



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018



NHL coaching changes tracker: Islanders part ways with Doug Weight, Lou Lamoriello to lead search

All the hirings, firings and retirements of the hockey world in one place

by [Cody Benjamin](#) & [Kevin Skiver](#)

17h ago • 5 min read

With the [Stanley Cup Final well underway](#), all but two teams are looking ahead to the future. For some teams, front office shakeups are on the horizon, while for others the focus remains on the bench.

As those outside the playoff picture and on the verge of either a retooled approach or full-on rebuild look ahead to 2018-19, we've got you covered with all the big coaching changes around hockey. Here, you'll find updates on every major hiring, firing and retirement among [NHL](#) head coaches:

Islander part ways with [Doug Weight](#)

The writing was on the wall for Doug Weight once Lou Lamoriello came into town as president of hockey operations for the [Islanders](#). Weight, who coached only one season for the Islanders after being promoted from interim head coach (he went 24-12-4 in that stint), went 41-29-12 with the Islanders. However, in the competitive Metropolitan division, you need to do better. Islander fans are waiting with bated breath to see what [John Tavares](#) will do in free agency, and if he's to stay, real change is necessary. The Islanders also let go of 12-year GM Garth Snow -- which is perhaps even bigger news for Islander fans. Lamoriello will assume GM duties moving forward.

[Carolina Hurricanes](#) hire Rod Brind'Amour

The Carolina Hurricanes have found their replacement for [Bill Peters](#), who resigned to fill the vacancy in Calgary, and it's a familiar face. Hurricanes' great Rod Brind'Amour, a former center who led the Hurricanes to their first and only Stanley Cup in 2006, will be on the bench for the Hurricanes next season.

Brind'Amour has been the Hurricanes' assistant and development coach since the 2011 season, just a year after he retired in 2010. His specialty, naturally, is in forward development, and with young players like [Sebastian Aho](#) and [Teuvo Teravainen](#) having breakout seasons in their early 20s, it appears to be paying off. Brind'Amour is a name that the Hurricanes can rally behind, now it's just time to hope that it goes better than the Patrick Roy experiment in Colorado. In addition to Brind'Amour, the Canes also named Don Waddell president and GM.

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Dallas Stars hire Jim Montgomery

As first suggested by SB Nation College Hockey's Chris Dilks and [reported by TSN's Elliotte Friedman](#) among others, the Stars have officially announced they're doing a 180 after the retirement of Ken Hitchcock, going from seasoned leader to up-and-coming first-timer.

Montgomery isn't just any old NHL newbie, though. The 48-year-old former center (1995-2003) has spent more than a decade making a name for himself in the college ranks, starting as an assistant with Notre Dame and later, in 2013, becoming head coach for the University of Denver Pioneers, who won the national title in 2017 and went 125-57-26 under his watch. He's a relatively out-of-the-box replacement for Hitchcock, albeit one whose reputation as an aggressive players' coach should up Dallas' intensity.

Bill Peters hired by [Calgary Flames](#)

The previous two coaching moves could really only end like this. In what will likely be the least surprising move of the offseason, Bill Peters has been hired by the Calgary Flames after opting out of his contract with the Carolina Hurricanes. Although Peters went just 137-138-53 with the Hurricanes in four seasons -- never making the playoffs -- he'll have more talent on a Flames' roster just one year removed from the postseason. [Peters said in his introductory press conference](#) that the Flames have a "lot of good talent and a lot of good pieces." Peters, [who hails from Alberta, added that](#) "there's a different feel, a different buzz" to coaching in a Canadian market. The first (and most obvious) domino has fallen in this coaching offseason, and now the Stars and [Rangers](#) are on the clock.

Carolina Hurricanes' Bill Peters resigns

Days after the Flames axed [Glen Gulutzan](#), the 53-year-old Peters has exercised the opt-out clause in his contract with Carolina, [as NBC Sports reported](#) and the NHL has since confirmed. No one may have seemed more like a goner than Peters as the Hurricanes wound down their 2017-18 campaign, which saw the team finish 36-35-11 and out of the playoffs for the ninth straight year. By initiating his own departure, the former [Detroit Red Wings](#) assistant has thrust himself into the rumor mill regarding Calgary's opening thanks to his connection to Flames management, his Alberta upbringing and his four years of experience.

Calgary Flames fire Glen Gulutzan

Just about nothing went -- or at least stayed -- right for the Flames in 2017-18, when an oft-injured and offensively inept group went 37-35-10 just a year after carrying momentum



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into the playoffs, where they were immediately swept by the [Anaheim Ducks](#). Hired as head coach after a stint with the [Dallas Stars](#) in the same capacity from 2011-2013, Gulutzan reversed Calgary's fortunes in his first year on the job, getting the Flames back to the playoffs. But [someone had to pay](#) after their stinker of a follow-up this year.

Dallas Stars' Ken Hitchcock retires

Instead of letting the Stars make a tough choice after a 2017-18 campaign marred by a late-season slump, the 66-year-old Hitchcock [retired from behind the bench on April 13](#), ending a 22-year run as an NHL head coach. His move to a front-office consulting role came just a year after he returned to Dallas for a second stint with the Stars, whom he led to the team's first-ever Stanley Cup win in 1998-99. Hitchcock is third in league history with 823 career victories and the Stars'

winningest head coach, but his touch couldn't save an under-performing crop of big-name acquisitions after earning five postseason berths with the St. Louis [Blues](#).

New York Rangers fire Alain Vigneault

The Rangers didn't waste any time making a change atop their staff after the last game of their regular season. [Vigneault's April 8 dismissal](#) may have been a surprise to the coach himself, especially since his five years running the show included a Stanley Cup Final appearance and Presidents' Trophy. But it was an anticipated shift for a team that went public with its intentions to rebuild after a disappointing 2017-18, which saw the Rangers miss the playoffs for the first time in eight years.



Flyers, Stars to receive Dick Dillman Award

Philadelphia, Dallas each recognized by PHWA for having top public relations staff in each conference

by The PHWA / NHL.com

June 5th, 2018

The Philadelphia Flyers and Dallas Stars are the 2018 recipients of the Dick Dillman Award, presented annually by the Professional Hockey Writers Association (PHWA) to honor the work of outstanding NHL public relations staffs in each conference.

The Flyers and Stars PR department each won the Dillman Award in 2015, and this marks the third time in six years Philadelphia has been recognized, led by senior director of communications Zack Hill and assisted by director of public relations Joe Siville and manager of broadcasting and media services Brian Smith.

Dallas' PR department is led by vice president of communications Tom Holy, assisted by manager of media relations Ben Fromstein and manager of corporate communications Joe Calvillo.

The Eastern Conference runner-up was the Carolina Hurricanes, led by Mike Sundheim, the Hurricanes long-time vice president of communications and team services.

The Anaheim Ducks were named as the runners-up in the West, led by Alex Gilchrist, the Ducks long-time director of media and communications, assisted by media and communications manager Steve Hoem and publicist Keren Lynch.

The Dillman Award is presented annually to honor of the work of the late Dick Dillman, who headed the Minnesota North Stars public relations department.

The committee is chaired by Eric Duhatschek of The Athletic and includes a blue-ribbon panel of senior members of the PHWA.

"The goal of any successful public relations staff is to assist, not obstruct," Duhatschek said. "What we discussed internally was how all four staffs honored here - with a win or a runner-up finish - did just that. You always had the sense they were prepared to go the extra mile. In a changing media landscape, the help they provided was appreciated, across the board, by members of our association."

The Dillman awards will be presented to the winners at the 2018 NHL Draft in Dallas on June 22-23.



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

1098360 NHL

Station expansions can double Seattle monorail capacity, new report says

4-5 minutes

Monorail executives say the projects could boost the capacity to 6,000 riders per hour each direction, because faster loading would help trains to depart every three minutes.

The historic Seattle Center Monorail could double its passenger flow by adding fare scanners, ticket machines, walkways, stairs and wider boarding platforms, a new city report says.

Cost estimates released Tuesday say "phase one" can be built for \$3.8 million at Westlake Station and \$3.1 million at Seattle Center, just in time for the Oak View Group to open a rebuilt arena at Seattle Center for NHL hockey in fall 2020.

Although the Seattle Center station has ample room, both stations need rewiring so that ORCA fare cards or monorail tickets would open fare gates, similar to how they're used at Washington State Ferries, said Megan Ching, general manager for Seattle Monorail Services, private operator of the city-owned system.

Traffic Lab

is a Seattle Times project that digs into the region's thorny transportation issues, spotlights promising approaches to easing gridlock, and helps readers find the best ways to get around. It is funded with the help of community sponsors Alaska Airlines, CenturyLink, Kemper Development Co., PEMCO Mutual Insurance Company, Sabey Corp., Seattle Children's hospital and Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. Seattle Times editors and reporters operate independently of our funders and maintain editorial control over Traffic Lab content.

The company must prevent fare evasion to meet its requirement to break even or profit, she said.

As The Seattle Times previously reported, the Westlake Center station is too cramped, so the plan entails removing a retail kiosk and a ticket kiosk from the passenger lobby over Fifth Avenue, so people can move quickly to or from all eight train doors.

At Westlake, a \$9.2 million second phase, maybe in 2024, would add a walkway, stairs and elevators that wrap around the southeast corner of the mall, leading directly to the Sound Transit subway, where travelers

could hop a train between Westlake Station and Federal Way, Redmond or Lynnwood.

Monorail executives say the projects could boost the capacity to 6,000 riders per hour each direction, because faster loading would help trains depart every 2.5 minutes. This assumes ideal, uninterrupted operations. Besides using ORCA fare cards, riders could scan event tickets whose bar codes include prepaid fare.

One obstacle is funding. None is identified yet. And the arena's environmental studies presume current stations will suffice, with fewer than 700 postgame fans departing via the monorail in the near-term.

The city's announcement Tuesday speculated that garages near Westlake Station would collect \$5 million per year more revenue from people who park-and-ride by monorail, helping reduce event traffic near the arena by 1,250 vehicle trips.

The 43-page analysis, by VIA Architecture, also mentions that a Belltown station could be built for \$40 million, not including land and engineering, midway along the one-mile route.

The monorail was built in 1962, and endured multiple crises last decade — a fire that required passengers to be rescued by ladder, a crash where trains wedged together, a \$4.5 million expense for major train renovations, and an unbuilt 14-mile monorail proposal that would have demolished and replaced the old trackways.

Seattle Times LOADED: 06.06.2018

1098415 Websites

The Athletic / A lanky kid from Raleigh, NHL draft prospect Tyler Weiss is 'a guy you're rooting for'

By Sunaya Sapurji Jun 5, 2018 14

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Tyler Weiss takes a bite of his grilled chicken sandwich — no tomato. He is sitting in a booth eating lunch in a sports-themed restaurant steps from the KeyBank Center. All around him there are TVs playing highlights of the Stanley Cup final between Las Vegas and Washington.

The 18-year-old native of Raleigh, N.C., is in town for the NHL Scouting Combine where he is among the top prospects for the June entry draft. For the forward with the U.S. National Team Development Program, it is the latest stop on a hockey journey that might not have been. Lately, with



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the excitement and pressure of the draft looming, the what ifs have been making their way into his thoughts.

Hockey is a tough sport: not only do you need the skill to play, but the funds to pay — and the better you get the more it costs. This was true for the Weiss family, like it is for so many others who often make sacrifices to keep their kids in the sport.

It was when Tyler was 13 and his brother Ryan, 15, that the costs became too much for their mom Kelly and dad, Shawn, to bear — especially with brother Patrick, still a toddler at the time, to care for.

"I was working just to pay for some of the hockey and when I had my third child I just couldn't do it, it was too much," said Kelly Weiss. "We just got to the point where it was too expensive."

Kelly, a medical assistant for a hand surgeon, and Shawn, a project director at LabCorp, had to break the news to their kids that the family finances could no longer afford to pay for hockey and all the travel that went along with it.

"I came home one night and Mom said, 'We can't play hockey anymore, you can't go to practice tomorrow,'" said Weiss. "My brother and I were pretty upset."

Weiss cried.

For weeks both boys were miserable, until one day Ryan came to his mom with an idea.

"Ryan knew how stressful it was and he said, 'Mom, if I gave up hockey would that help Tyler to keep playing? Because he's really good,'" said Kelly. "You know I didn't want him to give up because it wasn't fair to him, but he said, 'That's what I want to do.'"

"It was heartbreaking. It was really heartbreaking."

So, Ryan quit hockey in order for Tyler to continue.

"My brother did something amazing for me," said Weiss. "This is why I'm here. I don't know if I can ever repay him. He did something so special for me. He sacrificed something that was big in his life and I can't describe in words how much I love him."

Ryan instead played lacrosse in high school and used his skills to become a hockey referee, using the money he made to help out at home. In hindsight, Ryan said there was no doubt about making the sacrifice to help his little brother.

"It was a difficult decision but I saw how much my brother loved hockey," said Ryan Weiss. "Everything was about hockey — he always had a stick in his hand and was always watching hockey. I mean I loved hockey, but not as much as he did."

But even with one child in hockey, it was still a tough go. As a youngster, he stood out playing in Raleigh, but it's hard to know how you compare when you're a big fish in a small pond. Weiss eventually started playing in Virginia, which meant he and his dad were making 10-hour round trips on a regular basis before he joined a team in Richmond, Va., that was closer.

"We'd leave at seven in the morning and get back at 12 at night, just for a practice," said Weiss. "In Richmond, they made it easier for all the families by having practice-based weekends and then tournaments on the weekend too — that was only three hours away."

Staying at team hotels for tournaments was often expensive, so Weiss and his dad would stay nearby at cheaper motels. Saving money on equipment was also important and Kelly said she never once heard Tyler complain or feel hard done by not having the same expensive gear as his teammates.

"I'd get stuff that came out three years ago — not the top of the line," said Weiss. "Skates, sticks, gloves all that stuff, I'd just make the best of it. We weren't really used to fancy things."

When he was 14, Weiss left home for Canada where he joined the Greater Toronto Hockey League's Don Mills Flyers. The move was made so that he could have better competition and develop his burgeoning talent. He lived with a billet family in Scarborough, Ont., in his first year before moving to live with another family in Thornhill, Ont., in order to be closer to school. It was in the suburbs that he found his teenage Mecca.

"I miss Yorkdale Mall," he said. "I mean I never bought anything because it was so expensive. All I did was eat at the food court and walk around and look."

Moving away from home was hard on both Tyler and his family back in Raleigh, especially in that first year. Weiss would call every night to combat the homesickness. Now, four years later, Weiss billets in Plymouth, Mich., which has been home for two seasons with the NTDP. The phone calls home are slightly less frequent, though Weiss still talks to Ryan — a student at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington — almost nightly while they play Fortnite.

Ryan, 20, will be at the draft in Dallas later this month along with the rest of the family to cheer for Tyler when his name is called. They're turning the trip into a mini-vacation — an opportunity to enjoy their collective success in helping him take the next step on a road often fraught with obstacles.

"It's been a long journey," said Weiss. "My biggest goal is making my family proud. Making all those miles we travelled and all those sacrifices they made for me worth it. I know that if I make it one day, I can hopefully repay them — I don't even know if I could because of all they've done for me. That's my biggest goal — to make it for them and make it for myself because that's been my dream. I want to make them proud."

Our server at the restaurant is an unconscionably perky woman named Brittnie. It's fitting we talk over lunch, because Weiss' weight is an issue for scouts.

On Saturday, he was officially measured at 5-foot-10.5 and a fraction over 150-pounds.

It didn't help matters that he lost six pounds during the world under-18 tournament in Russia in April. He got tired of eating the same meal of chicken and pasta every day for weeks on end and came down with a sinus infection before Team USA's 3-2 loss in the gold medal game to Finland.

Of the 22 NHL teams that interviewed him over the week of the combine, all asked questions about how he's trying to bulk up and get stronger.

"I'm working out five times a week in Raleigh with (Carolina Hurricanes strength and conditioning coach) Bill Burniston," said Weiss, who is scheduled to attend the University of Nebraska Omaha in the fall. "I'm challenging myself to eat five meals a day. Even if I'm not hungry, I have to try to eat. That's what I need to do. That's the good thing about going to college, too, is that it gives you more time to develop and build muscle and strength."

At home, Weiss starts the day by making breakfast which consists of six eggs, scrambled. He eats relatively clean, though our conversation turns to his love of Bojangles', Steak 'n Shake, and the down-home cooking at Waffle House.

You know for a skinny kid you really like your food.

"I have a high metabolism," said Weiss with a laugh. "I have to keep putting the weight back on."

Scouts are all over the board on Weiss. The Athletic's Corey Pronman has him ranked No. 66 on his draft board, while NHL Central Scouting has him ranked 90th among North American skaters. With the NTDP the left-winger was used on the team's second-unit power play, but often took a back seat to some of the bigger draft-eligible names on the team. In 58 games with Team USA he scored 12 goals and added 19 assists for 31 points this season.



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"He's a boom or bust type," said one NHL scout with multiple viewings. "He has excellent skill and skating ability. He lacks strength presently but I don't expect that to be an issue in the long run. I thought he was underutilized by Team USA. He'll be a top-two line player in pro if he makes it.

"His stats were nothing special but he wasn't given much of an opportunity either. Also a very light, slight build. It could be a concern that he won't get much bigger. I think there are teams who like him better than (NHL) Central Scouting does."

His coach with the U.S. under-18 team, Seth Appert, believes Weiss is a player just waiting for his body to catch up to his skillset. In the weight room with NTDP, Weiss is an incredibly hard worker and his slender frame can be deceiving when it comes to his strength.

"Contrary to what he looks like when he gets into the weight room, he gets after it — hard," said Appert. "He has a great work ethic in the weight room. At this point physically his body hasn't accepted his weight as much as some other guys, but if he continues that work ethic it'll catch in time, for sure."

And when that happens, all bets are off on his potential as a player.

"He has top-six NHL forward skill, ability and creativity," said Appert. "He has potential first-round talent. Now does that always come through because of inconsistency? Or because he's not strong enough yet? Or all those things — because that's all a part of where he's at, but this is just a snapshot in time. ... He does have things that you can't teach. He has top-six NHL forward ability and that's not going away that's only going to be enhanced."

Danton Cole remembers the first time he saw Weiss. As the then-head coach of the NTDP's under-17 squad, the former NHLer was charged with helping Weiss make the transition from minor hockey.

"I really liked his game," said Cole who is now the head coach at Michigan State. "Some guys just have that pop in their step and sometimes it's a little on the God-given side. He just really floated on the ice, his hands were good and he played with a lot of excitement. There's a lot of robotic players now and I think Tyler really had that excitement in his game — he can make plays and make them at a very high speed. He's got a lot of promise."

Cole said he remembers Weiss as being a good student of the game, always spending extra time in the video room with coaches and never getting discouraged if things didn't work or if he couldn't master something right away.

"He kept going and he did it with a smile on his face," said Cole.

"He's very endearing," said Appert, of Weiss. "He's got a real warm heart. He's a kid that you root for and one that you enjoy being with every day. You know this year he went through some ups and downs and some inconsistencies and there were times when I had to be real demanding of him, but at the end of the day he's a guy you're rooting for."

Cole said he noticed great strides over the season they worked together both on and off the ice. He, too, thinks Weiss has the requisite tools for the pro level once he matures physically.

"He's probably never going to be a 200-pound guy," said Cole. "He's a bit of a wiry guy, but I think there's enough there that if he can get to 175 or 180 with the other things he brings and his smarts, I think he has a chance."

If his journey is indicative of anything, a chance is all Weiss needs to make good for himself, his family and hometown of Raleigh. In the summer he's a fixture at the local rinks, skating any time there's free ice available. Weiss said it's not uncommon for local kids to come and talk to him about hockey and even ask him for advice. He's more than happy to share his story and encourage them to think big.

"I'm a kid that's from Raleigh; born in Raleigh whose parents are working hard," said Weiss. "I don't want a kid to think 'I'm not going to make it

because my dad didn't play in the NHL.' I want kids to know that they can make it no matter what.

"I want to show kids that you can reach your dreams. I've been through so much adversity and I'm still making it. I'm still on the right path, making it happen — somehow. It's possible. I want to tell kids that it doesn't matter where you're from or how much money you have — if you can play the game, you can play the game."

The Athletic LOADED: 06.06.2018

1098416 Websites

The Athletic / Bourne: How the Capitals fancy footwork put them one step away from the Stanley Cup

By Justin Bourne Jun 5, 2018 19

It's almost a little too fitting that with less than 10 days to go until the start of the World Cup, a team would somehow win a Stanley Cup final game using dazzling footwork. It'd now be really convenient for me if I could wedge in some soccer pun along the lines of "Washington kicked Vegas around the rink on Monday" here, but that simply wouldn't be the truth. By almost every conceivable metric the Golden Knights took it to the Capitals (including "using your eyes"), who got awfully lucky and were extremely opportunistic.

The one thread for me that I got a little fixated on while watching Game 4 is just how exceptional the Caps were at using their skates to handle pucks. This is an element of the offensive game that's really evolved over the years.

An analogy I heard while filming a Toronto Marlies skills practice was about a recently retired football player, Calvin Johnson, AKA Megatron. A quarterback trying to throw the ball to him doesn't have to hit him in the numbers. If you think about the range from where an athlete like him can actually haul in passes (between wingspan, in-air adjustments, etc.), it has to be more like a target the size of small barn. You couldn't miss him, which allowed his quarterback throw the ball through whatever lane happened to be open, including to his back shoulder.

