



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 24, 2018



RYAN WARSOFSKY NAMED CHECKERS ASSISTANT COACH

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: July 23, 2018

The Checkers will have a new face on the bench next to head coach Mike Vellucci as Carolina has hired Ryan Warsofsky as assistant coach.

The 30-year-old spent the last two seasons in the ECHL serving as South Carolina's Head Coach and Director of Hockey Operations. Warsofsky went 88-44-10-2 during his tenure with the Stingrays and became the second-youngest coach in league history to lead a team to the finals in 2016-17 when he guided South Carolina to a Kelly Cup appearance.

"Ryan has had a lot of success for a young coach," said Hurricanes GM Don Waddell in a press release. "We're excited to have him work with our prospects in Charlotte."

Warsofsky began his coaching career in 2012-13 when he served as an assistant at Curry College before becoming South Carolina's assistant coach from 2013-14 until he got the head coaching job in 2016-17.

As a player, the North Marshfield, MA, native appeared in 71 NCAA games over four years at Sacred Heart and Curry College, posting 47 points (13g, 34a) from the blue line. Warsofsky then played season of pro hockey in 2011-12, making appearances in Belgium, the CHL and the FHL.

Warsofsky is the third assistant coach in franchise history, filling the spot of Peter Andersson, who manned the position for each of the last two seasons. Prior to Andersson, current Springfield Thunderbirds head coach Geordie Kinnear held Charlotte's assistant coach mantle for the team's first six campaigns.

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The Athletic / 'That's just a slap in the face': Islanders veterans refute doom and gloom predictions

By Arthur Staple Jul 23, 2018

It's been three weeks since John Tavares bid the Islanders farewell. It's been about the same amount of time since the bulk of the league's observers wrote off the 2018-19 Islanders.

"I've already seen some people pegging us as being in the bottom. That's just a slap in the face when I see it," Johnny Boychuk told The Athletic. "Our team is really good. I think we're going to show them we are a good team."

Boychuk is among the veteran Islanders who will need to fill the leadership void left by Tavares' departure — in addition to being their star player, Tavares was the Isles' captain the last five seasons, the longest-serving captain since Pat Flatley (1991-96).

That means it falls to Boychuk and his fellow veterans to welcome in the new Islanders and to initiate group texts during the summer among the players. Tavares had been the point man between the front office and coaching staff and the team, giving his input on items as big as where to hold morning skates — Tavares voiced the concerns of his teammates back in the 2015-16 season to convince Jack Capuano to move the morning skates from Brooklyn out to the practice facility on Long Island — and as small as whether the team would leave from a road game right after or stay over and fly home the next day.

It was not a one-man show — lots of other Isles veterans had their say on off-ice issues. And Boychuk and Josh Bailey stressed in conversations last week that it wasn't a one-man show on the ice either, despite their affinity for Tavares.

"I've never really worried too much about what's being said," said Bailey, who goes into his new six-year contract as the longest-tenured Islander at 715 games. "It's about your teammates, the organization, and your fans as well. I look forward to playing a role in helping the team take the next step. We're all on board with wanting to win, that's the main focus. We just want to give ourselves a chance."

"People shouldn't be worrying about one person. In hockey, one person does not make a team. At all," Boychuk said. "One guy can't carry a whole team, be the whole team. It was an important player for us but there's 23 players on a team and you have to hold 23 players accountable to win a season, a championship."

"If you play bad as a team, one player can play good all year but you're still gonna lose. That's why it's a team sport."

There's been no indication that Lou Lamoriello or Barry Trotz is feeling an urgency to name a new Islanders captain. Bailey and Boychuk have worn 'A's before, but part of the evaluation process for both the new president/GM and coach is to figure out who fits best in the leadership group. Andrew Ladd and Cal Clutterbuck wore 'A's regularly last season;

new Islanders and league vets Leo Komarov and Valtteri Filppula have worn an 'A' before as well.

Bailey isn't quite the last man standing from the core group of Islanders that struggled through the dark seasons earlier this decade, not with Matt Martin back via trade after two years away. But even with Tavares following Garth Snow and Doug Weight out the door, Bailey is excited to get going with next season.

"We're in good hands for sure," Bailey said of Lamoriello and Trotz. "New eyes can be a good thing, maybe put some guys on edge a bit. A new start for some, maybe some motivation for others. Different isn't always a bad thing."

Boychuk is also eager to get started. Lane Lambert, the Isles' new associate coach, was an assistant coach for Moose Jaw in the WHL from 2002-04, during Boychuk's two seasons playing there. Boychuk has been texting with nearly all of his teammates this summer and hasn't found any morose responses or "why us?" sentiments from his teammates since the events of July 1.

"There's been so many changes, it's good to check in with the guys and see that everyone is as excited as I am," said Boychuk, who came back to Long Island last week to have his surgically repaired knee checked out. He's getting back on the ice this week, his first time skating since April surgery. "We're going to be a grittier team next year, I think. More sandpaper, more hard-working. I think that's a reason for everyone to be excited."

The Athletic LOADED: 07.24.2018

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Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown: What to make of 6 confusing teams

Sean McIndoe | July 23, 2018, 8:16 AM

We're roughly a month into the off-season, and by now there a few teams we can feel pretty confident about projecting. The Lightning will be good, especially if they get Erik Karlsson. The Capitals, Predators, Jets and Leafs should also be contenders. At the other end of the standings, we're all pretty sure that teams like the Senators, Canucks and Sabres will struggle. There are even a few teams we can comfortably predict will be just OK — we could call that the Minnesota Wild zone.

There's nothing especially controversial in any of those calls; just about every set of pre-season predictions will say pretty much the same thing when it comes to those teams.

And, of course, we'll almost certainly be wrong about at least a few of them. Like, super wrong. As in not even close.

Look at last year, when obvious bottom-feeders like the Devils and Avalanche and Golden Knights all made the playoffs, while legitimate Cup contenders like the Blackhawks and Oilers crashed and burned. Few of us saw any of those stories coming. None of us saw them all.



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Everybody was dead wrong about something, just like we'll be wrong this year too.

And here's the thing: That's just the teams we feel confident about. If we already know we're going to screw a few of those up, imagine what's going to happen with the teams we can't figure out.

So today, let's look through a half-dozen teams that I'm still not sure about. I've gone back and forth on all six, and I'm not any closer to feeling confident about where they'll wind up. Maybe you're on steadier ground when it comes to these teams, and if so please let me know why. Seriously, I could use the help.

We'll start with one of those 2017-18 surprises...

Edmonton Oilers

They'll be good because: They have Connor McDavid, and if he isn't already the unanimous choice for "best player on the planet" honours, he will be soon. The NHL isn't the NBA, where one superstar can singlehandedly drag a team to the playoffs. But it's still a league that runs on elite talent, and there isn't any more elite than what the Oilers can toss out there for 22 minutes a night.

They'll be bad because: McDavid was great last year, and it didn't get the Oilers anything other than weaker lottery odds. And as you've probably noticed, they've barely done anything this off-season. They haven't made any major trades or signed any top-tier free agents. Right now, it looks like they might be content to roll out pretty much the same lineup that they featured last year. You know, the one that missed the playoffs by 17 points.

But they'll probably be fine because: A big part of last season's disaster was due to a rough year from Cam Talbot. No team leans on its starter as heavily as the Oilers, and in 2016-17 it paid off. Last year, it didn't. But Talbot has played five NHL seasons and over 250 games, and the bulk of his resume tells us that he's a very good goaltender, maybe even a great one.

