



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 3, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

What Brind'Amour plans to do if Jeff Skinner stays with the Hurricanes

By Chip Alexander

calexander@newsobserver.com

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Raleigh

The subject was Jeff Skinner and how to get the best out of the winger if he remains with the Carolina Hurricanes.

"That's the question, isn't it?" Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Sunday. "If you want to give me some advice, I'd take it."

It's no secret Canes general manager Don Waddell has been shopping Skinner, looking for a trade partner. But Skinner also has a no-move clause in his contract that gives him final approval of any deal, and none has been struck.

"A lot of teams the last week have been focused on free agency and things potentially could heat up in the next short period of time," Waddell said Sunday.

It's possible Skinner, with one year left on his contract, might decide to sit tight and return. Bill Peters no longer is the Canes coach, and Brind'Amour commands an large amount of respect given his playing career, his place in the Hurricanes organization and seven years as an assistant coach.

While Skinner is a pure scorer, capable of 30 or more goals in any season, possibly 40, he rarely has worked as hard on the defensive end of the ice for the Canes. His minus-27 plus/minus rating last season, one gauge to his play at even strength, was one of the worst in the league and easily the worst of his eight-year career.

"I've been around Jeff, I know him," Brind'Amour said. "Jeff's one of the smartest players we have. He knows how to play. I think he hasn't been held quite to the standard we need to hold him to. I think if he is, and realizes, 'Man, I've got to do it that way or I won't get out here,' I think you'll see a different Jeff Skinner."

"That's what I'm hoping, is that he comes back with that attitude."

Skinner, 26, has been among the NHL leaders in takeaways -- he was second to Edmonton's Connor McDavid last

season -- and has a quick, active stick. But positionally he gets caught out of place too often, his focus not as sharp in the Canes' zone as it needs to be.

Canes majority owner Tom Dundon is stressing more accountability from the players, the willingness to work hard in all three zones, and it's up to Brind'Amour and his staff to pull that effort out of the players -- and not just Skinner, if he's back -- more consistently.

With Skinner, it could be in how much ice time he receives, what line he's placed on by Brind'Amour.

"Now we've got guys to push him out of spots," Brind'Amour said. "If you're not going to quite dig in every shift then maybe you don't get every shift. That's definitely what I'm trying to preach and I've got to back that up."

"Now I have, from the top, the authority to do it that way, which is the right way. And Jeff, I think he wants that, too. We know he can do it. We just need him to do it every night."

Brind'Amour has spent much time mulling over his potential lines and lineup. Among the questions to be answered is whether to keep Sebastian Aho at center, where to place forward Micheal Ferland and whether to play the two "kids" -- teenaged forwards Martin Necas and Andrei Svechnikov -- together.

Ferland, a physical winger obtained in the recent trade with Calgary, might be best playing with Necas, able to keep other teams from trying to take liberties with the still-slender 19-year-old center. That's something Brind'Amour is considering.

And, of course, where to best fit in Skinner.

Brind'Amour said the departure of center Derek Ryan has been generally overlooked but could hurt in the faceoff circle. Ryan, who signed a three-year free-agent deal Sunday with Calgary, won 56.5 percent of his draws last season.

Brind'Amour sees the trade with Calgary -- forward Elias Lindholm and defenseman Noah Hanifin going to the Flames, Ferland and defenseman Dougie Hamilton coming back in return -- favoring the Canes.

"Does it change our dynamic? For sure," he said. "I like where we're at."



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Why Canes' new goalie Petr Mrazek prefers having one-year contract

By Chip Alexander

calexander@newsobserver.com

July 02, 2018 04:25 PM

Updated 14 minutes ago

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Petr Mrazek doesn't mind playing a season with a one-year contract.

"I've had that before and I'm pretty good with that," he said Monday. "It's something that would put me under pressure and that is something I like, to play games with more pressure on me."

[Mrazek, signed Sunday as a free agent](#), may get plenty of that. The Hurricanes haven't made the Stanley Cup playoffs since 2009, when he was 17 years old and playing for HC Vitkovice in his native Czech Republic, and inconsistent goaltending was a big reason why last season..

The Hurricanes and Mrazek agreed on a one-year deal that will pay him \$1.5 million next season. That's half the amount former Canes goalie Cam Ward will receive from the Chicago Blackhawks in 2018-19.

But Mrazek, 26, says it's more about the opportunity. With Carolina, he will share the net with Scott Darling, whose first season with the Hurricanes was mostly miserable.

The Canes hoped Darling would become their No. 1 goalie. He didn't do it and now will have a new competitor in net.

"Hopefully between Petr and 'Darls' one of these guys will get it together and can lead us," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

Mrazek, drafted by the Detroit Red Wings in 2010, at one time appeared to be on his way to being the Wings' No. 1 goalie, supplanting Jimmy Howard. Instead, Mrazek's play slipped the past two years and Howard took back over, and Mrazek was traded Feb. 19 to the Philadelphia Flyers.

Mrazek was in the second year of a two-year contract. The Flyers did not make Mrazek a qualifying offer after the season -- he had a \$4.15 million salary -- which made him an unrestricted free agent.

"I think the last two years I changed my style a little bit," Mrazek said. "I was moving in the net a little too much, pushing outside the blue paint. I've worked on being more patient in net. It's something I'm working on now in the offseason."

Mrazek said being traded to the Flyers and having to quickly adjust to a new defensive system was difficult and it showed in his performance numbers -- a 6-6-3 record, 3.22 goals-against average and .891 save percentage. It should be an easier transition, he said, with a full training camp with the Canes.

"When you look their D corps you see some big names and really good defensemen," he said.

Mrazek said Darling reached out to him with a text Sunday, after the signing, and two had a short chat about Raleigh, about the Hurricanes. He said there soon should be longer chats. Then, the competition.

"I believe we can be a great tandem for Carolina," Mrazek said. "Help them get the wins, which is the most important thing."



Canes sign defenseman Renouf to 1-year, 2-way deal

Posted 2:10 p.m. yesterday

By Derek Medlin, WRAL sports director

Raleigh, N.C. — The Carolina Hurricanes added depth to their defensive group Monday with the signing of Dan Renouf to a one-year, two-way deal.

Renouf, 24, will earn \$650,000 at the NHL level or \$70,000 at the AHL level with a guarantee of at least \$100,000.

"Dan is a sturdy, reliable defenseman," Carolina President and General Manager Don Waddell. "He'll be a steady presence on the blue line in our system."

Renouf tallied 12 points (2 goals, 10 assists) in 73 games with the Grand Rapids Griffins, the minor league affiliate of the Detroit Red Wings. Renouf has 29 points in 146 games at the AHL level.

Renouf has played in one NHL game, a March 27, 2017, meeting between Detroit and Carolina.

He signed with the Red Wings as an undrafted free agent in 2016.



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End of an Era

Ward leaves indelible mark on Hurricanes, community

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](#) / CarolinaHurricanes.com

July 2nd, 2018

April 4, 2004.

That was the last time the Carolina Hurricanes played a game in which, injuries aside, [Cam Ward](#) was not on the team's roster.

Oct. 4, 2018 -- exactly 174 months or 5,296 days later -- will be the next.

As free agency opened at noon on Sunday, curtains fell on an era in Raleigh. Ward, an unrestricted free agent for the first time in his career, signed a one-year contract with the Chicago Blackhawks.

"It's unfortunate that things didn't pan out," Ward said on a conference call. "I had always imagined myself retiring as a Hurricane and playing my whole career there, but with that being said, this has opened the door for a new opportunity and challenge for me, and I'm excited to see what comes out of it."

The Hurricanes made the decision to move forward with a goaltending tandem of [Scott Darling](#), who is hoping to rebound in year two of a four-year contract, and Petr Mrazek, signed to a one-year deal on Sunday. Ward, though uncertain what the future held, made the decision to move forward with his career.

"Cam Ward has been a great player for this franchise," Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell said. "Cam will never be forgotten in this organization."

"This is all new to me. This is the first time I've ever been a UFA in my career, so I really didn't know what to expect. I went through the week prior when teams can contact you and do the interview process. I was humbled by the number of teams that were reaching out and showing interest," Ward said. "I've got a family, a wife and two kids, and they're obviously the No. 1 priority. I wanted to go to a place that we all would feel comfortable in going to."

Sunday's news brought emotional finality to an era that began with a 25th overall pick in 2002 and ended 668 games and 13 seasons later. It didn't necessarily come as a surprise, though.

Reports of Ward signing with Chicago surfaced during the interview period, and the Hurricanes had made pretty well clear their intentions. Flip the calendar back to April 7, after

the Canes bested the Tampa Bay Lightning 3-2 in overtime in the season finale. Ward was given the postgame honor, a combat vest with "TEAM" stitched on the back, by his teammates, and he spoke candidly, both to them and to the cameras shortly after.

"I had a lot of fun this year coming to play with you guys," he told the room. "We got a great group here, and way to finish it on a good note with an OT win. We'll see what happens, and all the best to everybody."

"I'm human. I've been here for 13 years, and it's no secret that my contract is up," he said in his postgame media scrum. "The uncertainty and unknown of what's going to happen can be scary at times."

The goaltending section of the franchise record book belongs to Ward, who is the Hurricanes all-time leader in games played (668), wins (318), minutes played (38,436) and shutouts (27). He also owns the franchise records for saves in a game (57) and win streak (9).

Ward shown especially bright during the postseason. In 41 career playoff games with the Canes, Ward posted a 23-18 record, a 2.38 goals-against average and a .917 save percentage, and he's got a Conn Smythe - won as a rookie, no less - and a Stanley Cup to his name.

The images from Ward's career in Carolina are numerous. One rises above the rest, forever frozen in the pantheon of great moments in franchise history: Ward's outstretched left pad, desperately denying Fernando Pisani's game-tying bid in the waning minutes of Game 7 of the 2006 Stanley Cup Final. The rest, of course, is history.

Ward was so much more than a goaltender for the Hurricanes. His community involvement was highlighted by his "Cam's Champs" program, which began in 2006 as a way for him to support Special Olympics in North Carolina. In the early years of the program, Ward donated money for each save he made and hosted Special Olympics North Carolina athletes and their families in a suite at select games. The program evolved to host a variety of non-profit children's organizations in an all-inclusive suite for each Hurricanes home game, and Ward's contributions over the years totaled over a half-million dollars. Additionally, his wife, Cody, served on the Kids 'N Community Foundation board.

"Cam as a person, there's no better. He's one of the best guys I've been around," Waddell said. "We all know what he's meant to this organization and community."

Ward will make his return to PNC Arena, this time as a member of the opposition, when the Blackhawks make their



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first and only visit to Raleigh in the 2018-19 season on Monday, Nov. 12. One day, after he's hung up the skates and called it a career, the No. 30 will likely grace the rafters at PNC Arena.

Until then, a new chapter began on Sunday for both Ward and the Hurricanes.

But, it's not goodbye. It's see you later.

Mrazek out to Prove Himself

Czech goaltender enjoys pressure of one-year contract

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](#) / [CarolinaHurricanes.com](#)

July 2nd, 2018

Petr Mrazek has something to prove.

The Czech goaltender signed a one-year, \$1.5 million contract with the Carolina Hurricanes shortly after free agency opened on Sunday, July 1.

It's a relatively low-risk, high-reward signing for the Hurricanes, who rounded out their goaltending duo of [Scott Darling](#) and Mrazek for the 2018-19 season. For Mrazek, the one-year term is a chance to prove his worth in the NHL.

"It's something that puts me a little bit more under pressure," Mrazek said on a conference call. "That's something that I like to play under in the game, when there's more pressure on me."

"At 26 years of age, we felt there's still upside," President and General Manager Don Waddell said. "The age was a big factor for us. He's still a young player with a lot to prove, and he's determined to prove it."

Mrazek is looking to rediscover peak form, when he was the primary starter for Detroit in the 2015-16 season. Then, he posted a 27-16-6 record, a 2.33 goals-against average and a .921 save percentage to help lead the Red Wings to a Stanley Cup playoff berth. In 11 career postseason games, Mrazek owns a 1.98 goals-against average, a .927 save percentage and three shutouts.

Despite the dip in numbers since the 2015-16 season, particularly in Mrazek's 17-game stint with Philadelphia at the tail end of the 2017-18 season, the Hurricanes still see potential in the Czech netminder, who turned 26 not even five months ago.

"Mike Bales spent a lot of time on this goalie, watching a lot of video ... and talking to goalie coaches that he had. Mike came away with a great understanding of how he's played and how the last couple of years have gone for him," Waddell said. "Mike felt that he's not a guy who has a style that needs to be changed, but just has to work on it and tweak it some. He felt very comfortable with the skills Petr shows."

To his credit, Mrazek, who has a 2.66 goals-against average, a .911 save percentage and 14 shutouts over six career

"I'm going to miss everybody that I came across and everybody that supported me along the way. It's a long time to be with one organization, and I certainly wish that we had more success in making the playoffs, but it wasn't for a lack of effort and trying. I felt like I gave everything I could possibly give to the organization, and I also feel that they gave me every opportunity. I'm very thankful and appreciative of that," Ward said. "There's a reason I call Raleigh home. That plan doesn't change. I will forever call it home."

seasons, has already begun making some tweaks to his game.

"In the last few years I changed my style a little bit," he said. "I was moving in the net a little too much, going outside of the blue paint. I'm working on the stuff to be more patient in net and waiting on the shot. Last season I established that a little bit more, and that's something I'm working on right now in the offseason."

With the opportunity to prove himself comes the opportunity to vie for the crease with the Hurricanes. The Canes are hoping [Scott Darling](#) can rebound from an inconsistent first year with the team, and competition is going to drive both netminders in training camp.

"We have to go in with a very open mind. Competition is good," Waddell said. "Competition brings out the best in people. Nobody is going to be appointed the No. 1 job without going out and proving it."

"In Detroit when I shared the crease with Jimmy Howard, we were always pushing each other to be better on the ice and off the ice as a person, as well," Mrazek said. "I know Scott a little bit. I believe we can be a great tandem for Carolina."

Mrazek said Darling reached out via text on Sunday but the two didn't have much time to chat, since Mrazek was attending a friend's wedding in the Czech Republic. It had only been about 24 hours since the signing when Mrazek phoned in on a Monday conference call, so he had not yet spoken with fellow countryman Martin Necas, who is expected to play for the Hurricanes this season.

"It's nice to have someone in Carolina, Czech guys," Mrazek said. "I'm looking forward to helping him if he needs help. It's something in Detroit when I came from Europe, guys like ... Jiri Hudler helped me a lot, so I'm looking forward to it."

Furthering his decision to sign with the Canes was the team's stout, young defensive corps.

"When you look at their D corps, you see big names and really good defensemen," Mrazek said. "Those defensemen are really, really good. We all know how good and important they are for Carolina. I think it's going to be easy [transition]."

The Hurricanes believe Mrazek can be a viable option in net. Now it's up to him to prove it.

"When I talked to Petr on the phone ... he said, 'I want to go someplace on a one-year deal and prove that I'm the guy to



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be the No. 1 guy," Waddell said. "We got real comfortable that he was energized and excited about coming here to prove that he's a No. 1 guy."

"It's a great opportunity. That's something I was looking for this season, if there's going to be some opportunity to get the start in net and play as many games as I can," he said. "I was really, really excited and happy that Carolina gave me the chance."



Hurricanes Winds Blow Ward to Blackhawks

By [Mark Shiver](#) July 2nd, 2018

The winds of change are blowing at gale force in the Carolina Hurricanes' locker room. Sunday saw Cam Ward blown out of the only team he has ever played for, landing in the midwest with the Chicago Blackhawks. He signed a one-year deal for \$3 million. It's an epic event that has some Hurricanes fans happy and some not so happy.

Getting Rid of Ward is Epic

Reams have been written about Ward. I have contributed a great deal to the lexicon of Ward, the good and the not so good. He came on the scene in the 2005-06 season as a rookie, filling in for the injured Martin Gerber. He carried the team to the playoffs and eventually to victory in the Stanley Cup Final.

[As I pointed out in May](#) when making the assertion that Ward's jersey will hang in the rafters of the Hurricanes' home arena, "Not only does Ward have the distinction of winning the Cup as a rookie goaltender, but he also won the Conn Smythe Trophy, awarded to the most valuable player in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Once again, he is in elite company. The Stanley Cup Journal lists only three other goaltenders that have won the Conn Smythe as a rookie. They are Ken Dryden in 1971, Patrick Roy in 1986 and Ron Hextall in 1987." His career started out in stellar fashion, the stuff of legend, but fortune would not sustain that start.

Ward had the misfortune of playing on a sub-par team for the past 12 years. The Hurricanes only made it to the playoffs once in that time — in 2009. It was not Ward's play, or lack thereof, that propelled the team to mediocrity. A combination of poor coaching and poor management decisions kept him from being in the position to carry the team through the playoffs once more.

Ward was the ultimate team player. He not only tolerated, but accepted with grace, the decision of former general manager Ron Francis to bring in Scott Darling to be his replacement. He did not complain or hang his head. In fact, when he was called on to essentially resume his role as starter after Darling's horrific start last season, [Ward downplayed the notion he was trying to return](#) as the starter. He supported Darling every step of the way last season, making the decision to blow him off to the Blackhawks all the more difficult to understand.

There are social media pundits who regularly attack Ward and are delighted he is gone. But, [his career 318 wins \(27th on the list of all-time wins leaders\)](#) 2.70 goals-against average and .909 save percentage show that he has been an above-average goaltender throughout his career. His departure is an epic loss for the Hurricanes. It may have been a necessary move, but he is a player worthy of the thanks and respect from Hurricanes fans.

Ward and the Blackhawks

Ward did not necessarily want to go to Chicago, but being the consummate professional, he has accepted change and is already talking the talk we would expect of him. [Mark Lazerus wrote in Saturday's Chicago Sun-Times](#) that Ward is ready to do whatever is needed. Lazerus quoted Ward as saying Sunday, after signing a one-year, \$3 million contract with the Blackhawks, "I'm definitely going into it with the mindset that I'm there to support Corey," Ward said. "I think very highly of Corey as a goaltender. I look forward to meeting him and being a partner with him. Certainly, I'm in that support role that, when called upon, I will try to do the best I can."

Lazerus also quoted Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman as giving the rationale for their wanting Ward: "Being a No. 1 goalie in the NHL, it's not easy, There's a lot of examples around the league of guys that were great in a limited role, and once you put them in that No. 1 role, it's not easy to do. For that reason, we were looking to try to bring someone in that has a pedigree of being able to handle that."

Ward is definitely that player, and the concern the Blackhawks have with the health of their starting goalie, Corey Crawford, is lessened a bit knowing that Ward can step in if necessary.

Business is business. The business of hockey saw the winds of change blow through the Hurricanes' locker room, pick up Ward, and drop him in the 'Windy City.' Ward is the backup for the Blackhawks, a team that very well might make the playoffs. The irony of Darling having been there, in Raleigh now, and Ward now being there, is thick. Sometimes life is stranger than fiction, and those who respect what Ward has meant to the Hurricanes might just smile contently if he is a part of a Blackhawks' playoff run.

A well-deserved hat-tip to Ward and a heartfelt thank you for all you have meant to the Hurricanes and the community.



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Offseason Weekly Report: July 2, 2018

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: July 02, 2018

Each week during the offseason the Checkers PR staff will highlight news, notes and other various things to keep you in the loop.

NEWS

[Canes Qualify McKegg, Wallmark and Zykov](#): Three of the Checkers' most electric forwards last season all headed into the summer as restricted free agents, and the Canes extended qualifying offers to the trio to keep them in the fold. Wallmark and Zykov represent two of the organization's top prospects knocking on the NHL door, while McKegg is an AHL star whose NHL experience makes him a solid option for the Canes as well.

Checkers players not receiving qualifying offers, and thus becoming unrestricted free agents, were Sergey Tolchinsky, Tyler Ganly and Keegan Kanzig. Tolchinsky was already Russia-bound and didn't finish the season with the team, so his exclusion is no surprise. Injury issues have plagued Ganly, who has only appeared in 85 games between the AHL and ECHL through his first three pro seasons, while Kanzig couldn't crack the Charlotte lineup and spent the entirety of last season in the ECHL with Florida.

There is still a chance that the Canes could bring back any of those free agents who weren't qualified, a route they took with former Checker Phil Di Giuseppe.

[Canes Sign Zykov](#): The AHL's top goal-scorer impressed enough last season to earn himself a one-way contract with Carolina heading into his fourth pro campaign. Zykov's contract status now puts him in a solid position to compete for an NHL job out of training camp. The Russian forward stood out for the Canes during his limited NHL time last season, recording seven points in 10 games.

[Canes Sign Petr Mrazek](#): Carolina's big splash on day one of free agency came in the form of a new netminder. For the first time since 2005 Cam Ward won't be manning the crease in Raleigh, with the veteran inking a deal with the Chicago Blackhawks. In his place the Canes have brought in 26-year-old Petr Mrazek, a Detroit draft pick who has logged 183 career NHL contests. Mrazek joins Scott Darling and Alex Nedeljkovic as the group competing for Carolina's two spots.

Prospect Spotlight: Michael Fora

A 22-year-old blue liner out of Switzerland, Michael Fora inked an entry-level deal with the Hurricanes earlier this summer. The move gives Carolina added depth at defense, and given the nature of his contract Fora could be a solid addition to the Charlotte blue line, at least to start the season, filling a hole left by unrestricted free agents Jake Chelios and Philip Samuelsson.

Standing at 6-foot-4, 214 pounds, Fora brings a substantial physical presence to the blue line and is coming off a breakout offensive year back in his home country. His acclimation to North American ice surfaces shouldn't take long either, as Fora played one WHL season with Kamloops back in 2014-15.

Fora kicked off his tenure with the Hurricanes organization last week when he participated in Carolina's prospect camp.

