Cole Caufield is to comparable shooters in this draft to what Jango Fett was to stormtroopers. The gap has become so pronounced that they'd be prudent to just clone him. Also, he's short.

Seriously, though: Caufield is brilliant and his size doesn't concern me. He had no trouble keeping up with the best skater in the draft and though his numbers are certainly inflated by playing most of the season with the best passer in the draft (Hughes is the best at a lot of things, you're probably noticing), Caufield's ability to release with speed, release from a standstill, score with his one-timer and go to his backhand is crazy-impressive. Couple those things with his knack for finding space, getting to rebounds and sliding in and out of traffic and you've got a player who will be a dominant scoring threat at the University of Wisconsin next season — and someday in the NHL. Caufield's biggest challenge will be driving a line on his own and involving his teammates a little more when he doesn't have a player as talented as Hughes doing that for him.

11. Alex Newhook — C, Victoria Grizzlies, 5-foot-11

The thing about a lot of players who can burn defenders wide with explosive speed is that that speed can often work against them. They begin to rely on it and their instinct is to just turn on the jets whenever the puck hits their stick. For many players, that speed forces them wide into areas of the ice where offence is hard to come by. It was my biggest criticism of Devils draftee Michael McLeod. A skill only takes you as far as your know-how. You need to be able to use it. Newhook has that speed but his brilliance is that he seldom wastes it. He knows when to pull up and find the trailer. He knows when to cut under the defender and drive the net. And he knows when to slow things down. But when the opportunity is there to burn wide or use his release at top speed (which he does effortlessly), Newhook will take it. He's electric and fearless.

12. Trevor Zegras — C, USDP, 6-foot-0

If Hughes is the best passer in the draft, Zegras is the clear No. 2 (which isn't a knock on Ryan Suzuki, Dach or Krebs). I have two complaints with Zegras' game (otherwise there's a lot to like, from his ability to hang onto the puck to the job he does supporting the puck and winning back possession). The first is that he passes a little too much. Zegras has this uncanny ability to find small seams in the offensive zone with precision and pace and it means that everyone who plays with him (forwards and defencemen) have to be ready to receive a pass or moving to get open. But there are also times (not infrequently) when he ought to drive the net or use what is actually a pretty dangerous, quick release. The second concern is one of discipline. Zegras' physicality makes him the defensive presence that he is and enables him to come out of 50/50 battles more often than not but he can let it get the best of him and his talents are better utilized through his playmaking abilities rather than in the penalty box.

13. Arthur Kaliyev — LW, Hamilton Bulldogs, 6-foot-2

Here's the full list of under-18 CHL forwards who've scored 50 goals in the last decade: Jeff Skinner, Alex DeBrincat, Arthur Kaliyev. Nobody in the QMJHL (though Nik Ehlers came close with 49 goals in 2014) or the WHL has done it. It's been a long time since Patrick Marleau did it in 1997, or even since Sidney Crosby did it in 2004. That's some kind of company. Skinner went seventh overall and posted 63 points as a rookie with the Carolina Hurricanes the following season. DeBrincat fell to 39th overall due, returned to junior and eventually emerged with a 52-point rookie season of his own. Now he's a 40-goal scorer in the NHL and the teams that passed on him regret it. Though Kaliyev's skill set places him as the least talented of those three players, concerns about his skating and spotty defensive play shouldn't be enough to push him much lower than the late teens in this draft. His one-timer will make him a threat at any level and he's not a one-trick pony, either (I actually really liked the way he opened up his game as a passer this season, something I was worried he wouldn't be able to do after watching him as a rookie). He's going to prove some doubters wrong. The late birthday (June 26, 2001) doesn't hurt either.

14. Bobby Brink — RW, Sioux City Musketeers, 5-foot-10

Speaking of overstated concerns about skating! Believe in Bobby Brink, people. Allow yourself to believe in him. The astronomical numbers he put up in the USHL this year were his own doing and once he adds a little more strength the foot speed will catch up to the skill level that made him the USHL's Forward of the Year. Brink will take a little longer than some of the other top prospects in this draft to get to his ceiling but that ceiling is exciting. Centres are more often the driving forces on their lines at the next level but Brink's ability to win back pucks with his stick, get open and break teams down tactically once he has it is a joy to watch. There's a risk in everyone outside the top-12 in this year's draft but the reward on a player like Brink is a dynamic puck-handling winger who can involve his teammates when the player is there or do it himself when they are not. Sometimes you have to swing for the fences. I'd take that chance on Brink, who also has a late birthday (July 8, 2001).

15. Pavel Dorofeyev — RW/LW, Metallurg Magnitogorsk, 6-foot-0

Dorofeyev, one of the older players in this draft (October 26, 2000), is a stunningly patient player who excels with linemates who can play off him.



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Though he lacks strength (even 10 pounds would do wonders), Dorofeyev also rarely gets pushed around because that patience allows him to release a seam pass or a cut to the slot for a shot before he can get hit. That was particularly true at the MHL level in both of the last seasons (Dorofeyev's play two seasons would have also been impressive in his draft year, which has me less concerned about his age), whereas he tended to play a little too much on the perimeter in the KHL. His puck skills (in tight, out wide, on his forehand and on his backhand) are all high end, which allows him to turn in traffic and escape with possession on the heel or toe of his blade. Like Brink, he's going to take some time and the payoff has a chance of being an exciting, line-driving winger who can control a power play.

16. Ryan Suzuki — C, Barrie Colts, 6-foot-0

There was a time, not that long ago, when Suzuki projected as a top-10 pick in this class. Given that the Colts selected him first overall in the OHL draft, that shouldn't surprise anyone. Suzuki hasn't quite reached take-over-a-game levels though. Part of that is driven by the fact that he's a playmaker first and the Colts didn't have anyone for him to play with this season after they traded Lucas Chiodo to the 67's (the injury he dealt with at U18s didn't help him showcase his talent after an excellent Hlinka Gretzky Cup showing either) but part of it is a matter of over-handling and trying to do too much to create the perfect play. Still, Suzuki was far-and-away the best player on a bad team and the 25-point gap between him and the nearest Colts forward (who also happened to be the coach's son and 21 years old) speaks to that. Suzuki is a pinpoint passer who uses delays and a surprisingly-effective toe drag to pull defenders in before finding a teammate (something that will be harder to do at the NHL level unless he learns to take those chances a little less often).

17. Vasili Podkolzin — RW, SKA St. Petersburg, 6-foot-1

Podkolzin has age on his side (June 24, 2001) but his play has continued to leave me wanting more. The skill set is there. He gets to his top speed quickly and his top speed is a lot to handle in transition (more north-south than east-west), he's physical, has excellent hands and he can really — and I mean really — shoot it (though his drawback is a little too long for my liking). It all goes back to knowing how to use the skill that I touched on above. Podkolzin is an instinctual player who makes plays for himself but struggles to involve his teammates and the end result is a contrast between what your eyes tell you (they notice him a lot) and how effective he actually is. He has time to figure the rest of it out but it's extremely hard to be a dominant NHL player on skill and skill alone. Teams don't want to use a top-10 pick on a player who may become a checking third-liner who can play with pace and irritate teams but doesn't actually produce all that much. There's room for him to be a lot more than that but he needs to put all of the pieces together and I'm more certain today than I was in my midseason ranking that his top-five buzz is unwarranted.

18. Nils Hoglander — LW, Rogle, 5-foot-9

Even as Hoglander's impressive early-season SHL production faded late in the year, I rarely left a viewing of him disappointed in how he looked. Hoglander, despite his size disadvantage, has already played 94 games of professional hockey, accumulating 22 points along the way. His skills are obvious when you watch him. He's got a bit of a shuffle to his stride but his feet are light and that allows him to propel around the ice and accelerates out of his turns. He's got excellent stop-and-start puck control, which he uses to spin off checks or when coming out of puck battles. And most of all, considering he's 5-foot-9, he always goes to the middle of the ice.

That's true without the puck in the way he jumps to the inside lane to get open for redirects.

And it's true when he has the puck and he willingly attacks bigger players and stays on the puck when he loses it.

Hoglander isn't going to be a star at the next level but he projects as a productive, high-tempo, come-at-you-in-waves winger.

19. Philip Broberg — LHD, AIK, 6-foot-3

Is Broberg a player whose post-Hlinka hype surpassed the reality of his game? Yes. That has always been my view. Does Broberg still have a lot to offer? Absolutely. When you have the length that he does and you can still skate as he can, you've got a lot to work with. The raw talent is exciting because it shows up in flashes in games when he joins the rush and carries the puck through the neutral zone. But I still have concerns about his decision-making as well as his puck handling (there are way too many bobbles at the offensive zone blueline that go the other way). He also struggles to make high-end plays with the puck once his speed has pushed him over the offensive zone blueline. In the right program, there's no question that there's a lot to tap into. But there's definitely a lot of risk associated with taking him in the first half of the first round.

20. Anttoni Honka — RHD, JYP/Jukurit, 5-foot-10

Every year, hyperbole and exaggeration creep into the discussion around a handful of players and the polarity in how different evaluators view their games quickly turns into a contest of ego rather than a grounded evaluation of their skill set. This year, that has happened in some circles with Honka. He's an October 2000 birthday, he was excellent in Liiga a year ago and expectations were sky-high for him to take a step and become a truly dominant prospect. When that didn't happen, I think many scouts' over-exposure to his game resulted in nit-picks about his flaws (which is the same thing that has happened for many talented players who'd spent years on the hockey world's radar ahead of disappointing draft years, including Timothy Liljegren and Jakob Chychrun). Honka struggles in his own zone in a lot of the same ways Adam Boqvist did in his draft year but if that can become even average (if he can play a little more physically, give a little less off the rush and track his man in the defensive zone better than he does), the offensive tools are all there. Honka was outstanding in the Mestis playoffs and can take over games with his ability to exit the zone, control the play through the middle of the ice and quarterback offensive zone sequences with quick, aggressive movement. The right leap of faith may result in a steal.

21. Ville Heinola — LHD, Lukko, 5-foot-11

Heinola's growth this year has been incredible. It really has. Every time I watched him play I came away more impressed than the last and that has made him one of the consistent risers on my list this season. And though he's a more complete player than Honka, I don't see the same offensive level at his ceiling. Heinola is who is he because he's efficient (by that I mean that he makes plays quickly, he doesn't hesitate, but he does both of those things while still having surveyed the ice ahead of the decision), he quickly earns the trust of his coaches, he's precise in his execution offensively and he's compact and careful defensively. But he doesn't take over games and he's not going to be a dynamic offensive threat at the next level (though he showed signs that there may be more flair below the surface in the Liiga playoffs). He's really, really good. I just don't think he's going to be an outright star. He's probably going to be picked in the mid-to-late first round, that's fine.

22. Patrik Puustola — LW, Tappara/Leki, 6-foot-0

If you've followed my work this season you probably already know that Puustola is the player my ranking/evaluation probably differs from the most (at least among the rankings you're likely to have read in the public sphere). That may begin to change after the under-18 worlds he just had (his five goals led the disappointing Finns) but Puustola is a blow-you-away-in-a-split-second kind of talent. He can flat out break teams down and when it happens it can blow you away (and blow a puck past a goalie). His biggest challenge is that he's only ever going to be exactly that kind of player and those kinds of players require two things:

Coaches who believe in them and are willing to trust them in offensive roles rather than force them to work off the fourth line.

The right kind of linemates who can just get them the puck and get out of their way.

Inherently, that means there's risk involved. Puustola's not going to be a checker. Still, if he can continue to develop within the right organization, there's serious upside to his game.



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### 23. Mikko Kokkonen — LHD, Jukurit, 5-foot-11

Kokkonen is a smooth, cerebral-under-pressure defenceman who has been overshadowed by countryman Ville Heinola this season despite putting together an excellent year of his own. His 19 points and 56 games played are both modern-day Liiga records for an under-18 defenceman and he did it while playing on a team that won just 13 of 60 games this season. Kokkonen's defensive play is mature for his age. He closes out well on forwards of the rush, his stick is disruptive, he reads the play well and gets ahead of it in the defensive zone. He's strong for his height and he separates bigger players along the wall by stepping up through the neutral zone. I'd like to see Kokkonen play that assertive offensively, though I really like the way he moves across the top of the offensive zone to open up both shooting and passing lanes. Kokkonen has the tools to join the rush more than he does but he prefers the outlet play to the carry. Kokkonen disappointed at under-18 worlds but he closed out his Liiga season with two points in his final three games alongside five shots and 11 shot attempts while averaging more than 20 minutes a night. I came away impressed by some of his offensive flashes (and surprised he wasn't Team Finland's go-to option on PP2 in the tournament). Look for that movement I talked about below, as Kokkonen (No. 8) slides down the left-wing wall, into the slot, back to the right-wing point and across the offensive zone blueline before finding his man for the primary assist.

And watch the way not only that he uses his feet to create a lane for a shot on his goal, but that he also has the presence of mind to take the slap shot instead of a wrister (while in motion) here.