Goaltending is voodoo, but when your starter has a bad year it's almost always going to torpedo your chances. Let's not overthink it with Edmonton – if Talbot is better, they'll be fine. And history tells us he'll be better.

Unless they're not because: Most nights, a goaltender is only as good as the defence in front of him. The Oilers blue line continues to be a weak point, and according to the rumour mill their plan for fixing it is to trade their best defenceman. That's not how this works.

The verdict: The Pacific was the league's weakest division last year, and could be again. With the three California teams getting older and the Knights presumably coming back to reality, it won't take a monster season to make the playoffs. The Oilers should manage it fairly easily. I think.

Carolina Hurricanes

They'll be good because: They have to be someday. We've been waiting on the Hurricanes to break through for years now, so they're more than due. It should have happened last year, but Scott Darling's implosion scuttled that. This year they've added Petr Mrazek, so between him and Darling someone should produce a rebound year.

You know what other team was a constant breakout pick that always disappointed until they finally solved their goaltending? Last year's Jets. Now they're considered one of the best teams in the league, and we all act like it was inevitable all along. Maybe it was, but it didn't feel that way this time last summer. The Hurricanes have that same sort of vibe.

They'll be bad because: Seriously? Are we really doing this again?

The Hurricanes have missed the playoffs for a league-high nine straight years. There's talent here, but at some point we probably need to see a pulse before we start slotting them into any playoff projections. And as for

the Jets comparison, they had a top prospect in Connor Hellebuyck. The Hurricanes, again, have Darling and Mrazek. No thanks.

But they'll probably be fine because: New owner Tom Dundon has already shaken things up. The Hurricanes made a big trade, are rumoured to be on the verge of a few more, and have a new coach and GM. Sometimes the best thing that can happen to a team stuck in neutral is for a new pair of eyes to look over everything. Dundon doesn't seem like an owner who wants to fade into the background, and he might be just the kind of disruptor that this franchise needs.

Unless they're not because: So far, Dundon's big disruptions have involved failing in his hunt for a new GM before settling on an uninspired choice in Don Waddell, offering up a bunch of clichés about heart and culture change, and deciding that the best possible coach on the market just happened to be the franchise's former star player. In other words, all the things that every other team in the league already does. Some big thinker.

The verdict: Hockey gods help me, I'm picking the Hurricanes to make the playoffs again. This might be the 10th year in a row, I'm afraid to go back and check.

Florida Panthers

They'll be good because: They barely missed the playoffs last year, and they're young enough that they you'd expect them to improve just based on players continuing to develop. The roster is stacked with guys 25 or under, including the top three scorers and former top pick Aaron Ekblad, and this feels like the year that Aleksander Barkov finally makes the leap from under-appreciated star to just plain star. Even the coach is still learning – Bob Boughner won 44 games in his first year behind an NHL bench, so you'd figure he'll be even better in Year 2.

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.

They'll be bad because: The goaltending is at least a little bit of a question mark. Roberto Luongo was fantastic last year, but he's 39 years old and has been battling through injuries. James Reimer is an excellent backup who can step in as a decent starter, but in the likely scenario where Luongo is hurt or his game declines, this won't be a strength.

But they'll probably be fine because: The Atlantic looks like a train wreck. The top three teams are all strong, but that leaves four more that could all be varying degrees of disaster. That should mean a lot of easy wins for the Panthers, and not much pressure in the rearview mirror.

Unless they're not because: They're the Panthers. This team always seems to find a way to sabotage itself, whether it's through that disastrous 2016-17 shakeup or the expansion draft debacle. I know Florida fans are sick of hearing about mistakes made in the past, but at some point you have to wonder whether something is fundamentally broken when it comes to the decision-making process in this organization. And if so, what self-inflicted crisis are they going to pull off next?

The verdict: The Atlantic is basically three good teams, four bad ones, and then the Panthers trying to figure out which group they're in. I'm pretty sure they're a lot closer to the good group than the bad one, and it wouldn't even be that big a shock to see them jump up and catch someone like Boston or Toronto. But the most likely outcome looks a lot like last year – an easy fourth-place finish and a wild-card fight with the Metro to get into the playoffs.

They'll be good because: In this case, some of the uncertainty is tied directly to a potential Karlsson trade. But even if we assume that deal doesn't end up happening, the fact that the Stars were right in on both the best player on the trade market and the best player in free agency (John Tavares) suggests that Jim Nill thinks this team is ready to make some noise. He seems like a smart guy, so let's believe him.



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They'll be bad because: Does Nill really think they're close, or does he just think he needs a big move to save his job? Either way, you don't get a participation trophy for coming close on landing big-name players. The Stars missed the playoffs two years in a row, and as of right now they don't seem to be all that much better. That's not good news when you're stuck in the league's toughest division.

But they'll probably be fine because: The pieces are all there, even if the results haven't been. The offence can be dynamic when it's unleashed, and even a year under Ken Hitchcock still produced some decent numbers. Meanwhile, a healthy Ben Bishop (and the absence of Kari Lehtonen) should solve any lingering goaltending concerns. Some of their forwards are getting up there, but the blue line is young and talented. That should be enough to at least let them sneak by the Avalanche for a wild-card spot.

Unless they're not because: New coach Jim Montgomery comes from the college ranks and doesn't have any experience coaching professionals. He's highly regarded – he was reportedly the Rangers' top pick – but there will be some growing pains, and the track record of college coaches jumping to the NHL isn't exactly great.

The verdict: The Central is strong but could be top heavy with the Jets and Predators, so a wild-card spot or even third place should be available. But the Blues got better, the Blackhawks have earned the right not to be counted out, and the Wild and Avalanche were better teams last year. If the Stars land Karlsson then sure, let's push them up the standings. But right now, I'm not sure what separates them from anyone else in the Central traffic jam.

Columbus Blue Jackets

They'll be good because: They're already good. The Blue Jackets took a step back from their 108-point breakout in 2016-17, but still finished with a respectable 97 points last year, the most of any team on this list. They've had a quiet off-season so far; the only key piece they've lost is Jack Johnson, which might actually make them better. And let's not forget, they were one overtime goal away from going up 3-0 on the eventual champions last year. If they finish off the Caps, we're all probably already sold. They were one lucky bounce away from doing that.

They'll be bad because: That off-season may have been quiet in terms of transactions, but it hasn't been good. There's been no new deal for Sergei Bobrovsky, the team's most important player. And their other big star, Artemi Panarin, sure sounds like he wants out. This is a team that's never won so much as a playoff round, in part because star players like Rick Nash and Jeff Carter didn't want to stick around. If either Bobrovsky or Panarin is on the way out, they're doomed.

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But they'll probably be fine because: If one of the two stars bolts next summer, that will be bad news for the future. But we're talking about next season, and having one or two stars in the final year of their contract should provide some nice motivation. And if they end up trading Panarin, they should get a pretty decent return, so it could work out either way. Besides, you know who's not going anywhere? Seth Jones or Zach Werenski. They're just going to keep getting better.

Unless they're not because: It's a young-ish team that will be under pressure to win right now and could be facing dressing room distractions, and their coach is a guy who flips out over off-season soundbites. What could go wrong?

The verdict: Seriously, I have no idea. I'm not sure there's a team in the league with a wider range of plausible outcomes. We'll probably get some clarity on Panarin and Bobrovsky before the season starts, but right now anything between a Cup win and a total disaster of a season seems in play here.

Calgary Flames

They'll be good because: They've got a ton of skill up front, most of it young, and on paper the blue line should be a strength. Mix in the addition of James Neal, and there's more than enough talent here to at least make the playoffs in a weak Pacific, if not contend for top spot.

