



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Aug. 3, 2017

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Pesce looks to elevate game, get Canes in playoffs

By Chip Alexander

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A day after receiving a six-year contract extension, Brett Pesce was thinking only about next year.

The Carolina Hurricanes defenseman wants to be stronger. He wants to improve his shot and be more of an offensive factor. He wants to help the Canes reach the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time since 2009.

"It's time to get better and work harder and really elevate my game each and every year," Pesce said Wednesday. "I've got to up my game now."

The Canes like his game. Pesce, often paired with Jaccob Slavin last season, provided some smart, tough, effective play on the back end.

Slavin recently agreed to a seven-year contract extension. Pesce's six-year deal that will pay him \$4.025 million a season. It's a twosome that could be together for some time as general manager Ron Francis now has the two signed to long-term deals.

"Everyone knows the chemistry me and Jaccob had last year," Pesce said. "Hopefully we can continue to grow on that and grow together as a pair."

And not just the chemistry with Slavin. Justin Faulk and Noah Hanifin, and now Trevor van Riemsdyk, give the Canes not only one of the younger defensive corps in the NHL but also one that could develop into one of the best as a group.

Haydn Fleury and Jake Bean, two former first-round draft picks by Carolina, could make a push for roster spots. The competition should be intense in training camp.

"I think it's awesome and I think it's rare that with our group of defensemen, we're all so close," Pesce said. "I grew up with Jaccob. I remember us playing on festival teams in the U.S. development camps when we were like 15. I think it

goes a long way to come in the league together and grow as people and hockey players. That kind of builds our chemistry off the ice."

Pesce, 22, played a year of college hockey with van Riemsdyk, a former roommate at New Hampshire. Van Riemsdyk, who won a Stanley Cup ring with the Chicago Blackhawks, was obtained by the Canes this summer from the Vegas Golden Knights after Vegas took him in the expansion draft.

"He's another good-skating defenseman and he's young, obviously, as well," Pesce said. "He's a really good player, very smart in the D-zone and can join the rush and help offensively. I think he fits perfectly into our system."

Two years ago, Pesce came to Canes camp hoping to make a good impression and fit into the system. He had an AHL cameo with the Charlotte Checkers but quickly played his way into the Canes' lineup.

After taking a shot off a foot in a game his rookie year, Pesce had trouble walking to his car after a Canes practice. Carolina had a road game the next day and Pesce appeared doubtful for the game.

"Oh, I'm playing," he said.

Pesce did. And he played all 82 games last season, tying Slavin for the team high with his plus-23 rating.

But even Pesce, a third-round draft pick in 2013, is a bit amazed but what he has accomplished the past couple of years.

"I always hope and strive for the best and it's actually happened," he said. "It's pretty surreal. I have a lot to be thankful for. ... It's a good time for myself and the organization and I'm just excited to get going."

"It was a long offseason, that's for sure, and I'm getting pretty bored. I think we made the moves to be a playoff team, for sure. Anything below that is an underachievement."



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Tweetmail No. 153: Defense, Yard Signs & Season Tickets

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

August 2nd, 2017

Hello and welcome to a weekly feature on CarolinaHurricanes.com in which I take your Twitter questions about the Carolina Hurricanes or other assorted topics and answer them in mailbag form. Hopefully the final product is insightful to some degree, and maybe we have some fun along the way.

Let's get to it.

How good can this young defensive core be provided they stay together and continue to develop?

This question is incredibly relevant given [Tuesday's news](#) of [Brett Pesce's](#) six-year extension, which cements the duo of [Jacob Slavin](#) and Pesce - a legitimate top pairing in the NHL - for the next seven seasons.

To quote a Carolina great, "the ceiling is the roof" for these two and the Canes' entire defense. The team already boasts one of the most talented blue-line groups in the NHL, and they're only going to grow and improve from here.

"I think it's awesome and rare that our group of defensemen, we're all so close," Pesce said on a Wednesday conference call. "I think it just goes a long way to come into the league together - me, him and Noah - and grow as people and hockey players. That builds our chemistry off the ice."

