



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 6, 2020

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### The Carolina Hurricanes are finally practicing again at PNC Arena, await NHL's restart

BY EMILY LEIKER

Hockey returned to PNC Arena on Tuesday as the Carolina Hurricanes started voluntary training sessions with a group of 16 players in accordance with NHL and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services protocols.

The NHL transitioned to Phase 2 of its return-to-play plan June 8, allowing players to participate in voluntary, small-group training sessions at their club's home training facilities. Workouts are limited to six players per group both on- and off-ice, and are closed to the public and media.

At the time of the transition, Hurricanes team officials and players agreed to continue training individually. Friday, the team announced its intention to reopen PNC and begin group training.

"It was a lot of fun to see faces again, some of the fellas," Canes captain Jordan Staal said in a Zoom call Tuesday. "Still different, but exciting that we're moving forward and taking steps to get back on the ice."

Prior to Tuesday's session, players were asked to fill out a form to assess if they had any COVID-19 symptoms. Upon arrival, players and staff underwent temperature checks and wore masks as well as practiced social distancing. Staal noted that while the latter can be tricky in hockey, most of the team's drills focused on getting players moving again and taking shots on the goalies.

The Canes last played March 10 on the road against the Detroit Red Wings. On March 12, the NHL suspended play, eventually canceling all regular-season games.

Players used to having their summers off and starting a new season in September are adjusting to the different schedule. Staal said for most players, the priority has been keeping their bodies in as best shape as possible during quarantine. When play returns, team's rosters will be deeper with players who had extra time to recover from injuries and new trade acquisitions.

"There's lots of options," Staal said. "That's gonna put even more pressure on the players to perform. If guys aren't going, I'm sure they'll move to other guys because we have

that depth. That's what good teams have and to make a good playoff run you gotta have that.

"We're gonna have some fresh legs and healthy bodies. The hockey could be really exciting, who knows, because it could be a lot of mistakes and stuff like that — hopefully that's not gonna be our team."

The league's tentative start date for Phase 3 is July 10, marking the beginning of formal training camp for the 24 teams participating in the return to play plan. Teams will be divided between two "hub" cities where they will play best-of-five qualifying rounds. A 16-team Stanley Cup Playoff will follow with best-of-seven series and a 2020 champion will be crowned.

Hub cities have not yet been announced, but the league has reportedly narrowed its options to four locations.

There is no official start date for Phase 4, the return to play, as it will depend on how smoothly Phases 2 and 3 go and negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA. However, matchups for the qualifying round have been released, with the Hurricanes set to face the New York Rangers.

"If this kind of pushes through and we can pull this off, it's gonna be different, it's gonna be weird, but there's a lot of other people in the world that are feeling the same thing in different scenarios," Staal said. "We're hoping to get this thing going and play some hockey and get some normalcy back."

Staal also said that if another league, such as the NBA, "doesn't go" it will be harder for the NHL to return as well.

"We've seen some crazy things with this virus and how quickly it can spread, and anything could happen," Staal said.

A number of professional athletes have tested positive for COVID-19 as leagues attempt to resume play. The Orlando Pride was forced to withdraw from the NWSL Challenge Cup after multiple players and staff members tested positive. NBA players from the New Orleans Pelicans, Sacramento Kings and Brooklyn Nets have decided not to participate in the league's return due to positive test results.



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## Forslund, Hurricanes continue to negotiate as broadcaster's contract expires

BY LUKE DECOCK

When the Carolina Hurricanes let Chuck Kaiton leave over a contract dispute two summers ago, life went on pretty much as normal because the Hurricanes were able to replace the Hall of Fame radio broadcaster with a simulcast version of John Forslund's television play-by-play call.

There's no one standing ready to replace Forslund, whose contract was set to expire Tuesday and could end up leaving the Hurricanes.

While NHL players will have their contracts extended beyond their normal June 30 expiration to complete the 2019-20 season, that remained the deadline for many non-player contracts, including Forslund, assistant coach Dean Chynoweth and hockey operations vice presidents Rick Dudley and Paul Krepelka.

Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said Dudley will depart and one other contract was not renewed: massage therapist Tristan Simmons, who spent three seasons with the team after coming over from the Ottawa Senators. Waddell said negotiations will continue with Forslund, Chynoweth and Krepelka.

"We're not cutting anybody off," Waddell said. "It's one thing if you're going to let someone go. Some of these, we're just trying to find if there's common ground for both of us."

While some last-minute brinkmanship isn't uncommon — Forslund's broadcast partner Tripp Tracy only agreed to his new deal Monday — these negotiations have been unusual because the Hurricanes and owner Tom Dundon have offered substantially altered and reduced deals to the two broadcasters, who appear on Fox Sports Carolinas and are simulcast on WCMC-FM but are both employed by the team.

Forslund and Dundon spoke Monday but did not move any closer to resolution. Forslund referred comment Tuesday to his agent, Peter Cooney, who spoke Tuesday with Waddell.

"Regardless of the ending date of his current contract, we certainly have time to negotiate an extension or a new one beyond June 30," Cooney said. "It is correct that his current one does conclude today and like a hockey player he'd be an unrestricted free agent starting tomorrow. ... Business is

business and we have to see if we can negotiate this to a fair market price for John and continue to do business as we have in the past with Carolina."

Dudley, the veteran scout and peripatetic front-office sage, exits after two seasons, which is not out of character. He typically shows up, makes a team better and moves along a few years later. He and Krepelka both arrived in the summer of 2018 after Ron Francis' departure as general manager. Krepelka was an agent representing the Staal brothers, among others, before moving into management and has been the Hurricanes' primary contract negotiator.

As for the broadcasters, their new deals would make them independent contractors paid almost entirely on a per-game basis, and scaled to the amount of revenue the team has coming in — they would make substantially less, for example, if games are played without fans. Given the pandemic and the unlikelihood of full attendance in the 2020-21 season, this could result in considerable pay decreases for the broadcasters, both of whom have been with the team since its first season in Raleigh 21 years ago. Forslund moved with the team from Hartford; Tracy's first season was the last in Greensboro, 1998-99.

"These are difficult times and we're all making sacrifices," Tracy said. "As everybody knows, I've always loved the Hurricanes and always will."

In addition to looking to cut expenses overall, given the lack of revenue coming in with the NHL "paused" by COVID-19, Dundon has said in the past that he prefers to spend money improving the on-ice product and look for savings elsewhere, which is how Kaiton ended up leaving in 2018. But this is a different situation: there is no ready-made replacement for Forslund, who in many ways has become the public face of the franchise not only through his work for FS Carolinas but national broadcasts on NBC.

Forslund would potentially have options if he isn't re-signed, whether in an expanded role with NBC or with the Tampa Bay Lightning — where play-by-play broadcaster Rick Peckham retired and was just named this year's Foster Hewitt Award winner by the Hockey Hall of Fame — or Francis' expansion Seattle team.



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## THE ATHLETIC

### Jordan Staal says sports leagues ‘in this together’ as Hurricanes return home

By Sara Civian

An estimated 16 players returned to PNC Arena Tuesday as the Hurricanes entered Phase 2 of the NHL’s return to play plan, meaning voluntary, small group on- and off-ice workouts. This comes 10 days before the agreed upon July 10 training camp start date, should the NHL resume play.

As players trickle back into Raleigh, it’s important to remember that there’s still no guarantee the season actually resumes. Captain Jordan Staal reminded us on a video chat Tuesday that the players have yet to vote on returning to play.

“I’m not sure exactly when (these talks will happen), I heard it was going to be over the weekend and obviously that didn’t happen,” he said. “There is a lot of stuff to push through in a short period of time from now until future CBA stuff. But there are a lot of guys on calls for hours every day trying to figure this out and get some hockey back for the fans. I know there will be a point here, soon, where we will have a little vote, see what’s on the table and decide as a group what’s best for everyone.”

There are obviously a slew of concerns leading up to this vote, including players recently testing positive for COVID-19, protecting the health of older coaches and staff, weighing the individual risk-to-financial-gain ratio and not yet knowing hub city details.

In that sense, most professional sports leagues attempting to return to play are dealing with similar obstacles.

“If the NBA doesn’t go or something like that it will be hard for us to get going, too — we’re kinda all in this together, I think,” Staal said. “Every player has his own opinion on safety, including myself. Those are things we have to talk about and we have to discuss. It’s not like we’ve done this before. It has to be out there, we have to talk about it and find out the safest route to get back. At some point we’re

going to have to do it, for the most part feeling it out and seeing how it goes. It could blow up. It could not. It could be great. No one really knows. But for the most part from what I’ve seen (the league) has done a pretty good job at keeping people safe so far.”

Staal thought Day 1 of Phase 2 went well in terms of safety at PNC Arena.

“They have you to fill out a form before you even get there, asking you if you feel any (COVID-19) symptoms,” he began to walk us through the new safety protocols. “(Then there’s a temperature check at the door). Obviously (we are) wearing masks and keeping distance throughout the room.

Everyone’s got their own spot in the gym and in the room getting dressed. Obviously it’s a little more difficult for the guys sometimes including myself, hopefully we can get through Phases 2 and 3 unscathed, then get to the hub city ... It’s different, pretty much my whole life I’ve had the same routine, but at the same time I’m excited to have a chance at winning a Cup. It’s gonna be weird but there’s a lot of other people in the world feeling the same thing.”

The Canes spent their first day of Phase 2 on the ice with assistant coach Jeff Daniels. It was all about getting the legs moving, doing a few drills, getting the goalies warmed up and “ripping shots past Reims (James Reimer).” Though it was nice to get the band back together in a sense, the new normal will take some getting used to on multiple fronts.

“There is going to be some freshness and there could be more mistakes, too,” Staal said. “We’re taking two, three months of hockey and going into a playoff game, it’s going to be interesting hockey. No one really knows how it’s going to look. The hockey could be really exciting, who knows? There’s a lot more work to get this thing just right and everything’s gotta fall in line pretty quickly, but you gotta try. If the NHL just sat there and all the other leagues were playing and moving forward it would be hard to watch. I think we gotta give it a shot and we’ll see how it goes.”