They'll be bad because: Most of that talent was here last year, when they couldn't score and only managed 84 points while fading down the stretch. Worse, it all happened amidst rumours that they weren't mentally tough enough to fight through a challenging season. Brad Treliving said he'd shake things up and he has, with the Dougie Hamilton trade being the biggest roster move. But we're still not sure exactly what went wrong last year, and that means we can't be sure it's been fixed.

But they'll probably be fine because: If attitude was an issue last season, then at least some of that falls on the coaching staff. And the Flames have made changes there, bringing in Bill Peters to right the ship. Hearing a new voice should help, and Peters has been known to be willing to crack the whip when he needs to.

Unless they're not because: That's the same Bill Peters who never made the playoffs in four years in Carolina, right? Who took a Hurricanes team everyone kept expecting to be good and led them nowhere? Whose current lifetime coaching record has him under .500 in league where the loser point makes finishing under .500 really difficult? That's the guy we're counting on to turn this around? OK, just checking.

The verdict: There are a ton of warning lights on this dashboard – we haven't even mentioned Mike Smith being 36 and coming off a year in which he missed a key chunk of the season. But it's July and nobody will remember this in a few months, so let's get bold and finish back where we started. Go ahead and book your reservation for Round 2: It's Flames versus Oilers in the Pacific Division final.

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Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown: Six times an NHL team had to trade a star and won

Sean McIndoe | July 16, 2018, 11:26 AM

We're still waiting on an Erik Karlsson deal. We're still told that the Lightning and Stars are the frontrunners, but the rumour mill has largely gone cold and a deal no longer seems imminent. Some reports now suggest that Pierre Dorion could even end up holding on to Karlsson until training camp, if not beyond.

As far as the Senators and their fans go, no news may feel like good news. After all, conventional wisdom says that this is a trade they just can't win.

For one, there's the old adage about the team that gets the best player winning the deal, and that will be Karlsson. But more importantly, it's always been clear that the Senators are dealing from a position of weakness. They don't want to trade their captain, but they might have no choice. And as the old saying goes, when the league knows you're drowning, other teams start throwing anchors instead of lifejackets.

We've seen it plenty of times in NHL history, and the team that's forced into dealing a star typically gets taken to the cleaners. Think of Montreal trading Patrick Roy to Colorado, or the Oilers sending Mark Messier to New York, or the Flames all but giving Doug Gilmour to Toronto. Those ended up being some of the most lopsided deals in NHL history, but the teams making them didn't have much choice. That's the sort of situation the Senators may be headed towards, and it always ends in misery.



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Well, almost always. Because while it's rare, there have been some cases in NHL history where a team was forced into trading away a superstar and actually ended up doing well on the deal. So today, let's offer up some optimism for Ottawa fans by looking back at six times that a team was backed into a corner and still found a way to come out even, or even ahead – and what the Senators could learn from them.

Eric Lindros to Philadelphia, 1992

The setup: We'll start with the most obvious example, and a blockbuster that reminds us that sometimes the best player in a trade doesn't end up being who you might think.

When the Nordiques drafted Lindros in 1991, they thought they'd landed their franchise player. Lindros was the most hyped prospect to enter the league since Mario Lemieux, and was viewed as a sure-thing superstar. But he didn't want to play in Quebec and went back to junior rather than sign a contract with the Nordiques. The team tried to play hardball, but after a full year had passed it became evident they'd have to make a trade.

The trade: This gets a little complicated, since the Nordiques actually ended up trading Lindros twice. They agreed to separate deals with both the Rangers and the Flyers, and it took a hearing in front of an NHL arbitrator to figure out which deal would stand. After five days and 11 witnesses, the ruling came down: Lindros was headed to Philadelphia, in exchange for Ron Hextall, Steve Duchesne, Kerry Huffman, Mike Ricci, the rights to Peter Forsberg, two first-round picks and cash.

The result: While he wasn't the next Lemieux, Lindros came reasonably close to living up to the hype. He won a Hart Trophy in his third season, and eventually made the Hall of Fame despite an injury-riddled career. But the Nordiques may have got the best player in the deal in Forsberg, and the rest of the haul helped them make a quick transition from laughingstock to Cup contender.

(For what it's worth, the Flyers would end up being backed into an unwanted trade of their own in 2001, when Lindros sat out an entire season to force his way out of town. That deal ended up being a bust.)

The lesson: With all due respect to Karlsson, it's hard to imagine a player ever having as much trade value as the 19-year-old Lindros did, so the Sens won't be getting anywhere close to that sort of windfall. But they do seem to be following one key page from the Nordiques' playbook by working to create a bidding war between two teams. If Dorion can maneuver the Stars and Lightning into an auction, he may be able to extract enough value to make the move work out. Just, uh, don't pull the trigger on both deals at the same time.

Adam Oates to Washington, 1997

The setup: Oates had an interesting career, bouncing around the league over the course of nearly two decades and eventually playing for seven teams. After becoming a star with Brett Hull on his wing in St. Louis, he went to Boston and teamed with Cam Neely on the way to a career-year in 1992-93; his 97 assists that year were the most ever recorded by someone other than Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux or Bobby Orr.

But by 1997, the Bruins hadn't won a playoff series in three years and were on their way to one of the worst seasons in their modern history. And Oates had had enough, unleashing a memorable tirade after a last-second loss to the Avalanche. He accused management of failing to bring in enough talent and ownership of being cheap – let us know if this rings any bells, Sens fans – and he capped it all off by saying "We're getting worse every year."

While that was true, Oates had violated the unwritten rule against making those sorts of complaints public. The Bruins stripped of him of his alternate captaincy and started actively shopping him.

The trade: The Bruins traded Oates along with Rick Tocchet and Bill Ranford to the Capitals, in exchange for Jim Carey, Anson Carter and Jason Allison.

The result: It was a classic rebuilding trade for the Bruins, with Capitals GM David Poile shifting into win-now mode after a disappointing season. It didn't work in the short-term; Oates initially refused to report without a new contract, the Caps missed the playoffs, and Poile lost his job. But one year later, Washington went to the Cup final for the first time.

At the time, Carey seemed like the main piece coming back to Boston; he was just 22 and had won the Vezina the year before. But he was a bust in Boston, and was out of the league entirely by 1999. (According to some reports at the time, the Bruins were offered Olaf Kolzig but decided on Carey instead.) Carter fared better, turning into a 20-goal scorer and going on to a long career.

But the big catch ended up being Allison. The 21-year-old had just 29 career points in parts of four NHL seasons, but he blossomed into a front-line player as a Bruin. He had 83 points in his first full season in Boston, and a career-high 95 in 2000-01.

The lesson: You don't have to hit on every young player to feel good about a trade and can even whiff completely on your blue-chip piece – as long as you make up for it by finding a future all-star.

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Dale Hawerchuk to Buffalo, 1990

The setup: At the time the best player in the Jets' NHL history, Hawerchuk had put together nine productive seasons in Winnipeg including winning the Calder and finishing as the Hart Trophy runner-up. But a rift with Jets GM Mike Smith had festered, and Hawerchuk ended up asking for a trade.

The trade: The Jets sent Hawerchuk and a first-round pick to the Sabres for Phil Housley, Scott Arniel, Jeff Parker and a first.

The result: This ended up being one of those trades that worked out reasonably well for both teams. Hawerchuk was very good in Buffalo, putting up four straight seasons between 86 and 98 points. For his part, Housley was a Norris finalist in his second year in Winnipeg and then racked up an eye-popping 97 points in 1992-93, which still ranks as one of the best offensive seasons from a blueliner in league history.