### 24. Raphael Lavoie — C/RW, Halifax Mooseheads, 6-foot-4

I spent most of this draft year admittedly sour on Lavoie's game. He's one of the oldest players in the draft, he's one of the biggest players in the draft, he has the talent needed to be an unstoppable force at the junior level and yet that just never materialized ... until the QMJHL playoffs. Lavoie threw the Mooseheads over his shoulders and dragged them into their final against the Rouyn-Noranda Huskies by racking up a QMJHL-leading 17 goals and 27 points through 17 games in the first three rounds. His nearest Halifax teammate, Ducks second-round pick Antoine Morand, had 12 fewer points during that 17-game stretch. That's insane. The biggest challenge with Lavoie is differentiating between how much of it is skill and how much of it is a combination of the fact that he's nearly a year older than some of the other players on this list (he'll be 19 during his first NHL training camp) and boasts an overwhelming physical dominance. Increasingly, though, his skill has begun to shine through. He gets to the net at will and he has the ability to finish plays in tight by pounding home rebounds or using some impressive stick handling to beat goalies with a deke.

### 25. Jakob Pelletier — LW, Moncton Wildcats, 5-foot-9

Pelletier isn't all that dissimilar to Puustola in that he lacks the versatility required to project lower in an NHL lineup so you're basically banking on his talent to continue to blossom and carry him into an offensive role. The good news is that I think there's a real chance that happens for him. He definitely has the creativity and on many nights this season, he looked like the best player on the ice for Moncton (a team that boasted standout 20-year-old Jeremy McKenna, who may get drafted this year, as well as Minnesota Wild third-round pick Alexander Khovanov). Pelletier finished second to Alexis Lafreniere in under-18 QMJHL scoring a year after he finished second to Lafreniere in under-17 scoring. Late in the first round, I'd bet on a higher-risk player with real offensive potential than a safer NHL option with limited upside, which is what picking Pelletier comes down to. I love his creativity (he rarely makes the play you expect him to make and the one he does is normally the better, smarter play in retrospect anyway).

### 26. Maxim Cajkovic — RW, Saint John Sea Dogs, 5-foot-11

Cajkovic is one of those players whose game is more than the sum of his production (46 points in 60 games). There have been few CHL teams in recent memory with as little a supporting cast as this year's Sea Dogs had for Cajkovic. And still, on one of the worst teams in junior hockey, he

found ways to make things happen and produce on a large percentage of his team's goals (more than 30 percent when he was in the lineup, a number that is higher than some of his point per game draft counterparts). That, side-by-side three standout tournaments for Slovakia internationally and the second-best under-17 production in SuperElit a year ago (0.75 points per game) is impressive. And it lines up with my evaluation of his skill set, which has him as a flatfooted winger who is aggressive on the forecheck, attacks in waves with decent top speed, handles the puck deftly in traffic and can release his shot from a variety of stances and angles while under pressure in tight areas. Cajkovic has steal written all over him if he falls out of the second round.

### 27. Nathan Légaré — RW, Baie-Comeau Drakkar, 6-foot-0

Légaré could probably stand to lose 5-10 pounds in an effort to get lighter and improve his foot speed but he is otherwise a complete package as a goal scorer (though he needs to involve his teammates a little more and open up his line of sight as a passer) in today's pro game, blending a powerful net-driven mentality with a strong one-touch shot. That shot (which he can also use from high in the zone and still cleanly beat goalies), in combination with his strength along the boards, allows him to play the give and go game effectively. Which is good because he's not going to be the primary carrier on his line but he's also hard to knock off the puck. Though he benefitted from playing on a really talented team, Légaré, a sixth-overall pick in the QMJHL draft, never looked out of place alongside Ivan Chekhovich (San Jose Sharks) and Gabriel Fortier (Tampa Bay Lightning). Légaré's 45 goals tied him for second in the QMJHL (first in his age group), while his 271 shots on goal finished third. If he continues to progress, there's middle-six goal-scoring upside in his game at the next level. He's not the most talented player in the draft but he's a volume shooter with one of the faster releases in the class and he already has pro size.

### 28. Victor Söderström — RHD, Brynäs, 5-foot-11

Söderström is one of those players who will surely go higher than my ranking but whom I've watched a lot of in order to make sure my differing view of his game is grounded, hopefully, in reality. His stride is nearly flawless. His blades hardly touch the ice when he's extending through his body in straight lines, they're feathery on his crossovers laterally and he's nearly as fast skating backward as he is forward. Because he's also really physical for his size, that skating ability allows him to play a tight gap defensively and close on forwards to lay hits along the boards in the neutral zone, forcing dump-ins as a result. Though his shot isn't hard, he does a good job using his feet to get his wristers through and he isn't afraid to open up for the one-timer (something I would argue he uses too much on D-to-D plays at the point when a more effective pass is available). You can see both that shot and that neutral zone aggression at play here.

My only major concern with Soderstrom's game is one of upside. There's no question he's ahead of his peers but two major issues persist:

He loses a lot of board battles due to strength and he doesn't mitigate against that effectively with his stick (though that can be taught, which is good).

I don't see enough high-end playmaking ability to his game to view him as more than a second-pairing defenceman at the NHL level and I'm not sure his power play use in the SHL will translate to the NHL.

### 29. Thomas Harley — LHD, Mississauga Steelheads, 6-foot-3

In isolation, Harley's production this season (58 points in 68 games) put him in some pretty impressive under-18 OHL company over the last decade as its sixth-highest total behind names like Ryan Murphy, Ryan Merkley, Mitch Vande Sompel, Cam Dineen and Dougie Hamilton — and ahead of names like Mikhail Sergachev, Jakob Chychrun and Rasmus Sandin. Harley's offensive talent is obvious. He's really mobile for his size, light on his edges and his shot has to be respected (and has room to improve even more in terms of his delivery and follow-through) by opposing teams, which opens up his decent cross-ice vision as an option. But I have concerns about other areas of his game that have



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mitigated him from consideration in my top-24 tier. The biggest is his play in his own zone (though some of that was a byproduct of workload, the tough competition he was tasked with and the fact that he was playing nearly 30 minutes a night for stretches this season). Harley does a decent job defending the rush with his reach but he lacks physicality in puck battles and plays too passively within D-zone schemes, which can result in some ugly shifts. Still, Harley's August birthday, coupled with a strong follow-up performance at U18s after an excellent regular season bodes well for the growth that he needs to happen. Once he gets stronger, which could and should happen this summer, that will make a big difference.

### 30. Nicholas Robertson — LW, Peterborough Petes, 5-foot-9

If you read my scouting guide you already know that I strongly dislike terms that are used to describe the emotion a player plays with. It's nearly impossible to spot intensity or truly know whether a player is working hard. Some players just make getting from A to B look easier than others. Some players finish checks in ways that create the same outcome as others without looking nearly as violent. Every so often, though, you get a player who never stops moving, hunting, driving and hitting and you can't help but notice just how hard they really are working. Robertson, the youngest player in my top 31, is that player. You can literally see it in the way his eyes bulge as he chases down a bigger player and knocks them over. You can see it in the way his body shakes and his shoulder bobble when he cuts to the inside lane to explode towards a loose puck. There are times when it works to his detriment, he's expending too much energy when he should just be trying to slow things down. But that's just who he is. Luckily for Roberston, there's skill there too. Not only does he have one the better curl-and-drag releases in the draft (he'll go straight at defencemen and then plainly try to rip one through them) but he's also an explosive stop-and-start skater from a standstill. Robertson makes himself a factor in games and plays with a reckless abandonment that quickly endears itself to coaches and fans — while also serving as a style of play that can fit up and down a lineup.

### 31. Samuel Poulin — LW, Sherbrooke Phoenix, 6-foot-2

Poulin, taken second-overall in the 2017 QMJHL draft, has progressed well ever since without really taking huge leaps. Given the talent level that was already there, though, that has produced a darn good player. He's a lot to handle along the wall, is willing to go to the net with that power by dropping his shoulder and using one hand on his stick to force his way to the crease (or the slot) and has what has always been some sneaky-good passing skills that can surprise defenders who expect him to drive the net for a scoring chance, only to find the trailer. That versatility will translate well to the pro game. He also tracks the play back to stay above pucks and in responsible positions within Sherbrooke's structure, making him a positive presence in all three zones. Poulin was the best player on an otherwise mediocre team and played his best hockey late in the season (he finished the year on a seven-game point streak) and into the playoffs, where he posted eight goals and 14 points in 10 games. A good summer should make him one of the QMJHL's tougher players to contain next season.

### 32. Nikita Alexandrov — C, Charlottetown Islanders, 6-foot-0

Alexandrov, like Cajkovic, is another high-skill QMJHL forward who hasn't been given enough credit in draft circles this year (he was, to my eye, the best player on the ice at this year's top prospects game). Two years ago, as a 16-year-old, he was producing at the same rate as a then 17-year-old Dominik Bokk in Germany's top junior league. A year later he was an effective rookie on a low-end Charlottetown team and his breakout playoff performance pushed the mediocre Islanders (who finished the season with a minus-10 goal differential) against all odds into Game 7 of the third round. This season, on an improved though still not all that talented Islanders team, he continued to take steps. Alexandrov is a dynamic, primary carrier who is at his best with the puck on his stick, rather than playing off it. He can break defenders down one-on-one with lateral agility or fade to the slot and use his release to create a scoring chance. Surround him with a better team and he's got the potential to be scary-good at the junior level.

### 33. Robert Mastrosimone — C, Chicago Steel, 5-foot-10

Mastrosimone is in one sense a project (I suspect he spends three or four years at Boston University before turning pro) and in another an exhilarating talent. He became more of a goal scorer this season by virtue of his role as the triggerman for standout USHL passer Nick Abruzzese but there is talent of all kinds below the surface. Mastrosimone makes quick, aggressive plays with the puck, can hang onto it and drive through the middle on exits and entries, is only going to get stronger (which should benefit an already excellent, silent release) and does a wonderful job avoiding contact by sliding off checks or around defenders. He and Trevor Zegras will give BU some much-needed depth down the middle.

### 34. Philip Tomasino — C/RW, Niagara IceDogs, 6-foot-0

Tomasino's game is built for today's NHL in that he plays with pace, he's a threat in transition, he handles the puck lightly but not too long, he drives the slot, he finds pockets off the puck and he makes tough plays look easy. A little more upper body strength will go a long way to making him a more complete player as well. Though Tomasino is a natural centre, he spent a good chunk of the post-trade deadline season playing right wing with Akil Thomas due to the IceDogs' overwhelming talent down the middle. Now that a decent chunk of the IceDogs core is poised to move on, Tomasino will become more of a go-to threat next year and I think he will handle it really well. The talent is there for him to become a productive, borderline line-driving top-nine forward at the next level.

### 35. Moritz Seider — RHD, Adler Mannheim, 6-foot-4

Playing as a 17-year-old for most of the year, Seider was a third-pairing defenceman on the DEL champs, alongside former Stanley Cup champions and a number of players who fashioned out impressive careers in the AHL and NHL. He's one of those players who isn't going to wow you with his offensive upside but has proven he has the skill needed to be more than a tough-minutes option who goes off the glass and out. His size (which still has room to become even stronger, believe it or not) and length define him but he also possesses OK puck handling ability, a wrist shot that has some whip and bend to it (he doesn't use his slapshot all that often but his wrister comes in hard) and rapidly-improving skating to his game too. You can see that skating at play below (you'll notice his legs splay from the knees, creating an awkward extension, but that there's still a lot of power being generated to allow him to pull away).

And watch the way he closes out on a loose puck, uses his size to gain body position, powers up the right-wing boards and exits the zone with a cross-ice pass for a primary assist.

Or the way he again uses that size along the boards, this time in the offensive zone to protect the puck and send the shot on net for another playoff assist.

He's reliable in his own zone, rubs carriers out along the wall and has the skill needed to escape and exit the zone with an outlet pass. Though I wouldn't take him in the first round, I'm not going to be surprised when a team does.

### 36 Brett Leason — RW, Prince Albert Raiders, 6-foot-4

Sometimes, players just hit their growth curve at different times and their talent has to play catch-up to their body. Once Leason's skating improved this season, his game took off because he does such a good job recognizing his teammates and he has the puck protection skill to hang onto the puck in all three zones until the right play opens up. He's still not the fastest player on the ice but Leason's skating no longer holds back the rest of his skill set. Had he played a full 68-game season (Leason missed a portion of the year due to the world juniors and another due to injury), Leason paced for 110 points. The scary part: He could still add some muscle without sacrificing that newly developed foot speed. Leason's not going to leap directly into the NHL but I suspect that in time he'll get there after a stint in the AHL. Powerful wingers with size and enough skill don't come around all that often.

### 37. Yegor Afanasyev — LW, Muskegon Lumberjacks, 6-foot-4



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Speaking of big, strong wingers with enough talent to match their size advantage! Afanasyev is one of those kids who can just will himself to the front of the net by dropping his lead shoulder, protecting the puck out wide to his body and shuffling his way there. He also just happened to grow an inch and a half this season, which complemented his style of play better than he probably could have hoped for. Afanasyev is a beast whose progression in the last year has been as pronounced as any other player in the draft. Afanasyev's future remains in doubt though. He committed to Michigan State University in 2017 but the Windsor Spitfires traded for his rights this winter, so he has options. His play tailed off late in the year a little but the sky's the limit if the right team is willing to be patient.