### Canes’ unusual contract offer to broadcasters could lead to John Forslund’s exit

By Sara Civian Jul 2, 2020

It’s nearly impossible to imagine Hurricanes hockey without play-by-play announcer John Forslund. He’s been with the

franchise since 1991, relocated from Hartford to the Carolinas with the team, and turned into a face of the franchise along the way.

Not to mention, the Hurricanes’ broadcast team of Forslund and color commentator Tripp Tracy has been one of the



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most universally lauded in the NHL. It recently came in at No. 1 in The Athletic's 2020 NHL broadcast rankings.

But with contract disputes last season amounting in only one-year deals for Forslund and Tracy, they've had to attempt to negotiate new deals in the midst of the COVID-19 health crisis and an unpredictable future for hockey.

Tracy agreed to a new deal Monday — one day before both were set to become free agents. As of July 1, Forslund is a free agent. While both sides have extended contract talks through the weekend, Forslund told The Athletic Thursday that he is exploring his options, as anyone in his situation would.

"Well, I'm free to do so, so yes I am," he said. "But there's no news on that front, either."

Multiple sources said the Hurricanes have been unwilling to budge with the terms they are offering — terms that broadcasting professionals have called "unconventional" at best and "unprecedented" at worst.

"My agent left the door open with (the Hurricanes) on the 30th, and I was hoping for a different type of conclusion. Didn't happen," Forslund said. "I was hoping for a different type of approach from the beginning. Didn't happen. But that's the way it is. My love for the team hasn't changed, my desire to be here hasn't changed. But if the framework for how I work changes, then I have to adapt to it."

While the Hurricanes are facing an unprecedented time and business outlook, the new contracts would make the formerly salaried broadcasters independent contractors with a base stipend and a bonus scale directly tied to attendance, according to a source. If the Hurricanes start 2020-21 — assuming there is a season — without fans, a source said the broadcasters are looking at a pay cut of more than half of last season's salaries.

Hurricanes GM and president Don Waddell told The Athletic Thursday that this is the model the Hurricanes are operating on in general for the time being.

"The problem now is: Who knows what's going to happen next year?" Waddell said. "The way I've done these contracts is base-by-base, (the main difference being) playing games with no fans and playing games with fans. No one knows what's going to happen here. We can't pay everyone their whole salary if we don't play hockey again next season."

Many business are struggling right now and sports teams are no different — the Hurricanes announced furloughs in early April — and it's my sense that many Hurricanes employees understand this is a business where there are no home games scheduled in the near or distant future. Waddell reiterated a point many forget.

"Not everyone realizes that a lot of teams asked their employees to take a 25 percent pay cut this year, we didn't do that," he said. "(Owner) Tom (Dundon) said, 'Nope, leave everyone status quo.' I never went to any of our hockey people and asked them to take a pay cut, but now who knows what's gonna happen? We're in a crazy world right now."

This is not the first time the Hurricanes have made changes in this realm. Two years ago, Carolina did not renew the contract of longtime radio voice Chuck Kaiton.

And the reality is, a lot is aligning for Forslund to move on.

"As of right now we don't have a conclusion to it, but we're going to get there," he said. "Maybe we will (find a deal) maybe we won't, I don't know. That's kind of where the reality portion of this comes into play. You deal with it the best you can, and that's what I'm attempting to do."

Considering Forslund's rise to national prominence — namely his recurring appearances on NBC broadcasts — it's fair to wonder if he will have a better opportunity. It's been assumed for years that his jump to a national play-by-play role was a matter of if, not when. He could be exploring a recent vacancy in Tampa Bay, as play-by-play broadcaster Rick Peckham retired.

"I want to see John stay, but if he thinks he can do better someplace else, that's his choice," Waddell said. "I can respect that."



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## NORTH STATE JOURNAL

### Hurricanes finally back on ice; Staal notes 'different feel'

By Cory Lavalette

Jordan Staal and some of his Carolina Hurricanes' teammates returned to the ice for the first team-organized skate in more than three months, the latest step in NHL's attempt to return and finish the 2019-20 season.

"It could blow up; it could not. It could be great," Staal said in a Zoom call with reporters following the team's Phase 2 workout. "No one really knows, but from what I've seen, they've done the best they can to make sure that everyone's safe and hopefully we'll keep it that way."

Safety, of course, will be the top priority of the players and the league, who are ironing out agreements on where and how the agreed-upon play-in series and playoffs will be played during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Hurricanes are set to face the New York Rangers in a five-game play-in series, with the winner advancing to a 16-team bracket that, on the surface, will look a lot like a standard Stanley Cup Playoffs — with a handful of exceptions.

The play-in and playoff games will be played in two "hub" cities — Las Vegas and Toronto are considered the frontrunners, and in that scenario, Carolina would head to Canada — with no fans in the stands. Another change is the playoff teams will be reseeded after each round, with the highest-seeded team facing the lowest.

Teams that had lost players to short-term injuries will get many of those players back for the season's resumption. That includes the Hurricanes, who will have top-pairing defenseman Dougie Hamilton available — Staal said he skated Tuesday with the 6-foot-6 blueliner, who suffered a broken fibula in mid-January — and may finally get to see how trade deadline acquisition Sami Vatanen fits into their defense.

That all started in earnest with the first small group skate, a return that the team captain admitted was a little bizarre.

"I mean, it's different," Staal said. "Pretty much my whole life I've had the same routine of September starts, you have the season going and you have your summers off. (It's) definitely

a little bit different feel. The lake up north right now is really nice. It's tough not to be there, but at the same time (I'm) excited to have a chance of winning a Cup."

The restart should provide some interesting opportunities for various players.

Justin Williams, the 38-year-old who re-signed with the team Jan. 7 and played his first game back with Carolina 12 days later, will pursue his fourth Stanley Cup and was riding a five-game goal streak when the league was shut down.

Wingers Nino Niederreiter and Ryan Dzingel had underperformed through the season's first 68 games and probably welcome a cleaner slate.

And then there's Morgan Geekie, the 21-year-old center who played his first two games right before the NHL was shut down and had a welcoming party for the ages, totaling three goals and an assist in two wins.

"I feel bad for Geeks. He was on a roll," Staal said. "It's obviously too bad, especially for him, but he's going to be a good player, I think, for a really long time. So he'll be just fine."

For now, Staal and his teammates aren't looking too far ahead. The NHLPA still has to vote on the negotiated proposal — Staal said he thought a vote, which sounds like it will also include an extended collective bargaining agreement, might happen last weekend, but "a lot of guys working on calls every other day or every day for hours trying to figure this out and try to get hockey back for the fans" — and the players still need to knock the rust off in preparation for games.

While the normal bumps, bruises and nagging injuries associated with having played more than three-quarters of the season won't be there, Staal said fresher bodies don't necessarily mean better hockey.

"You get training camp with (coach Rod Brind'Amour) and you're going to be a little sore, but I think there is going to be some freshness and I think there could be more mistakes, too," Staal said. "I think you start dialing in your game throughout a season and you roll right in the playoffs and you



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got everyone humming, where taking two, three months completely off of hockey and mixing a few skates here and there and (being) thrown right into a playoff game, it's going to be interesting hockey, obviously.

"No one really knows how it's going to look, but we're going to have some fresh legs and healthy bodies, and the hockey could be really exciting," he added. "Who knows? Because it could be a lot of mistakes and stuff like that, but hopefully that's not gonna be our team. But it could make for some entertainment."



## Hurricanes losing Dudley, still in talks with TV's Forslund

RALEIGH, N.C. — Carolina Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell said Wednesday that executive Rick Dudley won't return and the team is still in talks with longtime TV play-by-play announcer John Forslund on a new deal.

The 71-year-old Dudley had worked as Carolina's senior vice president of hockey operations since 2018, part of nearly five decades in professional hockey. That included serving as general manager for four NHL franchises, and he also played and coached the Buffalo Sabres.

"Rick and I talked months ago and he said that at the end of his contract, he was going to move on," Waddell said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Waddell said the team has reached agreements with all employees whose deals expired Tuesday so far except for Forslund, who is in his 25th season with the franchise and also does national broadcasts with NBC.

"We've had multiple talks: I've talked to the agent numerous times, I've talked to John a couple of times," Waddell said. "We've laid it out. They didn't yesterday ask for anything other than some time."

Reached by the AP on Wednesday evening, Forslund said: "I've said it (before), the door's always open until it's completely closed. And as of right now, that's where it stands."



## Mrazek vs. Reimer and other Hurricanes lineup questions readying for Rangers

By James O'Brien

Beyond obvious outliers like the Penguins, the Hurricanes rank among the most legitimate of the NHL's Qualifying Round teams. Yet as stable as the Hurricanes are compared to a field full of erratic teams, Carolina faces many of the same lineup questions as the Rangers, the team they'd face in a best-of-five series.

Some might argue that the Hurricanes face tougher questions than the Rangers. (Though, the Rangers aren't off the hook in that regard.)

In particular, the Hurricanes may need training camp to find answers in net and on defense. For all we know, Hurricanes lineup questions could even persist beyond "Phase 3."

Let's glance at both the goalie and defense questions for the Hurricanes.



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Who should start in Hurricanes playoff lineup: Mrazek or Reimer?

With Henrik Lundqvist jousting with two young upstarts, some might wonder if the Rangers have too much of a good thing in net. The Hurricanes don't enjoy quite the abundance of options.

Even so, coach Rod Brind'Amour faces a decision, as they lack a clear No. 1. Should the Hurricanes go with Petr Mrazek — who helped them during the 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs — or James Reimer (who boasts superior numbers this season)?

If Brind'Amour knows, he's putting on a poker face.

"It's easy to say right now, 'OK, I'm going to go with Petr,' but I don't know," Brind'Amour said in a recent interview, via NHL.com's Dan Rosen. "He may be in rough shape. I don't know until I get to see them and see what they're like."

It's unclear if that last playoff run explains why Mrazek would be the "easy" choice, or if that came down to Reimer entering the pandemic pause with injury issues. (The Hurricanes may also be concerned about Reimer's rather lengthy run of injury hiccups, too.)