I thought of that again Monday night watching Evgeny Kuznetsov pick up a "back shoulder pass" of sorts, and he made the type of play that was so smooth — while staying in stride — some fans probably didn't notice it happen. The range of where you can give an NHLer a pass these days is unbelievably big. Watch Kuzy keep his speed up the right side of the ice, take the fairly hard pass off his back foot, and bring it up to his stick without even flinching.

This is impossibly smooth:

Alex Ovechkin didn't really have a passing lane to his stick, so he gets it over to him the next best way. Kuznetsov is a superstar, and that play is the embodiment of the cliché "you can't give a good player a bad pass." (Imagine how your buddy handles that one in beer league? Most of us would toe pick and slide over the blue-line outside.)

Using your skates to control passes is something a specific player type — generally bigger guys who play at the front of the net more — might spend time on after practice. I've seen coaches who'll take a bucket of pucks behind the net, or up to the point, and throw wobblers at a player's feet for them to get under control to put under the bar as fast as they can. It's an art.



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There were two unbelievable examples of that happening in Game 4, where pucks were coming hard and the Capitals players were able to control them.

The TJ Oshie goal presented us a first touch that would've made Lionel Messi proud.

Watch as he isn't just trying to stop the puck with his skate, he's actively trying to put it to his blade to make a quick shot.

Again, back foot, through his own legs, and it's not about making the best possible shot at that point, you've just gotta get it off quick and get some elevation on it.

Speaking of elevation, my word. The other example from Devante Smith-Pelley is Italian-chef-kissing-his-fingers good.

He really has to stretch to get his blade on this, but he still manages to move it to the absolute perfect spot for him to shoot it on first touch and tuck it right under the bar. I swear if he tried to do this 100 more times he couldn't execute it so flawlessly.

It's not an easy league to score, so we're seeing offensive tools like this evolve to the point where guys are even presenting their skates the way most people present their stick blades for a pass.

Sidney Crosby has been doing this for years, sealing off the backdoor post with his angled blades, so if a pass too hard or unruly comes his way, at least he can stop it in an area he can still score. As we've seen a few times from John Carlson this year, he's employing the same trick.

Check him out presenting his skates at the left post here, turning them sideways to create the biggest area with which to stop a potential pass/shot.

It was entertaining to see one very specific offensive tool come up so regularly, not to mention that the skill clearly had a massive effect on the outcome. To steal the old tagline from the PGA Tour "these guys are good."

So, here we are. The Capitals used their feet to come within a single step of becoming Stanley Cup champions. The start of Game 5 is going to be crucial. If Vegas can find a little more luck early on and gets out ahead, I could see the Caps starting to press and get frustrated.

I know "this year is different" for Washington, but it still feels like there's a chance for some old ghosts to haunt the Capitals, or at least crank up the stress level if they start poorly. Obviously, if they lose and head back to Washington, that's going to be an awful lot of pressure to get it done there in Game 6. You don't want to play Game 7 for the Stanley Cup in Vegas' building.

For the first time in his career, Ovechkin will be in the same building as the Cup with his chance to win it. And were he to pull that off, oh buddy, we would be gifted with Ovechkin partying in Vegas stories, which might be just about as fun to follow as this Cup final. I know I'd get a kick out of it, anyway.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.06.2018

1098417 Websites

The Athletic / NHL Trade Big Board: 20 players who could be on the move this summer

By Craig Custance Jun 5, 2018 102

One GM described the trade action this way: Immediately after the season, there was a ton of talk. Disappointment from a regular season that didn't end in success motivated action.

Then it all went away. General managers went to the World Championships. They had organizational meetings. Some even went golfing.

Now, it's picking back up and will only heat up as the draft gets closer.

"There's certainly a lot of talk out there," said one GM. "There are some high expectations."

With those expectations come pressure to improve. Factor in a rising cap and general managers have flexibility they might not have had in the recent years. In theory, it should make things interesting.

"Activity, as far as communication and bouncing ideas off others, is (higher)," said an assistant GM. "Whether it manifests itself any more in getting deals done, I don't know."

There's a lot at play here. Vegas' success might make owners less patient. Parity is at an all-time high. The availability of big names from the free agent Class of 2019 is another dynamic. And then there's the Hurricanes. Everyone is talking about Carolina.

Who is on the move?

Let's start here:

1. Erik Karlsson, Ottawa Senators – Ottawa nearly dealt Karlsson at the trade deadline, with the Vegas Golden Knights pivoting to a Tomas Tatar deal in the final minutes after falling short of a major blockbuster that was expected to land them Karlsson. There will be no less interest in him during the offseason. There are two schools of thought here: Karlsson had more value at the trade deadline because teams could get a playoff run out of him or he maintains that value now because there will be more teams in the mix. All it takes is one team making a massive offer to get this thing done.

The wild card could be if Karlsson believes that there will be a new ownership group in the picture, especially if it involves Daniel Alfredsson. But at his recent state of the union, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman shot down a possible Senators sale.

"I can tell you for sure that the franchise is not for sale," Bettman said. "Eugene Melnyk is committed to the Senators and is passionate about them."

Even with Bettman's denial, there are those around the league who question whether or not Melnyk can afford to keep it going. It paints a bleak picture for Karlsson's relationship with the Senators.

"I'd be shocked if he re-signs with them," said one NHL source. "What's the hope? I would think he gets traded at the draft. His value isn't going up."

2. Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Arizona Coyotes – There is still hope and even a little optimism in the Coyotes front office that Ekman-Larsson is going to sign an extension. According to TSN's Bob McKenzie, Ekman-Larsson is sitting on an eight-year offer from the Coyotes worth an average of \$8.25 million per season. The question becomes how long do the Coyotes wait for the offer to be accepted? According to an NHL source, the Coyotes are eager for an answer in order to formulate a plan if it doesn't happen.

"They can't let him walk for nothing," said a Western Conference executive. Still, of the three prominent 2019 UFA defensemen, this executive saw Karlsson as the more likely trade candidate.

"I think Drew Doughty stays, Ekman-Larsson might stay and Erik Karlsson is gone," he said.

3. Phil Kessel, Pittsburgh Penguins – There's not a better breakdown of where things stand with Kessel and the Penguins than what Josh Yohe already wrote. Read it if you haven't. This is how it goes with Kessel.



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He's going to produce. Teammates are going to love him. He's going to drive his coach crazy.

There's certainly debate as to whether the Penguins will actually trade Kessel. One source suggested that a Kessel trade would give a strong indication as to the power Mike Sullivan wields in the organization. Another said it would just be Jim Rutherford being Jim Rutherford.

"Jim is not going to sit around and bring the same team back," said one source who knows him well.

He suggested that a Kessel trade might even allow the Penguins to take a serious run at John Tavares. I know, the Penguins are pretty set at center. That's the beauty of having a gunslinger and dealmaker like Rutherford as the GM. You can't count anything out.

4. Max Pacioretty, Montreal Canadiens – There's been talk of a possible extension in Montreal lately but one source said that there has been nothing substantial done on that front. The more likely scenario is still a trade. But there's pressure on Canadiens GM Marc Bergevin to get a big return, so teams making offers will have to make an offer for the 35-goal scoring Pacioretty and not the 17-goal scoring Pacioretty, or else it's not getting done.

"He's not going to be traded for a second-round pick," said one NHL source. "If he does get traded, it's a big one for Bergevin."

5-7. Jeff Skinner, Noah Hanifin and Justin Faulk, Carolina Hurricanes

Someone is going to get moved in Carolina. Maybe two players. It could be one of these three. Another source was asked who he thought would go and he mentioned Elias Lindholm and Victor Rask. The only consensus out there is that Carolina is doing SOMETHING. New owner Tom Dundon won't have it any other way.

"I'd be surprised if (the Hurricanes) don't make at least a couple deals before the draft," said an Eastern Conference executive.

The perception is that Ron Francis was moved out because of inaction. If that's the case, the new management group has very clear marching orders heading into the draft. There's going to be some action, it's only a matter of who gets moved out.

8. Ryan O'Reilly, Buffalo Sabres – The Sabres are getting calls on O'Reilly and that's nothing new. His frustration after another losing season certainly caught the attention of executives outside of Buffalo.

"He sounded defeated," said a Western Conference executive. "I wouldn't be surprised if he's moved."

He's going to generate interest. He has Hockey Canada pedigree. Players like playing with him. He's a strong two-way centerman.

The Sabres certainly don't want to rush Casey Mittelstadt, so keeping O'Reilly around gives protection to the young centers in the lineup and pushes them down the depth chart a bit. That means it's not automatic that he's moved.

"It would have to be the right deal," said one source.

9. Rasmus Ristolainen, Sabres – He's another player the Sabres are getting calls on and for good reason. He's a 23-year-old right-shot defenseman who can play a ton. He's valuable. The core of the Sabres moving forward is going to be Jack Eichel, Mittelstadt and Rasmus Dahlin, so that in theory makes Ristolainen expendable.

The Sabres are listening, only because they have to considering their place in the standings. There's an open mind right now in the Buffalo front office. But the reality is the defense needs bolstering and Buffalo has no interest in moving Ristolainen if it's not getting a comparable player back in return.

10. Jake Muzzin, Los Angeles Kings – When you chat with people about potential destinations for every top goalscorer on the market, the Kings inevitably emerge as a top candidate. Ilya Kovalchuk? Going to the Kings. Pacioretty? Going to the Kings. James van Riemsdyk? Kings.

Kessel, too. If they're going to trade for more goal scoring to play on the top line, there needs to be some ammunition to make the deal and Muzzin could be that guy.

This is nothing new on the Muzzin front. Pierre LeBrun reported back in the fall that the Kings considered a Muzzin deal last summer in an attempt to add scoring. He has two years remaining on a very reasonable contract that averages \$4 million per season, making him even more attractive.

11-12. Nino Niederreiter and Matt Dumba, Minnesota Wild

The Wild are another team of interest this summer. They have a new GM, a mandate to make changes to the roster and players that interest opposing teams looking for upgrades. Any one of Niederreiter, Dumba, Jonas Brodin or Charlie Coyle could be on the move depending on the return.

Minnesota's lack of right shot forwards could mean that Coyle sticks around, even coming off a disappointing season in which his goal total dropped for the second consecutive season. But he's being shopped.

On defense, Dumba is the high-risk, high-reward player for teams looking to add a defenseman. Brodin is steady, signed to one of those \$4 million AAV long-term defenseman contracts. Nothing wrong there. Dumba needs a new deal and it's not going to be small.

"They have to be careful, too," said one NHL executive of the Wild. "Their back end is top heavy. Their five and six defensemen aren't good and you saw it in the playoffs. They don't have D coming. I thought Dumba took a step forward last season but Brodin is the safe play."

13. Philipp Grubauer, Washington Capitals

Washington is going to need to clear salary if it wants to keep John Carlson and trading the talented Grubauer is one way to make it happen. He's coming off another strong season that was in line with his career save percentage of .922 and is ready for a crack at a starting job, something that Braden Holtby is preventing.

"He's getting moved for sure," said one executive.

A likely destination would be the Islanders, who need to address their goaltending as part of their pitch to keep John Tavares. The Islanders have back-to-back first-round picks and could use one of them in a deal to land Grubauer, similar to the deal that Lou Lamoriello struck with Vancouver to bring Cory Schneider to New Jersey.

14. Vladislav Namestnikov, New York Rangers

This is more of a placeholder for any number of Rangers than it is an indication that Namestnikov gets moved, but the Rangers are certainly listening. They have four forwards who are arbitration eligible — Namestnikov, Kevin Hayes, Jimmy Vesey and Ryan Spooner. One source said he thought it was unlikely the Rangers started next season with all four of those players on their roster.

Another called the Rangers open for business.

"They are open to anything," said the executive. "I don't think they're set on moving one particular guy."

Namestnikov had just four points in 19 games after being traded to the Rangers. But with back-to-back 20-goal seasons with the Lightning, he's going to get a big raise this summer.

15. Alex Galchenyuk, Canadiens – Montreal would definitely move Galchenyuk, but they might have missed the window to truly maximize his value. There are fewer people around the league confident he can consistently play center than there were earlier in his career. Still, he's got a 30-goal season on his resume, is just 24 years old and shot a career-low 8.9 percent last season. He's a good buy-low candidate.

"There's question marks," said one source of Galchenyuk. "Is he a guy who scores 30 or 12? Is he coachable? His talent is undeniable."



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16. Andreas Athanasiou, Detroit Red Wings – Athanasiou's name in trade rumors is nothing new, and the Red Wings aren't necessarily highly motivated to make a move here. But both sides – the Athanasiou camp and the Red Wings management – aren't against a deal. There also still seems to be some strain between Athanasiou and the coaching staff.

Athanasiou is arbitration eligible this summer so he's going to get a raise from the nearly \$1.4 million he held out for last offseason. With young forwards Dylan Larkin and Anthony Mantha also in line for significant salary increases, Detroit may prefer to let another team do Athanasiou's next deal. And he has a weapon that opposing teams find attractive.

"Love the speed," said one GM. "Worry a bit about the production."

17. Artem Anisimov, Chicago Blackhawks – Chicago is another team of interest this summer. They've been connected to everything from something big — Tavares — to something not quite as big — a backup goalie. On July 1, Anisimov's contract provides GM Stan Bowman more flexibility to make a deal, moving from a full no-trade to protection that requires Anisimov to provide a list of 10 teams in which he'd permit a trade.

So, it's a possibility, although there's debate whether or not it's a great idea for Chicago to move him.

"Second-line centers don't grow on trees," said one NHL source.

"Who do they replace him with?" Asked an exec from the West. "He's on a reasonable contract."

18. Julius Honka, Dallas Stars – The Stars missed the playoffs last year because of a lack of depth up front. Their forward group is top heavy in part because the high-end prospects in the organization are on defense. Honka is ready for regular NHL duty. The Stars also have the talented Miro Heiskanen coming.

GM Jim Nill would love to add a top-six forward to his group, and Honka may be the best currency to make it happen.

19. Nick Jensen, Red Wings – The Red Wings are actively shopping defenseman Xavier Ouellet, who has one year remaining on a contract worth \$1.25 million. "He wants a fresh start," Red Wings GM Ken Holland said last week at the draft combine. That's not necessarily an easy assignment since Ouellet had trouble cracking the lineup on a Detroit team that wasn't particularly good.

Trading Jensen would be much easier and there's definitely interest. He's a 27-year-old right-shot defenseman who slots into any team's bottom pair for under \$1 million. That's attractive to both a budget team and teams up against the cap.

The problem is, one source outside Detroit suggested that the Red Wings weren't too eager to make the move yet. There's uncertainty as to whether Mike Green is coming back and who the Red Wings will get at the top of the draft. The preference for Detroit would be to wait until training camp to see how things all shake out, but by then, interested teams might have moved on.

20. Torey Krug, Boston Bruins – Krug is low on the list mostly because it's probably a longshot he gets moved. The Bruins would probably prefer to get out from under the contracts of David Backes or David Krejci, but if they're looking to upgrade or change the look of their team at all, Krug is the most attractive chip.

The Bruins like him but so does everybody else, which makes him an interesting trade option. In a perfect world, there's a left-shot defenseman coming back with a little more size for the Bruins defense, who can contribute on the PK and upgrade play at even strength. That's a pretty specific order.

"He had 12 points in 11 playoff games," said one executive while making the case for Krug. "I think they could move him, but they don't have to."

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The Athletic / LeBrun: Braden Holtby kept pushing and now has the Capitals one win away from the Stanley Cup

By Pierre LeBrun Jun 5, 2018 7

WASHINGTON — It was in the late stages of the World Cup of Hockey two years ago in Toronto, and there was Braden Holtby trying to get in whatever work that he could.

Despite being the reigning Vezina Trophy winner at the time, he was the No. 3 guy in a who's who trio, with Carey Price and Corey Crawford ahead of him.

It was not hard to feel for Holtby that he ended up the odd man out through no real fault of his own, and that the downside to it all was that he was a spare part who was barely getting any on-ice work in at a time of year when things are supposed to be ramping up at NHL camps. It was not ideal.

I remember a source close to him later explaining to me that Holtby had "deconditioned" during the World Cup and that he had to get back up to speed when he got back to Washington and played almost every preseason game he could cram in just to do it.

It was odd in a way.

But it was also a reminder of where he still stood in the elite pecking order, that he didn't have Price's Olympic gold medal or Hart Trophy, nor Crawford's three Stanley Cup rings.

Well, he's one win away from his first Stanley Cup championship.

Holtby has been able to pull off what Vezina Trophy nominee Connor Hellebuyck could not last round: outduel the Vegas Golden Knights' Marc-Andre Fleury. While we can certainly point out the lack of help Fleury is getting in this series, the fact remains Holtby has made the key saves, some of them out of this world, and Fleury has not done that enough.

While the betting money will be on Evgeny Kuznetsov or Alex Ovechkin for the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP if Washington does indeed finish the job, it's worth remembering that the Capitals also don't get one win away without the performance of their stellar netminder.

"He's been unbelievable," his understudy Philipp Grubauer told The Athletic after Monday night's 6-2 victory gave the Capitals a 3-1 series lead. "Every game, whether it's the regular season or the playoffs, he prepares unbelievably.

"He found a way this year to turn things around for himself. He's been so great in the playoffs. People always ask me what has he changed? I don't think anything has changed mentally or physically. He's just stopping the puck."

It was Grubauer who in fact started these playoffs against Columbus — remember that? — and it wasn't even all that surprising after the German goalie had a really good second half and pushed a struggling Holtby for the No. 1 job.

But once the Capitals dropped the opening two games to the Blue Jackets, Holtby was back in net and has never looked back, going 15-7 with a .923 save percentage. He turned aside 28 of 30 shots Monday night and was especially impactful in the opening half of the first period, when Vegas stormed out of the gates.

That adversity for Holtby this season no doubt forged the fire that has carried him out of those late-season struggles. He's better for it.



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"Absolutely," Grubauer said. "I had a rough start, too, lost six games or whatever, couldn't get a win, but if you're patient and keep working and improving every day, and learn from the mistakes, you can turn that into something really good. So did he. He lost five or six in a row, but you can really learn from your mistakes, and he did."

I asked Holtby after Monday night's game about just that, whether he was a stronger person now for what he had to go through this year. There was zero hesitation in his answer.

"That's one of the beautiful things about our profession and life in general, just that at any time there's adversity, if you take the right mindset and surround yourself with the right people, you can come out stronger," Holtby said. "It's fun. It's why we play, to challenge yourself in different areas to see if you can push yourself through."

Justin Peters was Holtby's last backup before Grubauer, playing a season here in 2014-15. Reached at his offseason home in Mississauga, Ontario, during Monday night's game, Peters reflected on the growth of Holtby.

"I played with him but also against him when I was in in the minors," Peters told The Athletic by phone. "His strength when he was younger was his athleticism. He had a lot of belief in his athleticism back then, perhaps more than in his puck-stopping ability. I think that's what has changed the most is his puck-stopping. It started when (goalie coach) Mitch Korn got there in Washington. He's tightened his game big-time. It's great to see how he's blossomed."

Korn is still on the coaching staff and consults on the goaltending side, but Scott Murray is now Washington's goalie coach, which is another asset, Peters said.

"Scott Murray is really good, too," said Peters, who was Canada's third goalie on its Olympic team this year. "I had him in Hershey; you can see him impact Holtby, too. Especially in terms of head trajectory. You can see that in Holtby's game."

Goaltending is a humbling job. Holtby felt that this season when his starting job was challenged. Now he's a hero on the biggest stage of all. His demeanor has barely changed.

"He's a class act, very humble, a small town guy who hasn't changed," Peters said. "It's pretty cool to see such a good guy do well. I'm excited for him."

Nearly two months ago, Holtby watched the playoffs open from the end of the bench. How crazy is that?

But really, as Holtby himself pointed out, it wasn't just him that is better now for having gone through that adversity, it's his entire team.

"Our group has done that as a whole this year, too. That's made us strong individually and collectively through this year," Holtby said. "We've had to work for everything. We just did it together and kept pushing forward."

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1098419 Websites

The Athletic / Burnside: Capitals will themselves to within a win of historic Stanley Cup triumph

Scott Burnside Jun 5, 2018 23

WASHINGTON – At the beginning of this most unlikely of Stanley Cup final, both teams could have looked at themselves in the mirror and asked, "Why not us?"

More to the point, both the Vegas Golden Knights and Washington Capitals could have looked around their respective locker rooms and could have told you that in their heart of hearts that they believed, believed they were ready to take that step, ready to be the team that did enough to do the previously unthinkable and win a Stanley Cup.

For what seems now like the smallest amount of time that might have actually been true.

But after Washington's soul-crushing 6-2 win over Vegas on Monday, a win that gave the Capitals three straight wins in this best-of-seven series and a chance to win its first Stanley Cup as early as Thursday in Las Vegas, it is clear there is only one team that can still speak those words and still have them ring true.

Since winning Game 1 by a 6-4 count, the Golden Knights have been outscored 12-5. Their best players have been nonexistent in critical moments, save for netminder Marc-Andre Fleury, who has basically been left to fend for himself as the Capitals have proven to be dangerous and opportunistic — which at this stage of the playoffs is a lethal combination.

Game 4 will be a game that will likely cause Golden Knights players and coaches to wake up in a cold sweat this summer. Because this one was there. Right there. And they let it slip away.

The first seven minutes were all Vegas. They hemmed the Capitals in their own zone. They hit a goal post.

