



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Canes' changes will include more locker-room area space

By Chip Alexander

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Raleigh

The race is on at PNC Arena.

The Carolina Hurricanes will have a different look to their locker-room area in September, with the weight room and exercise area expanded with the removal of walls and the coaches' offices moved to a new location.

Construction began Monday. The plan: have the project completed in 12 weeks.

"The goal is to have it done before the players report back for (training) camp," said Jeff Merritt, executive director of the Centennial Authority, the arena landlord.

"I'm not a construction guy but I'm hopeful they won't find any surprises and slow it down ... but construction projects are always full of something that you don't know."

The authority approved expenditures of up to \$300,000 for the project, Merritt said. And it was an expedited project — something the Hurricanes, team owner Tom Dundon, general manager Don Waddell and coach Rod Brind'Amour wanted.

Waddell, the Canes president and general manager, approached the authority on June 6 with the request, Merritt said. A special meeting of the authority board was called July 3 and the project funding approved.

"They understood it was a last-minute, out-of-protocol kind of thing," Merritt said. "I think given that there's a new ownership here that's eager to do big, bold things, I think the board was willing to make some exceptions to our normal process. ... It was a fast turnaround."

[The Hurricanes had asked that a new scoreboard](#), 3D projection system and theatrical lighting be in place for the 2018-19 season. The authority approved funding for the 3D system and lighting, but installation of a scoreboard was pushed back to the 2019-20 season because of structural changes that must first be made.

The Hurricanes typically begin preseason training camp in mid-September. The plan is for the project to be completed by Sept 11.

The Canes' weight room is fairly small by most major-league standards and a separate exercise room with stationary bikes is cramped and not well-lit.

"We're looking forward to it," Waddell said. "It's going to make the room, by removing those walls, feel a lot bigger."

After awful year, Scott Darling tries to rise again. Can he save his career – and the Canes?

By Luke DeCock

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Raleigh

One of several tattoos on Scott Darling's right forearm is of a phoenix, that mythical creature that rose from the ashes. The same image is on his goalie mask, a reminder of his unlikely climb from castaway at the lowest level of pro hockey to Stanley Cup champion.

He arrives at The Performance Academy in Raleigh on a steamy Monday in July at the beginning of a different ascent, trying to work his way back from one of the worst seasons by a goalie in the NHL's modern era and into the good graces of the Carolina Hurricanes.

There's not much on the line: Just his career. And the Hurricanes' nine-year playoff drought.

Bill Burniston, the Hurricanes' strength and conditioning coach, is waiting for Darling, who arrives wearing USA Hockey shorts from his recent stint with the national team at the world championships. A few other athletes are working out, teenaged baseball and hockey players, but it's a holiday week and the cavernous gym is mostly empty. Burniston puts down his coffee and warms up with Darling by playing catch. This isn't part of the program, but Darling has a new baseball glove he's trying to break in.

Soon, he's on the indoor turf field surrounded by four LED lights on stands, set up in a square about 20 feet on a side. Darling has to dance between them, responding as they turn on and off, constantly shuffling and changing direction. Cam Ward, who arrived at the gym shortly after Darling, a day after signing as a free agent to fill Darling's old job as a backup for the Chicago Blackhawks, joins him for some of it.

"A good ankle-breaker," Darling says.

"If I wanted to break your ankles, I'd do other things," Burniston says.



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"I'm getting turf burn, I'm moving so fast."

"Your feet are smoking."

It's the kind of offseason workout NHL players all over the world are doing to get ready for the season, and it's what Darling apparently wasn't doing last summer [when he signed a four-year, \\$16.6 million contract](#), came in out of shape, struggled in net and became the single most critical factor why the Hurricanes missed the playoffs yet again (although there were several).

"If Darling has just an average season, and I think he's going to have one better than that, we will be a playoff team," former owner Peter Karmanos said before the season. Darling did not — and the Hurricanes were not.

The Hurricanes never won more than four games in a row. Of their five winning streaks of three or four games, four ended with a switch from Ward to Darling in net. He was the ultimate cooler, the guy you hope never sits down at your blackjack table.

His general manager got fired and his coach left before he could get fired. The Hurricanes' new management team did have one opportunity to trade Darling's contract this summer but decided his history as a backup with the Blackhawks offered enough reason to gamble that Darling, properly supported and motivated and still only 29, could recapture his previous form.

Wherever Darling is headed, and nobody knows how any of this will work out, this is where it begins. Four weeks in, Darling has lost at least 15 pounds and looks leaner and more defined, even if his red beard remains just as bushy. The Hurricanes are more concerned about his body fat than his raw weight, and don't want to track either closely at this early point in the process, but it's safe to say he's closer to his roster weight of 232 pounds than he was when last season started or ended. There is a long way still to go.

All of which leads to one very obvious question with no obvious answer: Why wasn't he doing this last year?

"I'm not really sure," Darling said. "It was a weird summer for me, in my personal life. I'd grown comfortable in Chicago. I'm from Chicago. That was the longest I'd played for a team, three years. Of all the professional teams I've played for, that was the longest I'd played anywhere. I had a life there. I had a house there. It was a big move for me personally. I think I just let my foot off the gas and figured it would just work out as is. I learned pretty quickly you can't do that at this level."

Sweating in the spotlight

In Darling's first public appearance after the Hurricanes traded a third-round pick to get him from the Blackhawks last summer, he met with the local media in the center of the Hurricanes' locker room, the usual Triangle gaggle of four or five television cameras and a dozen or so people. At 6-foot-6, he stood high above the fray.

The sweat started as a trickle, a drop off the tip of his nose. Midway through the interview, he was sweating so badly a Hurricanes' media-relations staffer had to bring him a towel to wipe his face. It was a full-on, Albert Brooks in "Broadcast News," soaked-shirt episode. This was unusual enough to

raise a few eyebrows: "I have never seen that before," WTVD sports anchor Joe Mazur, in attendance that day, said later.

[All the same, it fit with Darling's story](#). Here was a guy whose acknowledged social anxiety was so crippling that he nearly drank himself out of the sport at one point as he self-medicated with alcohol, getting thrown out of college, going unsigned by the team that drafted him, tumbling down the ladder until he finally wrestled with all of it. He hit bottom, got help and became the first player to rise from the lowest level of professional hockey — the SPHL, the southern bus league known for fisticuffs and cheap beer — to the NHL.

Put Darling in front of a bunch of television cameras and he's so uncomfortable his body starts to rebel. Put him on the ice, alone in his mask and gear, anonymous behind that armor against the world, and he can play at an elite level.

That's how he rebuilt his career, from the SPHL to the ECHL to the AHL to the Nashville Predators to the Blackhawks, where he was a critical piece of their 2015 championship team, stepping in unexpectedly to win three playoff games on the way to the Stanley Cup, posting spectacular numbers in limited action.

That was the Darling the Hurricanes thought they were getting from the Blackhawks, the understudy ready for the big time, the one then-general manager Ron Francis signed to that gargantuan contract, the ultimate gesture of blind faith in a goalie who had never played more than 40 games in a season. Instead, they got something they were never expecting.

"He came last year to camp, he was out of shape," current Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said. "He never got in shape all year."

It was hard to tell just how unfit Darling was when he arrived at training camp. His weight and body fat certainly didn't appear to meet NHL standards, but the Hurricanes didn't know him well enough then to know just how far below standards they were. There's an element of trust with any new player that he'll show up in prime condition, to make a good first impression if nothing else. Last September, that was all they had to go on.

"It looked like his weight was up. It looked like his body comp (fat) was up," Burniston said. "Those are some things that we saw at first. From his testing, his testing numbers, they didn't really send up too many red flags for us. It's very difficult when a player comes in, a new player. You have to develop a rapport with them. It's hard, because you don't know what his peak was. You suspect it's not where we want it."

Darling was OK — not outstanding, but certainly passable — for the first two months of the season, before things turned sour. It's hard to pinpoint exactly when, but Nov. 22 might have been it. A harmless flip from center ice by New York Rangers forward Mika Zibanejad somehow eluded Darling's mitt and ended up in the net and on blooper reels forever. It was the Rangers' second goal in the opening 150 seconds. Darling would go on to allow four more goals in a 6-1 loss, facing only 21 shots.

'Everything was going wrong'



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Darling became a rotating selection of technical flaws. One game his glove was slow, the next he was too far out of his net, the next he was weak on his post. Darling was scrambling, overcompensating, lost. He compares it, now, to quicksand: The harder he fought, the more he sank.

"It just seemed like everything was going wrong when I got in the net," Darling said.

By the time then-coach Bill Peters mercilessly left him in for all eight goals of an 8-1 loss at the Toronto Maple Leafs just before Christmas, Darling was shot.

Physically, he might have been in good enough shape to play once a week as a backup, but he couldn't handle the load of being a night-in, night-out starter. (The Toronto game was the second half of a back-to-back; Darling had earned the start with a solid performance in a home win the night before.)

Mentally, he was in even worse shape.

What do you do when putting on that mask only makes things worse?

Where do you hide when your place of refuge becomes a personal hell?

Darling would go home, to an empty apartment, to stew. As alone as he may have been there, he dreaded returning to the rink, where nothing seemed to go right, where he felt like he was letting his teammates down.

"You're just waiting to go to the rink the next day, not excited about going to the rink, and it just snowballs," Darling said. "The months feel long. The season feels long. It's definitely not an ideal way to go through the season."

His teammates could see this. How could they not? There was nothing they could do to help, technically. Goalies are an island unto themselves anyway, huddled in the corner with their coach like devotees of some strange cult. But even as colleagues, as people, Darling's teammates felt powerless to intervene.

"The tough part is, we didn't really know him," Hurricanes forward Justin Williams said. "We didn't really know him coming into the year. We didn't know what was normal for him, what was odd. And really, in effect, how to help. If you don't know a guy, know his tendencies, what he's done to be successful to this point, it's tough to give advice."

The Hurricanes probably should have traded for a stopgap goalie from another team, a veteran minor-leaguer with NHL experience, to allow Darling a leave of absence to collect himself or even a few weeks in the AHL to rebuild his confidence. But they did not, nor did they think [prospect Alex Nedeljkovic](#) was ready for extended time in the NHL. So the Hurricanes instead did nothing, leaving Darling to marinate in his increasing despair.

Ward, predictably, wore down under the increased workload after posting excellent numbers as a backup over the first three months. By January, in Darling's sporadic appearances, the team had started playing completely different in front of him: visibly scared and on the perpetual verge of panic. The Hurricanes' season fizzled. Darling finished with the worst save percentage of any qualifying

goalie in the league, and based on several different advanced metrics, had one of the four worst seasons in the past decade by any goalie to appear in half of his team's games and one of the 11 worst in the past 30 years, per [hockey-reference.com](#).

All of which raises another obvious question, given Darling's personal history: Darling says alcohol was not part of the problem last season, but he also won't address it specifically beyond that. "I'm not here to talk about that," he said. Waddell declined to comment.

'Time to buckle down'

A few things happened after the season came to its merciful conclusion. The Hurricanes pushed hard for USA Hockey to take Darling to the world championships, and he won a bronze medal in Denmark in a backup role. For the first time in a long time, hockey was fun again. The Hurricanes invited him to speak to their prospects at their development camp last month, an attempt to make him feel like more a part of the team.

Most important, Darling was unhappy enough with his performance last season that he was determined not to repeat it.

"I made the decision a while ago that it's time to buckle down and do everything I can possibly do to be the best goalie I can next season, and that's been my whole plan this summer," Darling said.

Waddell said the team has provided Darling access to counseling and other resources, but at a minimum, Darling is expected to arrive at training camp in peak condition, all of which is why and how he ended up in the gym with Burniston, not just Monday but several days each week of the steamy summer so far.

"I'm really thrilled. He's been great," Burniston said. "I didn't know what to expect, to be completely honest. This isn't easy, coming in early in the morning and working all day. I think he's seeing results and that's why he continues to come."

The Hurricanes, by the end of June, had seen enough from Darling in the early part of the offseason that they decided not to pursue a salary-dumping trade or \$8 million contract buyout. They also brought in former Detroit Red Wings starter Petr Mrazek as a free agent to compete for the starting job.

"When you looked at the free-agent list of goaltenders, they were all kind of the same at that point," Waddell said. "Darling would be the most talented guy in that group. But we needed a commitment from Scott. Anything he gets at this point he has to earn. He understands that."

Darling is in the second phase of his summer conditioning program. The first was basic stuff, building a foundation. Eventually, he'll move away from strength training and into more explosive workouts, and then onto the ice. For now, he's on a cycle that includes four days with Burniston – two days of upper body, one of lower body, one of general training – to go with one day each of Pilates and yoga.



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"Sunday is recovery, although I've had to get him to take Sunday off," Burniston says.

"Hey, I was in here on Sunday," Darling interjects, only hearing half the conversation.

"That's what I'm saying," Burniston says. "You're supposed to be off!"

This workout is upper-body focused and the plan includes core strengthening, sprinting, the reaction-time work with the LED lights and a lot of weightlifting, followed by some interval training on the turf and on a resistance bike. Later, after a series of bench presses and biceps work, Darling does 90-second high-intensity intervals where he lies on his back and has to lift his chest and legs together in various ways.

Ninety seconds of that is interminable. After Darling makes it through his final set, he falls back on the artificial turf, spread-eagled.

"That's the whole idea, right?" Burniston says. "I'm trying to push you to the edge."

Darling has spent enough time on the edge. He needs to find a comfort zone here if he's going to be successful. These workouts are part of it, giving him the base of fitness he needs to play regularly in the NHL, and that's not something that can be done during the season. It has to be done now, in the summer, when there's time to focus on it.

That's not all. Darling bought a house in north Raleigh. His girlfriend has moved in with him, and they're getting a Great Dane puppy, his first dog of his own. He has a nutritionist to prepare menus and meals. He is doing the things he should

have done last summer, but there's nothing he can do now about the past.

"It's all on him, right?" Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "What we all want to see is him put in the time, and that will give him the confidence that he put in the work so when he gets in net he's not worrying if he's in shape or done enough. It's not just him, that's anybody. But with him, obviously, guys are going to be on him."

There's no way to make amends – to the team, to his teammates, to the fans, to himself – for what happened last season. But he still may be able to do something about the future, and his path forward starts in this gym.

"There's not too much else I can do, to be honest," Darling said. "I've been working out really hard, trying to eat really healthy. It's more just mentally kind of letting last season go, not dwelling on the past and moving forward and being confident in myself."