Whatever Happened To: Zack Fitzgerald

Zack Fitzgerald only spent one season in Charlotte but left an impact on the franchise record book. A third round-selection by St. Louis who joined the Checkers for his sixth pro season, Fitzgerald logged 229 penalty minutes, a high that hasn't been matched by any Checker since.

Fitzgerald would move on from Charlotte the following offseason and log three more AHL campaigns with Hamilton and Adirondack, amassing 701 penalty minutes along the way. For the 2014-15 season, he made the jump overseas to the EIHL, the UK's top league. Serving as a player/assistant coach, Fitzgerald logged 304 penalty minutes in 44 games for the Braehead Clan, helping lead the club to a conference title.

Fitzgerald remained in the EIHL for the next three seasons, jumping over to the Sheffield Steelers. Serving as an alternate captain all three seasons, the forward kept his hard hitting ways about him, totaling 575 penalty minutes during his tenure while leading the Steelers to a league title in 2015-16 and a playoff championship in 2016-17.

Now regarded as a star across the pond, Fitzgerald announced a return to Braehead earlier this summer, signing on as the club's new captain. His signing has Clan fans buzzing, as head coach Pete Russell heralded Fitzgerald as "a warrior, a natural leader and a huge character," and noted



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that "Zack is a player and person that every club, team, coach and fanbase needs."

Number of the Week: 10

The Checkers have had some high-flying offensive production as of late, but nothing has touched that early December game during the inaugural 2010-11 season when Charlotte hung 10 goals on the Syracuse Crunch. After heading into the second period deadlocked at one, the Checkers scored a pair of goals just 21 seconds apart to start the frame, then piled on four more to bring the total to six goals in less than four minutes of play. They would notch another pair before the second buzzer and then, after the

Hurricanes Sign Defenseman Dan Renouf

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: July 02, 2018

The Hurricanes added some depth to their defensive corps Sunday by inking Dan Renouf to one-year, two-way deal.

Renouf was not qualified by Detroit last week, making him an unrestricted free agent. The 24-year-old has logged two full pro seasons with the Grand Rapids Griffins, totaling 29 points (5g, 24a) and 183 penalty minutes in 146 games and

Crunch tallied a pair in the third, capped off the night with number 10 in the final five minutes of play.

In the end, nine different Checkers lit the lamp, with Riley Nash the only one who doubled up. Oskar Osala led the way with four points (1g, 3a) on the night while Jerome Samson notched a game-high plus-five rating. Timo Pielmeier took the brunt of the attack for Syracuse, logging over 58 minutes and surrendering eight goals on 41 shots, while Jean-Philippe Leavasseur entered the game for 94 seconds and allowed two goals on the only two shots he was faced with.

helping the Griffins capture a Calder Cup in 2017. Renouf, a native of Ontario, also appeared in one NHL game for the Red Wings in 2016-17.

"Dan is a sturdy, reliable defenseman," said Hurricanes GM Don Waddell. "He'll be a steady presence on the blue line in our system."

Prior to signing an entry-level contract with Detroit, Renouf spent three seasons at the University of Maine where he logged 38 points (10g, 28a) in 111 games.

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<http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/offseason-weekly-report-july-2-2018>

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SportScan

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

1101339 Carolina Hurricanes

Why Canes' new goalie Petr Mrazek prefers having one-year contract

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

July 02, 2018 04:25 PM

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Petr Mrazek doesn't mind playing a season with a one-year contract.

"I've had that before and I'm pretty good with that," he said Monday. "It's something that would put me under pressure and that is something I like, to play games with more pressure on me."

Mrazek, signed Sunday as a free agent, may get plenty of that. The Hurricanes haven't made the Stanley Cup playoffs since 2009, when he was 17 years old and playing for HC Vitkovice in his native Czech Republic, and inconsistent goaltending was a big reason why last season..

The Hurricanes and Mrazek agreed on a one-year deal that will pay him \$1.5 million next season. That's half the amount former Canes goalie Cam Ward will receive from the Chicago Blackhawks in 2018-19.

But Mrazek, 26, says it's more about the opportunity. With Carolina, he will share the net with Scott Darling, whose first season with the Hurricanes was mostly miserable.

Andrei Svechnikov, made the No. 2 pick of the NHL Draft last week by the Carolina Hurricanes, talks about signing his entry-level contract and his play in the prospect development camp on June 30, 2018.

The Canes hoped Darling would become their No. 1 goalie. He didn't do it and now will have a new competitor in net.

"Hopefully between Petr and 'Darls' one of these guys will get it together and can lead us," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

Mrazek, drafted by the Detroit Red Wings in 2010, at one time appeared to be on his way to being the Wings' No. 1 goalie, supplanting Jimmy Howard. Instead, Mrazek's play slipped the past two years and Howard took back over, and Mrazek was traded Feb. 19 to the Philadelphia Flyers.

The Flyers did not make Mrazek a qualifying offer after the season -- he had a \$4.15 million salary -- which made him an unrestricted free agent.

"I think the last two years I changed my style a little bit," Mrazek said. "I was moving in the net a little too much, pushing outside the blue paint. I've worked on being more patient in net. It's something I'm working on now in the offseason."

Mrazek said being traded to the Flyers and having to quickly adjust to a new defensive system was difficult and it showed in his performance numbers -- a 6-6-3 record, 3.22 goals-against average and .891 save percentage. It should be an easier transition, he said, with a full training camp with the Canes.

"When you look their D corps you see some big names and really good defensemen," he said.

Mrazek said Darling reached out to him with a text Sunday, after the signing, and two had a short chat about Raleigh, about the Hurricanes. He said there soon should be longer chats. Then, the competition.

"I believe we can be a great tandem for Carolina," Mrazek said. "Help them get the wins, which is the most important thing."

News Observer LOADED: 07.03.2018

1101340 Carolina Hurricanes

What Brind'Amour plans to do if Jeff Skinner stays with the Hurricanes

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

July 02, 2018 02:32 PM

The subject was Jeff Skinner and how to get the best out of the winger if he remains with the Carolina Hurricanes.

"That's the question, isn't it?" Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Sunday. "If you want to give me some advice, I'd take it."

It's no secret Canes general manager Don Waddell has been shopping Skinner, looking for a trade partner. But Skinner also has a no-move clause in his contract that gives him final approval of any deal, and none has been struck.

"A lot of teams the last week have been focused on free agency and things potentially could heat up in the next short period of time," Waddell said Sunday.

It's possible Skinner, with one year left on his contract, might decide to sit tight and return. Bill Peters no longer is the Canes coach, and Brind'Amour commands an large amount of respect given his playing career, his place in the Hurricanes organization and seven years as an assistant coach.

While Skinner is a pure scorer, capable of 30 or more goals in any season, possibly 40, he rarely has worked as hard on the defensive end of the ice for the Canes. His minus-27 plus/minus rating last season, one gauge to his play at even strength, was one of the worst in the league and easily the worst of his eight-year career.

"I've been around Jeff, I know him," Brind'Amour said. "Jeff's one of the smartest players we have. He knows how to play. I think he hasn't been held quite to the standard we need to hold him to. I think if he is, and realizes, 'Man, I've got to do it that way or I won't get out here,' I think you'll see a different Jeff Skinner."

"That's what I'm hoping, is that he comes back with that attitude."

Skinner, 26, has been among the NHL leaders in takeaways -- he was second to Edmonton's Connor McDavid last season -- and has a quick,



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active stick. But positionally he gets caught out of place too often, his focus not as sharp in the Canes' zone as it needs to be.

Canes majority owner Tom Dundon is stressing more accountability from the players, the willingness to work hard in all three zones, and it's up to Brind'Amour and his staff to pull that effort out of the players -- and not just Skinner, if he's back -- more consistently.

Carolina Hurricanes forward Jeff Skinner discusses his scoring binge: five goals in six games this season, 22 in his last 25 games.

With Skinner, it could be in how much ice time he receives, what line he's placed on by Brind'Amour.

"Now we've got guys to push him out of spots," Brind'Amour said. "If you're not going to quite dig in every shift then maybe you don't get every shift. That's definitely what I'm trying to preach and I've got to back that up.

"Now I have, from the top, the authority to do it that way, which is the right way. And Jeff, I think he wants that, too. We know he can do it. We just need him to do it every night."

Brind'Amour has spent much time mulling over his potential lines and lineup. Among the questions to be answered is whether to keep Sebastian Aho at center, where to place forward Micheal Ferland and whether to play the two "kids" -- teenaged forwards Martin Necas and Andrei Svechnikov -- together.

Ferland, a physical winger obtained in the recent trade with Calgary, might be best playing with Necas, able to keep other teams from trying to take liberties with the still-slender 19-year-old center. That's something Brind'Amour is considering.

And, of course, where to best fit in Skinner.

Brind'Amour said the departure of center Derek Ryan has been generally overlooked but could hurt in the faceoff circle. Ryan, who signed a three-year free-agent deal Sunday with Calgary, won 56.5 percent of his draws last season.

Brind'Amour sees the trade with Calgary -- forward Elias Lindholm and defenseman Noah Hanifin going to the Flames, Ferland and defenseman Dougie Hamilton coming back in return -- favoring the Canes.

"Does it change our dynamic? For sure," he said. "I like where we're at."

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1101388 NHL

Silvertips defenseman Wyatt Wylie becomes first Everett native drafted into NHL

By Geoff Baker

Lake Stevens product Wyatt Wylie has spent the past few days in professional hockey's equivalent of boot camp: waking up and hitting the ice early mornings, doing drills away from the rink and donning skates for more work before dinner.

It's all taking place at the Philadelphia Flyers development camp running through Monday at their practice facility in suburban Voorhees, N.J.; the culmination for Wylie of a wild week that began at the NHL draft in Las Vegas. Everett Silvertips defenseman Wylie, 18, had been seated with a friend in the front row at the draft when the Flyers selected him No. 127 overall in the fifth round, fulfilling a dream he'd carried since his youth hockey days.

"I was just sitting there hoping for anything and bracing for anything," Wylie said Friday by phone, catching a breather between workouts. "And

then, getting picked was absolutely the most amazing thing. I was so happy."

Wylie was one of three members of the Western Hockey League (WHL) Silvertips selected, joining forwards Connor Dewar and Riley Sutter, picked consecutively in the third round at Nos. 92 and 93 overall by the Minnesota Wild and Washington Capitals, respectively. The Spokane Chiefs completed the picks of players from junior teams in this state, with defensemen Ty Smith and Filip Kral taken in the first and fifth rounds at Nos. 17 and 143 overall by the New Jersey Devils and Toronto Maple Leafs.

But those other Washington-based junior picks hail from Canada. Wylie is rather unique in that he was born in Everett, making him the first native of that city drafted by an NHL team. Though raised in nearby Lake Stevens, he played his youth hockey in Everett starting at age 7 and has spent his entire amateur career there aside from a one-year stint in an Under-16 Dallas Stars development camp.

Wylie became a fan of the Silvertips from an even younger age when his father began bringing him to games.

"I had a group of hockey friends there, and we kind of grew up together playing," he said. "The culture between the fans and the players in Washington state is pretty cool."

It wasn't always that way around here.

You can count the number of players from the Seattle metro area who've played in the NHL on one hand -- Tom Bissett, Dylan Gambrell, Curtis Hamilton and recent Stanley Cup winner T.J. Oshie of the Capitals. Football, baseball and basketball typically carry sway around these parts, but not so for Wylie, showing the influence that having a junior team in Everett since 2003 has had for some athletes.

Still, influence or not, his game needed work.

A year ago, he was barely on anybody's draft radar before improving on his transitional game to move up 108 spots in NHL Central Scouting rankings between mid-term and season's end. He'd entered the draft ranked 71st among North American skaters and seventh among WHL defensemen.

That was among the biggest ranking improvements made by any single player, though still not high enough to avoid some pins and needles waiting for his name to be called on draft day.

Your dose of local sports news. Delivered Monday through Friday.

Though Wylie hasn't made the NHL yet, being in a camp run by the Flyers with 32 other draft prospects from recent seasons -- including Everett's MVP goaltender, Carter Hart -- sure feels awfully close to him. Hart attended the camp a year ago and has helped Wylie adjust to some of what's expected.

Though Hart is expected to be a key part of the Flyers' future, Wylie could see additional time with the Silvertips before any full-fledged NHL career. Not many NHL junior picks stick permanently the first time around, though Flyers general manager Ron Hextall has identified a team need for right-handed shooting defensemen.

It won't hurt that he and Hart have logged significant ice time positioned directly in front of and behind one another in keeping more pucks out of Everett's net last season than any other WHL team. In doing so, Wylie was often praised for above-average hockey "sense" and "intelligence" in displaying an ability to clear the zone under pressure and initiate rushes with headman passes.

Wylie posted career highs of six goals and 31 points, had a plus-minus of 12 and didn't miss a game all season in helping the Silvertips win the WHL's Western Conference title. The only other time Everett made it that far was back in their debut 2003-04 season when Wylie was only 4 and too young to remember it.



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Now, he's the property of an NHL team and ambassador for a region hoping to add its own Seattle squad for the start of the 2020-21 season. Wylie sees the significance of that, especially when mirrored against his own progression in helping Everett produce a truly homegrown NHL player.

"It's just going to grow more than it already has and beyond where it is right now," he said. "Hockey's such a great sport, and I'm just happy, and I'm hopeful that it happens."

And that he'll get to take the ice at a revamped KeyArena, even if it is in a visiting team's colors. As a long shot from Everett unsure he'd even be drafted at all barely a week ago, any uniform will suffice.

Seattle Times LOADED: 07.03.2018

1101449 Websites

The Athletic / Oh, really! Just when a trade for Ryan O'Reilly looked dead, Blues GM Doug Armstrong pulls off another stunner

By Jeremy Rutherford Jul 2, 2018

Even among Doug Armstrong's critics, there were many who surmised that the Blues general manager would have a surprise this offseason.

Trading for Buffalo center Ryan O'Reilly didn't really qualify because acquiring him had been speculated for weeks. But even if it did, the Sabres were down to their final day to trade O'Reilly before owing him a \$7.5 million bonus, and with the two teams unable to reach an agreement after multiple conversations, that deal was dead.

Then at noon ET Sunday, when the NHL's free agency period opened, the Blues announced three signings, bringing David Perron back to St. Louis for a third time and also welcoming center Tyler Bozak and backup goalie Chad Johnson. The addition of Bozak signaled that the club was out on O'Reilly, and after Armstrong held an afternoon conference call to wrap up the day's moves, the backlash began.

The Blues not only failed to significantly upgrade up the middle, they lost Kyle Brodziak to Edmonton and Carter Hutton to Buffalo in free agency. Adding to the fans' frustration, the team was still carrying a couple of under-performing players in Patrik Berglund and Vladimir Sobotka.

But there's a reason why people have come to expect surprises from Armstrong, and about eight hours later, with social media still stirring in angst, he pulled off another stunner. Yes, O'Reilly was headed to the Blues in exchange for a first-round draft pick in 2019, a second-round pick in 2021, Berglund, Sobotka, and prospect Tage Thompson.

"I had been working with Buffalo for some time on a potential trade," Armstrong said. "It fell apart a little bit this morning and we went in a different direction and we were able to pick it up after that — add and subtract some pieces that made everyone comfortable in the end. It was done tonight."

"I'd like to give a lot of credit to the Blues' ownership group. When you have to go to a group and tell them about a \$7.5 million signing bonus that is due and you get nothing but a quick 'You do what you have to do to make us a better team' ... it's a great feeling."

It was finalized just three hours before O'Reilly's bonus was to be paid by Buffalo, which would have ended the likelihood of a deal. And not a minute too soon for the Blues, who now have quality depth at a position that was their biggest area of concern last season.

Consider this: The Blues' four centers in their 2017-18 regular-season finale in Colorado on April 7 were Brayden Schenn, Brodziak, Sobotka and Oskar Sundqvist. When they open the 2018-19 season against Winnipeg on Oct. 4, they could be trotting out O'Reilly, Schenn, Bozak

and rookie Robert Thomas. Or, they could move O'Reilly to left wing, move Thomas up the lineup, and insert Ivan Barbashev in the middle on the fourth line.

Either way, it's quite the transformation.

"Ryan solidifies our center ice position," Armstrong said. "When I look at our position down the middle now, when you have Schenn, O'Reilly, Bozak and a young player like Rob Thomas fighting for a position there, it gives us a good opportunity to allow (Thomas), if he's good enough to make the team, to come in at a more natural pace. The one thing is, in today's NHL, you could never have too many centermen. Centermen can go to the wing with great ease. I see them all as center icemen now, but it gives (Blues head coach) Mike Yeo a lot of different options moving forward."

We'll get into those options later, and even guess at the opening-night line combinations. But first, let's look at O'Reilly, let's look at who the Blues gave up in the deal and, more importantly, let's look at who they didn't give up.

O'Reilly, 27, has played 651 games in the NHL (with Colorado and Buffalo) and has 155 goals and 422 points. His career-high offensive numbers came in 2013-14 with the Avalanche with 28 goals and 64 points, but he wasn't far off those totals last season with 24 goals and 61 points with the last-place Sabres.

A terrific two-way player who finished 11th in the Selke Trophy voting as the league's best defensive forward last year, O'Reilly is phenomenal in the face-off circle, finishing first in the NHL with a 60-percent success rate last year and setting the NHL record for the most wins on the dot in league history (1,274).

"Ryan will touch our team in many different ways, both ends of the special teams," Armstrong said. "He takes a ton of faceoffs, and adding Bozak with the right shot, we have two righties and two lefties, so it helps our power play a little bit."

O'Reilly should immensely benefit the Blues' ailing power play, ranked No. 30 in the NHL last season. On a Buffalo unit that was No. 20 in the league, O'Reilly netted 15 goals, tying him for third overall behind Winnipeg's Patrik Laine (20) and Washington's Alex Ovechkin (17). During the last three years, O'Reilly has 31 goals and 69 points on the man-advantage, which is more than New York Islander-turned-Toronto center John Tavares (67), Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos (63) and Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon (62).

So, why was O'Reilly, who is under contract for five more seasons with a \$7.5 million AAV, available?

Well, Buffalo is going younger, and the Sabres might have felt O'Reilly would be beyond his prime by the time they become contenders. There was also speculation that he needed a change of scenery, which was magnified when he admitted on locker clean-out day that he had lost his passion for the game at times last year.

Armstrong was asked if those comments put up any red flags with the Blues.

"I've worked with Ryan in the past in international events, and I know he has a great passion," Armstrong said. "I've certainly been guilty of saying things I was thinking and wishing I didn't say them. He probably would add that to the list of things he wished he would have kept internal, but it was out there. He's got great passion for the sport, he's got great passion to compete and to win and, hopefully, this gives him the boost that hopefully he feels is necessary that he can come in here. Quite honestly, we need that boost."

O'Reilly was unavailable for comment Sunday, but the Blues tweeted a video of Armstrong calling him after the trade was completed. The GM welcomed O'Reilly, who responded, "Let's go win a Cup ... I'm so excited."



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"HEY RYAN – DOUG ARMSTRONG CALLING."
[#STLBLUES](https://t.co/IGR20BJZKL)
[PIC.TWITTER.COM/Y3M2AK7AON](https://pic.twitter.com/Y3M2AK7AON)

— ST. LOUIS BLUES (@STLOUISBLUES) JULY 2, 2018

The Blues gave Buffalo a big package, but they had been trying to move Berglund and Sobotka for a while with no luck.

Berglund, 30, had four more years remaining on a five-year, \$19.2 million contract (\$3.85 AAV) and was coming off a disappointing season in which he had just 26 points in 57 games. Sobotka, who turned 30 on July 2, had two years left on a three-year, \$10.5 million deal (\$3.5 million AAV). Despite netting a career-high 11 goals in his first season back from a three-year sabbatical in Russia, Sobotka was ineffective overall.

Armstrong was somehow able to make the deal without giving up the Blues' top prospects: Thomas, Jordan Kyrou and Klim Kostin.

"I know Buffalo is really excited about Tage Thompson," Armstrong said. "We didn't want to give Tage up, either, but we do value Robert Thomas as a centerman. I think I've been pretty consistent for a while that we weren't trading him until we know exactly what he can do because center icemen are hard to find. And Kyrou is a player that really excites us just with his speed. You have to give to get, and giving up Tage was difficult, but we're excited about our return."

Thompson, 20, was the Blues' first-round pick in 2016. He played 41 NHL games as a rookie last season out of necessity and had his moments, registering three goals and nine points. But the 6-foot-5, 205-pound right winger also showed some flaws that might have worried the Blues.

"Tage, listen, I think he's got potential," said Corey Pronman, The Athletic's prospect guru. "I think he might be a second-line forward one day. He's 6-foot-5, he's got high-end puck skills, a high-end shot, makes plays. But he doesn't play with pace, he takes shifts off here and there, and he's got some room to develop. I think with Buffalo, he'll be a potential second-line, third-line guy, play some power play. That's what I see him topping out as. You didn't want to lose Thomas, and you didn't want to lose Kyrou. Those are the two big pieces, and you couldn't lose either two of those guys, particularly Thomas. I did not see any way they could have included him."

O'Reilly wasn't the only player that Armstrong welcomed to the Blues on Sunday. Earlier in the day, the club signed Bozak to a three-year, \$15 million contract, overpaying the 32-year-old with a \$5 million AAV, but doing so, in effect, to limit the term to three years.

Bozak went undrafted in the NHL, but was signed as a free agent by Toronto in 2009 and has managed to play nine seasons (594 games) with the Maple Leafs. He had a career-high 23 goals in 2014-15 and a career-high 55 points two years ago.