38. Henry Thrun — LHD, USDP, 6-foot-2

Thrun is a well-rounded, all-encompassing defenceman who played big minutes for the national program this year and produced effectively despite not usually factored as an option on the power play. As the game trends towards defencemen who can play a possession driven game and create positive outcomes (the actual points a defenceman puts up are proving to be less of a concern now than ever before as we learn more about what makes them effective), Thrun fits the mould.

That isn't to say Thrun (No. 3) won't push the envelope and slide to the net when an opportunity is there to finish off a play. He will:

And he has the one-timer to be able to a) hit the net and b) extend through his shot to score:

But Thrun's strength isn't his offensive game (which is strong on its own merits) but rather his ability to be a lockdown option defensively thanks to the athleticism that keeps forwards wide and the decision-making that helps him close on players at exactly the right time. Thrun's a zone prevention machine with enough talent offensively to translate into a reliable NHL option.

39. Lassi Thomson — RHD, Kelowna Rockets, 6-foot-0

One of the oldest first-year draft-eligible players in the draft, alongside Lavoie, Thomson is an aggressive, heavy-shooting defenceman (note: heavy denotes the spin the shot creates, rather than velocity, making it tough for goalies to control the rebound) who can score in transition, offset plays to his one-timer, or through timely attacks to the slot or the backdoor play. Defensively, Thomson plays a physical, glued-to-you-off-the-rush brand that can be really effective at holding the neutral zone and forcing turnovers but can also occasionally get him exposed. Thomson is a bit too much of a one-trick pony as a shooter offensively but he can still move the puck well enough and if that skill can be groomed there's significant room for growth in how he's used.

40. Albin Grewe — C/RW, Djurgardens, 6-foot-0

Grewe is what he is and that's an often mean, sometimes powerful (he needs to use it more) forward who can play with a variety of linemates and in a variety of roles but doesn't have any real standout, wow-you-level offensive skills (though he does have borderline high-end foot speed) that are capable of taking over a game. He projects safely as a useful pro forward (more likely as a winger, where his physicality can be more of a factor on the forecheck). The aggression and confidence he displayed in SuperElit didn't regularly translate in the SHL this season — and that's normal — but there were flashes of it and I wouldn't be surprised if he had a breakout year in an increased role next year. Give him two or three years and there might be something really interesting there.

41. Matthew Robertson — LHD, Edmonton Oil Kings, 6-foot-4

Robertson doesn't quite have the mobility of, say, a Philip Broberg, but his skating is a major strength and that makes his length hard to pass up on. I'm a little lower on the rest of his skill set than most but he can make the outlet necessary pass and use feet to escape trouble when he's under pressure in the defensive zone. Any deficiency in his puck handling is offset by his stout defensive play too. Robertson recognizes all three forwards ahead of the play, anticipates passes effectively,

disrupts attempts to drive the net with his long stick, and makes the quick play in transition to capitalize. There are some kinks to iron out and I wouldn't say he's smooth with the puck as a carrier but if he can develop that part of his game he's going to become a very good NHLer.

42. Samuel Fagemo — LW/RW, Frölunda HC, 5-foot-11

It took Fagemo some time to figure out exactly how he was most useful. There was a decent stretch of his young career where he tried to do too much and make things happen on his own and it meant that the skills he had weren't being used to the best of his ability. Then, at the beginning of this year in SuperElit, he flipped a switch and basically decided he was going to be a pure scorer — but an unselfish one. That's not always easy to do. Players who can blow pucks past goaltenders with a release like Fagemo's (the puck curls off his blade without it even looking like he was shooting it) want to be volume shooters who use their skill to get to the slot and score. The inherent problem with that mentality is that it's often counterproductive because it puts pressure on them to make individual plays and shoot through traffic. Now, Fagemo has dedicated himself to getting open and sliding into soft pockets in the offensive zone. In doing so, he gets more time to pick his spot and score. It takes the right kind of linemates but it's eminently more dangerous. His 14 goals and 25 points in 42 games ranked first among under-19 SHL players, ahead of Blues first-round pick Dominik Bokk (who is actually a month older than Fagemo). He's legit, overage status be damned, and will be a power play threat at any level. His skating has vastly improved too, which makes him a puck carrying threat that defencemen have to be cognizant of, especially now that he has begun to learn to go wide instead of trying to do too much. This assist in Frolunda's playoff run really leaped out at me because the play started and ended with No. 11 in red:

43. Vladislav Kolyachonok — LHD, Flint Firebirds, 6-foot-2

Kolyachonok should have been in the conversation for the first all-star team at April's under-18 world championships for the way he performed, helping Belarus avoid relegation while playing big, big minutes. Before that, he was also a late-birthday, high-impact player on a Flint team that sorely needed a player like him to step up and lead their core moving forward as they attempt (again) to escape the OHL's basement. Kolyachonok doesn't really lack any of the skills needed to be good in today's NHL and I got the sense watching him play throughout the year that this was just the beginning for him because there are so many flashes of 'OK, where did that come from?' to his game. Surround him with a little more talent and watch out. He can really skate (in all four directions), he's fluid with the puck, and he makes the plays you'd hope he makes with it.

44. Jamieson Rees — C, Sarnia Sting, 5-foot-10

Rees, one of the slickest players in the draft, has stick handling talent that can pull you out of your seat and make a goalie look silly on a breakaway. It's almost as though his stick floats across the ice. He'll pull a puck past a defender or stop up at full speed to make someone bite. It really is a pleasure to watch. Rees didn't help himself when he blindsided Cole Coskey for an eight-game suspension this season and he missed another portion due to injury but he still finished strong with an excellent showing as one of Canada's most dangerous players at U18s. Rees has NHL top speed, a deceptive shot that he releases from his front foot effortlessly, the ability to make passes that are one step ahead of the play, and agile though not explosive footwork.

45. Spencer Knight — G, USDP, 6-foot-3

I'm of the opinion that Spencer Knight's reputation precedes him at this point but that doesn't mean he's not an excellent, high-end goalie prospect. He is. When Knight's on, like he was at U18s, he can steal games. He's explosive post-to-post, he's big, he uses that size to challenge shooters, and — probably most importantly for goalies his age — he rarely gets caught swimming in his net because he has trained himself to be compact. Though I wouldn't take him in the first round (something that, in my opinion, should only happen with truly transformational goalies), Knight remains the best goalie prospect in this draft class and the table is set for him to take Joseph Woll's place at



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Boston College and play a lot of games, which should help him reach his potential as an NHL starter.

46. Connor McMichael — C/RW, London Knights, 5-foot-11

McMichael's playoff performance was disappointing by most measures. His play on the team's third line at even-strength didn't have enough of an impact to tilt games London's way when they needed him. Throughout, he was also used on the wing in spurts instead of at centre, which is a little odd given he was 55 percent on nearly 600 faceoffs in the regular season. McMichael is a player who does a lot of different things really well at the junior level but (outside of maybe his release) doesn't have any standout skill that really leaves you thinking "that will translate to the NHL." As a result, he projects as a third-line forward more than a high-end scorer, even though his 36 goals ranked third among under-18 forwards this season to Kalyev and 2020 prospect Cole Perfetti. He needs to get stronger if his development is going to take off.

47. Jordan Spence — RHD, Moncton Wildcats, 5-foot-10

A late bloomer with just one year in the QMJHL under his belt, Spence made a name for himself this season as a rookie, leading all under-18 defencemen in scoring by eight points before basically walking his way onto Team Canada for the first time at the worlds. Spence, the QMJHL's 2019 rookie of the year, also led all rookies in assists (regardless of position) with 43. He's a smooth-skating, light-footed, advance-the-play defenceman who was taken 20th overall by the Wildcats as an average on the back of a Maritimes Jr. A Hockey League (MJAHL) rookie of the year nod last season. His strongest attribute is his ability to hit forwards in transition with long outlet passes and slice pucks through traffic for tape-to-tape plays across the offensive zone but he's also silky through the neutral zone, weaving away from danger as a carrier. Spence, the first player to appear on this list who didn't appear in my midseason top-62 (largely so I could continue to get a feel for the newcomer), is an effortless zone-exit and zone-entry machine who is prone to a few brain cramps in the defensive zone but should be able to iron out some of those kinks with a little more polish in the Q. It's hard to be an effective defender at the NHL level at 5-foot-10 and 165 pounds but the right amount of patience and two more years in junior could do the trick for a player who has all of the other tools required to make the jump.

48. Vladislav Firstov — LW, Waterloo Blackhawks, 6-foot-0

The baby-faced Firstov, who doesn't turn 18 until days before the draft, stepped into the USHL this season and was named to its all-rookie team as one of its three-best first-year forwards. Firstov is a skinny, puck-on-a-string winger who is committed to the University of Connecticut who is more of a long-term project and should likely spend a full four years in college as he matures and adds strength to an impressive skill set that already includes tough-to-track lateral cuts and a quick, accurate release. After an excellent start to the season, Firstov's play plateaued a little at the midway point. Still, he can make plays and a little more lower-body strength should go a long way to making an elusive player into an explosive one. Patience will be key in his developmental curve though.

49. Nolan Foote — LW, Kelowna Rockets, 6-foot-3

Foote uses his weight and his balance to receive passes on his backhand and pivot to his forehead for a one-motion release as well as anyone and that's a skill that makes him lethal in any league because it's a split second movement across his body that disguises his release point and forces goalies to catch up to him. And though that skill is absolutely transferable, there are hitches in Foote's game which haven't yet disappeared (something that is particularly concerning given his three years in the WHL due to his age). I worry, too, given the way his brother Cal has struggled to increase his foot speed as he has gotten heavier, that Foote will have to settle for average acceleration, something that could limit him from becoming the power forward so many believed he could be.

50. Shane Pinto — C/RW, Tri-City Storm, 6-foot-2

I was slow to trust Pinto's skill set this season but he just kept looking better with each viewing and his play with the Storm post-trade was electric in spurts and peaked at the right time, with points in 10 of his final 11 regular season games before opening the playoffs with eight points in the Storm's three-game sweep of Des Moines in the first round of the Clark Cup playoffs. Pinto, who went from a 330th overall pick in the 21st round of the USHL draft to one of its all-rookie team members, does an excellent job staying ahead of the play without cheating (which takes a fine balance) and releasing from defenders to get open for a give-and-go play. He also tracks pucks at an extremely high level, which enables him to take efficient routes and control possession when he's on the ice. Pinto doesn't need time or space to finish off plays either. He's decisive with the puck and often knows where he wants to put it before he even receives it. Some players can just anticipate the play one or two steps ahead of others and Pinto is one of them.

The top 100

In order to give you a better understanding of how closely-ranked many of these players are I have broken down the ranking into tiers. They are as follows: 1, 2, 3-5, 6-12, 13-25, 26-50, 51-77, 78-100. Eight players who were ranked in my midseason top 62 fell below that threshold here, including two who fell out of the top 100 and into the honourable mentions:

Honourable mentions (25): Michael Gildon, Matvei Guskov, Dylan Jackson, Josh Williams, Patrick Moynihan, Daniil Antropov, Anthony Romano, Judd Caulfield, Luke Toporowski, Ryder Donovan, Daniil Misyul, Jake Lee, Yegor Serdyuk, Alexander Campbell, Alexander Popovic, Kean Washkurak, Grant Silianoff, Vladimir Alistrov, Kyen Sopa, Semyon Chistyakov, Simon Lundmark, Jackson LaCombe, Valentin Nussbaumer, Sasha Mutala, Yegor Chinakhov.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144140 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Dubas support means Mike Babcock must innovate to improve Maple Leafs

Chris Johnston | May 7, 2019, 12:52 AM

In his early days with the Toronto Maple Leafs, Mike Babcock envisioned a decade-long tenure to match the one he had in Detroit.

"Well I've got this year and seven more here, and then I'm going to stay for two more because the team's going to be that good," Babcock said in February 2016.

Since then, much has changed in Toronto.

His boss went from a septuagenarian to a millennial and the roster improved as quickly as the results. But the progress was interrupted this spring and, as much as Babcock's presence behind the Leafs bench always seemed secure, there was room for speculation when general manager Kyle Dubas refused to guarantee his position in the immediate aftermath of the Game 7 loss in Boston.

The doubt can now be completely removed, with Dubas affirming his commitment to the NHL's highest-paid coach on Monday, and so they must get on with tackling the interesting part: How best to change, evolve and grow together to push the Leafs further up the mountain?

The relationship between coach and GM will remain under heavy scrutiny, especially since Babcock's footing is more precarious than it's been at any point since he arrived in Toronto.



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Even with four years still left on his contract and Dubas' current expression of support, the status quo won't be good enough. It's hard to conjure any scenario where Babcock survives a fourth straight first-round playoff loss next spring — at least from this far away.

That's not entirely fair, of course, because of the NHL's uneven divisional playoff format and the fact that Toronto lost to a Bruins team which might still go on and win a Stanley Cup.

But that's where we are.

Dubas didn't hide his disappointment about what he saw in 2018-19 when he met reporters on locker cleanout day. This was a team that finished fourth overall in regulation and overtime wins (ROWs) and improved its underlying metrics during the regular season, but failed to get past Boston despite holding series leads of 1-0, 2-1 and 3-2.

"I mean we had 100 points and we went to Game 7 against the Bruins in the first round, so it's tough to say that it was tangible progress," said Dubas. "I think anyone watching the series would say we played a lot better in this series than the team did the year before, but we have to continue to improve everything that we do. It starts with me improving the job that I do [with] contracts, signing players, drafting players, our development system — every single thing of our organization.