The mythical phoenix would re-create itself from its own ashes, born anew each time. The myth doesn't specify how easy that was. Darling has already done it once, in circumstances perhaps more improbable than these. There is no room to fall short this time. Mrazek, in his own way, has as much to prove as Darling. The competition for playing time in net will be unfettered.

No one knows how this ends, not Darling, not anyone. All he can do is try to get better each day than he was the day before, in hopes a different kind of summer leads to a different kind of winter.

Canes assistant coach Steve Smith resigns

By Chip Alexander

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Updated July 09, 2018 05:55 PM

Carolina Hurricanes assistant coach Steve Smith has resigned his position, the team announced Monday.

Smith, 55, spent four seasons with the Hurricanes as an assistant coach and was responsible for the team's defensemen and penalty kill.

Canes general manager Don Waddell called the parting amicable, saying, "He talked to us and said he had been here four years and was looking at other things."

Waddell said Smith had one year remaining on his contract.

A coaching search will begin immediately, the team said. Jeff Daniels recently was named to the Canes staff.

Smith was hired by former head coach Bill Peters, who resigned after the 2017-18 season and is head coach of the Calgary Flames. In his four seasons as assistant coach, the Hurricanes compiled a 137-138-53 record.

Smith took part in the Canes' recent prospect development camp under new head coach Rod Brind'Amour.



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Smith resigns as Hurricanes assistant

Former player had coached defense and penalty kill the past four seasons in Carolina

[July 9, 2018 Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports](#)

RALEIGH — Steve Smith, who spent the past four seasons as an assistant under former Carolina Hurricanes coach Bill Peters, resigned from the position Monday, the team announced in a press release.

Smith was set to join Jeff Daniels as an assistant under new coach Rod Brind'Amour, and he even participated in the team's prospect development camp two weeks ago. The

release said the team would immediately begin its search for Smith's replacement.

Smith, 55, was charged with coaching the team's defense and penalty kill during his four seasons with the Hurricanes. A veteran of more than 800 NHL games, Smith won three Stanley Cups as a defenseman with the Edmonton Oilers. He later played for the Blackhawks and, after one year as an assistant coach in Calgary, returned to the ice with the Flames for three more seasons. Prior to coming to Carolina, Smith was an assistant for four seasons with the Oilers.



Hurricane watch issued for DBAP in late August

Posted 3:00 p.m. yesterday
Updated 3:02 p.m. yesterday

By Derek Medlin, WRAL sports director

Durham, N.C. — It'll be a cool night at Durham Bulls Athletic Park on Aug. 23.

The Bulls and Carolina Hurricanes are partnering to bring hockey night to DBAP, and it's all for a good cause.

The Bulls will wear Hurricanes-themed uniforms and hats inspired by the Canes' home red sweaters. Game-worn jerseys will be auctioned off, with all proceeds benefiting the

Hurricanes' Kids 'N Community Foundation. Hats will be available at the Ballpark Corner Store.

Wool E. Bull will be joined by Stormy and members of the Pepsi Storm Squad.

"Partnering with the Hurricanes for a theme night is going to be fun and exciting for our fans," Bulls Vice President Mike Birling said in a statement.

"We're eager to combine two of the largest sports brands in North Carolina for an evening fun, and we're looking forward to making a strong donation to the Kids 'N Community Foundation."

Hurricanes assistant coach Smith resigns

Posted 3:07 p.m. yesterday
Updated 3:52 p.m. yesterday

By Derek Medlin, WRAL sports director

Raleigh, N.C. — Carolina Hurricanes assistant coach Steve Smith has resigned.

Team President and General Manager Don Waddell announced the news Monday afternoon.

Smith, 55, spent the past four seasons with the Hurricanes and was responsible for the team's defensemen and penalty kill.

The Hurricanes said the team will begin a search immediately to hire Smith's replacement.



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Finnish-ed Deals Upcoming for Hurricanes

By [Carter Fricano](#) July 9th, 2018

There is excitement about the Carolina Hurricanes and PNC Arena again for the first time in almost a decade. This is thanks to the team's young defense and recent moves like [signing Calvin De Haan](#) and drafting Andrei Svechnikov, but it really all began with their two young Finns up front.

Both Teuvo Teravainen and Sebastian Aho have been a revelation in Raleigh and last season 'Canes fans got a good look at what they could become, as they played together often and developed electrifying chemistry. Both Teravainen and Aho are heading into the last year of their contracts and as they have become invaluable pieces to a resurging Hurricanes squad, it should be high on general manager Don Waddell's priority list to resign these two young forwards. Would that look like?

To project the kind of term and value that Aho and Teravainen will receive with their next contracts, let's compare them with other players with similar skillsets and production levels who have signed long-term deals (five years or longer) since 2015. This should give us the most accurate idea of what these contracts could look like and what their impact would be on the Hurricanes' cap situation.

Bridge the Gap

Let's start with Teravainen. [Since being dealt to Carolina by the Chicago Blackhawks two summers ago](#), Teravainen has enjoyed the most productive seasons of his career and he has improved at a steady pace. He has become a mainstay on the top line, playing all but one game out of 164 and collecting a total of 106 points. Teravainen was touted as one of the best talents in his draft class in 2012 despite his size and fans are beginning to see why.

Teravainen is entering the final year of a two-year bridge contract worth \$5.72 million total that the 'Canes signed him to exactly one year after he was acquired. And even though he will be an RFA again next summer, he will also be eligible to file for arbitration.

To judge what Teuvo will be worth next summer, let's assume that he produces similarly to this past season. There is no better player comparison than the Winnipeg Jets' Nikolaj Ehlers. While Ehlers is a target man compared to Teuvo's natural playmaking role, Ehlers put up very similar numbers as Teuvo, played most of his club's games, and even did it all on his entry-level contract (ELC), whereas Teravainen took a couple of years to get his production up.

[Ehlers earned a seven-year, \\$42 million contract extension](#) last October as he entered the final year of his ELC. If Teravainen forgoes the right to arbitration and wants to get an extension done this summer, I predict Ehlers' term of seven years and average annual value (AAV) of \$6 million

will be a reference point. Anything greater than six years would put him in his 30s when he becomes a UFA, so maybe he would prefer a deal with less term but higher AAV. All in all, I think Ehlers' contract terms will be the beginning of that conversation.

Payday for Sea-Bass

Sebastian Aho has proven to be one of the most exciting players in the league but he does it very quietly. He hasn't been in the conversation of the most skilled young forwards but 'Canes fans and management know what they have in the Finnish phenom, and he's still only 20-years-old.

Drafted 35th overall in 2015 to a mixed reception, Aho has impressed since then, scoring at a point-per-game clip in both the regular season and playoffs with Karpat in the generally low-scoring Finnish Liiga and scoring 53 goals and 114 points in 160 NHL games with the Hurricanes. Aho measures up nicely to other players in a stacked 2015 draft class that includes Mitch Marner, Mikko Rantanen, Jack Eichel, and Travis Konecny. Sure, he's not on the same plane as McDavid and Barzal (also 2015 draftees) but few are.

As a continually improving player, who [can play center](#) and who has the ability to carry a line, the measuring stick for Aho's next contract is likely going to be the Edmonton Oilers' centre Leon Draisaitl. After an average rookie season, Draisaitl has taken the league by storm, posting over 50 points in his second season and reaching the 70-point plateau in the final year of his ELC.

Last summer, Draisaitl received an eight-year, \$68 million contract at an \$8.5 million AAV. This was largely exacerbated by his unbelievable playoff performance in 2017 where he outplayed McDavid, but he would have earned a fairly similar contract anyway considering his monster regular season.

Is Aho going to get the same deal as Draisaitl? Unlikely. However, Aho was close to the 70-point mark in 2017-18 and he could very well hit it this season or do better. It also depends on if the 'Canes finally make the playoffs this season and what kind of role he plays in accomplishing that, but I think the sky's the limit for Aho.

My current projection, assuming he collects 70 points or more and the 'Canes see a Game 83, is an eight-year, \$60 million contract at a \$7.5 million AAV. We know that the 'Canes aren't an overly wealthy organization, so moves will likely need to be made if they want to keep both Aho and Teravainen in Raleigh.

I could see Teravainen signing a deal this summer, but I assume that Aho will wait until next year to sign anything because it appears that his ceiling is even higher. The good



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news for the 'Canes is that both of these talented youngsters will be RFAs, and the worst case scenario is that they must trade one or both if negotiations go south but neither will

walk away for nothing. You're on deck, Waddell. Get 'er done.

Will Hurricanes' Moves Move Them Up Enough?

By [Mark Shiver](#) July 9th, 2018

The Carolina Hurricanes finished a busy week by [re-signing defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk](#). They have arguably been more active in the past couple of weeks than they have in recent memory. The question now that the dust is almost completely settled is, "Will the Hurricanes' moves move them up enough in the Metropolitan Division to make them a serious playoff contender?"

If not, do they have enough to make the playoffs as an Eastern Conference wild-card participant? [They had 83 points last season](#). The Columbus Blue Jackets and New Jersey Devils made it into the playoffs as wild cards with 97 points each. The Philadelphia Flyers made it in as the third-place team in the Metropolitan Division with 98 points. The Hurricanes have to set their sights on at least 95-100 points. Is that realistic?

Close or not, the fans of the Hurricanes are beyond ready for their team to bring some playoff hockey back to Raleigh, NC. After all, this team has drunk from the same Stanley Cup trophy that [Alex Ovechkin is carrying around the world](#). "Caniacs" want the Cup, or at least a chance to play for it in the postseason. Will the moves the front office has made get them close to 100 points and the playoffs?

The Defense Should Be Stout

For all the talk about the potential of the young blueliners on the Hurricanes' squad, [a new reality set in over the past couple of weeks](#). This good defense improved a great deal—on paper at least. Of course, we will have to see how it plays out, but adding Dougie Hamilton and [Calvin de Haan did a lot to bolster this 'D.'](#)

Hamilton brings a scoring threat which the Hurricanes absolutely need, and the plus/minus stats for de Haan show that he is a disciplined defenseman, bringing an upgrade of quality to the corps. Losing Noah Hanifin will carry with it a bit of the requisite pain that goes anytime an All-Star leaves a team, but his youth mitigates that a bit as he still has a way to go in his development.

What to Do With a Three-Time All-Star?

This all brings Justin Faulk into the spotlight only because he has been the subject of so much speculation regarding his possibly being traded. He is one of now four right-handed defensemen of the seven that the Hurricanes have under contract. The wisdom of signing van Riemsdyk is a topic for another day. Suffice it to say that he is very likely to be a part of the third pairing with Haydn Fleury and [comes a lot cheaper than Faulk](#). His \$4.6 million over two years is less than Faulk's \$4.833 million for one year.

Candidly, Faulk will command more in return than van Riemsdyk would in a trade situation. As a three-time All-Star

and current team co-captain, he has an aura of success as a veteran even though the team has disappointed. It's not his fault that the Hurricanes have continuously missed the playoffs. He has proven that he can score, particularly on the power play and will make superb trade bait in the right situation.

[Franklin Steele wrote at the Bleacher Report last week](#), "While the Fourth Period's David Pagnotta says a deal isn't imminent, Justin Faulk should be an intriguing piece for a lot of teams around the league. While he's not the kind of player the Hurricanes want to build around apparently, he's a capable puck mover who has notched at least 30 points in each of the past five seasons."

General manager Don Waddell has made some very positive moves to this point. He knows Faulk's value and hopefully will be able to extract equivalent value from whatever team he winds up partnering with on a trade. A nice return would be getting a proven goal scorer for up top and whatever else Waddell can put together. With the team having made a commitment at least for one year to Petr Mrazek, getting a consistent goaltender is not likely on Waddell's radar.

Offense Could Actually Be Productive

Even though getting a proven veteran, consistent goal-scorer for Faulk would be a positive for the Hurricanes, the offense as it stands looks like it might actually have some potential. As noted previously, Hamilton can find the net as a defenseman. Micheal Ferland, traded to the Hurricanes with Hamilton, is also trending up as a scorer.

The New Young Guns

If you've read my coverage of the Hurricanes over the past four years, you know I have referred to their talented group as "the young guns." Here is what [I had to say about the group in November 2015](#): "Noah Hanifin at age 18 is already living up to the pre-draft hype and proving he belongs in the NHL. 24-year old Andrej Nestrasil is reliable. Last year's darling Elias Lindholm is in a scoring drought this season, but is still just 21-years old, and has a seemingly unlimited upside. Defenseman Justin Faulk at 23 is already causing the league to take notice."

My account of the "young guns" went on: "Mix in Phillip Di Giuseppe, Michal Jordan, Joakim Nordstrom, Victor Rask, Jaccob Slavin and the proven-stellar Jeff Skinner and the stable of "young guns" is definitely full in Carolina. Ten players age 25 and younger who are all growing quickly as legitimate NHL players mean a bright future for this team."

Hanifin, Lindholm, Nestrasil, Jordan, and Nordstrom are gone from the team leaving a group of what were youngsters now older and more experienced. There are some new "young guns" on board, and they are what is lighting the fuse of excitement around the Hurricanes. Sebastian Aho will turn



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21 in a couple of weeks. Fleury turned 22 today. Brock McGinn is 24, Martin Necas is 19, and this year's number 2 overall pick in the NHL Entry Draft, Andrei Svechnikov is 18.

Teuvo Teravainen is 24 and Valentin Zykov is 22. Brett Pesce is 23 and Hamilton just turned 25 last month.

The Hurricanes are the youngest team in the NHL, and they are full of talent. This team is even more worthy of the gloss "young guns" than the 2015 version. The reason is that they represent a ton of potential for scoring if they live up to the talent that each of them brings to the ice. Aho is scary good. He and Teravainen could have monster seasons. Even Skinner, the subject of constant trade speculation this offseason could blow up and score 40 goals for the Hurricanes, should he stay.

Head coach Rod Brind'Amour has a lot of "good problems" on his plate, namely who to play with who. [Chip Alexander of the Raleigh News & Observer wrote last week:](#)

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

If Brind'Amour can keep this group from the team lethargy of "not starting on time" that plagued the administration of

former head coach Bill Peters, and if they play to their talent capabilities, the Hurricanes' scoring potential is amazing. For the first time in a long time, this team has the realistic chance, maybe even the expectation to put points on the scoreboard, and hopefully, that will translate into points in the standings.