Because, again, Reimer performed at a higher level than Mrazek in 2019-20. Reimer boasts a better save percentage than Mrazek this season (.914 to Mrazek's .905) and over their careers (.914 to Mrazek's .910). Reimer takes most/all goalie "advanced stats" between the two this season, as well. Generally speaking, we've seen more from Reimer over the past few seasons than Mrazek, whose career was teetering on the edge here and there.

(But, to be fair, Reimer's had his issues, too.)

Regardless, just about every team should take a long look at how their goalies are performing during training camps. Even teams with clearer No. 1 options.

Honestly, with the NHL not expected to limit the number of goalies at training camps, maybe the Hurricanes should even look at options like Anton Forsberg or Alex Nedeljkovic?

An unexpectedly crowded defense

During the 2020 NHL Trade Deadline, the Hurricanes acquired Brady Skjei and Sami Vatanen. As you may remember, those moves hinged at least partially on injuries to Dougie Hamilton and Brett Pesce. After the twists of those

bad-luck injuries, the pandemic threw off Carolina's rhythm once more.

The best news is that it sounds like Hamilton will be available. Don't let the museum talk fool you. If Hamilton maintained his hot pace and didn't get injured, he would have been a go-to choice for those making arguments against John Carlson's Norris credentials. Either way, Hamilton provides an enormous boost to the Hurricanes lineup — one they weren't expecting during the deadline.

On the other hand, Brind'Amour told NHL.com's Rosen that Pesce remains unlikely to return. However ...

"It's going to be a long shot, but the longer this goes the shot gets a little shorter," Brind'Amour said.

(Anyone else visualizing that after that rather literal description from Brind'Amour? No? OK.)

So, Hamilton stands as probable while Pesce looks unlikely. Beyond that, the Hurricanes have two still-new faces in Skjei (just seven not particularly impressive games played) and Vatanen (who was injured and didn't even get to suit up). Let's say that represents three defensemen for the Hurricanes. Here are the other contenders for spots in the Hurricanes defensive lineup:

Jacob Slavin, a lock.

Jake Gardiner, who dealt with a tough season, averaging only 16:40 TOI. Still, Gardiner is experienced, played in 68 games this season, and may have benefited from the break.

Joel Edmundson (68 GP like Slavin and Gardiner, averaged more TOI than Gardiner with 18:27 per contest).

Trevor van Riemsdyk (49 GP, less than 15 minutes per night; still, Hurricanes are very familiar with TVR).

Haydn Fleury (45 GP, averaged fewer than 15 minutes per game).

Realistically, Brind'Amour could have eight options on defense, and possibly nine if Pesce makes unexpectedly rapid progress. Being that some of those options are quite good, there are worse problems to have.

But it still adds to the notion that training camp could be quite important for Hurricanes lineup decisions. With both goalies and defense, Brind'Amour emphasized a wait-and-see approach. So ... we'll see?



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## Hurricanes Training Camp Preview

By Dan Rosen

*With training camps set to begin on July 10 as part of Phase 3 of the NHL Return to Play Plan, NHL.com is taking a closer look at each of the 24 teams in the Stanley Cup Qualifiers.*

*Today, the Carolina Hurricanes.*

The Carolina Hurricanes were 38-25-5 (.596 points percentage) in the regular season and will enter the Stanley Cup Qualifiers as the No. 6 seed in the Eastern Conference. They will play the No. 11 seed, the New York Rangers (37-28-5, .564), in one of eight best-of-5 series, and the winner will advance to the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The Hurricanes, who lost the Eastern Conference Final to the Boston Bruins last season, were one of the best puck-possession teams in the NHL this season, finishing third in shot attempts percentage (54.3 percent) and fourth in percentage of 5-on-5 face-offs taken in the offensive zone (52.3 percent).

Carolina lost all four games it played against New York in regulation and was outscored 17-9. The Hurricanes are 8-25-7 against the Rangers with a power-play percentage of 14.3 percent and a penalty-kill percentage of 73.4 percent the past 10 seasons.

"I know the players could care less [about their history against the Rangers] and that's what matters," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Most of them have not been around for much of it except for a year or two, so they're not going to be talking about it."

### PLAYER TO WATCH

Dougie Hamilton arguably was the Hurricanes' best player before he fractured his left fibula Jan. 16, putting him out for the rest of the regular season. Hamilton was fourth among NHL defensemen and tied for third on Carolina with 40 points (16 goals, 24 assists) in 47 games at the time of his injury, and he led them with a plus-30 rating and an average of 23:17 of ice time. Hamilton is healthy and ready to resume his role as the Hurricanes' top offensive defenseman.

### BIGGEST QUESTION

How will the defense pairs look with Hamilton back and Brady Skjei and Sami Vatanen available? Carolina could have nine defensemen for six spots if Brett Pesce (shoulder) can return; he had surgery in March that required 4-6 months

of recovery time. Brind'Amour left open the possibility Pesce could be ready to play against New York. The Hurricanes acquired Skjei (in a trade from the Rangers) and Vatanen (in a trade from the New Jersey Devils) on Feb. 24 because they didn't expect to have Hamilton and Pesce for the rest of the regular season, which was paused March 12 due to concerns surrounding the coronavirus. Now the options are plentiful.

### INJURY UPDATES

**Dougie Hamilton, D** -- Healthy and ready to play after missing the final 21 games with a fractured left fibula.

**Brett Pesce, D** -- Recovering from right shoulder surgery but hasn't been ruled out for the series.

**Ryan Dzingel, F** -- Expected to be healthy entering training camp after missing the two games prior to the pause with an upper-body injury.

**Sami Vatanen, D** -- Practiced with the Hurricanes on July 1; has not played since Feb. 1 because of a lower-body injury sustained prior to being acquired.

**James Reimer, G** -- Healthy after missing the final seven games because of a lower-body injury.

### FRESH FACE

Morgan Geekie made a big impression in two games before the season was paused. The 21-year-old forward scored four points (three goals, one assist), including two goals and an assist in his NHL debut March 8, a 6-2 win at the Pittsburgh Penguins. He became the second player in Hurricanes/Hartford Whalers history to have a three-point game in his NHL debut, joining Dan Bourbonnais, who did it Dec. 30, 1981. Brind'Amour said Geekie will be an option.

### TELLING STAT

The Hurricanes had the best winning percentage in the NHL in games when they scored first (.839; 26-3-2). Their 26 wins in such games were tied for third in the Eastern Conference with the Florida Panthers behind the Tampa Bay Lightning (30) and Philadelphia Flyers (28).



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## THEY SAID IT

"It's easy to say right now, 'OK, I'm going to go with Petr [Mrazek in goal],' but I don't know. Even with the [defense] pairs. Everyone always asks me, 'Who are you going to play with who?' Well, we've kind of got to see where we're at. It's different. It's not like we just pick up where we left off. Guys are telling me they're doing OK, but I don't know how much training they're doing and where they're going to be at when we get started." -- *coach Rod Brind'Amour*

## PROJECTED LINEUP

Andrei Svechnikov -- Sebastian Aho -- Teuvo Teravainen

Nino Niederreiter -- Vincent Trocheck -- Martin Necas

Brock McGinn -- Jordan Staal -- Justin Williams

Ryan Dzingel -- Morgan Geekie -- Warren Foegele

Jacob Slavin -- Dougie Hamilton

Joel Edmundson -- Sami Vatanen

Brady Skjei -- Jake Gardiner

Petr Mrazek

James Reimer

## Hurricanes face tough decisions at goalie, defensemen

By Dan Rosen

The Carolina Hurricanes may have challenging decisions to make before the Stanley Cup Qualifiers because their roster will be arguably deeper than it was at any point in the regular season.

Coach Rod Brind'Amour said it's not clear who will be the Hurricanes' starting goalie in Game 1 of their best-of-5 series against the New York Rangers.

Petr Mrazek and James Reimer are both expected to be available, unlike when the season was paused March 12 because of concerns surrounding the coronavirus. Reimer, who started 24 games and was 14-6-2 with a 2.66 goals-against average and a .914 save percentage, missed Carolina's last seven games with a lower-body injury. Mrazek, who started 38 games and went 21-16-2 with a 2.69 GAA and a .905 save percentage, returned March 10 after missing six games with a concussion.

"It's easy to say right now, 'OK, I'm going to go with Petr,' but I don't know," Brind'Amour said in a recent interview. "He may be in rough shape. I don't know until I get to see them and see what they're like."

Brind'Amour also isn't clear on what the defenseman group will look like, especially the pairs, because the Hurricanes could have nine players for six spots, something that wasn't remotely possible when the season was paused.

"I don't know because we haven't seen these guys together," Brind'Amour said.

The Hurricanes acquired Brady Skjei (from the Rangers) and Sami Vatanen (from the New Jersey Devils) prior to the 2020 NHL Trade Deadline on Feb. 24 because they didn't expect to have defensemen Dougie Hamilton (fractured left fibula) or Brett Pesce (right shoulder surgery) available the rest of the season.

Hamilton, who has been out indefinitely after having surgery Jan. 17, is expected to be back when training camp opens;

camps are scheduled to begin July 10 under Phase 3 of the NHL Return to Play Plan provided that medical and safety conditions allow, and the parties have reached an agreement on resuming play. The length of training camp, and the start date and two hub cities for the resumption of play in Phase 4 -- one city for the 12 participating Eastern Conference teams, and one for the 12 Western Conference teams -- will be determined.

Hamilton led Carolina defensemen with 40 points (14 goals, 26 assists) in 47 games.

Brind'Amour said Pesce, who was expected to miss 4-6 months after his surgery in early March, has a chance to return too.

"It's going to be a long shot, but the longer this goes the shot gets a little shorter," Brind'Amour said.

Vatanen had a right leg injury when Carolina acquired him. He never got into a game or even a practice, but he's expected to be ready when camp opens. Skjei played in seven games with the Hurricanes.

Carolina also has Jacob Slavin, Jake Gardiner, Trevor van Riemsdyk, Joel Edmundson and Haydn Fleury.