"I can play anywhere in the lineup when needed, and I think depth is such a huge thing to have on a team," Bozak said. "I think St. Louis has a lot of depth. You're not going to get through a full season without injuries, so I think I can move up and down the lineup, play in different spots, different areas. And to play with different guys, you have to find out who you have the best chemistry with, and that will take a little time. I can contribute points-wise. Two years ago was my best year, I felt really good last year and I'm still feeling really good. I was a late-bloomer coming up — I didn't really start until I was 23 in NHL — so I still feel really young, and the body feels good."

The Athletic reached out to a Western Conference assistant coach and an Eastern Conference scout for anonymous evaluations on Bozak and here's what they had to say ...

Western Conference assistant coach: "I like him. Smart, good sense, pretty complete game because of his sense, can play well on both sides of the puck, should be able to play against other team's best. Offense is as advertised, although he might see a bump in St. Louis if he gets top-line offensive minutes again. I won't be surprised if he matches or

marginally exceeds (Paul) Stastny points, capable special teams guy. Should be able to PK, too."

Eastern Conference scout: "Smart two-way player with good hockey sense and puck skill. Thinks and sees the game well. Pace and quickness is average. Second-tier situational player. Usual top-nine guy. That is probably where he will play. Useful player that can play anywhere."

When Bozak signed in the afternoon, it appeared the Blues would be plugging him into the second line. But with the news later in the day that O'Reilly was coming, too, it makes the Bozak addition look even better because he is a very solid third-line player.

In fact, though the Blues missed out on John Tavares, they arguably came away with three of the top four centers available. Toronto got Tavares and Vegas lured Paul Stastny with a lucrative contract, but the Blues did alright with their combination.

The club also announced the signing of Perron to a four-year, \$16 million contract, bringing back a player whom they drafted No. 26 overall in 2007 for the third time. He was exposed in the NHL expansion draft last summer and plucked by Vegas. But after putting up a career-high 66 points and playing in the Stanley Cup final with the Golden Knights, he's a Blue again.

"That was a difficult decision," Armstrong said of making Perron available for the expansion draft. "That went down to the last second on what to do with our expansion list. When we put David on, I thought (Vegas) might go in a different direction, maybe someone they might have security for longer. Obviously, they made the right decision with the way David played for them."

Perron, who was also unavailable Sunday, reportedly had a similar offer on the table from the Islanders, but chose to return to St. Louis.

"He loves it here; he wanted to come back," Armstrong said. "Basically, the last two contracts we've done with him, he's left money on the table. He's a good player that we think can come in here and push into our group of nine, and into our group of six, and help us win."

The Blues' line combinations will certainly have a different appearance in October, with O'Reilly, Bozak and Perron being added, along with the return of Robby Fabbri from injury and the expected availability of Thomas.

Armstrong mentioned the possibility of playing Thomas down the lineup early in the season and pacing him as a rookie, but added that, by Christmas if his performance warranted, the Blues could have him center a line with O'Reilly on the left wing and Vladimir Tarasenko on the right side. I've constructed the lines with that in mind, and with Dmitriy Jaskin, Zach Sanford, Sundqvist and Kyrou the being the extras for now.

The additions of Bozak and Perron gave the Blues two much-needed right-shot forwards, although they lost one Sunday with Brodziak's exit to Edmonton. The 34-year-old signed a two-year deal with a \$1.15 million AAV, which the Blues likely would have matched, but he wanted to play closer to his hometown in Alberta.

The Blues also lost Hutton to free agency, leaving for a three-year contract with Buffalo with a \$2.75 million AAV. Armstrong wanted Hutton back, but didn't want to match the term because the club would soon like to bring goalie prospect Ville Husso into the fold.

But with Husso, 23, yet to even make his NHL debut, the Blues needed some insurance, so they signed free agent Chad Johnson on a one-year, \$1.75 million contract. Johnson, who is on his seventh team in eight years, was 10-16-3 with a 3.55 goals-against average and an .891 save-percentage with Buffalo last season.

"He had a difficult year last year in Buffalo," Armstrong said. "It looked like their team might have struggled most of the season. But when you look at what he did, he partnered with Brian Elliott the year before (in Calgary) and was a very good partner and played a lot of games there. I think we can provide a strong defensive unit in front of him, give him



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some protection, and he can get back to that .915, .920 save percentage that he's had in the past."

From the O'Reilly deal, in which the Blues weren't forced to give up their top prospects, to the Johnson signing, in which they were able to keep a clear path for Husso, Armstrong was successfully able to make his club more competitive in 2018-19, yet still keep his eye on the future.

"We believe that our best path for long-term success for this organization was to add veteran players, increase competition and keep the players (Thomas and Kyrrou) that (other clubs) wanted," Armstrong said. "We like our youth coming, but we were trying to make sure we support that core group of Tarasenko, Schenn and (Jaden) Schwartz and (Alex) Pietrangelo, and we're taking full advantage of their prime years."

The Blues might not be done. They now have \$8.4 million in available space, with five restricted free agents still to sign: Joel Edmundson, Fabbri, Jaskin, Sundqvist and Jordan Schmaltz. But they could still be in the running for another winger, such as UFA and native St. Louisan Patrick Maroon.

"I think we would have to get creative financially," Armstrong said. "I never say never, but we've done a lot of moving of assets and we've taken on some hefty salaries in the last 12 hours. It's going to be difficult to do that without that same amount of money leaving. I like the way our team is set up now, but with the caveat of you never know when the phone's going to ring. If there's a different way to improve the team, we'll do it. But right now, we do like the balance that we have of center icemen. I like the look of this team right now."

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1101450 Websites

The Athletic / LeBrun Notebook: Inside details on Marleau's influence on Tavares, O'Reilly's trade and Stastny's decision

By Pierre LeBrun Jul 2, 2018

John Tavares followed his heart to Toronto but not before using his brain in every imaginable way as he studied the biggest decision of his career.

Back and forth he went, examining the merits of every situation presented to him last week, and there was one Toronto Maple Leafs player that certainly made an impact in his final decision.

A year ago, it was Patrick Marleau who agonized over leaving the only NHL team he had ever known in San Jose for the hockey mecca of Toronto, and it took him the extra while to finally say yes and take the plunge with the Maple Leafs.

All those questions and fears that Marleau had a year ago, he helped answer last week when Tavares came calling.

"I was impressed how thorough he was, he had a list of questions and he was specific with what he was asking about," Marleau told The Athletic over the phone on Sunday, hours after Tavares' blockbuster signing with the Leafs.

Which is something Brendan Shanahan also echoed.

"John is very process-oriented, he was very thorough through this," the Leafs president told The Athletic on Monday.

Tavares wanted to know as much as he possibly could what he was getting into.

You see, there is a certain perception that other players around the league have about Toronto and potentially playing in Toronto, but there's

also a different reality. And so there was Marleau relaying that reality to Tavares, and no doubt it made an impact in the end.

Marleau was speaking to me from his offseason home in San Jose, where no doubt he will settle down after his career is over. He of course saw the irony, too, in him trying to lure Tavares to Toronto while his old pals and teammates in San Jose, led by "Jumbo" Joe Thornton, were doing the same in trying to get the superstar centre in a Sharks uniform.

And while Tavares could have had an equal opportunity to win and enjoy life in San Jose, no doubt about it, Marleau put it rather simply when he underlined the ultimate reasoning in why both he and Tavares ended up with the rising Leafs.

"I went to Toronto to win a Cup, so has John," Marleau said.

No doubt in my mind Marleau would have also sent his old pal Thornton a message over the past week wondering what the UFA centre was up to. Remember that a year ago they contemplated going to Toronto together as a package.

I can tell you that Leafs head coach Mike Babcock reached out to Thornton when the UFA speaking period opened last week, just as he did a year ago.

But as far as I can tell, Thornton this time around wasn't interested in looking at the market and has been only focused on staying put again; it sounds like he'll have a new contract with the Sharks in short order. (Note: Later Monday, the Sharks announced a one-year deal for Thornton worth \$5 million with a no-movement clause.)

As for Tavares, I think he'll look back and realize he was already opening his mind up to being a Leaf from the moment Toronto's delegation of Shanahan, Babcock and GM Kyle Dubas wrapped up its presentation to the prized free agent a week ago in Los Angeles.

"Kyle Dubas was really impressive," Babcock said Sunday.

"Kyle was the lead communicator in the pitch and I thought he did a great job painting a picture of where we are and where we're headed," added Shanahan.

The Leafs showed Tavares who he might be playing with five-on-five, short-handed, on the power play, and shared the team's vision for the next few years.

It's the kind of thing that would have way more impact today than two years ago when the Leafs fell on their face trying to sell their team to then prized UFA Steven Stamkos.

The reality is that Toronto, at that moment, should have never even bothered trying to get in on Stamkos. The Leafs were coming off a last-place finish. They had promise in just having drafted Auston Matthews, but they hadn't proven a damn thing.

Stamkos made the right call in staying with a proven contender in Tampa.

In fact, if you're a Leafs fan, it's all worked out perfectly, because if Stamkos signs in Toronto two years ago, the Leafs probably don't have the cap room to even entertain the \$77 million they just dropped on Tavares.

This time, the Leafs left their presentation feeling mighty good about themselves. Only Shanahan had a funny thing happen on the way home from L.A. There he is sitting on the plane last week and in walks Tavares and his fiancée.

"I don't think they ever saw me, they were sitting three rows ahead of me," chuckled Shanahan. "I didn't talk to him on the flight."

He waited until they landed in Toronto to say a quick hello but otherwise, the Leafs president didn't want to leave an impression he was stalking or smothering the player he so badly wanted to lure to his team. They had made their pitch in a very detailed manner and didn't need to go in for more. Shanahan felt it was time for Tavares to sit back and process all



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the information he had gathered. No need to pile on in that moment on the plane.

Looking back, maybe it was fate they ended up on that same flight home. They'll be sharing many a flight for seven years now.

One still has to worry about how the Leafs are going to defend next season, but make no mistake about it, the idea of a franchise's 51-year Cup drought finally ending over the next few years has never been more realistic than the moment No. 91 signed on the dotted line Sunday.

BLUES-SABRES BLOCKBUSTER

There was a funny moment Saturday morning of the NHL draft in Dallas where I stopped to say hello to Sabres GM Jason Botterill in the hallways of the arena on route to getting myself a coffee. We were having a friendly chat when Blues GM Doug Armstrong walked over in our direction.

And this is when you realize there's a crowd. After also saying hello to Armstrong, I exited the scene because it was clear this was no coincidence but rather the Blues GM responding to a text from Botterill to come over and chat again.

Because those two guys had many a chat over the past few weeks regarding a Ryan O'Reilly trade. No team stayed on it more than St. Louis. The Montreal Canadiens stayed in touch but, in the end, GM Marc Bergevin was never comfortable with the asking price Botterill had set. And frankly, I think that was the right call on Bergevin's part not to spend the kind of assets the Blues eventually did in Sunday night's blockbuster deal with the Sabres.

But this is a perfect example of when a deal makes so much sense for both sides. The Sabres were under the gun to move O'Reilly before midnight when they had to pay his \$7.5 million bonus. And they did so while still getting an impressive haul in return.

The Sabres had another dreadful season this past year. The exit meetings with players painted a picture for Botterill that screamed culture change. O'Reilly was the best player traded Sunday. But the Sabres needed a seismic dressing room shift and they got it.

From the Blues' perspective, there's a handful of GMs in this league that are unafraid to make bold move after bold move: I'd put Armstrong in that group along with Doug Wilson (Sharks), David Poile (Predators), Bob Murray (Ducks) and Steve Yzerman (Lightning). It doesn't mean their trades always work, but their level of comfort in rolling the dice on roster-shaking moves has set them apart over the past several years.

Armstrong traded pending UFA Paul Stastny while his team was still in a playoff spot this season. I mean, who does that? But in his heart of hearts, he saw a sinking team that wasn't going to win a Cup regardless. He has a standard for where he wants to see his team.

In a matter of hours, he added a difference-maker and a two-way stud in O'Reilly, signed reliable centre Tyler Bozak, brought back winger David Perron for a third tour of duty and parted ways with Patrik Berglund and Vladimir Sobotka — in Berglund's case, a longtime Blue who needed a change of scenery, in my mind.

Are the Blues better? No question, in my mind. The Central Division is a monster group. The Winnipeg Jets and Nashville Predators are still the teams to beat, but the Blues gained some ground Sunday.

STASTNY IN VEGAS

Paul Stastny's No. 1 priority right to the end was re-signing in Winnipeg, as he saw a team on the cusp of winning a Stanley Cup. But even with the Montreal trade the Jets made Saturday morning, Winnipeg GM Kevin Cheveldayoff was never able to match the dollars Stastny was being offered everywhere else. The Jets' salary cap situation and the players they need to re-sign this summer made it impossible, really, to get there. North of \$5 million perhaps, but not much more than that. The Jets were there on the three-year term, but not on the salary.

Stastny, I'm told, had two other offers on the table from other teams at \$7 million times three years but took the Vegas offer of \$6.5 million times three years. Of course, with no income tax in Nevada that certainly helped, too, but seeing first-hand as Vegas beat the Jets team he was on in the Western Conference final also made an impression.

The Habs, by the way, got word from Stastny's agent Matt Keator late in the week that they weren't terribly high on the player's list, so that fuelled Bergevin's decision to move ahead on that cap-driven deal with Winnipeg, which netted Montreal a decent player in Joel Armia.

RYAN ELLIS EXTENSION

Drew Doughty, Ryan McDonagh and Oliver Ekman-Larsson are among the high-profile defensemen one year away from UFA status who signed big extensions on the very first day they could Sunday.

Not Ryan Ellis.

Which is not to say he eventually won't, because I think it's still what he wants and what the Nashville Predators have made their whole summer about, as far as their No. 1 goal.

But the fact remains that, on a day when three big-time blueliners in the exact same position as Ellis signed, he did not.

The plan is for his agent Rick Curran and Poile to re-connect and resume contract talks over the next week or two.

Again, if I were a betting man, I'd say this gets done. But there are hurdles to overcome.

Namely, the Preds aren't big fans of lockout protection money (big signing bonuses) nor no-trade clauses (Pekka Rinne is the only NTC on the Preds).

So, something's got to give. Ellis is massively underpaid at \$2.5 million entering the final year of his contract and, if he ends up giving Nashville a bit of a discount for staying, I would assume the no-trade would be a trade-off he'd be looking for.

There are teams around the league watching this situation very attentively. Poile has mentioned many times that, after losing Ryan Suter for nothing half a decade ago, he would never let that happen again with core players in their walk year.

Ellis needs to be signed by the fall, I think, or else the Predators have a big decision to make.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.03.2018

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Sportsnet.ca / The inside story of how the Maple Leafs won the John Tavares sweepstakes

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris July 2, 2018

TORONTO – At the same time the Stanley Cup final was being waged between two other teams last month, the Toronto Maple Leafs started making ice in their building again.

It had been six weeks since the last home game and would be almost four more months before the next one, but the pursuit of John Tavares was on.

So it was that the Leafs had Mitchell Marner come out of the June heat and take some twirls on a freshly-made sheet with the cameras rolling. Marner is a local kid who possesses plenty of film-friendly skills



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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(alternatively they could just have used this) and had been identified as a big part of the potential pitch to Tavares.

At that point, the Leafs didn't even know if they would get an audience with the pending unrestricted free agent before July 1, but they were intent on not missing their shot if it came around.

"He hadn't signed back [with the New York Islanders] yet, so we figured we may as well start preparing so that we're not rushing to scramble something together on Monday morning at 11 when we're going in there at 3 o'clock," said general manager Kyle Dubas.

There isn't much of a playbook on how to navigate this kind of process in hockey. A handful of impactful NHL free agents have met with suitors like Tavares did last week – Brad Richards in 2011, Zach Parise in 2012, Steven Stamkos in 2016 – but it's nowhere near as common as you see in other sports.

As part of his preparation, Dubas studied what's worked best for NBA teams in free agency. He picked the brains of Toronto Raptors executives Masai Ujiri, Bobby Webster and Teresa Resch to glean what he could from their experiences. He decided to focus almost exclusively on what Toronto could offer Tavares as a hockey player.

That's where Marnier came in.

Dubas and head coach Mike Babcock felt he would be the best fit for Tavares as a linemate and wanted to accentuate that in their meeting. Not only was the 21-year-old winger featured prominently in the video he was shown at the Beverly Hills headquarters of CAA Sports on June 25, he was among the Leafs players – along with Patrick Marleau and Auston Matthews – to call Tavares personally in the days that followed.

"I think Mitch's skillset and John's skillset [fit]," said Babcock. "Mitch is so quick."

Toronto Maple Leafs centre Mitchell Marnier. (Nathan Denette/CP)

Toronto Maple Leafs centre Mitch Marnier. (Nathan Denette/CP)

It's little wonder why Tavares was able to provide such a thorough scouting report on Marnier after deciding to join forces with him. He'd had some time to closely examine what he would be getting in the dynamic right-winger.

There's no doubt, as well, that it had been brought to his attention that Marnier scored at a 90-point pace in the second half of last season before putting up nine points in the seven-game, first-round loss to Boston.

"His speed, his ability to control the play, control games at times, his ability to move the puck and create time and space with his feet," Tavares said, in describing his new linemate. "It's extremely impressive."

It's a game-breaking ability he's never really had beside him while logging big minutes with Anders Lee, Josh Bailey, Ryan Strome, Kyle Okposo, Thomas Vanek, Matt Moulson, Brad Boyes and P-A Parenteau over the past seven seasons.

When Tavares sat down with Toronto, he was reminded that the team can basically roll out two No. 1 lines with him in the mix. He doesn't have to carry this group. Babcock is planning to go with Zach Hyman-Tavares-Marnier on one line while pairing Marleau-Matthews-William Nylander on the other.

(Nazem Kadri, inarguably the NHL's top No. 3 centre, will have Andreas Johnsson and one of Connor Brown or Kasperii Kapanen on his wings.)

They weren't alone in being able to trumpet that kind of depth – Boston, Tampa, San Jose and Dallas also met with Tavares and would have looked great with him in their lineups – but the way the information was presented affirmed the deeply-held notion that if he left the Islanders it would have to be for Toronto.

"Kyle drove the bus for us," said Leafs president Brendan Shanahan. "He took the lead. He had the vision."

Dubas demurred when informed of the sentiment held by his boss.

"I think really what was the definitive action was informing John of the players that he's going to play with," he said. "That's the most exciting part. Those players were great, they spoke with him as well, and it's really not about any of us. It's about the players."

As much as the Leafs had some built-in advantages during this process – a quality young team, being based close to where Tavares was raised and spends his summers – it was vital that they made a good first impression when they met with him and his fiancée, Aryne.

They needed to quickly establish a rapport. They were weeks behind Islanders GM Lou Lamoriello, who had dinner with Tavares and agent Pat Brisson in New York to start his sales pitch back in the middle of May.

That's where all of the advanced background work and preparation paid off for Toronto. Dubas flew directly to Los Angeles after the NHL draft concluded in Dallas on June 23 and had a full day to review and sharpen his approach before Babcock and Shanahan joined him for the meeting.

The word coming out of the room was that the 32-year-old GM delivered an impressive presentation.

"It's not about flash, it's about substance. It's about going there with a plan," said Babcock. "Not only did we have that plan, we had it built out for years to come. You're getting a guy to come to I think the greatest hockey city in the world, but your family's here. You want to feel safe here, you want to know you can do well here."

"Obviously we were able to show him [that] or he was able to feel that."

They notably avoided veering in a cheesy direction. There was no blue-and-white No. 91 sweater presented to him during the two-hour meeting, nor was there an overt appeal to the emotional aspects of coming home to win a Stanley Cup.

FLASHBACK: John Tavares is now a Toronto Maple Leaf, but when he was just 14 years old, he was the CityNews Athlete of the Week. pic.twitter.com/JSa5woS9AC

— CityNews Toronto (@CityNews) July 1, 2018

The Leafs correctly counted on those sentiments being stirred naturally inside Tavares as he worked through his decision. They didn't need to be force-fed to him.

"I don't think they wanted to hammer it home, but they recognized being from here [meant something] and tried to show the uniqueness of the opportunity and why the timing was right," said Tavares. "In our conversations it always just felt right. There just felt like a comfort level."

On the afternoon he signed the \$77-million contract to join the Maple Leafs, there was no ice on the floor at the freshly-renamed Scotiabank Arena.

But the boards were still up.

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Sportsnet.ca / Senators grant teams permission to talk extension with Karlsson

Sonny Sachdeva

The tumultuous relationship between the Ottawa Senators and their star defenceman has taken yet another turn, according to reports coming out



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of New York, with the club once again seemingly inching closer to moving their two-time Norris Trophy winner.

The Senators have given opposing clubs permission to speak with Erik Karlsson and his representatives about a potential contract extension, according to the New York Post's Larry Brooks — a report confirmed by Sportsnet's John Shannon.

Senators have given interested teams permission to talk contract extension with Karlsson. Sounds as if he is looking for Doughty deal (8x11)

— Larry Brooks (@NYP_Brooksie) July 2, 2018

The news comes just one day after Senators GM Pierre Dorion said Sunday that the club has offered Karlsson — who's set to become an unrestricted free agent after the 2018-19 campaign — a contract extension.

While Dorion told reporters an offer was extended, no details regarding salary or term were revealed.

"Obviously we don't really want to talk about roster players, contract negotiations, trades, all these things," Dorion said Sunday. "But I think we owe it to our fans and we made a promise at the town hall that we would make a contract offer to Erik Karlsson and we've done so."

"I'm not going to talk any more about it but we just thought that we talked about it previously and that's about all we're going to say on the subject."

Fellow top-end blueliner Drew Doughty recently signed an eight-year, \$88 million contract with his Los Angeles Kings, and it's assumed Karlsson is seeking a similar deal, according to Brooks.