And Then There's the Goaltending

The big question mark for the Hurricanes is in between the pipes. It is well-documented that last season was one that Scott Darling, brought in to be the starter for team icon Cam Ward, would rather forget. If it is forgotten, then Darling gets a clean slate and an opportunity to redeem himself with the Hurricanes, to prove he is a starting goaltender in the NHL.

If it is not to be Darling, then perhaps the newly acquired [Petr Mrazek can provide some magic in goal](#) for the 'Canes. He has shown signs of brilliance as well as bad play. Can he and Darling be consistently reliable? If the answer is "yes," then pencil the Hurricanes in for one of the Eastern Conference playoff spots. If not, then ink in another frustrating summer for the fans of this playoff-hungry franchise.

The goal of 95-100 points is attainable, but it will take peak performance night in and night out. The moves that Waddell and the team have made might just be enough.



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Steve Smith Resigns from Hurricanes Assistant Coaching Position

The assistant coach had been a part of the Hurricanes staff for four seasons.

By [Brett Finger@brettfinger](mailto:Brett.Finger@brettfinger) Jul 9, 2018, 3:17pm EDT

The [Carolina Hurricanes](#) announced on Monday afternoon that assistant coach Steve Smith, who has in charge of coaching defense and penalty killing, has resigned from his position with the team.

Smith was hired as an assistant coach shortly after Bill Peters was hired as head coach in the summer of 2014. Smith was part of the [Edmonton Oilers](#) coaching staff for four seasons before joining the Hurricanes. The team will begin the search for his replacement immediately.

The [official press release](#) from the Hurricanes is below:

RALEIGH, NC – Don Waddell, President and General Manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, today announced that Steve Smith has resigned his position as assistant coach. The team will immediately begin its search for a new assistant coach.

Smith, 55, spent four seasons with the Hurricanes as an assistant coach and was responsible for the team's defensemen and penalty kill. In his four seasons as assistant coach, the Hurricanes compiled a [137-138-53](#) record.



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Carolina Hurricanes' Steve Smith resigns as assistant coach

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes say Steve Smith has resigned as assistant coach.

The team announced Smith's resignation Monday. The 55-year-old Smith had spent four seasons with the Hurricanes as an assistant coach under Bill Peters, who resigned after

the season to become Calgary's head coach. Smith was responsible for the team's defensemen and penalty kill.

Former Hurricanes captain Rod Brind'Amour replaced Peters as head coach.



Offseason Weekly Report: July 9, 2018

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: July 09, 2018

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

NEWS

Canes Sign Dan Renouf: After two seasons (and a Calder Cup) with the Grand Rapids Griffins, defenseman Dan Renouf has joined the Carolina organization by inking a one-year, two-way deal with the Canes. Renouf hasn't put up the gaudy offensive numbers that some other Charlotte blue liners have, but has size (he's listed at 6-foot-2) and toughness (183 penalty minutes in 146 AHL games, ranked first or second on the Griffins in his two pro seasons). Given the nature of his contract, it's likely Renouf at least starts the season in Charlotte, where he'll likely take up more of a physical, stay-at-home role on the Checkers' blue line.

Checkers Bring Back Stortini: Zack Stortini is returning to the fold next season after signing a new one-year deal with the Checkers. The 32-year-old forward only appeared in 23 games last season but ranked third on the team in penalty minutes, filling his role as a tough enforcer on the ice. But that wasn't the only way he made an impact. Stortini was heralded for his leadership throughout the season, helping to guide the younger prospects through the pro game. With a new crop of young talent heading to Charlotte next season,

it's never a bad idea to have someone like Stortini around.

Checkers Win AHL Community Service Award: After raising \$383,415 in total donations this season, the highest mark in franchise history, the Checkers were given the AHL's Eastern Conference Excellence in Community Service Award. That's the fourth time (2011, 2014, 2015, 2018) in eight seasons that the Checkers have earned the award. Thanks to all the fans and partners who have helped keep the dynasty alive.

Prospect Spotlight: Callum Booth

Callum Booth spent his first pro season as the number two netminder in Florida, but impressed when called upon. The 21-year-old won 19 games for the Everblades and ranked second among ECHL rookies with a 2.41 goals-against average, all while helping guide Florida to a conference title. Booth, a fourth-round pick by Carolina in 2015 who turned in a stellar junior career in the QMJHL, got a taste of the next level as well by appearing in four games for the Checkers. The netminder held his own during his stint, going 2-1-0 while logging a 1.60 goals-against average.

As it stands now, Booth looks to be slated to make the full-time jump to the AHL next season, likely starring in a tandem with Alex Nedeljkovic. That could change, however, as the competition in the crease across the organization will likely heat up come training camp.

Whatever Happened To: Jon Matsumoto

Ontario-born forward Jon Matsumoto only spent a season and a half with the Checkers, but he made his time count.



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Matsumoto logged 82 points in 106 games for Charlotte, landing him 19th on the franchise's all-time scoring list, though his 0.77 points-per-game average is the fifth-highest among all skaters ahead of him.

Matsumoto, who was selected to the 2012 AHL All-Star Game after a strong first half with Charlotte, was dealt to Florida midway through the 2011-12 campaign, finishing up the season with the San Antonio Rampage while appearing in one NHL game for the Panthers. He would land a deal with San Jose the following year, ranking third on the team in scoring, before returning to Florida as a free agent ahead of the 2013-14 campaign. He would only log 29 games during his second stint with San Antonio, however, and made the jump overseas for the 2014-15 season.

Matsumoto joined the Schwenningen Wild Wings for the first

of what would be a run of solid seasons in Germany's top league. The then-27-year-old ranked second on the team in goals that season, then followed it up by leading the Augsburg Panthers in scoring a year later. Matsumoto then signed on with Munich, where he captured back-to-back championships in 2016 and 2017.

Now 31, Matsumoto inked a deal with the Iserlohn Roosters for the upcoming DEL season.

Number of the Week: 3

A Checkers player has been awarded a penalty shot 14 times in franchise history, but only three players have scored. If you know the three players, tweet them at us with #IknowTheAnswerToTheCharlotteCheckersOffseasonWeeklyReportTriviaQuestion.

Checkers Sign Goalie Jamie Phillips To AHL Deal

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: July 09, 2018

The Checkers added another goalie to the mix this offseason by signing Jamie Phillips to an AHL deal.

The 25-year-old netminder split last season between the AHL and ECHL, logging 16 appearances with both the Manitoba Moose and the Jacksonville Icemen. With the Moose, Phillips went 6-7-0 with a 2.76 goals-against average and a .912 save percentage. He also appeared in one playoff game for the Moose, stopping all 15 shots he saw in relief.

Taken in the seventh round of the 2012 draft by Winnipeg, Phillips is heading into his third pro season. Thus far in his career he has gone 8-11-1 with a goals-against average of 2.84 and a save percentage of .910 through 27 AHL games with Manitoba, while posting a 22-21-0, 2.87 and .906 line in 47 ECHL games with Tulsa and Jacksonville.

Prior to turning pro Phillips played for four seasons at Michigan Tech, making the conference's First All-Star Team in 2014-15 and the second team in 2015-16.



2018 first-round draft pick tracker

Status of 31 players chosen in opening round in Dallas

NHL.com [@NHL](#)

July 9th, 2018

The 31 players picked in the first round of the 2018 NHL Draft have NHL hopes. Some have gotten a start toward their goal by signing their three-year entry-level contract.

The first three players picked at the draft, Buffalo Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, Carolina Hurricanes forward Andrei Svechnikov and Montreal Canadiens center Jesperi

Kotkaniemi have signed, and more could as we get closer to the start of the 2018-19 season.

Here is a look at which players have signed and the status of the others:

1. Rasmus Dahlin, D, Buffalo Sabres ([signed](#))

Expected to be in Sabres opening-night lineup

2. Andrei Svechnikov, RW, Carolina Hurricanes ([signed](#))

Could start season as top-six forward.

3. Jesperi Kotkaniemi, C, Montreal Canadiens ([signed](#))



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Will compete for a roster spot during training camp but could start the season in the American Hockey League or return to his native Finland.

4. Brady Tkachuk, LW, Ottawa Senators (unsigned)

Tkachuk said during Senators development camp that [he was unsure if he would sign or return to Boston University](#) for his sophomore season. "I have plenty of time this summer (to decide)," he said. "I'm going to see how development camp goes, just enjoy it, soak it all in, soak in the information, discuss it with [the Senators], my family, my adviser. I don't think there's pressure on me to make a decision quick. I'm going to take my time and soak it all in."

5. Barrett Hayton, C, Arizona Coyotes (signed)

Will compete for a spot during training camp but also could be returned to Sault Ste. Marie of the Ontario Hockey League.

6. Filip Zadina, RW, Detroit Red Wings (signed)

Will compete for a roster spot but could play for Grand Rapids in the AHL or return to Halifax of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

7. Quintin Hughes, D, Vancouver Canucks (unsigned)

Can sign and start his professional career or return to the University of Michigan for his sophomore season.

8. Adam Boqvist, D, Chicago Blackhawks (signed)

Likely will play for London of the Ontario Hockey League this season.

9. Vitali Kravtsov, RW, New York Rangers (unsigned)

Expected to spend at least one more season with Traktor Chelyabinsk in the Kontinental Hockey League.

10. Evan Bouchard, D, Edmonton Oilers (unsigned)

Will compete for spot in training camp or return for one more season with London of the OHL.

11. Oliver Wahlstrom, RW, New York Islanders (unsigned)

Expected to play at least one season at Boston College.

12. Noah Dobson, D, New York Islanders (unsigned)

Will compete for roster spot or return for one more season with Acadie-Bathurst of the QMJHL.

13. Ty Dellandrea, C, Dallas Stars (unsigned)

Expected to play at least one more season with Flint of the OHL.

14. Joel Farabee, LW, Philadelphia Flyers (unsigned)

Will play at least one season at Boston University.

15. Grigori Denisenko, LW, Florida Panthers (unsigned)

Could compete for roster spot or play with Lokomotiv Yaroslavl in the KHL.

16. Martin Kaut, RW, Colorado Avalanche (signed)

Will compete for a roster spot in training camp or play for Colorado in the AHL.

17. Ty Smith, D, New Jersey Devils (unsigned)

Likely to play at least one more season with Spokane in the Western Hockey League.

18. Liam Foudy, C, Columbus Blue Jackets (unsigned)

Likely to play at least one more season with London in the OHL.

19. Jay O'Brien, C, Philadelphia Flyers (unsigned)

Will play at least one season at Providence College.

20. Rasmus Kupari, C, Los Angeles Kings (unsigned)

Likely to play at least one more season with Karpat in Liiga, the top professional league in Finland.

21. Ryan Merkley, D, San Jose Sharks (unsigned)

Expected to play at least one more season with Guelph in the OHL.

22. K'Andre Miller, D, New York Rangers (unsigned)

Will play this season at the University of Wisconsin.

23. Isac Lundestrom, C, Anaheim Ducks (unsigned)

Could compete for roster spot at training camp, but likely will play at least one more season with Lulea in the Swedish Hockey League.

24. Filip Johansson, D, Minnesota Wild (unsigned)

Expected to play at least one more season with Leksand in Allsvenskan, Sweden's No. 2 professional league.

25. Dominik Bokk, RW, St. Louis Blues (unsigned)

Expected to play at least one more season with Vaxjo in the SHL.

26. Jacob Bernard-Docker, D, Ottawa Senators (unsigned)

Will play this season at the University of North Dakota.

27. Nicolas Beaudin, D, Chicago Blackhawks (unsigned)

Expected to play with Drummondville of the QMJHL this season.

28. Nils Lundkvist, D, New York Rangers (unsigned)

Expected to play at least one more season with Lulea in the SHL.

29. Rasmus Sandin, D, Toronto Maple Leafs (unsigned)

Expected to play for Sault Ste. Marie in the OHL or Rogle in the SHL this season.

30. Joseph Veleno, C, Detroit Red Wings (unsigned)

Expected to play for Drummondville in the QMJHL this season.

31. Alexander Alexeyev, D, Washington Capitals (unsigned)



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Expected to play for Red Deer in the WHL this season.

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SportScan

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

1101709 Carolina Hurricanes

News Observer LOADED: 07.10.2018

Canes assistant coach Steve Smith resigns

1101710 Carolina Hurricanes

By Chip Alexander

Canes' changes will include more locker-room area space

July 09, 2018 03:12 PM

Updated 10 hours 40 minutes ago

By Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes assistant coach Steve Smith has resigned his position, the team announced Monday.

The race is on at PNC Arena.

Smith, 55, spent four seasons with the Hurricanes as an assistant coach and was responsible for the team's defensemen and penalty kill.

The Carolina Hurricanes will have a different look to their locker-room area in September, with the weight room and exercise area expanded with the removal of walls and the coaches' offices moved to a new location.

Canes general manager Don Waddell called the parting amicable, saying, "He talked to us and said he had been here four years and was looking at other things."

Construction began Monday. The plan: have the project completed in 12 weeks.

Waddell said Smith had one year remaining on his contract.

"The goal is to have it done before the players report back for (training) camp," said Jeff Merritt, executive director of the Centennial Authority, the arena landlord.

A coaching search will begin immediately, the team said. Jeff Daniels recently was named to the Canes staff.

"I'm not a construction guy but I'm hopeful they won't find any surprises and slow it down ... but construction projects are always full of something that you don't know."

Smith was hired by former head coach Bill Peters, who resigned after the 2017-18 season and is head coach of the Calgary Flames. In his four seasons as assistant coach, the Hurricanes compiled a 137-138-53 record.

The authority approved expenditures of up to \$300,000 for the project, Merritt said. And it was an expedited project — something the Hurricanes, team owner Tom Dundon, general manager Don Waddell and coach Rod Brind'Amour wanted.

Smith took part in the Canes' recent prospect development camp under new head coach Rod Brind'Amour.



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Waddell, the Canes president and general manager, approached the authority on June 6 with the request, Merritt said. A special meeting of the authority board was called July 3 and the project funding approved.

"They understood it was a last-minute, out-of-protocol kind of thing," Merritt said. "I think given that there's a new ownership here that's eager to do big, bold things, I think the board was willing to make some exceptions to our normal process. ... It was a fast turnaround."

The Hurricanes had asked that a new scoreboard, 3D projection system and theatrical lighting be in place for the 2018-19 season. The authority approved funding for the 3D system and lighting, but installation of a scoreboard was pushed back to the 2019-20 season because of structural changes that must first be made.

The Hurricanes typically begin preseason training camp in mid-September. The plan is for the project to be completed by Sept 11.