But the real key to the deal for the Jets was that swap of first-round picks. Winnipeg actually ended up moving down in the exchange, but they used their pick on Keith Tkachuk, who'd score over 300 goals in nearly a decade with the franchise. (In case you're wondering, the Sabres used their pick on Brad May.)

The lesson: Any Karlsson trade will presumably involve a first-round pick or two. Hitting on those can save the deal for the Sens, even if we may have to wait before we realize it.

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.

Jaromir Jagr to Washington, 2001

The setup: Jagr was easily the game's most dominant offensive force, having won four straight Art Ross trophies. But the Penguins were facing a financial crisis, having already gone through a bankruptcy and facing an uncertain future. With Jagr making a reported \$10-million a year, the Penguins just couldn't afford him.

As you'd expect, having the league's best forward hit the trade market sparked a major bidding war, with the Rangers, Kings and Stars all making their pitch. But it was the Capitals who came up with an offer the Penguins couldn't refuse.

The trade: The Pens sent Jagr to Washington for prospects Kris Beech, Ross Lupaschuk, Michal Sivek.

The result: In one sense, this is the rare trade where everybody lost. Jagr's production fell off a cliff in Washington, and less than three years later the Caps were shipping him to the Rangers in a straight-up deal for



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Anson Carter. To this day, the Jagr-in-Washington era is one of those "let's never speak of this again" things.

But the Penguins didn't really fare any better. All three prospects ended up being busts, combining to score just 13 goals in Penguin uniforms. Pittsburgh basically traded the league's top scorer for nothing.

So how does this deal wind up as a positive for Pittsburgh? Because Jagr's absence allowed them to hit rock bottom over the next three years. That landed them three top-five picks, which they turned into Ryan Whitney, Marc-Andre Fleury and Evgeni Malkin. More importantly, those three terrible seasons gave them the league's best odds in the 2005 Sidney Crosby lottery. When the ping pong balls bounced their way, the groundwork for three more Cups (and counting) had been laid. And none of it would have happened if they hadn't traded Jagr for a handful of magic beans.

The lesson: While we'll all declare winners and losers on a Karlsson deal the moment it happens, sometimes the long-term impact can take years to come into focus.

Denis Savard to Montreal, 1990

The setup: Savard had established himself as one of the game's top centres over the course of a decade in Chicago, racking up five 100-plus point seasons along the way. But he was facing a problem that more than a few NHL stars have run into over the years: Mike Keenan.

The notoriously combative coach had been making life difficult for Savard, and the rift had become public during the 1990 playoffs. The two butted heads, Savard was occasionally benched, and depending on which version of the story you believe, Keenan may even have kicked his franchise player out of the team hotel.

The Blackhawks still made the conference final, but by the time their run ended it was clear somebody was going to have to go. That ended up being Savard.

The trade: Chicago sent Savard to Montreal for 28-year-old former Norris winner Chris Chelios and a second-round pick.

The result: Savard had some decent moments in Montreal, but his production fell off to the point where he was a healthy scratch for much of the Canadiens' 1993 Cup run. His stint as a Hab lasted just three seasons, and after a detour in Tampa he finished his career back in a Keenan-less Chicago.

Meanwhile, Chelios had reportedly been causing headaches of his own in Montreal, but continued to dominate on the ice in Chicago. He won two Norris Trophies as a Hawk and was a finalist for two more before being dealt to the Red Wings in 1999 and going on to one of the longest careers in NHL history.

The lesson: No matter what you do, never trade a 28-year-old former Norris winner.

Wait, that probably doesn't make Senator fans feel any better. OK, let's close with one that will put smiles on some faces in Ottawa, as we look back on a disgruntled centre who was traded for young players and a high draft pick.

Matt Duchene to Ottawa, 2017

No! Not that trade involving a centre! Good lord, we're trying to cheer up Senator fans, not pour salt in their wounds. Let's go to the other Ottawa deal featuring a disgruntled centre being traded for young players and a high draft pick.

Alexei Yashin to New York, 2001

The setup: That's better.

Yashin had been the modern Senators' first real star and had finished as the Hart runner-up in 1998-99. But as far as he was concerned, that entitled him to a big raise, and when the Senators didn't offer one, he

went home. He sat out the entire 1999-2000 season, which he believed was the last one left on his contract.

And it was... or it would have been. The Senators argued that because Yashin didn't play, he still owed them one more year. An arbitrator agreed, forcing Yashin back to Ottawa for the 2000-01 season. He sulked his way through that final season, but it was clear he'd never play another game for the Senators once his deal was officially up. The Sens had no choice but to trade the rights to their franchise player.

The trade: At the 2001 draft, the Senators sent Yashin to the Islanders for the second overall pick, young defenceman Zdeno Chara, and forward Bill Muckalt.

The result: Yashin got a massive new contract from the Islanders, then saw his production flatline. He was eventually bought out, and his deal only came off the Isles' books a few years ago.

Meanwhile, the Senators used the second pick on Jason Spezza, who quickly developed into a 90-point centre. That alone would have been enough to score the trade as a win, but they also landed Chara, at the time a big but raw blueliner who was viewed as a project. It's fair to say the project turned out well, and he developed into a Norris candidate in four seasons in Ottawa.

As for Muckalt, his Senators resume involved the rare feat of going a full season without scoring a single goal. Nobody cared, and to this day the trade that was spawned by the seemingly no-win Yashin situation stands as the best the Senators have ever made.

The lesson: If possible, the Senators should try really hard to trade Karlsson to Mike Milbury.

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Sportsnet.ca / Best NHL defence pairs of the salary-cap era

Sean McIndoe | July 11, 2018

The Erik Karlsson watch continues. After rumours swirled all weekend that a deal to send Karlsson to Tampa was imminent, we've made it into the week without a trade. The Lightning still seem like the frontrunner, but for now, nothing is official.

Extending Nikita Kucherov does not take #TBLightning out of the Erik Karlsson trade talks. Quite the opposite; it gives them more certainty about their future.

Word is they continue to engage outside teams on a potential three-way deal with OTT.

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) July 10, 2018

That's good news for everyone who isn't a Lightning fan, because it means there's still a chance that the two-time Norris winner won't end up playing on the same team as this year's recipient — Victor Hedman — and maybe even on the same pairing. That's vaguely terrifying for the rest of the league, since we're told that defence wins championships and the Lightning would have two of the very best in the league.

That kind of star power sharing the same blue line is rare, but not unheard of. So today, let's run through some of the times over the past 30 years or so that one team could run out a pair of Hall of Fame defencemen. Note that we're talking about a pair here, not necessarily a pairing — in most cases, these players weren't used on the same unit, and we don't know whether Karlsson and Hedman would be. But even if



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they're deployed separately, having two Norris-caliber defencemen gives a coach all sorts of opportunity to dominate matchups.

It also virtually guarantees a Stanley Cup... most of the time. As we'll see, there are no sure things in the NHL, although having an all-star blue line comes awfully close.

The Big Show

Joe Smith gives his take on the Kucherov extension and a potential Karlsson deal

July 10 2018

Audio Player

Chris Pronger and Scott Niedermayer, Anaheim Ducks

There's a good chance that when you saw the subject for this post, this is the first pair that came to mind. They land right in that sweet spot where they're recent enough that everyone remembers them, but long enough ago that we can start to build a mythology around them.