"And it's up to me to work with Mike to continue to have him improve, and with his staff improve."

Livestream every game of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, blackout-free. Plus stream the Blue Jays & MLB, Raptors and NBA Playoffs matchups and more.

There is onus here on the 56-year-old coach to pursue new methods as well.

The Leafs have entered a potential championship window that is only guaranteed to last another five seasons — the length of Auston Matthews' contract, give or take. Patience will wear increasingly thin at all levels of the organization as time ticks away without obvious progress towards that pursuit.

Sand has started passing through the hourglass.

Babcock chose the Leafs back in 2015 with an eye on climbing the highest mountain possible, taking on the biggest challenge he could find to cap a Hall of Fame career.

Whether or not it plays out as he once imagined is only partially under his control. The winds have shifted and Babcock needs to adjust his sails.

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Sportsnet.ca / J.T. Compher plays hero in helping Avalanche extend season against Sharks

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis May 7, 2019

DENVER — J.T. Compher made headlines after Game 5 by smashing a metal garbage can with his stick.

In Game 6 he stuck it to the San Jose Sharks.

The 24-year-old didn't score the overtime winner on Monday night — that honour went to captain Gabriel Landeskog. But prior to that, one of the heroes the Colorado Avalanche were looking for to extend their season came from the most unlikely of sources in a third line winger.

An amazing development for a team sorely lacking depth up front.

Compher's three-point night played a big role in helping the Avalanche stave off elimination with a 4-3 overtime win to force Game 7 in San Jose on Wednesday.

His effort set the stage for Landeskog's winner, which came 2:32 into overtime when his shot from the slot bounced in off Martin Jones, sending the crowd at Pepsi Center into a frenzy.

"It's a huge step for our team," said Landeskog, whose goal marked the first point from the top line in the last two games. "It's a great opportunity for us to be 60 minutes away from a Western Conference Final. I mean, who would have thought before the season and who would've thought before this series or whatever. For us, we keep believing.

"You just have to instill that doubt in that team on the other side. And at this point, I doubt the last thing they wanted to do was go back and play another one at home in San Jose. So we accomplished Step 1 to win this one and now we have to regroup and win another one."

It was a gritty win for the Avs, who allowed San Jose to score goals late in the second and third periods to tie the game, including a back-breaking goal by Marc-Edouard Vlasic with 2:28 remaining to send it into overtime.

Prior to that, it looked like Compher's goal early in the third — his second of the game — would stand as the winner.

"It was a little discouraging when they kept coming back, but this group is resilient and we stuck with it tonight," said Compher, who had one three-point outing in his previous 172 NHL games.

"We've been counted out many times this year this group has and we're very resilient and we'll be ready to go for Game 7. Game 6 means nothing if we don't go win Game 7. So the page will be turned pretty quickly here and we'll make sure we're ready to go in two days."

Compher and the rest of his eighth-ranked Avs spent most of the post-game celebration reiterating the word opportunity, which is what they've created against long odds.

"You guys talk about the future more than us — we're here every day, and we're in the present, and we know how big of an opportunity we have," said Compher.

"There are guys who've been in the league for a long time and haven't had this opportunity."

The winning goal started with a Cale Makar shot from the point.

"I think everybody just really knew we were going to win and wanted to win really bad," said the 20-year-old defenceman when asked about the mood in the dressing room before overtime.

"Now it's a toss-up and the pressure is on them going back to San Jose. It's going to be a fun one."

A stunned Sharks room credited the hosts for a win spearheaded by lesser lights.

"Their depth guys beat us tonight," said forward Logan Couture.

"We got beat by J.T. Compher, Tyson Jost, their second, third, fourth line."

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Sportsnet.ca / Tuukka Rask untouchable as Bruins head back to Eastern Conference Final

Chris Johnston | May 7, 2019, 1:57 AM



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COLUMBUS, Ohio — They didn't dent Tuukka Rask.

In fact, they didn't so much as leave a mark.

The biggest reason the Boston Bruins are heading back to the Eastern Conference Final for the first time since 2013 is because Rask began playing like a younger version of himself. He was untouchable during a six-game series win over Columbus, stealing the show from counterpart Sergei Bobrovsky and conjuring some distant memories of Boston's last run to the Stanley Cup Final.

"Ummm, it's a long time ago," said teammate Patrice Bergeron. "I mean obviously I do remember that he was pretty much light's out the whole time. I think right now he's in the zone and that's where he's at.

"He's playing some big-time hockey."

The Blue Jackets never did find an answer despite head coach John Tortorella's assertion before Monday's clincher that his team "dented their goalie."

Rask claimed not to have heard those comments and played like they didn't have any basis in reality — stopping all 39 shots he faced in the 3-0 victory, including 11 sent his way during four Columbus power plays.

"It's better than sucking, I guess," Rask deadpanned. "You play enough in this league ... and you tend to learn a thing, that's not all about you. You don't have to do anything spectacular, it's a team sport and you play for each other.

"That's helped me a lot and I'm trying to keep carrying that on."

The next stop on their journey will take them through Carolina in a series the Bruins are favoured to win. Some Vegas oddsmakers have pegged them as Cup favourites, too.

Significant roadbumps still lay ahead, including the possibility they have to play Game 1 of Eastern Conference Final without stud defenceman Charlie McAvoy, pending a decision from the NHL's department of player safety.

McAvoy laid a punishing check on Blue Jackets forward Josh Anderson at 19:40 of the second period and made contact with his opponent's head in the process — earning a minor penalty for an "illegal check to the head" from referee Kelly Sutherland.

The game was only 1-0 at that point and Columbus lobbied hard for a major penalty with Anderson down in pain. But that's not an option for a penalty assessed under Rule 48. It was the defining moment of Game 6.

"You're seeing your teammate laying on the ground from a hit that's really just right to the head and unnecessary," said Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno. "Kelly had a tough job to do. I thought at the end of the day he probably makes the right call, but at the time you'd like to see it probably be a five[-minute major]."

For his part, McAvoy called it a "hockey play." There's no guarantee he'll escape further supplemental discipline despite it being whistled as a minor penalty on the ice.

"I mean I put my shoulder into it," said McAvoy. "When I hit I do my very best to keep my elbow tucked so I don't get it out there. I hit with my shoulder. I try to hit with as much power as possible. He's a bigger guy."

Columbus would still have needed to break through Rask if it was called a major. That just didn't appear to be in the cards.

The Finn finished the series with a .948 save percentage on 212 shots — allowing just 11 goals in the process. Bobrovsky was a respectable .921 at the other end of the ice.

However, it amounted to a significant difference in performance because Columbus finished ahead in expected goals for the series, 16.31-15.69, based on the shot data analyzed by naturalstattrick.com.

That speaks to how close these games were.

Where once Rask was known for having a temper, he's been positively Zen-like throughout the spring. Even when the officials huddled to debate the call on the McAvoy penalty he didn't get distracted with thoughts of how it might swing the outcome.

"No, no. I can't think that because if I start thinking that I lose my focus," he said. "I just try to stay focused. I'm hoping it's going to be a two-minute penalty instead of five."

The 32-year-old believes he's benefitting from experience and maturity.

He's also coming off a season where he had more rest than any year since 2013 — appearing in 46 games and only starting three consecutively one time. About the only thing the Blue Jackets managed to dent in Monday's clincher was the posts and crossbar in the net behind Rask, striking iron at least four times.

"Good angles," said Rask, before turning his attention to Tortorella's dented remark. "It's the playoffs, there's mind games always. It's the entertainment industry, I guess, so that's what the fans and media want. When I'm playing, I don't read it.

"But if I'm a spectator, I like to read it because it's entertaining."

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL's Top 12 UFAs of 2019: Latest rumours, reports

Luke Fox | May 6, 2019, 12:35 PM

Did John Tavares and his \$77-million sweepstakes open his UFA followers' eyes for what might be possible if you peek beyond the curtain?

The summer of 2019 could deliver no shortage of star power, as a two-time Norris winner, a two-time Vezina winner, two Calder winners, and a few clubs' top scorers are all racing toward July 1's open market.

Big shakeups and monster paydays are on the horizon.

While a chunk of key UFAs are still focused on lifting the Stanley Cup, some clarity on the question of "Will they stay, or will they go?" is taking shape with those whose teams have been eliminated.

Here's a look at the NHL's Top 12 unrestricted free agents of 2019 and the freshest rumours surrounding their futures.

1. Erik Karlsson

Age on July 1: 29

Position: Defence

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$6.5 million

Bargaining chips: Two-time Norris Trophy champ (2012, 2015). Four-time NHL First All-Star Team. Under 30 years old. Olympic silver medallist and winner of Olympic best defenceman award in 2014. Skates like a deer. Once dragged Ottawa to within a goal of the Cup Final on one ankle. Six 60-plus-point campaigns. Looks like he just stepped out of a salon.

The latest: After weathering a sluggish start in teal, everything's clicking for Erik Karlsson and the Sharks.



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Although he's been eligible to re-sign with San Jose since Jan. 1, Karlsson was ineligible to ink an eight-year extension until the trade deadline passed.

Agent Don Meehan and Sharks GM Doug Wilson had some preliminary discussions regarding a potential Karlsson contract in January, but this thing won't be revisited seriously until the Sharks complete their playoff run.

"We look at Erik much like we looked at Evander [Kane last season], as a guy who fits now and in the future age-wise, style of game," Wilson told NBC Sports California upon trading for him. "We're in the mode of trying to win right now, and I think that's something that's attractive to him.

"You have to make it be a place the player wants to play, filling in all of the ingredients that they're looking for in their decision-making process. He's expressed that to us, that we are a place he'd like to be, and same thing [for] us back to him. We'd love him to be here long-term."

Karlsson controls his destiny and, like Tavares a year ago, will be the most coveted UFA if he goes to market. Count the Lightning, Rangers, Golden Knights, Flyers and Stars among a slew of teams who might be interested in opening the coffers.

Does he pass up an opportunity that tempting?

"Tough to say," a noncommittal Karlsson told After Hours on Feb. 16. "Right now I'm focused on getting back to my former self and getting right of this injury and playing at the standard that I'm used to."

Karlsson has been sidelined multiple times this contract season with a groin injury that doesn't require surgery (yet) but throws a yellow flag at his future.

One-legged Erik Karlsson, offense-only defenseman, goes cross-ice on a backcheck to prevent a scoring chance for Soderberg. [pic.twitter.com/SBrqnY6gko](https://pic.twitter.com/SBrqnY6gko)

— Sean Tierney (@ChartingHockey) May 5, 2019

Erik Karlsson had/is having his best year of the last four in San Jose per RAPM. So, yeah, I'd up the dollar amount if he was willing to sign a shorter-term contract with NYR. [pic.twitter.com/5DhIP56k3e](https://pic.twitter.com/5DhIP56k3e)

— Rob Luker (@RLuker12) May 3, 2019

### 2. Artemi Panarin

Age on July 1: 27

Position: Left wing

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$6 million

Bargaining chips: Led all Blue Jackets in assists (59), points (87), game-winners (eight) and power-play points (18). Now leads in playoff scoring. Memorably beat out Connor McDavid for the 2016 Calder Trophy. Crushed back-to-back 80-point seasons in Columbus after starting his NHL career with back-to-back 70-point seasons in Chicago. Magician on ice.

The latest: All signs point to Panarin leaving Columbus for the open market — and a bigger city with a larger Russian community — on July 1.

Having never won a playoff series, Columbus was loath to trade its top scorer heading into the stretch run, as brassy GM Jarmo Kekalainen risked losing an elite talent for nothing.

The whole city pitched in on the "Keep Panarin" campaign. Columbus-based High Bank Distillery took out a billboard offering him free booze for life if he re-signs.

"I say it's harder for me to keep talking about my free agency because I see how people want me to stay in Columbus, and it's harder," Panarin told reporters in February.

"But it's my life. We only have one life and I want to, like... it's 10 per cent of my life, seven or eight years, you know? I want to stay happy every day and I want to see more options."

The Florida Panthers — the presumed front-runner here — have cleared cap space and hired coach Joel Quenneville (a Panarin fan) to make a splash in July. The Blackhawks, Rangers and Kings are also rumoured to be in the hunt.

"Seriously, guys, I don't have a team. Not one team where I want to go," Panarin said. "But I have many teams. We'll see what happens in the summer, but right now I don't know what I want.

"I'm ready for that situation. I know in the summer how hard that will be for me. I'm ready. Still positive."

Panarin was reportedly seeking a deal worth \$10-11 million per season prior to the start of the playoffs.

### 3. Matt Duchene

Age on July 1: 28

Position: Centre

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$6 million

Bargaining chips: Best UFA centre under 30. Seven 20-goal, 50-point seasons. Gold medalist for Team Canada at Winter Olympics, world championships (twice), and World Cup. Coming off career-best 31-goal, 70-point campaign. Point per game in 2019 playoffs.

The latest: Senators GM Pierre Dorion paid a handsome price to acquire Duchene in 2017, and with Ottawa amidst a rebuild, the GM could not afford to let him walk. So, he traded Duchene to Columbus for prospects Vitaly Abramov and Jonathan Davidsson, a first-round pick in 2019 and a conditional first-rounder in 2020.