The Canes' weight room is fairly small by most major-league standards and a separate exercise room with stationary bikes is cramped and not well-lit.

"We're looking forward to it," Waddell said. "It's going to make the room, by removing those walls, feel a lot bigger."

News Observer LOADED: 07.10.2018

1101711 Carolina Hurricanes

Scott Darling's comeback summer, Carolina Hurricanes, July 9, 2018

By Julia Wall

One of several tattoos on Scott Darling's right forearm is of a phoenix, that mythical creature that rose from the ashes. The same image is on his goalie mask, a reminder of his unlikely climb from castaway at the lowest level of pro hockey to Stanley Cup champion.

He arrives at The Performance Academy in Raleigh on a steamy Monday in July at the beginning of a different ascent, trying to work his way back from one of the worst seasons by a goalie in the NHL's modern era and into the good graces of the Carolina Hurricanes.

There's not much on the line: Just his career. And the Hurricanes' nine-year playoff drought.

Bill Burniston, the Hurricanes' strength and conditioning coach, is waiting for Darling, who arrives wearing USA Hockey shorts from his recent stint with the national team at the world championships. A few other athletes are working out, teenaged baseball and hockey players, but it's a holiday week and the cavernous gym is mostly empty. Burniston puts down his coffee and warms up with Darling by playing catch. This isn't part of the program, but Darling has a new baseball glove he's trying to break in.

Soon, he's on the indoor turf field surrounded by four LED lights on stands, set up in a square about 20 feet on a side. Darling has to dance between them, responding as they turn on and off, constantly shuffling and changing direction. Cam Ward, who arrived at the gym shortly after Darling, a day after signing as a free agent to fill Darling's old job as a backup for the Chicago Blackhawks, joins him for some of it.

"A good ankle-breaker," Darling says.

"If I wanted to break your ankles, I'd do other things," Burniston says.

"I'm getting turf burn, I'm moving so fast."

"Your feet are smoking."

It's the kind of offseason workout NHL players all over the world are doing to get ready for the season, and it's what Darling apparently wasn't doing last summer when he signed a four-year, \$16.6 million contract, came in out of shape, struggled in net and became the single most critical factor why the Hurricanes missed the playoffs yet again (although there were several).

"If Darling has just an average season, and I think he's going to have one better than that, we will be a playoff team," former owner Peter Karmanos said before the season. Darling did not — and the Hurricanes were not.

The Hurricanes never won more than four games in a row. Of their five winning streaks of three or four games, four ended with a switch from Ward to Darling in net. He was the ultimate cooler, the guy you hope never sits down at your blackjack table.

His general manager got fired and his coach left before he could get fired. The Hurricanes' new management team did have one opportunity to trade Darling's contract this summer but decided his history as a backup with the Blackhawks offered enough reason to gamble that Darling, properly supported and motivated and still only 29, could recapture his previous form.

Wherever Darling is headed, and nobody knows how any of this will work out, this is where it begins. Four weeks in, Darling has lost at least 15 pounds and looks leaner and more defined, even if his red beard remains just as bushy. The Hurricanes are more concerned about his body fat than his raw weight, and don't want to track either closely at this early point in the process, but it's safe to say he's closer to his roster weight of 232 pounds than he was when last season started or ended. There is a long way still to go.

Head strength and conditioning coach for the Carolina Hurricanes, Bill Burniston, coaches goalie Scott Darling through an intense workout at The Performance Academy on Monday July 2, 2018.

All of which leads to one very obvious question with no obvious answer: Why wasn't he doing this last year?

"I'm not really sure," Darling said. "It was a weird summer for me, in my personal life. I'd grown comfortable in Chicago. I'm from Chicago. That was the longest I'd played for a team, three years. Of all the professional teams I've played for, that was the longest I'd played anywhere. I had a life there. I had a house there. It was a big move for me personally. I think I just let my foot off the gas and figured it would just work out as is. I learned pretty quickly you can't do that at this level."

Sweating in the spotlight

In Darling's first public appearance after the Hurricanes traded a third-round pick to get him from the Blackhawks last summer, he met with the local media in the center of the Hurricanes' locker room, the usual Triangle gaggle of four or five television cameras and a dozen or so people. At 6-foot-6, he stood high above the fray.

The sweat started as a trickle, a drop off the tip of his nose. Midway through the interview, he was sweating so badly a Hurricanes' media-relations staffer had to bring him a towel to wipe his face. It was a full-on, Albert Brooks in "Broadcast News," soaked-shirt episode. This was unusual enough to raise a few eyebrows: "I have never seen that before," WTVD sports anchor Joe Mazur, in attendance that day, said later.

All the same, it fit with Darling's story. Here was a guy whose acknowledged social anxiety was so crippling that he nearly drank himself out of the sport at one point as he self-medicated with alcohol, getting thrown out of college, going unsigned by the team that drafted him, tumbling down the ladder until he finally wrestled with all of it. He hit bottom, got help and became the first player to rise from the lowest level of professional hockey — the SPHL, the southern bus league known for fisticuffs and cheap beer — to the NHL.

Put Darling in front of a bunch of television cameras and he's so uncomfortable his body starts to rebel. Put him on the ice, alone in his



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mask and gear, anonymous behind that armor against the world, and he can play at an elite level.

That's how he rebuilt his career, from the SPHL to the ECHL to the AHL to the Nashville Predators to the Blackhawks, where he was a critical piece of their 2015 championship team, stepping in unexpectedly to win three playoff games on the way to the Stanley Cup, posting spectacular numbers in limited action.

That was the Darling the Hurricanes thought they were getting from the Blackhawks, the understudy ready for the big time, the one then-general manager Ron Francis signed to that gargantuan contract, the ultimate gesture of blind faith in a goalie who had never played more than 40 games in a season. Instead, they got something they were never expecting.

"He came last year to camp, he was out of shape," current Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said. "He never got in shape all year."

It was hard to tell just how unfit Darling was when he arrived at training camp. His weight and body fat certainly didn't appear to meet NHL standards, but the Hurricanes didn't know him well enough then to know just how far below standards they were. There's an element of trust with any new player that he'll show up in prime condition, to make a good first impression if nothing else. Last September, that was all they had to go on.

"It looked like his weight was up. It looked like his body comp (fat) was up," Burniston said. "Those are some things that we saw at first. From his testing, his testing numbers, they didn't really send up too many red flags for us. It's very difficult when a player comes in, a new player. You have to develop a rapport with them. It's hard, because you don't know what his peak was. You suspect it's not where we want it."

Darling was OK – not outstanding, but certainly passable – for the first two months of the season, before things turned sour. It's hard to pinpoint exactly when, but Nov. 22 might have been it. A harmless flip from center ice by New York Rangers forward Mika Zibanejad somehow eluded Darling's mitt and ended up in the net and on blooper reels forever. It was the Rangers' second goal in the opening 150 seconds. Darling would go on to allow four more goals in a 6-1 loss, facing only 21 shots.

'Everything was going wrong'

Darling became a rotating selection of technical flaws. One game his glove was slow, the next he was too far out of his net, the next he was weak on his post. Darling was scrambling, overcompensating, lost. He compares it, now, to quicksand: The harder he fought, the more he sank.

"It just seemed like everything was going wrong when I got in the net," Darling said.

By the time then-coach Bill Peters mercilessly left him in for all eight goals of an 8-1 loss at the Toronto Maple Leafs just before Christmas, Darling was shot.

The Leafs' Patrick Marleau (12) puts the puck past the Canes' Scott Darling (33) and Jacob Slavin (74) for what proved to be the game winning goal during the third period of an NHL game played between the Carolina Hurricanes and the Toronto Maple Leafs at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C. on Nov. 24, 2017. The Leafs beat the Canes 5-4.

Physically, he might have been in good enough shape to play once a week as a backup, but he couldn't handle the load of being a night-in, night-out starter. (The Toronto game was the second half of a back-to-back; Darling had earned the start with a solid performance in a home win the night before.)

Mentally, he was in even worse shape.

What do you do when putting on that mask only makes things worse?

Where do you hide when your place of refuge becomes a personal hell?

Darling would go home, to an empty apartment, to stew. As alone as he may have been there, he dreaded returning to the rink, where nothing seemed to go right, where he felt like he was letting his teammates down.

"You're just waiting to go to the rink the next day, not excited about going to the rink, and it just snowballs," Darling said. "The months feel long. The season feels long. It's definitely not an ideal way to go through the season."

His teammates could see this. How could they not? There was nothing they could do to help, technically. Goalies are an island unto themselves anyway, huddled in the corner with their coach like devotees of some strange cult. But even as colleagues, as people, Darling's teammates felt powerless to intervene.

"The tough part is, we didn't really know him," Hurricanes forward Justin Williams said. "We didn't really know him coming into the year. We didn't know what was normal for him, what was odd. And really, in effect, how to help. If you don't know a guy, know his tendencies, what he's done to be successful to this point, it's tough to give advice."

The Hurricanes probably should have traded for a stopgap goalie from another team, a veteran minor-leaguer with NHL experience, to allow Darling a leave of absence to collect himself or even a few weeks in the AHL to rebuild his confidence. But they did not, nor did they think prospect Alex Nedeljkovic was ready for extended time in the NHL. So the Hurricanes instead did nothing, leaving Darling to marinate in his increasing despair.

The Canes' Scott Darling (33) reacts after bobbling a catch for the Rangers second goal during the first period of an NHL game played between the Carolina Hurricanes and the NY Rangers at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C. on Nov. 22, 2017. The Rangers beat the Hurricanes 6-1.

Ward, predictably, wore down under the increased workload after posting excellent numbers as a backup over the first three months. By January, in Darling's sporadic appearances, the team had started playing completely different in front of him: visibly scared and on the perpetual verge of panic. The Hurricanes' season fizzled. Darling finished with the worst save percentage of any qualifying goalie in the league, and based on several different advanced metrics, had one of the four worst seasons in the past decade by any goalie to appear in half of his team's games and one of the 11 worst in the past 30 years, per hockey-reference.com.

All of which raises another obvious question, given Darling's personal history: Darling says alcohol was not part of the problem last season, but he also won't address it specifically beyond that. "I'm not here to talk about that," he said. Waddell declined to comment.

'Time to buckle down'

A few things happened after the season came to its merciful conclusion. The Hurricanes pushed hard for USA Hockey to take Darling to the world championships, and he won a bronze medal in Denmark in a backup role. For the first time in a long time, hockey was fun again. The Hurricanes invited him to speak to their prospects at their development camp last month, an attempt to make him feel like more a part of the team.

Most important, Darling was unhappy enough with his performance last season that he was determined not to repeat it.

"I made the decision a while ago that it's time to buckle down and do everything I can possibly do to be the best goalie I can next season, and that's been my whole plan this summer," Darling said.

Waddell said the team has provided Darling access to counseling and other resources, but at a minimum, Darling is expected to arrive at training camp in peak condition, all of which is why and how he ended up in the gym with Burniston, not just Monday but several days each week of the steamy summer so far.

"I'm really thrilled. He's been great," Burniston said. "I didn't know what to expect, to be completely honest. This isn't easy, coming in early in the



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morning and working all day. I think he's seeing results and that's why he continues to come."

The Hurricanes, by the end of June, had seen enough from Darling in the early part of the offseason that they decided not to pursue a salary-dumping trade or \$8 million contract buyout. They also brought in former Detroit Red Wings starter Petr Mrazek as a free agent to compete for the starting job.

"When you looked at the free-agent list of goaltenders, they were all kind of the same at that point," Waddell said. "Darling would be the most talented guy in that group. But we needed a commitment from Scott. Anything he gets at this point he has to earn. He understands that."

Darling is in the second phase of his summer conditioning program. The first was basic stuff, building a foundation. Eventually, he'll move away from strength training and into more explosive workouts, and then onto the ice. For now, he's on a cycle that includes four days with Burniston – two days of upper body, one of lower body, one of general training – to go with one day each of Pilates and yoga.

Bill Burniston, head strength and conditioning coach for the Carolina Hurricanes, works with goalie Scott Darling during a workout at The Performance Academy at Raleigh Orthopedic on Monday July 2, 2018.

"Sunday is recovery, although I've had to get him to take Sunday off," Burniston says.

"Hey, I was in here on Sunday," Darling interjects, only hearing half the conversation.

"That's what I'm saying," Burniston says. "You're supposed to be off!"

This workout is upper-body focused and the plan includes core strengthening, sprinting, the reaction-time work with the LED lights and a lot of weightlifting, followed by some interval training on the turf and on a resistance bike. Later, after a series of bench presses and biceps work, Darling does 90-second high-intensity intervals where he lies on his back and has to lift his chest and legs together in various ways.

Ninety seconds of that is interminable. After Darling makes it through his final set, he falls back on the artificial turf, spread-eagled.

"That's the whole idea, right?" Burniston says. "I'm trying to push you to the edge."

Scott Darling, the goalie for the Carolina Hurricanes, trains at The Performance Academy at Raleigh Orthopedic on Monday July 2, 2018.

Darling has spent enough time on the edge. He needs to find a comfort zone here if he's going to be successful. These workouts are part of it, giving him the base of fitness he needs to play regularly in the NHL, and that's not something that can be done during the season. It has to be done now, in the summer, when there's time to focus on it.

That's not all. Darling bought a house in north Raleigh. His girlfriend has moved in with him, and they're getting a Great Dane puppy, his first dog of his own. He has a nutritionist to prepare menus and meals. He is doing the things he should have done last summer, but there's nothing he can do now about the past.

"It's all on him, right?" Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "What we all want to see is him put in the time, and that will give him the confidence that he put in the work so when he gets in net he's not worrying if he's in shape or done enough. It's not just him, that's anybody. But with him, obviously, guys are going to be on him."

There's no way to make amends – to the team, to his teammates, to the fans, to himself – for what happened last season. But he still may be able to do something about the future, and his path forward starts in this gym.

"There's not too much else I can do, to be honest," Darling said. "I've been working out really hard, trying to eat really healthy. It's more just mentally kind of letting last season go, not dwelling on the past and moving forward and being confident in myself."

The mythical phoenix would re-create itself from its own ashes, born anew each time. The myth doesn't specify how easy that was. Darling has already done it once, in circumstances perhaps more improbable than these. There is no room to fall short this time. Mrazek, in his own way, has as much to prove as Darling. The competition for playing time in net will be unfettered.

No one knows how this ends, not Darling, not anyone. All he can do is try to get better each day than he was the day before, in hopes a different kind of summer leads to a different kind of winter.