"There's going to be definitely a feeling-out process to see how everyone meshes, but those are pretty good options to be thrown into your team," Brind'Amour said. "There's going to be good competition. If everybody is healthy then we have extras, so I think it's going to be a question of really, how do they look by the time this camp is done? It's not like you get too long of a warmup period. When we start every game counts, so we've got to go with whoever is ready. That's something we'll figure out."

The Hurricanes (38-25-5, .596 points percentage) are the No. 6 seed in the East under the 24-team Return to Play Plan. The Rangers (37-28-5, .564) are the No. 11 seed. The winner will advance to the Stanley Cup Playoffs, and the loser will have a chance at the No. 1 pick in the 2020 NHL Draft in the Second Phase of the NHL Draft Lottery.



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"In all aspects of when we get started it's going to be interesting to tell because we don't know where our guys are at," Brind'Amour said. "It's different. It's not like we just

picked up where we left off. I know guys are telling me they're doing OK, but I don't know how much training they're doing and where they're going to be at when we get started."

## Top 20 Cup Final games since 2000: No. 16

2006 GAME 7: CAROLINA HURRICANES 3, EDMONTON OILERS 1

The Hurricanes were in their eighth season in Carolina but had already reached the Stanley Cup Final once, losing to the Detroit Red Wings in 2002.

But things went differently in 2006.

There were four one-goal games (Game 1, 5-4, Carolina; Game 3, 2-1 Edmonton; Game 4, 2-1 Carolina; Game 5, 4-3 Edmonton in overtime) in the series before Game 6, a 4-0 Oilers win. But the Hurricanes won their first championship on their third and final attempt after the Oilers won Game 5 and Game 6 to extend the best-of-7 series.

In Game 7 at RBC Center in Raleigh, North Carolina, Hurricanes defenseman Aaron Ward scored 1:26 into the first period, and defenseman Frantisek Kaberle followed with a power-play goal at 4:18 of the second to give Carolina a 2-0 lead. But the Oilers responded 1:03 into the third with a rebound goal by forward Fernando Pisani, bringing them within one.

Pisani nearly scored another rebound goal with three minutes remaining, but rookie goalie Cam Ward managed to make a save with his left pad, one of the biggest moments in the series.

It remained a one-goal game until forward [Justin Williams](#) scored into an empty net with 1:01 left.

**They said it:** "Honestly, it was gratitude. That's what I remember sitting in my stall, just being so grateful that I was

able to accomplish that with the guys that I did and that my family was able to be a part of it. Our sport is really unique that way in that it's such a sacrifice for your family just to be able to get you to play as a kid. They're with you every step of the way. For me, winning it, especially at that stage, I think it just made it that much more special. I just remember being so grateful." -- *Hurricanes forward Rod Brind'Amour on winning the Cup for the first time in his career*

**Historical significance:** Ward became the first rookie goalie to win the Stanley Cup since Patrick Roy of the Montreal Canadiens in 1986. Ward was the first rookie since Ron Hextall with the Philadelphia Flyers in 1987 to win the Conn Smythe voted as MVP of the Stanley Cup Playoffs; he had a 2.14 goals-against average and .920 save percentage in 23 games. ... Hurricanes defenseman Glen Wesley, who began his NHL career with the Hartford Whalers, won the Stanley Cup for the first time in his 18th season. ... The Oilers were the first No. 8 seed to reach the Cup Final. ... It was the second Cup Final in a row that a team from Alberta lost Game 7 (Calgary Flames, 2004 against the Tampa Bay Lightning).

**Iconic moment:** With three minutes remaining in the third period and the Hurricanes ahead by one goal, Oilers forward Raffi Torres sent a shot on net from the left side. Ward made the save, but he allowed a rebound right in front with Pisani driving the net. Ward also saved the rebound, kicking out his left pad, to preserve the lead.

**Telling stat:** Ward won 15 games in the playoffs, one more than he had during the regular season.



## Canes Return to the Ice in Phase 2

By Michael Smith

With the start of training camp - Phase 3 of the National Hockey League's [24-team return to play plan](#) - potentially 10 days away, the Carolina Hurricanes returned to PNC Arena ice in two small groups for voluntary skates.

The NHL [permitted teams to begin Phase 2](#) - voluntary small-group on- and off-ice workouts - on June 8, but after internal discussions between staff and players, the Canes chose to delay their transition while players continued to work out and skate on their own.



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Now, with more players returning to the area and momentum building towards puck drop, the Canes have officially entered into Phase 2, which carries with it a host of safety measures and medical requirements laid out by the league.

There's a prescreening form for players. There's a temperature check at the door. Masks are a must, and keeping a safe physical distance is emphasized whenever possible.

"Everyone's kind of got their own spot in the gym and own spot in the room getting dressed," said Jordan Staal, who skated with a small group on Tuesday morning. "There were a few rules out [on the ice], but it is hockey, and sometimes you might accidentally run into a few guys here and there."

It's a little different, no doubt, but it's still hockey.

"It felt like a good day of work," Staal said. "It was a lot of fun to see faces again. Still different, but exciting that we're moving forward."

Assistant coach Jeff Daniels ran the on-ice work with a handful of drills "to get the feet and hands going," Staal said. And? "Ripping shots past Reims," the Canes' captain laughed.

Dougie Hamilton, who missed the last two months of the regular season after suffering a broken fibula in Columbus, was among the players skating, as well. As an injured player rehabbing from surgery, he's been skating on his own for a while and will be 100 percent whenever the puck drops again.

"It's good to see Dougie back skating today," Staal said. "He looks good."

As the Canes dip their toes into Phase 2, the safety and health of the players and staff is, of course, top priority. And,

it remains top of mind for all involved as talks progress in finalizing return to play details for not only the NHL but also the other major sports leagues.

"There's a lot of things you've got to go through to make sure everyone is as safe as possible," Staal said. "We're keeping tabs on most leagues. If the NBA doesn't go or something like that, it'd be hard for us to get going too. We're kind of all in it together, I think."

As of now, training camps are set to open on July 10, but that's not a firm date. A target date has also not yet been set for resumption of play, but it could begin in early August.

Playoff hockey in August and September will be a little different, just like everything else in the pause, especially for hockey players who are notorious creatures of habit. Just ask Staal, who noted that summertime is peak cottage season in Thunder Bay or him and his brothers.

It won't be the playoff hockey we're used to seeing, either. It will look a bit different and sound a bit different, but it will still be playoff hockey. It's going to ramp up quickly and require "everyone involved and ready to work right away," Staal said. It will be intense. It will be emotional. It will be a grind. (So let's dispense with the asterisk nonsense, shall we?)

The Canes want to be ready to begin that 19-win quest, whenever, wherever that may be.

"No one really knows how it's going to look, but we're going to have some fresh legs and healthy bodies. The hockey could be really exciting. Who knows?" Staal said. "I'm excited to have a chance at winning a Cup. ... It's going to be different and weird ... but we're hoping to get this thing going and play some hockey."



## Rod Brind'Amour talks voluntary workouts, Hall of Fame snub and return to hockey

By Lauren Brownlow, WRALSportsFan columnist/reporter

Rod Brind'Amour has really only known one thing most of his life, and that's hockey.

It's why when he retired from the NHL 10 years ago to the day on June 30, 2010, he knew he was going to stay in the game.

"I was like, okay, I've got to stay in the game. I know my personality and I certainly didn't want to do nothing. I needed

to have some purpose in the morning when you get up and I didn't really want to train myself to do new skills. So I thought okay, let's see if I can still stay in the game," Brind'Amour said when he joined The Adam Gold Show on Tuesday. "So that's kind of where it went. Did I want to get into coaching? To be honest, no, I didn't. I wanted to get into management more just because I hadn't done any of that. I felt like the coaching thing was the same hours and kind of the same grind as playing and I kind of wanted to have a life. But it didn't work out that way — thankfully. I love what I do now."



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But when Brind'Amour thinks back to that time in his hockey career, it doesn't bring back the fondest of memories.

In the end, he said, the decision to retire was made for him.

"My last year was terrible, so it made it easy to say okay, I guess I'm done with hockey. But I was frustrated I think because I was still in really good shape. The issue really at the end was I wasn't going to go play for another team. I know I could have continued to play, but I would've had to do it somewhere else. That was made really clear to me," Brind'Amour said. "It was kind of like okay, I'm not putting on another jersey anywhere else. It actually made it an easy decision for me. That's kind of what I remember about that day. It was like, all right, that's it. Never going to do this again."

Brind'Amour now is a promising young head coach, but one that can't be with his team just yet as a few players began voluntary workouts at PNC Arena on Tuesday.

He doesn't mind that part of it, though. He encouraged as many of his players that had reasonable training facilities to stay home until they have to report for camp on July 10.

"I actually told the guys not to come back unless they felt they needed to, stay at home as long as they could. We start (July) 10th and I was happy to have guys show up on the 9th just because I'm wanting and expecting that we're going to go at this and do it right. It's going to be three months in a lockdown and they need to spend every minute with their families that they can," Brind'Amour said. "Once we get here, we want to do it right. As long as they had a good facility and we're staying in shape, then I was happy for the guys to stay away. We still had 16 guys show up. So it'll be interesting to see July 10 where everybody is, but that's really when it kind of starts."

The format of the NHL when it resumes play will be the top four teams in each division facing off in a round robin format to determine seeding. The Hurricanes are sixth in the Eastern Division, meaning that they and seven other Eastern Conference teams will start a Playoff-style format best of five series to determine who advances to face the top four teams. The Hurricanes would begin with the 11th-seed New York Rangers.

It's an odd format, and one that goes against some of the excitement of Playoff hockey where a team can get hot and upset even a top-seeded team early in the Playoffs.

But Brind'Amour says there will be no asterisk for the winner.

"I don't think you can ever put an asterisk beside winning (the Stanley Cup) because of the grind that's going to happen here in the next three months, if we hopefully get to play. Whoever wins it is going to earn it, so I'll say that," Brind'Amour said. "It's not a tournament. It's not a thing where you had to win four games or get hot for a week. You've got to go out and get it done. So I would say no to Hockey Hall of Fame, but it's not that important to me."

that about an asterisk. We can debate it all we want on is this the right format and this and that but at the end of the day, whoever does win this is going to earn it."