In the case of the Ducks, the mythology goes something like this: Anaheim was a good team coming out of the lockout, and they became a very good one when they signed Niedermayer as a free agent in 2005. But it was the acquisition of Pronger in 2006, thanks to some aggressive maneuvering by GM Brian Burke, that gave Anaheim one of the greatest pair of blueliners in modern NHL history, and they rolled to the Stanley Cup the very next year.

Most of that mythology is pretty much true, although it leaves out a few details, like Pronger forcing his way out of Edmonton and Niedermayer choosing the Ducks at least partly because he could play with his brother.

Those minor details aside, it's hard to deny how overpowering the pair were. Randy Carlyle often used them on the same unit; other times he'd split them up and basically play the entire game with a Norris winner on the ice. During Anaheim's Cup run, both players averaged roughly 30 minutes a game, miles ahead of any other Ducks.

When you think of a potential Karlsson/Hedman combo, this is the scenario you're dreaming of if you're a Lightning fan and dreading if you're anyone else. But the story ending with a Cup parade isn't quite inevitable, as Pronger himself can remind us...

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

Chris Pronger and Al MacInnis, St. Louis Blues

As great a pair as they were, Pronger and Niedermayer were a few years removed from their Norris Trophy wins when they arrived in Anaheim, both having earned the honour years apart for different teams. So imagine how unbeatable a team would be if it had two defencemen on the same roster who also happened to be the two most recent Norris winners.

It's only happened once in modern NHL history; even the Canadiens' fabled Big Three of their '70s dynasty never combined to capture back-to-back Norris Trophies. The only team to pull it off in the last 50 years was the St. Louis Blues back at the turn of the century, when Al MacInnis won the 1999 trophy and Pronger took it home (along with the Hart) the very next year.

So how did a team with not one but two recent Norris winners patrolling the blue line end up doing? Enh, they were OK.

That's pretty much it. Somehow, the Blues turned the Pronger/MacInnis era into a bunch of pretty good teams that never really went anywhere. The 1999-2000 team won the Presidents' Trophy with 114 points, then lost in the first round in a crushing upset. The rest of their teams hovered around 90 or 100 points, made the playoffs, and then went out quickly.

Some of that was injury, with Pronger missing almost the entire 2002-03 season. Some of it was age, as MacInnis was pushing 40 by that point, although his play didn't show it - he finished as the Norris runner-up in his last full season in 2002-03. But mostly, the Blues just didn't put a good enough team around their two studs, relying on guys like Roman Turek in net and an inconsistent cast of forwards up front.

It's fair to say that when it comes to depth at other positions, the current Lightning aren't the early-2000s Blues. But if you're looking for hope that Tampa wouldn't steamroll to easy titles with Karlsson on board, the Pronger/MacInnis combo offers at least a little.

Rob Blake and Ray Bourque, Colorado Avalanche

This one's a bit of a different case. Neither Blake or Bourque was a homegrown star, and they played together for only a single playoff run. But they make for a good case study in what happens when a GM goes all in on a championship-caliber roster. Spoiler alert: It turned out well.

By 2000, the Avalanche were a few years removed from their only Stanley Cup and facing down the end of the Patrick Roy era. With Joe Sakic and Peter Forsberg up front, GM Pierre Lacroix identified the blue line as an area of need and addressed it with aggressive moves for a pair of Hall of Famers. Bourque came over in a 2000 trade, and when the Avs fell short in that year's conference finals, Lacroix doubled down by acquiring Blake at the 2001 deadline.

That gave the Avalanche an unbeatable pair - or trio, if you mix in the reliably steady Adam Foote. The Avs dominated the regular season, and while they needed seven games to knock off Blake's old team, they ended up capturing the Stanley Cup. Every hockey fan remembers how that run ended:

Far be it from Steve Yzerman to take much inspiration from his old pals in Colorado, but he'd be happy to see a Karlsson/Hedman combo finish up with the same result. Even if it didn't pack quite the same emotional punch.

Nicklas Lidstrom and Chris Chelios, Detroit Red Wings

Here's a combo Yzerman probably has a little bit fonder memories of.

During his time in Detroit, Lidstrom was one of those stars that you could send out with just about anyone and know you had a dominant pairing; towards the end of his career, he clicked especially well with Brian Rafalski. But back in 1999, before Lidstrom had won a Norris, the Wings decided to bring in another big name to share the blue line minutes when they pried a 37-year-old Chelios out of a messy situation in Chicago.

At the time, it felt like a move that could be a short-term rental. Instead, Chelios played another decade in Detroit, giving the Red Wings two all-time greats. Their most impressive accomplishment came in 2002, when Lidstrom and Chelios finished 1-2 in a close Norris vote, an almost unprecedented case of players from the same team dominating the ballots.

Not surprisingly, the Red Wings won the Cup that year.

They'd win it again in 2008, although by that point Chelios was well past his prime, and they had their share of dominant regular seasons, too. And they weren't shy about doing it with veteran blueliners - when the Red Wings finished with 124 points in 2005-06, Lidstrom and Chelios were two of a ridiculous five defencemen on the roster who were 35 or older. (By comparison, here's the total list of blueliners that old who saw the ice in 2017-18 for any team.)

Paul Coffey and Larry Murphy, Pittsburgh Penguins

Let's move from Lidstrom and the Red Wings to two more Hall of Famers who'd eventually join him in Detroit. Coffey and Murphy each played parts of five seasons with the Mario Lemieux-era Penguins, although they never overlapped for a full season. They were together for one playoff run, though. That came in 1991, with Murphy having just arrived in a mid-season trade from Minnesota and Coffey still a year away from being dealt to the Kings.



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It was pretty much the perfect time for the two to cross paths. Including the 1990–91 season, Coffey had finished in the top five in Norris voting in nine of the past 10 years, while Murphy would do the same in three of the next four. They joined a loaded Penguins team that featured five other Hall of Famers plus Jaromir Jagr, but still somehow finished the season with only 88 points.

That was enough to get them into the playoffs, and after an early scare against the Devils they went on to win the franchise's first Stanley Cup. The clinching win came in Minnesota, with the Pens rolling to an 8–0 laugh. Murphy scored the game's final goal against the team that had just traded him less than six months earlier.

Scott Stevens and Scott Niedermayer, New Jersey Devils

We'll end back where we started, with slick-skating Scott Niedermayer suiting up alongside a bruiser.

This combo lasted a little longer than the Anaheim version, with Niedermayer and Stevens arriving in New Jersey together in 1991 and lasting until 2004. That was enough time to win three Stanley Cups and come close on a few more. Based on talent, longevity and results, you could make a strong case for Stevens and Niedermayer being the gold standard for one-two punches on the blue line.

If anything, having two all-world defencemen on the same team for so long may have resulted in both guys being somewhat underrated, at least as far as post-season awards go. Stevens is right up there with Brad Park in the conversation for the best defenceman to never win a Norris, and Niedermayer only won his in his final year in New Jersey, when Stevens missed half the season. Each also managed just a single first-team all-star selection, as voters generally looked elsewhere when it was time to hand out honours.

Still, those three Cup wins will probably dull any lingering pain. If you're not a Lightning fan, this is basically your worst-case scenario, especially with the obvious parallels – like Hedman, Niedermayer was a homegrown talent drafted with a top-three pick, while Stevens arrived in New Jersey when he was just a few months younger than Karlsson is right now.

If a Karlsson-to-Tampa deal goes down, the league had better hope that Andrei Vasilevskiy isn't the next Martin Brodeur, or else we can probably go ahead and hand the Lightning at least a few of the next decade's Stanley Cups.