Reilly Smith had a wide-open net early on in a still-scoreless first period, but the 22-goal scorer during the regular season continued to struggle in the postseason, sending a shot well wide (although he would add a mostly meaningless goal midway through the third period that made the score briefly 4-2).

The Golden Knights got the first power play of the game, and maybe the biggest, most crushing miss of the night followed. James Neal, a pure goal scorer, had a vacant Washington cage but somehow found the far post, and the rebound came back and glanced off netminder Braden Holtby to safety.

"Yeah, I hit the post; it probably changes the game," Neal said afterward. "It's probably a different game after that. We get the first one. It's tough. It's a great play. (Tomas) Tatar passes it over to (Erik) Haula, and he finds me backdoor, and I had a wide-open net, and then I just hit the post. Definitely one I want to have back."

A few minutes later, with Vegas still buzzing, Colin Miller took an ill-advised tripping penalty in the neutral zone, and T.J. Oshie went skate-to-stick with the rebound of an Evgeny Kuznetsov shot to make it 1-0 Capitals. Two more goals would follow before the end of the first period.

It would be if not ironic then certainly apropos that with Neal in the box for an offensive zone slash late in the second period that the Capitals would score again with the man advantage to delight the sellout Capital One Center crowd inside and the thousands of red-clad fans who swarmed downtown D.C.

If one of those glorious chances for Vegas goes in earlier, of course it changes things.

"Yeah, I mean it definitely would have changed the outcome of the game and would have given us momentum," Vegas forward Alex Tuch said. "But we can't worry about that. We just got to move on and take whatever we did well for this game, forget about the bad and worry about Game 5."

You want to call what happened in this building Monday night lucky? Go ahead. And maybe Holtby's save on Tuch with 1:59 left in Game 2 in Vegas that preserved a 3-2 Washington win was lucky too.

But what is luck?



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Was it "lucky" that Oshie was able to make an incredible play on the first Washington goal? Or that Devante Smith-Pelly did much the same on the third goal?

Where does luck end and skill or will or destiny or some other element enter into the equation?

"You work for your bounces," Neal said. "There are definitely some plays there that were really close to going in. Gone off a couple of skates or Holtby just got a piece of it, a couple of open nets that we just missed, posts. We're right there."

"But at the end of the day, you have to bury them. No feeling sorry for ourselves. We have to regroup, and like I said, if we play that way again, we'll be just fine."

Certainly Tuch had no explanation for how things have snowballed so quickly and seemingly so irrevocably for the Golden Knights.

"No, no reason in particular," Tuch said. "Just maybe some puck luck or just not bearing down. It happens. It's hockey. It's a game of inches and sometimes it doesn't go your way, and it hasn't so far. But hopefully we're able to turn that around for Game 5."

Holtby, who has played his way into Conn Smythe Trophy consideration with his performances since Game 1, acknowledged that the Capitals had good fortune early in the game with the Vegas misses. But he certainly made no apologies.

"That's one of the beautiful things about our profession and life in general, just that at any time there's adversity, if you take the right mind-set and surround yourself with the right people, you can come out stronger," Holtby said after stopping 28 of 30 shots. "It's fun. It's why we play, to challenge yourself in different areas to see if you can push yourself through. Our group has done that as a whole this year, too. That's made us strong individually and collectively through this year. We've had to work for everything. We just did it together and kept pushing forward."

Maybe it's something a lot simpler than puck luck or good fortune or hockey gods. Maybe it's just the natural separation between two teams that believed the exact same thing a week ago but whose realities are very different now with Washington holding a 3-1 series lead.

"No gas left," offered another NHL coach. Vegas's top line "has huge holes in it."

"This is it," he added. "Caps will have to come down a level for Vegas to win."

Didn't happen on this night. Maybe it happens Thursday, although there is absolutely nothing in the way this lopsided game unfolded to suggest that will happen, except for the very fact that this is sports, so anything is possible.

One of the great parts of this playoff run has been in listening to Washington head coach Barry Trotz talk about things like the human spirit and hockey gods and something called the human track.

That was a line he used in describing why he felt Smith-Pelly had been able to find a home in Washington after bouncing in the past couple of seasons from Anaheim to Montreal to New Jersey, before landing in Washington prior to this season.

"There are times when me personally, I can say some things that are pretty close to the line with a player, but we understand that they're a player first, we care about the human track first, and then make sure it fits in our game, and the trust factor between coach, player and teammates is obviously there," Trotz said before Game 4.

It was Smith-Pelly who scored the third first-period goal Monday night with 20.5 seconds left in the period. It was his sixth goal of the postseason and second in a row in this final series. And it turned out to be the game-winner.

Was it luck that brought him to Washington, where he began the season on a two-way contract? Smith-Pelly has as many (or more) goals in this series as every other Vegas Golden Knight, except another fourth-liner, Tomas Nosek, who has three.

"He's a good player," offered one NHL coach. "It's all about him growing up and maturing."

So you can call the Capitals lucky if you're so inclined. When it comes to sports, I'm not sure what that really means.

Instead, we turn to something else Trotz said Monday morning: That you don't know what you are capable of until you are in that hard place. Washington has been there lots of times this season and this playoff spring, and it was there early in Game 4.

The Capitals came out the other side, one win away from a Stanley Cup.

"I think the human spirit. I think when the mind gets real tired and you think you can't do it, you can't," Trotz said. "And I think when your mind's strong, I think we have strong minds on our team, you're able to go way further than you ever thought you could. And I think that's what you find about when you get these opportunities to go deep in the playoffs. You find out what you can take and how much you have to give."

"And you find out that you can take a lot more and you can give a lot more, and that's one of the things that you learn."

It's not over, of course, and no team knows that better than Washington, which has endured lots of playoff collapses en route to winning zero Stanley Cups in the team's history. But it's going to be a lot easier for the Caps to look in the mirror the next couple of days and ask again: Why not us?

"I thought we'd have another level of urgency in our game," Trotz said after Monday's win. "But when it mattered, we were able to get it done. And that's what this team has done over the course of the playoffs. When it mattered, we've been able to get it complete. This team's showed a lot of character. I love our group. Man for man, this group wants to keep playing. They really do."

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1098420 Websites

The Athletic / Pronman vs. Wheeler: Debating the biggest differences at the top of their prospect rankings

By The Athletic Staff Jun 5, 2018 48

Sarah Goldstein: We are here today because you two prove that two people watching the same player can come to very different conclusions about that player's talent. You've both watched a lot of prospects this season, what stands out to you about this draft class?

Corey Pronman: I think any time you talk about a draft class with a disproportionate amount of talent at defense, not even including Rasmus Dahlin, but Quinn Hughes, Adam Boqvist, Evan Bouchard, Noah Dobson, Ryan Merkley, Ty Smith, Bode Wilde etc., it brings back memories of 2012 and 2008, which were similarly defense-loaded classes. All drafts have uncertainty, but these kinds of classes have uncertainty plus one, and it makes the high-end forwards really stand out.

Scott Wheeler: For me, what stands out about this class, and Corey touched on it a little, isn't just the high-end defencemen at the top, but the depth in numbers that exists. There's a very good chance a point per game defenseman (or two ... or three) at the junior level doesn't go in the



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first round. Players like Calen Addison and Nicolas Beaudin, who've outproduced recent — and considerably higher — selections like a Cal Foote (14th) or an Olli Juolevi (fifth). Especially because so many of these defencemen are on the smaller side, it's really going to test how far NHL teams have come. And you mix in a serious lack of quality options at center and in net, and I think it should create fascinating theatre on draft day, and a class that we'll look back on in a few years as having a lot of swings and misses.

Check out The Athletic's prospects rankings from Corey Pronman and Scott Wheeler, and all of our coverage of the 2018 NHL draft.

Jesper Kotkaniemi

Goldstein: Jesperi Kotkaniemi, a 17-year-old center from Finland, is a player you both have in your top 10, but Corey has him at No. 4 and Scott has him at No. 9. Corey, what do you like about Kotkaniemi?

Pronman: High-end brain, high-end skills, I think you can argue both of those attributes look elite some days. He's got size and projects down the middle based on his two-way play at the international level. He's not a pretty skater but average overall from what I've seen. He's one of the youngest players in the draft and yet has shown he can play at a very high level versus men in Finland's top league and his peer group. He has the attributes you want in a top-tier prospect.

Wheeler: No disagreement there. I really, really like Kotkaniemi and his tools as translatable. But I do have a clear top-eight and the difference, for me, between Kotkaniemi and Hughes, Boqvist, Bouchard or Oliver Wahlstrom just lays in their ceilings. I think Kotkaniemi has first-line upside at his peak, but I'd probably bet on him being a 2C before anything else. And I think Wahlstrom projects as an impact goal scorer higher in the lineup, while the three defencemen all have No. 2 upside with different kinds of offensive flair and PP1 potential. I like Kotkaniemi's range and his puck skills/finishing ability around the net, but his stride is a little awkward. The July birthday helps, though. There's no rush.

Pronman: What does Wahlstrom do better than Kotkaniemi?

Wheeler: Kotkaniemi has some size and strength to his game that Wahlstrom hasn't yet added, but I think Wahlstrom is a better skater and a significantly better shooter, in motion and from a standstill. Outside Andrei Svechnikov, I don't think there's a better pure shooter in the class than Wahlstrom. Only Auston Matthews has ever scored more than the 70 goals Wahlstrom scored with the program this year.

Pronman: I don't disagree with that but Wahlstrom drags his feet now and again, negating part of that skating advantage. He doesn't drive play like Kotkaniemi does. Kotkaniemi's a high-end playmaker. Much more skilled and smarter. That's where value is in any league, high-end center talents who can drive a line. The shooting talent isn't enough to negate that.

Wheeler: See, I wouldn't classify him as much more skilled. There's certainly a playmaking advantage as a passer/creator for his linemates, but I really liked the way Wahlstrom opened up his game in the second half of the year as a playmaker when he started to draw more attention as a shot threat — and he's an excellent handler. Part of that new dynamic to his game was helped by the return of Jake Wise and arrival of Hughes, but Wahlstrom's more than just a shooter. There's no question you take the line-driving 1C over the goal scoring 1W; I just think there's a better chance Wahlstrom hits that ceiling than Kotkaniemi does, and the impact scoring winger who can change a game in a split second with one touch has more value than the productive 2C.

Goldstein: Where do you realistically see Kotkaniemi being drafted? And which teams would he be the best fit for?

Wheeler: It's always hard to gauge because team lists vary so much, but I think the Blackhawks at No. 8 or the Oilers at No. 10 are probably his most likely landing spots, just because it sounds like the Canucks and the Rangers are going to take a defenseman at No. 7 and No. 9.

Pronman: First, I was at most of Wahlstrom's games prior to Hughes' arrival. That team struggled to create offense. He drove play but it was not the dominance you saw with a true driver like Hughes on his line. Second, from my observations watching both of them at the U18 Five Nations in February and IIHF tournament in April, as well as talking to members of the team staffs that were tasked with stopping them, they felt Kotkaniemi was a notably harder player to contain. That he was the line driver on a team that skated with the NTDP at the gold medal game at both tournaments also speaks volumes.

I don't think I'm alone in this assessment from talking to NHL folks, so I could see him go to either Montreal at No. 3 or Arizona at No. 5.

Evan Bouchard

Goldstein: OK, we will let Corey have the last word on this one.

Now let's move on to a player that Scott likes more than Corey: Evan Bouchard. The London Knights defenseman is No. 7 on Scott's ranking and No. 18 for Corey.

Scott, what do you like about Bouchard?

Wheeler: I've spent the past month working on a feature on Bouchard and one of the things I was able to confirm about him that I'd always differed on versus some scouts I'd talked to was that several people within the Knights organization, and around the OHL, believe concerns about his skating have been overstated. While he's got a heavier stride than some of the fabulous skating defencemen in this class, and it still needs to get better, he performed really well in all of the skating drills at the top prospects combine and he's got power to his skating that allows him to pull away from forecheckers and still create a ton with his feet in transition. I think what has made Bouchard so divisive in this draft class is that he doesn't have the flash that the Boqvists or the Merkleys have. But he continued to produce at a crazy rate even after the Knights dealt Robert Thomas and Co. Bouchard is already a strong defender, which you can't say about some of the other high-end creators in this class, and I really like his shot and his calculated aggressiveness. If there's one concern I have about Bouchard's development curve moving forward, it's that he is on the older side of this class. But he's also a good ways ahead of a lot of the younger players in terms of his decision-making and anticipation without the puck.

Pronman: I don't love the combine argument. It's an area where I find the NFL and NHL really differ, in that a lot of that stuff I find in combine drills is not very translatable to games. It's fine being able to skate well in a straight line without having to think or make a play. Morgan Frost skates well and did excellent in the combine drills last season, but I find Frost doesn't play exceptionally fast. I discussed this issue earlier in the season. Nic Petan with the Jets suffers from the same thing where he has the speed but doesn't play fast.

Bouchard thinks the game at a very high level and makes quick decisions, but I didn't see him use his skating to create exits, entries or offense at an above-average level when I went to London games.

So on his production, Bouchard is an October 1999. Ryan Merkley is an August 2000. That's nearly a full year apart. At this time last season, Bouchard had 44 points in 68 games on a good team, Merkley was a point per game on a so-so team, which is more similar than comparing their seasons at the moment. You can't just throw out data, though, as Bouchard did very good numbers-wise, one of the best ever by a first year draft-eligible defenseman in the O. London played him a crap ton, 30 minutes a night it seemed, so there's an adjustment to be made, but he earned those minutes.

You characterize that he doesn't have the flash of Merkley or Boqvist, and I would rather characterize it as he doesn't have the skills or pure offensive instincts to make the same type of plays. He makes good plays, though; he has very good vision; fine hands and a big shot. But when I watched him and then watched Merkley the next day, it was very different in terms of the level of plays they made, counterbalanced by much less risk in Bouchard's game.



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I'm also not sure I'd call Bouchard a strong defender. He's a decent defender, for me. Good for the level, not particularly strong on his checks and more about using his brains very well positionally. I have questions on whether he'll be a tough minutes guy at the NHL level.

Wheeler: Oh there's no question the on-ice drills at the top prospects game and the off-ice ones at the scouting combine both have their flaws, and that hockey is an incredibly difficult game to simulate in any meaningful way other than by playing it. But I think the on-ice drills do highlight when players struggle with mechanics, which I believe has been miscast in regards to Bouchard. I have Boqvist higher than Bouchard, so I won't debate you there, but in terms of the skills argument, I think the kinds of tools you're talking about create their own biases because of the ways they jump out at you. I'm all for betting on raw skill, and that's always been reflective in my rankings. There's also no denying Merkley (who I also love) is shiftier than Bouchard with the puck and relies on his hands to make plays more than Bouchard does because he's a more gifted handler. But Bouchard's also 6-foot-2 and Merkley's a generous 5-foot-11, and I wouldn't expect players with a three-inch gap to use their tools in the same ways. I have no concerns about Bouchard's offensive gifts, even side-by-side older players like fellow first all-star team defenceman Nic Hague. He was the best defenceman in the OHL this year, in my opinion. I'm comfortable with him in the No. 7-9 range.

Pronman: I'm not talking about highlight reel in regards to "jump out at you" but in terms of gauging the level of skill and especially offensive instincts. Boqvist and Merkley make plays that hit that elite tier, which I never saw Bouchard do. On my two-to-eight scale, Boqvist and Merkley make level seven plays, mind you Merkley makes a lot of level four plays too, whereas Bouchard is a more consistent six. Merkley's difference for me isn't just shifty feet and hands, his brain is elite, elite, elite. He thinks the game like few 17-year-old D-men I've ever seen even with his major mistakes he makes here and there, and I'd give his IQ a higher grade than Bouchard's without question, even though I love Bouchard's brain. I'd push back on Hague as well; I'm not that big a fan, either!

Wheeler: My point isn't to dispute that they can make plays that Bouchard doesn't (or at least not as often, because I've seen him find guys you'd never expect him to find and his 62 assists can't be ignored just because they're side-by-side the 25 goals). It's more about the give-and-take that comes with their games. Both of those players really struggle defensively and also bring a lot more risk. Merkley's defensive issues are well known, but I have real concerns about Boqvist's, too. The difference is Boqvist's aren't as pronounced, so there's enough there for me to be higher on him than Bouchard. I don't see the gap in Merkley's unique gifts as being enough to mitigate against the drawbacks that don't come with a bigger, stronger, smarter defender in Bouchard — who still has really high upside offensively. At least not anymore.

Pronman: I think our gap is I don't think the upside is really high. I see the elite stats, but I don't see the process of how he creates that offense being of that caliber. He's likely a second pair/second PP unit guy for me.

Wheeler: Yeah, I think that's where it stands. I think he's got No. 2/3 upside at evens and PP1 ability because of his shot and the way he sees the offensive zone.

Goldstein: So where will Bouchard be drafted?

Pronman: Somewhere between No. 5-7. Guess is to Detroit at No. 6.

Wheeler: I know Vancouver is interested in him, so I could see him ending up there at No. 7.

Goldstein: Last up: Joel Farabee, the USNTDP winger. He is No. 10 for Scott and No. 27 for Corey. Scott, tell us why you like him.

Wheeler: Farabee is one of those players who has bounced around a little for me over the past two years, and that's just a byproduct of how fluid things get outside of the top eight or nine players. I was really high on him last year. He was fantastic and the most impressive player on the U17 team (Wahlstrom included). His progression since then hasn't taken the sharp incline that Wahlstrom's has, obviously, and that was reflected

in my having him at No. 14 on my preliminary list and No. 15 on my midseason list. But he was outstanding late in the year, especially at U18s, where I thought he was even better than his eight points in seven games suggested and his top-three players on team USA nod was well deserved. He's not going to be a superstar, but I think there's a very good chance he becomes a contributing top-six forward and that's about how I feel about the other forwards I have in his tier (Isac Lundestrom, Vitali Kravtsov, Joe Veleno, etc.) and I think Farabee's ceiling is higher than all three of those players. Equal parts playmaker and finisher, light skater, can play big minutes, strong backchecker. I see a kid with a lot of tools who could become an excellent two-way threat and play with a variety of linemates.

Pronman: I saw a lot of Farabee this season. I live close to the NTDP, so I got to see their games as much as anyone's. He was great at the U18s. I did not see that player for a large chunk of the season. He played well and underlying numbers suggest whatever line he was on did a lot better with him on the ice than without, but I'd push back on him having a very good chance at top six. I'd say he has a good chance at being a third liner and maybe you get something more. His brain is high-end, compete is high-end, skills/feet are just fine to good, not a big guy. That package doesn't scream scoring impact to me.

Wheeler: I think his footwork/skating has definitely become a strength. He's agile, with above-average top speed. He definitely needs to get stronger but he is six-foot, and he'll have time at BU to add some weight. He also doesn't play a perimeter game due to his size, so it's less of a concern for me. He'll attack the front of the net. He didn't play much at all with Hughes either, which bodes well for his production being sustainable.

Pronman: I don't know about that. I stood 10 feet away from him all season and his speed never really stood out to me. He's not slow, but for his size, he doesn't have that breakaway gear I'd want in a top 15 pick. I see the stats, I see the versatility, the work ethic, the all-around brain, but for me, there's not enough impact in his game for where he's likely to be picked.

Goldstein: So where will Farabee go in the draft? Which teams does he fit with?

Pronman: I've talked to some teams who are skeptical like me, but there are some teams I've talked to who adore him. All matters whose picking/how the board develops. I'm guessing mid-teens.

Wheeler: I think there's a chance he goes to Philly at 14, if he's available there. Mid-teens sounds about right, though.

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The Athletic / Ex-North Stars GM Jack Ferreira is Paul Fenton's first Wild hire; assistant John Anderson let go, sources say

By Michael Russo Jun 6, 2018 18

Jack Ferreira has pulled some brilliant practical jokes in his day, particularly with his new boss and longtime protégé, Paul Fenton, as the target.

But this week, at the Wild's amateur scouting meetings, the Wild's new assistant to the GM has already found himself the victim to Hall of Famer Guy Lapointe's usual antics.



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"Yesterday, I kept getting this phone call," Ferreira said Tuesday. "It kept saying, 'MINNEAPOLIS,' and I was like, 'What the heck?' I'd say, 'Hello,' and they'd just mumble something and hang up. I got it about four times until I finally figured it out. It was Guy, and he was at the other end of the bar."

Lapointe, the Wild's chief of amateur scouting, doubles as the Wild's Prankster in Chief, and just the fact that he is already terrorizing Ferreira, a hockey lifer, tells Ferreira he can feel right at home in his return to Minnesota as — fittingly — Fenton's first official hire.

Ferreira, who turns 74 Saturday, was the North Stars' general manager and vice president of hockey operations for two playoff seasons from 1988-90. The Gunds then sold the franchise to Norm Green and wanted Ferreira to come with them to San Jose to be the first GM of the expansion Sharks the year the North Stars advanced to the Stanley Cup Final.

"Hey, that's the game," Ferreira said. "I took a little pride in putting much of that team together."

The 2018-19 season will be Ferreira's 46th professional season working for his 10th franchise (WHA New England Whalers, Calgary, Rangers, North Stars, San Jose, Montreal, Anaheim, Atlanta, Los Angeles and Wild). He spent the past 11 years working for the Kings in their front office. He has held the titles of GM, scout, assistant coach, assistant GM, director of player development, director of professional scouting, director of player personnel, special assistant to the GM and senior advisor, so why not just become assistant to the GM?