Karlsson's name has held firm amid the rumour mill for months now, with the early inklings of a potential separation from his club coming back in November 2017, when the Swedish star told reporters he had no interest in discussing a hometown discount on his next contract.

A weekly deep dive into the biggest hockey news in the world with hosts Elliotte Friedman and Jeff Marek. New episodes every Thursday.

While it appeared a trade was coming before the 2018 trade deadline in February, one never came to fruition, shifting attention to the off-season.

The Karlsson situation took yet another significant turn in June, when the defenceman's wife alleged that she was being harassed by the partner of her husband's teammate, Mike Hoffman — a tense situation that resulted in the latter Senator being traded to San Jose, and then Florida.

Karlsson is set to earn \$6.5 million in 2018-19, the final season of a seven-year contract signed back in 2012. The 28-year-old is coming off a 62-point effort for Ottawa — while being limited to just 71 games — and heads into the next campaign with 518 points through 627 games in a Senators jersey.

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Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown: Winners and losers from NHL free agency

Sean McIndoe

Another July 1 has come and gone in the NHL, meaning we're now a day into the free-agency market. And for once, we had some Canada Day fireworks to enjoy. An actual, honest-to-goodness NHL star in his prime actually made it to the market. Not only that, he changed teams. You probably heard about it.

John Tavares wasn't the only name on the move. But he's the one we have to start with, because this is a winners and losers column. And for one of the only times in the last half-decade or so, the big winners in the NHL were the Toronto Maple Leafs. That's confusing, and a little scary, but here we are. So while we're all trying to sort through this strange new world we're living in, let's start our July 1 rundown in the only place we can.

Winner: The Maple Leafs

They actually pulled it off. They lured a local hero back home, and even got a bit of discount in the process. For all the fun you can have with Leafs fans and their constant belief that every superstar secretly wants to come to Toronto, this time it really happened. As Tavares himself put it, the Leafs won this sweepstakes because they could offer a chance to live a childhood dream.

So now what? This is where the contrarian reflex is supposed to kick in. But at least in the short term, it's honestly hard to find any kind of downside here for the Leafs. They'll pay Tavares the league max this year, almost all of it in bonuses, but they have more than enough cash flow and cap room to afford it. Things will get trickier in 2019-20, once the Auston Matthews and Mitchell Marner extensions kick in, but even that crunch could be manageable. (And seeing Tavares leave a little money on the table could encourage the younger players to do the same.)

For now, the Leafs are as strong down the middle as pretty much anyone, and the idea of either Tavares or Matthews getting easy matchups is scary. The blue line still needs work Frederik Andersen isn't a sure thing, and the Leafs still have to get through Tampa and Boston to get out of the Atlantic, so there's work left to do. But even for a lifelong Maple Leafs cynic, there's really no way to spin this: It's a huge win for Toronto.

That's a hometown discount from John Tavares. He may not be the last #leafs player to do that to keep this team together.

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) July 1, 2018

Loser: New York Islanders fans

Honestly, we don't even have a joke here. This is a brutal, brutal moment for Islanders fans.

For some teams, watching your franchise player walk away for nothing would be a wakeup call. Not for Islanders fans. They're already wide awake. They've had plenty of time to worry that the team was adrift; that Charles Wang and Garth Snow and the arena mess and one playoff series win in 25 years had dug a hole so deep that even new ownership and Lou Lamoriello and Barry Trotz couldn't dig out of it. They've had years to think the worst. They're used to it.

But it's one thing to think the worst. It's another to have a once-in-a-generation player look you dead in the eye and tell you that you're right. Tavares can soften this with talk of childhood dreams and coming home, and there's no doubt something to that. But the brutal truth remains: In a league where star players always choose to stay put, the Islanders were the one team who couldn't convince theirs to stay.

That stings. And it has some Islanders supporters lashing out, with the predictable stream of YouTube clips of outraged fans and burning jerseys. But once the initial bitterness clears, the question will be where this team goes next. It's upgraded the front office and behind the bench, even if it turned out not to be enough for Tavares. A goalie is needed, and now a top-line forward. There's plenty of cap space, which is good news if it's used wisely and bad news if there's a knee-jerk panic move. So far, the early indications aren't good.

Leo Komarov signs with the Islanders. Four years, \$12M.

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) July 1, 2018

That's... I mean... yikes.



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Whichever way the Islanders go next, there are going to be a lot of tough questions for a team that chose not to trade Tavares for a windfall at the deadline. Eventually, there will be answers, and in the long term some of them may even be positive ones. Just not right now. Right now, it's nothing but brutal.

Hindsight, and it's going to put salt in the wounds, but the thing with Tavares, and I touched on this around the trade deadline, with no new contract in place for him in February, they had to trade him then with where the team was trending. They didn't. He's reportedly gone.

— Dan Rosen (@drosennhl) July 1, 2018

Winner: Kyle Dubas

The Leafs roster is the big winner, but let's not forget about their new GM. Kyle Dubas's first major moment in the Toronto spotlight saw him face down his old mentor, and walk away with Lamoriello's franchise player. That's not a bad start, and it will no doubt buy Dubas some goodwill with the Toronto market. At this rate, nobody's going to call for him to be fired until next week at the earliest.

Winner: The Tavares suspense

As painful as it may have been at times, the Tavares roller-coaster delivered. A few weeks ago, it seemed like he may re-sign with the Islanders before the sweepstakes ever got off the ground. Even a week ago, it still felt like we were headed to a Steven Stamkos-style anticlimactic ending. At the very least, we all assumed that we'd know something before July 1.

Instead, Tavares didn't just make it to the open market – he did it with some genuine mystery around where he'd wind up. It all made for a fun ride, and probably the most interesting off-season day since those infamous 23 minutes back in 2016.

Other leagues get to do this every year. In the NHL, it's a rarity. Here's hoping that changes, and that Tavares might inspire a few fellow stars to test the waters.

Ryan Dixon and Rory Boylen go deep on pucks with a mix of facts and fun, leaning on a varied group of hockey voices to give their take on the country's most beloved game.

Loser: The non-Tavares suspense

Oh right, everyone who wasn't John Tavares. Almost forgot about those guys.

By Sunday morning, Tavares was just about the only big-name left whose destination hadn't leaked. John Carlson, Evander Kane and Mike Green didn't even make it to Monday. Rick Nash removed himself from the running, at least temporarily. We knew where Ilya Kovalchuk, Paul Stastny, James van Riemsdyk, Jack Johnson and even Ryan Reaves would wind up before the markets officially opened.

That's the downside of the league's multi-day window for negotiating with pending UFAs. It removes some of the pressure on teams to make crazy offers on July 1, which probably helps GMs make slightly smaller mistakes than they typically would. But much like the trade deadline has done over the last decade, we're seeing UFA day morph into a week-long process that doesn't always leave a lot of drama as the clock ticks down. Tavares provided some, but once he was off the board it was slim pickings.

Winner: The Philadelphia Flyers

They landed van Riemsdyk on a five-year, \$35-million deal. That cap hit is a bit higher than most seemed to be expecting, but only a bit. And the five-year term is a year or two less than what the rumour mill had suggested.

Eating a little bit more salary to keep the term manageable on star players is a smart strategy that more teams should be willing to employ. In this case, it landed the Flyers a consistent goal scorer without committing to a big chunk of his mid-30s.

Loser: The Vancouver Canucks

July 1 is generally a disaster for NHL GMs, who repeatedly make the same mistakes year after year. But if there's one lesson that should be all but impossible to ignore, it's this: Don't give term to depth.

Depth is important. You can't win without it. But it also doesn't tend to be all that hard to find. And it's not something you typically should need to commit multiple years to lock down.

Apparently, Jim Benning doesn't see it that way. He signed 32-year-old Jay Beagle and 28-year-old Antoine Roussel to matching four-year deals that will carry \$3-million cap hits. Why go that long for players who figure to slot in on the third or fourth line? As Benning explained it:

Benning : 4 years was the market for those players. #Canucks

— Rick Dhaliwal (@DhaliwalSports) July 1, 2018

That's probably true. But sometimes the market is wrong, or at least unreasonable. Smart teams walk away from the market when the numbers get silly.

Both Roussel and Beagle will fit in fine in Vancouver, and should contribute at least a little to a team working to turn things around. But in another year or two, when the Canucks may be ready to get back to contending for a playoff spot, those deals are unlikely to look very good. Kicking the salary cap can down the road can sometimes makes sense, but not when "down the road" is where you're expecting to competitive again.

Winner: The Vegas Golden Knights

For the second time, Stastny went into the UFA market and was willing to come away with a shorter term. Apparently, it's kind of his thing.

That works for the Knights, who may well have walked away from yesterday with the single best value deal of the day. And they've still got plenty of cap space left to do something big – maybe on the trade market, where Erik Karlsson still looms. More on that in a bit.

The Knights' other big signing was Reaves, who comes back on a deal that carries a \$2.775-million cap hit. That's pricey for what he brings to the table, and will almost certainly be a deal that Vegas regrets. But again, the term was reasonable. Reaves got two years, so even if he's a bust the Knights can buy him out or trade him without too much trouble. Slowly but surely, NHL teams are figuring out how to manage term, and the Knights seem to be one of the faster learners.

Winner: Drew Doughty

This wasn't a July 1 signing, but it was the biggest contract of the weekend so it warrants a mention. As expected, Doughty hammered out an extension with the Kings that will keep him in L.A. through 2027. And he got it done without an agent, which will put a few extra dollars back into his pocket.

Is it a good deal for the Kings? That's a tougher question. In the short term, sure – as the Islanders just demonstrated, letting a key player head into the final year of his contract can be a recipe for disaster. But as for the future, well...

The Kings now have ~\$54M in 2020-21 cap space tied up in:

38 year old Ilya Kovalchuk

36 year old Dustin Brown

36 year old Jeff Carter

36 year old Dion Phaneuf

35 year old Jonathan Quick

33 year old Anze Kopitar

33 year old Alec Martinez



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31 year old Drew Doughty

— Dimitri Filipovic (@DimFilipovic) June 29, 2018

The contract will also make Doughty the highest paid defenceman in the NHL, soaring well past P.K. Subban's \$9-million hit. Well, at least until Karlsson signs. Speaking of which...

Loser: The Ottawa Senators stay quiet

The Senators didn't do anything of any significance yesterday, which was to be suspected – this isn't a team with a ton of money to spend. Still, with plenty of key players to either sign or extend, you could forgive Sens fans if they were hoping against hope for some good news. If not a Karlsson extension, maybe Mark Stone or Matt Duchene. Instead, nothing.

The Senators did, in fact, make an offer to Erik Karlsson today.

— John Shannon (@JSportsnet) July 1, 2018

That wasn't a surprise. But the pressure is on the Senators now. They've spent the off-season telling their fans that they'd wait until July 1 to make their case to Karlsson, even as guys like Doughty, Ryan McDonagh and Oliver Ekman-Larsson were agreeing to new deals in advance. If you're an Ottawa fan, you could at least convince yourself that things were on track. But now July 1 has come and gone, and there's no more using the calendar as an excuse. Karlsson can sign whenever he wants. Now we find out if he wants to.

For what it's worth, the Senators say they made their offer yesterday. Maybe they offered enough to get a deal done, or at least to generate a conversation that leads to one. Or maybe it was just the team's latest attempt at PR spin to a fan base getting tired of it.

A trade out of Ottawa still seems like the most likely scenario, and if there's good news here for the Sens, it's that the rest of the blue line class of 2019 signing extensions means Karlsson is head and shoulders above anyone else who could be on the market. In theory, that means the Senators can pump up the asking price, and insist that trade suitors be ready to pay big. Of course, it could also mean that they decide to focus on unloading Bobby Ryan's contract instead. Time will tell. But as of yesterday, the time is now.

Loser, but only temporarily: The San Jose Sharks

They lost out on Tavares despite a strong pitch. That's disappointing, but it leaves GM Doug Wilson with plenty of cap room to work with, even with Logan Couture's extension done. That makes the Sharks one of the most fascinating teams to watch over the coming days.

At a high level, the Sharks roster looks a lot like the Kings' – they're good, they're locked up long term, and they're not quite old but they're getting there. There aren't many big names left, so Wilson may have to get creative and turn to the trade market. But one way or another, you'd figure he has to do something, and probably something big.

A weekly deep dive into the biggest hockey news in the world with hosts Elliotte Friedman and Jeff Marek. New episodes every Thursday.

Finally, let's close with a few quick hits.

Winner: The St. Louis Blues – The bad news is that they paid Tyler Bozak second-line money. The good news is that he won't need to be a second-line player for them, thanks to last night's acquisition of Ryan O'Reilly. The former Sabre didn't come cheap, but he's the best asset in the deal by far, and the cap hit balances out fairly well for them.

Loser: The Winnipeg Jets – They were a darn good team before Stastny arrived, and they'll be a good one with him gone. But seeing a top UFA walk away will reinforce the old idea that the Jets are at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting top players. Finding a way to dump Steve Mason's contract freed up some space, which is good. But can they find somebody to spend it on?

Winner: The Edmonton Oilers – Peter Chiarelli didn't have much room to work with, and given some of his recent UFA work, maybe that was a good thing. But picking up Kyle Brodziak and Tobias Rieder on cheap-ish deals was a decent day's work.

Loser: The Detroit Red Wings' rebuild – They signed Green, Thomas Vanek and Jonathan Bernier, which doesn't exactly sound like a youth movement. You can see where Ken Holland is coming from; there's a playoff spot to be had in the Atlantic, and it's not like the prospect pipeline is sending a ton of young talent to clog up the lineup. Still, Detroit fans hoping for some long-term vision came away disappointed.

Winner: The Buffalo Sabres – Carter Hutton is a gamble, because he's a goaltender and all goaltenders are gambles. Maybe he's the next Cam Talbot or Martin Jones; maybe he's the next Scott Darling. But at \$2.75 million for three years, he seems like a decent risk for a team that could use some stability in goal. As for O'Reilly, they got a decent return for a player they probably felt like they had to move – and apparently did it before his bonus kicked in.

Winner: The Montreal Canadiens – In the big picture, they lost; they desperately need a top-line centre like Tavares, didn't get so much as an invitation to even make their case to him, and then watched him land with a division rival. But as far as the weekend goes, they made a smart move to use some cap space to pry Joel Armia out of Winnipeg. That's not the same as spending money on Tavares or Stastny or O'Reilly, but it's something, so we'll be nice and call it a minor win.

Loser: The Jack Johnson signing – Nobody seems to be happy on this one. The Pittsburgh Penguins were widely seen to have overpaid, especially on term, and had to unload a pair of decent assets to make room. Meanwhile, the John Tortorella and the Columbus Blue Jackets are upset over some of the comments made in the fallout.

Loser: The Calgary Flames – I'm iffy on this one, so you could probably talk me into a slight nudge into the "winners" column. The Derek Ryan and Austin Czarnik signings were fine. But this morning's news of a five-year James Neal deal seems like the sort of thing the team will regret. There's a case to be made that the Flames basically paid a little less money for a little worse version of van Riemsdyk, which is a deal I liked. But Neal is two years older, which shifts the risk equation on those five years. They got their man, and they didn't do anything crazy to do it, but this still feels like a contract they'll be thinking of unloading by the midway mark.

Winner: Homecomings – Never let it be said that NHL players and teams don't appreciate the familiar. Tavares heads home to the team he rooted for as a kid, but plenty of other players are rejoining teams they've already played for. That group include van Riemsdyk in Philadelphia, Tomas Plekanec in Montreal, David Perron in St. Louis, Vanek in Detroit, Matt Cullen in Pittsburgh and even Roussel in Vancouver, where he'd had a training camp tryout back in 2011 that everyone had forgot about.

Loser: The trade market – No Karlsson deal, yet. No Max Pacioretty deal, yet. Nothing on Jeff Skinner or Phil Kessel or Milan Lucic. Just the O'Reilly trade on July 1, in fact, and only two minor deals in the immediate lead-up.

All of which is to say: Settle in, because this off-season isn't done yet.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.03.2018

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Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Lind carrying lessons from Humboldt tragedy, pushing forward

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet July 2, 2018, 9:42 PM



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 3, 2018

VANCOUVER — There are three sets of initials that Kole Lind draws on his hockey sticks. 'LS' for Logan Schatz. 'XL' for Xavier LaBelle. And if you can't quite place those names, the third initials say everything: 'HB' for Humboldt Broncos.

Lind, the Vancouver Canucks' terrific prospect from Shaunavon, Sask., was playing his second game as a pro for the Utica Comets last April 6 when the Broncos' bus, on its way to a Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League playoff game, was sheared in half by a truck. Sixteen players and staff were killed.

Imagine getting that horrific news after a game while just starting what every player on that Humboldt bus had dreamed of: a career in professional hockey.

"I turned on my phone and my dad texted me, my buddy from Saskatoon texted me," Lind, 19, said Monday at the Canucks' summer development camp. "Everyone just saying they loved me. You have a heavy heart, first of all, but it just makes you more grateful to be able to play a game that you love.

"You've just got to play each game like it's your last because you never know what's going to happen. I still play for those guys every single day. I have some of their initials on my stick, so I think that's just something I'll keep in the back of my mind for the rest of my hockey career, and help me push through whatever adversity I have."

Lind played summer hockey in Saskatoon with Schatz, the Broncos' 20-year-old captain who was killed. He played minor hockey with LaBelle, an 18-year-old defenceman who was initially reported by authorities as dead, but survived despite a fractured skull, 20 broken bones and injuries to several organs. Lind also knows crash survivor Kaleb Dahlgren and he knew victim Evan Thomas.

In Saskatchewan, there are not six degrees of separation to anything, let alone hockey.

"There's not really words to describe what happened," Lind said.

A weekly deep dive into the biggest hockey news in the world with hosts Elliotte Friedman and Jeff Marek. New episodes every Thursday.

After the tragedy, Lind was back in the Comets' lineup the next night in Syracuse. In all, he logged six American Hockey League games after finishing a superb final season of junior in the Western Hockey League, scoring 39 goals and 95 points in 58 games for the Kelowna Rockets.

Years from now, Lind may remember his brief springtime in Utica, N.Y., for shaping his career. The Humboldt tragedy changed his outlook on hockey and how precious the chance to play the game is. And his difficult six games in the AHL told him how hard he will have to work to earn his career.

The power forward the Canucks selected three picks into the second round of the 2017 National Hockey League draft tore through junior as a 19-year-old but managed only a single assist for the Comets before coming out of the lineup for the AHL playoffs.

Ryan Johnson, the Comets' general manager and head of the Canucks' player development program, sees a different player at this camp than he did in April, and expects Lind to have evolved further by the time he goes to Vancouver's NHL training camp in September.

"As development people, you can harp to them how difficult that step is (up to professional hockey)," Johnson said Monday. "He got to live it and taste it, and I think it changed Kole and his perception about what he needed to do to get ready for the next step. He's had a huge summer so far. He's been training, he's been meeting the intensity that we've asked of him.

"Just seeing him walking into the building, he's thicker, he's more mature. You can see him becoming a man in front of you, so he's an exciting player for us."

The Canucks sent minor-league strength and conditioning coach Ken Hetzel to work with Lind in Saskatoon, where he trains and spends the summer. Lind lives with former NHL player Rich Pilon, with whom he billeted during midget hockey.

"It's almost night and day," Lind said of his conditioning now versus a year ago. "I've committed myself a lot to training and getting better this summer and being more powerful on the ice. I think it's starting to show now; give me another two months and we'll see where things go from there."

His AHL experience obviously left an impression.

"I don't think you can prepare for it until you get there," Lind said. "You think, obviously, it's going to be faster and you want to try to play a faster game. But it was a huge step for me. There were things I had to fix in my game before I worried about contributing, and that didn't come very much in the minors.

Hopefully, it will come next year.

"At times, I almost found myself getting pushed around a little bit. Even in the minors. So I think that really was an eye-opener for me."

Lind hasn't had nearly the attention that fifth-overall pick Elias Pettersson of Sweden has received since the 2017 draft, and will now also be overshadowed by 2018 first-rounder Quinn Hughes, the dynamic defencemen who missed the first day of development camp due to the flu.

But Johnson raves about Lind and the Canucks believe he will be a core piece in their rebuild. His 1.64 points per game in his draft-plus-one season represented a 32 per cent increase for Lind on the previous year. He is fast and skilled but possesses what Johnson admiringly calls a "nastiness" to his game that the Canucks love.

It's why Vancouver general manager Jim Benning, before the winger slipped to the Canucks on draft night, was caught on tape asking aloud: "Why isn't anyone taking Kole Lind?"

It was a good question then, an even better question now.

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Sportsnet.ca / Kadri talks Tavares' fit in lineup, Leafs' ability to contend for Stanley Cup

Sonny Sachdeva | @sachdevasonny July 2, 2018, 8:56 PM

There's been cause for celebration among the Maple Leafs faithful for the past 24 hours. And rightfully so, as it was announced early Sunday that star centreman John Tavares — he of two Hart Trophy nominations and three 80-point campaigns — will don Toronto's blue and white for the next seven years.

But while Torontonians rejoiced at the former New York Islanders captain's decision to return home as a free agent, there's no comparing that to the impact the news had on those inside the club's locker room, who could see their team take a significant step forward with No. 91 now in the fold.

Leafs centreman Nazem Kadri — now potentially one of the game's top third-line pivots given the impending lineup shuffle — joined Sportsnet 590's Prime Time Sports Monday to discuss the game-changing addition and how he'll fit into the lineup.



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"Obviously, he's got the talent to be in that one-spot, and he just brings so much, even in terms of off the ice," Kadri said Monday. "He's a leader, he's professional. I know, playing with him, he takes care of himself. His preparation is second to none, so I think that's one thing that's going to mesh well with our team."

Kadri and Tavares will sport the same jersey for the second time in their hockey careers, the first coming when the duo played together for the OHL's London Knights during the 2008-09 season. Tavares joined the team for the latter portion of that campaign, posting 32 goals and 50 points through his 24 games as a Knight, while Kadri amassed 25 goals and a team-leading 78 points through 56 games.