Brind'Amour and the Hurricanes were active at the trade deadline as they had injuries to keep players, including Dougie Hamilton and Brett Pesce. Now, with the addition of Brady Skjei and Sami Vatanen and the return of a healthy Hamilton, they'll have an abundance of defensemen rather than a lack of them.

"What do you do, right? It's a great problem to have, obviously. We've got too many guys right now," Brind'Amour said. "You've got to play the best guys. You've got to play who looks the best in camp and who's ready to go — not necessarily the best players, even. If they're not quite up to speed, you just can't wait around. It's going to be interesting. We're going to have a couple of weeks to try to figure all that out. Obviously those additions we made at the trade deadline were to get us into the Playoffs and then have a Playoff run. We didn't expect some of these guys back, like Dougie, obviously. He will be in the game, I can pretty much guarantee you that. The rest of the lineup is kind of to be determined after the camp we have."

Brind'Amour is never one to sit still, so the COVID-19 shutdown has made things especially difficult. But he never wanted to learn a new skill, so he decided to spend it sharpening his.

"I definitely was on a lot of Zoom meetings with other coaches. I was kind of fortunate to do that," Brind'Amour said. "Right away, one of the coaches that I know started it and it started with eight coaches. The next thing you know, it was up to 60. Just learning from other people and hearing some great former coaches and current coaches talk about every situation possible. So that's been good. So I guess just sharpening your skills. Then we've had a lot of time to digest and watch your team and get ready for this startup. Hopefully, all of that will make me better when I get back but I guess we'll see."

Brind'Amour was also snubbed by the Hall of Fame in its most recent round of inductions yet again.

He said that he does not care, but he does admit that he cares about it a little bit — just not for his own sake.

No. I shut that window awhile ago. I say I don't care, but I care because there are a lot of people that I would love to thank if I got in that deserve it, that put me in this position to have a long career and still doing what I'm doing. I would love the chance to thank people," Brind'Amour said. "And I think it would mean a lot to the organization and the fans here. However, having said that, I've kind of given up hope on that awhile ago. It seems like there's guys going in that — I don't know. I don't want to debate it. At the end of the day, it's not a big deal. I didn't grow up dreaming about being in the



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## Staal: Hurricanes, NHL have done everything they can to make return to play safe

Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal said he was ready to hit the ice Tuesday when the team allowed players back inside PNC Arena for some small-group, voluntary workouts.

The NHL, which stalled the season in March because of coronavirus concerns, is planning for a modified postseason in which 24 teams, including the Canes, will compete for the Stanley Cup. A start date has yet to be set as the NHL watches other leagues make plans for a return to play and gradually works toward the same.

Team training camps for postseason play are expected to begin July 10.

In a Zoom call with the media Tuesday, Staal outlined the precautions his team was taking – including daily temperature checks – and said he feels as comfortable on the ice as at anywhere in public.

"There's just as much risk just living your life, cruising through the grocery store, than I think there is going to the rink," he said.

"They've taken it quite seriously. Hopefully we can get through this Phase 2 and 3 and get in a bubble and go on from there."

After Tuesday's workout, Staal said, "It felt like a good day at work.

"Everyone's kind of got their own spot in the gym, their own spot in the room getting dressed, keeping your distance as best you can," he said.

The NHL's phased plan calls for eight teams from each conference to play in a best-of-five "qualifying round" before the "playoffs" begin.

At the same time, the top four teams in each conference will play a round-robin tournament to determine their playoff seed.

"It's going to be different, it's going to be weird, but there are a lot of people in the world who are feeling the same in different scenarios," Staal said. "Taking two or three months completely off of hockey ... and getting thrown right into a playoff game ... it's going to be interesting hockey."

## Gold: Deadline passes on Forslund extension

While not yet official, it's way more likely than not that Wednesday is the first day that John Forslund is NOT the television (and, for the last two years, radio) voice of the Carolina Hurricanes. I'm going to give you, the Hurricanes fan, a moment to process this before I continue.

(pause)

Unless something redirects the course of negotiations, Forslund has become the best broadcasting free agent since Jon Miller was encouraged to leave the Baltimore Orioles for the San Francisco Giants in 1997. Forslund — still smarting from a somewhat contentious contract negotiation a year ago — and the team have failed to come to an agreement that will allow him to continue as the team's lead broadcaster ,and his contract expired June 30.

There is still some hope that a resolution will be achieved as the Hurricanes, as well as the rest of the NHL, hope to resume the season in early August. As of late Tuesday night, both sides were open to Forslund continuing as the television voice, which would extend his streak to 25 years in that role for the franchise.

"I would never close a door unless they say it's closed," Forslund said Tuesday evening. Tom Dundon, the Hurricanes' owner, and the man who will have final say on this matter, was uncharacteristically mum when asked where negotiations stood. "Nothing new to report," Dundon told me in a text message. "We're still talking."

There are a lot of details in which we could get lost, starting with where Forslund ranks among the league's local play-by-play talents. For what it's worth, according to The Athletic, a league-wide poll of fans had John and partner Tripp Tracy as the top local duo in the sport. Was it a scientific study? No. It was a poll of hockey fans across the league.

Then there's his national profile. He's among the top hockey game-callers for NBC's presentation of the NHL. Assuming the league does resume, Forslund will more than likely get a fair share of the work load, though it could come from a Stamford, CT, studio as the NHL aims to limit those in the bubble due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Maybe he'll draw national Hurricanes assignments, and there's a fair chance that the network will see the attraction of a final four team from a year ago meeting up with an Original Six franchise. But, without a new contract, I would find it hard to believe Forslund will be on hand with the Fox Sports Carolinas crew for the qualifying series with New York.

And, if that is the case, that March Tuesday night in Detroit, as the Hurricanes won their third straight to move into the top Wild Card position in the Eastern Conference, would end up his swan song for the only NHL franchise he's ever graced. That would be a shame.

Forslund is the public face of the franchise. He is the conduit between the team and its fans. He's the emcee for virtually



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every team function. He's a 2 1/2 hour commercial for the franchise every game night and represents the team with an abundance of elegance. John is believable, his integrity as a broadcaster unmatched anywhere, in any sport. If John says it, believe it.

Two summers ago, Dundon took a lot of heat when the team ended their association with Hall of Fame radio broadcaster Chuck Kaiton. That will seem like a pin prick compared to the gaping public relations wound that would come with failing to bring Forslund back. There is only one man more beloved among Hurricanes fans than John Forslund — head coach Rod Brind'Amour.

He also happens to be best in the business at what he does, and I don't care if you want to call me a homer. I will admit to

being biased in favor of Forslund, but that doesn't mean I'm wrong. John and Tripp offer insight, analysis, credibility, and a sense of humor uncommon among local duos. It's simply an enjoyable, informative, highly amusing watch, and listen, every night.

I'm hoping that March 10 wasn't his last game as the Canes voice. I'm hoping that time is on our side as Canes fans. There won't be any game until August — at least — so, barring an announcement to the contrary, I'm going to keep my fingers crossed. But, with the calendar having turned to July, Forslund is, for the first time in his career, a free agent.

Hopefully, in the end, he'll still be "our" voice. Because, it will be a whole lot more difficult to sit back and enjoy this one if the man behind the mic isn't John Forslund.

## Canes Corner Podcast: Featuring John Forslund

[VIDEO](#)



## Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour delivers lunch to healthcare workers

RALEIGH, N.C. (WTVD) -- The UNC Health Wakebrook behavioral health campus is the first stop of many for the Carolina Hurricanes in the next month or so. Two hundred meals were delivered Wednesday with head coach Rod Brind'Amour leading the charge.

Boxes of veggie lasagna rolled out of the Hurricanes cargo van and into appreciative arms like those of Euniqua Bullock, the nursing manager at the facility.

"This is a major impact on morale and staff resilience and the staff is very appreciative," Bullock said.

If lunch wasn't enough to boost spirits, a social-distancing picture with the Canes head coach did the trick.

"I'm not doing much, I've got to be honest," Brind'Amour said. "I'm just showing my support."

He added: "Even though they've been important forever and ever, I think now they're getting their due and it's just a thank you really for all the sacrifice."

The program will benefit Blue Cross and Blue Shield healthcare workers during the next five weeks. The Canes

are just one organization doing what they can to the appreciation of UNC Hospitals President Janet Hadar.

"I think this is terrific. The community support is so much appreciated," Hadar said. "COVID has been going on now for many months, and as you can imagine, it gets a little bit wearing on our personnel."

Though happy to be here, Brind'Amour would certainly rather be coaching hockey games.

"Everybody is trying their best," he said. "Putting the best efforts and the science and everything they can do to get sports back and give people a little bit of an outlet. Certainly in our case and for Raleigh and the community to give them something to come together about. And get their minds off of everything that's going on and that's really our mission. 2020 has not been a great year. Maybe we can bring some joy at some point"

Brind'Amour said he is staying away from the players as they return to small-group skates. Fingers crossed, he'll rejoin them when training camp starts in a couple of weeks.

[VIDEO](#)



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## SportScan

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

The Athletic / How the NHL plans to create two secure bubbles for the return to play

By Michael Russo and Scott Burnside Jul 5, 2020

From literally thousands of COVID-19 tests daily to specific disinfecting rules for dressing rooms and benches to protocols governing restaurants, elevators and hotel behavior, the expansive details of proposed life inside the NHL's two bubble cities has started to come into focus.

A 47-page document governing Phase 4 of the league's ambitious plan to try to proceed with the 2019-20 season and award the Stanley Cup in early October reveals the level of detail that has gone into trying to plan for what would be a monumental undertaking when 12 Western Conference teams head to Edmonton and 12 Eastern Conference teams head to Toronto later this month.

Among the highlights of the document, a copy of which was obtained by The Athletic, is that a wide group of people, including players, coaches, arena staff, hotel housekeepers and bartenders and many, many others, will be tested for the coronavirus every day. With 24 teams set to begin play-in rounds and round-robin games, it's possible the initial stage of the return to play will exceed 2,000 tests a day.

Players' families will be allowed to enter the tightly controlled secure zone for the conference finals and the Stanley Cup Final.