He'll be Fenton's go-to guy for a multitude of special projects, most of them from a scouting standpoint. Ferreira, who used to live in Edina, will continue to reside 60 miles east of Los Angeles in Riverside, Calif., for at least a year, so Ferreira's arrival won't necessarily affect the front office's No. 2, Brent Flahr, nor assistant GMs Shep Harder or Andrew Brunette.

As Fenton works to build his front office (so far there have been no other announced changes, but everything is under review) the rest of the offseason, Ferreira said it'll be revisited in a year if there's a necessity for him to move to Minnesota.

"This is not earth-shattering news," said Ferreira, referring to the fact that he insinuated to The Athletic two weeks ago that he likely would join the Wild in some capacity.

It's no secret the Wild have had a pro scouting void on the west coast, and Ferreira said he'll be assigned NHL and minor-league teams to watch out west.

"But I'll be traveling with some of their scouts and looking at some of the top prospects, too," Ferreira said. "Whatever he wants me to do, I'll do. If he wants me to watch a player for a possible trade or something, I've done that plenty of times."

Ferreira, a Providence, Rhode Island, native and All-American goalie from Boston University, first met Fenton when he was 16. Ferreira was working for the Whalers when a local rink manager asked if he would coach a summer league team of high school and college kids. Fenton, a native of Springfield, Mass., tried out and became the best player on a team that included now-longtime NHL executive Dean Lombardi.

Ferreira coached them for two summers.

Years later, Ferreira brought Fenton to the Sharks in 1991-92 for his final NHL season as a player. Ferreira, who moved south to Anaheim to manage the expansion Ducks, gave Fenton his first hockey job as a scout. Five years later, he recommended Fenton to Nashville GM David Poile, where he'd last 18 seasons before coming to the Wild as their third GM.

"I'm just so happy for Paul," Ferreira said of the coolness of him working for somebody he used to employ. "That's the main thing. I certainly know we can work together and it's going to be fun being together and doing things. I'm really happy for him because he deserves it, he's worked hard for it. Just look at the Nashville franchise to prove all his hard work."

Ferreira's just happy to be working again after not having his contract renewed in L.A.

"I have so many guys that I've played with and been in the business with, and they say, 'When you going to retire?'" Ferreira said. "Why? Somebody wants to pay me to watch a hockey game, I've been doing that all my life. I'm probably going to watch the game anyway even if I retire, so why would I not keep doing it? And the opportunity to work with Paul and to help him out is great. I love it."

According to multiple sources, Fenton has decided not to renew the contract of assistant coach John Anderson. It's a significant decision because Anderson's friendship with head coach Bruce Boudreau dates all the way back to when the two were teenage prospects of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Fenton was not available for comment.

It's believed assistant coaches Bob Woods and Darby Hendrickson each have another year on their contracts. Longtime Wild coach Bob Mason has an expiring contract, but he's likely to be extended.

It would not be shocking if Fenton brings in Milwaukee Admirals coach Dean Evason to replace Anderson.

Evason, 53, and Fenton were teammates in the mid-80s for the Binghamton and Hartford Whalers and again on Ferreira's 1991-92 San Jose Sharks. Evason was Fenton's head coach in Milwaukee for the past six years; he made the playoffs four times with a 1-12 postseason record. He scored 139 goals and had 233 assists in 803 NHL games.

In another twist, Evason came to Milwaukee from the Washington Capitals, where he was an assistant coach for seven seasons from 2005-12. Boudreau inherited Evason as one of his assistants in 2007 when he became head coach and the two lasted parts of five seasons together. Woods was also on the Capitals coaching staff for parts of three seasons starting in 2009, while Wild video coach Jonas Plumb was also there for part of Boudreau's tenure.

So if Evason is hired, there'd be a full Capitals coaching staff reunion in Minnesota from Boudreau's Washington run.

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The Athletic / Urban: Meeting the Prime Minister is more than photo op for women's hockey

By Karolina Urban Jun 5, 2018 15

Twenty years ago I became a Canadian citizen and Monday was a very special day at Parliament Hill. I never imagined getting the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister for winning a championship, nor did my parents ever think one day their daughter would play in the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL).

Growing up in Kamloops, B.C., there was no doubt that I would be doing one of two things, either skiing on weekends or spending time in the rinks playing hockey. Unfortunately, being a girl, my parents didn't overly want to see me playing in a physical game like hockey — preferring I join soccer. Most of all they couldn't commit to the many hours spent on the roads or in the rinks. Regardless, I was the ultimate hockey fan and could have told you about every Vancouver Canucks player including their stats and the type of player they were. My parents often found me playing road hockey with the boys on the street or rollerblading on the drive way shooting pucks and pretending to be Pavel Bure.



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The real defining moment and convincing factor for my parents came after watching 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City. That's what influenced them to put me in organized hockey. The gold medal win by Team Canada, was truly a defining moment and led to a huge surge in girls joining hockey. The media coverage around this moment, the excitement, the true bond of sport shined through and I think that it had a profound effect on the growth of women's hockey.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hosts the CWHL champion Markham Thunder.

Yesterday, was another big step forward for the women's game. We became the first women's professional hockey team to be invited to Parliament Hill to meet Prime Minister Trudeau. Not only did this legitimize the CWHL, but it also sent a strong message about equality. It is also a bigger statement than a day trip to parliament suggests. It is a sign that women's sports are important, they are a stepping stone towards giving young girls dreams and showing those who don't believe that women's sports should be on TV or in the media that we are here and the sport of women's hockey deserves attention.

It's been nearly 15 years after I first started playing hockey and this is a sign that the game has truly grown. Young girls now have the opportunity to play at a high level and train as elite athletes in the NCAA and USports while completing their education. Young girls now are dreaming of playing for their respective countries all over the world, including countries like Japan, China, Kazakhstan, Italy and Poland (to name a few). All countries you probably never imagined having women's hockey programs. Not only that there are now two professional women's hockey leagues, the CWHL and the National Women's Hockey League (NWHL). These league give an opportunity to continue to play beyond university and with some of the best in the world — including Olympic athletes. There are also leagues overseas in Europe including the Swedish League and Eastern European Hockey League that give girls a chance to travel and/or young girls from those countries a chance to dream.

Although a special day for me personally, I know that this honour is something much more than just a picture with Prime Minister Trudeau. It is about women getting the opportunity to be recognized for their accomplishments. It's about young girls watching Hockey Night in Canada during the Stanley Cup Final and Ron MacLean taking the time to speak about women's hockey and seeing that they one day too can have a chance to get to play professionally. I would have never imagined at the beginning of this year when I joined the Markham Thunder that we would have been invited to celebrate our championship on Parliament Hill. Just another example of the speed in which the women's hockey game is growing.

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The Athletic / Blackhawks' Anthony Duclair wants to 'leave mark' with Chicago's black youth

By Scott Powers Jun 5, 2018 9

Bringing back Anthony Duclair may be good for the Blackhawks. He undoubtedly has skill and can influence a game.

Bringing back Duclair may even have a greater impact for the city of Chicago.

More than simply drawing cheers from those already-established Blackhawks fans, Duclair, one of the few black players in the NHL, has

the potential to attract new fans to the United Center and more importantly to the game of hockey.

"He's not a fourth-line plug like me," said former NHL player and current Blackhawks community liaison Jamal Mayers, who is also black. "He's a guy who is a dynamic player who can get people out of their seats. I think that's something.

"I hope he takes that next step and is able to take hold of that spot and become an impact player for years. I think he can immeasurably impact a community. All the kids are going to gravitate towards the better players. If he becomes one of the better players, it's a home run. I don't think you make trades based on that. It happens and it kind of works out. I hope it does. He's fun to watch."

There's that, and there's also a familiarity with Duclair's look.

"I think reality is people are going to see his flattop hair," Mayers said. "They're like, 'That guy looks like my cousin' or whatever. Or I'll be at the hotel and people will be saying, 'I didn't know we got a brother on the team.' It's pretty funny. But it just takes that little spark for kids to say, 'Hey, I can do this.'"

Duclair is conscious of that too. While he is still only 22 years old, he does grasp the sort of influence he can have.

If Willie O'Ree, the NHL's first black player, inspired him, Duclair can be a more modern role model.

"Growing up, we obviously had Willie O'Ree," Duclair said this past season. "He's been a great mentor for us young African-Americans. Just giving back to the younger generation is really important.

"A city like Chicago is very diverse. I'd love to leave my mark here and reach out to a young generation. Hopefully grow the game as much as possible, not only for young black Americans, but any race and religion."

Duclair had the opportunity to meet O'Ree once. It occurred before he was drafted in 2013, and it's something he cherishes to this day.

"He's probably been through a lot," Duclair said of O'Ree. "When he first started out to break barriers is obviously something unbelievable, something us younger generation can look up to for sure. He's a great pioneer. I was pretty honored to meet him before the draft there. Definitely someone I look up to."

Duclair is from Quebec, and his parents are from Haiti. He has already shown a willingness to speak up about race in hockey. When Devante Smith-Pelly was racially taunted at the United Center this season, Duclair voiced his opinion and told it as it is.

"It's just very disappointing," Duclair said. "You'd think there'd be some change after some years, especially coming off Hockey is for Everyone. It's just very disappointing. How do I feel? You got some Blackhawks fans in the stands that think a certain way. If they're Blackhawks fans, they would know there's a black hockey player on their team. Like I said, not shocking, but obviously disappointing."

Duclair endured hockey racism when he was younger and didn't have that courage to say something. Things are different now.

"What are you going to do as a kid?" Duclair said. "It's tough. You don't really have a voice when you're younger. Sort of brush them off, don't tell anyone, keep it to yourself. I think reaching the NHL you at least have a voice. People listen to you. You can't brush it off. You got to make sure these people are held accountable. I bet every black hockey player has been through this. I don't know everyone personally, but I can definitely speak for them and say that everyone has been through sort of racism. You just put the hockey aside, this happens a lot in society just as a whole. It's just disappointing."

Kevin Weekes, a black former NHL player and current NHL Network analyst, was proud of Duclair for speaking up.

"It's really important," Weekes said. "Having talked about this, say, over the last 25 years in my case and doing a lot of stuff on behalf of the



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league as a young player, Duke's [Duclair] age, and doing clinics and doing appearances and doing different things to help grow the game, there was a responsibility that came with that for me as a young player and as a young player of color, a young black player of Caribbean parents. I think the same thing for Duke."

Duclair may be playing a sport that is mostly white, but he's tried to stay true to himself. From his flattop haircut on down, he's always Anthony Duclair.

"It doesn't matter where you come from or what you believe in or whatnot, you want to stay the way you are, stay how you were growing up and how you were raised," Duclair said. "I think I've done that so far. I never changed for anybody and want to keep that personality no matter what happens. Yeah, definitely, whatever it is on the ice and off the ice, you want to stay the same."

Duclair has seen growth in the sport and more people of color playing hockey. He said he's especially seen it back home in Montreal, and he attributed that to largely P.K. Subban.

Duclair arrived in Chicago midway through the season and didn't have much time to get involved in the community, but it's something he said he'd like to do if he remains with the Blackhawks.

"You always want to do everything possible to give back," said Duclair, who is set to become a restricted free agent. "If there's an opportunity to give back in the community, I'll step up and do that. It's a big sports town and you want to reach back."

The Athletic LOADED: 06.06.2018

1098424 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Lamoriello regains Devils level of power with Islanders

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris June 5, 2018, 7:35 PM

It took all of two weeks for Lou Lamoriello to stroll into the New York Islanders front office, poke his head around and start knocking down walls.

Garth Snow is gone (sort of), Doug Weight is gone (sort of) and even if both firings were entirely predictable when Lamoriello was hired on May 22, they offered an immediate reminder that he holds a New Jersey-esque level of power in his new organization rather than what he made due with in Toronto.

Time is of the essence for Lamoriello as he steers the Islanders through a "culture change." He's got cornerstone John Tavares due to become an unrestricted free agent in 25 days and is now searching for a new head coach.

He's also taken on the general manager's title after ending Snow's 12-year run – although it's not yet clear whether he'll keep it beyond, say, July 16 when Mark Hunter's contract with the Leafs expires.

"If I felt like I was rushing I wouldn't do it," Lamoriello said in explaining Tuesday's seismic changes. "I'm a believer that when time's on your side you use it, but when you know what you feel the right decision is you make it."

This a departure from the environment he inhabited over three years with the Leafs, where he reported to president Brendan Shanahan and inherited his assistants. One of them was Kyle Dubas, who replaced him last month.

The Islanders are an organization that had grown stale under Snow, making the playoffs just four times in his 12 seasons while often having to operate on the cheap. With Lamoriello at the helm as both president and GM, and with his son Chris up next on the executive list as assistant GM, they are likely to become a much bolder operation.

Of particular interest is whether Lamoriello leans on some Toronto ties when he makes his next hires – Hunter is considered a strong candidate to be GM while Marlies coach Sheldon Keefe and Leafs assistant D.J. Smith are both possibilities behind the bench.

There are plenty of other intriguing names out there to consider beyond them. Barry Trotz is currently one win away from coaching the Washington Capitals to the Stanley Cup and isn't signed beyond this season. Alain Vigneault was fired by the Rangers in April. There's also a whole host of guys like Scott Stevens who have longstanding Devils ties and have transitioned into coaching.

"We're going to get the best coach available," said Lamoriello. "Whether I know him or not it's not going to enter into the decision."

The real wild card in all of this is Tavares, who has the potential to become the NHL's first blue-ribbon unrestricted free agent in a decade but has maintained a strong line of communication with the Islanders since the season ended.

He could virtually have his pick of the league if he wanted to. Money and term aren't likely to be a serious sticking point in New York or anywhere else. But the 27-year-old centre knows his legacy will be tied to championships and needs to be comfortable that his next contract is signed with an organization where the Stanley Cup is the sole focus.

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It sure sounds like Lamoriello is trying to dramatically reposition the Islanders in that light. He intends to impose structure and change the way the entire organization operates.

"It's just doing little things a certain way, a different way, a consistent way," said Lamoriello. "It's only going to be time before we see exactly how it works out."

What's interesting about the Snow and Weight dismissals is that both men had plenty of term left on their contracts and will stay on with the organization in as-yet undefined roles. They're still going to be getting paid, and so Lamoriello is open to picking their brains from time to time.

However, they are two pillars of this franchise that no longer have any meaningful power or influence on how things are done. More changes could still come, too, with Lamoriello declining to disclose his plans for the assistant coaches or other lower members of the front office.

"The bottom line is there are a lot of tremendous people here," he said. "There's been a lot of changes for different reasons and right now it's just trying to stabilize everything. Start off with a fresh face, start off with fresh minds, a fresh coach and just go forward."

Lou has his groove back.

And it's going to be his way or the highway on Long Island.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.06.2018

1098425 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Devante Smith-Pelly's 'roller coaster' hits happy peak



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Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox June 5, 2018, 7:37 PM

LAS VEGAS – Hours before the night he scored the biggest goal of his life, the gap-toothed Devante Smith-Pelly took a slapshot flush in the face courtesy of teammate Andre Burakovsky and a rolling puck — a painful emblem of what the young man has endured over the past 365 days.

“Not the way you wanted to start your morning,” Smith-Pelly said through a glued-together mouth, grateful he hadn’t lost another tooth. Burakovsky owes him one. “At least a dinner. The minimum a dinner. At least.”

As he spoke to reporters at the Washington Capitals’ practice facility, blood from the gash dribbled and dropped onto his tattooed forearm. Some spattered on the bench.

By the time he slammed the Game 4 winner — a beauty that required him to kick a skipping puck from his left blade to his right shot in stride — and helped whisk his new club within 60 minutes of history, the pain had mostly vanished.

Smith-Pelly punctuated the moment with a wonderful, one-kneed windmill fist pump. A full-throated “D! S! P! D! S! P!” chant thundered through Capital One Arena then, and again when one of his extra-effort plays stifled another Vegas Golden Knights power play.

“It’s not as sore now,” he said, following the Caps’ 6-2 victory Monday. “Obviously, [the chanting] makes you feel pretty good. I’m trying to focus on the game, but I did hear it.

“It’s been a roller coaster year. I can’t really explain the six goals in the playoffs but seven in the regular season. But I’m happy with the way I’m playing, happy with the way the team’s playing. I’m just trying to have fun.”

Wheeee!

That Smith-Pelly has no business being a Stanley Cup hero has made the past two months much more enjoyable. His is one of the best underdog stories in a series with so many of them, we’re cool with double off-days.

Ironically, the Knights could have acquired Smith-Pelly last June when his former team, the New Jersey Devils, left him exposed in the expansion draft. GM George McPhee passed over him and instead took defenceman Jon Merrill, who has struggled to get in the Vegas lineup.

The Devils didn’t want Smith-Pelly either. He was paid \$225,000 this season to not skate for them. And the Caps weren’t sure if they wanted him.

They invited Smith-Pelly to a camp tryout in the fall. Fail that, and he could be out of the NHL before his 26th birthday.

Washington’s forward lines were undergoing turnover due to budget, and the Toronto-born Smith-Pelly had a relationship with Tom Wilson and Brett Connolly.

“I wasn’t really paying attention to the situation here, but they kind of told me the cap was tight and stuff like that and they were going to need other guys to come in,” Smith-Pelly explains. “I took their advice and it worked out.”

Happy to block shots, kill penalties and forecheck — “the not-so-sexy things,” he says — and learn a whole new system and fit into it, DSP impressed coach Barry Trotz enough to be guaranteed \$350,000 on a cheap, one-year, two-way deal. He’ll turn RFA on July 1.

Bouncing to his fourth franchise in three years, Smith-Pelly figures it took half the season to truly feel at ease rocking the red.

Connolly, a fellow bottom-six guy, credits the Capitals’ inviting dressing room culture and consistent production from the stars.

“His career’s gone up and down a little bit like a lot of guys on both sides,” Connolly says. “The guys here just kind of welcome you with open

arms and make it a really comfortable place to just go and play and do your best. It’s been a good fit for me, a good fit for [Smith-Pelly].”

Thursday’s Cup-clinching bid will mark his 100th game this season—the longest, sweetest one of his life. Building on his series-winner in Round 1 versus Columbus, Smith-Pelly’s tag has morphed from buyout bait to clutch player.

“That’s what some people are saying, I guess,” he says. “It just so happens maybe I’m scoring goals at the right time. I don’t know. I love playing in the playoffs. That’s really the only way I can kind of explain it.”

To borrow a line from a Vegas fourth-liner, Pierre-Edouard Bellmare: “Nothing easy is good.”

On DSP’s toughest night, at least publicly, four fans in Chicago showered him with racist taunts as he served a penalty. Smith-Pelly heard those chants, too, and pointed out the perpetrators.

The United Center booted the racists, Trotz chastised the ignorance, and both teams issued statements that such actions would not be tolerated. Smith-Pelly himself could’ve swept the ugly incident under the rug.

He spoke out. That takes guts. Arguably more so in hockey.

“It’s sad that in 2018 we’re still talking about the same thing over and over,” Smith-Pelly said in February. “You’d think there would be some sort of change or progression, but we’re still working toward it, I guess, and we’re going to keep working toward it.”

A new player comes into Trotz’s room and the first thing the coach does is talk to him. Learn his background. Ask what the player believes he can bring to the table, strengths and weaknesses. Then Trotz will be honest about what he’s observed from the outside. The trick is drilling down so that the player, coach and the teammates understand each skater’s true identity.

“We talked about his brand as an individual player because, let’s face it: In our business, every player is their own company. They really are. They’ve got to fit into your team structure, and they all have different talents,” Trotz says.

“I asked him to make sure his game fits with who we are. You can still build your brand, we’ll still build your player, we’ll still build you confidence-wise, and I think there’s a trust with a player.”

“Let’s see if we can build a brand that’s sustainable so that you cannot be bouncing around a little bit from team to team and have a long, sustainable career.”

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Sportsnet.ca / Looking at Garth Snow's most intriguing moves as Islanders GM

Emily Sadler | @EmmySadler June 5, 2018, 11:57 PM

Garth Snow’s tenure as general manager of the New York Islanders has officially come to an end.

So, what can we make of it? Looking back, it’s difficult to define the Snow era. But if you look at his track record, what started out as a shaky front-office stint turned into some decent dealings for the Islanders GM with plenty of questions still to be answered. Here’s a look at a few of the most notable moves — good, bad, and yet-to-be-determined — from Snow’s 12 years in charge in New York.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018

September 12th, 2006: Signed DiPietro to 15-year deal

For someone who carved out a career in the NHL crease, Snow struggled to lock down a true No. 1 netminder in New York during his time there. Rick DiPietro's massive deal just makes the blue paint that much more of a sore spot for Islanders fans.

Yes, it's probably unfair to list this deal on Snow's resume, as it was then-owner Charles Wang who did the heavy lifting on this contract less than two months into Snow's time as GM. Not to mention, no one could have predicted the laundry list of injuries that would derail DiPietro's career. But rightly or wrongly, the monstrous deal — and the 2013 buyout — falls under Snow's reign on Long Island.

February 27, 2007: Acquired Smyth from Oilers

Snow made a big splash at his first NHL Trade Deadline when he acquired "Captain Canada" Ryan Smyth from the Oilers in exchange for forwards Robert Nilsson and Ryan O'Marra and a first-round draft pick (Alex Plante), capitalizing on Edmonton's contract standoff with their longtime forward. The Islanders sprinted for the post-season and would ultimately make it, only to be ousted in five games by the Buffalo Sabres. The bold move from Snow to get the club into the post-season in his first year at the helm ultimately ended in Smyth walking in free agency, as Snow was unable to sign him to a deal the following summer.