General Manager Ron Francis and his staff have assembled a young core on defense that will likely soon see league-wide accolades. And they've done so without breaking the bank, even with the trio of Slavin, Pesce and [Noah Hanifin](#) coming off their entry-level contracts after this season. Slavin and Pesce are set to earn a combined average of \$9.325 million in each of the six seasons they'll be under contract together. That's a whale of a deal, especially considering the singular average annual value of some of the league's top defensemen; PK Subban's contract, for instance, carries a \$9 million cap hit alone.

The Slavin-Pesce pair has been one of the league's best-kept secrets. As Canes assistant coach Steve Smith told me last season, though, coaches are beginning to figure it out and shy their top lines away from that pairing. They're two budding defensive stalwarts, and to have them locked down for the next seven years (eight in Slavin's case) is tremendous for this team's long-term future.

"I know how much faith the organization has put in me with this deal," Pesce said. "I know that now is the time to get even better and work even harder to elevate my game."

Longtime follower, first-time tweetmail-er. When can fans expect to be able to pick up their brand new Opening Night yard signs? #Tweetmail

The new Hurricanes yard signs have arrived at 1400 Edwards Mill Rd., and as a #Tweetmail exclusive, the signs are pictured at the top of this piece.

These will be available (for free!) in conjunction with the individual game ticket on-sale, which is Thursday, Aug. 24. The signs will be available for fans to pick up at PNC Arena's VIP entrance and at events throughout late August and September.

Speaking of, individual game ticket pricing and gold, silver and bronze game designations were announced on Wednesday morning. All of that and more is available [here](#).

Will the #Canes20 logo be featured at center ice this season?

Yes, the #Canes20 logo will be featured at center ice during the 2017-18 season. You'll also see the logo adorning the Canes' helmets this season. There will be special 20th Anniversary swag available in The Eye, and fans who fill out [this form](#) and purchase a new Canes jersey when they arrive at The Eye in early September will receive an exclusive 20th Anniversary patch.

Any sneak previews you can share about the upcoming STM packages?

Keep an eye out in early September for Season Ticket Member ticket packages to be arriving on your doorsteps. What you'll be receiving this year will honor the team's 20th Anniversary season, and the presentation will be quite a bit different than what you're used to. We think you'll really like it - and that's about all I can say at this point.

Any new rumors on who is wearing the C this year??

Brett Pesce, [Brock McGinn](#) and [Klas Dahlbeck](#) will have C's on their jerseys this season.

But seriously, there is no further word on what the captaincy will look like in the 2017-18 season. We'll dive more into that once training camp begins and the Opening Night roster is assembled. Soon!



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Lack of rookie expectations a mark of Canes' improved depth

Andrew Schnittker, Sports Editor

9 hrs ago

The Carolina Hurricanes have certainly been no stranger to rookie contributors in recent years. Last year, forward Sebastian Aho burst onto the scene and was a key part of the forward group. The year before, Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce and Noah Hanifin were all important pieces on the blue line as freshmen. Going back even further, forward Jeff Skinner burst onto the scene in 2010-11 and won rookie of the year.

In each of these years, those rookies were essential for a competitive team, playing big roles. In fact, for many years, due to a top-heavy lineup with poor depth, it was not uncommon for young players and rookies to essentially be penciled into the lineup. All last summer the talk was of Aho coming in and being a key scorer after a strong year in Finland. He delivered, but relying on a rookie is always a risky proposition.

The year before, though Slavin and Pesce were surprises, Hanifin was expected to make the leap straight out of the draft. Perhaps the biggest blunder in this regard was in 2013, when, under former general manager Jim Rutherford, forward Elias Lindholm was penciled into the lineup straight out of the draft, and spent most of the year in the NHL despite clearly not being ready.

This summer, however, despite the Hurricanes having one of the deepest prospect groups in the league, has been largely free of expectations for rookies to make a big impact. Up front, Julien Gauthier, Nicolas Roy, Janne Kuokkanen and Aleksii Saarela will turn pro and have promise, but should start the year in Charlotte.

Due to the work general manager Ron Francis has done over the past few years to build a deeper lineup, there really is no room for a rookie to burst onto the scene unless he completely blows the doors off. The top-nine group at forward figures to comprise Skinner, Lindholm, Aho, Victor Rask, Teuvo Teravainen, Jordan Staal, Lee Stempniak, Derek Ryan and the newly-signed Justin Williams. The fourth

line should be made up of some three-man combination of Marcus Kruger, Josh Jooris, Joakim Nordstrom, Brock McGinn and Phillip Di Giuseppe.