"It's a situation of constant information-gathering whenever you're in a contract year," Duchene told me at training camp.

"Johnny [Tavares] is a good friend of mine. We've come up together: same agent, same trainer, same equipment company, same draft, same everything. It's a guy I'm very familiar with and have a really good relationship with. I thought he handled the situation with extreme class and respect for everyone involved. I definitely took notes."

Duchene is playing so well that he's silenced those who questioned his abilities as a playoff performer. His July 1 suitors will be plentiful.

Sportsnet's Nick Kypreos reported that Ottawa offered an eight-year, \$64-million extension to Duchene prior to the trade. Can he fetch that much from Columbus or another franchise?

"It's not far away from home for him up in Ontario. Everything's a fit to this point," Jackets president John Davidson told Prime Time Sports. "We'll just let it play out, see where it goes, and let them enjoy the city."

As long as the Jackets are playing hockey, that's the only thing on Duchene's mind.

"I couldn't give a hell about what's going to happen in the summer right now, for me," Duchene told reporters during Round 2. "I know that other guys are feeling the same way and, if they're not feeling the same way, they're definitely playing like they don't care about that stuff.

"They're playing like this is the be-all and end-all, and it is."

### 4. Sergei Bobrovsky

Age on July 1: 30

Position: Goaltender

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$7.425 million

Bargaining chips: Two-time Vezina Trophy winner. Franchise record-holder for most wins, best goals-against average and save percentage in



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a season. Gold medalist for Team Russia at world championships. Bona fide No. 1 goalie.

The latest: "I don't like to do any games, any mind games," Goalie Bob, who holds a full no-move clause, said at the outset of camp. "After last season, I told the situation to the management of the Blue Jackets, so they know everything. They know my plans for the season. They know my plans for the future. They know everything."

Bobrovsky endured an up-and-down season. His save percentage (.913) was his lowest in a healthy season since he came to Columbus from Philadelphia seven years ago.

In mid-December, NHL Network analyst Kevin Weekes (who shares an agent with Bobrovsky, Paul Theofanous) labelled the situation untenable.

"Based on what I'm told from the Bobrovsky camp, and not Sergei himself, this relationship has really deteriorated," Weekes said.

"So now the challenge for the Jackets is: Can they repair that? Is it possible or is it irreparable damage at this point? Are they able to salvage that relationship? Can they find a common path going forward, or does it continue going... down the path of no return."

The Panthers, Islanders, Flames and Hurricanes would be among the suspected teams interested if Bobrovsky hits the open market as expected.

His asking price come July 1 has been said to be in the ballpark of \$10 million per season.

Even though a return to Columbus in the fall ranks somewhere between unlikely and impossible, the goaltender has been spectacular this post-season, backstopping the Jackets to a sweep over Tampa.

Panarin switched agents to Theofanous in the first week of February, leading some to believe the Russian Blue Jackets could be a package deal.

Cam Atkinson was candid today when asked about the Panarin and Bobrovsky contract situations.

"Everyone's different. I love it here. I started playing my career here. I want to finish it here. So, everyone's different. So, that's all I can say about that." pic.twitter.com/cv95vVoBYp

— Brian Hedger (@BrianHedger) February 4, 2019

### 5. Jeff Skinner

Age on July 1: 27

Position: Left wing

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$5.725 million

Bargaining chips: Calder winner. Hot off his first 40-goal and third 60-point season. Trade to Buffalo resulted in the most productive campaign of his career. Quick chemistry with franchise centre Jack Eichel. Hasn't missed a game in two-plus seasons.

The latest: Sabres GM Jason Botterill and Skinner's agent, Don Meehan, touched base in January and agreed to let the season run its course.

Despite missing the playoffs again, Buffalo finds itself on the upswing for the first time in years — thanks in part because the Skinner trade has worked out so well — and would be wise to keep Skinner in the fold. The winger has noted that he enjoys being closer to home with Toronto just a two-hour highway cruise away.

Skinner also, however, has endured nine straight NHL seasons without skating in a single post-season game. Getting to July 1 means Skinner has a say in where he wants to win.

Flipping Skinner before Feb. 25 would have infuriated Sabres fans and devastated the dressing room, and yet the struggling Sabres need to get back on a roll to make the dance.

Mark Stone's new salary of \$9.5 million in Vegas certainly won't harm Skinner's leverage. Both wingers are the same age.

During his news conference to address the firing of coach Phil Housley, Botterill said there was a "100 per cent" chance a deal with Skinner could be completed. The Sabres have \$23 million in cap space and could comfortably fit Skinner's next AAV (approximately \$8 million?) into their budget.

"If there were any doubts about Skinner's interest in Buffalo, he used the word 'we' on several occasions when asked about the Sabres' prospects for 2019-20," according to Lance Lysowski of the Buffalo News.

Leaving Jeff Skinner open in front of the net is a definite no-no. pic.twitter.com/PafjZ7zaTJ

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) February 16, 2019

### 6. Joe Pavelski

Age on July 1: 34

Position: Centre / Right wing

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$6 million

Bargaining chips: Most goals per game (38 in 74) among all impending UFAs. One of the world's best tipsters. Equally effective as a wing or a centre. Olympic silver medalist for Team USA. Ten 20-goal seasons and running. Captain America. Won't be slowed by head staples.

The latest: After a slight production dip in 2017-18, "Little Joe" over-delivered in his platform year, to the point where we'd have him a few spots higher on this list if he wasn't going to enter 2019-20 at the age of 35. Forwards are supposed to decline then, right?

That appeared to be GM Wilson's logic when he shelled out big bucks to Evander Kane and made certain to lock up the younger Logan Couture last summer but played the wait-and-see approach with Pavelski. In September, agent Dan Plante described extension talks as "nonexistent" to The Athletic's Kevin Kurz.

Complicating matters for the captain's future within the Sharks' financial puzzle is that breakout forward Timo Meier will be an RFA. Ditto Joonas Donskoi and Kevin Labanc. Karlsson is the biggest fish in the UFA pond (and certainly looks like the kind of guy you want to keep). And who knows if Jumbo Joe's knees want one more year?

Note: Pavelski and Meier out-produced Kane, a \$7-million player.

There is zero reason to believe Pavelski and the Sharks wish to part ways, but this is shaping up to be a decision best made after we see how deep San Jose goes in the playoffs.

This will be an unpopular take around these parts, but ...

Patrick Marleau, then 37, was signed to 3-year deal by TOR during its rebuild to provide leadership to their young players,

Who's to say #Canucks won't want to take same approach if Pavelski, 34, is UFA on July 1?

— Curtis Pashelka (@CurtisPashelka) February 17, 2019

### 7. Tyler Myers

Age on July 1: 29

Position: Defence

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$5.5 million

Bargaining chips: The most attractive and highest-producing under-30 UFA defenceman not named Erik Karlsson. Logs more than 20 minutes nightly. Solid power-play option. Big body. Shoots right.



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The latest: Myers is one member of a long list of Jets who are headed to free agency and looking for a raise: Patrik Laine, Kyle Connor, Jacob Trouba, Ben Chiarot, Brandon Tanev, Kevin Hayes....

"We have some tough decisions to make this summer, a lot of them," GM Kevin Cheveldayoff said, following his player exit meetings. "This year, there's certainly going to be some changes."

The bet here is that Myers has priced himself out of town, and Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman recently reported no traction on extension talks.

Myers will have a bevy of suitors to choose from. Vancouver, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Montreal are among the speculated clubs with interest.

8. Jake Gardiner

Age on July 1: 28

Position: Defence

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$4.05 million

Bargaining chips: Solid power-play quarterback. Excellent skater and passer. A 50-point defender when healthy. Still managed 30 points and a plus-19 rating in 2018-19 despite a serious back injury and reduced power-play opportunity.

The latest: Gardiner, a Minnesota native, enjoys being a Maple Leaf, and despite his defensive lapses — which can be magnified — the Leafs are high on Gardiner. Coach Mike Babcock trusts him. GM Kyle Dubas has described Gardiner as "a key part" of the club.

But!

He's due a major raise and would likely need to take a significant "hometown" discount to remain a Leaf. RFA Mitch Marner is GM Kyle Dubas's No. 1 priority, and with left-shot prospect Calle Rosen already earning a new deal, lefty Travis Dermott progressing well, and lefty Jake Muzzin acquired in January, it's nearly impossible to envision Gardiner getting properly compensated in Toronto.

"We would like [Gardiner] to be here. It's not as simple as it sounds," Dubas said. "You only have a certain amount that you can divvy up, and it's trying to make that all work and keep our team on the right path moving forward."

Unless Dubas can pull a rabbit out of his salary cap, Gardiner walks. During Toronto's locker cleanout, the player got emotional speaking as if it was his last public appearance as a Leaf.

That Gardiner's back ailed him during the post-season and he considered surgery should serve as a yellow flag for pursuant teams.

Wrote about Jake Gardiner, whose career in Toronto may be over. And who shouldn't be defined by a few errors in Game 7s. Come at me, bro. Just kidding, don't be mean. But read it if you want. <https://t.co/0WnwndxChX>

— Kristina Rutherford (@KrRutherford) April 26, 2019

9. Kevin Hayes

Age on July 1: 27

Position: Centre

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$5.175 million

Bargaining chips: Built on 2017-18's 25-goal campaign with a career year in points (54). Contributes to both special teams. His stock may never be higher.

The latest: After signing a one-year deal with the Rangers in the off-season, theoretically to jack his trade worth and bide time for younger centres in the system to develop, Hayes excelled in all situations and elevated his all-around game.

Despite a nagging injury that flared up in January, Hayes lured several trade suitors and was dealt to Winnipeg on deadline day — for Brendan Lemieux, a 2019 first-round pick and a conditional fourth-rounder in 2022 — to become the Jets' Paul Stastny 2.0.

The Jets' first-round playoff disappointment and impending cap crunch, however, leads us to believe re-signing in Winnipeg is a no-go. Nashville, Boston, Colorado, Buffalo and the Islanders could all be interested in signing Hayes if he reaches July 1.

The Jets have decisions to make on several impending free agents, however. Like Stastny before him, Hayes will be difficult to afford.

10. Anders Lee

Age on July 1: 28

Position: Left wing

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$3.75 million

Bargaining chips: Three consecutive 50-point seasons. Led all 2018-19 Islanders in goals (28), game-winners (five) and shots (204). Strong defensively and a stud on the power play. Inherited captaincy once Tavares departed. In his prime.

The latest: The way Lee has performed this season should put to rest the faulty notion that he'd been riding Tavares's coattails.

Do the Islanders risk losing their captain for nothing two summers in a row, or is an extension in the works?

"We're not at a point right now where things need to be said either way. The conversations [with GM Lou Lamoriello] have been good, and I'm looking forward to continuing those and we'll go from there." Lee told Newsday mid-season.

"There is a different feeling here and that just comes with all the changes made and the way Barry [Trotz, head coach] and Lou have taken over."

Lamoriello has a number of decisions to make up front, with Jordan Eberle, Brock Nelson and Valtteri Filppula also set to hit the open market. Lee — the top priority and currently one of the NHL's biggest bargains — won't be cheap.

Term will be the major sticking point.

"Things are still good," Lee told Newsday on Feb. 17.

The player believes he will remain an Islander long-term.

"There's nothing to be worried about at this point. It still needs to get done and all that stuff. But there's nothing that's worried from either side. Status quo."

The New York Post reported on March 2 that Lamoriello isn't rushing into serious negotiations with Lee, Nelson or Eberle.

Of course at #Isles break-up day today, Anders Lee will say he wants to stay. And of course that means only at the right price. The gap might be wider than first thought for the one-year captain. <https://t.co/UUyyZl19e0> via @nypostsports

— Brett Cyrgalis (@BrettCyrgalis) May 6, 2019

11. Anton Stralman

Age on July 1: 32

Position: Defence

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$4.5 million

Bargaining chips: Reliable, top-four defenceman with 700-plus games of experience and two trips to the Cup Final under his belt. World championships gold medallist for Team Sweden. A minutes horse content to stay at home and kill penalties. A plus defender eight years running.



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The latest: Some might place Vancouver's Alex Edler in this spot, but we believe Stralman's understated talents get overshadowed by the brand names (Victor Hedman, Ryan McDonagh) on Tampa's blue line. (Plus, he's younger than Edler.) Stralman is a trusted, smart right shot who does all the things coaches love and plays the type of game that could age well. Which is why he did not get traded ahead of Tampa's playoffs.

But as much as Tampa loves him, Stralman is the priciest of three Bolts' D-men on expiring deals (Braydon Coburn and Dan Girardi), and the cap-tight club has to pay RFA Brayden Point first and foremost.

Injuries and the emergence of young defencemen of the future cost Stralman to miss 35 games this season. As solid as his reputation has been, it leveled off in 2018-19. A fresh start could do wonders here.

We like Toronto as a potential destination, but Stralman's suitors will be plentiful.