October 27, 2013 – March 5, 2014: Acquiring and trading Vanek

It started early in the 2013-14 season, when Snow paid a hefty price for Thomas Vanek: Matt Moulson, a conditional first-round pick and second-round pick went to Buffalo in exchange for the pending UFA forward.

The deal, though expensive, seemed to be working out as Vanek found great chemistry with the Islanders before John Tavares went down with a season-ending injury during the Olympics. When Vanek made it clear he wouldn't be re-signing with the club, Snow traded him at the deadline for practically peanuts: Vanek headed to Montreal with just a second-round pick and prospect Sebastian Collberg coming back in return.

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October 4, 2014: Acquired Boychuk and Leddy

Snow added two key pieces to the Islanders' blue line just a few days prior to puck drop on the 2014-15 season, and didn't have to give up much in return as he was able to use his own cap flexibility to relieve teams whose budgets forced their hands. Nick Leddy joined New York from Chicago in return for defencemen T.J. Brennan and Ville Pokka and goalie Anders Nilsson while Johnny Boychuk came over from Boston for two second-rounders and a conditional third.

These rearguards, who continue to play big roles for the Islanders, helped Snow get his team to the post-season and avoided gifting the Sabres a top pick in 2015 from that dreadful Vanek deal.

June 26, 2015: Turned Reinhart into Barzal and Beauvillier

Avert your eyes, Edmonton. Snow earned a reputation for being a savvy draft-day dealer, and unfortunately for the Oilers, 2015 was his best showing. The Islanders went into the 2015 draft without any first-round selections, but changed that by sending defenceman Griffin Reinhart to the Oilers in exchange for a first- and second-round pick (16th and 33rd overall). The Islanders then used the 16th overall pick on Mathew Barzal, and packaged up No. 33 to select Anthony Beauvillier.

While Reinhart, originally selected by Snow with the fourth overall pick in 2012, is no longer with the Oilers, Barzal and Beauvillier have proven to be two huge pieces for the Islanders moving forward.

Barzal turned out to be a brilliant pick, registering 22 goals and 63 assists for 85 points as a rookie this past season while being named a Calder Trophy finalist. He and Beauvillier (21 goals and 36 points as a

sophomore) make up two thirds of the club's top-scoring line, thanks to another smart deal with the Oilers...

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June 22, 2017: Acquired Eberle for Strome

Snow was able to make a rare one-for-one trade with the Oilers that saw Jordan Eberle join the Islanders in exchange for Ryan Strome. While cap hits play a big part in this (Eberle counts for \$6 million while Strome costs just \$2.5 million) the deal doesn't look so good even when you're just looking at the stats. Eberle rebounded nicely in New York with a 25-goal, 59-point season, fitting in seamlessly alongside linemates Barzal and Beauvillier.

June 24, 2017: Sent Hamonic to Calgary

Just a few days after bringing in Eberle, Snow sent defenceman Travis Hamonic to the Calgary Flames in an effort to acquire more assets — something he often prioritized. While he sacrificed leadership on the blue line, he got a pretty decent haul: a first-round pick in 2018, a 2018 second-rounder, and either a second-round pick in 2019 or 2020 — all that, after showing patience with the defenceman following a trade request a few years prior. Now, it's up to new GM Lou Lamoriello to decide what the team does with those picks.

February 2016, 2018: Staying quiet at the trade deadline

Many viewed the 2018 trade deadline as an opportunity for Snow to send a message to his captain that the team was willing to bring in backup to help Tavares get back into the post-season, but Snow was steadfast in his decision not to risk the team's future. Ultimately, his inaction may have cost him his own job.

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Sportsnet.ca / 2018 NHL playoffs all-disappointment team

Sean McIndoe | @DownGoesBrown June 5, 2018, 11:19 AM

We may be one game away from the end of the Stanley Cup Final. As early as Thursday, the Washington Capitals could end 44 years of misery by finally getting their hands on the Stanley Cup, setting off a wild celebration in Washington and fulfilling the lifelong dreams many of these players have had since childhood.

We'd better get our complaining in while we still can.

So today, before we're all distracted by that icky positivity, let's break out the annual playoff-bust team. We're looking for a full roster of post-season disappointment, which seems like a lot until you realize how many big names we'll have to cut from well-deserved spots. The NHL playoffs are rough.

Keep in mind, we're looking for players who were disappointing relative to what their teams had hoped they'd do. This isn't a collection of the worst players from this year's playoffs, since there are any number of fourth-liners or depth defencemen who did even less. In a way, appearing on a list like this is almost a compliment, since it implies that expectations were high. Remember that when your favourite player shows up and you want to yell at me.

We'll start with the position that's usually the easiest to fill in these sorts of things: those poor goalies. Emphasis on "poor."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018

GOALTENDERS

Frederik Andersen, Maple Leafs: To his credit, Andersen helped the Leafs dig out of a 3-1 series hole with a pair of strong games. But they were in that hole largely due to a pair of stinkers early on, and with the series on the line he had a disastrous third period in Game 7. Even when the numbers said he was playing well, Andersen seemed to be fighting the puck for long stretches, and it caught up with him when the Leafs could least afford it.

John Gibson, Ducks: Gibson had a phenomenal season, one that had some observers touting him as a Vezina candidate. But he couldn't maintain that magic in the playoffs, and it was a big part of the reason why the Ducks went out so meekly against the Sharks. His .889 playoff save percentage was the worst of any goaltender who started the majority of his team's regular-season games. Granted, that number was skewed by a disastrous Game 3 in which he was shelled for five goals in two periods of what would become an 8-1 blowout, but that was a game the Ducks desperately needed.

Pekka Rinne, Predators: Gibson could have been a Vezina finalist; Rinne will almost certainly win it. But once the playoffs arrived he was inconsistent at best for a team that looked like a Stanley Cup favourite. He had his moments, including a pair of shutouts. But he was also pulled four times, including after giving up two soft goals in the deciding seventh game against the Jets.

Late cuts: Sergei Bobrovsky never came up with the sort of game that would have helped the Blue Jackets finish off the Capitals. Matt Murray and Tuukka Rask both won a round, but neither was at his best.

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DEFENCEMEN

Drew Doughty, Kings: When your team gets swept and scores only three goals in the process, you're going to produce plenty of candidates for the all-disappointment team. Doughty earns a spot based on three pointless games, but his biggest moment in the series was the one that got him suspended. His high hit on William Carrier cost his team his services in the crucial second game, and may have been the series turning point. When it came to the Golden Knights, Doughty had already called his shot; he didn't do much to back it up.

Ryan McDonagh, Lightning: The Lightning paid a big price to land McDonagh at the deadline, and were rewarded with no goals and just two primary assists in 17 games. They didn't acquire him solely for his offence, and his 22:31 of average ice time were second on the team. And with another year left on his deal, this wasn't a rental that you can write off based on one spring. Still, you make that sort of deadline splash hoping you're getting a difference-maker, and most nights McDonagh wasn't.

Roman Josi, Predators: The first-year captain put up another solid season, hitting double-digit goals for the fifth straight year. But the offence disappeared in the playoffs, as Josi was held without a goal through the Predators' 13-game run. He also had some disappointing defensive moments against the Jets, including being on the ice for three Winnipeg goals in Game 7.

Shayne Gostisbehere, Flyers: The Flyers faced a tough task against the high-powered Penguins, and it's fair to say that they struggled defensively. While Philadelphia looked good in their two wins, they were caved in over the course of four losses, giving up an embarrassing 25 goals in the process. Gostisbehere had a first-hand view of more than a few of those, finishing the post-season with a -8 rating that ranked as the league's worst among blueliners.

Jacob Trouba, Jets: The Jets don't offer up many candidates for our all-disappointment squad after putting together the longest playoff run in Winnipeg's NHL history. Still, Trouba was at least a mild letdown, going

pointless in 15 of the Jets' 17 games, including the last nine straight. He still played big minutes and took care of things in his own end, so we won't go overboard, but on a team full of post-season overachievers, Trouba was one of the few who left at least a little to be desired.

Paul Martin, Sharks: We'll slot Martin in last on our list, since even in San Jose he wasn't expected to provide much more than veteran depth. But there's really no nice way to put it: He struggled badly in the playoffs, even in sheltered minutes. As just one example, we're still not sure what he was doing on William Karlsson's series-changing OT winner:

An off-season buyout seems likely.

Late cuts: Jake Gardiner suffered through a disastrous Game 7, but he may have been the Leafs' best defenceman in the series until then so we'll cut him some slack. And if we're not penalizing guys for one nightmare game, we'll let Shea Theodore off the hook for what happened Saturday.

FORWARDS

Rick Nash, Bruins: Another post-season, another team, and yet another letdown from Nash. Apart from a two-goal game in the opener against the Lightning, Nash was largely held off the scoreboard for two rounds, and it's fair to say the Bruins didn't get their money's worth on their big deadline acquisition. As always seems to be the case, some of the secondary numbers suggest that Nash was better than his goal total would indicate, but at some point a fluke becomes a pattern. With just 18 goals in 89 career playoff games, we'll go ahead and make Nash our team captain.

Corey Perry, Ducks: In four games, Perry's contribution came out to no goals, no points, one questionable hit and a team-worst -5 rating. For an \$8.6-million cap hit, that's not great, and it has Ducks fans asking deep philosophical questions like "Corey Perry: Is he still good?"

Claude Giroux, Flyers: Giroux's comeback regular season moved him back into the league's top tier of elite forwards. But his post-season was a disaster: one goal, three points and a league-worst -10 rating in the Flyers' first-round loss to the Penguins. Plus/minus may be a flawed stat that doesn't tell us as much as we think in small samples, but it's hard to comb through any of the numbers and find much good news for a player the Flyers needed big things from to have a chance.

Nazem Kadri, Maple Leafs: Most of the players on this list are here because of what they did (or didn't) do on the ice. Kadri makes it largely because of the time he spent in the press box. His three-game suspension for an inexcusable hit on Tommy Wingels didn't decide the series, but it definitely hurt a Leafs team that needed all hands on deck against the Bruins. It speaks to Kadri's development as a top-six forward that his absence was seen as so critical, but it's the sort of play he just can't make in that situation.

Eric Staal, Wild: Staal's rebound season at the age of 33 was one of the league's better stories; his 42 goals tied the franchise record. But he largely disappeared against the Jets, managing just one goal and two points in the series and being held off the scoreboard completely in the Wild's four losses.

Anze Kopitar, Kings: It's not often you can be called a playoff disappointment when you lead your team in scoring with twice the total points of the next most productive player. The Kings' loss to the Knights clearly wasn't Kopitar's fault, and his two points did indeed claim the team lead. But in hindsight, the Kings needed a monster series from their Hart Trophy finalist to have a shot against Vegas, and they didn't get it.

Mikko Rantanen, Avalanche: It's tough to point to anyone on the Avalanche as a true disappointment, given how unlikely their playoff appearance was in the first place. Still, Rantanen followed a breakout regular season by failing to score in the Avs' six-game loss to the Predators.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018

Each week, Jeff Blair and Stephen Brunt tackle the most impactful stories in the world of sports and their intersection with popular culture. Come for the sports; stay for the storytelling and cigars.

Nico Hischier, Devils: Like the Avalanche, the Devils could be excused for just being happy to be in the playoffs at all, and on balance Hischier's rookie season was a success. But he only managed one point in the playoffs, tying him on the team scoring list with defensive defenceman Ben Lovejoy and goaltender Cory Schneider. Would a few more points have made a difference in the series? Against the Lightning, probably not, so let's chalk it up as a learning experience.

Thomas Vanek, Blue Jackets: Stop me if you've heard this one before, but after a reasonably productive regular season, Vanek struggled through a disappointing playoff run. In this case, that meant producing a goal and an assist in the Blue Jackets' opening-game win over the Capitals, then largely disappearing for the rest of the series. He'd actually been pretty good in Columbus after arriving at the deadline, but as always, his playoff reputation will follow him wherever he winds up next.

Derick Brassard, Penguins: Yet another trade-deadline pickup that didn't pay dividends, Brassard managed just one goal and four points in the Penguins' 12-game run. He was reportedly banged up for much of the post-season, and with another year left on his deal there's still time for the trade to pay off. But the Pens were hoping that Brassard would anchor a third line that could take some of the heat off of the Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin units, and it never happened.

Phil Kessel, Penguins: Our second Penguins forward makes the team based on scoring just a single goal in two rounds. He added eight assists, so he certainly wasn't a non-factor. But with Kessel, you're willing to accept some shortcomings in his game as long as he puts the puck in the net. For the last two Penguins playoffs runs that's exactly what he did, but this year was a letdown.

David Perron, Golden Knights: Perron is the only player on our list whose team is still alive, so this pick virtually assures him of a dramatic hat trick in Game 5. But first he'll have to get back in the lineup after being a healthy scratch last night. That's the latest chapter in a disappointing post-season that's seen him follow a career year by being held without a goal in 14 games; he's managed just a single shot in the final, and his line was a minus-three on Saturday. As unthinkable as it would have seemed even a week ago, that may turn out to be the last we see of Perron this season.

Late cuts: Auston Matthews's two-point output wasn't anywhere near enough for Toronto, but his line did generate plenty of chances so we'll avoid giving the Leafs a league-leading third spot on our roster. Tomas Tatar replaced Perron in the Knights' lineup and could probably replace him on this list, too. And it's tempting to find a way to get Steven Stamkos on the team after yet another disappointing Game 7 moved him firmly into the discussion of players who come up small when the games mean the most. But that would be overreacting to one game; Stamkos put up 16 points in 17 games, and his seven goals were tied for the team lead. Plenty of players would take that kind of disappointing performance.

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Sportsnet.ca / Draft prospect Filip Zadina big on Montreal, Ottawa

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox June 5, 2018, 8:03 PM

That Czech-born Filip Zadina only knows three words of French but that hasn't prevented him from getting excited about the possibility of being

selected by bilingual Montreal or Ottawa at the NHL Draft later this month.

"Literally none. I can say, Je m'appelle Filip. But that's it. Merci," Zadina said Monday, when a small group of the league hosted a handful of draft's top prospects at Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final. "If I ended up there, I would need to learn the French language."

Zadina, 18, lit up the QMJHL in 2017-18, his first season on North American ice, scoring 44 goals and 38 assists in 57 games for the Halifax Mooseheads, topping all rookies in points. He was named to the First All-Star Team and won the Mike Bossy Trophy as the best professional prospect in the Q.

Scouts describe the son of Marek Zadina, a retired pro who now serves as an assistant coach in the Czech's top domestic league, as a natural scorer blessed with finish.

In other words, the type of winger goal-hungry high-drafting clubs like the Canadiens (third pick) and Senators (fourth) should consider.

"It will be good if either Montreal or Ottawa," Zadina said. "They're nice cities. Montreal, I know very well. I've been to the city many times and the fans are awesome. But they're looking for a centre or a D.

"Ottawa, I've been to there when we played in Gatineau. It's the capital of Canada, so it would mean a lot to play there."

Zadina finds himself in cluster of skilled forwards expected to get scooped up in the top five. Once Buffalo claims its prized Swedish defenceman, Rasmus Dahlin, No. 1 overall, the Carolina Hurricanes will be on the clock.

"I know Carolina very well, because I know [Hurricanes 2017 first-rounder] Martin Necas. I would love to play with him. But I will not say it's going to happen," Zadina said.

The smart money is on Andrei Svechnikov being drafted second overall to Carolina, but Zadina doesn't want to handicap the race between himself, Svechnikov, and American Brady Tkachuk, the three most prized scoring wingers on the board.

"Me and Svechnikov played in the CHL, but Brady played in college, so it's hard to compare," Zadina said. "We're going to be surprised by what team picks us and where."

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If Zadina's statement that Montreal is eyeing a defenceman or centre holds true, one of the three may slip out of the top five.

One thing is certain: Zadina is much too gifted and hyped to be lingering around by the time Chicago is on the clock at eight.

"The Blackhawks were my favourite team. When I was growing up, I was watching when they were winning the Cup. That was an unbelievable feeling," Zadina said.

"[Patrick] Kane's my favourite player. I love his hands and the way he's playing. He's a very skilled player. He has such a feeling for scoring the goals. I'm trying to follow him and learn something."

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Sportsnet.ca / Capitals shaking off 44 years of bad luck, just one win from Cup glory



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris June 4, 2018, 11:18 PM

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Tony Robbins is embracing Jay Beagle.

The world's most famous life coach has become a buddy of Washington Capitals owner Ted Leonsis and is clearly on friendly terms with a group of players who now find themselves one win away from lifting the Stanley Cup.

When Robbins reached Beagle in a celebratory home dressing room on Monday night, he spoke with certainty: "You're going to close this one out this time."

Beagle didn't blink.

"It's our time. It's our time."

It just feels that way, doesn't it?

If you are someone who believes in signs, a pivotal Game 4 in this championship series delivered a strong one before it was even five minutes old. The Vegas Golden Knights had labelled this a must-win situation and came out charging, seeing an early Alex Tuch tip hit the post and spin to safety.

Then they were given a power play and James Neal found himself with a moment so big he might never forget it so long as he walks this Earth – staring at a completely empty four-by-six net behind Braden Holtby, the same size as those he's scored 293 NHL goals into. This time Neal fired and hit the inside post, watching in horror as the puck caromed off Holtby's blocker and stayed out.

Every long-suffering Capitals fan had no choice but jump to the same conclusion: Where has good fortune like that been these last 44 years?

"To be honest, I thought it was in [from] my angle, and somehow it didn't go in," said Holtby.

"Sometimes it's luck, sometimes you need that kind of bounce," added captain Alex Ovechkin after a 6-2 Washington victory. "It's a big moment for us."

It was followed by an avalanche of goals that left his Capitals just 60 minutes away from the Stanley Cup that has eluded this organization since the Gerald Ford administration. Ovechkin could take that trophy from Gary Bettman as soon as Thursday night in Las Vegas – something that would surely be followed by them painting the town red.

They've guaranteed themselves at least three chances at closing it out after building a 3-1 series lead.

Somewhere along the way the Capitals have developed an unshakeable mental fortitude. Amazingly, this group found itself in a 2-0 hole to Columbus in Round 1 and had to pull out an overtime victory on the road in Game 3.

After navigating their way through that, they don't seem like candidates to let this moment get the best of them. They've proven adept at keeping their thoughts on the moment at hand.

"It's easy to let your mind wander. It's been one of our strengths to make sure that we're in the right place mentally," said defenceman John Carlson. "I think everyone knows the stakes. There's nothing, no opportunity that's going to pass by that we're not going to give it all we've got."

"That stays with us, the same mentality that we've had after losing the first game against Columbus. Come back with a better plan, better execution, make the plays that we know we can make – that gives you a better chance to win."

There was plenty of opportunity for them to wobble on Monday.

The shot attempts were 14-3 in favour of the visitors when T.J. Oshie opened the scoring against the run of play at 9:54. He kicked the puck up

to his stick after an Evgeny Kuznetsov shot was stopped and had Capital One Arena shaking on its foundation.

The Golden Knights have been carried by the Jonathan Marchessault-William Karlsson-Reilly Smith line throughout this dream expansion season, but that trio was burned twice before the intermission. They were caught out for more than 90 seconds because of an icing when Kuznetsov won an offensive zone faceoff and pulled off a lovely give-and-go with Tom Wilson at 16:26.

Then it was Devante Smith-Pelly's turn to get in on the fun, keeping the puck in at his own blue line and kicking it up to his stick before making 3-0 with 20.5 seconds left.

Good night, Golden Knights.

"We knew they were going to come," said Capitals coach Barry Trotz. "They talked about putting their game out and they did. And they didn't get anything out of it."

Vegas did what it could to keep hope alive – Brayden McNabb hit a third post in the second period – but wound up falling another goal behind when Carlson snuck into Ovechkin's spot on the power play and wired a one-timer past Marc-Andre Fleury.

It was Evgeny Kuznetsov who found the UFA-to-be open in the circle, part of a four-assist night that pushed him to 31 points in a spring that might finish with him lifting the Conn Smythe Trophy. The Russian centre is just the sixth player with at least 30 points in one playoff campaign since 1996.

Neal's goal arrived 41 minutes too late – he broke Holtby's shutout bid early in the third period – and then Smith, Michal Kempny and Brett Connolly exchanged academic tallies.

The Golden Knights finished ahead 53-28 in even-strength shot attempts, fuelled in part by the fact they chased the game for the final 50 minutes. It's going to be a tough loss to shake off.

Hockey, man. It'll break your heart. You need some breaks in a sport played with vulcanized rubber on ice.

"That's one of the beautiful things about our profession and life in general, just that at any time there's adversity, if you take the right mindset and surround yourself with the right people, you can come out stronger," said Holtby, who started these playoffs watching from the bench. "It's fun. It's why we play, to challenge yourself in different areas to see if you can push yourself through. Our group has done that as a whole this year, too."

"That's made us strong individually and collectively through this year."

The Capitals have been knocked down repeatedly and fought on. They've had at least three teams in the Ovechkin Era that have been stronger on paper than this one.

But this is the one that could be remembered here forever.

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TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: San Jose Sharks

Scott Cullen



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018

The San Jose Sharks made the playoffs for the 13th time in the past 14 seasons, finishing with 100 points for the second time in the past six full seasons.

They lost to Vegas in the second round of the playoffs, but there's a good team in place.

Off-Season Game Plan looks at Sharks team that already made one big free agent signing and might try for more this summer.