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.

Honourable mentions

We did say we were looking for pairs where both guys were Hall of Famers, which for now at least rules out some decent combos. At the risk of hearing from Dallas Stars fans who make this kind of thing their life's work, we'll point out that Sergei Zubov isn't in the Hall yet, even though his stint in New York with Brian Leetch is worth a mention — Zubov was actually the leading scorer on the Rangers' 1994 Cup-winning team.

Another blueliner with a strong HHOF case who hasn't made it yet is Doug Wilson, who played alongside Chelios in Chicago for a few years towards the end of his career. Kevin Lowe could still make it someday, which would make him worth a mention for his days in Edmonton with Coffey — he was also on that championship Rangers team with Leetch and Zubov. If you're looking at guys who are still active but may have a shot at the Hall someday, you'd have to consider the Shea Weber/Ryan Suter combo in Nashville a few years ago.

Then there are a few cases of Hall of Fame combos that weren't together long. Not surprisingly, we could come up with a few involving Coffey, who bounced around a ton during his career. In addition to playing with Murphy in Pittsburgh and Lidstrom in Detroit, he also shared a roster with Larry Robinson in Los Angeles, and even with Chelios in Chicago (for six

whole games). Speaking of cameos, Phil Housley briefly joined the Stevens/Niedermayer combo in New Jersey.

There are probably some others that I missed, including that pair from your favourite team that was clearly better than anyone on this list. That's a terrible oversight, because those guys were the best ever. At least until Karlsson and Hedman team up to destroy us all.

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

Sportsnet Staff | @Sportsnet July 23, 2018, 2:30 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.

So far, only one hearing this year has actually resulted in an arbitration ruling — that's Jacob Trouba, who was awarded a one-year, \$5.5-million contract.

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

Arbitration date: July 24

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.

Arbitration asks for Brandon Montour — team requests two-year deal with an AAV of \$1.5M. Player ask is one year at \$4.75M. @icemancometh reported yesterday that Bob Murray said the two sides are working on a bridge deal

— Elliotte Friedman (@FriedgeHNIC) July 22, 2018

Ducks GM Bob Murray told fans at a season ticket holders event that he'll be flying to Toronto for Brandon Montour's arbitration hearing, scheduled for Tuesday. Said he's working on a two-year bridge deal with defenseman. Sides couldn't work out longer extension.

— Eric Stephens (@icemancometh) July 21, 2018



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Calgary Flames

Garnet Hathaway

2017-18 salary: \$650,000

Arbitration date: July 30

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

Arbitration date: July 27

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

Arbitration date: July 23

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

Signed: The Flames locked up Lindholm to a six-year, \$29.1-million deal on July 16, avoiding arbitration with the newly-acquired forward who came over to Calgary in the blockbuster deal along with fellow RFA Noah Hanifin. His new cap hit is \$4.85 million through the 2023-24 campaign.

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.

David Rittich

2017-18 salary: \$725,000

Arbitration date: July 28

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

Arbitration date: Aug. 4

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

Signed: Nieto and the Avalanche settled on a two-year, \$3.95-million pact (\$1.975-million cap hit) prior to the arbitration hearing.

The depth forward has fit in well in Colorado since being claimed off waivers from the San Jose Sharks in January 2017. The 25-year-old tallied a career-high 15 goals in 74 games in 2017-18.

Dallas Stars

Mattias Janmark

2017-18 salary: \$700,000

Arbitration date: Aug. 3

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

Signed: The Stars avoided a hearing by inking Shore to a two-year, \$4.6-million contract on July 13.

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

Arbitration date: Aug. 1

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

Arbitration date: July 30

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

Signed: Dumba was rewarded for his breakout season with a five-year, \$30-million contract to stay in Minnesota through 2022-23.

He 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

Arbitration date: July 28

2017-18 was a breakout season with 33 goals and 64 points plus 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



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Joel Armia

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Signed: Two weeks after acquiring Armia in a trade with the Winnipeg Jets, the Canadiens sidestepped an arbitration hearing by signing him up to a one-year, \$1.85-million deal on July 13.

He 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

Signed: Not only did Danault avoid arbitration, he also got a healthy raise by signing a three-year, \$9.25-million deal with the Canadiens on July 15.

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

Arbitration date: Aug. 2

He 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/QX2qmrMRhl>

— Jim Diamond (@diamondhockey) July 5, 2018

New Jersey Devils

Blake Coleman

2017-18 salary: \$660,000

Signed: The Devils avoided arbitration by signing Coleman to a three-year, \$5.4-million deal on July 17.

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.

Stefan Noesen

2017-18 salary: \$660,000

Signed: On the same day they signed Coleman, the Devils also inked Noesen to a one-year deal worth \$1.7 million.

A third- or fourth-liner, Noesen has yet to hit his potential as a pro.

New York Islanders

Brock Nelson

2017-18 salary: \$2.5 million

Arbitration date: Aug. 3

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.

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New York Rangers

Kevin Hayes

2017-18 salary: \$2.6 million

Arbitration date: Aug. 2

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

Arbitration date: July 31

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

Arbitration date: Aug. 4

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

Signed: No hearing needed between Vesey and the Rangers, as the two sides agreed to terms on a two-year deal worth \$4.55 million on July 17.

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

Arbitration date: Aug. 1

He may not be a fan favourite, but Ceci averaged 23:20 per game, which might go up 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

Arbitration date: Aug. 3

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 \$8-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



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Signed: It's a one-year, \$720,000 deal for Leier and the Flyers, arbitration-free.

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

Signed: The two sides avoid an arbitration hearing with a two-year, \$1.5-million deal.

The 25-year-old netminder made 11 appearances as a rookie in 2017-18, posting a 4-2-1 record with a 2.75 goals-against average (GAA) and .905 save percentage.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Jamie Oleksiak

2017-18 salary: \$806,558

Signed: Oleksiak is a Penguins for three more seasons after signing a pre-arbitration contract worth \$6.41 million over those three years.

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

Signed: The Sharks and Tierney agreed to terms on a two-year, \$5.875-million contract on July 18, ahead of their scheduled arbitration hearing.

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. He scored 17 goals and 40 points last season, which was a 17-point jump from his previous career best, and was San Jose's top penalty-killer among forwards.

St. Louis Blues

Joel Edmundson

2017-18 salary: \$1.05 million

Arbitration date: July 25

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

Dmitrij Jaskin

2017-18 salary: \$1 million

Signed: Jaskin will earn \$1.1 million in 2018-19, thanks to a one-year pre-arbitration deal signed on July 7.

Oskar Sundqvist

2017-18 salary: \$675,000

Signed: Sundqvist signed a one-year deal ahead of his scheduled hearing, and will earn 700,000 with the Blues next season.

Vancouver Canucks

Troy Stecher

2017-18 salary: \$925,000

Signed: Stecher will stay with his hometown team, thanks to a pre-arbitration settlement signed on July 20 that will see the rearguard earn \$4.65 million over the next two years.

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.

Vegas Golden Knights

William Karlsson

2017-18 salary: \$1 million

Arbitration date: Aug. 4

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

Signed: The Golden Knights didn't need to head to their arbitration hearing with Miller, who agreed to a four-year, \$15.5-million contract on July 7.

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

Signed: The two sides had a hearing scheduled for July 30, but came to terms on a one-year, \$962,500 contract beforehand.

A 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

Signed: Rather than head to the arbitration table on July 23, the Capitals and O'Brien signed a one-year pact worth the league-minimum \$650,000 on July 13.