It was also formalized that any player can opt out of participation without requiring any kind of existing medical reason. If players don't wish to play, they simply need to notify the league in writing within three days after the ratification of the return-to-play protocols and an extended, amended collective bargaining agreement (CBA) that was still in the final stages of being completed early Monday morning.

Once completed, the NHL's Board of Governors would have to approve the document and the NHLPA's executive board would have to approve the package. Afterward, it will go to the full players' association membership for a vote. Players would have 72 hours to vote, and the league needs a majority for an approved return to play and a new CBA.

Given what lies ahead, it's expected that Phase 3, the opening of training camp, which was supposed to be on Friday, will be pushed back to at least July 13.

### Traveling party

- The names of those on the 52-person traveling parties (51 if a team cannot provide a physician) must be submitted to the NHL by each team no later than July 13.

- The traveling party must include at least the following personnel: No more than 31 players, three coaches, two athletic trainers, one team physician (if available), one equipment manager, one massage therapist, one team psychiatrist/chiropractor, one content/social media creator, one security official and one representative to serve as the compliance officer. (The compliance officer is required to certify daily his or her team's compliance with Phase 4 protocol: that PCR testing, symptom screening and temperature checks have been administered, that all

members of the traveling party remain in the secure zone and that all members wear face coverings in all required situations. The compliance officer must be a senior member of the traveling party with compliance experience and must certify, in writing, by 10 a.m. local time each day, to the NHL's facility hygiene officer that all members were in compliance in all aspects.)

- The league states that "in light of the potentially lengthy absence of the players from their homes," each team's club services personnel "will make best efforts to assist in providing grocery delivery and errand-delivery services to the player's family members remaining at home in the club city as needed." That includes accessing medical services such as COVID-19 testing.

### Participant groups

Every person who has a role in the return-to-play process in the hub cities will be assigned to different groups depending on their roles and responsibilities. Those roles and responsibilities will determine their access to various parts of the facilities in the hub and will also determine the level and extent of medical testing.

Following the procedures as outlined by the league and the NHLPA is mandatory.

Group 1 is the core group and includes those people essential to the games being played: Players, club personnel, on-ice officials, NHL hygiene officers, club compliance officers, locker room attendants, locker room security, facility compliance staffers, hotel conference service managers, world feed microphone staffers, event-level NHL staffers (social media, tech ops, penalty box officials, communications, hockey ops, player safety, NHL Studios), NHL staffers, NHLPA staffers, NHL event medical directors and those with the RT-PCR testing company.

While many will have close contact with one other, contact with players will be limited to essential interaction. Group 1 will be housed in a secure-zone hotel and will have daily testing for COVID-19 and daily temperature checks.

Group 2 participants are those with a business function that will require either short or zero contact with Group 1 participants and includes: Off-ice officials (other than penalty box officials and ATC), credential staffers, certain hotel staffers and event coverage medical staffers (orthopedists, primary care sports medicine physicians, emergency medical physicians, dentists or oral surgeons).

Group 2 will not have access to player spaces but will be housed in a secure-zone hotel and will also require daily testing and temperature checks.

Group 3 participants are those who will have repeated contact with those in groups 1 and 2 but for short durations of time and include: Perimeter security, event coverage medical staff (EMTs, X-ray technicians, neuropsychologists), hotel bartenders, food servers, banquet servers and those on the ice crew.

Group 3 individuals will be housed in a separate hotel or will be allowed to return home. They will limit their contact to all members of groups 1 and 2 when possible. They will be tested daily as well as have daily temperature checks.

Group 4 will be those with very limited or short-duration exposure to groups 1, 2, and 3 and includes: Arena food and beverage workers, the



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PA announcer and game presentation staffers, hotel housekeeping, kitchen and prep staff and the transportation staff.

Group 4 will be housed in a separate hotel or at home and will require daily testing as well as daily temperature checks.

Group 5 will be those who have no contact with any other group members and includes: Third-party vendors, other arena staffers, other hotel staffers, the fire marshal, police and the media.

This group will be in a separate hotel or at home and will not require testing but will have daily temperature checks.

Credentials will be distributed to all people in Phase 4 and those credentials will reflect the group to which they are assigned. Anyone without a credential will be denied access to the secure zones.

### Testing and positive-test handling

Any player or member of a team's traveling party who develops symptoms should immediately self-quarantine and contact the team doctor or athletic trainer. He or she will then be evaluated by team doctors, who will consult with the team's infectious disease specialist and the league's event medical director. Players and club personnel are required to notify officials if they believe they have come in contact with someone who has COVID-19.

Anyone in groups 1-5 who develops symptoms should contact the NHL's event medical director. Those in groups 1-5 must also inform officials if they believe they have come in contact with someone who has COVID-19.

### Protocol for a positive test

If anyone in Phase 4 tests positive for COVID-19 and is medically stable but is not in his or her hotel room, he or she will be taken to a secure location designated by the NHL's event medical director and refrained from contacting others.

If a person tests positive but is asymptomatic, he or she will have an RT-PCR test for confirmation. The person will be in contact with club medical staff during the process. If a positive test is confirmed, the person will self-isolate until medical clearance is obtained.

If the confirmation test comes back negative, the person will remain in isolation and be retested in 24 hours. A second negative confirmation test means the person can return to normal activities within Phase 4.

A person who tests positive but is symptomatic won't be subject to further testing unless a physician has reason to doubt the positive test result.

Once a positive test has been confirmed, that person will remain in isolation and will not be allowed to exercise or take part in any team activities or business. Contact with doctors and others will be remote only.

A person who tests positive but is asymptomatic must remain in isolation until the person tests negative in two consecutive RT-PCR tests 24 hours apart or, after 10 days since the first positive test, the person has remained asymptomatic during self-isolation.

A person who was symptomatic at the time of the positive test or who develops symptoms during self-isolation must test negative twice after being administered RT-PCR tests and symptoms must be shown to be improving. Or, after 10 days, there are no respiratory symptoms over a 72-hour period.

Physicians must also conclude that exiting self-isolation will not put others at risk. Exiting self-isolation must also fall within local health guidelines.

Players exiting self-isolation must refrain from exercise for 14 days from the time of the first positive test unless they meet certain requirements for an earlier return to workouts with approval from team doctors along with input from a cardiologist and infectious disease specialist.

A cardiologist and the team doctor must declare a player fit to play before returning to game action.

If a player is confirmed to have COVID-19, he'll be designated as being unfit to play and will be classified as having sustained an illness as a result of his employment as a hockey player. He will be covered as such by the terms of the CBA unless it can be proven that the player contracted the virus outside the course of his employment as a hockey player.

Unless there is approval from the league (in consultation with the NHLPA), no information, including to the media, will be made available regarding a player's positive test for COVID-19.

A contact-tracing investigation will begin immediately after a person's first positive test. Anyone who has been in contact with the person testing positive for 15 minutes or longer at a distance of 6 feet or less in the 48-hour period leading up to the positive test will be considered a close contact for the purposes of the contact tracing and will be subject to immediate testing.

Close contacts who test positive will follow the protocols for self-isolation and further testing. Those who test negative will have daily testing for 14 days and will not have to self-quarantine, provided they don't exhibit symptoms and are fever-free for the 14-day period.

### Leaving/returning to the secure zone

It's expected that all participants staying at a secure-zone hotel will remain on site at all times throughout Phase 4. Participants can leave if:

- They are receiving medical assessment or care or retrieving necessary medical supplies such as prescriptions, though permission is needed;
- They need to consult with or be examined by a doctor of their choice, or if a player must be seen by a doctor at an outside location;
- There are extenuating circumstances, like the birth of a child, a family illness or a death or an important family event.

If somebody leaves Phase 4 in accordance with those reasons, upon reentry, he or she will be required to return at least four consecutive negative PCR test results over a four-day period and will be required to quarantine in his or her hotel room until such testing requirements have been fulfilled. In certain circumstances, at the discretion of the NHL event medical director, an individual returning may also be subject to a regimen of nasopharyngeal testing, a period of quarantine of up to 14 days based on the individual's activities outside Phase 4, including the nature and frequency of his potential exposure to infected persons, and an assessment of whether the individual himself poses a risk of infecting others. In cases where the individual stayed for a sustained period of time in a high-risk environment and who poses a substantial risk of infecting others, the NHL event medical director may determine that the person's access to the secure zone will be removed and/or his or her involvement with any aspect of Phase 4 will be terminated.

### Phase 4/secure zone safety precautions

- A physical distance of 6 feet is required at all times, including on planes or buses, while eating at restaurants or in conference areas, while indoors or outdoors, while exercising and in social situations.
- Masks (cloth or surgical) must be worn at all times outside of rooms within the secure zone. Exceptions are made for those exercising or on the ice, for coaches on the bench, for broadcasters on the air, for on-ice officials during games, for players during interviews (as long as there's appropriate distancing) and while eating and drinking.
- All sorts of safety advice has been given, including guidance on washing hands, avoiding touching one's face and avoiding handshakes, high-fives and fist bumps.
- All team game staffers and those interacting with players' gloves, equipment, jerseys, water bottles and towels are required to wear gloves when tending to the benches, penalty boxes and locker room areas. Off-



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ice officials must wear gloves while working in the penalty box during games.

### Secure zone hotel and hotel rules

- Each person gets his or her own room. With the exception of housekeeping or engineering staff, no guests are allowed in a room. When family members are allowed during the conference finals and the Stanley Cup Final, they will be given their own hotel rooms. If family members want to reside with a player or staff, they can if they satisfy testing and quarantine requirements.
- Each club will be assigned a designated floor. If possible, clubs will be provided additional space on their floor for access to single-wrapped snacks and single-serve beverages. Each floor will have space designated for medical training and treatment.
- The hotel lobby and bars will be open and available as long as there's proper physical distancing.
- Elevator capacity will be limited and distancing protocols may be put in place. It's suggested individuals not hit elevator buttons with their fingers and instead use their knuckles or elbows, and no talking to others is allowed while in an elevator.
- Housekeeping and room maintenance personnel will be prohibited from entering rooms while they are occupied. Housekeeping personnel will be required to wear face coverings and gloves and to use EPA-approved cleaning and disinfecting products. Housekeeping will be provided every third day.
- The pool, if open, is permitted for use as long as appropriate distancing measures are taken and individuals disinfect lounge chairs before and after use.
- The hotel spa, steam room and sauna will be closed.
- A daily schedule for the use of the hotel fitness center shall be established by the league. The schedule shall allocate appropriate and sufficient time for players to work out, and for NHL staff and for other Phase 4 personnel to work out, respectively and separately, and for all equipment to be disinfected by staff before and after each use.