News Observer LOADED: 07.10.2018

1101751 Websites

The Athletic / Why Shannon Szabados chose the NWHL Beauts over the CWHL

By The Athletic Staff Jul 9, 2018

By Hannah Bevis

Shannon Szabados, a three-time Olympian and one of the best goaltenders in the world, made waves when she signed with the Buffalo Beauts. The signing was a surprise for a few different reasons. Szabados is well-known for playing in men's leagues, not women's; most recently, she played in the SPHL with the Columbus Cottonmouths and joined the Peoria Rivermen for two games before she was abruptly cut. The 2018-19 season will be the first time she suits up in a pro women's league.

The other surprise is that Szabados chose to play in the NWHL at all. Most of her Team Canada teammates play in the CWHL, which will go into its 12th season of existence this season. The two leagues have been co-existing for the past three seasons, though recently the hashtag #OneLeague has been shared on social media as players and fans hope the leagues will merge.

The majority of the U.S. national team moved as a group from the CWHL to the NWHL in 2015 when the newer league offered to pay its players a salary. For the first year or so, those lines stayed fairly evenly divided, with Canadians playing in the CWHL and the Americans staying in the NWHL. But they've become more and more blurred as time has gone on. The CWHL started paying its players a salary last season; though the contracts vary, for the most part, the salaries are approximately even in both leagues, ranging between \$2,000-10,000 a year.

We're now at a point where players are choosing to sign with a team based on a variety of factors, not solely because of what national squad they play for. USA superstar Hilary Knight signed with Les Canadiennes de Montreal after the Olympics and Canadians Sarah Edney and Jess Jones were two Canadians who jumped from the CWHL to the NWHL last year.

But Szabados' signing is historic specifically because she's the first active Canadian Olympian to sign in the NWHL. Don't read too much into it — though some might point to her signing as the NWHL proving its superiority over the CWHL — Szabados joining the Beauts is mostly motivated by location, which she made clear to reporters during a press conference call.

"It's kind of something I've been thinking about for a while here now. My boyfriend lives just southwest of Cleveland. ... Two years ago we kind of figured if we were going to do the whole Olympic thing, we'd probably move back there afterwards," Szabados said. "I had some conversations with Hockey Canada. You know, most of our players play in the CWHL, and I just had a chat with them saying 'Hey, this is where I'm going to be living, this makes the most sense for me' and they were behind me 100 percent. So the plan is to hopefully continue playing there."



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"That proximity and being able to travel back and forth and be in Buffalo when I need to be, and speaking with the organization and the staff and [hearing about] the direction that they're headed with the team was the other factor."

The Beauts were recently purchased by the Pegulas, one of two teams in the NWHL who have tangible ties to an NHL club. The Metropolitan Riveters partnered with the New Jersey Devils this year, though they're still technically owned by the NWHL. The Pegulas took things a step further, purchasing the Beauts last season as part of the #OneBuffalo campaign. Based on the way the summer has gone so far — the Beauts have nearly signed their whole roster and snagged significant free agents like Kelly Babstock and Dani Cameranesi — the purchase clearly caught players' attention.

"I think it's bringing a little bit of experience of the way NHL teams and NFL teams and how sports teams in the industry, lending a little bit of that professionalism to the Beauts. I think there was already a great, strong foundation, but upping, craving a little bit more stability, a sense of pride, that whole One Buffalo concept. ... I think it's totally been a game-changer," said Nik Fattey, the Beauts GM.

Fattey added that the Pegula purchase brings stability to the team, allowing players to practice at more consistent times instead of jumping around from rink to rink depending on what ice was available. He also mentioned that there's been more of an effort to brand the Sabres and the Beauts together.

A clear example of that is the timing of Szabados' signing. The Beauts waited until Sabres development camp to announce that she was joining the team, when the HarborCenter was already packed with local media covering the NHL team's prospects. It's a brilliant marketing tactic that ensured the maximum amount of media coverage.

It's that kind of partnership that will bring continued success to the NWHL and its stars, and it's clearly attracting top-end talent to Buffalo.

In fact, it's already caught the eye of another elite goaltender. Szabados' partner in net will be Nicole Hensley, who signed with the Beauts earlier in June. Hensley, also an Olympian, most recently won gold with Team USA in PyeongChang. She was in net during the gold medal game at the 2017 IIHF World Championships, shortly after Team USA fought (and won) for equitable treatment with USA Hockey.

The opposing netminder in that game? Szabados, who gave up an overtime goal to Knight that handed Team USA the gold.

The two goaltenders have a mutual friend and Szabados said there's a "certain level of familiarity" between the two already. Though they haven't discussed playing time with the coaches yet, she didn't seem worried about it, mentioning that she expected Hensley to still get reps in with Team USA during international events.

"I think every team in the league is going to have great goaltending, so no matter where you go, you're going to be in for a battle," Szabados said. "I would assume if you have two goalies of international caliber, you're going to want to play both of them."

Indeed. It may still be the middle of summer, but you'll be hard-pressed to find a team that can best the Beauts this season. It's not a stretch to think that the Isobel Cup might make its way back to Buffalo next spring.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.10.2018

1101752 Websites

The Athletic / Blue Jackets should move on from Artemi Panarin sooner rather than later

By Tom Reed Jul 9, 2018

Artemi Panarin is the most dynamic forward to ever play for the Blue Jackets. And, they shouldn't allow him to skate another shift for the franchise.

Not in the regular season. Not in exhibition games. Not in training camp.

Unless the Russian winger has a sudden change of heart and agrees to sign an extension, Blue Jackets general manager Jarmo Kekalainen should trade the unrestricted free agent sooner rather than later. The organization needs to spend the next eight weeks looking to make the best deal possible even if the centerpieces are a high-end prospect (here's looking at you, Florida center Henrik Borgstrom) and a top-six forward.

Any Blue Jackets fan thinking Panarin's long-term desire to play elsewhere was media speculation received a jolt Sunday with comments from his agent, Daniel Milstein.

"We're not holding out for more money, because if I called Jarmo right now, he'd probably drive up to my house and we'd put a deal together," Milstein told The Athletic's Aaron Portzline. "(Panarin's) biggest thing is ... he loves the team, he loves the coach. It's not the team or the way they treat him. It's about, does he want to spend the next eight years in Columbus? That's the only thing at stake right now. If it was a two-year deal we probably would have done it. But it isn't a two-year deal. It's gonna have to be an extended, seven- or eight-year deal put in place."

These words didn't come from a "source." They came directly from Panarin's agent, who could have easily declined public comment until after Kekalainen had an opportunity to meet with the player in Europe later this month.

Panarin enjoyed his first season with the Blue Jackets, registering a team-record 82 points, and would no doubt supply maximum effort in a contract year should the franchise keep him on the roster. But a week after the Islanders lost John Tavares for nothing, Milstein was clear about the gamble the Blue Jackets would be taking by letting him play out the season in Columbus.

"(Panarin) basically said, 'That's OK. I just don't want to (mess with) the team. If I decide not to stay, no one would ever blame me and say I played games (with them) and walked for nothing at the 11th hour,'" Milstein said. "So if they can get something ... (But), if they decide to keep me, they should know the risks associated with that. There's never been a disagreement or an argument. We've been truthful and honest. I told (Panarin) of the risk, but he said it was a good time to let the team know so that they can plan ahead. We told them before the draft."

Panarin, Milstein and the Blue Jackets have been exemplary in dealing with a delicate and emotional situation. Panarin's camp has said "as of now" they're unwilling to negotiate a new contract with the Blue Jackets, leaving the door ajar in case circumstances somehow change.

But there's not much reading between the lines needed. Panarin sees his future elsewhere. Blue Jackets fans might not like it, but their best player has earned the right to exercise his options. He's not gaming the system. He's not breaking a contract even as he puts Kekalainen in a difficult spot. The general manager also is dealing with the uncertain future of two-time Vezina Trophy winner Sergei Bobrovsky, another unrestricted free agent.

And, oh, by the way, Kekalainen, assistant GM Bill Zito, president of hockey operations John Davidson and coach John Tortorella are all entering the final year of their deals. No pressure here, boys.

Blue Jackets management and Bobrovsky's camp are at least having "dialogue," according to Kekalainen. Once a Panarin trade is made, the club would have additional money, if required, to complete a pricy extension for Bobrovsky should the two sides pursue it.

We'll get back to the goaltending situation in a minute. Let's address the Panarin scenarios first.



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The Blue Jackets could retain him until at least the trade deadline. He could repeat or improve on his performance from a season ago and decide Columbus truly is the best place for his future.

As it stands, the thought of Panarin re-signing with the Blue Jackets seems almost as remote as the Blue Jackets retiring Adam Foote's number.

Could an outstanding start to the season increase Panarin's trade value? Sure. But imagine the fan backlash of moving the winger with the club in playoff position. The only way keeping him until the trade deadline makes sense is if the team slips out of the playoff race. The Blue Jackets certainly aren't going into the season thinking that will happen with Panarin on the roster.

Let's also remember contenders at the deadline aren't in the habit of parting with top-six forwards and high-end prospects on the cusp of playing in the NHL. The currency of choice is first-round picks who are taken in the second and third hours of the draft.

Just starting the season with Panarin on the roster brings risk. While he's popular with teammates, his uncertain future would create a natural distraction. This wouldn't be a longtime Blue Jacket like Cam Atkinson entering last year's campaign without an extension. This would be a budding superstar with little history in Columbus and an agent who's on record as all but saying his client wants to play in another market.

There's also the matter of Tom Wilson potentially shearing Panarin's ACL from his knee prior to the trade deadline, preventing the Blue Jackets from recovering anything in return.

The best move would be for Kekalainen to get a definitive list of teams where Panarin would agree to sign long term, thus maximizing his trade value. From there, it's a matter of sparking a bidding war. The Panthers, rumored to be a desirable location, would make a fine trading partner. They are flush with good forwards, and the 20-year-old Borgstrom, who tallied 23 goals and 29 assists last season at the University of Denver before making his NHL debut, would be an excellent addition.

The Blue Jackets aren't making a deep run in the Eastern Conference playoffs until they upgrade at center. Not with Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin in Pittsburgh. Not with Evgeny Kuznetsov and Nicklas Backstrom in Washington. Not with Tavares and Auston Matthews in Toronto.

A high-end center prospect, one like Borgstrom, would accelerate the process for the Blue Jackets and give kids like Liam Foudy time to develop.

Having to trade Panarin represents a serious blow, but getting a decent return for him this summer allows the Jackets to put the loss behind them and focus on the future. That brings us back to Bobrovsky, who will command a major payday.

Some believe a goalie in his ninth season — one still searching for his first playoff-round win — isn't worth such a substantial, long-term investment. The line of thinking is not without merit. Then again, it wasn't long ago some had similar doubts about Braden Holtby, who hadn't made it out of the second round until last month. But the Capitals' ability to elevate their play, even after losing Justin Williams, Marcus Johansson and Kevin Shattenkirk last summer, helped Holtby bolster his game en route to a Stanley Cup title.

Nobody is predicting that for the Blue Jackets this season. They might need to take a step back to go forward. That's likely going to start with trading their most dynamic player.

Right now, the market for Panarin is unknown and Kekalainen doesn't need to agree to just any offer. But waiting for a perfect offer, one that might never materialize, comes with its own set of risks.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.10.2018

1101753 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Top 10 UFAs remaining: Latest rumours, reports

Luke Fox | July 9, 2018, 12:04 PM

National Hockey League general managers may need to dig deeper, and jobless players may need to lower their asking prices, but there are still a few gems — or at least some worthy gambles and depth additions — to be unearthed from 2018's UFAs.

The pickings are slim, youth is scarce, and the most proven free agent out there isn't even sure if he wants to keep playing pro hockey. Some of the names out there may have to settle for PTOs or retirement.

Nevertheless, we examine the latest buzz surrounding the top UFAs still on the market more than a week after it opened.

1. Rick Nash*

Age: 34

Position: Right wing

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$7.8 million

*Uncertain if he wishes to continue his lucrative and successful NHL career due to health and family concerns, Nash told interested teams — at least five, including the Columbus Blue Jackets — that he would be sitting out July 1's frenzy as he contemplated his future.

An emotional Nash departed New York as part of the Rangers' dramatic February fire sale and put up five points as a complementary piece of the Bruins' two-round post-season run.

Nash is already the 16th-highest-paid NHLer and enjoyed a whopping \$8.2-million base salary last season. Unlike most on this list, he'll be in for a pay cut if he plays.

The power forward, who has never hit unrestricted free agency, failed to wow in Boston, partly due to his head injury.

"It was disappointing with having a concussion, and having some effects during it, and only playing a certain amount of games, and then coming back for the playoffs," Nash told reporters after playing what was potentially his last NHL game.

If Nash gets the itch to return, however, he should have no shortage of suitors.

Further on Rick Nash's decision to opt out of Free Agency, for now...8 teams made calls on #61... and he could have agreed in principle to a deal that would have paid him 15 million dollars on a multi-year deal.

He decided to take the high road.

— John Shannon (@JSportsnet) June 29, 2018

2. Patrick Maroon

Age: 30

Position: Left wing

2017-18 cap hit: \$2 million

The Blues and Flames were two of the six clubs reportedly interested in signing the big winger, but Calgary's commitment to James Neal should take it out of the running. The Blues did shed from the wings in order to complete the Ryan O'Reilly trade, and Maroon is from St. Louis. Hence, agent Ben Hankinson's description of the Blues as a "strong option."

Maroon is quietly coming off a career year in which piled up a personal-best 43 points with the Oilers and Devils. Character guy with some finish in his big mits.



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Maroon update: Agent @BenHankinson tells The Athletic that no decision is expected tonight, and that while the Blues remain a "strong option," there are other teams still in the mix. #stlblues

— Jeremy Rutherford (@jprutherford) July 9, 2018

If the final piece of the @NHLFlames free-agent puzzle came down to James Neal or Patrick Maroon, I'm all in favor of opting for Neal. Didn't really know him before. Spoke to him lots in Vegas this year. Really impressed with his leadership skills. Not a bad finisher either.

— Eric Duhatschek (@eduhatschek) July 2, 2018

3. Luca Sbisa

Age: 28

Position: Defence

2017-18 cap hit: \$4 million

Andre Rufener, Sbisa's agent, told The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun that Vegas Golden Knights GM George McPhee never made his client an offer. McPhee refuted that claim to reporters Sunday, saying he did offer the defenceman an extension but that Sbisa has decided to move on.