"Even back in the day, he used to just have a knack for the net and was able to produce goals every single year," Kadri recalled. "It's going to be exciting."

Kadri — who was drafted seventh-overall by the Leafs the same year Tavares went No. 1 to the Islanders — stressed the impact Tavares' arrival will have on the progress Toronto has already been building towards. The 2017-18 season marked the first time the Leafs earned back-to-back post-season appearances in over a decade, that playoff run coming after a regular season in which they amassed a franchise-best 49 wins.

So, why exactly should Tavares be intrigued by the chance to take the ice with the Leafs?

"For wins. That's the simple answer," Kadri told the Prime Time Sports crew. "We're trying to build something special. We're not only trying to build it for the next two or three years, but it's going to be a significant amount of time where we can contend. So I think that's what he'd be most excited about."

Much has yet to be decided regarding Tavares' fit with the club and the best arrangement of the roster's offensive weapons. There's also the matter of whether the Mississauga, Ont., native now jumps past Auston Matthews as the next presumptive captain for the storied franchise. General manager Kyle Dubas made clear that he and head coach Mike Babcock won't rush any decision on who eventually gets the 'C' stitched on their sweater.

In Kadri's eyes, there's no question Tavares would be up to the task.

"I definitely know he can handle [the captaincy] — he's a guy that's got some pretty big shoulders, and you can put a lot of weight on them," Kadri said. "He's a good player — he's been under a lot of pressure since he was 13, 14 years old. Just the hype of John Tavares, I remember back in the day, it was through the roof."

"I'm not sure how a young kid handled it as well as he did, but he's been used to that."

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Sportsnet.ca / Cap Considerations: Where NHL teams are at after big July moves

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen July 2, 2018, 4:16 PM

With July 1 behind us, the busiest days of NHL roster movement are likely behind us for the summer. That's not to say there won't be any trades from here on out, what with Erik Karlsson still in Ottawa, but there were no summer trades in 2017 after July 4. In 2016, there were just two trades after July 8.

For now anyway, salary cap situations around the league are generally settled. The exception to this is that there are a number of RFAs still without contracts, some of whom could go through or at least approach arbitration.

With all that in mind, let's take a look at which teams have the most room or need to get to the floor, those who have the least room, some notable teams that could still be active with the space they have, and bad contracts the big spenders could still look to shed via trade.

TEAMS STILL UNDER THE SALARY FLOOR

With a \$79.5 million salary cap, the floor comes in at \$58.8 million and according to CapFriendly.com. Five teams are still under that threshold.

TEAM	CAP HIT	AMOUNT TO SALARY FLOOR
Winnipeg Jets	\$51.95 million	\$6.85 million
NY Islanders	\$54.99 million	\$3.81 million
NY Rangers	\$55.77 million	\$3.03 million
New Jersey	\$56.4 million	\$2.4 million
Carolina	\$58.32 million	\$480,000

It's important to note here that while the Jets currently have the most cap space, that will change once they sign their RFAs. Between Josh Morrissey, Jacob Trouba and Connor Hellebuyck alone the Jets could be adding between \$12-\$15 million in salary, so before long they'll be far closer to the middle of the pack. And with new contracts for Patrik Laine, Kyle Connor and Blake Wheeler looming a year from now, Winnipeg shouldn't be considered a cap floor team by any means.

None of the other four teams under the floor currently have contracts that big to hand out, but each of them should get to the \$58.8 million mark by the time all their RFAs are signed. The Rangers owe Kevin Hayes and Ryan Spooner raises from the mid-\$2 million cap hits they had last season and 24-year-old Brady Skjei will see a nice bump in his first post-entry level contract deal.

Of this group, the Islanders, Hurricanes and Devils stand as the teams in the best position to take on another team's bad contract in order to add another future asset or two.

Narrowing the field further, Carolina doesn't seem likely to become a dumping ground. While they are rebuilding, they are well past the point when hoarding draft picks of any kind is a priority — Carolina owner Tom Dundon is trying to make the Canes relevant, which would seem to mean adding players of note to make the team better.

Ryan Dixon and Rory Boylen go deep on pucks with a mix of facts and fun, leaning on a varied group of hockey voices to give their take on the country's most beloved game.

"At this moment, I think we're anonymous, whether it's in our town or across the league, and we do have good players and it's not fair to them that people don't know about them," Dundon told Hockey Central at Noon last week. "If you can win and bring a little more attention to the franchise and to some of these players, I think those are all good things."

The Arizona Coyotes also fall into this category. Currently listed with a \$63.4 million cap hit, that total will fall by \$5.5 million (and below the floor) when Dave Bolland hits LTIR.

That means the Coyotes, Islanders and Devils, could all be in the market for overpaid players and draft picks.

TEAMS WITH THE LEAST CAP SPACE

Before we dive into this table, we'll point out a difference between our list and the one at CapFriendly.com. The Chicago Blackhawks are currently listed with the highest projected cap hit, but we're excluding them because presumably Marian Hossa will be put on LTIR by the start of next season (if his contract isn't traded out first), so that would add an extra \$5.275 million in space.



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TEAM	CAP HIT	CAP SPACE
Los Angeles	\$77.3 million	\$2.2 million
Pittsburgh	\$76.6 million	\$2.8 million
Boston	\$75.3 million	\$4.2 million
Florida	\$74.6 million	\$4.9 million
Tampa Bay	\$74.2 million	\$5.3 million

Out of these teams, the Kings' situation has to be the most alarming. Ilya Kovalchuk at three years and a \$6.25 million cap hit per season was their big free agent splash, but he's already 35-years old, meaning if the Kings were to buy out his contract, they won't get any cap relief from it. What's truly scary however, is how the team's cap is set up for the next number of years.

The Kings now have ~\$54M in 2020-21 cap space tied up in:

- 38 year old Ilya Kovalchuk
- 36 year old Dustin Brown
- 36 year old Jeff Carter
- 36 year old Dion Phaneuf
- 35 year old Jonathan Quick
- 33 year old Anze Kopitar
- 33 year old Alec Martinez
- 31 year old Drew Doughty

— Dimitri Filipovic (@DimFilipovic) June 29, 2018

If the Islanders, Coyotes and Devils are targets to take on a bad contract, the Kings will be looking to shed one or two some time within the next year.

The Penguins are no surprise here and have become well-versed in navigating these waters. The key is to supplement the expensive, high-end talent with cheaper youngsters. And where Dominik Simon, Conor Sheary and Jake Guentzel have stepped in before, 21-year-old second-round pick Daniel Sprong will spring into action next season.

Had Tampa Bay signed John Tavares they would have had to make some moves, with \$5 million man Tyler Johnson the most likely trade candidate. A year from now Nikita Kucherov will be an RFA and in line for a hefty raise from his current team-friendly \$4.76 million cap hit. Brayden Point, who just scored 32 goals, will also be an RFA a year from now.

Florida is the most surprising team on this list just because they usually don't come in this high. But they're here largely because they've locked in to a core for the long term. The Panthers have three defencemen (Aaron Ekblad, Keith Yandle, Michael Matheson) signed for at least another five years and three forwards (Aleksander Barkov, Vincent Trocheck, Jonathan Huberdeau) locked in for the next four years. Add big trade acquisition Mike Hoffman and you have a roster that management has bet on through its prime years.

"We had so much instability a few years ago," Florida GM Dale Tallon told the Sun-Sentinel. "New faces, new players, new coaches. Now, we want to make sure that we let our young guys develop in the proper way that we have a strong core. Coaches are more comfortable with the players and players will be more comfortable with them as well. I look for everyone to get off to a good start, a much better start than we did last year."

TEAMS TO WATCH

San Jose Sharks, \$8.2 million in cap room

They missed out on Tavares, but the Sharks are a motivated unit with a Stanley Cup window still open. Though they are still looking for a No. 1

(or even 2) centre to replace Joe Thornton in the long-term, but Jumbo Joe will return for the 2018-19 season.

The Sharks won't be in on any big-name RFAs via offer sheet since they don't possess their own first-round pick, which would be needed as compensation for any deal worth \$4,059,322 or above. Once they re-signed Evander Kane, the Sharks had to give up their 2019 first-rounder to Buffalo to complete the trade.

But with a desire to still add another top-six forward and cap space left over after missing out on Tavares, Wilson can still go all-in. The team was linked to Max Pacioretty at the draft, which means they would also likely look long and hard at Jeff Skinner and Artemi Panarin.

Either way, Wilson has spent most of his summer clearing cap space so it's hard to believe he'll leave it that way in October.

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Dallas Stars, \$10.67 million in cap room

Another team that was in on the Tavares sweepstakes, Dallas and GM Jim Nill are in a win-now position. Looking at the talent at the top of their roster you wonder how they missed the playoffs the past two seasons. And with Tyler Seguin a year away from unrestricted free agency, will they have to prove to him the Stars are a team he can win with going forward?

This seems like a team that, if they chose to, could go head-first into offer sheet territory. They have all their own draft picks in 2019 and since Jason Spezza's \$7.5 million cap hit will come off the books next summer, most of that room would go towards Seguin's extension, so the cap space remains relatively even. Could this be the team that breaks the code and takes the plunge by throwing money at William Nylander or Mark Stone? The top area of need right now for Dallas is scoring on the wing, though that was offset somewhat by the return of Valeri Nichushkin.

Given that offer sheets are so rare, the trade route could be the more likely road to improvement. Nill has made a number of deals in his time, none bigger than bringing in Seguin. So if he swung for the fences again, Panarin or Pacioretty would be home runs. Granted, both are in the final years of their deals, so the price could be too high for a team that isn't even a surefire post-season squad.

But what about being more practical and targeting a team like the Minnesota Wild and try for either Nino Niederreiter (four years, \$5.25 million cap hit) or Jason Zucker (RFA) to get top-six scoring on the wing? Dallas has a good-looking young core of defencemen coming up, but would they consider going after Karlsson from Ottawa?

Vegas Golden Knights, 18.75 million in cap room

Paul Stastny was their big UFA signing, but when your highest-paid player is making \$6.5 million against the cap, you're going to have room to maneuver. Shea Theodore, the potential future No. 1 defenceman, is an RFA, as is William Karlsson, who may be the most interesting individual case to monitor.

Vegas still has a load of cap room and interest in riding the wave from their successful inaugural season. They were big players for Erik Karlsson at the trade deadline and you have to believe are still weighing their options on that front. They too could knock on Minnesota's door as the losses of David Perron and James Neal leave Vegas with more need for scoring wingers than before.

The problem when coming up with potential trade ideas for Vegas is that since they are still trying to build out a prospect pool from scratch, it would be hard for them to part with the likes of Cody Glass, or future first-round picks.

Paul Stastny looks like a guy who really wanted to play for the @GoldenKnights with no signing bonuses. 18-19 \$7.5, 19-20 \$6.5, 20-21



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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\$5.5 he has a modified no trade (10 teams he don't want to be traded to) No no-move clause. I am convince he had a better deal elsewhere.

— Renaud Lavoie (@renlavoietva) July 2, 2018

BIG, BAD CONTRACTS THAT COULD BE DUMPED

For any team open to acquiring an overpaid, underproducing player if it means picking up another draft pick or two, these are some players to target.

Troy Brouwer, Calgary, \$4.5 million

If you're a rebuilding team looking to fill out your roster and want to add "grit" why not turn to the Calgary Flames, who would also give you a draft pick or two to take Brouwer, rather than overpay a UFA for a contract that goes beyond two years?

After bringing in James Neal, the Flames have \$12.8 million in cap space with Elias Lindholm and Noah Hanifin as two big looming RFAs in need of new deals. A little further down the depth chart, Mark Jankowski also needs a new deal. Their salary number also doesn't include a backup goalie, so Calgary could be against the upper limit before long. Trading Brouwer should be a priority.

All that's left for Treliving now is sorting out the traffic jam at the bottom of the rotation (Brouwer, Lazar, Hathaway, Mangiapane, Czarnik, Stone, Andersson,), and potentially looking for a legit backup.

— Kent Wilson (@Kent_Wilson) July 2, 2018

Ryan Callahan, Tampa Bay, \$5.8 million

The Lightning will be more up against it a year from now, but if they want to still add between now and October and shave money off the books, trading Callahan would provide the most relief at minimal cost to the roster. He was 11th in overall ice time among Tampa forwards last season, but fourth among forwards on the PK. If Callahan had just one season left on his deal the Lightning could live with it, but the fact this contract runs through 2019-20 makes it movable.

According to CapFriendly, Callahan has a modified no-trade list in which he submits a list of 16 teams he'd approve a move to.

Bobby Ryan, Ottawa, \$7.25 million

The big question on this potential move is if it's tied to Karlsson or not. Ryan's deal still has four years left on it, which means it runs long enough to go through the next CBA negotiation — after which a new compliance buyout window could open. Of course, there's no guarantee that'll be the case. Ryan has had injury problems in recent seasons and hasn't scored 14 goals in either of the past two seasons.

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Sportsnet.ca / New Sabres forward Tage Thompson felt 'pigeonholed' by Blues

Mike Johnston | @MikeyJ_MMA July 2, 2018, 5:33 PM

Players aren't always pleased when they get traded—especially when they're sent from a perennial playoff contender to the worst team in the NHL.

That wasn't the case with Tage Thompson, though, after the 20-year-old forward was traded to the Buffalo Sabres as part of the package that sent Ryan O'Reilly to the St. Louis Blues.

"We feel like this is a great fit for me and it's going to be exactly what I've been looking for as far as an opportunity to go in and play a lot and produce and help a team win," Thompson told reporters on a conference call Monday. "The organization thinks the same thing, so it's nice to be on the same page and be given an opportunity."

Thompson had a frustrating rookie campaign with the Blues, registering just three goals and six assists in 41 games, while averaging a mere 11:55 in ice-time per game.

The 26th-overall pick from the 2016 NHL Draft even suggested he wasn't being properly utilized by the Blues

"In St. Louis, they rely on their veteran guys, so I was pigeonholed in a sense where I didn't get to play a lot or get to play the game I like to play, so I'm excited to come to a new team with some young players where I can just go out there, have fun and make some mistakes and help the team win," Thompson said. "I think I play better when I'm relied on a little bit more. I really feel like I thrive under pressure, so I'm excited to be the guy that they look to in terms of producing and helping the team succeed."

Tage Thompson sees Buffalo as a perfect fit.

His style of play should fit right in too pic.twitter.com/Pu1TJaKAgI

— Buffalo Sabres (@BuffaloSabres) July 2, 2018

"Great shot, great size, good reach on the ice, has played NHL games, had the opportunity to win a world juniors gold medal," Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said Sunday. "We think he can step into our lineup and grow with our young centremen. Also has a bit of a shooter's mentality, which we like."

Thompson, a 6-foot-5 University of Connecticut alumnus, joins a Sabres team that boasts a slew youthful talent, including top-10 picks Jack Eichel, Casey Mittelstadt, Alexander Nylander, Sam Reinhart, Rasmus Ristolainen and 2018 first-overall pick Rasmus Dahlin.

"Based on our talks [with Botterill] I think they are excited to have me and I'm excited to be a part of it," Thompson added. "They really have big plans for me to be a big part of the team and play a lot, have a lot of opportunities to be successful and put up points and help the team win in that way. So yeah, I'm really excited and hopefully, I can find a spot in the top six and produce."

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TSN.CA / Undersized Palmu likes the direction Canucks and NHL are heading

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER — Perhaps the one person in the Vancouver Canucks organization most excited about the team taking diminutive defenceman Quinn Hughes seventh overall in last month's National Hockey League draft was Petrus Palmu. It was an indication that the Canucks are placing a premium on elite skill and skating over all other traits. And that gives the 5'6" Finn more hope than ever that he'll one day have the chance to realize his dream of playing in the NHL.

Palmu, who was a sixth round pick of the Canucks in the 2017 draft, remains a long-shot to climb hockey's ladder to the top rung. But based on his size, battling long odds is nothing new. Yet Palmu is not only an NHL draft pick, but he's signed to an entry-level contract and ready to play in Utica next season. The idea of him getting his chance in the NHL isn't as far-fetched as it once seemed. And he's excited by the prospect



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of playing for a franchise hitching its wagon to Hughes along with 2017 first rounder Elias Pettersson who, like Palmu, has also spent the past season shaking this notion he isn't big enough to make his mark on the game.

"The game is changing and it's a sport and you have to have a good hockey IQ and the smarts – it's not all about size and strength," Palmu said after the first day of on-ice sessions at Canucks' summer development camp at Rogers Arena on Monday. "There's a puck and you have to skate and stick handle. It's a good thing that Vancouver wants players who are skilled and smart and good skaters. So I like that."

Listed at 172 pounds on the Canucks roster, Palmu arrives at this camp coming off an impressive first professional season in which he scored 17 goals and produced 36 points in 59 games for TPS Turku in the Finnish SM-liiga. That led all first year players in that league and for his efforts, the right winger was named Rookie of the Year.

With a low centre of gravity, Palmu is strong on his skates and despite being shorter than opponents he's certainly not easy to push around. After a few games of adjusting to life as a pro, the soon to be 21-year-old (his birthday is on July 16th), was pleased with the way his season unfolded.

"For my first year in pro hockey, I had dreams about being a professional, I think it went well and it was fun," he says. "I take little steps every year. It's not like it's one summer and I'll be a National Hockey League player. It's a process and it may take a summer or two or maybe three, but I try to do my best and enjoy every day. I'm living my dream and hopefully I'll get the chance at some point. I believe in myself."

While he may have been little more than a curiosity with potential when they selected him a year ago, the Canucks now believe in Palmu, too. He's destined to start next season in the American Hockey League, but unlike many Europeans who need time to adjust to smaller ice in North America, Palmu has experience to draw on from three years in the Ontario Hockey League.

In fact, he's just one year removed from a 40-goal and 98-point season on small ice in Owen Sound where he was teammates with fellow 2017 Canucks draft pick Jonah Gadjovich.

"You look at the way the game is trending and he fits all those things," Utica general manager and Canucks director of player development Ryan Johnson says of Palmu's prowess. "Yes, he's small in stature, but he protects the puck very well. He's almost like a fire hydrant. He's tough to knock off the puck. He's very shifty down low. He's quick in the small areas and the East/West game and has a really high hockey sense. I know when our guys drafted him, that's what they were envisioning. You look at a guy like (Viktor) Arvidsson in Nashville that plays a crafty game, he's quick all over the ice and he plays in traffic. Petrus has a lot of those similar qualities and we're just trying to help him bring them out."

A decade ago, it would have been difficult to imagine a player like Palmu getting a legitimate chance to play in the NHL. But with the emergence of stars like Patrick Kane and Johnny Gaudreau leading the way for others like Tyler Johnson, Jonathan Marchessault, Cam Atkinson, Connor Sheary and Alex DeBrincat – all members of the 5'9" and under club – the opportunities in the NHL now seem better than ever.

And for Palmu and others of his ilk, recently-named 2018 Hockey Hall of Fame inductee-to-be Martin St. Louis remains the gold standard for undersized players.

"I have a teammate in Turku Eric Perrin who is friends with Marty and I have a St. Louis jersey I want to send to him," Palmu laughed. "He said he was going to see Marty this summer, so maybe I'll get it autographed."

That would be a terrific keepsake and a reminder for Palmu of just what is possible. While he may be shorter than those around him, Palmu wants to prove he measures up. And the Canucks may find in the years ahead that this Finn is a perfect fit for an organization trying to climb back to the Stanley Cup playoffs.

CAMP NOTES:

Jonah Gadjovich

is nursing a wrist injury that is preventing him from shooting pucks at camp. He took part in Monday's on-ice drills by was limited during the session. He says he suffered the injury during the OHL Playoffs. He's been examined by the Canucks medical staff and expects to be 100% for training camp in September. Fellow 2017 second round draft pick

Kole Lind

is spending the summer in Saskatoon after moving from his home in small town Shaunavon, Sask. where he felt he couldn't adequately train for the upcoming hockey season. Lind is living at the home of former NHLer Rich Pilon who was his Midget hockey billet. At one point Monday, there were 11 coaches on the ice working with the players. Canucks prospects will tackle the Grouse Grind on Friday as the finale to this year's Summer Development Camp.

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Neal adds finish to Flames

Scott Cullen

The Calgary Flames added another key component via free agency, signing a veteran goal-scoring winger.

Statistically Speaking breaks down the Flames' addition of James Neal.

James Neal	Vegas	RW	71	25	19
44	50.5	-0.5	98.6	54.4	17:11

The Flames Get: RW James Neal

A 30-year-old power forward who has scored at least 20 goals in each of his 10 NHL seasons, James Neal is a proven goal-scorer, who can play with an edge, though he has eased off some as his career has progressed.

He has also seen a decline in production and role as he gets older. Last season, he played 17:11 per game, his lowest time on ice since 2008-2009, and he still finished with 25 goals in 71 games for Vegas.

With Calgary, though, there will be an opportunity for Neal to play in a significant role, potentially alongside Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan on the top line. If not, the Flames may be inclined to shake up their second line and put Neal with Matthew Tkachuk and Mikael Backlund. In either case, that's a good place for Neal to keep his 20-goal streak going.

After their deal with Carolina to get Elias Lindholm, and adding free agents Derek Ryan and Austin Czarnik, the Flames have significantly improved their forward depth.

Signed for five years, at a cap hit of \$5.75-million, Neal is fairly-priced as a scoring winger. It's certainly possible that by the end of that contract, he may no longer be a sure thing for 20-plus goals, but if that continues for three or four years out of the five, that would still be a decent return.

As for Vegas, in the wake of Neal's departure, there should be a bigger role available to winger Alex Tuch. It also makes sense for the Golden Knights to avoid sinking five years into a winger on the wrong side of 30.