With Jan Rutta signed to one way deal for next season, #blightning have five defencemen under contract (Hedman, McDonagh, Sergachev, Cernak). Coburn, Stralman, Girardi pending UFAs. The \$1.3 million AAV is about a million less than Rutta's cap hit last year (\$2.25 million)

— Joe Smith (@JoeSmithTB) May 3, 2019

12. Ryan Dzingel

Age on July 1: 27

Position: Centre / wing

2018-19 salary cap hit: \$1.8 million

Bargaining chips: Increased his production every year since breaking into the league in 2015-16. Back-to-back 20-goal, 40-point campaigns. Versatile, speedy forward who can play any position up front. Younger than some of the other high-scoring wingers in the class (Zuccarello, Eberle, Simmonds, Johnsson).

The latest: Dzingel's healthy-scratching by John Tortorella during the Blue Jackets' playoff run may have harmed his standing slightly, or at least reinforced the theory that he's unwilling to pay a physical price for his goals, but he's a late bloomer whose most productive days might still lie ahead.

Prior to being traded to Columbus from Ottawa at the deadline, Dzingel reportedly turned down a five-year extension offer worth in excess of \$20 million. His free agency has flown under the radar in both Ottawa and Columbus due to higher-profile UFA teammates, but Dzingel could represent a nice value buy for clubs unable to afford the bigger fish available this summer.

More notable UFAs of 2019: Jordan Eberle, Mats Zuccarello, Gustav Nyquist, Wayne Simmonds, Brock Nelson, Alexander Edler, Micheal Ferland, Semyon Varlamov, Joe Thornton, Brian Boyle, Jason Pominville, Joonas Donskoi, Jason Spezza, Marcus Johansson, Valtteri Filppula, Derick Brassard, Justin Williams, Ron Hainsey, Patrick Maroon, Jay Bouwmeester, Robin Lehner, Cam Talbot, Mike Smith, Marc Methot, Deryk Engelland, Thomas Vanek, Niklas Kronwall, Brett Connolly, Alex Chiasson

Lehner: "I can't say enough I love this team. I love everything about [it]. I've been very vocal about the situation here, but you never know with sports. I can only hope [I'm back]. We'll see what happens. I don't want to [tick] anyone off." (laughs) #Isles

— Brian Compton (@BComptonNHL) May 6, 2019

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144144 Websites

TSN.CA / Officiating clouding playoffs seemingly more than ever before

Frank Seravalli

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Nick Foligno pleaded his case, to the point that he had to be restrained by a linesman so referee Kelly Sutherland could announce his call to the cauldron that had become Nationwide Arena.

An incensed Blue Jackets fan threw a bag of popcorn on the ice in protest to the two-minute minor penalty for Charlie McAvoy's blatant illegal check to the head of Columbus' Josh Anderson.

The ensuing cleanup allowed Foligno more time to offer his opinion — all to no avail.

The damage was done. Now, after a hit that could now cost McAvoy as many games as minutes served, the Blue Jackets are left to a different kind of cleanup on Wednesday. Their lockers.

Yes, there was no guarantee the Blue Jackets would have scored on extended power play if it was called differently, not with Tuukka Rask stopping all 11 shots he faced with Columbus (0-for-4) on the man-advantage.

But it certainly changed the momentum in a one-goal elimination game. Marcus Johansson delivered the dagger six minutes after the Bruins killed it off, sending Boston to their first Eastern Conference final since 2013.

"It sucks," Foligno said. "Kelly is a good ref. I don't want to get into it. He had a tough call to make. I just think when your player is injured, it's an automatic five minutes."

It's difficult to remember a Stanley Cup playoffs that has been clouded more by polarizing calls from officials than this one. With the speed of today's NHL, there is no question hockey is the most difficult of the four major professional sports to call. There are always going to be mistakes, even for the best officials in the world.

But one series to the next, from Cody Eakin's season-changing botched major to Ben Bishop getting scored upon while he's on his back and injured, there have seemingly been more nights with controversy than clean hockey.

McAvoy's headshot wasn't nearly the only controversial call of this series. Brad Marchand punched Scott Harrington in the back of the head at the end of Game 3 and it went unpenalized.

Remember when Artemi Panarin scored a goal in Game 4 that clearly bounced off the mesh netting above the goal?

That play should have been blown dead, but it was not correctable with the help of video because a puck out of play is not reviewable.

"In this day and age, I think it's crazy," Rask said after Game 3. "I mean what if that's in overtime? ... It didn't cost us but I think it's just funny that they can look at a lot of other goals and call them back from the offices so why not that? ... I didn't know what happened. I didn't see it hit the [netting]. If I saw it then I probably would have slammed the stick and chased the refs. It was probably better I didn't see it."

Monday night's pivotal call in Game 6 was also not reviewable. NHL general managers shot down a proposal to make major penalty calls reviewable at their last meeting in March. These playoffs may put that decision up for debate again at their next meeting in June.

In this case, Anderson remained in the game. So did McAvoy — even after Sutherland initially seemed to indicate he would be tossed by touching his head and then signalling to the bench.

According to Rule 48.1, an illegal check to the head may only be assessed either a minor penalty or a match penalty. There is no provision for a major penalty or a game misconduct penalty. In other words, so



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long as an illegal check to the head was the call, the Blue Jackets could not enjoy a power play longer than two minutes.

Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen said he did not receive any explanation from the NHL on the call.

"I think the video was very self-explanatory what happened there," Kekalainen said.

McAvoy stated his case postgame saying it was "a hockey play."

"I thought it was a hockey play," McAvoy said. "I mean I put my shoulder into it. When I hit I do my very best to keep my elbow tucked so I don't get it out there. I hit with my shoulder. I try to hit with as much power as possible. He's a bigger guy, it was a hockey play."

The NHL declined to make series supervisor Bill McCreary available to the media or even a pool reporter. The NHL's Situation Room also did not respond to a request for explanation or insight.

(Meanwhile, the NBA – itself a lightning rod for officiating at times – has created a Twitter account for its officials to explain and add context to almost every call in the playoffs.)

Columbus coach John Tortorella would not elaborate on the explanation he was given.

"Yeah, I'm not going to discuss that," Tortorella said. "It's a huge moment. But I'm not going to discuss what was told to me."

Ultimately, Foligno said he believes the referees got it right.

"At the end of the day, he probably makes the right call, but at the time you probably want to see it be a five," Foligno said. "Then again, we got a two-minute power play and we didn't make anything of it. We got another power play after that and we didn't make anything of it."

But Foligno said he was "confused" based on what transpired in Game 7 between the Vegas Golden Knights and San Jose Sharks in Round 1.

"I don't understand, especially with the other series that went on, that just confused me," Foligno said. "You see your teammate laying on the ground from a hit that's right to the head and really just unnecessary. The guy [Zdeno Chara] is already on him, he's playing him one-on-one, there's no reason to come across like that."

You know the story. Sharks captain Joe Pavelski left Game 7 with a significant head injury after an awkward but routine and mostly innocent cross-check from Eakin. Referees Dan O'Halloran and Eric Furlatt huddled and assessed a five-minute major.

The rest is now history. The Sharks, down 3-0, scored four goals on the major and won in overtime to advance to Round 2.

Pavelski himself said this week that Eakin's call should not have been a major.

"Was it a five-minute penalty? No, I don't think it was," Pavelski said Sunday. "Am I glad they called it that way? Heck, yeah."

Like the Golden Knights, O'Halloran and Furlatt did not make it to Round 2. Knowing that history, and that their own playoffs might be on the line, did Sutherland and Kozari shy away from a different call in Columbus that could have resulted in a major?

In this case, Sutherland and Kozari punted on a potentially series-changing call for McAvoy, leaving discipline now ultimately to the Department of Player Safety.

That's too little, too late for the Blue Jackets, who will have all summer to wonder what could have been. They aren't alone.

"It's tough," Foligno said, "because who knows what happens."

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TSN.CA / At least 137 former players accept NHL concussion lawsuit settlement

Rick Westhead

The National Hockey League has reached settlements in its concussion litigation with at least 137 former players including Joe Murphy, Bernie Nicholls and Gary Leeman, court records show.

There were 318 former players, including 146 named plaintiffs, who were eligible for a settlement.

Others who have accepted settlements include Reed Larson, Dan LaCouture, Kevin Stevens, Chris Simon and Guillaume Latendresse.

Players who accept the settlement will receive at least \$22,000 (U.S.). The league also agreed to fund neuropsychological testing and reimburse up to \$75,000 in medical treatment expenses for players who qualify.

The lawsuit was first filed in 2013 and set the NHL on a years-long battle with its former players. Players alleged that the NHL has glorified and profited off of violence while ignoring warnings from the scientific community about the long-term implications of repeated brain trauma.

The NHL argued that players knew its brand of hockey is violent and that they would possibly be hurt and that players could have done their own research if they wanted to learn about brain injuries.

The NHL, which denied any liability in the settlement, also promised to create a "common good" fund worth more than \$2.5 million. The settlement is expected to cost the NHL a combined \$18.9 million.

The league chose not to exercise its right to walk away from a settlement if 100 per cent of eligible players didn't accept the terms of the deal.

Michael Cashman, a lawyer involved with the case, said that dismissal motions need to be filed with U.S. federal court in Minneapolis for players who accept the settlement and that some of these motions may not yet have been filed.

Another 172 former NHL players who retained lawyers to pursue a claim against the league but didn't file a case in court are also eligible for settlements. It's unlikely their identities will be made public, Cashman said.

Former NHL players Dan Carcillo and Nick Boynton and the families of Todd Ewen and Steve Montador have not agreed to a settlement and have said they are moving forward with individual lawsuits against the NHL.

On April 4, U.S. federal court judge Susan Nelson published a ruling establishing the Sapientia Law Group as a claims administrator, meaning the law firm will be responsible for ensuring players get their settlements.

Nelson has scheduled a hearing for June 16 to discuss how individual concussion lawsuits against the NHL will proceed.

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TSN.CA / Holland has work to do on every facet of the Oilers

Frank Seravalli



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After 22 years in an NHL general manager's chair in Detroit, it took Ken Holland just two weeks to get the itch to be back in the seat again.

He missed not being in the action, those close to him say, realizing at the World Under-18 Championship in Sweden just how little say he'd have after orchestrating Steve Yzerman's return to Hockeytown.

Holland will now have as much action as he can handle.

The Edmonton Oilers are expected to announce Holland's arrival as the 10th GM in franchise history in the coming days after agreeing to a five-year contract, worth nearly \$25 million, over the weekend.

Holland met with Red Wings matriarch Marian Huch on Sunday to deliver the news.

Holland, 63, is a hockey junkie. The Vernon, B.C., native wanted a challenge. The pull to return the Oilers to greatness around Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl was an opportunity unlike any available or potentially available.

McKenzie: Holland will have to find creative ways to alleviate financial concerns

TSN hockey insider Bob McKenzie joins Dustin Nielson to share his thoughts on the reports that Ken Holland will be the next Oilers GM, his recent work in Detroit and who he may name head coach.

If McDavid and Draisaitl were the bait, then the switch was all the grinding that must be done around them.

The questions are endless, the priorities all urgent. There is no time to waste between now and mid-July.

The first priority will be sorting out Edmonton's hockey operations department.

There will be blood.

There has been no shortage of criticism for the Oilers' 'old boys' club' in the front office. Who remains and who goes? One of the first questions will be whether acting GM Keith Gretzky will be retained, along with the likes of Craig MacTavish, Scott Howson and Duane Sutter.

One possible exception is former GM Kevin Lowe, who has operated exclusively on the business side of the Oilers Entertainment Group operations for years.

Some of those positions may be filled by Holland's former lieutenants from Detroit. Yzerman has plucked assistant GM Pat Verbeek from the Lightning. That would potentially open Holland's assistant from Detroit, Ryan Martin, to join him in Edmonton, perhaps alongside director of amateur scouting Tyler Wright and former Oilers captain Shawn Horcoff, who was Holland's director of player development. Kris Draper is expected to remain with the Red Wings.

Then what about a head coach?

Officially, Ken Hitchcock remains an interim coach, and will be under contract next season in a consultant's role. But he is not expected back on the bench.

The hockey world was whispering about the potential of Mike Babcock reuniting with Holland in Oil Country. But Leafs GM Kyle Dubas quashed that potential reunion by saying definitively on Monday that Babcock will be back next season.

"We're all in on Mike and Mike is all in on us," Dubas told TSN's Bob McKenzie. "We've had productive management meetings as an organization and Mike and I have had some really good meetings as well since the season ended. It's our very strong belief that Mike is the one to lead us."

The sense is Holland would prefer a veteran coach. That would seemingly make veteran NHL coach Dave Tippett a candidate. In

addition, Holland also knows Dallas Stars assistant Todd Nelson well. Holland's AHL coach in Grand Rapids, Nelson was well-liked by Oilers players after finishing the 2014-15 season as interim coach before Peter Chiarelli and Todd McLellan arrived.

Decisions will also have to be made on the Oilers' assistant coaches, including Glen Gulutzan, Trent Yawney and Manny Viveiros, all of whom are only one year into their current contracts.

Only then, finally, can Holland turn an eye toward the necessary reconstructive surgery of the Oilers' roster.

There are no easy answers there. The list of needs is long, the list of tradeable assets is short, and both of those constraints are compounded by the salary cap hell Chiarelli engineered.

The Oilers are a classic helicopter team: all centres, no wings. They desperately need high-skill wingers to play with McDavid, Draisaitl – who played left wing most of this past season – and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. They need top-end defencemen, preferably one who is also a right-shooting power play specialist who can dish from the point.