Regardless, here we are: Sbisa is one of the best youngish D-men on the open market. A Stanley Cup finalist, Sbisa logged an average of 19:31 in the 30 games he played and posted 14 points with a plus-8 rating.

McPhee also said the claim by Luca Sbisa's agent to @DavidSchoenLVRJ that they didn't offer Luca a contract was false.

McPhee said they offered Luca two different deals and he moved on.

— Jesse Granger (@JesseGranger_) July 1, 2018

4. Dan Hamhuis

Age: 35

Position: Defence

2017-18 cap hit: \$3 million

The 35-year-old stay-at-home D-man would bring experience and reliability. Despite his age, Hamhuis's 24 points in 2017-18 were his most in five years — and he only missed three games in Dallas. The B.C. native has an Olympic gold medal and two world championship golds on his resume.

A family man, Hamhuis told Sportsnet 650 last week that he has "a few irons in the fire" and would like to join a contender, knowing he only has a few years left.

"Unfortunately, things didn't work out with Dallas," Hamhuis said. "We really enjoyed our time and wanted to be back but they're kind of going in a little bit of a different direction. They kind of wanted to keep as much money around as they could to make runs at [John] Tavares and [Erik] Karlsson, but maybe that window's not closed either."

Just noticed that Dan Hamhuis had more points than Michael Del Zotto last year. Neat.

— Tristan Thompson (@thisweektristan) June 29, 2018

5. Tobias Enstrom

Age: 33

Position: Defence

2017-18 cap hit: \$5.75 million

A solid, stay-at-home contributor to the Winnipeg blue line when healthy, Enstrom won't wow you with his offence but keeps mistakes to a minimum. Wear and tear is a concern. He only squeezed into 43 games last season, but skated more than 17 minutes a night when available.

The former Jet wishes to keep his NHL career alive but will have options overseas if nothing pans out in North America.

If the Leafs trade Gardiner this summer, they might look into adding another LD.

UFA Toby Enstrom limits high-danger scoring chances at a high level, and is the "stay at home" defenseman many Leafs fans have been waiting for. pic.twitter.com/VPk07nswi7

— Nick DeSouza (@NickDeSouza_) July 6, 2018

6. Brooks Orpik

Age: 37

Position: Defence

2017-18 cap hit: \$5.5 million

Yes, Orpik is old and slow and recently had his contract traded and bought out so the Capitals could sign John Carlson long term. But he is what former Washington coach Barry Trotz called "the most respected guy in the room." New coach Todd Reirden's relationship with Orpik stretches back to their Penguins days, and it's believed Washington would be willing to bring the veteran back on a one-year deal. Selfless player who sets a tone and does all those intangibles that number-crunchers hate and coaches love. Will block a shot for food.

With today's signing of Michal Kempny, #Caps have inked five of their top six defensemen and 10 of their top 11 forwards from last season. Focus now shifts to RFAs Wilson, Bowey, Boyd and another defenseman, potentially Brooks Orpik. They've got about \$9.7 million in cap space.

— Mike Vogel (@VogsCaps) June 29, 2018

MacLellan said Caps are in discussions with Orpik. He's weighing some options as well.

— Isabelle Khurshudyan (@ikhurshudyan) July 3, 2018

7. Mark Letestu

Age: 33

Position: Centre / Right wing

2017-18 cap hit: \$1.8 million

The Alberta native is a useful, experienced 3C option who should be available for a reasonable contract, both in dollars and term. He fit well with the Oilers but was flipped at the trade deadline for futures. Although less productive in his second stint with Columbus, Letestu could still produce 30-plus points given the opportunity.

8. Mike Cammalleri

Age: 36

Position: Left wing / Centre

2017-18 cap hit: \$1 million

Despite playing just 65 games last season, the veteran Cammalleri is still the third-most-productive skater still looking for a job. The Toronto native's 29 points put him behind only Nash and Maroon. The legs aren't where they used to be, but Cammalleri is a smart, versatile forward. After getting bought out by New Jersey, his hopeful return to Los Angeles fizzled fast and he ended the season in Edmonton. Still has some hands.

9. Alexei Emelin

Age: 32

Position: Defence

2017-18 cap hit: \$4.4 million



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Somewhat lost on a deep Predators blue line, the left-shot defender will have to drop his \$4.4-million price to hang on in the NHL but would have no trouble cracking plenty of teams' top six and can log 17 to 19 minutes a night. As with all Russians, there are reportedly KHL options if he chooses not to battle for an NHL spot.

Told former #Habs, #Preds D Alexei Emelin discussing with "a few teams" and is looking at offers. Hasn't decided on any yet.

— L.A. Lariviere (@L_A_theRiver) July 8, 2018

10. Kari Lehtonen

Age: 34

Position: Goalie

2017-18 cap hit: \$5.9 million

Lehtonen's struggles down the stretch for Dallas after starter Ben Bishop was injured underlined the fact he can no longer handle a starter's load. Still, he's the most qualified backup lingering on the market, and most of the hate thrown his way had to do with his too-large cap hit. The veteran's record in 2018-19 was actually respectable: 15-14-3, with a shutout and a .912 save percentage to match his career average. For the right price, he'd be a fine No. 2.

Today officially ends Kari Lehtonen's time as a Star. When traded from Atlanta, they said he was fat & lazy. No one worked harder to be a quality goalie and for many years he was the only reason DAL had a playoff chance. Didn't end the way he wanted, but never deny his dedication.

— Bruce LeVine (@BruceLeVinePuck) July 2, 2018

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.10.2018

1101754 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL Off-Season Power Rankings: Who's improved most (so far)?

Luke Fox | July 6, 2018, 10:09 AM

Monster signings, a few juicy trades, and four weeks have passed since Alex Ovechkin hoisted sport's most storied chalice, officially triggering hockey's off-season.

With an intriguing draft, a free agency bombshell, coaches fired and hired, and RFA cases settled and less so, the league has undergone some drastic roster shuffling over the past month.

We step back to evaluate the NHL landscape and rank the moves its 31 general managers have made so far this summer in our NHL Off-Season Power Rankings.

While there's still plenty of time to tinker and trade, and a whopping 44 players have filed for arbitration, some clubs have improved for the better and others have taken a step back — on paper, of course.

All teams have been ranked from 1 through 31 according to off-season performance only. (This is not an order of strength heading into 2017-18 but strictly an assessment of recent front office moves.)

1. Toronto Maple Leafs

John Tavares took a hometown discount to come to Toronto, the AHL Marlies ended 50-plus years of championship-free pro hockey in the city, and Kyle Dubas let someone else sign Leo Komarov for four more years. Pretty good month. Now, about those William Nylander and Auston Matthews extensions....

2. Tampa Bay Lightning

Able to see cap space the rest of us are blind to, Steve Yzerman pitched John Tavares and is on the brink of landing Erik Karlsson. He's also been busy re-committing to players already on the roster: Slater Koekoek, Louis Domingue, Cedric Paquette, the versatile J.T. Miller, and top-four D-man Ryan McDonagh. McDonagh will be 37 when his massive \$47.25-million extension expires. We like the player, but this big contract could come back to bite the Bolts down the road.

Don't expect any #TBLightning deal for Erik Karlsson anytime soon, per source. Not saying it won't happen eventually, but nothing imminent or close.

— Joe Smith (@JoeSmithTB) July 6, 2018

3. Washington Capitals

Any off-season that begins with a parade is a good one. The loss of Barry Trotz isn't a good look, but Todd Reirden has been heavily involved as an associate coach, so the transition could be smoother than we think. We love the Philipp Grubauer and Brooks Orpik trade, because there was no way either was coming back, and re-signing defenceman John Carlson was top priority. Jay Beagle will be missed, but retaining Devante Smith-Pelly for \$1 million was a no-brainer.

4. Vegas Golden Knights

George McPhee continues to impress. He made Paul Stastny, the second-best centre on the UFA market, the highest-paid Knight (\$6.5 million cap hit) but was smart enough to trade dollars for term and not signing him beyond age 35. That's the reason he was fine to walk away from James Neal. Ryan Reaves' raise (\$2.75 million) is steep for a fourth liner, as we've just watched the Maple Leafs trade away Matt Martin — another enforcer type who cashed in on July 1. Big decisions await on RFAs William Karlsson, Colin Miller and Shea Theodore.

5. Calgary Flames

Give Brad Treliving kudos for being proactive. Bill Peters gives the room a new voice, and the additions of James Neal and Elias Lindholm fill the void of secondary scoring that buried Calgary in 2017-18. I'm fine swapping Dougie Hamilton for the younger Noah Hanifin, who should grow into a solid second-pair guy.

6. St. Louis Blues

The Blues new-look centre depth — Brayden Schenn, Ryan O'Reilly, Tyler Bozak — is solid, and we fully expect ROR to arrive reinvigorated. Four years and \$16 million is steep for winger David Perron, now on his third tour in St. Louis, but we approve of Robby Fabbri's one-year, prove-it deal at \$925,000, and backup goalie Chad Johnson (\$1.75 million) might end up being one of this summer's better value deals. He'll look much better behind St. Louis's D than he did behind Buffalo's.

NHL-Maple-Leafs-Bozak

7. Colorado Avalanche

The future is bright in Denver. Grubauer is now positioned to succeed Semyon Varlamov in net, Ian Cole bolsters the D, and Matt Calvert represents a nice bargain pickup. Oh, and the Avs now have \$14 million in cap space plus five picks in the first three rounds of the 2019 draft. Plenty of flexibility heading into October.

8. San Jose Sharks

Doug Wilson did an excellent job of clearing cap space to go deep-sea fishing this summer. He went hard after Tavares and came up short. He was able to lock up under-30 forwards Evander Kane and Logan Couture for the remainder of their prime and extend Tomas Hertl. Wilson's best move was pawning off Mikkel Boedker, who never quite fit, to Ottawa and immediately flipping Mike Hoffman to Florida at a gain.

9. Florida Panthers



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Provided Mike Hoffman finds a niche, the Florida Panthers are my pick to make it back to the playoffs. Their forward core is all under 30 and under \$6 million, and Michael Hutchinson was a nice insurance add to the goaltending tandem of Roberto Luongo and James Reimer.

10. Winnipeg Jets

GM Kevin Cheveldayoff cleared Steve Mason's salary and lost a top-nine forward in Joel Armia. He tried to retain second-line centre Paul Stastny, an excellent fit, but lost a bidding war to Vegas. Now he must focus on re-signing core members Jacob Trouba, Connor Hellebuyck, Josh Morrissey and Adam Lowry. So many RFAs. Plus, Patrik Laine is now eligible for a monster extension, and 2019 could well be the Jets' last kick at championship before captain Blake Wheeler leaves. The cap crunch is here.

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

11. Los Angeles Kings

Old getting older. We don't blame the Kings for going for it. How Ilya Kovalchuk adapts after his five-year NHL sabbatical will be one of this fall's most compelling story lines, while Drew Doughty's \$88-million extension on July 1 robbed us of 12 months of trade rumour fodder.

12. Arizona Coyotes

Some nifty work by John Chaya in locking up both Oliver Ekman-Larsson and Niklas Hjalmarsson a year in advance. If Jakob Chychrun turns into a player, Arizona will have a nice D group. The off-season will go from good to great if Alex Galchenyuk, 24, turns into the centre Chayka believes he can be and Marc Bergevin believes he can't be.

13. Boston Bruins

Sensing they have a contender, the Bruins were in the mix for big UFA tickets like John Tavares and Ilya Kovalchuk but had to settle for smaller moves. Out the door walk backup goalie Anton Khudobin and Nashes Rick and Riley. In comes defenceman John Moore at a reasonable \$2.75 million cap hit, the same salary as new backup Jaroslav Halak — who somehow cashed in after posting his lowest save percentage (.908) in five years.

14. Pittsburgh Penguins

Jim Rutherford is nothing if not decisive. He quickly made up his mind that Bryan Rust was more valuable than Connor Sheary, and that Jack Johnson would be an upgrade from Matt Hunwick. Matt Cullen's return at age 41 feels a tad sentimental, but he's not sapping the cap and his presence should only strengthen a room of guys who expect to win more Cups. With so much smoke, we can't help but wonder if a Phil Kessel deal is still a possibility.

15. Edmonton Oilers

Peter Chiarelli tinkered with the fringes of a roster that largely disappointed, bringing in new assistants under Todd McLellan and picking up a couple nice value buys in Tobias Reider and Kyle Brodziak. The big gains must come from within, so we've awarded a bonus point for not doing anything irrational. P.S. — 23-year-old defender Darnell Nurse still needs a deal.

16. Minnesota Wild

New GM Paul Fenton made a series of low-risk gambles on veterans Eric Fehr, J.T. Brown, Greg Pateryn, and Matt Hendricks. Not exactly difference-makers. More intriguing will be how he handles the forthcoming extensions for RFAs Matt Dumba and Jason Zucker, each of whom enjoyed superb seasons. ALSO: We like that Fenton didn't fire Bruce Boudreau, who isn't to blame for the roster's offensive shortcomings and cap trouble.

17. New York Rangers

Firing Alain Vigneault and going full rebuild was a bold move for a showtime club, but at least the Rangers are sticking to their plan and didn't fall victim to July 1 mistakes. Rookie bench boss David Quinn has nothing to lose now that expectations have plummeted.

18. Buffalo Sabres

Any off-season that begins with the No. 1 overall pick ain't bad. We also like the return Jason Botterill fetched in from Pittsburgh and St. Louis, a pair of moves that helped both sides. Bringing in more veterans and removing a frustrated Ryan O'Reilly could shake up a fragile dressing room. Nice to see Carter Hutton get a chance to be a Number 1 goalie, although he'll have his work cut out for him playing behind a softer defence.

19. Philadelphia Flyers

As many as 12 teams expressed interest in James van Riemsdyk, the best winger still available on July 1, and the Flyers got him. Philly now has three forwards making a minimum of \$7 million for the next four seasons, and that doesn't include Wayne Simmonds, who is due for a raise in less than a year's time.

20. Dallas Stars

God bless Jim Nill, who never shies away from the big move. He took an honest shot at both Tavares and Karlsson. The return of Valeri Nichuskin is a positive; the inability to move Jason Spezza is a negative. The Polak Door remains open.

21. Columbus Blue Jackets

Riley Nash was a decent UFA pickup, Anthony Duclair is a low-risk gamble, and letting Pittsburgh (over?)pay Jack Johnson was the right call. But the Blue Jackets' off-season is marred with knowledge that 26-year-old star Artemi Panarin (UFA 2019) has no interest in signing an extension. He'd mark a huge loss for a franchise that can never seem to get over the hump. So, do the Jackets go all in now while they still have the Bread Man and Sergei Bobrovsky under contract? Or will they ultimately sell off two integral pieces to their 2018-19 hopes?