For much of this season, the Sharks have been mentioned as possible landing spot for pending free agent centre John Tavares. They have a competitive team, and had lots of salary cap room.

The Sharks may still be able to maneuver their way into a Tavares signing, but after they spent big money on Evander Kane, they would have to get creative in order to free up enough cap space.

If San Jose doesn't get Tavares, they are still in okay shape. Bringing back Joe Thornton would make the Sharks a strong team next season, but that's more of the same – a team good enough to reach the playoffs, rarely to advance beyond the second round. Maybe they have to take a bigger swing this summer in the hopes of changing that outlook.

HEROES

Brent Burns – The Sharks were outscored at evens with Burns on the ice, but he had a .917 on-ice save percentage, which could have undermined his stellar shot differentials (54.3 CF%, +5.7 CFRel%) and team-leading 67 points.

Logan Couture – An established scorer, the 29-year-old centre went for a career-high 34 goals in 2017-18.

Joe Pavelski – With Joe Thornton injured, Pavelski's goal production dipped, but the captain moved to the middle of the ice and handled more of a playmaking role, with his 44 assists his most since 2010-11.

ZEROES

Jannik Hansen – The 32-year-old winger saw his ice time drop to a career-low 12:02 per game and he finished with just two goals in 46 games.

Paul Martin – Father Time is catching up to the 37-year-old defenceman, who played more games in the AHL (18) than the NHL (14) during the regular season. He played just 14:46 per game, well down from his previous career low (19:14) set in 2016-17.

Joel Ward – A hard-working veteran winger, Ward had been a reliable contributor, scoring 74 goals in his previous four seasons, but managed just five goals and 12 points in 52 games last season.

Joe Pavelski	82	22	44	66	52.7
	2.6	99.4	54.0	19:15	\$6.0M
Logan Couture	78	34	27	61	50.7
	-0.2	98.9	48.7	18:33	\$6.0M
Evander Kane	78	29	25	54	50.8
	4.3	99.9	56.5	19:35	\$4.0M
Kevin Labanc	77	11	29	40	54.0
	4.4	98.4	54.4	14:21	\$718K
Mikkel Boedker	74	15	22	37	46.9
	-5.1	100.6	47.6	13:21	\$4.0M
Timo Meier	81	21	15	36	52.6
	2.2	100.0	53.2	14:52	\$894K
Joonas Donskoi	66	14	18	32	55.1
	5.9	100.3	55.4	14:58	\$1.9M
Melker Karlsson	71	8	11	19	45.6
	-7.0	99.2	43.3	13:15	\$2.0M

Barclay Goodrow	47	7	7	14	50.9
	1.6	99.1	48.1	10:53	\$650K
Marcus Sorensen	32	5	2	7	48.7
	-3.3	96.4	47.7	10:09	\$700K
Tomas Hertl	79	22	24	46	51.5
	0.3	97.3	47.7	18:06	\$3.0M RFA
Chris Tierney	82	17	23	40	49.3
	-2.2	99.1	51.4	16:00	\$735K RFA
Joe Thornton	47	13	23	36	53.9
	2.8	96.3	57.2	18:21	\$8.0M UFA
Jannik Hansen	46	2	12	14	50.8
	-0.7	101.6	49.6	12:02	\$2.0M UFA
Joel Ward	52	5	7	12	49.2
	97.5	53.3	11:52	\$3.275M	UFA
Eric Fehr	18	3	1	4	49.9
	102.3	44.4	11:47	\$2.0M	UFA

Joe Pavelski is a rock for the Sharks. He plays every night, missing one game in the past seven seasons, is productive, and moves around the lineup as needed. The captain scored on just 9.8% of his shots last season, leading to a decline in goals, but the rest of his game was pretty typical.

At the same time, the Sharks will soon have a decision to make with Pavelski. He turns 34 this summer and will be heading into the final year of his current contract, which comes with a cap hit of \$6-million per.

Logan Couture and Tomas Hertl are big parts of the Sharks' attack.

Logan Couture has been a productive scoring centre for most of his career in San Jose, but he's also had the luxury of doing so in a secondary role, often with Joe Thornton's line drawing more defensive attention. He's also struggled in the face-off circle, winning less than 45% over the past four seasons and, as a result, he's taken fewer faceoffs – last year's 325 draws was Couture's fewest of his career.

Similar to Pavelski, 29-year-old Couture is going into the last year of his current deal that also comes with a \$6-million cap hit.

The Sharks made it no secret when they traded for Evander Kane that, if all went well, they would be interested in a long-term relationship. Kane scored nine goals in 17 games for the Sharks, adding four more in nine playoff games, and had his typically strong possession numbers. So, the Sharks signed him to a seven-year, \$49-million deal.

This puts me in an awkward position because, usually, I end up defending Kane (the player; he's on his own for his off-ice problems) as a solid player, a four-time 20-goal scorer who consistently drives play. At the same time, that's a lot of money for a player who has never scored 60 points in an NHL season. But the Sharks obviously love him.

A slick playmaker, Kevin Labanc offers tremendous value for the Sharks on an entry-level contract. The 22-year-old winger is one of the best passers on the team, and the Sharks controlled play with him on the ice.

Veteran winger Mikkel Boedker was a little more productive last season, but his ice time was down to 13:21 per game, his lowest since 2010-2011, and he was routinely outshot (46.9 CF%, -5.1 CFRel%). These aren't great signs for a player that has two more years left on a contract that has a \$4-million cap hit, but it's not going to be easy for San Jose to get away from that deal.

21-year-old winger Timo Meier scored 21 goals in his first full NHL season, 18 of them at even strength. There's still more potential for the young winger to take on a bigger offensive role on this team but, as is, he's a productive shot generator.

After a down year in 2016-17, 26-year-old Joonas Donskoi bounced back with a more productive season, fulfilling his role as a steady middle-six



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winger. He has lots of skill and does most of his damage (68 of 85 career points) at even strength.

Although Melker Karlsson has never put up 25 points in a season, he has established that he's a reliable fourth-line player, one that can move up the lineup from time to time, when needed.

25-year-old Barclay Goodrow worked his way back into the league, at least in a part-time role, last season and while he didn't play a lot, he was effective enough when given the chance. He's an inexpensive depth option.

After a playoff run in which he scored four goals in 10 games, 26-year-old Marcus Sorensen was lauded as a valuable fourth-line contributor, but that's not quite what his record has been. In the past two seasons, he has 11 points in 51 games so any expectations for Sorensen's future production ought to be modest.

Tomas Hertl scored a career-high 22 goals and tied a career-high with 46 points, before adding nine points in 10 playoff games. He's a skilled centre who could still produce more offensively, and he's also due for a new contract this summer.

Joe Thornton's injury allowed 23-year-old Chris Tierney to take on a bigger role and he responded with a career-high 17 goals and 40 points. That would seem to indicate that he's a suitable third-line centre.

The interesting thing about the Sharks signing Kane when they did, is that it looks like it would complicate any attempts to lure John Tavares via free agency. Maybe a trade and a buyout would create enough room to throw market value at Tavares but, if not, Joe Thornton could return at a reduced price. Would the Sharks consider Ilya Kovalchuk? I had him going to San Jose last summer before he returned to the KHL for one more season.

Brent Burns	82	12	55	67	54.3
	5.7	97.9	60.8	25:15	\$8.0M
Justin Braun	81	5	28	33	45.7
	-8.2	99.8	39.1	21:20	\$3.8M
Marc-Edouard Vlasic	81	11	21	32	48.3
	-3.9	99.7	42.3	22:33	\$7.0M
Brenden Dillon	81	5	17	22	51.5
	0.9	97.7	55.0	17:19	\$3.27M
Joakim Ryan	62	3	9	12	53.0
	3.1	100.4	55.5	16:45	\$650K
Tim Heed	29	3	8	11	4.1
	99.9	61.3	16:01	\$650K	
Paul Martin	14	0	2	2	55.5
	7.2	102.2	58.4	14:46	\$4.85M
Dylan DeMelo	63	0	20	20	49.7
	-0.7	99.6	49.3	14:12	\$650K RFA

Even though he generated more than four shots on goal per game, Brent Burns saw his goal total drop from 29 to 12, and that certainly hurt the Sharks because they run so much of their offence through the 6-foot-5 defenceman. Burns can be a dynamic performer, but does typically avoid the toughest defensive matchups, and he's better age well – the 33-year-old is signed for seven more years.

The Sharks turn Brent Burns loose so that he can generate offence from the blueline.

One half of the Sharks' shutdown defensive pairing, Justin Braun recorded a career-high 33 points last season and all of those points came at even strength, giving him the same number of even-strength points as P.K. Subban and Seth Jones. Points aren't his game, though, he gets thrown out with Marc-Edouard Vlasic to face the opposition's top forward line night after night.

Vlasic is an interesting case, a defensive defenceman who has been good enough to play for Canada at the Olympics and World Cup, so he's somewhat famous for his performance in a shutdown role, yet in the past two seasons, he and Braun have been obliterated by relative shot metrics. It didn't use to be that way for Vlasic, who was outshooting and outscoring opponents when he was in his prime, but if this is the way it's going to be, the next seven years could head into some uncomfortable territory.

A big and physical defenceman who can skate, Brenden Dillon had a career-high 22 points last season. He's a very good No. 5 defenceman, and the 27-year-old could conceivably play higher on the depth chart.

Joakim Ryan played a couple of seasons in the AHL after four years at Cornell, and wasn't highly-touted, but performed well as a rookie, often getting partnered with Burns.

27-year-old Tim Heed saw action in 29 games for the Sharks last season, and acquitted himself well in a limited role, but if he's not going to get an opportunity to play regularly, he may have some value to teams that are more willing to live with his perceived defensive shortcomings.

A 37-year-old coming off a season shortened by an ankle injury, Paul Martin still has one year left on his contract, but seems like a potential buyout candidate. He's had an impressive career, playing 992 (regular season plus playoff) games, but is not the same player at this stage.

25-year-old Dylan DeMelo is a solid puck-moving defenceman who held his own on the third pairing last season, and recorded half of his assists during a nine-game span in March.

The Sharks could look for some veteran defensive help on the free agent market, but there's an advantage to be gained by having inexpensive players like Ryan and DeMelo filling regular roles, provided that they can hold up their end of the bargain.

Martin Jones	60	30	22	6	.915
	.914	\$5.75M			
Aaron Dell	29	15	5	4	.914
	.916	\$1.9M			

Starting goaltender Martin Jones had some ups and downs during the regular season, but the 28-year-old was very good in the playoffs and his overall regular season was above average. He's compensated well, but he's also started at least 60 games in each of the past three seasons, something no other goaltender has accomplished, and durability matters.

While he wasn't as impressive as the year before, 29-year-old Aaron Dell is establishing himself as a solid backup, with a .920 save percentage in 49 career games. He's a nice insurance policy when Jones runs into difficulty during the season.

Josh Norris	C	37	8	15	23
	-8	Michigan (Big 10)			
Dylan Gambrell	C	41	13	30	43
	+16	Denver (NCHC)			
Mario Ferraro	D	39	4	19	23
	+5	Massachusetts (HE)			
Rudolfs Balcers	LW	67	23	25	48
	-8	San Jose (AHL)			
Scott Reedy	C	35	7	8	15
	0	Minnesota (Big 10)			
Jeremy Roy	D	20	2	6	8
	-2	San Jose (AHL)			
Julius Bergman	D	65	10	10	20
	-20	San Jose (AHL)			
Rourke Chartier	C	28	7	14	21
	-2	San Jose (AHL)			



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Noah Rod RW	25	7	2	9	-1
Geneve Servette (SUI)					
Sasha Chmelevski	C	68	35	41	76
+8	Ottawa (OHL)				
Maxim Letunov	C	36	12	16	28
+8	Connecticut (HE)				
Adam Helewka	LW	63	9	29	38
-11	San Jose (AHL)				
Ivan Chekhovich	LW	65	29	31	60
-11	Baie-Comeau (QMJHL)				
Radim Simek	D	67	7	20	27
+6	San Jose (AHL)				
Noah Gregor	C	60	29	36	65
+7	Victoria (WHL)				

DRAFT

21st – Vitali Kravtsov, Grigori Denisenko, Rasmus Sandin, Ryan McLeod

FREE AGENCY

The Sharks have approximately \$66.6M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 20 players.

NEEDS

One top-six forward

WHAT I SAID THE SHARKS NEEDED LAST YEAR

One top-six forward, depth forwards

THEY ADDED

Timo Meier, Barclay Goodrow, Joakim Ryan, Tim Heed

TRADE MARKET

Mikkel Boedker, Paul Martin, Brenden Dillon, Justin Braun

Evander Kane	Joe Thornton	Joe Pavelski
Logan Couture	Tomas Hertl	Kevin Labanc
Mikkel Boedker	Chris Tierney	Timo Meier
Melker Karlsson	Tomas Plekanec*	Joonas Donskoi
Rudolfs Balcers	Dylan Gambrell	Marcus Sorensen
Adam Helewka	Rourke Chartier	Barclay Goodrow
Joakim Ryan	Brent Burns	Martin Jones
Marc-Edouard Vlasic	Justin Braun	Aaron Dell
Brenden Dillon	Dylan DeMelo	Antoine Bibeau
Radim Simek	Tim Heed	
Julius Bergman	Jeremy Roy	

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TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Los Angeles Kings

Scott Cullen

The Los Angeles Kings returned to the playoffs, but were quickly swept away by the Vegas Golden Knights in the first round.

Off-Season Game Plan looks at a Kings team that still has core pieces from their Stanley Cup years, but needs more talent to compete for another as the game opens up and allows offensive hockey to flourish.

The Kings do have important pieces in place, to be sure. There aren't many teams that can boast a No. 1 centre and No. 1 defenceman as talented as Anze Kopitar and Drew Doughty, and as long as they are productive stars it makes sense to build a contending team around them.

At the same time, the Kings also have some older players logging big minutes. Kopitar, Dustin Brown, Dion Phaneuf and Jeff Carter are all north of 30 and ranked in the top seven in average time on ice.

That means the Kings need a succession plan in place. If it doesn't happen they could be a key injury or two away from needing a serious rebuild.

HEROES

Anze Kopitar – After the worst year of his career in 2016-17, the Kings' star centre responded with the most productive year of his career, scoring a career-high 35 goals and 92 points.

Dustin Brown – For five straight seasons, the Kings winger had finished with 36 or fewer points then, at 33, he went for a career-high 61 points.

Drew Doughty – The Kings' star blueliner took on a more offensive role, and went for a career-high 60 points while continuing to post dominant shot differentials (52.8 CF%, +4.6 CFRel%).

ZEROES

Alec Martinez – The veteran Kings defenceman played a career-high 22:52 per game, but spent a lot of that time in his own end of the ice.

Dion Phaneuf – Before he arrived in Los Angeles, Phaneuf was part of one of the league's worst defence pairings (with Cody Ceci in Ottawa), but results didn't improve a whole lot upon joining the Kings and now L.A. is on the hook for three more years.

Anze Kopitar	82	35	57	92	52.2
3.2	101.6	46.1	22:05	\$10.0M	
Dustin Brown	81	28	33	61	52.9
4.0	103.5	48.8	19:50	\$5.875M	
Tyler Toffoli	82	24	23	47	50.7
0.9	101.5	55.2	16:07	\$4.6M	
Tanner Pearson	82	15	25	40	51.9
2.6	101.7	54.9	15:58	\$3.75M	
Adrian Kempe	81	16	21	37	50.8
1.3	103.4	71.3	13:20	\$894K	
Trevor Lewis	68	14	12	26	50.1
-0.9	98.6	43.3	15:14	\$2.0M	
Alex Iafallo	75	9	16	25	52.5
3.1	100.8	47.9	15:06	\$925K	
Jeff Carter	27	13	9	22	48.1
-3.3	101.4	48.5	17:51	\$5.273M	
Nate Thompson	69	5	12	17	43.7
-5.8	99.4	40.1	12:46	\$1.65M	
Kyle Clifford	50	6	4	10	52.4
2.4	97.6	45.5	10:33	\$1.6M	
Andy Andreoff	45	3	6	9	45.6
-4.1	98.8	55.2	9:23	\$678K	



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Michael Amadio	37	4	4	8	47.6
-2.6	99.7	67.5	9:19	\$718K	
Jonny Brodzinski	35	4	2	6	45.7
-5.3	103.5	53.5	9:30	\$650K	
Tobias Rieder	78	12	13	25	46.2
-2.5	99.8	45.1	14:39	\$2.225M	RFA
Torrey Mitchell	60	6	5	11	48.6
-2.4	98.4	43.2	11:24	\$1.3M	UFA

A dominant two-way force, Anze Kopitar bounced back from a down season and re-established his place among the top players in the game, warranting serious Hart Trophy discussion after putting up a career-high 92 points. At the same time, though, he did allow his higher rate of shots against since his rookie season, so the dominant results were, at least in part, driven by percentages – his 9.6% on-ice shooting percentage was his highest since 2010-11.

It's been a long time since Dustin Brown felt like a relevant part of the Kings, and it's really unusual for a player to emerge from a down cycle of four years, but that's what happened to the 33-year-old last season, as he rode shotgun with Kopitar and turned back the clock. Not only did he put up 28 goals and 61 points, but the Kings outscored the opposition 60-35 with Brown on the ice at 5-on-5. Under contract for four more seasons, a productive Brown makes a major difference for Los Angeles.

Last season's production was relatively average for Tyler Toffoli, but he did generate a career-high 3.06 shots on goal per game. He's a strong scoring winger, a three-time 20-goal scorer, though his play away from the puck could be better – his rate of shots against increased by about 25% compared to 2016-17.

After a career-high 24 goals in 2016-17, Tanner Pearson dropped to 15 goals last season. His underlying numbers are still decent, and he's reasonably-priced, so it is conceivable that he could be a trade chip in the offseason, if the Kings want to add a more significant piece to their offence.

2014 first-round pick Adrian Kempe had a nice showing in what was still officially his rookie season, though he was shifted to the middle when Jeff Carter was hurt and struggled (38.5%) at the dot. Nevertheless, Kempe adds speed and skill to the Kings lineup, and the 21-year-old should be capable of producing more in a bigger role.

Veteran winger Trevor Lewis has had a surprisingly regular role for a forward who contributed so little offensively, but that's changed a bit in recent seasons. He scored a career-high 14 goals in just 68 games last season, and remains a fine option in the bottom six.

Signed as a free agent of Minnesota-Duluth, Alex Iafallo injected speed into the Kings' lineup, and frequently found himself skating with Kopitar and Brown on the top line. If he's going to keep such a lofty spot, Iafallo needs to finish more efficiently, but he certainly gives Los Angeles more options when putting together their lineup.

Can Jeff Carter rebound from an injury-plagued season?

Jeff Carter missed a bit more than four months after his leg was cut by the skate of Montreal Canadiens defenceman Jeff Petry, but he was still productive after returning, finishing with 13 goals in 27 games. By the looks of things, Carter is still a valuable commodity, but it's also fair to wonder for how much longer. He's 33-years-old and under contract for four more seasons.

The Kings made a significant commitment when they traded for Nate Thompson, mostly because he's signed through next season. He's a serviceable fourth-liner who seems to hold an inflated reputation because of some relative playoff success in previous stops with Anaheim and Tampa Bay.

In eight NHL seasons, Kyle Clifford has not scored more than 15 points in a single campaign, but he's still a capable physical presence who can

hit, fight, and do it without getting buried in terms of shot differentials. He's probably making a bit too much in that role, but he's a contributor.

Andy Andreoff has been scrapping for his NHL life every step of the way. The 27-year-old has 24 points and 18 fights in 159 career games. His results aren't good enough to hold a regular spot, but if he's an inexpensive low-maintenance fill-in option, that's fine.

Twenty-two-year-old Michael Amadio earned a promotion from the American Hockey League, where he had 32 points in 29 games, and ended up toiling on the Kings' fourth line. The question is whether he can rise up the depth chart or whether he is a more skilled option for the lower half.

Over the past couple of seasons, Jonny Brodzinski has put up 79 points in 88 AHL games, and eight points in 41 NHL games. He turns 25 this summer, so the time to stick in the league is here, and he's a viable depth option, but still left battling for a job.

The Kings acquired Tobias Rieder from Arizona before the trade deadline, and while he had modest production (six points in 20 games) after the deal, it's conceivable that the Kings would like to keep Rieder around because he adds speed and versatility to the lineup. He's a restricted free agent, though, and depending on other moves, money could get tight when it comes to Rieder.

As the Kings look to improve their offence, 2017 first-rounder Gabriel Vilardi looks like a promising addition. He dominated the Ontario Hockey League this season and the 6-foot-3 centre could be ready to contribute in a supporting role.

It would make some sense for the Kings to be aggressive on the trade or free agent markets. As long as they have Kopitar and Doughty performing at a high level, the play ought to be to provide the best possible supporting cast. Free agent wingers James Neal, James van Riemsdyk and Ilya Kovalchuk would all be interesting for the Kings. Trades for wingers who might be available, like Phil Kessel, Max Pacioretty and Jeff Skinner should be on the table, too. (In the Hurricanes' Off-Season Game Plan, I had Skinner going to L.A.)