The blue line will be slightly different. The top five is pretty much set with Slavin, Pesce, Hanifin, Justin Faulk and Trevor van Riemsdyk. The sixth spot does figure to be [left open](#) for a rookie, with Haydn Fleury seeming to have the inside track, but Roland McKeown and Trevor Carrick are also in the mix.

The [key difference](#) here is that a rookie blueliner will still be eased in, playing lighter third-pairing minutes with softer assignments. In years past, a young defender may have been asked to step right into the top four and play big minutes against the opposition's best players.

This improved depth will help Carolina in both the short and long term. In the short term, it gives the [Canes](#) a good, deep lineup with some more experienced players that know how to win, and can show the young players already on the roster how to do so.

In the long term, it allows them to develop these prospects properly to be key contributors down the road. Players such as Roy and Gauthier can play big minutes in Charlotte, and really learn the pro game and grow together in the minors. In this way, the Canes can follow the model that many successful "draft and develop" franchises have used, and allow their kids to be "overripe" and ready to go when they do reach the big league.

The Detroit Red Wings, a model franchise for years that just last year ended a 25-year playoff streak were famous for this model. The Tampa Bay Lightning and Columbus Blue Jackets have also recently seen benefits of it, with groups of young players who won championships at the AHL level contributing to successful NHL rosters.

The new approach the Canes have taken with building out their roster with veterans and letting their prospects [marinate](#) is one that should pay serious long-term dividends. Using this model, Carolina should be able to build a team that is able to compete for a long time.



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Pesce, Hurricanes mapping out plan for playoffs

'Anything below that is underachievement,' defenseman says after agreeing to six-year contract extension

by Kurt Dusterberg / NHL.com Correspondent

August 2nd, 2017

For Carolina Hurricanes defenseman [Brett Pesce](#), a contract extension has added plenty of incentive to his offseason workouts.

"It makes me more excited to work harder because I know how much faith the organization puts in me with this deal," Pesce, 22, said Wednesday. "I know that now is the time to get even better and work even harder to elevate my game."

"We made the moves to be a playoff team for sure, and anything below that is underachievement. So it's an exciting time and I'm excited to be part of it."

Pesce agreed to terms on a six-year, \$24.15 million contract extension with the Hurricanes on Tuesday. The contract, which begins next season, will have an average annual value of \$4.025 million. He will make \$809,167 this season in the final year of a three-year, entry-level contract he signed March 28, 2015.

He had 20 points (two goals, 18 points) in 82 games last season, and 36 points (six goals, 30 assists) in 151 career NHL games.

Pesce is the latest Hurricanes player to sign a long-term extension. His defense partner, [Jacob Slavin](#), 23, signed a seven-year, \$37.1 million extension (average annual value \$5.3 million) on July 12.

Goaltender [Scott Darling](#), acquired in a trade with the Chicago Blackhawks on April 28, signed a four-year, \$16.6 million (average annual value \$4.15 million) with Carolina on May 5, and free agent forward [Justin Williams](#) signed a two-year, \$9 million contract (average annual value \$4.5 million) on July 1.

Pesce and Slavin, who formed Carolina's top defensive pair last season, are widely regarded as one of the best young

defensive tandems in the league. Each set a single-season franchise record with a plus-23 plus/minus rating, finishing tied for 10th among NHL defensemen. Their on-ice rapport was forged in an era before either was drafted by Carolina.

"I grew up with Jaccob," said Pesce, a third-round pick (No. 66) in the 2013 NHL Draft. "I remember us playing on the festival teams in the U.S. development camps when we were 15. It goes a long way to come into the League together and grow as people and hockey players. That just builds our chemistry off the ice."

Pesce will see another familiar face on the blue line this season after the addition of [Trevor van Riemsdyk](#), who was acquired in a trade with the Vegas Golden Knights on June 22. They played two seasons together at the University of New Hampshire.

"He's another good skating defenseman," Pesce said. "He's a very good player, very smart, great in the defensive zone. He can join the rush and contribute offensively, so I think he fits perfectly into our system."

Pesce has spent the offseason working to round out his game. Though his defensive instincts are strong and he moves he puck well, he would like to be a reliable point producer.