Verdict: Neal represents an upgrade because he can score, and the Flames need scoring help. He's going to be 31 when next season begins,



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so a contract that runs him through age 35 is going to depend on him aging well.

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TSN.CA / Flames sign F Neal to five-year deal

3-4 minutes

CALGARY — The Calgary Flames have added a much-needed sniper to their lineup while cementing their top-six forward core, signing proven scorer James Neal on Monday.

The deal is worth US\$28.75 million over five years with an annual average salary of \$5.75 million.

Neal is coming off a run to the Stanley Cup final with the Vegas Golden Knights, putting up 25 goals and 44 points in 71 regular-season games before adding six goals and 11 points in 20 post-season games.

The 30-year-old winger has reached the 20-goal mark in each of his 10 NHL seasons and produced a career-high 40 goals in 2011-12. He has 263 goals and 495 points in 703 career games.

Calgary wasn't done with the Neal signing, announcing later in the day that the club inked depth forward Buddy Robinson to a two-year, two-way contract that pays \$700,000 annually if he sticks on the Flames roster and \$325,000 if sent down to their American Hockey league affiliate the Stockton Heat.

Neal can either slide right into Calgary's top line alongside Johnny Gaudreau and centre Sean Monahan or play second line with centre Mikael Backlund and Matthew Tkachuk. Flames coach Bill Peters will have some options with recently-acquired winger Elias Lindholm being the other option on one of those two lines.

Calgary missed the playoffs last year for the seventh time in nine seasons in large part due to its lack of scoring. The Flames were 27th in goals scored and struggled heavily on the power play, finishing 29th.

Neal, who will turn 31 in September, adds some post-season experience to a team in need of it with 100 career playoff games including back-to-back Stanley Cup appearances, first in 2017 with the Nashville Predators before the Golden Knights' magical run in their inaugural season in 2018.

The Flames will be Neal's fifth team. The Whitby, Ont., native was originally drafted by the Dallas Stars 33rd overall in 2005 and has played with the Pittsburgh Penguins, Nashville and Vegas.

The six-foot-two 221-pound Neal will be receiving a slight raise from his last contract, a six-year US\$30 million deal signed with the Penguins in 2012, and will be the fourth-highest paid player on Calgary behind Gaudreau, Monahan and captain Mark Giordano.

Robinson played 74 games with the AHL's Manitoba Moose in 2017-18 and scored 25 goals with 53 points.

The 26-year-old native of Bellmawr, N.J., went undrafted after two seasons at Lake Superior State University before signing with the Ottawa Senators as a college free agent in 2013. He made his NHL debut with Ottawa in 2015-16 and has seven career NHL games under his belt, all with the Senators.

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TSN.CA / From Bob McKenzie's Hockey Confidential: Uncle John, Young John

Bob McKenzie

Hockey Confidential: Inside Stories of People Inside the Game is a book I wrote in 2013-14. It was first published as a hardcover by Harper Collins Canada in October, 2014, and as a paperback a year later.

One of the chapters in that book was about John Tavares, two John Tavares actually. The lacrosse-playing uncle and the hockey-playing nephew. But it's also the story of an immigrant family who came to Canada and went on to produce two of the country's greatest athletes bearing the same name and extraordinary ability to score goals in their respective sports.

Given that the hockey-playing John Tavares has been in the news for some reason in the last few days, I thought it might be interesting to look back on the story of the Tavares family that appeared in Hockey Confidential four years ago.

In addition to the story, there's also the transcript of a question-and-answer interview I did with both J.T.'s on all things goal-scoring, a subject near and dear to their hearts. That interview was conducted in August, 2013, in a Mississauga, Ont., coffee shop.

The reprinting of the story and the interview is with the permission of Harper Collins Canada.

If anyone would like to get more information on Hockey Confidential, you can do so by clicking here.

Joe Tavares is not the type of man to wonder what might have been. He's economical with his words, projecting equal parts stoicism and strength. If he were being cast in a movie, he'd be the strong, silent type.

So as much as a nine-year-old boy, brand new to Canada, desperately wanted to join the other boys his age and play the sports they were playing – soccer and baseball in the summer, hockey in the winter – Joe Tavares knew it was not to be.

"I wanted to play so badly," he said, "but I couldn't."

Tavares said he had to deal with "reality" and this was his: When Manuel and Dorotea Tavares left the harsh life of the Azores (a string of volcanic islands off the coast of their native Portugal in the Atlantic Ocean) behind them in 1967, emigrating to Toronto in Canada's Centennial Year for the promise of a better life, there was neither time nor money for sports or recreation, certainly not at first, not for their eldest son Joe or his younger siblings Rita, 7, and Danny, 5.

Even as a nine-year-old, when Joe's grade school day was over at Ryerson Public School in the Alexandra Park area of west-end downtown Toronto, he had to hustle to his part-time job to help support the family, hucking dry goods in the Kensington Market. But that doesn't mean there weren't times when Joe was still sorely tempted to be a kid, one with a passion for sports.

"One day, instead of going to my job at the Market after school, I played for the school baseball team," Joe recalled. "I was pitching, I was on the mound when I saw my mother coming across the (baseball) field towards me. I dropped the ball and ran right to work. My teacher was mad. He didn't understand why I left. I ran because I knew what was coming next if I didn't."

Not only was there no time for Joe to play sports, it wasn't long before there was no time for school at all. His "reality" was work, not education. With the Tavares patriarch Manuel working as a laborer and matriarch Dorotea staying at home to look after the family, there were soon more



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Tavares' mouths to feed. Another brother, John, the first of the family to be born in Canada, arrived in 1968, and youngest brother Peter in 1976.

By the age of 15, Joe was no longer going to school, working two jobs that allowed for younger siblings like John to play the games Joe couldn't. And even though Joe was able to play some soccer and hockey once he got into his 20s, getting married and having a family of his own meant that "reality" would at times trump sports once again. Joe's own son John would be given every chance to play the sports he loved, but Joe was often too busy in the sheet metal-structural steel business supporting his own family to fully partake in his son's sporting endeavors.

"I didn't really have that chance to play (sports) but I did what I could so (brother John and son John) could play," Joe Tavares said. "If (son John) wanted it, the opportunity was there for him. I would tell him, 'It's there if you want it, go for it.'"

Go for it, they did. Both of them. Like you wouldn't believe. Joe's little brother John, the lacrosse player; Joe's son John, the hockey player; an uncle; a nephew; the same name; different game.

Little did Joe Tavares realize when he dropped the ball on the pitcher's mound to run to work that day with his mother in hot pursuit, it would help to spawn two of the country's greatest athletes who would not only play Canada's two national games, but, quite remarkably, dominate them.

If you hear the name John Tavares and automatically think of the 1990-born National Hockey League centre with the New York Islanders, it's understandable. The eldest son of Joe and Barb Tavares of Oakville, Ont., has been a national headliner since, at age 15, becoming the first player to be granted "exceptional" status in the Ontario Hockey League, gaining admission to the league a year earlier than normal. He broke Wayne Gretzky's OHL record for goals by a 16 year old, starred for Canada in back-to-back gold-medal performances at the World Junior Championship in 2008 and 2009 and was the first overall selection in the 2009 NHL draft. At age 23, he lined up with the crème de la crème and played for Team Canada at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Five seasons into his pro career, he was already an NHL superstar in every sense of the word and if he plays his way into the Hockey Hall of Fame, it will come as a surprise to no one.

So, yes, it's perfectly understandable if he's who you thought of when you heard the name John Tavares.

But that would only mean you haven't met Uncle John, or Johnny T or the original J.T., as he's known (with apologies to his nephew and Justin Timberlake), the 1968-born, mild-mannered math high school teacher by day, ageless wonder and Canadian box lacrosse phenom by summer nights and winter weekends. If there were a prize for epitomizing Canadian athleticism and lack of national recognition, Johnny T would win it in a walk.

"Put it this way," says Hockey Hall of Fame player Brendan Shanahan, who played minor lacrosse with J.T., "John Tavares the hockey player has a long way to go to accomplish what John Tavares the lacrosse player has done."

Young John would be the first to agree, if only Uncle John would slow down long enough to let anyone catch up.

Every time he stepped on the floor for the National Lacrosse League's Buffalo Bandits, he was setting NLL records.

His statistical dominance in the NLL has been Wayne Gretzky like. Going into the 2014 season, Tavares had played more games than anyone else (280), scored more goals (779, 142 more than the next best), assists (887, 109 more No. 2) and points (1,666, 404 more than the nearest competition).

If his offensive prowess was Gretzky-like, his longevity was Gordie Howe-like. The NLL was originally known as the Major Indoor Lacrosse League (MILL). It opened its doors in 1986 but it was in 1992 when a 24-year-old Tavares burst onto the scene with the Bandits, winning three

MILL championships in his first five seasons. In 1997, the MILL became the NLL and while Tavares led the Bandits to four appearances in NLL championships, there was just one more title in 2008. Twenty three consecutive seasons later, at age 45, he was still at it, one of Buffalo's most revered athletes, a big reason why the Bandits, first at the old Memorial Auditorium and then its replacement First Niagara Center, have been the NLL's marquee franchise.

J.T.'s an institution in Western New York. Every time he scored a goal, the P.A. announcer would say: Bandit goal scored by Johnny Who? And the crowd would roar "Tavares" in response.

His impact in the summer lacrosse leagues of Ontario and British Columbia is the stuff of legends. In 1992, at the age of 24, he helped lead the Brampton Excelsiors to the national championship Mann Cup. They did it again in 1993. In 1994, he moved to the Six Nations Chiefs and won three consecutive Mann Cups.

SC Express: Tavares' best plays

With John Tavares joining his hometown Toronto Maple Leafs, we take a look at some of JT's best career plays in the SC Express.

But merely recounting his championships or MVP awards or all the goals or points can't begin to paint the true picture of the artistry and athleticism of the 5-foot-11, 185-pound Tavares. Lacrosse is a hard game, especially the summer variety, played in hot, steamy, sauna-like arenas. Just running up and down the hard concrete floors can break down a man's body, never mind that there are big men – mean ones, too – using the legal lacrosse crosscheck and other more violent illegal tactics to physically punish whomever has the ball. And in any game played by J.T., he has the ball. A lot. There's no place to hide in lacrosse. Ask any hockey player who has played lacrosse, and there are many, and they'll tell you how much tougher and rugged a sport lacrosse can be than hockey, especially in front of the net where a goal-scorer takes his life into his hands while cutting through the middle.

Lacrosse fans are no different than hockey in that they like to debate to who's the greatest player of all time. In hockey, some will cite the statistical dominance of Gretzky, the longevity of Howe, the game-changing dynamic of Bobby Orr, Mario Lemieux's unheard of size, speed and skill or the fire in the eyes of Maurice (Rocket) Richard.

It's no different in lacrosse. Oldtimers will say the greatest of all time is Gaylord Powless or John Davis. In the modern era, many would say it has to be Victoria's Gary Gait, or his twin brother Paul, big men who excelled in field lacrosse at Syracuse before dominating any box game they played anywhere. Peterborough's John Grant Jr., six years younger than Tavares, was making his own case for G.O.A.T. But there's never any shortage of lacrosse people to tell you J.T.'s No. 1.

"I think he's the best who ever played," said Brian Shanahan, the older brother of ex-NHLer Brendan and a stalwart lacrosse defender who won five Mann Cups alongside Tavares in Brampton and Six Nations. "It's not just that he's played the game at the highest level possible, it's how long he's done it. It's incredible. Gary Gait is amazing, he's a lot like Mario Lemieux, that's a good comparison. There'll be lots of people who say Gary or Paul Gait are best. There's always going to be that debate. But, for me, J.T. is Wayne Gretzky AND Gordie Howe all in one. Like Gretzky, he's not the biggest or the fastest or the strongest but he is the smartest and the most skillful. He just thinks the game on another level from everyone else. He's dominated for such a long time, so he's like Gordie Howe that way. He's 45 years old and he's still playing. It's incredible. He's so competitive. He'd slit your throat to beat you, but he's a tremendous teammate and a great guy, a really good person."

Troy Cordingly would take it a step further.

"Not only do I think he's the greatest lacrosse player of all time," said the head coach of the 2014 Buffalo Bandits and a four-time Mann Cup teammate of Tavares, "I think you could make a case for him being the one of the greatest Canadian athletes, if not the greatest, in any sport. To do what he's doing at age 45, in as physically a demanding game as



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lacrosse is, to have done it year in and year out, yeah, I think he's one of the best Canadian athletes ever in any sport."

Scuff if you like, and many will, but I'm going to tell you a story.

Since the early 1980s, I've had a front-row seat to the greatest professional hockey performances of all time. I was in Hamilton's Copps Coliseum when Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux teamed up to win the 1987 Canada Cup. I was there at Maple Leaf Gardens when Gretzky played what he said was the greatest single game of his career, Game 7 of the Western Conference final against Toronto in 1993. I was maybe 20 feet away from Sidney Crosby when he yelled "lggy" and scored the Golden Goal to give Canada the gold medal at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. All of those performances, and so many more, are burned into my memory as extraordinary athletic accomplishments but then there's the hot, summer night in July of 1992, when I first saw John Tavares play lacrosse.

Biggest signings in Toronto Sports history

John Tavares signing with the Maple Leafs is arguably the biggest signing in the history of Toronto Sports. In honour of JT's homecoming, we take a look at other big signings in Toronto's past that are in the conversation.

It was an athletic display I'll never forget, a seminal sporting moment for me that I couldn't help but think about when Cordingly made a claim many would say is outlandish.

It was an Ontario Lacrosse Association Major Series League mid-week regular season game between the visiting Brampton Excelsiors and the Brooklin Redmen at tiny Luther Vipond Memorial Arena in Brooklin, Ont. There couldn't have been any more than maybe 50 to 75 people there, if that. I stood in the corner, at the glass, near the dressing rooms on the far side from the stands, where everyone else sat to watch the game. It could not have been further removed from Copps Coliseum or Maple Leaf Gardens or the Winter Olympics.

It was Tavares' third year of senior men's lacrosse, he was 23, but his first in Ontario after having played two seasons in B.C. I went to the game not ever having heard of John Tavares and I left the arena that summer night feeling as though I had witnessed one of the most incredible feats of athleticism ever, bar none.

I was totally captivated by Tavares that night. At just under 6 feet tall and, at that time, probably weighing no more than 175 pounds, he seemed so much smaller than the other players. Yet he was so dynamic and explosive, so graceful and cerebral. He ran the floor with a fluidity that's difficult to put into words but his game was also so visceral. He was so lean, especially his legs, but they were like coiled steel. His swarthy skin glistened with sweat, his hawkish features evident under the wire facemask, his eyes bright like white-hot light.

To the best of my recollection, he probably scored five or six goals that night but it wasn't that he scored them so much as it was how he scored them, how he played the game, demonstrating an uncanny blend of intelligence, athleticism and extraordinary skill.

His passing and shooting was on another level from virtually every player on the floor. You could seem him process the game like no other, Gretzky-like vision and creativity. The things he could do with the ball in his stick cannot even be described. He shot the ball overhand, underhand, side-arm, over the shoulder, behind the back, between the legs. He juke and jived all over the floor, faking and feigning, creating open spaces for himself, but he also carried big, aggressive defenders on his back through heavy traffic. He absorbed more physical punishment – crosschecks, big hits, blatant attempts at intimidation, physical and verbal – than I'd seen any star hockey player take. Ever. He gave as good as he got, too, figuratively baring his teeth, literally getting his stick into the faces of opponents taking liberties, protecting himself, creating space for himself. He used trickery to sneak off the bench and score on a breakaway. He scored a goal diving through the air like Superman. He scored in tight. He scored from far out. He scored from behind the net, he

scored from in front of it. He beat opponents one on one, he beat them one on three. He played with unbelievable passion yet there was a calmness and sense of control and purpose in everything he did. Boundless energy, not an ounce of it wasted.

I clearly remember thinking that I was seeing someone and something truly extraordinary, an athlete who was every bit as gifted in his discipline as Wayne Gretzky was in his. I remember going into the parking lot outside the arena between periods and seeing him sitting on a curbstone minus his equipment, quietly gathering himself, sipping on a Gatorade, doing the intermission cool-down ritual that is standard practice at any lacrosse game on a hot summer's night (the dressing rooms are, as a rule, stifling hot and it's not uncommon for both teams to be out there in a parking lot). I recall thinking how Gretzky-like his body type was, that anything 99 could do in hockey, John Tavares could do in lacrosse.

I was fascinated by him, captivated by what he'd done. I asked the lacrosse fans there, who is this guy? John Tavares, they told me. A rising star, a phenom, they added. And they were right.

Tavares led Brampton to the first of his five straight Mann Cups that season. Twenty years later, in the summer of 2012, with Canadian summer box lacrosse stops in Vancouver, Brampton, Six Nations, Akwesasne (twice), Victoria and St. Regis, J.T. played for the Peterborough Lakers and hoisted the Mann Cup for a record eighth time. Laker captain Scott Self received the Mann Cup and instead of being the first to lift it over his head, as is the custom for the winning captain, he immediately handed it over to 44-year-old Tavares, who lifted it, quite likely, for the final time. A year later, in 2013, he didn't play summer lacrosse for the first time since he picked up a stick as a young boy, resting his body for what he thought might be his final NLL season in 2014.

Unlike his older brother Joe, 10 years his senior, the first Canadian born member of the Portuguese Tavares family wasn't obliged to work one job as a kid, never mind two. So as a young boy, John Tavares was able to pursue his passion for sports. That didn't mean his parents were thrilled with John's sporting life. Money was still hard to come by and sports cost money. So when John would borrow his older brother Danny's lacrosse stick and wanted to play for St. Christopher's at nearby Alexandra Park – registration was \$20 -- it was more tolerated than embraced.

"My father didn't dislike sports, he actually liked them," John said. "He just felt playing sports was taking away from potential income for our family. So, me playing lacrosse, they didn't really want me to play."

Maybe they would have looked more favorably had it been a sport they knew like soccer, but young John played one game of European "football," never touched the ball, and had no desire to ever do it again.

Dreger: Tavares' heart led him to Toronto over Long Island

With John Tavares signing a 7-year, \$77 million contract with the Maple Leafs, the Insiders break down Tavares' decision timeline and discuss where the Islanders go from here after losing their captain.

Lacrosse, though, he took to it instantly. It just felt right. Dorotea couldn't always see her son John from their house on Ryerson Avenue when he went to Alex Park but she could certainly hear him. For hours at a time, he'd be there, shooting the Indian rubber lacrosse ball against the boards.

It wasn't long before he was scoring goals, lots of them, and thrilling the rowdy, enthusiastic neighborhood crowds who would come out on summer's nights to cheer on St. Christopher's at the outdoor box.

He also gave hockey a try. More ball hockey than organized ice hockey, which wasn't readily available at Alexandra Park. But he'd try skating in the winter when the lacrosse box became the community hockey rink.

"I was a real ankle burner," he said. "I had a pair of old Orbit skates we bought from Honest Ed's. But hockey was never my game."



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In fact, if winter, and hockey season were holding on too long, John the lacrosse player would hurry it along.

"I was so impatient for lacrosse season to start, I'd go over once the ice started to melt and I'd chip away the ice with my boots, break it up, help it along so the box would be clear for lacrosse," Tavares said. "I couldn't wait for lacrosse season to start."

Tavares loved playing for St. Christopher's at Alexandra Park. It felt like home. It wasn't easy for him when his family left the Bathurst-Queen Street area for the suburbs in Mississauga, where he wound up playing minor lacrosse as well as Junior B and Junior A.

Even in midget lacrosse, playing alongside future NHLer Brendan Shanahan, everyone knew J.T. had that special something.

"What I always remember about him is that he was working on his (lacrosse) stick," Shanahan said. "Constantly. The other thing about him is that he was so smart, so tricky. He was always working on trick plays, hiding the ball, pretending to leave the floor on a line change but then racing back into the play to score a goal. I can't tell you how many times he would score a goal and the game would be delayed because the refs would have to consult and figure out what they just saw and whether it was legal. He was always pushing the envelope on rules, finding loopholes, getting creative."

"He was in minor lacrosse what Pavel Datsyuk is now, a guy you just like to watch practice to see all the creative things he would try."

Shanahan loved lacrosse, too, but knew he would have to give it up to focus on hockey. Tavares, though, was a pure lacrosse player, although Shanahan laughed at what might have been had Tavares been inclined to skate or play hockey.

"John Purves, who was a very good hockey player, played lacrosse with us too and John (Purves) would rent ice in the summer," Shanahan recalled. "John (Tavares) would come out for fun. He couldn't skate very well at all but you could see he was taking everything in, sizing up what everyone was doing, where they were on the ice, it was like he was studying us. So even though he couldn't skate, it wasn't long before he was starting to dangle guys and make plays. (Purves) always said, 'If (Tavares) ever decided he wanted to be a hockey player, he'd be better than all of us.' He had that kind of mind to really process things."

Tavares won a Founder's Cup national Junior B championship with Mississauga in 1986. Statistically, he ripped up Jr. B (132 goals in 17 games in one season) and Jr. A lacrosse. He played and starred in high school football and wound up going to Wilfrid Laurier University, playing defensive back on the Canadian university football team.

He graduated from Laurier, with a desire to become a teacher. He wanted to go to teacher's college but didn't have the money. He found work at the high school he attended as a student, Phillip Pocock Catholic Secondary School in Mississauga. He was hired as an educational research worker with special needs kids and did that for a couple of years. It was while he was playing for the Buffalo Bandits that he got hooked up with D'Youville College in Buffalo, getting his teaching certificate there, ultimately landing a fulltime teaching job at Pocock.

Technically, one of Canada's most gifted athletes is a high-school math teacher.