Drew Doughty	82	10	50	60	52.8
4.6	101.2	49.1	26:50	\$7.0M	
Jake Muzzin	74	8	34	42	53.0
5.0	101.5	51.9	21:39	\$4.0M	
Dion Phaneuf	79	6	20	26	43.6
-6.1	99.4	48.4	20:00	\$5.25M	
Alec Martinez	77	9	16	25	46.2
-5.6	102.0	48.9	22:52	\$4.0M	
Derek Forbort	78	1	17	18	50.3
0.8	101.3	45.6	20:47	\$2.525M	
Oscar Fantenberg	27	2	7	9	47.4
-3.9	101.9	54.3	14:16	\$650K	
Christian Folin	65	3	10	13	49.8
-0.8	99.5	50.9	15:39	\$850K	UFA
Paul LaDue	12	3	1	4	57.6
7.3	107.0	60.5	13:58	\$874K	RFA
Kurtis MacDermid	34	1	3	4	43.7
-7.0	100.0	52.3	11:36	\$650K	RFA
Kevin Gravel	16	0	3	3	49.0
-6.3	98.7	53.0	14:02	\$650K	UFA

The main focus of the King's summer will be to get defenceman Drew Doughty signed to a contract extension. It won't come cheaply. Doughty is consistently one of the league's best two-way defenders, hasn't missed a game in four years and had a career-high 60 points last season. The Kings did cut Doughty's ice time all the way down to 26:50 per game (he was at 29:00 per game in 2014-2015), but he continues to produce elite



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results. The question is how much can the Kings commit to Doughty long-term, and still have a reasonable shot at building a Cup-contending roster?

A Drew Doughty contract extension seems to be job one for the Kings this summer.

One of the more underrated defencemen in the league, Jake Muzzin does a bit of everything. He skates well for a big man, uses his size to play a physical game, can move the puck and work the power play. Getting Muzzin's level of performance for a \$4-million cap hit is a bargain.

By contrast, Dion Phaneuf is a potential problem for the Kings. The 33-year-old has had a long and productive career, but he struggled in Ottawa and the early returns in Los Angeles weren't good either. That wouldn't necessarily be a big deal, but even with the Senators retaining some salary, the Kings have Phaneuf on the books for three more seasons and unless his performance improves dramatically next season that contract is going to be an albatross.

The Kings obviously have a successful history with 30-year-old defenceman Alec Martinez, but he didn't have a great season in 2017-2018, and was bailed out to some degree by a .935 on-ice save percentage. He played nearly 23 minutes per game last season, so if another team would offer significant value in return, it would probably make sense for the Kings to listen. Otherwise, they at least need Martinez to tighten up his defensive play next season.

26-year-old Derek Forbort took a while to reach the league after he was a first-round pick in 2010, but he's been a no-nonsense defensive presence for the past couple of seasons, frequently paired with Doughty on the top pair. Forbort doesn't add much offensively, but he plays to his strengths.

The Kings have a number of guys battling for the six, seven, eight spots on the blueline. Even if Christian Folin leaves as a free agent, Oscar Fantenberg, Paul LaDue and Kurtis MacDermid are all in that mix.

Jonathan Quick	64	33	28	3	.921
	.926	\$5.8M			
Jack Campbell	5	2	0	2	.924
	.900	\$675K			

The Kings got to see how different life could be with a healthy Jonathan Quick, and he bounced back from an injury-shortened 2016-2017 season to have his best season since 2011-2012. He may not provide great value for all five of the years left on his contract but, if he can stay healthy, the Kings have a chance to be competitive.

A healthy Jonathan Quick was a difference-maker for the Kings.

Every player in the league has a story about their path, and how they got to the NHL. Few will have the same ups and downs as Jack Campbell, a 26-year-old who has played seven career games since he was drafted 11th overall in 2010.

Campbell was expected to be a star after World Junior success, but he struggled for years, with mostly middling results in the minors. When the Kings dealt Darcy Kuemper to Arizona that opened up the backup job for Campbell, and he's here to stay. At least that's the plan.

Gabriel Vilardi	C	32	22	36	58
	+21	Kingston (OHL)			
Kale Clague	D	54	11	60	71
	+42	Moose Jaw (WHL)			
Jaret Anderson-Dolan	C	70	40	51	
	91	+9	Spokane (WHL)		
Cal Peterson	G	41			
	.910	Ontario (AHL)			

Matthew Villalta	G	49			
	.908	Sault Ste. Marie (OHL)			
Markus Phillips	D	68	10	29	39
	+13	Owen Sound (OHL)			
Michael Anderson	D	39	5	18	23
	+11	Minnesota-Duluth (NCHC)			
Mikey Eyssimont	LW	39	17	22	39
	+12	St. Cloud St. (NCHC)			
Matt Luff	RW	67	12	17	29
		Ontario (AHL)			+3
Dominik Kubalik	LW	25	10	17	27
	-6	Ambri-Piotta (SUI)			
Paul LaDue	D	36	8	10	18
	+8	Ontario (AHL)			
Matt Roy	D	49	4	13	17
		Ontario (AHL)			+10
Alex Lintuniemi	D	64	4	20	24
	-6	Ontario (AHL)			
Alexander Dergachyov	C	36	7	6	
	13	-8	Moscow Spartak (KHL)		
Jordan Subban	D	52	4	9	13
	-12	Ontario (AHL)			

DRAFT

20th – Grigori Denisenko, Vitali Kravtsov, Dominik Bokk, Bode Wild

FREE AGENCY

The have approximately \$70.7M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 20 players.

NEEDS

Two top-nine forwards, two defencemen

WHAT I SAID THE KINGS NEEDED LAST YEAR

Two top-six forwards, two defencemen

THEY ADDED

Alex Iafallo, Oscar Fantenberg, Kurtis MacDermid

TRADE MARKET

Jeff Carter, Tyler Toffoli, Tanner Pearson, Trevor Lewis, Tobias Rieder, Kyle Clifford, Jonny Brodzinski, Alec Martinez, Paul LaDue

Jeff Skinner*	Anze Kopitar	Dustin Brown
Tobias Rieder	Jeff Carter	Tyler Toffoli
Alex Iafallo	Gabe Vilardi*	Adrian Kempe
Kyle Clifford	Mike Amadio	Trevor Lewis
Andy Andreoff	Nate Thompson	Jonny Brodzinski
Sheldon Rempal	Mikey Eyssimont	Matt Luff
Derek Forbort	Drew Doughty	Jonathan Quick
Jake Muzzin	Alec Martinez	Jack Campbell
Oscar Fantenberg	Dion Phaneuf	Cal Petersen
Kurtis MacDermid	Cody Franson*	
Kale Clague	Matt Roy	



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Philadelphia Flyers

Scott Cullen

The Philadelphia Flyers returned to the playoffs in 2017-18, with their best points percentage since 2011-12.

Off-Season Game Plan looks into a team with an interesting mix of youth and veteran talent.

That is, the Flyers are still led by veteran stars Claude Giroux and Jakub Voracek, but they have a few players in their prime, like Sean Couturier and Shayne Gostisbehere.

But, there are a lot of up-and-comers too, either early in their careers or on their way in the near future – Ivan Provorov, Travis Konecny, Nolan Patrick, Travis Sanheim, Philippe Myers, Carter Hart – so the future should be quite promising.

Is there going to be a point at which these young players are going to be ready to be major contributors while Giroux and Voracek are still top-tier performers?

That may be a bigger picture question, but in the short term, the Flyers have a playoff team and have some holes to fill in order to be a playoff contender again next season.

HEROES

Claude Giroux – The 30-year-old shifted from centre to left wing, and led the league with 68 points, contributing to his career-high 102 points.

Sean Couturier – Elevated in the lineup to play centre with Giroux, Couturier remained an excellent defensive performer while putting up 76 points, nearly double his previous career-best.

Ivan Provorov – In his second season, the 21-year-old blueliner played more than 24 minutes per game and tied for the league lead among defencemen with 17 goals, including 15 at even strength.

ZEROES

Jori Lehtera – He's been in decline pretty much since his first year in the league, but the 30-year-old managed just eight points in 62 games.

Dale Weise – It didn't make a lot of sense to sign Weise to a free agent deal a couple of years ago, and he had worn out his welcome by last season, playing under 11 minutes per game while dressing for 46 games.

Petr Mrazek – The Flyers were desperate when they added Mrazek, with Brian Elliott and Michal Neuvirth both injured, and the former Red Wings goaltender had a .891 save percentage in 17 games.

Claude Giroux	82	34	68	102	52.9
	4.7	103.7	44.6	20:22	\$8.275M
Jakub Voracek	82	20	65	85	50.6
	1.3	102.7	49.4	19:27	\$8.25M
Sean Couturier	82	31	45	76	53.3
	5.2	103.4	43.2	21:36	\$4.333M
Travis Konecny	81	24	23	47	48.9
	-1.2	101.8	47.5	14:54	\$894K
Wayne Simmonds	75	24	22	46	47.3
	-3.2	98.1	46.6	18:05	\$3.975M

Nolan Patrick	73	13	17	30	49.0
	-0.6	101.1	53.0	13:43	\$925K
Michael Raffl	76	13	9	22	50.1
	0.5	100.1	52.5	13:15	\$2.35M
Jordan Weal	69	8	13	21	49.7
	-0.5	97.8	49.5	12:57	\$1.75M
Scott Laughton	81	10	10	20	51.6
	2.3	95.3	48.3	11:07	\$963K
Dale Weise	46	4	4	8	44.1
	-5.2	98.7	55.1	10:34	\$2.35M
Jori Lehtera	62	3	5	8	48.8
	-1.6	96.9	46.1	10:31	\$4.7M
Valtteri Filppula	81	11	22	33	44.5
	-7.1	99.0	48.7	16:29	\$5.0M
Taylor Leier	39	1	4	5	51.9
	1.9	94.6	50.5	10:29	\$807K
Matt Read	19	1	0	1	51.5
	1.0	95.5	45.2	10:54	\$3.625M

After his point total dipped to 58 points in 2016-17, his lowest in a full season since 2009-10, Claude Giroux moved to left wing and turned in the most productive season of his career, finishing second in the scoring race with 102 points, including 66 at even strength. He still took face-offs when needed, too, and won 58.6% of his draws.

Veteran winger Jakub Voracek, who has missed more than four games once in his 10 NHL seasons, put up a career-high 85 points. He's a consistent play driver who moved off the top line to give the Flyers' attack more depth.

Sean Couturier added a big offensive component to his game.

Through his first six seasons, Sean Couturier established himself as a first-rate checking centre, but was underwhelming offensively. Last season was a breakout performance, though, as the 25-year-old started on the top line and looked like that's where he always belonged.

21-year-old winger Travis Konecny climbed up to the top line part way through the season and he tallied 23 even-strength goals. He's on the smaller side, but plays with some bite and should be ready to take on more responsibility in his third season.

Veteran winger Wayne Simmonds is a rare type of player – capable of scoring goals and scrapping – though he did have a career-low 57 penalty minutes last season. Nevertheless, he did score 24 goals, the fifth straight season that he topped the 20-goal mark. Simmonds will be entering the final year of his current contract, so that could prompt a decision from the Flyers this summer, whether that means a contract extension, deciding to let him play it out or dealing him for assets now.

The second overall pick in last summer's draft, Nolan Patrick started slowly, but was coming on strong in the second half of the season, putting up 21 points in his last 33 games. It was a solid enough showing to think that he can contribute in a more significant role as a sophomore.

Michael Raffl has been a steady left winger for five seasons. He is limited offensively, but the puck tends to move the right way with him on the ice and that remains true even as he slides down the depth chart.

A strong showing late in the 2016-17 season earned Jordan Weal a two-year contract with the Flyers and, predictably, his production didn't hold up, as he scored as many goals (8) in 69 games last season as he did in 23 games the year before.

A gritty checking centre, Scott Laughton returned to the NHL after spending most of the 2016-17 season in the American Hockey League. Can the 24-year-old climb up the depth chart, or is he settling into a fourth-line role?



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Dale Weise is a veteran winger who will bang bodies, but he fell out of favour with the Flyers last season. Given his contract, it wouldn't be a surprise for the Flyers to give the 29-year-old a shot at redemption, but if they could find a deal to move him out, that would probably work for them too.

When the speed of the game is just too much for a player to handle, it can become glaring and that's what happened to Jori Lehtera last season. Barring a surprise gain of speed at this stage of his career, Lehtera is a longshot to be productive for the final year of his contract, which could lead to a buyout this summer. The Flyers don't look like a team that will be pushing the cap, though, so they may not feel too much urgency to shed Lehtera's deal.

The Flyers didn't want to waive 24-year-old winger Taylor Leier, but they weren't too eager to play him either, even though his shot metrics suggested that he could capably fill a fourth-line role.

Philadelphia has enough cap space that they could make a bid for prized free agent John Tavares, so that shouldn't be discounted as a possibility.

Otherwise, if veteran centre Valtteri Filppula departs then the Flyers could use a third line centre. Riley Nash, Tomas Plekanec, Tyler Bozak and Derek Ryan would be among the reasonable candidates for that role. Paul Stastny would require a bigger investment, and likely some convincing, to fill that spot.

Additionally, the Flyers could use another checking winger. Brian Gibbons, Daniel Winnik, Tim Schaller, and Antoine Roussel are among the possibilities that might be a decent fit.

Shayne Gostisbehere	78	13	52	65	
51.3	2.3	101.7	56.0	21:27	\$4.5M
Ivan Provorov	82	17	24	41	49.4
-0.5	101.6	47.8	24:09	\$894K	
Andrew MacDonald	66	6	15	21	46.1
-4.3	101.2	40.9	19:51	\$5.0M	
Radko Gudas	70	2	14	16	52.5
3.3	97.2	47.4	17:06	\$3.35M	
Brandon Manning	65	7	12	19	50.6
1.3	99.6	46.4	17:57	\$975K	UFA
Robert Hagg	70	3	6	9	45.6
-6.1	101.6	41.6	18:08	\$894K	RFA
Johnny Oduya	52	4	4	8	48.7
0.9	100.1	47.4	17:07	\$1.0M	UFA

Smooth skating Shayne Gostisbehere was eventually paired with Ivan Provorov and the Flyers reaped the rewards, as the duo put up positive shot, scoring chance and goal differentials. Gostisbehere is also an ace on the power play, recording 33 of his 65 points with the man advantage.

Shayne Gostisbehere is a force on the Flyers power play.

21-year-old Ivan Provorov has established that he is Philadelphia's number one defenceman, and his results got measurably better once he was paired with Gostisbehere, a competent puck-moving defenceman. What's remarkable about Provorov is that he is so productive despite a limited power play role; 61 of his 71 career points have come at evens.

Even though he consistently gets destroyed in terms of shots for and against, Andrew MacDonald only saw his ice time dip under 20 minutes per game for the first time last season. He can skate and handle the puck a bit, but doesn't defend the blueline well, so if the Flyers insist on giving MacDonald a spot in the lineup, a third-pair role would seem to be the best fit.

He's more widely known for his borderline hits, but Radko Gudas is more than just a thumper on the Flyers blueline. The 27-year-old has consistently been on the right side of shot differentials in three seasons with Philadelphia.

Despite getting brutalized by shot metrics as a rookie, Robert Hagg somehow managed to be on the ice for more goals for than against. If the 23-year-old is going to hold a regular spot in the lineup, he'll need to be better than he was last season.

2014 first-rounder Travis Sanheim got his first taste of NHL action last season and he played well; well enough that he probably deserved a more regular role on the Philadelphia blueline. He has the potential to be a quality top-four defenceman, capable of generating offence and suppressing shots against.

While the Flyers do have quality young defencemen in the pipeline, including Sanheim and Philippe Myers, it's probably worthwhile to add a veteran free agent. Toby Enstrom, Dan Hamhuis, Ian Cole, Nick Holden or Jack Johnson might be available on a short-term deal.

Brian Elliott	43	23	11	7	.909
.926	\$2.75M				
Michal Neuvirth	22	9	7	3	.915
.934	\$2.5M				
Petr Mrazek	39	14	13	6	.902
.914	\$4.0M	RFA			
Alex Lyon	11	4	2	1	.905
\$874K	RFA			.907	

Veteran netminder Brian Elliott wasn't really the answer in goal for the Flyers, though he was excellent at even strength. If the Flyers start with Elliott atop the depth chart next season, that's fine, but it doesn't mean he'll finish there either.

Michal Neuvirth had some trouble staying healthy last season, but played well when given the chance and that makes him a pretty strong option as a backup goaltender. I traded him to Carolina in the Hurricanes' Off-Season Game Plan, though that may be a bit too soon.

Petr Mrazek is technically a restricted free agent, but it's hard to imagine the Flyers giving him the \$4-million qualifying offer necessary to keep that restricted status. As such, he's likely to become an unrestricted free agent, and probably needs to find a good backup role in an effort to resurrect his career.

The Flyers do have prospects that will be pushing for playing time. 25-year-old Alex Lyon got into 11 games for Philadelphia last season, and had a strong season in the AHL.

Carter Hart may be the top goaltending prospect in the game. He dominated the Western Hockey League and, while it would be a totally unreasonable expectation for a player who turns 20 this summer, it's not inconceivable that Hart could challenge for a job next season.

Carter Hart	G	41			
.947	Everett (WHL)				
Philippe Myers	D	50	5	16	21
+12	Lehigh Valley (AHL)				
Morgan Frost	C	67	42	70	112
+70	Sault Ste. Marie (OHL)				
German Rubtsov	C	49	15	28	43
+7	Acadie-Bathurst (QMJHL)				
Wade Allison	RW	22	15	15	30
+7	Western Michigan (NCHC)				
Felix Sandstrom	G	11			
.903	Brynäs (SHL)				
Oskar Lindblom	LW	54	16	18	34
+4	Lehigh Valley (AHL)				
Tanner Laczynski	C	41	17	30	47
+18	Ohio St. (Big 10)				



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Samuel Morin +4	D	15	1	6	7
Lehigh Valley (AHL)					
Isaac Ratcliffe -28	LW	67	41	27	68
Guelph (OHL)					
Carsen Twarynski +4	LW	68	45	27	72
Kelowna (WHL)					
Nicolas Aube-Kubel +24	RW	72	18	28	46
Lehigh Valley (AHL)					
Matthew Strome -2	LW	65	37	31	68
Hamilton (OHL)					
Alex Lyon G		27			.913
Lehigh Valley (AHL)					
Maksim Sushko +13	RW	60	31	29	60
Owen Sound (OHL)					

DRAFT

14th - Ty Smith, Barrett Hayton, Rasmus Kupari

19th – Dominik Bokk, Akil Thomas, Jared McIsaac, Ryan McLeod

FREE AGENCY

The have approximately \$57.8M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 17 players.

NEEDS

One top-nine forward, depth forwards, one defenceman

WHAT I SAID THE FLYERS NEEDED LAST YEAR

One top-six forward, two top-four defencemen, starting goaltender

THEY ADDED

Nolan Patrick, Scott Laughton, Jori Lehtera, Travis Sanheim, Robert Hagg, Brian Elliott

TRADE MARKET

Dale Weise, Michael Raffl, Taylor Leier, Robert Hagg, Michal Neuvirth

Claude Giroux	Sean Couturier	Wayne Simmonds
Travis Konecny	Nolan Patrick	Jakub Voracek
Oskar Lindblom	Riley Nash*	Michael Raffl
Brian Gibbons*	Scott Laughton	Jordan Weal
Taylor Leier	Jori Lehtera	Dale Weise
Danick Martel	Michael Vecchione	Nicolas Aube-Kubel
Ivan Provorov	Shayne Gostisbehere	Brian Elliott
Travis Sanheim	Radko Gudas	Alex Lyon
Toby Enstrom*	Andrew MacDonald	Carter Hart
Robert Hagg	Philippe Myers	
Samuel Morin	Mark Friedman	

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TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Columbus Blue Jackets

Scott Cullen

The Columbus Blue Jackets reached the postseason for the second straight season, but the season also ended with disappointment after another first-round exit.

Off-Season Game Plan looks at a talented Blue Jackets team that has some major decisions to make in the summer.

Given their current salary situation, the Blue Jackets are probably not going to make major additions, but they have two huge priorities this summer.

Left winger Artemi Panarin and goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky, two of the team's cornerstone pieces, are one year away from unrestricted free agency, and will be eligible for extensions this summer.

If either one doesn't get signed to a new contract, that could suddenly open up the possibility to a blockbuster trade this summer.

But, provided those situations don't prompt a dramatic change in course, the Blue Jackets look like they should have a competitive team, one that may have to count on internal improvement if they are going to take a step forward next season.

Seth Jones – My pick for the Norris Trophy, the 23-year-old had a career-high 16 goals and 57 points, with strong shot and goal differentials.

Artemi Panarin – How would the Russian winger fare away from Patrick Kane ? That was the question going into last season, but then Panarin responded with a career-high 82 points in the regular season before producing seven points in six playoff games. Turns out he's great all on his own.

Sergei Bobrovsky – While the Blue Jackets netminder had a .921 save percentage, that doesn't even tell the whole story about how well he played in 2017-2018. His save percentage (.936) over expected save percentage (.915) at 5-on-5 was far and away the best among starting goaltenders.

ZEROES

Brandon Dubinsky – The wheels fell off for the veteran centre, who saw his point total drop from 41 to 16 and had his lowest ice time per game since 2007-2008.

Jack Johnson – It's not unusual for the veteran blueliner to get outshot, because that's been standard practice throughout his career, but his possession stats (48.0 CF%, -5.2 CFRel%) were back in the tank as he played a career-low 19:33 per game.

Alexander Wennberg – Following his breakout 2016-2017 season, during which he scored 59 points, the Blue Jackets centre dropped to 35 points in 66 games.