22. Anaheim Ducks

The Ducks' window feels like it's closing. Corey Perry is untradeable, Ryan Kesler is unhealthy, and while Bob Murray isn't afraid to make big moves, he's been relegated to cheap depth pickups (Brian Gibbons could be a good one) as he works on raises for Ondrej Kase and Brandon Montour, each coming off breakout campaigns.

23. Carolina Hurricanes

Owner Tom Dundon has wasted no time making his mark: new GM, new coach, new goaltending tandem, new power-play quarterback. And we still might get a Jeff Skinner and/or Justin Faulk trade. Petr Mrazek is younger than Cam Ward, but is he better? Will the offensive-leaning Dougie Hamilton ultimately have a better career than Noah Hanifin? We'll see. From an entertainment standpoint, the Hurricanes haven't been on the radar like this in a while.

24. Montreal Canadiens

Marc Bergevin did well to not overpay for Ryan O'Reilly or trade the third-overall pick in a panic. But the news that Montreal will start the season without a true No. 1 centre or a No. 1 defenceman (Shea Weber needs up to six months to recover from surgery and will have been off the ice roughly a year when he returns) illustrates the state of a franchise a long way from contention. The Joel Armia pickup was nice, though.

25. Chicago Blackhawks

Not sure we would've signed a 38-year-old Chris Kunitz, but we do like Cam Ward at one year and \$3 million. Last season was proof that Chicago needs a proven backup behind Corey Crawford, whose health is still a concern.

26. Nashville Predators



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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David Poile's relatively quiet off-season is a testament to his already building a contender. RFA depth forwards Ryan Hartman and Miikka Salomaki still need contracts, and two big contract decisions loom for the near future: top-four defenceman Ryan Ellis and Vezina champ Pekka Rinne both turn UFA in 2019 and can be signed to extensions now. Most pressing is the case of Austin Watson, who was arrested on a domestic assault charge.

27. Detroit Red Wings

A seeming embrace of the rebuild — trading away Petr Mrazek and Tomas Tatar for picks at the deadline — was oddly offset by older acquisitions like Thomas Vanek and Mike Green. We loved seeing Jonathan Bernier bounce back with Colorado, but a three-year deal is surprising. Ken Holland was gifted Filip Zadina major work is still to be done. He must re-sign RFAs Dylan Larkin and Anthony Mantha.

28. New Jersey Devils

Ray Shero was surprisingly quiet this spring, a point to which his \$23 million in project cap room can attest. The GM exercised patience in letting UFAs John Moore, Michael Grabner and Patrick Maroon all walk. His UFA bids either came up short or he's playing the long game.

Dimitri Filipovic provides entertaining and thoughtful dialogue about the game of hockey with an analytical edge. Not as nerdy as it sounds.

29. Vancouver Canucks

We won't be the first or last to say that four years is too much term for Jay Beagle and Antoine Roussel. That said, drafting Quinn Hughes — a potential power-play quarterback for years — was a major win, and re-signing Sven Baertschi for a \$3.37 million cap hit might look like a bargain if he keeps raising his game.

30. New York Islanders

Finally stripping Garth Snow of his power: Check mark. Hiring Barry Trotz at top dollar: Check mark. Losing the face of the franchise for nothing and then signing Leo Komarov for four years: Uh-oh.

31. Ottawa Senators

An utter gong show. Mike Hoffman and his 30 goals are gone. No. 1 goalie Craig Anderson wants out, and all signs point to Erik Karlsson's departure. Next up: Sens fans can look forward to Mark Stone's arbitration case. There's a silver lining, however. We like the Brady Tkachuk pick.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.10.2018

1101755 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Panarin's agent provides update on potential trade, extension talks

Sonny Sachdeva | July 8, 2018, 8:19 PM

It's been a wild off-season for NHL clubs looking to add some dynamic offensive skill to their rosters.

While John Tavares swapped orange for blue as a free agent and talks continue regarding a potential Erik Karlsson deal, another game changer is waiting in the wings, potentially set for relocation as well.

In June, Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reported Columbus Blue Jackets winger Artemi Panarin could also be available due to the winger's unwillingness to negotiate an extension past the 2018-19 campaign, in which he'll play out the final season of a two-year, \$12-million deal signed with Chicago.

There is word today that Artemi Panarin has told CLB that he is not ready to consider an extension "at this time." (UFA July 2019.) As a result, the Blue Jackets are testing the market for him.

— Elliott Friedman (@FriedgeHNIC) June 19, 2018

Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen told Friedman at the time that the club would prefer to keep Panarin in Columbus long-term — no surprise given the winger's franchise-best 82 points last season — and feels both sides have plenty of time to iron out a solution.

On Sunday, Panarin's agent, Daniel Milstein, provided an update on his client's position in a lengthy interview with The Athletic's Aaron Portzline, confirming that the winger informed the Blue Jackets before the 2018 draft of his indecision regarding an extension with the club.

It appears the central issues for the former Chicago Blackhawks are the term of a potential deal and simply the franchise's location, as Panarin hasn't yet decided whether he wants to spend much of the next decade in Columbus, according to his agent.

"[Panarin] loves the team, he loves the coach. It's not the team or the way they treat him," Milstein explained to Portzline. "It's about, does he want to spend the next eight years in Columbus? That's the only thing at stake right now. If it was a two-year deal we probably would have done it.

"But it isn't a two-year deal. It's gonna have to be an extended, seven- or eight-year deal put in place."

Milstein also confirmed that Kekalainen is indeed still testing the waters on a trade for the dynamic winger, though it appears nothing significant has materialized up to this point.

"Jarmo's trying to find a trade partner," Milstein said. "And if the team wants to know about his long-term plans, Jarmo would have to give (the opposing GM) permission to speak with me. I have not asked (Kekalainen) to speak to any clubs and, certainly, he hasn't asked me if I would be willing to talk to any clubs. I believe all (30) clubs would love to have him, but I can't see anybody trading for him without picking up the phone and checking with me first."

There's no question Panarin would serve as a marquee upgrade for any team able to add his elite scoring touch to their attack. Through three seasons in the big leagues, he's amassed 233 points in 244 games, coming up with more than a few highlight-reel displays along the way.

Friedman pointed to the Kings, Rangers, Islanders, Lightning, and Panthers as potential destinations for the smooth-skating winger.

The Kings and Panthers have begun working to upgrade their forward corps already via the additions of Ilya Kovalchuk and Mike Hoffman, respectively. Tampa Bay, meanwhile, reportedly remains in on the efforts to lure Karlsson away from Ottawa, while the Rangers and Islanders could both certainly use an upgrade in star power given the roster turnover seen in each dressing room over the past year.

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1101756 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Luke Richardson hire one of several that should give Canadiens fans hope

Eric Engels July 9, 2018, 12:58 PM

Montreal Canadiens fans might not be enthused about the product they expect to see on the ice in 2018-19, but they should be excited about the revolution happening at the executive level of the organization.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 10, 2018

Luke Richardson, who has a wealth of experience as both an NHL player and coach, was hired on Monday to look after the team's defence — and he's one of several new people who will be at the heart of fixing what's been the biggest problem the Canadiens have had in the six years Marc Bergevin has been general manager.

It's all about development — and the timing is crucial. This team is in transition, lacking the type of talent it takes to compete for a championship. And with so many young, inexperienced players taking on key roles, just making the playoffs is going to be a daunting task.

But it's also going to be a critical learning experience for everyone involved, and having such quality people as Richardson be a part of that process is going to go a long way towards ensuring they come out on the right end of it.

We're talking about a guy who's been involved in NHL hockey for 25 years. Richardson played over 1,400 games as a defenceman, offering his steady — and at times punishing — style to the Toronto Maple Leafs, Edmonton Oilers, Philadelphia Flyers, Columbus Blue Jackets, Tampa Bay Lightning, and Ottawa Senators over his career. He then jumped behind Ottawa's bench as an assistant coach before taking over its AHL affiliate in Binghamton, N.Y., and carrying it to a 153-120-31 record over his tenure.

Now Richardson comes to the Canadiens after working alongside Doug Weight as an assistant coach with the New York Islanders, and they couldn't be happier to have him.

"We're very pleased with the hiring of Luke Richardson as an assistant coach," said Bergevin via press release on Monday.

"I'm delighted," added head coach Claude Julien.

Looking over the organization's recent hires should be where hope is anchored for Canadiens fans, too.

Dominique Ducharme was the first to come on board, hired as an assistant coach by Julien just a few weeks after the dust settled on a 28th-place finish in the standings for the Canadiens. A local guy who had risen steadily up the coaching ranks and collected significant hardware along the way — including a Memorial Cup with the Halifax Mooseheads in 2013 and world junior gold in 2018.

Joel Bouchard, who was a member of the management team that put together that world junior win for Canada, was plucked out of Boisbriand, Que., in the third week of May so he could take over head coaching duties for Montreal's AHL affiliate — the Laval Rocket. He had been serving as the QMJHL's Armada's owner, general manager and coach after the brief stint in broadcasting that followed his 13 years as an NHL defenceman. And he had built up a reputation as one of the finest and fiercest coaches in junior hockey over that time.

That has to be at least part of the reason that Alex Burrows announced late last week that he was retiring from his 14-year NHL career to join Bouchard's bench in Laval.

Having the former Ottawa Senator — who enjoyed his best seasons as a goal-scoring pest for the Vancouver Canucks — on board is going to offer the organization's NHL hopefuls a fresh perspective on what it takes to make it. Burrows was an undrafted player who played three full seasons in the ECHL and two full ones in the AHL before making it to the NHL and never looking back. If anyone knows how to do it, it's him. The fact that he was in the action up until April only helps.

With longtime NHL veteran Martin Lapointe overseeing things as assistant general manager to Bergevin, with former Canadiens Francis Bouillon and Rob Ramage running development and working closely with prospects on and off the ice, and with Richardson, Ducharme, Bouchard and Burrows now in the system, the outlook has changed considerably.

It had to. Montreal's AHL team, led by Sylvain Lefebvre, was an unmitigated disaster. It failed to make the playoffs in five of the six years he was coach and flunked out in a first-round sweep the one year it did

participate. And too few players came up to Montreal and had the type of impact the Canadiens would've hoped for.

Even worse, too many failed to develop to expectation and were sent packing as a result. Too many former first-rounders out the door instead of helping the Canadiens remain as an annual threat. Too many mistakes to count.

But the changes over the last few weeks offer a fresh start on the most important front — as the team brings 11 freshly drafted players into the fold, as other promising prospects move from junior up to the AHL ranks and as youngsters like Jonathan Drouin, Max Domi, Victor Mete and Noah Juulsen are expected to take immediate strides with the Canadiens. They should have the fans thinking that the reset process might not be as long and painful as it could be.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.10.2018

1101757 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL Arbitration Tracker: Can the Senators sign Mark Stone long-term?

Rory Boylen | July 9, 2018, 1:19 PM

Though the top UFAs have all signed and centre Ryan O'Reilly was traded, there is still work to be done this summer.

The deadline for players to elect to go to arbitration was Thursday, July 5 at 5 p.m. ET, with the deadline for team-elected arbitration coming 24 hours later.

If a player chooses arbitration they are no longer eligible to receive an offer sheet, so you can count Mark Stone out of that possible intrigue. At the same time, if Stone does go through arbitration, he'll walk out with a one-year deal and be less than 12 months away from unrestricted free agency.

It's also important to point out that so few of these cases ever make it to the arbiter. Teams and players will be negotiating deals in the meantime — all 30 of last year's cases were resolved before needing judgment.

On that note, here are this year's pending arbitration cases, which we will update as news comes.

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

Anaheim Ducks

Brandon Montour

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Note: Another young (24) Ducks defenceman with good underlying numbers. Montour had the fourth-highest average time on ice among Anaheim defencemen and posted 32 points in 80 games.

Ducks defenseman Brandon Montour files for arbitration. Often a formality as contracts are often reached before it gets to that. Team is talking to his rep.

— Eric Stephens (@icemancometh) July 5, 2018

Calgary Flames

Garnet Hathaway

2017-18 salary: \$650,000



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Note: The 26-year-old is one year away from unrestricted free agency. Bottom-six player with some PK upside. Was put on waivers in October.

Mark Jankowski

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Note: First-round pick (21st overall) in 2012 figures to be the Flames' third-line centre and is coming off a 17-goal rookie season.

Also, David Jankowski is Mark Jankowski's younger brother. He's one of the 19 tryout players coming to Calgary development camp. #Flames

— Pat Steinberg (@Fan960Steinberg) July 3, 2018

Brett Kulak

2017-18 salary: \$650,000

Note: We know who the top five Calgary defencemen are — Kulak is a depth piece who played limited minutes in 71 games last season. May lose his No. 6 spot to rookie Rasmus Andersson.

Elias Lindholm

2017-18 salary: \$2.7 million

Note: One of the key returns from Carolina, Lindholm is in line to be a top-line player for the Flames, who hope he'll score more than 45 points for the first time in his career.

Bit of a contract update on Elias Lindholm from GM Brad Treliving today.

He says the team is looking for something long term with the RFA forward. Says Lindholm's camp is very open to that, too. #Flames

— Pat Steinberg (@Fan960Steinberg) July 6, 2018

David Rittich

2017-18 salary: \$725,000

Note: Served as Calgary's backup much of last season and played 21 games, posting a .904 save percentage and 8-6-3 record. He's 25 years old and the most proven option in that role behind Mike Smith, but we're getting to the point where Jon Gillies and Tyler Parsons will start making their own cases.

Colorado Avalanche

Patrik Nemeth

2017-18 salary: \$945,000

Note: His 68 games played last season was the first time the 26-year-old saw more than half a season's worth of NHL action. Averaged third-highest TOI among Avalanche blueliners (19:51) and second-most used PK guy. Came to Colorado via waivers from Dallas in October.

Matthew Nieto

2017-18 salary: \$1 million

Pre-arbitration settlement: Two years with a \$1.975-million cap hit.

Dallas Stars

Mattias Janmark

2017-18 salary: \$700,000

Note: Improved by four goals and five points in his sophomore season, Janmark will be a key player as Dallas needs more scoring from its secondary lines.