Dreger on Babcock's future, Holland as Oilers' GM and more

TSN hockey insider Darren Dreger joins First Up with Michael and Carlo to discuss the future of Mike Babcock with the Maple Leafs, Ken Holland being named Oilers GM, teams around the league having interest in Marlies head coach Sheldon Keefe, the World Hockey Championships and more.

Godspeed.

Can Holland find a new home for Milan Lucic? His contract is virtually buyout-proof from a salary cap perspective and he can veto any trade with a full no-move clause.

Holland has experience getting out of cap trouble. He finally navigated out of his own mistakes in Detroit, leaving Yzerman with upwards of \$20 million to spend this summer. The cost was a few lean years – bottom-feeding seasons that followed a 25-year playoff streak.

What will Holland do for a goaltender? Chiarelli signed Mikko Koskinen to a three-year, \$13.5 million deal the day before he was fired as GM, but there aren't many inside or outside of Edmonton who see him as a No. 1 goaltender. Koskinen, 30, finished his first full NHL season with a .906 save percentage – right at the league average.

There is no shortage of questions, touching nearly every facet of the Oilers.

Only one thing is certain. It will be fascinating to see how Holland attempts to restore this proud franchise to glory – as so many before him have tried.

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1144147 Websites

TSN.CA / Will Holland be a builder or a spender in Edmonton?

Travis Yost

On Sunday, news broke that the Edmonton Oilers are tagging Ken Holland to take over general managerial duties on a reported five-year, \$25-million dollar contract.

Since the report, there has been ample debate about the type of fit Holland will be within the Oilers organization. It is hard to think of another NHL team that's had more trouble finding quality executives or head



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coaches over the last decade. To that end, it's understandable that fans and media are approaching the reported hiring with hesitation.

After the firing of both general manager Peter Chiarelli and head coach Todd McLellan, it became clear that the market wanted real change – the type of change that didn't include another Oilers retread assuming executive control. It forced Bob Nicholson, Oilers Entertainment Group CEO and the man tasked with leading the executive search, to look outside of the normal run of candidates. That meant capitalizing on a changing landscape in Detroit.

Edmonton preyed on Detroit the same way Detroit preyed on Tampa Bay. When Steve Yzerman – one of the principal engineers behind the Lightning's surge to the top of the NHL hierarchy – became available, Detroit immediately signed him and handed him the primary role overseeing hockey operations in Motown. Since that day, it seemed all but certain Holland would be moving on. The question was when and where.

Still, the plans for Holland's eventual succession were probably in the works for quite some time.

Holland had signed a curiously short-term, two-year contract extension in April of 2018. It's not the type of extension you tend to see for legacy general managers, certainly not for the likes of a general manager with Holland's resume. Three Stanley Cups and five Presidents' Trophies can buy you an awful lot of time and equity, and understandably so.

A year later, we are starting to see why. Holland, increasingly frustrated with the team's status and direction in the middle of an ugly rebuild, was paving the way for an inevitable transition. It just so happened that the timing worked in Detroit's favour, with Yzerman looking to return to his old stomping grounds around the same time.

The ongoing rebuild in Detroit has had myriad issues. At the top of the list, they tried to extend the useful life of their window through paying and re-paying some of their veteran players – veteran players who were once impact skaters on the ice, but had obviously seen their talent erode with time.

When they realized they had largely misevaluated on those contracts, they went out and sought expensive help in free agency. Only after a few years of doing this (over, and over) they went full steam ahead into an actual rebuild.

The notion that the Red Wings have been gutting their roster for some time would be incorrect. Even through this year regular season, Detroit has consistently carried some of the most penalizing salary caps in the NHL.

CapFriendly has an impressive catalogue of spending over the last four seasons, more or less the timeframe we are talking about here. Using that data, we can see the Red Wings have been the least efficient spending team the league has had to offer:

No team has spent more and picked up less than the Red Wings. While this is going to be directionally true for most teams in a rebuild, it's worth pointing out that the Oilers – perhaps one of the least efficient teams we have seen in quite some time – spent nearly \$130,000 less for every standings point accumulated.

So we know the Red Wings have burned a lot of money over this window. But it's important to note that this isn't front-loaded in any way. Detroit has consistently carried one of the league's most penalizing caps, year over year.

Yes, Detroit has consistently met or exceeded the cap threshold. Their focal point of relief has generally come by way of long term injured reserve ("LTIR"), which allows teams to artificially exceed the salary cap when roster players are expected to miss a minimum of 10 NHL games and 24 calendar days in a given NHL season. In 2018-19, we saw the Red Wings exercise this with the likes of Henrik Zetterberg, Johan Franzen and Mike Green, providing a nearly \$7-million overage.

But LTIR is just one small part of the story. Consider just the 2018-19 regular season – a throwaway year designed to bring as many quality trade assets and draft picks as possible. Here were Detroit's most heavily paid rostered players:

Forwards: Dylan Larkin, Frans Nielsen, Justin Abdelkader, Darren Helm

Defence: Danny DeKeyser, Niklas Kronwall, Jonathan Ericsson, Trevor Daley

Goalies: Jimmy Howard, Jonathan Bernier

Not exactly a murderers' row of talent there, and yet this group of 10 players ate up nearly \$45-million in cap space last season. And here is the gut-wrenching part for most Red Wings fans: only one (Kronwall) has a contract expiring this season.

The team has been able to secure additional draft picks in coming years to help combat some of the salary cap swell, and will start seeing some real cap relief as soon as this summer. The 2020-21 season will be even friendlier on the team's cap outlook, and will give Yzerman substantial room moving forward.

No one is ever going to take away that blistering run of success that is front and centre on Holland's resume. But those runs were many, many years ago. And years after those runs the Red Wings have no immediate future, thanks in large part to so many crippling long-term contracts given out to aged-out veterans or players who never had a prime in the first place.

Outside of Detroit, no team needs more immediate help managing against the salary cap than Edmonton. That's what makes the Holland hiring so curious. Is Edmonton getting the builder from 15 years ago, or a piece of the Detroit front office that has spent the Red Wings into the ground?

We will find out soon enough.

TSN.CA LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144148 Websites

TSN.CA / Holland accepts Oilers GM offer, official announcement coming soon

3-4 minutes

Ken Holland will be the next general manager of Edmonton Oilers, according to TSN's Ryan Rishaug.

Rishaug reported late Sunday night that Holland has accepted the Oilers' offer and an official announcement will be coming in the next few days.

Can confirm Ken Holland has officially accepted the job as Oilers General Manager. An official announcement to come in the next few days.

— Ryan Rishaug (@TSNRyanRishaug) May 6, 2019

TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger added Holland informed the Red Wings and the owners, the Ilitch family, of his decision on Sunday and the deal with the Oilers is believed to be for five years at \$5 million per season.

My understanding is, Holland is informing the Ilitch family and the Red Wings today. And as has been speculated all week, the Oilers offer is believed to 5 years at \$5 million per. <https://t.co/yPAp78gf6>

— Darren Dreger (@DarrenDreger) May 5, 2019



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Dreger also reported Holland will have autonomy with the Oilers while Nicholson could take on a bigger role.

The 63-year-old, who held a senior vice-president position with the Red Wings after the arrival of Steve Yzerman as general manager, captured three Stanley Cups (1998, 2002, 2008) as Detroit's general manager from 1997 through the end of this season.

TSN.CA LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144149 Websites

TSN.CA / OHL investigation finds IceDogs signed secret deals with multiple players

Rick Westhead

The Ontario Hockey League's Niagara IceDogs agreed to unauthorized side contracts with the families of two players - one of whom is still in the OHL - and likely had similarly secret and unsanctioned deals with a number of European players, according to an investigation into the team's recruiting practices.

The investigation was commissioned by the OHL in the spring of 2018 and was conducted by the Toronto law firm Lax O'Sullivan Lisus Gottlieb LLP after former IceDogs player Zach Wilkie complained that the team had backed out on an oral agreement to pay him \$40,000 towards his room and board expenses at university.

A copy of the investigation report and a number of other documents related to the IceDogs' pursuit of young prospects was unsealed late Friday by an Ontario Superior Court judge in Hamilton, Ont.

The court documents, which include a string of email correspondence, a number of scouting reports and a photo of a stack of \$100 bills related to a \$1,500 payment made to Wilkie to cover his summer training expenses, offer a glimpse into the cutthroat world of hockey recruiting, where major-junior teams in the Canadian Hockey League compete against U.S. universities to sign the best young prospects in the game.

The documents also open a window into the back-and-forth negotiations between the OHL and its teams regarding sanctions.

Lax O'Sullivan Lisus Gottlieb LLP lawyers Andrew Winton and Sapna Thakker interviewed 12 witnesses and reviewed a series of emails, player contracts and other documents before concluding the IceDogs had verbally agreed to a deal with Wilkie.

The investigators also found that the IceDogs had agreed to a secret side deal with the father of former IceDogs defenceman Liam Ham to pay him \$2,000 a year.

"In the course of our investigation, we were shown documents and heard evidence from participants that leads us to further conclude that the IceDogs had, on more than one occasion, entered into side deals with players that formed part of the players' contract, which were not filed with the league," Winton and Thakker wrote in their report.

"We were shown a copy of a side deal between the club and Mike Ham, father of Liam Ham, that the Club admitted it entered into with Mike in June, 2016, and which provided for payment of \$2,000 cash to Mike per year. We were also told that the Club had entered into side deals with European players to pay them more than the maximum they were entitled to receive under their Standard Player Agreement, and find that evidence to be credible."

The investigation report also offers behind-the-scenes details of how Wilkie's parents lobbied the IceDogs to offer their son a side deal.

At one point, according to the report, Zach's father, Jeff Wilkie, suggested that a secret contract could be kept in a safety deposit box or held by an independent lawyer to prevent the OHL from becoming aware of it.

Bill Burke, who has co-owned the IceDogs since 2007, declined to comment on the OHL investigation. The OHL on March 21 announced the IceDogs had agreed to pay a \$125,000 fine for recruiting violations and that the team would lose one draft pick.

OHL president David Branch wrote in a May 5 email to TSN that the IceDogs sought a sealing order to "maintain the confidentiality of the players involved and the integrity of the investigative process... Any further steps considered will continue to be confidential.

"The Ontario Hockey League takes our commitment to our players and their player experience very seriously, which includes ensuring a fair and competitive on-ice experience among all teams. In order to maintain the integrity of this player experience and competitiveness within the league, it is critical that all clubs operate within the league recruitment guidelines. When a club ignores these guidelines, significant sanctions are required."

Wilkie was raised in Villa Park, Ill., and his father taught skating to young children in the Chicago area, including the children of NHL players who played for the Blackhawks. Wilkie moved to Toronto at the age of 15 to play his minor midget season in the Greater Toronto Hockey League with the Toronto Junior Canadiens.

IceDogs director of scouting John Neville coveted the young defenceman.

In an Oct. 23, 2012, scouting report, Neville wrote that Wilkie "threw the hardest hit I have seen in years - clean and knocked the kid out cold - plays with speed and force and can really shoot - hard passes - still plays a little [too] loose but easier to rein in and pump up."

Neville began a discussion with Jory Zola, Wilkie's agent, about whether he would sign with the IceDogs. U.S. universities such as Boston College, Michigan State and Minnesota were also interested in Wilkie.

Neville initially told Zola that the IceDogs could not offer Wilkie a "full ride" scholarship, which was typically available only to first-round draft picks and which guaranteed the OHL team would pay for four years of tuition and books once a player had played a single game in the league. Players selected in later rounds of the OHL entry draft were typically offered a year's tuition and books for each year they played in the league.

"At this point, Zola told Neville that if a full ride was not on the table, Zach would not report to the IceDogs, the investigation report says. "Zola recalls that Neville called him back prior to the [draft] and stated that he spoke to the 'ownership' and they reconsidered their decision. Zola recalls that Neville informed him that if Zach was 'on the board in Round 2, we will take him and we would be willing to pay him a full ride package.'"

The IceDogs drafted Wilkie in the second round of the 2013 OHL priority draft on Apr. 6, 2013.

Two or three weeks after the draft, then-IceDogs head coach and general manager Marty Williamson told Zola that team ownership wasn't willing to put the offer of a full-ride scholarship package in writing.

"Zola recalls that Williamson said the IceDogs would pay Zach the full ride, but that they would not file that part of the deal with the league, because the team had maxed out its 7 slotted full rides, therefore, the IceDogs could not put the full ride offer in writing," the investigation report says.

On June 8, 2013, Wilkie and his parents arrived at the Holiday Inn in St. Catharines, Ont. for the IceDogs' orientation day, an annual event in which the team's most recent draft picks travelled together by bus to the team's training facility before a barbecue lunch.



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The Wilkies met in a boardroom at the Holiday Inn with husband-and-wife co-owners Bill and Denise Burke and their son, Joey Burke, the IceDogs' assistant general manager.

"There are two accounts of the meeting that diverge significantly," the investigation report says.

Burke later said that during the five-minute meeting he only promised that Wilkie's education package would be "inflation protected," meaning if tuition costs increased between 2013 and the time Wilkie went to university after his junior career finished, the team would pay the full tuition amount.

"We do not find Bill's evidence on this point to be credible," the report says.

Williamson told the investigators that Jeff Wilkie insisted on having the side deal in writing.