It wouldn't be accurate to say Tavares made no money playing lacrosse, but it's never been nearly enough to call it a livelihood. In 2014, he was getting the maximum NLL salary of close to \$40,000 for the five-month season. Officially, the summer leagues in Ontario and B.C. are amateur loops, but everyone knows there's cash to be made, "expenses" to be paid, but even for a superstar like Tavares, we're talking modest amounts of money.

By anyone's best guess, the most Tavares has ever made in one year from lacrosse would be around \$50,000, and keep in mind, when he started playing in the MILL in 1992, he got \$125 per game for the eight-game season.

"Yeah, but it went up to \$150 a game in my second year," he said with a laugh.

If such an extraordinary athlete ever felt bitter about his career lacrosse earnings being a mere fraction of what the lowest-paid NHL player would get for one season, never mind what superstar athletes of Tavares' ilk earn in other sports, he doesn't show it. Or that he had to spend hours in rush-hour traffic, driving the 100 miles from Mississauga to Peterborough for summer games rather than traveling in style on an NHL charter.

"It would have been nice to make more money, but lacrosse has brought a lot of good things to my life," Tavares said. "It would have been great to make a livelihood at it, but that wasn't possible. I am a math teacher. When I was growing up, I played lacrosse because I loved it. There was no pro league to aspire to. I never set out to be a lacrosse player so I can't be disappointed. I'm fortunate to have been able to play at the level I've played."

Now, he takes great pride in being a father. He and his wife Katrina had son Justin in 2006 and daughter Breanne in 2007. J.T. coached Justin in tyke lacrosse but Justin suggested he might want to play baseball.

"If he likes (baseball) better," Tavares said, "I don't mind."

But when Justin suggested he's interested in being a goalie, the father had to put his foot down.

"I told him when he can afford to buy goalie equipment, he can play goal," Tavares said. "I've never liked goalies."

As he prepared for the 2014 NLL season, he knew there was a good chance it would be his last. His body had been breaking down. His 2012 summer season and 2013 NLL year were marred by injury, micro-tears of his calf muscles that made it difficult to run. If it turned out 2014 was his final season, he's at peace with it.

"When you're old, you can't be playing hurt," he said late in the summer of 2013. "(Injuries) caused me to struggle the last few years. (The Bandits) still seem to think I can help out and I'm still loving to play. I'm not sure why they want a 45 year old on the team. I look at it that there are stages of being retired. Like, when you're at home and you don't want to go to the arena but once you get to the arena you like being there. That's when you know you're near retirement but not there yet. That's me (going into 2014). I've still got some fire left. But the next stage, the one where you know it's time to retire, you just don't want to go to the arena at all. That's when you know it's time. I'll know. That won't be a problem for me."

As for his place in the game, his legacy as the greatest player of all time, the comparisons to Gretzky, he doesn't get too caught up in any of it, his humility shining through it all.

"I've got numbers others don't but the numbers don't tell the whole story," he said. "That doesn't make you the best player."

"Gretzky?" he said with a grin. "I was dirtier than Gretzky. I'd stick guys or fight. Wayne was a Lady Byng guy. Me, not so much. For me, hands down, Gary Gait is (the best lacrosse player of all time.) Paul was no slouch either. John Grant's name should be in there, too. There are so many great players. I'm just fortunate to have played for as long as I did."

"You know what I'll remember more than any championships, any accomplishments or goals I scored? My early years, my minor lacrosse, just playing in the box at Alexandra Park, with the rowdy crowd, just looking forward to go there with my stick. I wanted to play lacrosse because my brother Danny played and I'd take his stick. That's what I'll remember most."

John Tavares the lacrosse player was never going to be a hockey player but John Tavares the hockey player most definitely could have been a lacrosse player.

Babcock: 'It was great to see John make this decision'



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Following the press conference that formally introduced John Tavares as a member of the Toronto Maple Leafs, headcoach Mike Babcock answered questions in the locker room regarding the prolonged process of acquiring Tavares and how important this added depth will be to winning a championship.

Young John's mother Barb remembered her brother-in-law Danny suggesting she put four-year-old John in peanut lacrosse, which she did. Uncle Danny took little John to his first game, brought him home and told Barb that they would have to put John in an older age group with his Danny's six-year-old son Ryan.

"In John's first lacrosse game, his team won 17-1," Barb Tavares said. "John scored all 17 goals."

As natural as John was with a lacrosse stick in his hand, hockey was his first and enduring love. He first skated at Clarkson Arena when he was two-and-a-half years old.

"At any given time it was hard for me to say what I enjoyed more, hockey or lacrosse, but I know I fell in love with hockey first," the NHL star said. "I can still vividly remember learning to skate, not wanting to use the boards, going to the middle and trying to not fall down. I had a hockey stick in my hand when I was two years old. My first connection was to hockey but as I got older, I wanted to be (uncle) J.T."

Uncle John remembered a young John who was crazy for hockey. "He'd rather watch Wayne Gretzky videos than cartoons," J.T. said. "I'd come over to his house and we'd play hockey in the basement. If I didn't let him be the commentator, he would cry. I wouldn't let him beat me either."

But seeing Uncle John play for the Bandits had a huge impact on young John, who with his collection of cousins would make the drive on Friday nights to see the Bandits play at the old Aud in Buffalo.

"I was only three or four years old and it was so loud," young John said. "What I remember is how steep the seats were in the Aud."

"His mom (Barb) would tell you (young John) would just stare at the game, even as a four year old, and take it all in where a lot of kids would be running around all over the place," J.T. said.

In the summer months, young John would go to the old Memorial Arena in Brampton and watch Uncle John in the MLS. That, too, left an indelible imprint on him.

"It was such a great atmosphere in a real old barn," young John said. "The lacrosse was so good. I would watch it and say, 'Wow, I can't believe I play this game.' It was fantastic. I loved it."

It didn't matter which sport young John was playing, he filled the net in both, always playing up one age group in hockey, but since lacrosse age groupings are two years, he was, in peewee lacrosse for example, a 10 year old playing against 12 year olds.

It just didn't matter. In the highly competitive peewee, bantam and midget provincial qualifiers and championships, the underage kid would still dominate and often lead everyone in the province in scoring. In hockey, he was the kid the other teams would go to extraordinary lengths to stop.

"I loved playing both sports," young John said. "I really looked up to (J.T.) and until I was 13 years old, I really thought I could just keep on playing both sports. I played lacrosse with my cousins and we had a lot of good friends. It was how we bonded. My lacrosse highlight was winning the provincial championship in bantam. Our Oakville team started out as kids and we were getting beat by Whitby by 15 or 16 goals and in bantam, we won it all. That was a really tight group of guys that grew up together. We beat Whitby in the final. I had the game-winning goal in the semi-final and the final."

In midget lacrosse, at the Ontario Summer Games in London, Tavares' Oakville team finished third but his lacrosse game really took off. He was named tournament MVP. He played a year of Junior A lacrosse for Mississauga the summer before he was granted early admission to the OHL. And even after he finished his rookie season in the OHL with the

Oshawa Generals, he played one more season of Jr. A with the Tomahawks.

It was only after he played his second OHL season that he knew, as difficult as it was for him, he'd have to stop playing lacrosse to focus on his hockey career.

"I went to the (Jr. A lacrosse) tryouts that summer and for the first time, I knew that was it for lacrosse," he said. "I ran in that practice and when it was over, I told them I was done, that I had to put more time into my off-season hockey conditioning. You just can't train for hockey and play lacrosse at the same time. I'd get home at 1 in the morning from Peterborough or St. Catharines and then have to get up and work out in the morning. I just couldn't do it. It was time."

Joe Tavares never imagined the two Johns -- his brother the lacrosse superstar and his son the hockey superstar -- would make the impact they have on their respective worlds, so there's plenty of Tavares pride to go around.

"We're all very proud, our whole family," Joe said. "They're phenomenal athletes and they're very proud of each other. You can see that."

Proud, and thankful as well, especially to the man who never got the same athletic opportunities as they did, which allowed them to chase their sporting dreams and scale the greatest of heights in their respective games.

Older John is eternally grateful that Joe sacrificed his own youth to work and support the family so John was able to play lacrosse. Younger John feels the same way about his Dad doing everything he did to allow him to play both hockey and lacrosse.

And maybe, just maybe, this J.T.-John Tavares story could turn out to be a trilogy. Peter Tavares, 18 years Joe's junior, is the youngest of Manuel's and Dorotea's children. On Sept. 14, 2012, -- six days after lacrosse John's 44th birthday and six days before hockey John's 22nd birthday -- Peter Tavares became a father for the first time. He and his wife Misty had a little boy.

They named him Jonathan.

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TSN.CA / Q and A with the hockey John Tavares and the lacrosse John Tavares

Bob McKenzie

In an effort to unearth the secrets of goal-scoring success and all things goal-scoring, we didn't need to go around the world on a quest. We needed only to invite two of the greatest natural goal-scorers in two sports -- the lacrosse J.T. and the hockey John Tavares -- to a Mississauga, Ont., coffee shop. Here's the transcript of an interview that was conducted in August of 2013:

BM: First goal you ever scored, do you remember it?

UNCLE JOHN: I was 5 or 6. I zigzagged through the whole Mimico team and scored. It's funny, I don't remember the ball actually going in the net. What I remember is what I felt after I scored: confident. I knew I could get through everyone and score.

YOUNG JOHN: I don't remember my first goal, but it's weird, I remember not being able to score. I was a hockey camp, I was really young and I



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had six or seven breakaways in a scrimmage at the end and I didn't score on any of them. I didn't start off too well. My Mom took video of it. I remember watching it a few years ago, maybe that's why I remember it.

BM: From an artistic point of view, what's the best goal you've ever scored?

UNCLE JOHN: Hmmm, I'm like (young) John, I remember more of my errors than my goals. There was a goal I scored and my part of it, that was the easy part. It was the most artistic because of the whole play. It was in Brampton, Darris Kilgour won the faceoff and he passed it to Jim Veltman and Veltman backhanded a beautiful pass to me and I just shot it in the net. It was like boom-boom-boom. What I did wasn't anything special, but the whole play, the flow, the simplicity of it, it was just beautiful. But I think you're looking for something else, more individual. Okay, I came down my wrong side, which I did a lot. I would normally bring the ball across myself, cross my arms and dive through the air and just push it in on the far side where I was diving. But goalies would catch on to what I was doing and the goalie this time, it was Anthony Cosmo, he knew me really well, so I started doing it and then I realized he knew exactly what I was doing. So while I was in the air, diving across the crease, instead of shooting it into the net far side, I somehow wrapped the stick around behind my back and twisted my body while I was in the air and shot it back to the other side and it went in. I don't think there's any video of it, it was Buffalo vs. Toronto (NLL), I would like to see that one again.

YOUNG JOHN: I can't believe you didn't say the one that was on the ESPN Top 10.

UNCLE JOHN: Oh, yeah, that was a good one, too (grins).

YOUNG JOHN: Look it up on YouTube. It was on ESPN. Buffalo against Portland. He went through three guys and made like eight fakes. It was an incredible goal, one of the best I've ever seen. A few stand out for me. There was a minor hockey game, they were checking me all game. I got hauled down on a breakaway. Laying on my back, I somehow shot it, the goalie was down and I just sort of chipped it over him. The other one I think of, it was my first goal in the OHL, against Kingston. We were shorthanded, I'm not sure why a 15-year-old was on the ice killing a penalty in his first OHL game (laughs). I just let a snap shot go from top of circle, one of the best shots I've ever taken. It went far side, top corner. I don't normally shoot it like that.

BM: What about your most important goal?

UNCLE JOHN: It was 1992 (Tavares' rookie season in the NLL), Buffalo versus Philly at the Spectrum, a great game, sudden-death overtime, sold out crowd. The atmosphere was unreal. It was a broken play. Philly's goaltenders were Dallas Eliuk and Dwight Maetche, who I played with in Vancouver. Dwight was a great goalie, I really respected him, and I never say a goalie is good, but he was good. In practice, he would never let me score. I hated that. So Dwight got into the game and I didn't want to shoot on him, he was in my head a bit. So there's a broken play and the ball comes to me in overtime and I decide I'm going to take backhand (over the shoulder) and I don't take a lot of backhands. I see the top corner open and I take the shot. It went straight into the ground and between Dwight's legs and in (laughs). Nice shot. But it won the NLL championship.

YOUNG JOHN: For me, it's probably the (2009) world junior championships. It was New Year's Eve, we're down 3-0 like that against the Americans. I scored three goals, but it was the second goal that was the big one. I drove wide, shot it into the top corner. That goal really turned things around for us in that game and the tournament. But, I would have to say shootout goal I scored against Russia in the semi-finals that year was really important, too. We all remember the (miraculous Jordan Eberle tying goal) but I knew I couldn't miss on the shootout. What I remember is I didn't hear anything, nothing, when I skated in on the goalie, and the place was going crazy, but that's the most focused I've ever been on a shot. I almost lost the puck but the goalie went down and I scored.

BM: This may be repetitive, because you've talked about a lot of goals already, but what about, for any reason you see fit, the most memorable goal you've scored?

UNCLE JOHN: That would be the game-winning goal in the Founders Cup Junior B championship (see Tavares story preceding the interview) or the 1992 NLL OT GWG against Philly.

YOUNG JOHN: For me, that would be when I broke Wayne Gretzky's record for most goals by a 16 year old in the OHL. I tried to pass the puck to Cal Clutterbuck on the back door, Logan Couture went down to block it, the puck went off his skate and back to me. The goalie anticipated the pass, went down and I shot it low blocker. I didn't even celebrate the goal, I just went and got the puck. The guys gave me a hard time about that one.

BM: How about this one, the most vindictive, suck-on-that, in-your-face goal you scored?

UNCLE JOHN: I don't have one like that.

YOUNG JOHN: Oh, I do. There were tons in minor hockey. Kids would follow me and slash me and stick me and I'd score and be so pumped....

UNCLE JOHN: Yeah, I probably have a few like that but not one I remember any more than another. I'd be in Peterborough or Boston and I'm tired and some guy is yipping at me from the bench, saying, 'You're too old,' and I'm thinking, 'You don't really want to wake me up.' I'm an old man now (laughs). So I'd take the ball, I'd have a look up at the 30-second shot clock and I'd just shoot it in and look over the bench, like, 'Really?'

YOUNG JOHN: I know when I played in minor atom, a guy was shadowing me, being really dirty with me. My Dad thought it was coming from their coach and he would tell me to protect myself. They would butt end or stick me in the nuts. I scored a hat trick in this game. The guy who was sticking me, after I scored, he faked like he was going to slash me in the head. He got a penalty, I didn't even move, never flinched. I scored again and I said, 'What are you going to do now, fake slash me in the head again?'

BM: How about a goal someone else scored that you wish you scored? Do you have any goal envy?

UNCLE JOHN: I played some minor lacrosse with Brendan Shanahan and he'd say to me, 'Show me a fancy goal.' I didn't score fancy goals, I'd just try to do things the right way. Gary Gait, now there's a guy who scored some fancy goals. He'd rip a backhand from the top of the power play into the top corner. I wouldn't even have the guts to try that, especially on the power play. So I'd like to score a Gary Gait backhand from the top of the power play.

YOUNG JOHN: For me, it would be a goal with great meaning. Maybe because it's coming up, the Olympics, I would have loved to score Sid's goal in Vancouver, in Canada, to win Olympic gold for Canada. Either that or Brett Hull scoring a game-winning goal in overtime to win the Stanley Cup. Those are the kinds of goals I dream of scoring.

UNCLE JOHN: I've been trying to convince (young) John to pick up the puck on the blade of his stick and whip it around and bounce it in, like Robbie Schremp did. As a fan, that's what I'd like to see John do on a shootout shot. What's the percentage on scoring on a penalty shot or shootout, maybe 20 per cent? I'm surprised you don't do that.

YOUNG JOHN: I do it in practice.

UNCLE JOHN: Do you score?

YOUNG JOHN: Yeah, sometimes.

UNCLE JOHN: See, it's easy. I've seen high school kids do it. Easy. Do it.

YOUNG JOHN: Now you sound like my Dad. My Dad can shoot right or left in hockey, both ways, and he always says to me, 'Shoot both ways, it's easy.'



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BM: Most goals you've ever scored in one game?

UNCLE JOHN: I think in junior, I once had 12 or 13. In pro, I think the most I ever had was seven. My manager in Buffalo told me that if I get a few goals early and the game is in hand, I really back off and don't try to score as much. He's probably right.

YOUNG JOHN: Once in lacrosse, I had 13 or 14 points but I don't recall how many goals. In minor hockey, I've scored six or seven goals. That would be the most for me in hockey.

BM: Outside of your contract that pays you, did anyone, a family member, ever give you money to score a goal?

UNCLE JOHN: Nope, never any money, maybe a shot in the head if I didn't score (laughs).

YOUNG JOHN: My Dad would just say, 'If you don't get a hat trick, don't come home.' After the game, we'd pull up and he'd open the door a crack and peek out and say, 'How many did you get? Okay, c'mon in then.'

BM: Let's talk celebrations, do you guys have a go-to celebration?

UNCLE JOHN: I don't celebrate goals too much. More in practice. I joke around that I'm going to jump up on the glass and really go crazy and then I score and I just raise my arms. Honestly, excessive celebrating just stirs up the other team. Why would you want to do that?

YOUNG JOHN: I go through stages. I don't mind celebrating a goal, nothing too crazy though. I'll do the same thing for 20 or 30 games and then switch it up a bit.

BM: I went through a lot of (Young John's) goals on video and you're right, you stick with the basics but there's little variations that you throw in there. You're mostly a two arms straight in the air guy, but sometimes you'll throw in a little something extra—

YOUNG JOHN: Fist pump, usually. I don't mind a little fist pump.

BM: Yes, sometimes it's down low from your mid-section, but sometimes you like to go upstairs and give the overhead, overhand fist pump to the crowd with a look into the stands. But you're right, it's all relatively subdued.

YOUNG JOHN: My Dad always told me, 'Don't ever celebrate, it's like saying the F word.' So when I was young, I'd put my hands in the air and then take them down. Actually, there probably was one for me, the World Juniors in Ottawa against the Americans. When they went up on us 3-0, one of their players when by our bench and taunted us, with his hand to his ear. When I scored my second goal to make it 3-2, I did it back to them. I probably would like to take that one back but it was a really emotional game. I try not to be too obnoxious.

BM: I ask this question and I already know the answer, but is it easier to score goals in hockey or lacrosse? The answer, in theory, should be hockey, because the net in lacrosse is a lot smaller and the goalie equipment is much bigger, but it's obvious by the number of goals scored in a game, it's lacrosse.

YOUNG JOHN: In lacrosse, you have more control where the ball is going. It's in your stick, you're not on skates.

UNCLE JOHN: In hockey, they have only one angle, up...in lacrosse you can move the ball from high to low and shoot up or down. By the way (to Young John), you should use your backhand more than you do.

YOUNG JOHN: He always tells me that. It's the only move he ever had in the basement when he would come over to play hockey with me. Forehand, backhand, deke, same move every time.

BM: Where's it more dangerous, in front of the net in hockey or lacrosse?

YOUNG JOHN: Lacrosse.

UNCLE JOHN: Really?

YOUNG JOHN: For sure, you can legally crosscheck in lacrosse. Guys would crosscheck you in the hips. And in lacrosse, you have to go through the middle and that's where you can see the kids who are afraid. You have to have balls to cut through the middle in lacrosse because you're taking your life into your hands.

UNCLE JOHN: There's crosschecking off the ball in lacrosse, too. If your team has the ball, the other team can start crosschecking anyone who doesn't have the ball. That's intense.

YOUNG JOHN: I remember playing against Six Nations. Every defender had a wooden stick, when you went to set a pick, you know you were going to get destroyed. I would wear all sorts of extra equipment. I was a lot younger, I was 20 to 30 pounds lighter than them and they'd just give it to you even if you didn't have the ball.

UNCLE JOHN: I like a tough game, always have, but I don't know much (physical) intimidation should exist in sport. I've got a kid playing now. Do I really want him playing lacrosse and hockey and taking shots to the head with barely any penalties?

BM: I'm sure you guys have heard the term "natural" or "pure" goal scorer, which on one level is counter-intuitive because I think you guys would be the first to admit it takes a lot of hard work and practice to score, but there's no denying some guys simply have the knack, and that would be both of you.

UNCLE JOHN: Positioning is everything for me in scoring goals. I think I put myself in a good spot to score. My skill level maybe isn't the highest in the game, but my sense of where to be, I just try to put people to sleep and then when they least expect it...

BM: Brett Hull used to subscribe to that theory. He would say he liked to be invisible until he got the puck on his stick in the right spot on the ice.

UNCLE JOHN: In lacrosse, I would try to set up the guy playing defence against me. I would show him routine, same thing over and over again, do routine, do routine and let him think he was getting the better of me for a while and when I could see he was relaxing, getting comfortable with my routine, that's when I'd break the routine, do something different and beat him for a goal...I asked (Young John) once whether he considers himself a playmaker or a goal scorer. He said he's a goal-scorer, which surprised me a bit. I kind of think of myself as a playmaker first although when the game is on the line, I guess I like to be a goal scorer.

YOUNG JOHN: When you talk about a natural or pure goal scorer, I think you're talking about some guys who don't look like they have the greatest skill set – they don't have a real hard shot or they're not fast or big – but when you talk about a guy like my line-mate, Matt Moulson, or someone like Luc Robitaille, they have great scoring instincts and an ability to put the puck in the net. That's my definition of a natural goal scorer. Some guys have the skill set to be great goal scorers, some guys just have the knack, some have both and those are the really great ones.

BM: That precise moment when the puck or ball goes into the net, how does that feel? Can you put it into words?