The undrafted 23-year-old depth player played three games with the Capitals last season, and 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



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Arbitration date: July 30

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

Signed: GM Kevin Cheveldayoff locked up his young No. 1 netminder to a six-year, \$37-million deal on July 12. He'll count for \$6.167 million against the cap through 2023-24, which could prove to be a steal.

Adam Lowry

2017-18 salary: \$1.125 million

Signed: Lowry's locked in for three more years with Winnipeg thanks a pre-arbitration settlement worth \$8.75 million.

The 25-year-old has proved valuable on special teams, posting the highest average ice time on the penalty kill among Jets forwards. He was limited to 45 regular-season games due to injury in 2017-18, but was effective in the post-season.

Brandon Tanev

2017-18 salary: \$700,000

Signed: Tanev and the Jets inked a one-year 1.15-million contract just three days before their scheduled arbitration hearing.

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

Jacob Trouba

2017-18 salary: \$2.812 million

Arbitration award: After what was reported to be a marathon of a hearing, the arbitrator awarded Trouba a one-year, \$5.5 contract on Sunday.

Once upon a time Trouba asked for a trade out of Winnipeg, which was later rescinded after he accepted a two-year bridge contract. 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.

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL's 15 most intriguing unsigned RFAs: Latest buzz

Luke Fox | July 23, 2018, 1:40 PM

With this summer's crop of unrestricted free agents picked over like a garage sale come 2 p.m., our attention focuses on the 40 restricted free agents who have yet to come to terms with their respective clubs.

A chunk of them have filed for arbitration, which helps accelerate the process, but several are ineligible to do so or elected to solve things without involving a third party.

The next real pressure point for RFAs without a pending arb case is the opening day of training camps in September.

A few big extensions — like those for Minnesota's Matt Dumba, Calgary's Elias Lindholm and Winnipeg's Connor Hellebuyck and Jacob Trouba — have already been inked, but there are plenty of intriguing ones on deck.

Here are the 15 we're most interested to see play out.

Mark Stone

Age: 26

Position: Right wing

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$3.5 million

A 20-goal, 30-plus-assist scorer for the fourth consecutive year, Stone was a rare plus player (+9) on one of the league's worst teams. The takeaway artist signed off on a relatively team-friendly bridge deal when he first became a restricted free agent three years ago, and now it's time for Ottawa to pay. Unfortunately for GM Pierre Dorion, he's working under a budget and the futures of Erik Karlsson and Cody Ceci are also on his plate. Stone told us a couple months back that he intends to be "part of the solution" in Ottawa, not part of the problem. That he filed for arbitration ensures at least another season in Ottawa. The unsung star is a year away from unrestricted free agency and thus could be looking at an AAV exceeding \$7 million.

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

William Nylander

Age: 22

Position: Right wing / Centre

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$832,500

Any Leafs fan concerned that Nylander may be dangled as cap-saving trade bait breathed an audible sigh of relief when GM Kyle Dubas said, "We can, and we will" keep all three young studs — Auston Matthews, Mitchell Marner and Nylander — in the fold, as well as UFA prize John Tavares. Nylander is coming off back-to-back 61-point seasons and should expect to put up at least that many again in 2018-19 skating on Matthews' wing. Of the three, he's the only must-sign this summer. Cap space isn't an issue yet in Toronto, but Dubas's first big extension must be made with the forthcoming raises for Marner and Matthews in mind.

"We'll be very patient," Dubas told Eliot Friedman and Jeff Marek on the 31 Thoughts podcast in early July. "I always think that when a player is going to make a commitment of any length, particularly when they're signing up long-term, that we need to sit with the player and make sure that the player knows where we're going as a program and what our vision and our plans are so those are discussions that I'll have with each of the individual players that are due extensions here or are due contracts for next season."

William Nylander's first NHL game was Feb 29, 2016. Here are the 21 forwards who have exceeded his totals in both goals and assists since that time. And yes I'm gonna beat this dead horse into a goddam pulp. pic.twitter.com/2xMXuRroSn

— Active Stick (@oak_leafs) July 17, 2018

Dylan Larkin

Age: 22

Position: Centre

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$925,000

Turning heads as a rookie, Larkin bounced back from a soft sophomore season to again lead the Red Wings' offence in a stellar contract year (63 points). He also improved his defensive game, killed penalties, and graduated from wing to centre. According to Helene St. James of the Detroit Free Press, GM Ken Holland is working on a large extension for the most important player on Detroit's roster. The Wings would prefer to go five years but may have to up their offer to six.

William Karlsson

Age: 25



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Position: Centre

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$1 million

Already on his third NHL team, Karlsson has been a revelation for the expansion Golden Knights as the Stanley Cup finalist's top centre and arguably the biggest bargain in the NHL. He won the Lady Byng, was named Sweden's hockey player of the year, finished sixth in Selke voting and scored a cool 43 goals, thanks in part to a shooting percentage of 23.4. Inching toward arbitration, Karlsson's one good incredible season makes this the most intriguing RFA case of the summer. At the risk of irking the player, it may be in Vegas's best interest to aim short term.

Brandon Montour

Age: 24

Position: Defence

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$925,000

A big, young, right-shot defenceman who can log minutes and contribute offence? Yeah, probably the type of player you want to lock up. The cap-hit Ducks have already committed more than \$19 million to their D core in 2018-19, and with Montour's arbitration set for Tuesday, this one will be interesting to watch. The Athletic's Eric Stephens reported Wednesday that negotiations on a bridge deal are "going well."

Arbitration asks for Brandon Montour — team requests two-year deal with an AAV of \$1.5M. Player ask is one year at \$4.75M.

@icemancomeh reported yesterday that Bob Murray said the two sides are working on a bridge deal

— Elliotte Friedman (@FriedgeHNIC) July 22, 2018

Jason Zucker

Age: 26

Position: Left wing / Right wing

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$2 million

Zucker picked a fine time for his best NHL season offensively, leading all Wild wings with 64 points. The versatile forward has a loyal track record of re-upping for fair, short-term deals, but his 33-goal breakout in 2017-18 means he'll want to cash in. New GM Paul Fenton was staring at arbitration battles with both Zucker (July 28) and Dumba, critical pieces of Minnesota's future. Since signing Dumba Friday, Fenton has about \$5.6 million in cap space to ink Zucker.

"I want to be in Minnesota; I love Minnesota. My family roots are now here. This is a second home to us, and I want to be here. We have a great team. We have a lot of really good things going for us," Zucker told TwinCities.com. "If it was my choice, I'd be here playing for the Wild next season."

Fenton and Zucker's agent are reportedly set to meet face-to-face this week.

Noah Hanifin

Age: 21

Position: Defence

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$925,000

Defensively sound with plenty of runway to improve, Calgary views Hanifin as a long-term upgrade from (or at least a better fit than) Dougie Hamilton. One of the attractive elements of Hamilton, from Carolina's perspective, is cost certainty. The Flames have already come to terms with Lindholm, the other RFA acquired in their draft-weekend blockbuster, but Hanifin has no arbitration rights. Hanifin is enthused by the trade, and Brad Treliving says he doesn't foresee an issue coming to an agreement. Hanifin has been penciled in to skate alongside Travis Hamonic in Calgary's second pairing.