According to the report, Williamson "even provided the Burkes with 4-5 solutions to Bill's concern about recording the side deal in writing, including putting the signed contract in a safety deposit box or having an independent lawyer hold it. Williamson recalls a number of assurances given by Bill stating that he was an honest man and that the Wilkies could trust the Burkes, but that the Burkes could not put this deal on paper. The meeting ended with everyone shaking hands."

After the meeting, the Wilkies decided to sign with the IceDogs, against the advice of their agent.

After returning home to Illinois, Wilkie's parents, Jeff and Linda, signed a contract with the IceDogs on June 13, 2013. Wilkie signed five days later.

Midway through his third season with Niagara, the IceDogs traded Wilkie to the Sudbury Wolves.

"Williamson stated that he warned Bill that the IceDogs would potentially be on the hook for Zach's side deal, but that Bill told him to call Zach's agent, and have 'everything washed,'" the report said. "Williamson, under Bill's direction, communicated to Zola that the side deal was dead."

In April, 2018, after finishing his career in the OHL, Wilkie contacted Burke to tell him he was planning to attend Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ont.

"Good evening Mr. Burke, just wanted to congratulate you and the organization on a great season," he wrote in an Apr. 20 email. "Also my junior career has come to an end and we had made an arrangement when I was coming into the league. I was just wondering how you would like to go about fulfilling that arrangement? Thank you again."

Burke replied three days later: "Hey Zack [sic], Thanks for your note and congratulations on a great junior career, wow hard to believe you're off to university already! Not to worry, I remember your Dad's concern about inflation and we agreed to cover it."

On April 27, Wilkie emailed again, insisting that the IceDogs owed him \$40,000.

"Zack, you have left me completely speechless and quite frankly for the longest time I sat here not even knowing how to respond to this," Burke replied the same day. "First and foremost I suggest you have a long talk with your Dad on exactly what was discussed. Your Dad's only concern was that he wouldn't be able to afford any escalation in tuition fees five years down the road, so ALL that was agreed to was our assurance that you would not be out of pocket for that. How or why you came up with this illegal payment amount of \$40,000 is nothing short of baffling and I don't know what to say to you other than I'm utterly shocked and disappointed. I assure you, you will be paid everything owed to you as per your contract, nothing more and nothing less."

Wilkie emailed Branch on May 12 about the matter, triggering the investigation.

Branch forwarded Wilkie's email to Burke and the IceDogs owner denied the claims.

"I pointed out to him that we have never had a side deal in our 11 yrs as we simply don't do them," Burke wrote in a June 11, 2018, email to Branch. "On the one hand, I'm happy to defend myself in the media, with the lawyers and any third party investigation. But on the other hand I do not want to win the battle and lose the war knowing the climate we are dealing with."

The OHL is embroiled in a class-action lawsuit filed by a group of current and former players demanding they be paid minimum wage.

In connection with that case, Denise Burke testified in a Nov. 14, 2015, affidavit that while her OHL team brought in an average of \$2.7 million, it still lost money.

Seven months before the IceDogs purportedly signed a secret deal with the Ham family, Denise Burke said that it would be "catastrophic" if the IceDogs had to pay players.

"We knew that we wouldn't become rich owning a team, but seeing as this is our only business, we have always hoped that we would at least be able to break even and at least make more money than we spend, otherwise sooner or later the 'Bank of Burke' will run dry," she testified.

On June 19, 2018, and again the following week, Winton and Thakker interviewed Williamson.

The former IceDogs coach, who was fired by the team in 2015 and left on bad terms, according to correspondence between investigators and the team, said he had documented evidence concerning an alleged side deal between the club and Mike Ham, the father of Liam Ham, who was drafted by Niagara in 2015 and who now plays for the Mississauga Steelheads.

Williamson showed the lawyers, but did not let them copy a document he'd received from an anonymous source at the IceDogs that was dated June 5, 2016.

The document appeared to be signed by Mike Ham and Joey Burke and was included with Ham's standard player agreement. It said that the IceDogs agree to pay Ham \$2,000 for each year for the subsequent four years. Payment was to be made on the anniversary date of his contract signing.

Williamson said he had kept the document in case the Burkes alleged that any side deals negotiated during his tenure as the club's general manager were done without their knowledge.

Joey Burke told the investigators that the Ham deal was done on a "compassionate basis" because Mike Ham was dealing with an illness.

"Based on the witnesses' accounts and documents that we were shown, and in particular on Joey's admission that a side deal had been entered into, we find that the IceDogs negotiated a side deal with Liam Ham in order to get him to play for the club, and not for a 'compassionate' reason," the investigators wrote.

Williamson also told the lawyers that there were other side deals, in particular with European players, deals whose existence the Burkes denied.

"We find Williamson's evidence on this point to be credible," the investigators wrote. "The admission was made reluctantly and it was evident that Williamson was uncomfortable about acknowledging that he was a participant in violations of the League's rules. We find it more likely than not that the club had entered into other side deals with European players."

On Feb. 15, 2019, Branch informed the IceDogs that they would be fined \$250,000 and stripped of two draft picks.

On March 14, OHL lawyer Robert Bayne wrote an email to IceDogs' attorney David Thompson suggesting that the OHL would be willing to lower the fine amount to \$150,000.

"If there is any violation of confidentiality as a result of this process, your client can be subject to penalties under the constitution and perhaps



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even civil action by other teams for damages related to his confidentiality violations," Bayne wrote.

Thompson responded the same day, writing in an email to Bayne that the Burkes would be willing to agree to a fine of \$125,000.

TSN.CA LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144150 Websites

TSN.CA / Maple Leafs sign Mikheyev to one-year deal

Kristen Shilton

The Toronto Maple Leafs announced on Monday that they've signed KHL winger Ilya Mikheyev to a one-year, entry-level contract.

TSN Hockey Insider Pierre LeBrun reported Mikheyev's contract is for \$832K plus \$92.5K.

signed max ELC deal \$832k plus \$92,500. Long list of NHL teams were after him. <https://t.co/hqVA1A1ez9>

— Pierre LeBrun (@PierreVLeBrun) May 6, 2019

Mikheyev's services had been in high demand around the NHL, despite the fact he was never drafted. TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger reported last week that a majority of the NHL's 31 teams had shown interest in Mikheyev, and the forward then confirmed to Russia's OM1 this week that the Leafs and Vegas Golden Knights were pursuing him closely.

A speedy, versatile right winger (who shoots left), Mikheyev, 24, had 45 points (23 goals, 22 assists) in 62 games this season with Omsk Avangard, adding 11 points (four goals, seven assists) in 13 playoff contests. He's spent the past four seasons with Avangard, totalling 120 points (64 goals, 58 assists) in 224 games.

Throughout his KHL tenure, Mikheyev has put up almost an equal number of goals and assists, indicative of his playmaking ability and shooter's mentality. Mikheyev also has experience killing penalties.

If Mikheyev does come to North America next season and make Toronto's roster, the 6-foot-2, 194-pound winger would be among the Leafs' biggest forwards at that position.

According to Dreger, the Leafs have been working on signing Mikheyev for some time, which would explain why the deal has come together less than a week after general manager Kyle Dubas said at the team's locker clean out day that the Leafs wouldn't be signing anyone until pending restricted free agent Mitch Marner's contract was finished.

"Without an answer on Mitch, we're going to be in a stalemate," Dubas said last Thursday. "It is a top priority because we're not going to jump around and chew up our cap space we are going to need for Mitch by or with fringe signings either."

The Leafs currently have six wingers under contract for next season who played for the club this year (William Nylander, Patrick Marleau, Connor Brown, Zach Hyman, Trevor Moore and Nic Petan), with Marner, Kasperi Kapanen and Andreas Johnsson are all pending RFAs waiting on new deals. Tyler Ennis will be an unrestricted free agent on July 1.

TSN.CA LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144151 Websites

USA TODAY / Opinion: Bruins are standing firm during the year of the NHL playoff upset

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 10:42 p.m. ET May 6, 2019 | Updated 11:43 p.m. ET May 6, 2019

In the year of the upset in the NHL playoffs, the Boston Bruins have stood firm against the trend.

The defending champion Washington Capitals are gone. The Tampa Bay Lightning, who had a record-tying 62 wins, were swept in the first round. The New York Islanders, the league's top goals-against team, were swept in the second round.

But the Bruins, who finished third overall this season, have continued to take care of business in the postseason. Everyone was talking about the Columbus Blue Jackets after they swept the Lightning. But the Bruins used a memorable 39-save shutout from Tuukka Rask to defeat them 3-0 in Game 6 to earn the right to play the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference final.

Bruins goaltender Tuukka Rask had a big Game 6 in a 3-0, series-clinching victory.

While other top teams were falling, the Bruins simply got the job done. After having an earlier goal waved off for goalie interference, they needed a big goal in the second period, and got it from David Krejci.

That's no different from their approach all season.

Everyone was talking about Lightning's offense or the Islanders' about-face under coach Barry Trotz. Even in these playoffs, the story in the East has been the Blue Jackets and Hurricanes.

The Blue Jackets have been playing with molten intensity. They outthit the Bruins 43-19 in Game 6. Fiery Columbus coach John Tortorella always draws plenty of attention.

The Hurricanes are garnering notice as the team nicknamed a "Bunch of Jerks." They are the lovable underdogs.

Meanwhile, the Bruins, without much fanfare, keep doing what needs to be done in order to get to the Stanley Cup Final.

Consistency is the key for the Bruins. Showing the will in every game, concentrating on the details. Making the right plays at the right times.

They beat the Blue Jackets because Rask was just a bit better than Sergei Bobrovsky, who played well enough to win. The scoring was opportunistic, also a hallmark of a championship-caliber team. The defense kept the front of the net clear. When the Bruins weren't at their best in one game, they were always better the next game. Rask has been at his best. His positioning has been superb.

The Bruins had their share of breaks, like in Game 6 when Charlie McAvoy only received a minor penalty for a blatant blow to Josh Anderson's chin.

McAvoy only gets two minutes for this. Wow. [pic.twitter.com/5c1XtSetR4](http://pic.twitter.com/5c1XtSetR4)

— Pete Blackburn (@PeteBlackburn) May 7, 2019

Replays showed the head was the target. It could have been, or should have been, a match penalty. Would the game have ended differently if the Bruins had to kill off five minutes?

We will never know. But what we do know is that the Bruins figured out ways to win four times against a team that was playing with a high degree energy and drive.

In the year of the upset, the Bruins are dedicated to not let it happen to them. Instead of wilting in the face of the pressure of a 1-0



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game entering the third period, the Bruins managed to get goals by Marcus Johansson and David Backes to take command.

Because so many top teams were toppled, the path to the Stanley Cup is less cluttered than usual. But that doesn't matter at all unless you can take advantage of that.

The Bruins seem determined to do that.

USA TODAY LOADED: 05.07.2019

1144152 Websites

USA TODAY / Controversial call: Bruins' Charlie McAvoy gets only two minutes for clear hit to head

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 9:27 p.m. ET May 6, 2019 | Updated 11:48 p.m. ET May 6, 2019

Boston Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy delivered a blow to the head of Columbus Blue Jackets forward Josh Anderson that could earn him a hearing with the NHL's Department of Player Safety.

But McAvoy received only a minor penalty on the play, prompting NBCSN analyst Brian Boucher to say he was surprised that McAvoy wasn't kicked out of the game.

"I'm shocked by this call," Boucher said. "I think this is a clear targeting of the head."

Anderson crumpled to the ice after the hit in the closing 20 seconds of the second period when his team was trailing 1-0. He headed to the dressing room, though he returned for the third period.

McAvoy hits Anderson high, he's given two minutes for an illegal check to the head #CBJ#NHLBruinspic.twitter.com/M9xcJEMH4D

— Shayna (@hayyyshayyy) May 7, 2019

OPINION: Bruins are standing firm during the year of the playoff upset

SHARKS: Joe Pavelski says hit on him wasn't worth five minutes

HARSH WORDS: Don Cherry doubles down on 'jerks' criticism of Hurricanes

McAvoy connected directly with Anderson's chin as the Blue Jackets forward was trying to get away from Boston's Zdeno Chara.

"It stinks," Columbus captain Nick Foligno told reporters. "I just hate to see a teammate lying on the ground on a hit that's unnecessary."

Referees have the option of giving two minutes or a match penalty for an illegal hit to the head. If a match penalty, the Bruins would have had to kill off five minutes.

Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy is called for an illegal check to the head against Blue Jackets right wing Josh Anderson.

"I was a huge moment, but I'm not going to discuss what was told to me (by the referees)," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella told reporters after the game.

McAvoy and Anderson had a warm exchange in the handshake line after the game.

Anderson/McAvoy pic.twitter.com/4d5MRBy4mB

— Bucci Mane (@Buccigross) May 7, 2019

If the NHL decides to take action against McAvoy, any punishment would occur in the Eastern Conference final because the Bruins won 3-0 in Game 6 to advance to a meeting with the Carolina Hurricanes.

Although McAvoy is a young player, he is key to Boston's success. He had six points in the first 12 games and was averaging nearly 25 minutes a game in the postseason. He also had a big blocked shot in the closing seconds of the Bruins' Game 5 win.

USA TODAY LOADED: 05.07.2019