UNCLE JOHN: For me, it's the exact same feeling every time. It's satisfaction and gratification that all the hard work has paid off. Now when I score, I'm so happy inside. When you're older, you need that goal, really need it. At age 28, if you go two games without scoring a goal, it's called a slump. When you're 40, you go two games without a goal and you're washed up. I need those goals now for confidence. It makes me believe I still belong.

YOUNG JOHN: I can't describe it. As a kid, I knew the objective is to score, and I felt if I could do that better than anyone else, it would help my team win and help me become the best at it. There's no emotion like it, nothing like scoring a goal. I'm driven by it.

BM: Goal scorers get into the zone, how do you know when you're "in the zone?"



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UNCLE JOHN: In lacrosse, your stick has to be on. In lacrosse, the stick is everything. If your stick feels great, it seems like the game is so easy. Then things just seem to happen so naturally.

YOUNG JOHN: Those moments are hard to explain because it's hard to stay at that level for any length of time and when you are "in the zone" you often can't figure out why you are. Usually, it means something good happened early. I remember a Belleville-Oshawa game, I wasn't feeling well at all, I slept only two hours the night before and yet I scored a power-play goal, an even-strength goal, two shorthanded goals, had an assist and scored on the shootout to win the game. I didn't think I was going to play well in that game because I didn't feel good. But you start, things go your way and it's as if some unseen thing is taking your skill to the next level. Why? No idea, none.

BM: What about the flip side, the dreaded slump, when you can't do anything right?

UNCLE JOHN: Superstitions get made on those times. You start thinking, 'What did I do when I was playing really well?' If I'm struggling, I just ask myself, 'Am I getting chances?' If not, I'll go do something else, make a defensive play, help the team in some way. You can't let it bring you down.

YOUNG JOHN: I always grew up scoring goals and I obviously don't like it when I'm not. So like a lot of guys, if I'm not scoring, I try to do other things. My first year in the NHL, I wasn't getting many chances, was not scoring. It's tough mentally, it can play with your mind. I learned a lot from that experience. I went 15 or 16 games without scoring, longest I've ever gone. It was good for me, but I didn't like it.

BM: You mentioned superstitions, you have any?

UNCLE JOHN: I like a pre-game nap. Is that a superstition? I don't think so. I don't have any.

YOUNG JOHN: Not anything wacky. My superstitions are based more on preparation, there's no excuse to not play well, so it's more routine than superstition, I think. The one superstition I guess I have is that in junior, at the old Civic Auditorium, there's small room, a medical room, and all the players would put their stick on the wall outside that room. But I would put my stick inside (trainer) Brian Boyes' medical room. I still do it now, always put my stick in the medical room. But that's about it.

UNCLE JOHN: No intimacy the night before...for most of my career anyway. (laughs).

BM: Okay, guys, most important question: What's the secret to goal-scoring success?

YOUNG JOHN: I just feel like I want it more than anyone else. Whether it's lacrosse or hockey, I always wanted to score. I feel like I wanted it more than anyone else. I still feel that way. I know everyone likes to score but I just have this feeling that there's no one in the world who wants to score a goal more than me.

UNCLE JOHN: I never went into a game saying I want to score. I just wanted to make the right play. That's how I got my opportunities to score. If you make the right play, you're going to get scoring chances for not just you but your team. Is there an actual secret to it? I don't know, but I can tell you I don't respect any goalies. I refuse to show them any respect. I think they're no good, because if you say a goalie is good, then you're giving that goalie an edge over you. I won't do that. It's a mindset, I guess. I hated stats, too. I hated milestones, you know, 500th goal or whatever. I hate that stuff, I didn't like the attention being on me.

YOUNG JOHN: I'm not a big stats guy either. I won't look at them, I won't look at league leaders. I just want to focus on playing well, that's where I'm focused.

BM: Can you guys imagine what it'll be like when you're finished playing and there's no more goals to be scored?

UNCLE JOHN: I'm okay with not scoring any more goals. If I don't play, if I retire, I'll be fine. I've scored my share. I was golfing with (ex-Buffalo

Sabre) Rene Robert and someone asked him if he still plays any hockey. He said, 'What kind of question is that? I'm retired.' I'll be the same way, you won't see me playing masters lacrosse, I can tell you that. You, on the other hands (to Young John), you've got lots more goals to score. Lots.

YOUNG JOHN: I'd like to play as long as he has (points to Uncle John).

UNCLE JOHN: (Young John) is a great player, but, and I tell him this all the time, he's at his best when he just puts his nose down and just goes to the net, when he doesn't get too cute and just goes for it. So do what I tell you (laughs).

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USA TODAY / NHL free agency 2018: Breaking down the deals and rumors on July 1

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 9:28 a.m. ET July 1, 2018

Hart Trophy winner Taylor Hall of the New Jersey Devils feels that the league's stars need to be more active on social media in order to grow the sport. USA TODAY Sports

Islanders make a few moves

After signing winger Leo Komarov to a four-year, \$12 million deal, GM Lou Lamoriello inked center Valteri Filppula to a one-year, \$2.75 million contract, according to The Athletic's Arthur Staple. These moves certainly won't make up for the loss of John Tavares .. but at least it's something?

Don't forget the trades

The Blues have found their replacement for Paul Stastny -- and it came at a steep price, at least in terms of amount of assets. They sent forwards Patrik Berglund, Vladimir Sobotka and prospect Tage Thompson, plus a first-rounder in 2019 and a second-rounder in 2021 to the Sabres.

Ryan O'Reilly is a 20-goal, 60-point center who can play on the top line. The Sabres get assets for a player who was owed a \$7.5 million bonus at midnight. O'Reilly has five years at \$7.5 million per season remaining on his contract.

For the Sabres, they get players who can fill dead spots on their roster, even if it's the bottom-six mo.d

Blue Jackets gain some depth

They signed Riley Nash to a three-year deal for \$2.75 million per season, according to TSN's Darren Dreger. Nash had a career-high 15 goals and 41 points in 76 games last season with the Bruins

Coyotes add speed

Michael Grabner has signed with the Coyotes on a three-year deal worth \$3.35 million per season. He is a speedy, versatile player who will be very useful for a young team. This seems like good value.

The best remaining free agents

While many are off the board, there are still several good ones still out there. Need a goalie? A Scorer? A playmaker? Someone with grit?

TOP REMAINING NHL FREE AGENTS(includes 2018 team, salary and pts):

James Neal - #VGK \$5M AAV - 71GP 44PTS



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Joe Thornton - #SJS \$8M AAV - 47GP 36PTS

Riley Nash - #BOS \$900K AAV - 76GP 41PTS

Patrick Maroon - #NJD \$2M AAV - 74GP 43PTS

Robin Lehner - #BUF \$2.225M AAV - 14W 3.01GAA

— SiriusXM NHL Network (@SiriusXMNHL) July 1, 2018

Rangers extend a center

One of their own. Namestnikov, who was traded from the Lightning to the Rangers, posted only four points in 19 games with his new team after getting 44 in 62 with Tampa Bay. Namestnikov, 25, still possesses good upside from the center position.

Post has learned that Rangers are re-signing Namestnikov. Deal is believed two years at around \$4M per. They are not signing him to trade him.

— Larry Brooks (@NYP_Brooksie) July 1, 2018

Bruins land a defenseman

John Moore, the left-handed shooting blueliner, has some job security. He has always possessed the tools to be an impact player but has settled in as a bottom-pairing player.

Big deal for John Moore. He is going to the #Bruins on a 5-year deal at \$2.75 million AAV. #TSN

— Frank Seravalli (@frank_seravalli) July 1, 2018

Islanders have nobody to blame but themselves

They had the chance to keep the franchise center on Long Island for the rest of his career. Instead, the latest moves to hire GM Lou Lamoriello and coach Barry Trotz weren't enough. John Tavares is headed to the Maple Leafs.

John Tavares has found his new team

Minutes after a report that said the Islanders were out on John Tavares, the world-class center has agreed to a seven-year deal with the Maple Leafs.

7 years for Tavares in TOR

— Elliotte Friedman (@FriedgeHNIC) July 1, 2018

pic.twitter.com/3229r6WwMoD

— John Tavares (@91Tavares) July 1, 2018

Hurricanes add goalie

Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell signed Peter Mrazek to a one-year contract worth \$1.5 million and said he expects "to have healthy competition for the starter's crease next fall."

Carolina's No. 1 is Scott Darling, who is coming off a poor season during which he posted a 3.18 goals-against average and .888 save percentage. Mrazek started his career as a heralded Red Wings prospect, but fell from grace because of poor play. He was traded to the Flyers last season. After playing well in the beginning, Mrazek also struggled there.

The Hurricanes are still expected to make a couple of trades. They may move veteran forward Jeff Skinner. They are looking to acquire another forward to play in their top six.

Stars bring back old friend

The Stars added a major piece for their offense when they signed Valeri Nichushkin, 23, to a two-year contract worth an average of \$2.95 million per season.

Nichushkin previously played for the Stars, but he returned to Russia to play in the Kontinental Hockey League for the past two seasons. He scored 16 goals, including seven game-winners, for CSKA Moscow in 2017-18. He had nine points in 19 playoff games as CSKA reached the KHL championship series. The Stars say Nichushkin is far more polished now.

Lightning get early start on next year's crop

Defenseman Ryan McDonagh, who could have been an unrestricted free agent next summer, signed a seven-year contract extension with the Lightning that will average \$6.75 million per season. Next summer was supposed to have several big name free agents, but the signings of McDonagh, Drew Doughty and Oliver-Ekman Larsson changes all of that.

Blackhawks make some moves

The Blackhawks announced the signing of forward Chris Kunitz and goaltender Cam Ward to one-year contracts and defenseman Brandon Manning to a two-year deal. The veteran Ward's signing is crucial because of Corey Crawford's injury history, Kunitz is a prickly competitor with a dressing room presence. Manning played 65 games for the Flyers last season.

What John Tavares could be joining

When John Tavares wasn't re-signed by the Islanders last night, it meant he no longer could get an eight-year deal from them.

The Maple Leafs now are believed to be the favorite, but here is what each team in the Tavares sweepstakes can offer:

Maple Leafs: Tavares was born in Mississauga, Ont., a Toronto suburb. The Maple Leafs crest is iconic for him. More importantly, Tavares knows the Maple Leafs are a team on the rise, and a legitimate Stanley Cup contender.

Sharks: Sharks general manager Doug Wilson seems on a mission to find the final pieces to bring a Cup to San Jose. The Sharks have the goaltending and defense to win it all, and Tavares could re-ignite their offense.

Lightning: The team is already among the favorites to win a Stanley Cup next season. Plenty of talent up front, Victor Hedman and Anton Stralman lead a noteworthy defense and Andrei Vasilevskiy could win the Vezina this season.

Stars: The one-two center combination of Tyler Seguin and John Tavares would be among the league's best. Those two could play together on the power play and when the Stars really need a goal. Dallas has an intriguing cast, including an exceptional power play point man in John Klingberg.

Bruins: The Bruins have plenty of talent up front, and they established last season that they are a team on the rise. Are they closer than the Maple Leafs?

Islanders: Can't completely rule them out. Tavares is comfortable in Long Island, and he likes the players on his team. He could take a seven-year deal for more money. Why not?

Blues find a center

TSN's Bob McKenzie has reported that the Blues will sign Tyler Bozak to a three-year, \$5 million deal. That fills a void created when Paul Stastny was traded to Winnipeg last season. It also would seem to mean that the Blues are not going to trade for Ryan O'Reilly.

The wait goes on

As of 11 am ET, the teams involved in the Tavares bidding have not been told they are out.

— John Shannon (@JSportsnet) July 1, 2018

Wild add some grit



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Athletic's Mike Russo says Matt Hendricks will be going to the Wild for \$700,000 for one season. He's the type of feisty role player that coach Bruce Boudreau appreciates.

Golden Knights are the favorites to land Paul Stastny

According to a person with knowledge of the negotiations, the Golden Knights are the favorites to land two-way center Paul Stastny. The person spoke to USA TODAY Sports under the condition of anonymity because the contract is not finalized.

The Golden Knights' willingness to pursue one of the top free agents proves they are not going to be fooled by last season's success.

They know they must continue to upgrade to remain a contender. Stastny's overall skill package will earn him a place among their top-six forwards. Stastny's defensive reputation sometimes overshadows his offensive ability. He is smart playmaker, a player capable of creating scoring chances when none seem to exist.

Stastny is best positioned as a No. 2 center, but he can fill the No. 1 center role.

The latest

- ▶ The Stars will sign Roman Polak, a veteran stay-at-home defenseman, according to TSN's Bob McKenzie.
- ▶ The Penguins are still expected to sign Jack Johnson to a multiyear deal.
- ▶ The Athletic's Mike Russo is reporting that Greg Pateryn, 28, is going to the Wild. He's a safe defenseman with 167 games in the NHL.
- ▶ Tomas Plekanec is expected to return to the Canadiens. He played in Montreal before being dealt to the Toronto Maple Leafs last season.

Blues land a big prize

Blues general manager Doug Armstrong's desire to be aggressive in strengthening his squad showed up Sunday with the signing of David Perron to a four-year deal worth \$4 million per season, according to Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman.

Perron, 30, had 66 points in 70 games last season for the Golden Knights. He is considered one of the more skilled players in this summer's crop of free agents.

Quite a wallop

Darren Dreger of TSN Canada said Ryan Reaves' new deal in Las Vegas is two seasons at an average of \$2.775 million. Reaves showed his value as a tough, fourth-line contributor. But his salary still qualifies as an eye-opener. That's a hefty amount for a player who doesn't play all that much.

Capitals have a hole to fill

The Capitals were able to keep John Carlson and Michal Kempny, but they have apparently lost checker Jay Beagle. Beagle will sign with the Canucks today on a four-year deal worth \$3 million per year, according to Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman.

Beagle is exceptional on faceoffs, he's hard to play against and he's a good man in the dressing room.

Goalie carousel is turning

Goalie roundup: Bernier to Detroit, Halak to Boston, Hutchinson to Florida, Hutton to Buffalo, Khudobin to Dallas.

— Kevin Allen (@ByKevinAllen) July 1, 2018

Add Cam Ward to the Blackhawks, according to Sportsnet's Chris Johnston.

Robin Lehner is still out there, and Steve Mason will be, too, as the Canadiens have placed him on buyout waivers after acquiring him from the Jets. The Islanders and Hurricanes are still trying to sign a goalie.

Why the rebuilding Red Wings re-signed Mike Green

The Red Wings are committed to a youth movement, but they were happy to re-sign veteran defenseman Mike Green, 32, to a two-year deal worth \$5.375 per season.

Green wanted a three-year deal but took two to stay with the Red Wings because he has enjoyed his time in Detroit. The Red Wings wanted him back because he is the team's only proven offensive-minded defenseman.

With defenseman Filip Hronek possibly making the team next season for his power-play potential (44 points in 67 games Grand Rapids in the American Hockey League, the Red Wings needed a veteran point man there to help him with the transition to the NHL.

Top UFAs on the board

With van Riemsdyk off the board, here are USA TODAY Sports' top unrestricted free agents on the board heading into breakfast this morning:

1. Center John Tavares: He hasn't announced anything, even though he met with six teams recently.
2. Center Paul Stastny: The Jets have been trying to clear cap space to keep him. His two-way game is attractive to a number of teams.
3. Goalie Carter Hutton: The Islanders and Hurricanes are both looking for a No. 1 goalie, but the Blues would like to have him back.
4. Left wing James Neal: Still surprising that the Golden Knights didn't re-sign him.
5. Left wing David Perron: Registered a career-high 50 assists last season. That's more than Tavares and Nicklas Backstrom had.
6. Center Tyler Bozak: He might be a Plan B for the teams trying to land Tavares.
7. Left wing Thomas Vanek: The Red Wings are trying to sign him. He loved playing in Detroit and the Red Wings loved having him. Coach Jeff Blashill was among his biggest fans.
8. Left wing Michael Grabner: This is a speed league, and Grabner can fly.
9. Right wing Patrick Maroon: Can provide the mix of toughness and offensive might that teams covet.
10. Defenseman Jack Johnson: The Penguins are said to be very interested in Johnson. He is Sidney Crosby's buddy from their high school days at Shattuck St. Mary's. Johnson was Crosby's catcher on the baseball team.

Honorable mention: Defenseman Ian Cole: Buffalo or Chicago? Could be anywhere. Many teams are looking for a competent defenseman.

Other deals that have leaked out that should be announced today

- ▶ Red Wings to sign Jonathan Bernier to a three-year deal, according to mive.com: Jimmy Howard is on the last season of his contract and Bernier undoubtedly liked the idea that he has a shot to play more.
- ▶ Flames to sign center Derek Ryan to a three-year deal, according to Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman. He is reuniting with Bill Peters who coached him last season with the Hurricanes. Ryan, who scored 15 goals last season, was surprisingly popular in the marketplace.
- ▶ Bruins to sign forward Chris Wagner to a two-year deal worth \$1.25 million per season, according to the Providence Journal. Wagner is a Massachusetts native and played for the Anaheim Ducks and Islanders last season. He scored seven goals total.



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Flyers are early winners

According to multiple reports, the Flyers and James van Riemsdyk have agreed to a five-year deal worth \$7 million per season.

Van Riemsdyk was considered the second-most intriguing unrestricted free agent. Van Riemsdyk was drafted by the Flyers and played for them from 2009-12. He scored 36 goals last season for the Maple Leafs, and had scored 136 goals over the previous five seasons (he played in 40 games in 2015-16).

The Flyers ranked 12th in scoring last season, and this summer has been marked by trade rumors surrounding winger Wayne Simmonds.

Where will John Tavares go?

The first day of NHL free agency kicks off with the hockey world not knowing where John Tavares will be playing in the future.

Midnight came and went without the Islanders saying whether Tavares was returning. Tavares made no announcement at all about his intentions. He had until 12 if he wanted to sign an eight-year deal with the Islanders, but once his contract expired, he was only eligible to sign a deal up to seven years with any team.

An early announcement was expected because Tavares had used the talking period to discuss his options with Maple Leafs, Sharks, Bruins, Stars, Lightning and Islanders.

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USA TODAY / NHL free agency 2018: Winners, losers from early frenzy

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 5:00 p.m. ET July 1, 2018

The NHL's free-agent signing period started Sunday at noon, but most of the top players were verbally committed before then, so the day was full of early action.

James Neal, Rick Nash and Patrick Maroon are the only players on USA TODAY Sports' top-15 free agent list who haven't already signed. There are reports that Nash is weighing retirement because of health concerns.

A look at some winners and losers:

Winner: Toronto Maple Leafs

The signing of superstar John Tavares to a seven-year, \$77 million contract is probably the most significant free-agent signing since Anaheim landed defenseman Scott Niedermayer in 2005. Niedermayer helped the Ducks win a Stanley Cup. The Leafs still probably have to add defensive help for Tavares to do what Niedermayer did.

Loser: New York Islanders

They lost Tavares and didn't exactly replace him Sunday, and they haven't yet acquired a new goalie. Winger Leo Komarov (four years, \$12 million) is more of a bottom-six forward who plays with an edge, and center Valtteri Filppula (one year, \$2.75 million) is a 34-year-old who had 33 points last season. They also re-signed defenseman Thomas Hickey (four years, \$10 million). There's no obvious choice among available goalies, although general manager Lou Lamoriello has a history of being creative with his acquisitions. Craig Anderson? Robin Lehner?

Winner: Ryan Reaves

The tough guy/role player received \$2.775 million per year over two seasons to re-sign with the Vegas Golden Knights. That's a healthy wage

for a player who isn't a lock to play every day. He was impressive in the postseason, but often plays fewer than eight minutes per game.

Loser: San Jose Sharks

They are losers only in the sense that they didn't win the Tavares sweepstakes. Disappointing outcome for a franchise that is close to having a team that can win it all. Think about it: They have goaltending, defensive might and a quality offense. Tavares may have been exactly what was needed to get over the top. GM Doug Wilson did a superb job clearing cap space to make a Tavares signing work. But it didn't happen.

Winner: Philadelphia Flyers GM Ron Hextall

He signed James van Riemsdyk to a five-year deal at \$7 million per season. That's a major signing at a reasonable price and term. Van Riemsdyk, a consistent scorer, seems like a nice fit for center Nolan Patrick.

Loser: Teams planning to find a defenseman in 2019 free-agent market

Ryan McDonagh signed a seven-year extension with the Tampa Bay Lightning on Sunday. Drew Doughty and Oliver-Ekman Larsson have also re-upped this offseason. The Nashville Predators are working on extending Ryan Ellis. Don't you think Erik Karlsson will get a new deal when he's traded from the Ottawa Senators? That potential supergroup of 2019 unrestricted free agent defensemen is disappearing.

Winner: Golden Knights GM George McPhee

Proving he's not going to be complacent after an impressive inaugural season, McPhee signed Paul Stastny to a three-year deal worth \$6.5 million per season. Stastny, a two-way center, may now be the best all-around player Vegas. As a bonus, McPhee is still operating near the salary-cap floor. He has plenty of cap space left if he wants to pursue a premium defenseman in a trade.

Loser: Winnipeg Jets

This Winnipeg group is primed for a major run at a Stanley Cup this season, and it would have helped if the Jets could have found a way to retain Stastny. It hurts twice as much that Stastny ended up with the rival Golden Knights, the team that eliminated the Jets from the playoffs

Winner: Detroit Red Wings GM Ken Holland

After enjoying a strong two days at the draft table last week, Holland was able re-sign No. 1 defenseman Mike Green (two years), proven scorer Thomas Vanek (one year) and goalie Jonathan Bernier (three years). Holland is still on point to have considerable cap space to work with in the summer of 2019.

Loser: Senators

The Senators haven't done anything to begin repairing the fractured relationship they have with their fan base. The Karlsson trade can't come soon enough. The Senators need to land a memorable return for Karlsson that offers fans some hope.

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