"We got two good players, they're excited to be here and play for this team ... we think this fits for us." — Brad Treliving on the acquisitions of Elias Lindholm and Noah Hanifin [pic.twitter.com/rRjXv9qnb7](https://twitter.com/rRjXv9qnb7)

— Calgary Flames (@NHLFlames) June 23, 2018

Brady Skjei

Age: 24

Position: Defence

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$925,000

The Rangers have a tradition of dealing in bridge contracts after a bright young player's entry-level deal expires. As the only established Rangers defender under the age of 29, locking up Skjei should be a no-brainer. After buying out Dan Girardi last summer and staring at three more years of Marc Staal at \$5.7 million per, the Blueshirts should learn it's better to commit to young players than old ones. Retooling New York is facing arbitration with forwards Spooner and Hayes in addition to Skjei with a shade over \$19.1 million to spend.

Sam Reinhart

Age: 22

Position: Right wing / Centre

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$894,167

The second-overall pick of 2014 has performed better each season of his young NHL career. As with any Sabre not named Jack Eichel, Reinhart has had his name chucked into the trade rumour mill from time to time, but he's a 25-goal talent who doesn't miss games and whose ceiling has yet to be reached. With no arbitration rights, does Reinhart push for a bridge deal and bet on further improvement, or does Buffalo want to lock up its last remaining RFA early? A longer-term deal could compare to those of fellow 2018 RFAs J.T. Miller or Tomas Hertl: an AAV of at least \$5 million over at least five seasons.

For a guy whose career highs in FIVE seasons are 17 goals and 45 points. Aren't Sam Reinhart and his agent high-fiving right now? Isn't Jason Botterill cursing Calgary right now? <https://t.co/8D6tB0nTmd>

— Mike Harrington (@ByMHarrington) July 16, 2018

Ondrej Kase

Age: 22

Position: Right wing

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$670,000

The seventh-round gem excelled in a third-line role, making the Pacific Division take note of his sneaky-good talent. A \$670,000 cap hit for a 20-goal scorer? "Thank you very much," said the cap-strapped Ducks. But now that Kase's contract has expired, the winger is due for a hefty raise — and Bob Murray needs to keep all the young, speedy forwards he's got. Note that Kase is not eligible for arbitration, so this one could linger.

Tom Wilson

Age: 24

Position: Right wing

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$2 million

Tom Wilson won a Stanley Cup skating on the far side of Alex Ovechkin on the Washington Capitals' first line. Love him or hate him, he's an impact player — in every sense of the word — and critical to his club's identity.

"It's a big priority," Capitals GM Brian MacLellan told reporters earlier this month. "Tom's a big part of our team, a big part of what we got going and our playoff success. So he's No. 1 right now."



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"I'd prefer to keep him around for as long as we can."

MacLellan prefers to strike a long-term deal — five years or more — that would keep Wilson in D.C. through his 20s.

Despite being eligible for arbitration, Wilson loves Washington and opted not to file. The rugged winger has been negotiating a new contract through agent Mark Guy, who told the Washington Post's Isabelle Khurshudyan on July 17 that a deal is not "done or close."

Darnell Nurse

Age: 23

Position: Defence

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$863,333

Nurse led all Oilers defencemen in scoring last season, although that only took 26 points. Belief among both the player and the club is that there is another level to the defender's game. That and the fact Edmonton is down to just \$4.98 million in cap space — with which Peter Chiarelli must use to sign Nurse and maybe a depth forward — suggests Nurse would be better off going short-term and betting on a breakout year. More power-play minutes could help his wallet.

"They've sent us a proposal and we'll see where that goes," Nurse's agent, Anton Thun, told the Edmonton Journal. "I don't see with their cap space being what it is that they can entice us with much term."

"They bought out Eric Gryba to add another player (50-man protected list), which cut into their cap and they signed the European goalie (Mikko Koskinen) for two-million and change, and that did the same to their cap space."

"If they've got \$5 million in cap space, it's not going to be a long-term deal."

Joshua Morrissey

Age: 23

Position: Defence

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$863,333

Ineligible for arbitration, Morrissey has patiently waited his turn for an extension, watching Hellebuyck, Lowry, Tanev and Trouba get their contracts. Morrissey was consistently and quietly excellent for the Jets all season and through the post-season. The big question is, with cap space at premium, is it actually smarter to bet on himself, take a two-year deal and swing for the fences at age 25?

Codi Ceci

Age: 24

Position: Defence

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$2.8 million

Only Erik Karlsson logged more ice time for Ottawa than Ceci in 2017-18. A young, right-shot stay-at-home defenceman who avoids the penalty box, he has the potential to be a top-four fixture in the nation's capital for years. Ceci was deemed too valuable to expose during the expansion draft or surrender in previous trade discussions. Ceci quietly plays a defensive role, and his modest stat line (five goals, 19 points, minus-27) should keep his cap hit reasonable if his upcoming arbitration case goes the distance.

Kevin Hayes

Age: 26

Position: Centre

2017-18 salary cap hit: \$2.6 million

Slotting in a the Rangers' second-line centre, Hayes is coming off a career-best 25-goal campaign — and yet that hasn't stopped his name from popping up in blog-driven trade speculation. Hayes filed for salary arbitration, and his case will be held Aug. 2 if a deal isn't reached prior.

More notable RFAs: Brock Nelson, Mattias Janmark, Colin Miller, Shea Theodore, Joel Edmundson, Nick Ritchie, Miles Wood, Jake Virtanen, Ryan Spooner, Mark Jankowski

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Sportsnet.ca / Islanders' Boychuk, Bailey not worried after Tavares departure

Josh Beneteau | July 23, 2018, 4:25 PM

The minute John Tavares left the New York Islanders to return home and play for the Toronto Maple Leafs, people in all sorts of hockey circles began writing off the Islanders.

After all, this was a team that had missed the playoffs for two straight seasons and then lost its most important offensive weapon.

But despite all the criticism, veteran players Johnny Boychuk and Josh Bailey aren't listening. Instead, they believe their team will be just fine.

"I've already seen some people pegging us as being in the bottom. That's just a slap in the face when I see it," Boychuk said in an interview with Arthur Staple of The Athletic. "Our team is really good. I think we're going to show them we are a good team."

"I've never really worried too much about what's being said," Bailey added. "It's about your teammates, the organization, and your fans as well. I look forward to playing a role in helping the team take the next step. We're all on board with wanting to win, that's the main focus. We just want to give ourselves a chance."

The Islanders' offensive responsibilities now fall on Bailey, Anders Lee and 2018 Calder Trophy winner Mathew Barzal. The Islanders did add some veteran forwards with Leo Komarov, Valtteri Filppula and Tom Kuhnhackl signing as free agents, but those three are known more for their play away from than puck than scoring goals.

Boychuk acknowledged the focus will be on the hole left by Tavares, but reminded critics that hockey is a team game.

"People shouldn't be worrying about one person. In hockey, one person does not make a team. At all," Boychuk said. "One guy can't carry a whole team, be the whole team. It was an important player for us but there's 23 players on a team and you have to hold 23 players accountable to win a season, a championship."

Along with some major changes on the ice, the Islanders shook up their team off the ice, too. Head coach Doug Weight and GM Garth Snow were replaced by Barry Trotz and Lou Lamoriello, two people with hard-nosed reputations and winning resumes. Bailey was asked about the hiring of Trotz and Lamoriello and said the changes should light a fire under the players.

"We're in good hands for sure," Bailey said. "New eyes can be a good thing, maybe put some guys on edge a bit. A new start for some, maybe some motivation for others. Different isn't always a bad thing."

While it's certainly too early to say whether the many moves will turn the Islanders into a playoff team, it's clear the players still there will head into the season with positive outlooks.



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"We're going to be a grittier team next year, I think. More sandpaper, more hard-working," Boychuk said. "I think that's a reason for everyone to be excited."

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