### Dining rules inside and outside the secure zone

- Each club will be provided with designated conference space and physical meeting space. Modified buffet-style meals will be permitted during Phase 4, subject to plexiglass barriers (or something similar) being set up between servers and individuals to maintain social distancing and contactless service.
- There will be several other dining options and individuals will be permitted to eat at hotel restaurants and bars or club-dedicated meeting or conference rooms with meals prepared by the hotel catering staff. Contactless room service delivery and delivery from local restaurants to a specified drop-off location at the secure zone is also allowed.
- To minimize in-person interactions, the servers at the secure-zone hotel restaurants and bars, as well as those in club meeting and conference rooms, will be instructed to place meals and drinks on a cart for pickup. In addition, each individual will be responsible for clearing his or her own plates and serving utensils between courses and putting them in a bin that will be provided for removal by hotel wait staff.
- The same food and eating hygiene measures will be employed for food served at the arena and at any restaurants outside the secure zone hotel(s) that are dedicated for NHL use only.

### Social activities inside and outside of the secure zone

The NHL recognizes the importance of mental health and the psychological benefit of variation in activity, so social excursions will be arranged inside and outside the secure zone, provided that disinfecting and distancing and the use of face coverings and personal hygiene measures can be maintained. Details of available options will be provided

closer to the start of Phase 4, but they are expected to include movies, live music and golf.

### Hygiene and disinfecting

- There shall be no sharing of water bottles.
- Clubs are required to supply player-specific, labeled water bottles for their players.
- The benches will have vertical dividers for each water bottle.
- There shall be no sharing of towels. All towels shall be treated as single use and shall not be reused by another player. Once a towel is used, it will be washed before being used again.
- Each team shall be provided a minimum of 100 clean towels for use on the bench during each game.
- Both teams' benches must be properly cleaned and disinfected before use and between periods. At a minimum, that includes flooring, the bench surface, the tops of dasher boards, the water bottle storage area and the glass.

### Penalties for noncompliance

- Individuals leaving the secure zone without permission may be subject to consequences up to and including removal from Phase 4, or, in other cases, strict quarantines of up to 10 to 14 days, as well as enhanced testing and monitoring upon return.

In addition, established violations of the rules will result in:

For clubs, significant penalties, potentially including fines and/or the loss of draft choices;

For third-party vendors, potential contract termination;

For NHL staff, the potential dismissal from the secure zone.

### Cancellation or postponement of Phase 4

The NHL or the NHLPA can, at any point, contact the other if it believes games should not continue because it's believed conditions are present that would present a hazard to players or would jeopardize the integrity of the competition, including an uncontrolled outbreak of COVID-19. It's not clear how many positive tests or what circumstances might qualify as an uncontrolled outbreak. The two sides would then consult with the event medical director, the NHLPA's medical consultant, players, GMs and infectious disease experts.

Commissioner Gary Bettman would then, after consultation with NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr, make a determination on whether to postpone, delay, move or cancel games. In theory, the NHLPA, if it disagreed with the commissioner, could ask for an expedited arbitration.

The Athletic / Bourne's Notebook: 'Bubble' hopes and concerns, CBA thoughts and more

By Justin Bourne Jul 5, 2020

When looking at the days, weeks and months ahead as an NHL analyst, the bulk of the challenge revolves around forecasting possible outcomes, and wondering "what if" about the variety of outcomes. What makes that so hard is just how unprecedented this all is — there's no experience to lean on outside our own human one, so we're left with a lot of questions.

Still, asking those questions can help shape our expectations for what's to come, so I thought I'd pull out the notebook and talk through the overarching ideas I've been kicking around. Let's get going.



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The most important part of the NHL's return to play, the part the whole plan hinges on, is underway as you're reading this. That means today, that means yesterday, and that means tomorrow, too. The NHL's return-to-play plan has players in the make-or-break window before the smaller bubble before the bigger bubble, and if the first part isn't well-executed, the other two won't even happen.

If NHL hockey is about teamwork, it's been good practice for this moment when they're all going to need it more than ever. Players need to be taking isolation time here seriously, because like a good defence in hockey, if there's one breakdown, one weak link in the chain it'll be ruined for everyone else. In a sport that prides itself on protecting teammates, players need to be staying home, be masked up when they aren't, and giving this upcoming bubble thing a real chance. While there's testing on the way into these bubbles, it's possible that with bad timing, bad testing, or just bad behaviour, one case could lead to many more.

What would it really take for the NHL to shut it all down now that the ball's in motion?

One thing the league doesn't seem eager to touch with any measure of specificity: What happens if one team gets absolutely lit up by the disease? Or more teams? It's during a higher-risk portion of the plan right now, but we hear "11 cases here," (carry on), "15 cases there," (carry on), "a closed facility over here" (that's fine). If a team has a half-dozen positives as the games draw near – or dare I say an actual dozen – is the league going to be OK with just saying "forfeit" and handing over a series to the less-infected team? Would a hard-hit team be expected to dress as many AHL players as it has around, even suit up less than a full squad?

It's not impossible to see a scenario where "one case" turns into "one team" becomes "OK, we just have to shut down the whole season."

Plug our ears and cover our eyes all we like, there's a non-zero chance the NHL never returns to play at all.

One thing that concerns me most about every hub-bubble plan I read about: They're awfully human, aren't they? Guys aren't hermetically sealed in some literal biodome once they arrive at the bubbles. That they hinge on the good decision-making of everyone, and not just most people, is the part that gets me. Knowing us humans, it's tough to consider that and not wince a little. We all know That Person who might see 99 percent of people doing something they're supposed to, who'll then say, "Y'know, I'm not sure that's the right way to operate here." Free thinking is great; unfortunately, some choose to use that option to freely think like morons.

My biggest concern about Toronto is just that so many players know so many people here, who will be physically close but still outside the conceptual bubble. Can we trust most guys to stay in and do the right thing? Absolutely. Can we trust everyone to ignore the call from that high school buddy, that old girlfriend, that BBQ in their Uncle's backyard with a few neighbors over? I think it's considerably less likely an NHL player would've shattered the bubble in Vegas by blowing on the dice at the craps table with dozens of randoms, versus sneaking out to a summer gathering with some friends or family they have in the area. And both are concerning for the ability of the whole season to reach its conclusion.

Onto the CBA talk!

The jarring conclusion of the NHL's entirely un-painful CBA negotiation (at least publicly)

I agreed with eight points in an eight-tweet thread from our own Jonathan Willis about the NHL's latest CBA extension, which I figure is a success rate high enough to warrant conversation here today. Let's add to three of his points.

I am extremely grateful that the NHL leadership, with the NHLPA, didn't treat hockey fans the way baseball fans have been treated throughout this whole mess. Major League Baseball has compounded its problems with public negotiating tactics, threats and by explicitly making it clear the fans are not the priority through all this. It has been extremely refreshing that the league and the players — even if it isn't this way in private — are

working toward the betterment of hockey instead of making a power grab.

Things aren't perfect. There are parts of the proposed CBA changes both sides won't love and will want to change. But these talks always hinge on how to divide the pie. By moving through these hard times together and pushing off to what are hopefully better days, both sides ensure there's any kind of pie to share at all.

The NHL's playoff pool — the money that gets divided among players of playoff teams depending on how deep they move into playoffs — is going to be doubled from \$16 million to \$32 million for this season. Call it danger pay — there's no doubt there should be a little extra something offered to players who agree to take some extra risk this season.

I love this point by Willis and think this is a plus for the league. There's just too much incentive to be as young as possible right now. Right now if you're going to pay someone \$750,000 for a smaller role, it might as well be a young player who can use the experience to improve, seeing as how a journeyman who might give you a little more costs the same. "Might give you a little more" isn't always worth it when the age curve is going the wrong way, and the young guy will likely give you more in future years.

But then, this is the NHL, not a development league, and shouldn't teams want the best players until those young guys are in fact better players?

If a vet is now able to give a little more, and able to be a little cheaper," they're more likely to be sought after. I think we get better hockey at the margins there, while players aren't handed spots they're not quite ready for, simply for economic reasons.

Again, I'm so grateful the league and players saw the gravity of these NHL days in mapping out the years ahead and settled on things that seem healthy for the good of the game. That the Olympics are back is a joy for everyone who cares about hockey in the slightest.

And finally, a meta thought:

The critical dates calendar shows "training camps" July 13, and games as soon as Aug. 1, and the Stanley Cup being handed out in early October. When a player wins the Cup, he talks about his teammates, and how important they've been, and how they couldn't have done it without everyone buying in. This year, if we're fortunate enough to get to that final "critical date" of the 2019-20 season, each player will have more teammates to thank than just the ones who wore the same jersey they did. It will be a win for the larger NHL hockey team.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.06.2020



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Sportsnet.ca / NHL, NHLPA tentatively agree on protocols to resume play as CBA talks continue

Sportsnet Staff | July 5, 2020, 8:11 PM

The NHL and NHLPA have tentatively agreed on protocols to resume play, Sportsnet can confirm. The two sides continue to negotiate an extension to the collective bargaining agreement.

Once a CBA extension is agreed upon, the NHL's board of governors and the full membership of the NHLPA will vote on both the extension and the return-to-play protocols that were agreed to on Sunday.

The newly agreed-upon protocols cover Phase 3 and 4 of the NHL's return-to-play plan. According to Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman, this includes a framework for how the return-to-play would be called off if the COVID-19 virus cannot be contained.

If games do happen, players will have a choice whether to participate. According to Sportsnet's Chris Johnston, the return-to-play protocols include an opt-out clause for any player that does not want to resume play this season without penalty. He adds that coaches will not be required to wear face coverings on the bench during games and no dress code will be imposed upon players on game days.