"The biggest thing for me this year was working on my offensive game, and most importantly my shot," he said. "I've been hitting that pretty hard. I have a month and some change to get even better, and I'm hoping to continue to see improvement in that category."

With the new contract and high expectations for the coming season, Pesce is ready to get going.

"It was a long offseason to be sure," he said. "I love Raleigh, honestly. I consider it home now. I love the team. Management is great to me. I don't have anything bad to say. That's why it was a no-brainer when we were talking six years for me. I've got to up my game now, and the work really starts."



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Mailbag: Hurricanes' chances at playoffs, Jagr's future

NHL.com's Dan Rosen answers weekly questions

by Dan Rosen [@drosennhl](#) / NHL.com Senior Writer

August 2nd, 2017

Here is the Aug. 2 edition of Dan Rosen's weekly mailbag, which will run periodically during the offseason. If you have a question, tweet it to [@drosennhl](#) and use #OvertheBoards.

Do you think the Carolina Hurricanes have a realistic shot at the Stanley Cup Playoffs this season in a tough division? I think we made huge steps this offseason. -- @paulwshannon

Yes. The video will come out Sunday, when the Hurricanes portion of our 31 in 31 series runs, and in it you will hear me pick Carolina to make the playoffs for the first time since 2009. I'm a believer in coach Bill Peters, and I'm a fan of what general manager Ron Francis and the organization have done this offseason.

A lot of this depends on how goalie [Scott Darling](#) fares going from a backup with the Chicago Blackhawks to Carolina's starter. One of the hardest jumps to make in hockey is going from being the backup to the No. 1. There's more playing time, more exposure and more pressure. Darling was excellent as the backup to [Corey Crawford](#). Now he must nail being the No. 1. Provided he does, I do think the Hurricanes are a playoff team.

Carolina is always a strong possession team and doesn't hurt itself with penalties. The penalty kill and center depth is stronger with the addition of [Marcus Kruger](#), [Victor Rask](#) and [Jordan Staal](#) can handle centering the top two lines, especially with the expected continued development of [Sebastian Aho](#), [Teuvo Teravainen](#) and [Elias Lindholm](#). [Jeff Skinner](#) is a potential 40-goal scorer. [Justin Williams](#) can still produce, and his leadership will help a young forward group. I can see Williams being Carolina's captain with Skinner as the captain in waiting.

The Hurricanes defensemen, particularly the top four of [Justin Faulk](#), [Jacob Slavin](#), [Noah Hanifin](#) and [Brett Pesce](#), is strong yet underrated. All four can move the puck, skate, join the rush and keep possession in the offensive end.

Carolina has been taking the proper steps toward becoming a playoff contender under Peters. The Hurricanes made a run for the playoffs last season by going 10-5-5 in their final 20 games, including 9-0-4 before a 1-5-1 finish. They fell short. They won't this season.

What will happen to [Mikael Granlund](#)? Do to the Minnesota Wild have too many big contracts already? What can they do to get better? -- @HannesKari

The Wild have about \$4.8 million in NHL salary cap space, according to CapFriendly.com, after signing Granlund to a three-year, \$17.25 million contract worth \$5.75 million per season. They need to get forward [Marcus Foligno](#) under contract and fill out their depth, including at least two forwards and another defenseman who can come from their system and be decided in training camp.

Forward [Nino Niederreiter](#)'s five-year, \$26.5 million contract, which he agreed to Monday, provided the framework for the Wild to sign Granlund before his arbitration hearing, which was scheduled for Aug. 4.

The question of what can the Wild do to get better isn't so easy to answer. They were good last season. They had 106 points and were second in the Central Division. They simply flamed out against the equally good St. Louis Blues in five games during the Western Conference First Round. I'm not sure what the Wild can do to be better other than to say they need to get back to the playoffs and find a way to score some goals. They scored eight goals in five games, including three in the first three games. That's why they fell behind 3-0 in the best-of-7 series. Get back to the playoffs and score. That's it.