Artemi Panarin	81	27	55	82	56.5
	7.6	101.9	63.8	20:08	\$6.0M
Pierre-Luc Dubois	82	20	28	48	55.7
	5.9	99.9	65.0	16:38	\$894K
Cam Atkinson	65	24	22	46	52.3
	0.7	102.7	53.7	18:54	\$5.875M
Alexander Wennberg		66	8	27	35
	54.0	2.9	103.2	60.7	18:08
Nick Foligno	72	15	18	33	51.4
	-0.4	100.2	51.8	18:21	\$5.5M
Josh Anderson	63	19	11	30	54.0
	3.7	99.4	60.1	18:02	\$1.85M



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Sonny Milano	55	14	8	22	50.9
	-0.2	97.5	56.5	11:39	\$863K
Brandon Dubinsky	62	6	10	16	47.5
	-6.9	98.5	37.4	15:21	\$5.85M
Lukas Sedlak	53	4	4	8	48.9
	-3.5	98.3	38.5	9:24	\$825K
Markus Hannikainen	33	3	3	6	44.5
	-5.0	100.2	45.8	8:22	\$675K
Thomas Vanek	80	24	32	56	46.9
	-1.9	102.7	61.8	14:05	\$2.0M UFA
Oliver Bjorkstrand	82	11	29	40	51.6
	0.2	100.1	54.7	14:18	\$650K RFA
Boone Jenner	75	13	19	32	47.1
	-5.6	100.8	42.0	16:28	\$2.9M RFA
Matt Calvert	69	9	15	24	47.8
	-5.0	97.4	39.7	13:23	\$2.2M UFA
Mark Letestu	80	9	14	23	48.6
	-3.6	96.5	37.5	12:51	\$1.8M UFA

An artist in the offensive zone, Artemi Panarin made a seamless move to Columbus and took on the role as the franchise's scoring star. While that's super encouraging, he's also headed into the last year of his contract, which means he's eligible for an extension this summer, and if he doesn't get it, unrestricted free agency looms.

Artemi Panarin gives the Blue Jackets a game-breaking scorer.

Somewhat of a surprise pick when he was taken third overall in 2016, Pierre-Luc Dubois turned in a terrific rookie season as a 19-year-old. After he had just four points in his first 20 games, Dubois had 44 points in the last 62 games and established himself as the No. 1 centre.

After a tough start to the season, Cam Atkinson rallied to a strong finish, putting up 18 goals and 33 points in his last 33 games. He generated a career-high 3.55 shots on goal per game, the kind of shot generation that should keep him as a high-end goal scorer.

A playmaker who is a reluctant shooter, Alexander Wennberg had a disappointing season, but he was injured and wasn't the factor on the power play that he was the year before, going from 23 power-play points to five.

Captain Nick Foligno produced just 33 points, his lowest total in a non-lockout season since 2009-2010. He's a solid pro winger, but he comes with a \$5.5-million cap hit for the next three seasons, which is a tad pricey if he's not producing.

Power forward Josh Anderson had a career-high 19 goals and 30 points, and played six more minutes per game than the year before, but a knee injury cost him 19 games. His possession numbers were strong, too, and the 24-year-old should be a significant part of the lineup going forward.

A 2014 first-round pick, Sonny Milano has loads of skill with the puck, and his 1.45 goals/60 ranked second among all players with at least 300 5-on-5 minutes. Nevertheless, he's still battling for a regular spot in the lineup.

After a productive career as a gritty two-way centre, Brandon Dubinsky fell off a cliff last season, even getting sent home at one point for "ongoing personal issues." It might be tempting for Columbus to buy their way out of the last three years of Dubinsky's contract, because of the \$5.85-million cap hit and the fact that he's 32-years-old, but that's still a big price to pay, so they probably give him a shot at redemption next season.

Lukas Sedlak's second NHL season wasn't nearly as effective as his rookie year, but he's still worth consideration in the fourth-line centre role.

25-year-old Markus Hannikainen has been inching his way into the league. He played a career-high 33 games last season, but still just 8:22 time on ice per game, so he's organizational depth.

While there was some inconsistency, and he only shot 6.7%, Oliver Bjorkstrand did break through with a 40-point season. There's still more to come for the 23-year-old who has offensive upside.

At one point during the season, John Tortorella talked about how the game was getting too fast for Boone Jenner, the versatile 24-year-old forward who is a couple of years removed from a 30-goal season. He did get better down the stretch, however, contributing 19 points in the last 28 games. He's a restricted free agent, though, so if the Blue Jackets aren't prepared to pay for Jenner then he probably would have some appeal on the trade market.

While it doesn't seem like the Blue Jackets are in position to make a big free agent addition, they could look into a depth winger like Antoine Roussel or Ryan Reaves. Not every team digs tough guys, but that still seems to hold appeal for Columbus.

Seth Jones	78	16	41	57	54.3
	4.5	100.4	58.4	24:36	\$5.4M
Zach Werenski	77	16	21	37	54.2
	3.9	100.6	60.0	22:35	\$925K
Markus Nutivaara	61	7	16	23	53.2
	3.1	101.7	52.5	16:02	\$2.7M
David Savard	81	4	12	16	49.5
	-3.1	99.7	46.0	19:23	\$4.25M
Scott Harrington	32	2	3	5	43.8
	-7.9	101.1	52.8	13:18	\$675K
Dean Kukan	11	0	4	4	56.3
	1.7	97.2	60.4	12:22	\$725K
Ian Cole	67	5	15	20	51.5
	100.4	45.5	17:47	\$2.1M	UFA -0.1
Ryan Murray	44	1	11	12	50.1
	-2.8	99.2	47.8	18:26	\$2.825M RFA
Jack Johnson	77	3	8	11	48.0
	-5.2	99.2	45.2	19:33	\$4.357M UFA
Taylor Chorney	25	1	3	4	43.8
	-5.7	107.4	55.5	13:08	\$800K UFA

23-year-old Seth Jones has stepped into a big role with the Blue Jackets, after coming over in a trade from Nashville, and last season was his star-making performance, putting up points, dominant possession numbers and playing more than 24 minutes per game. He's a star and is on a relative bargain contract for the next four seasons.

Seth Jones was a standout on the Columbus blueline last season.

A shoulder injury hampered Zach Werenski in his second season, and while he was still very good on the Blue Jackets' top pairing, he wasn't quite as impressive as the year before. After undergoing surgery, he may not be ready for the start of next season, and it's fair to wonder if he will be effective right away following rehab.

Drafted in the seventh round in 2015, Markus Nutivaara has already emerged as a steal. He was intriguing as a rookie a couple of years ago, then took a notable step forward last season, earning a four-year contract. Opportunity could be there for Nutivaara to take on a bigger role next season.

Last season was not the best of David Savard's career, to be sure, but tended to fare better when he wasn't partnered with Jack Johnson. That should be standard procedure next season and Savard had been steady enough in the previous three years to warrant another chance with a new partner next year.



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Ever-injured Ryan Murray has missed 60 games in the past couple of seasons (and that's only the most recent example of his injury woes), and the 24-year-old's development has naturally been impeded by all the missed time. Even so, the second pick in the 2012 Draft can fill a spot on the blue line, potentially as part of the top four, if needed.

25-year-old Scott Harrington has played in 79 career games, spread out over three teams in the past four seasons. He's been crushed by shot metrics in the past couple of years with Columbus, but the samples are so small and spread out over time. As it is, he's okay organizational depth.

There is still a chance that 24-year-old Dean Kukan could emerge as a regular part of the Blue Jackets' top six on defence. He's played 19 NHL games and has solid possession numbers (53.2 CF%, +2.6 CFRel%) in that brief look in the NHL.

Presuming that Columbus lets Johnson and/or Ian Cole leave via free agency, there is a need for help on the blue line. It could be 2015 first rounder Gabriel Carlsson, or the Blue Jackets might take a low-risk investment in a free agent defenceman. Roman Polak or Luke Schenn might be viable low-cost depth options.

Sergei Bobrovsky	65	37	22	6	.921
	.935	\$7.425M			
Joonas Korpiälö	18	8	8	1	.897
	.898	\$900K			

Since 2012-2013, Sergei Bobrovsky has a .923 save percentage in 312 games. Among 32 goaltenders to play at least 200 games in that period, his save percentage is best. Among the 30 goaltenders to play at least 12,000 minutes in that time, his delta save percentage (save percentage minus expected save percentage) ranks third, behind Corey Crawford and Henrik Lundqvist.

Will the Blue Jackets be able to keep Officer Bobrovsky on the case?

So it's safe to say that Bobrovsky is travelling in elite company and that poses a challenge for the Blue Jackets because Bobrovsky is entering the last year of his contract and he'll be 30 by the time next season starts. How much, and how long, should they pay? It's a major decision that could impact how competitive this team is in the near future.

The goaltending decision might be easier for Columbus if 24-year-old Joonas Korpiälö had continued to develop, so that he might be close enough to challenge for a starting role. However, he's not there yet and had a .897 save percentage in 18 games.

Goaltending should be a strong suit for Columbus, but the future of Bobrovsky looms large.

Gabriel Carlsson	D	33	2	3	5
	-3	Cleveland (AHL)			
Jonathan Davidsson	RW	52	10	21	31
	+18	Djurgarden (SHL)			
Alexandre Texier	C	53	13	9	22
	+5	KalPa (SML)			
Vitaly Abramov	RW	56	45	59	104
	+52	Victoriaville (QMJHL)			
Andrew Peeke	D	39	5	9	14
	+12	Notre Dame (HE)			
Vladislav Gavrikov	D	50	5	9	14
	+20	SKA St. Petersburg (KHL)			
Sam Vigneault	C	56	9	13	22
	-7	Cleveland (AHL)			
Calvin Thurkauf	LW	75	11	13	24
	-12	Cleveland (AHL)			

Kevin Stenlund	C	43	7	15	22
	+4	HV71 (SHL)			
Elvis Merzlikins	G	42			
	.921	Lugano (SUI)			
Dean Kukan	D	32	1	14	15
	-3	Cleveland (AHL)			
Emil Bemstrom	C	33	8	7	15
	+8	Leksands (SWE)			
Alex Broadhurst	C	66	19	22	41
	-10	Cleveland (AHL)			
Kale Howarth	LW	44	24	37	61
		Trail (BCHL)			
Eric Robinson	LW	36	17	14	31
	+4	Princeton (ECAC)			

DRAFT

18th – Isac Lunderstrom, Dominik Bokk, Serron Noel

FREE AGENCY

The Blue Jackets have approximately \$61.6 M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 19 players.

NEEDS

Depth forwards, one defenceman

WHAT I SAID THE BLUE JACKETS NEEDED LAST YEAR

One top-six forward, financial flexibility

THEY ADDED

Artemi Panarin, Pierre-Luc Dubois, Sonny Milano

TRADE MARKET

Boone Jenner, Brandon Dubinsky, Sonny Milano

Artemi Panarin	Pierre-Luc Dubois	Cam Atkinson
Nick Foligno	Alexander Wennberg	Oliver Bjorkstrand
Boone Jenner	Brandon Dubinsky	Josh Anderson
Sonny Milano	Lukas Sedlak	Ryan Reaves*
Markus Hannikainen	Alex Broadhurst	Kevin Stenlund
Calvin Thurkauf	Sam Vigneault	Vitali Abramov
Zach Werenski	Seth Jones	Sergei Bobrovsky
Markus Nutivaara	David Savard	Joonas Korpiälö
Ryan Murray	Roman Polak*	Matiss Kivlenieks
Dean Kukan	Scott Harrington	
Gabriel Carlsson	Ryan Collins	

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TSN.CA / Smith-Pelly finding success the old-fashioned way

Frank Seravalli



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018

LAS VEGAS — Devante Smith-Pelly's face said it all.

Ten hours after Andre Burakovsky drilled him in the face with a slap shot at the Capitals' morning skate, leaving him dripping blood as he faced reporters, Smith-Pelly could not stop smiling after scoring in a second straight Stanley Cup Final game.

What a day.

"Yeah, it didn't start so great, but it feels a lot better now," Smith-Pelly said. "It's not as sore."

Smith-Pelly said Burakovsky owed him "at minimum" a steak dinner for the errant shot. Maybe Burakovsky can instead buy him a bottle of Veuve Cliquot.

Thanks in part to Smith-Pelly, the Washington Capitals are one win away from sipping from Stanley. It's the rare analgesic that can make you brush off a slapper to the dome.

"It's exciting," Smith-Pelly said. "I mean, at the same time, we're not there yet."

That Smith-Pelly is even here at all, with a jam-packed Capital One Arena chanting his name in a Cup Final, is almost unbelievable in itself.

Smith-Pelly has six goals in these Stanley Cup playoffs after scoring just seven in 75 regular season games. He hadn't scored in back-to-back games since 2016, two seasons ago.

Last June, he was placed on waivers and bought out by the New Jersey Devils. Ready for a reset after bouncing around three teams in three years, the Scarborough, Ont., native signed with the Capitals - but wasn't promised a spot in the NHL.

Smith-Pelly signed a two-way deal with the cap-strapped Caps and was guaranteed \$325,000 - the lowest among non-entry-level players in the Caps' system - which was a 75 per cent haircut from the \$1.3 million he was making with the Devils.

"When you've got skill and you bound around, it's a consistency factor," Smith-Pelly's junior coach and former Senators bench boss Dave Cameron said Tuesday. "You want guys that are consistent. It's a tough league and there is no blueprint on how to get there."

Smith-Pelly, 25, rededicated himself and spent the summer with Matt Nichol at Biosteel Sports in Toronto and former Capitals head coach Adam Oates. They helped "Devo" understand how to reach his potential, even six years after making his debut as a 19-year-old in Anaheim.

"A lot of people just saw him as a big, strong power forward that was able to create a lot of opportunities," Cameron said. "What got lost in the physicality was how good his hands were."

Smith-Pelly's numbers weren't jaw-dropping this season, but he played in a career-high 75 games. That was a start.

"As a coach, you want to know what you're getting all the time," Capitals coach Barry Trotz said. "And you have to know your strengths and weaknesses. Your strengths are you can skate pretty well, he can be a physical aspect, he can kill penalties. Just to be very consistent in back-to-back games over the course of 82 games and then you have a trust factor with your teammates and you're probably going to have some production."

"He's learned that he's got my trust as a coach-player relationship. And he's done a really good job."

Trotz said one reason the Capitals signed Smith-Pelly was his reputation as a solid playoff performer. He netted five goals in 12 games for the Ducks in 2013-14, but then had just one in 12 games with the Canadiens in 2015-16.

Yes, Smith-Pelly netted 15 goals in 20 playoff games for Cameron en route to the Memorial Cup final with the St. Mike's Majors, but really no one saw this - goals in two elimination games this spring - coming.

There is something about the postseason that brings out hockey's most unlikely heroes, and Smith-Pelly has no way to make sense of the randomness.

"I don't know. It's been a roller coaster year. I can't really explain the six goals in the playoffs but seven in the regular season," Smith-Pelly said. "I'm happy with the way I'm playing. I'm happy with the way the team's playing. I'm just trying to have fun."

Maybe the clutch factor springs from Smith-Pelly's laid back attitude.

"He was a fun guy to have around," said Cameron, who will be the next head coach of the Vienna Capitals in Austria. "You could joke with him and have some fun with him."

Maybe it really is just luck - the opposite of getting hit with a puck in practice on the morning before the biggest game of your life.

"Maybe," Smith-Pelly said of his goal. "That puck landed - it came right to me. Sometimes it happens. Sometimes it just bounces your way."

Maybe this playoff run is him finally putting it all together for the first time. Everything Smith-Pelly has received is because he earned it the old fashioned way.

"He's still young," Cameron said. "He's still figuring it out. Hopefully this great playoff is exactly what he needed to be the straw to figure out what it takes to stay. These young guys aren't always ready to grab it one time. There's some pressure involved. There is no blueprint."

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USA TODAY / Pearl Harbor survivor revels in Capitals' Stanley Cup run

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 12:40 p.m. ET June 5, 2018 | Updated 4:17 p.m. ET June 5, 2018

WASHINGTON — Ninety-year-old Grace Cohen isn't the only Washington Capitals fan who has owned season tickets since the team's first season in 1974-75.

But she might be the Washington fan base's most endearing character.

Cohen grew up in Hawaii, and when her husband said he wanted to buy tickets she said, "I didn't know the difference between a puck and surfboard."

Forty-four years later, and eight years after her husband, Jay, died, she was a guest of Capitals owner Ted Leonsis in his suite Monday night when the team beat the Vegas Golden Knights to take a 3-1 series lead in the Stanley Cup Final.

"I've been pushy since I was 8 years old," Cohen told USA TODAY Sports. "Ted happened to get off an elevator and walk past me, and I told him, 'I just want to tell you I think you are the best owner in sports.'"

Leonsis whipped out his cellphone and snapped a photo with Grace. "That's when I got pushy," Cohen said, laughing. "I said, 'Mr. Leonsis, in 44 years of being a season ticketholder, I've never had the honor and privilege of sitting in the owner's box.'"



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 6, 2018

He promised Cohen that if the Capitals made the Stanley Cup Final, she would receive an invitation to sit with him. He made good on that promise for Game 4.

In 1974, Cohen said she told her husband to buy the tickets and if she didn't like the sport, he could "find someone else to go with."

She added: "But after the third game, nobody got my tickets because I fell in love with the sport."

As excited as Grace is about the Capitals' playoff run, she can't say these playoff games have been the most momentous events she has experienced. Not even close.

She was in Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

"The Japanese planes actually flew over my bedroom window on their way out," Cohen said.

Her father was in the Navy, working on Ford Island, which was heavily bombed. "We did not know for three days whether he was dead or alive," Cohen said. "We had to darken out the windows because of the blackouts, and I remember we were all screaming because we were so excited when we heard him come up the stairs."

Cohen's only regret about this Capitals' run is that her husband didn't live to see it. After he retired, he used to attend many Washington practices.

She recalls that when Bryan Murray was coach, he took note of Cohen's frequent presence and invited him into his office to talk hockey.

"Bryan would talk to him about this player or that player, but would always say 'You can't tell Gracie,'" Cohen said.

"My husband would say, 'What if I talk in my sleep?' " Cohen said. "And Bryan would say, 'You can't.' "

Cohen has been thinking about how to celebrate if the Capitals win.

"I've been wondering if the Capitals win, whether they would give me the Stanley Cup and I will take it out to his grave," Cohen said. "It's a crazy idea, and it probably will never happen."

USA TODAY LOADED: 06.06.2018

1098436 Websites

USA TODAY / Capitals crush Golden Knights in Game 4, are one win from first Stanley Cup

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 11:06 a.m. ET June 5, 2018

WASHINGTON — It's as if the Washington Capitals have learned the secret of the Vegas Golden Knights' magic, decoded their DNA and discovered a way to eliminate their superpowers.

The Capitals ignored a strong first-period push by the Golden Knights to down them 6-2 and claim a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven Stanley Cup Final. They need one win to claim the first win in Washington's 44-year history.

"When it mattered, we were able to get it done," Capitals coach Barry Trotz said. "That's what this team has done in the course of the playoffs. Even when maybe we were not at our best, we have got it done."

The Golden Knights have earned rave reviews this season for their great starts, and relentless playing style. They pushed hard in the opening

minutes, hit a post and missed a couple of chances and found themselves trailing 3-0 after one period.

The Capitals have a lengthy history of postseason failures, but now history is on their side. It has been 76 years since any NHL teams rebounded from a 3-1 series deficit to win the Stanley Cup. The Toronto Maple Leafs erased a 3-0 deficit in 1942 against the Detroit Red Wings.

"We are trying to write our own story here and seems like the rest of the city is on board with that," said Washington's T.J. Oshie, who had a goal and two assists.

One of the strengths of this Washington team has been the players' ability to move past the losing postseason culture.

"We don't dwell on the game before, let alone things that happened in years past," Oshie said. "We know there's been heartbreak here, but that has scarred over and made us stronger for it."

In the two games in Washington, the Capitals outscored Vegas 9-3. Evgeny Kuznetsov had four assists in Game 4, giving him six points in those two games. Oshie scored, along with John Carlson, Tom Wilson, Michal Kempny and Brett Connolly.

With a league-leading 31 points, Kuznetsov is making a case to be the Conn Smythe Trophy winner as playoff MVP. If he doesn't win it, Alex Ovechkin will. He has 26 points.

Washington's most important players are producing, while the Golden Knights' top line of Jonathan Marchessault, William Karlsson and Reilly Smith hasn't found the net with regularity in this series. That trio combined for 92 goals in the regular season, but they have one goal in the series.

"In any offense in this league, your stars lead the way," Trotz said.

The expansion Golden Knights have been impressive this entire season and through three rounds of the playoffs. They haven't been able to finish in this round.

Vegas winger James Neal hitting the post early in the first epitomized their lack of puck luck. Washington goalie Braden Holtby said after the game he thought it was in.

"I thought we played our best period of the Final (in the first period)," said Vegas coach Gerard Gallant. "We had some good chances, and we got nothing out of it."

Gallant added that "we played a lot of the game the way we wanted to play."

Holtby has given up four goals in the last three games. Have the Golden Knights run out of luck or are the Capitals simply playing at a higher level?

Is the difference that Vegas is a well-balanced skilled team, but Washington is a well-balanced skilled team that has the added element of stars such Ovechkin, Kuznetsov and Carlson?

In the tighter-checking Stanley Cup Final, the Golden Knights have not been able to match the Capitals' ability to make the big plays when needed most.

USA TODAY LOADED: 06.06.2018