Some players may not have a choice over whether they can return. Friedman reports that all players will undergo "a Pre-Participation Medical Examination" where the doctor administering the exam and the team's infectious disease expert may determine a player is unfit to return to play due to the "substantial risk of developing a serious illness" from COVID-19. If that occurs, that player may seek a second opinion to determine if it's safe for them to play.

Once players are in the hub city bubbles, there will be strict enforcement of the boundaries.

"Individuals leaving... without permission may be subject to consequences up to and including removal," Friedman reports the agreement as saying, adding "violations... will result in, for clubs, significant penalties, potentially including fines and/or loss of draft choices."

In May, the NHL and NHLPA agreed to a framework for what return to play would look like and the two sides have been negotiating finer details ever since. The return-to-play format will see 24 teams return to the ice in two hub cities, each hosting one conference. The top four teams in each conference by points percentage at the time of the season pause in March will play each other to determine playoff seeding. The next eight teams in each conference have been paired up based on points percentage and will play best-of-five series to determine the other playoff spots.

The NHL initially was considering 10 cities to be hubs for these games, with Edmonton and Toronto expected to be chosen.

The NHL's return plan has been broken down into four stages. Phase 1 began shortly after the season was suspended and saw all team facilities closed and players allowed to return home. Phase 2 began June 8 and is ongoing, with players allowed to return to team facilities to skate in small groups after testing negative for COVID-19. According to the NHL, from June 8 to 29, more than 250 players were tested under Phase 2 protocols and 15 tested positive. Additionally, 11 players tested positive outside of Phase 2 protocols in that same time period.

Phase 3 of the return plan would cover training camps for the returning teams and eventual travel to the hub cities while Phase 4 would cover playing games. Specific dates for the beginning of these phases won't be determined until the CBA negotiation is complete and the board of

governors and NHLPA membership approve the plans and CBA in a vote.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.06.2020

TSN.CA / How NHL plans to operate secure 'bubbles' in Toronto and Edmonton

Frank Seravalli

The NHL and NHL Players' Association have finalized a tentative agreement on Phase 3 and 4 protocols to open training camps and resume the 2019-20 season inside secure "bubbles" in Toronto and Edmonton.

The two sides continue to hammer out language and details for memorandum of understanding (MOU) on an imminent, new six-year Collective Bargaining Agreement.

When that is agreed upon, the entire package - the Phase 3 and 4 protocols and CBA extension - will need to be ratified by both the NHL's Board of Governors and the NHLPA's full membership. Those votes are expected to occur some time this week.

For now, all of the details surrounding how the NHL plans to operate and maintain what it is calling a "secure zone" have emerged for the first time:

> In the Bubble: Each team will be permitted to bring a maximum of 52 individuals inside the secure zone, including ownership, players, coaches, executives and staff.

Teams are permitted to bring no more than 31 players. The list of each traveling part must be submitted to the NHL by July 13, the day training camps are scheduled to open.

Each team will have at least one physician, one security representative, one club Phase 4 compliance officer, and one content creator / social media member included in the traveling party.

> Testing: Every person inside the NHL's "bubble" will be tested for COVID-19 daily via nasal swab, also administered temperature checks and symptom screenings.

The list of people requiring daily testing is massive and includes but is not limited to: all players, staff, officials, arena ice crew, security, hotel bartenders, food service staff, arena food and beverage staff, hotel housekeeping, hotel kitchen and food prep staff, and bus drivers. Simply put, any person who has contact or may come into contact (even indirectly) will be tested daily.

With 24 teams inside the bubble (at 52 people per team), that is 1,248 tests required daily for team personnel only. Add in all of the other levels and it is easy to imagine the NHL requiring upwards of 2,000 tests daily to begin the 24-team tournament. That is 20,000 tests in first 10 days alone.

> Calling it off: At any time before or during play in the 24-team tournament, the NHL and NHLPA have the ability to postpone, delay, move or cancel any games in the event conditions present "risk to player health and safety" and/or jeopardize "the integrity of the competition."

Those conditions may include "an uncontrolled outbreak of COVID-19 in the players of one or more clubs" participating in the tournament. No specific number of positive cases was provided in the protocol to define the "uncontrolled outbreak" threshold. The NHL has maintained that singular or even multiple isolated positive tests will not halt play.

The NHLPA may contest any ruling from commissioner Gary Bettman in the form of an "expedited arbitration of a grievance" before an impartial arbitrator.



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> Compliance: Any team that violates the rules set in the protocol will be subject to “significant penalties, potentially including fines and/or loss of draft picks.” Any player who refuses to follow the testing and monitoring protocol will not be allowed to participate and may be subject to permanent removal from the bubble.

> Opt-out: Any player may choose to not participate in the return-to-play tournament for any reason and without penalty. The deadline to opt-out will be three days after this return-to-play protocol package is ratified by a vote, likely giving players at least until July 13, when the list of each traveling party is due.

> Bubble life: Each bubble will be tightly secured, no one will be able to enter/exit that is not authorized. Players will be living in single occupancy rooms, no roommates, with each team assigned designated floors. Players are not permitted to enter each other’s rooms. Housekeeping will be provided every third day. Hotel bars and restaurants will be open and available in the bubble, provided social distancing is followed.

Players will have access to hotel pool and fitness centre. Each club will be provided with a designated meeting space in the hotel. Each person will also have access to contactless room service delivery, as well as delivery from local restaurants available for pick-up.

The NHL is also planning for league-approved “excursions” both inside and outside of the bubble. Think designated tee times at a local golf club, etc. All transportation will be provided to/from the excursion and social distancing, face coverings and personal hygiene measures will be mandatory. There will also be outdoor areas to walk, exercise and mingle on campus.

> Masks mandatory: A cloth or surgical mask is required to be worn by any individual in the bubble when outside of their hotel room. Masks may be removed during exercise and play on the ice, as well as when eating and/or drinking. Coaches are not required to wear masks on the bench; on-ice officials are not required to wear masks during games. Broadcasters and players being interviewed are also not required to wear a mask, provided appropriate social distancing is followed.

> Arriving in the bubble: Every person will be tested three times, 48 hours apart, in the seven days prior to their charter flight to the bubble. They will not be subject to quarantine upon arrival, including for teams/players/staff coming from the United States. Daily testing will begin upon arrival. During the first five days inside the bubble (exhibition games), individuals will only be allowed to engage in social interaction with people from their own team’s traveling party.

> Leaving the bubble: Players who are authorized to leave the bubble for a medical reason or extenuating personal circumstance (birth of a child or death of a family member, etc.) will be permitted to return. They will be forced to quarantine on return pending four negative tests over a four-day period - or longer, depending on the location they visited outside the bubble and those circumstances.

> Family visits: Players’ immediate families (spouse/significant other and children only) will be permitted to join the NHL’s bubble during the Conference Finals and Stanley Cup Final in Edmonton. Families will be allowed to stay in the same hotel room as the player, only after an acceptable quarantine and daily testing have been conducted inside the bubble.

That means players advancing to the Conference Final will go a minimum of five weeks away from their families.

> Help at home: While players are gone, NHL teams will offer to assist families remaining at home by providing grocery delivery and errand delivery services.

> Positive tests: Any person inside the bubble who tests positive will immediately be isolated.

A second “confirmatory” test will be administered. If that test returns positive, then that person will be instructed to isolate until medical clearance is administered. Even if that confirmatory test is negative, that

person shall remain isolated and will be tested again in 24 hours - only until a second negative test is provided will that person be permitted to exit isolation.

An ‘asymptomatic’ confirmed positive case will be allowed to rejoin after two consecutive negative tests over a 48-hour period, or after 10 days of passage in isolation.

A ‘symptomatic’ confirmed positive case will also be able to rejoin after symptoms have subsided (no fever, no respiratory symptoms) for a minimum of 72 hours, provided the person was in self-isolation for a minimum of 10 days since the onset of symptoms.

> Nondisclosure: No player who tests positive or develops symptoms will be identified to media or publicly, absent approval from the NHL or NHLPA.

> Player safety: Any player exiting isolation must “continue to refrain from exercise for a 14-day period from the time of the first positive test.” After that, players shall receive cardiac testing, including at a minimum: an ECG, echocardiogram and high-sensitivity troponin.

> Contact tracing: Any person considered to be in “close contact” with a positive test case - defined by the NHL as in contact for 15 minutes or longer at 6-feet or less - in the 48 hours leading up to the time of their positive test, will be immediately removed and tested. That person will then be monitored closely for a 14-day period.

> Cleaning procedures: Between every period during games, each bench area must be disinfected, including flooring, bench surface, top of dasher board and water bottle area. Vertical dividers will separate each players’ water bottle. All locker rooms, team spaces and event floor areas will also be disinfected daily.

Rangers’ European players all back in New York ahead of training camp

By Mollie Walker July 3, 2020 | 10:06am | Updated

All of the Rangers’ European players are back in New York as of Thursday night and following the NHL’s ‘Return to Play’ protocol as the potential start of training camp on July 13 inches closer, the team confirmed to The Post Friday.

The players who went back to Europe since the global coronavirus pandemic shut down the 2019-20 regular season in March include Henrik Lundqvist, Mika Zibanejad, Jesper Fast, Kaapo Kakko, Alexandar Georgiev and Filip Chytil.

There are still more Rangers making their way back into the New York area.

Players returning for training camp from outside the United States, or different parts of the country, are subject to the league’s ‘Return to Play’ protocol. This includes getting tested for COVID-19 when they arrive in New York and again before they can be cleared to practice.

The league is still in Phase 2 of the ‘Return to Play’ plan, holding voluntary small-group workouts at team practice facilities as players make their way back to their respective markets. Players are only permitted to skate in the same groups of fewer than 12 and are undergoing frequent testing. The Post reported Thursday that the opening of team camps (Phase 3) was being pushed back until at least July 13.

According to TSN, the NHL is targeting July 26 for teams to report to their hub cities, confirmed by The Post to be Toronto and Edmonton, with the 24-team playoff tournament — Phase 4 — targeted to begin Aug. 1.



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