Do you think Jaromir Jagr will sign in the NHL? If you think he does, where do you see him going? -- @glushbeats

Though I understand the lure of potentially playing for the Czech Republic in the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics, I don't think representing his country perhaps for the last time is enough for Jagr to choose to leave the NHL. He knows this is the best league in the world and he wants to prove he is still among the best. I think he'll sign, and I predicted he'd go to the Calgary Flames in [my July 12 mailbag](#). That's a total shot in the dark prediction based on three things: 1) Calgary has the salary cap space to sign Jagr to what could be in the range of a \$4-5 million contract; 2) Calgary has room up front and the potential to play Jagr in a top-six role; and 3) Jagr has never played for a Canadian team and the Flames are on the rise and would be an exciting team to join, especially with [Johnny Gaudreau](#), [Sean Monahan](#) and a strong group of defensemen.

I could also see the Edmonton Oilers being an option for similar reasons. So are the Montreal Canadiens, but are they a team on the rise? Not so sure about that.

Again, it's a guess, because nobody, perhaps not even Jagr, knows what Jagr is thinking. But he's 45 and has value in the NHL. He scored 46 points last season with the Florida Panthers, and was one of 119 players to have at least 30 assists and one of 123 players to have at least 46 points last season. He also was one of 99 players to play all 82 games. I think a team should sign him, but it may not be until just before training camps open.

Is playoff success possible without an elite player? Example: The Nashville Predators get Ryan Johansen and make the Stanley Cup Final for the first time. -- @briantodd34

Short answer: No, playoff success isn't possible without an elite player.

Long answer: I think it's a moot point because every team in the NHL has at least one elite player.

The good teams build around their elite player with good depth, especially on defense, which leads to strong special teams and good-enough possession numbers. That's how they overachieve and get to the playoffs. Examples are the Ottawa Senators (Erik Karlsson) and Blues (Vladimir Tarasenko).

The elite teams have multiple elite players and fill in around them the same way. Examples are the Pittsburgh Penguins (Sidney Crosby, [Evgeni Malkin](#) and, when healthy, [Kris](#)



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[Letang](#)), Washington Capitals (Alex Ovechkin, [Nicklas Backstrom](#), [Braden Holtby](#)), and the Blackhawks (Patrick Kane, [Jonathan Toews](#), [Duncan Keith](#)). New to the club are the Predators (Johansen, [P.K. Subban](#), [Roman Josi](#)) and Oilers (Connor McDavid, [Leon Draisaitl](#), [Cam Talbot](#)).

However, let's remember that the Predators were tied for 15th team in the NHL standings last season with Johansen playing 82 games and scoring 61 points (14 goals, 47 assists). They were not an elite team in the regular season. Let's also remember that Johansen had season-ending surgery on his leg before Game 5 of the Western Conference Final against the Anaheim Ducks. The Predators won Games 5 and 6 without him because they had an elite defense and excellent goaltending. They won because they had enough depth up front, particularly at center, to overcome his loss.

[John Tavares](#) to the New York Rangers? The Toronto Maple Leafs need to sign key players and won't have much cap space, so where do you see him going? -- @HeyimbanuPeter

I'm holding firm that Tavares will eventually sign a long-term contract to remain with the New York Islanders. People looked at July 1 as a deadline for him to sign a new contract. No. It was the first date he was eligible to sign a new contract. Tavares and the Islanders have plenty of time to get this done.

If it doesn't happen, I do not think for one second he'll wind up with the Rangers. The Canadiens make the most sense, especially with [Tomas Plekanec](#) (\$6 million) coming off their salary cap after this season. Tavares is going to cost \$10 million plus, but at least losing Plekanec's charge would offset some of that.

Regardless, I don't think it'll matter. I think the Islanders will re-sign him.

Will the Rangers make a move for a top center this offseason? -- @ConnorNilan

The Rangers have their top-two centers, [Mika Zibanejad](#) and [Kevin Hayes](#). The quicker Rangers fans get used to that the better. It'll take a blockbuster trade for the Rangers to land a center who will play ahead of Zibanejad and Hayes. I don't see that happening, especially since they have a shade over \$3 million in salary cap space, according to CapFriendly.com, and teams simply don't trade a No. 1 center unless they absolutely must. It's possible the Rangers could land a No. 3 center in a trade, but they're prepared to go into the season with Zibanejad and Hayes as the top two. They agreed to terms with Zibanejad on a five-year contract that pays him \$5.35 million per season on July 25. He is their guy.

TriangleSportsNetwork

Carolina Hurricanes announce 2017-2018 single-game ticket availability

RALEIGH, N.C. – The [Carolina Hurricanes](#) announced on Wednesday that individual game [tickets](#) for all 2017-2018 home games will go on sale to the general public on Thurs., Aug. 24 at 10 a.m.