Mattias Janmark, Devin Shore and Gemel Smith file for Arbitration. Janmark to me is the most intriguing. 34 points last year which is a career high. I think 2 million per is a very fair contract. #Stars can try to

sign all 3 before their hearings which begin for players on 7/20. <https://t.co/V56Qe3dE6N>

— Gavin Spittle (@gjspittle) July 5, 2018

Devin Shore

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Note: Similar to Janmark, the 23-year-old Shore will be needed to expand the depth of scoring. Averaged 1:30 less per game than Janmark, but posted a similar 32 points.

Gemel Smith

2017-18 salary: \$650,000

Note: Still playing his way into this lineup. Got into just 46 games and averaged less than 10 minutes per game.

Florida Panthers

MacKenzie Weegar

2017-18 salary: \$675,000

Note: Depth defenceman who saw very few minutes in 60 games played. Just 24 years old and a seventh-round pick in 2013.

Minnesota Wild

Mathew Dumba

2017-18 salary: \$2.55 million

Note: Saw his role increase last season and his average time on ice rise by more than three minutes. In the nine games (regular season and playoffs) the Wild played after Ryan Suter's injury, Dumba played less than 24 minutes just twice.

Jason Zucker

2017-18 salary: \$2 million

Note: Breakout season with 33 goals and 64 points and had 50 more shots on goal than his previous career high. Shooting percentage was 2.1 per cent higher than career average, but he's becoming a more integral part of this team.

Montreal Canadiens

Joel Armia

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Note: May not hit the potential he had when he was a 16th-overall pick, but the big winger is coming off a career year in which he totalled 12 goals and 29 points. If he gets more ice time and opportunity, the Canadiens could find some untapped upside in Armia.

Phillip Danault

2017-18 salary: \$912,500

Note: With 25 points in 52 games, Danault had a similar points-per-game rate to 2016-17. Shooting percentage is below league average, so if that came up to a respectable level Danault could end up as the Canadiens' No. 1 centre.

Nashville Predators

Miikka Salomaki

2017-18 salary: \$612,500

Note: Hasn't played his way up in the lineup and only posted eight points in 58 games. The 25-year-old is basically a fourth-liner on this team.

Miikka Salomaki has filed for salary arbitration. Going out on a limb, but if this gets to a hearing, he will lose badly. <https://t.co/QX2qmrMRhI>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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— Jim Diamond (@diamondhockey) July 5, 2018

New Jersey Devils

Blake Coleman

2017-18 salary: \$660,000

Note: One of the many great stories on the Devils this past season, the 26-year-old had a career-best 25 points — 10 of which came in the final 16 games.

She said YES! What an amazing weekend with my beautiful future bride and our wonderful family and friends! <https://t.co/89XDBwahTI>

— Blake Coleman (@BColes25) July 1, 2018

Stefan Noesen

2017-18 salary: \$660,000

Note: A third- or fourth-liner, Noesen hasn't hit his potential as a pro.

New York Islanders

Brock Nelson

2017-18 salary: \$2.5 million

Note: His bid for four-straight 20-goal seasons fell one shy, but the power forward's role should be upgraded. If he goes to arbitration, a one-year award would make him a UFA in 2019.

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

New York Rangers

Kevin Hayes

2017-18 salary: \$2.6 million

Note: With younger centres coming up, Hayes has been mentioned in trade rumours. Scored a career-high 25 goals in 2017-18, but New York's concern is having to pay him at the level of a second-liner if he's a better fit one line lower.

Brady Skjei

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Note: A rising piece of New York's rebuild on the blue line. The 24-year-old averaged 21:02 per game and should see further growth in 2018-19.

Ryan Spooner

2017-18 salary: \$2.825 million

Note: Acquired from Boston in the Rick Nash trade, Spooner was nearly a point-per-game player down the stretch in New York. The Rangers have a number of middle-six forwards, so Spooner is a trade candidate this summer.

Jimmy Vesey

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Note: After two sub-30-point seasons, Vesey is fitting in more as a bottom-six winger entering his age 25 season. That said, he's scored 16 and 17 goals in two seasons and has the upside for more.

Ottawa Senators

Cody Ceci

2017-18 salary: \$2.8 million

Note: He may not be a fan favourite, but Ceci averaged 23:20 per game, which might not go down if Erik Karlsson is traded. Had the lowest relative Corsi percentage among Senators defencemen who spent the full season with the club.

Mark Stone

2017-18 salary: \$2.8 million

Note: He may not be eligible for an offer sheet anymore, but has all the leverage here. Stone could either go through arbitration and be a year away from becoming a UFA, or sign a long-term deal for big money. An \$80-million cap hit would have to be the low end of what that contract could be for a still-underrated elite two-way forward with consistent 60-plus point production.

Mark Stone went on to say: "I'm going into the summer wanting to stay with this (Senators) team." And he also added, "it feels like we're going in the right direction."

Stay tuned.

— Arash Madani (@ArashMadani) April 4, 2018

Philadelphia Flyers

Taylor Leier

2017-18 salary: \$806,558

Note: Fourth-line player with seven points in 55 games across three seasons. Hard to gauge his NHL upside so far as he averaged just a little more than 10 minutes per game — hard to muster a breakout with so little opportunity.

It's tough to make an impact in a small role, but Taylor Leier has done really well in what he's been given since returning to the lineup.

— Dave Isaac (@davegisaaac) February 3, 2018

Alex Lyon

2017-18 salary: 874,125

Pre-arbitration settlement: Two years with a \$750,000 cap hit.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Jamie Oleksiak

2017-18 salary: \$806,558

Note: A capable third-pair blueliner with limited offensive upside. Won't hit the potential he had as a 14th-overall pick, but at 25 years old he's a good big-body depth option for a team that needs to find value lower in the lineup.

San Jose Sharks

Chris Tierney

2017-18 salary: \$735,000

Note: Although the Sharks didn't get John Tavares, they still boast one of the better 1-2-3 centre lines in the league between Logan Couture, Joe Thornton and an under-the-radar Tierney. Scored 17 goals and 40 points last season, which was a 17-point jump from his previous career best. Was San Jose's top penalty-killer among forwards.

#SJSharks have just one RFA left in Chris Tierney, and I don't get the sense there is anything imminent yet in terms of an extension. Keep in mind, Tierney has arbitration rights now and the team arguably lowballed him last summer

— Kevin Kurz (@KKurzNHL) July 2, 2018

St. Louis Blues

Joel Edmundson

2017-18 salary: \$1.05 million

Note: Averaged more than 20 minutes a game as a top-four blueliner and one of the main penalty-killers from the back end. After a seven-goal



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season, the best may still be to come for the 6-foot-4 blueliner. Missed a little more than a month with a broken arm.

Dmitrij Jaskin

2017-18 salary: \$1 million

Pre-arbitration settlement: One year with a \$1.1-million cap hit.

Oskar Sundqvist

2017-18 salary: \$675,000

Pre-arbitration settlement: One year with a \$700,000 cap hit.

Vancouver Canucks

Troy Stecher

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Note: After a successful 2016-17 season put him on the map, Stecher's role was drawn back and his power-play time all but disappeared. The smallish puckmover could see a bounce back next season if the team still has long-term plans for fitting him in the lineup.

Polled some agents on what RFA Troy Stecher comparables would be on a short term deal.

Replies back included Ben Hutton (2.8 m), Derek Forbort (2.5 m) and Markus Nutivaara (2.7 m).

Stecher has filed for arb. #Canucks

— Rick Dhaliwal (@DhaliwalSports) July 6, 2018

Vegas Golden Knights

William Karlsson

2017-18 salary: \$1 million

Note: This may be the trickiest arbitration case of the summer — what is Karlsson worth? Sure, he scored 43 goals but did it on a completely unsustainable 23.4 shooting percentage. Prior to this breakout he had a career high of nine goals.

William Karlsson named Swedish hockey player of the year. "Who would have believed this a year ago? It's been a crazy year and now I'm sitting with this one." <https://t.co/qTfrVBIDQr>

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) June 30, 2018

Colin Miller

2017-18 salary: \$1 million

Pre-arbitration settlement: Four years with a \$3.875-million cap hit.

Colin Miller ranked 10th among defenders this season with 1.32 WAR.

— Emmanuel Perry (@manny_hockey) July 7, 2018

Tomas Nosek

2017-18 salary: \$612,500

Note: Fourth-line depth option, Nosek actually took a pay cut the last time he inked a two-year contract. In his first full NHL season, Nosek scored seven goals and 15 points for Vegas in a little more than 11 minutes per game.

Washington Capitals

Liam O'Brien

2017-18 salary: \$650,000

Note: Undrafted, 23-year-old depth player who played three games with the Capitals last season. Had 17 goals in 69 AHL games.

Forward Liam O'Brien's arbitration date with the Washington Capitals has been set for July 23 and will take place in Toronto.

— CapitalsPR (@CapitalsPR) July 9, 2018

Winnipeg Jets

Marko Dano

2017-18 salary: \$850,000

Note: A first-rounder all the way back in 2013, Dano was used less than any other Jets forward last season. Hard to see where his future is on a deep forward core — might be dangled as part of a trade instead.

Connor Hellebuyck

2017-18 salary: \$2.25 million

Note: After struggling through a bad season Hellebuyck still got a hefty raise, so where does he go now that he's a Vezina finalist? At 25 years old, now is the time to avoid arbitration and lock in long term on Hellebuyck if the Jets think he'll keep it up, meaning they'll have to pay for some UFA years in his prime.

Connor Hellebuyck should be happy with today's goalie signing by the #NHLJets — he and Laurent Brossoit train together in the off-season, are in the same goalie program and share the same agent. #wfp

— Mike McIntyre (@mikemcintyre) July 1, 2018

Adam Lowry

2017-18 salary: \$1.125 million

Note: Had the highest average ice time on the penalty kill among Jets forwards. Limited to 45 games due to injury.

Adam Lowry of the Winnipeg Jets bandaging up to 75% health before Game 3 ... #FortniteForever pic.twitter.com/636vGaKn55

— Bar South N Celly™ (@BarSouthNCelly) April 15, 2018

Brandon Tanev

2017-18 salary: \$700,000

Note: Another of Winnipeg's top penalty-killers, Tanev is strictly a bottom-six checker.

Jacob Trouba

2017-18 salary: \$2.812 million

Note: Once upon a time Trouba asked for a trade out of Winnipeg, which was later rescinded after he accepted a two-year bridge contract. Now we'll find out how much he wants to remain a part of this team. Trouba averaged 21:54 as the No. 2 most-used Jets defenceman. If 33-year-old Dustin Byfuglien is the current No. 1, Trouba will be in short order — time to lock him in for eight years.

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TSN.CA / The noise surrounding secondary assists

Travis Yost

Hundreds of contracts are handed out to restricted and unrestricted free agents every summer. The starting point for all of those negotiations revolves around scoring rates. So, what happens when scoring rates are misleading?



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This is a critical focus area for any general manager wading through contract talks. Point totals – as simplistic as they are – tend to be one of the more robust measures we have of individual talent and impact on the game, and that's particularly true for forwards. The more an attacker is involved in the run of play, the higher the likelihood of him accumulating points. Since point scoring is a repeatable talent (i.e., we tend to see strong scorers repeat as strong scorers in subsequent years, and the opposite holds true for weak scorers), it makes sense to heavily consider scoring rates when evaluating contracts.

But there are issues. All points, by the literal definition, are equal. One goal is equivalent to one primary assist and one secondary assist. But behaviourally we know this is false. Goals and primary assists are strong indicators of positive offensive impact; secondary assists tend to be extremely noisy and often regress heavily in future periods. Another way of saying this: If you are considering scoring when it comes to a player's next contract, you probably want to deal in the world of primary points, and not all points.

Not every goal will have a secondary assist allocated, which certainly helps trim some of the noise. But there are still enough secondary assists out there to have quite an impact on a player's total scoring rates.

Let's look at the top side of this piece first – the players who most greatly benefited from accumulating secondary assists in bunches. The below table shows all forwards (minimum 25 goals scored while on the ice) based on their primary point percentage, their total point percentage and their secondary assist point percentage. Keep in mind that the average attacker gets points on any goal-scoring sequence about 60 per cent of the time and is credited with the secondary assist about 15 per cent of the time. The more north you get of both, the more likely you benefited from randomness.

Some of the percentages at the highest end of the spectrum seem hard to believe. Henrik Sedin picked up points on 80 per cent of the goals Vancouver scored while he was on the ice in his final season, which is substantially higher than league average. But the number that's harder to believe is the secondary assist piece. Of Sedin's 25 5-on-5 points, 16 of those were secondary assists. That's about 10 more than we would expect in normal circumstances.

Sedin's name is a bit less interesting since he retired at year's end, but thankfully there are a number of players to take a look at. David Perron – who signed a lucrative four-year, \$16-million dollar contract with St. Louis this summer – is probably at the top of my list. Perron had points on 80 per cent of Vegas' goals while on the ice, which is already high. But he also had the secondary assist on 27 per cent of those – about double what we would consider normal. Perron seems like a fine playmaker, but I think it's fair to conclude that last year was kind by about seven assists, and again, that's just at 5-on-5.

Secondary assists being noisy cuts both ways, though. So long as we are lumping all of these counting measures together, we need to look at the guys who didn't get any luck by way of secondary assists. These guys are going to be well below that 15 per cent number.

This table is a bit more interesting because there are so many impact players populating the leaderboard. Pittsburgh's Patric Hornqvist is fascinating – he's not a primary scoring option on such a loaded Penguins team, but the fact that the guy had one secondary assist in nearly 1,000 minutes and 39 Pittsburgh goals is insane. Even a player with a defined role like Hornqvist shouldn't be getting this unlucky, and last year was surely an outlier. Over the last four seasons, Hornqvist has accumulated the following secondary assist totals per-60 minutes of play: 0.49, 0.60, 0.34, and 0.07. It is a massive outlier.

The most ironic inclusion on this list though would surely be Philadelphia's Sean Couturier. He managed to pick up just six secondary assists on 76 Flyers goals, which cost him about seven 5-on-5 points in the season (that number, it should be noted, is the largest "loss" for any regular skater in the league). It's amazing to think that a player like Couturier – who nearly doubled his point total year-over-year and easily had his most productive offensive season since entering the league –

could have been simultaneously unlucky, but that appears to be the case.

Secondary assists are just one data point, but a critical one to keep in mind when analyzing a player's true production. There is no doubt at this point that they are a mostly random attribution that aren't reflective of a player's true offensive impact, but somehow continue to get lumped into point totals – the same point totals that can drive how much a front office may or may not be willing to pay for a player in the future.

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