The team also announced its tiered, single-game [ticket pricing](#) along with [advance purchase](#) times for season-ticket holders and social media promotions for committed followers.

Hurricanes Season Ticket Members (STMs) will be able to purchase individual-game tickets via their Caniac [Account Manager](#) two days ahead of the public on-sale, starting at 10 a.m., on Tues., Aug. 22, while social media followers will have access to a special pre-sale beginning on Wed., Aug. 23, at 10 a.m.

Individual-game ticket pricing is broken into three tiers based upon the anticipated popularity of the games.

Six games are designated for "Gold" pricing, 10 games have "Silver" pricing, and there are 27 "Bronze"-priced games.

A complete breakdown of the tiers and costs are available on the team's [individual-game ticket web page](#).

For the first time, fans attending Hurricanes home games will be able to pay for parking with their credit cards as well as having the option to purchase a general [parking pass](#) at the time of ticket purchase.

Parking for Hurricanes games increases to \$20 in 2017-18, up from the previous cost of \$15 in recent years.



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The Hockey News

Francis delivers another masterstroke, locks up Pesce to six-year extension

By: [Jared Clinton](#) Aug 2, 2017

The Hurricanes locked up Brett Pesce to a six-year, \$24.15-million extension, and with the way the 22-year-old has developed, it could be the best deal on the roster in a few years' time.

Ron Francis sees a bright future in Carolina, and with the team the Hurricanes GM has worked to assemble, it's not hard to see why. There's offensive talent in the likes of Jeff Skinner, Jordan Staal and Victor Rask, blossoming young forwards such as Teuvo Teravainen, Elias Lindholm and Sebastian Aho, and a defense, headlined by Justin Faulk, that looks to be one of the best in the league in short order.

And knowing that this team has some bright years ahead of it, with playoff berths and Stanley Cup [contention](#) seemingly in the offing, Francis understands that keeping a roster with so many up-and-coming talents can be expensive. Ask the Chicago Blackhawks. Take a look at the Washington Capitals. And, in a few years' time, have a conversation with the Toronto Maple Leafs about that very subject.

So, with that in mind, Francis has made yet another move to lock up one of his bright young players to a long-term deal, inking 22-year-old defenseman Brett Pesce to a six-year, \$24.15-million deal. And it's exactly the move Francis should be making this off-season. While Pesce's \$4.025-million cap hit may seem a touch high priced to those outside of Carolina, even a cursory glance at his numbers would have most fans wishing they had a defenseman of his ilk on their preferred club.

This past season, Pesce's second full year in the NHL, his average ice time jumped by nearly three minutes per game and his responsibility went through the roof. He took on high-quality minutes in his [sophomore season](#), often facing off against the other team's top line and taking the second-highest slant of defensive-zone starts among the rearguards. In fact, the only Hurricanes defender to face tougher competition while starting more often in the Carolina end was Jaccob Slavin, who just so happens to be Pesce's defensive partner. The two were nearly [inseparable](#), skating more than 1,000 minutes together at 5-on-5 and forming one of the league's best defensive pairings.

Don't believe it? Consider the following.

This past season, there were only 11 other defensive pairings that skated 1,000-plus minutes together. Among those were the likes of Ryan Suter and Jared Spurgeon, Brent Burns and Paul Martin, Seth Jones and Zach

Werenski, Mattias Ekholm and P.K. Subban and Adam Larsson and Oscar Klefbom. However, when ranking the 12 pairings on their possession rates and goals for percentages, Slavin and Pesce stood as arguably the best pairing of the bunch. They had the second-best Corsi For percentage together, a solid 54.6 percent, and, when on ice together, the Hurricanes scored 58.6 percent of the 5-on-5 goals. That was the third-best mark. The only other pairing to rank top-five in both categories was Burns and Martin, and they came in fifth in both.

The incredible thing about those numbers is Pesce, as noted, is only 22. Slavin is 23. This is a pairing that has long legs if all goes according to plan, and that's where Francis' summer signing genius really kicks in. Slavin was already locked up earlier this summer to a six-year, \$37.1-million extension, and Pesce's contract will keep him in Carolina for the same length of time. Combined, the duo will earn \$9.325 million over the next six seasons. The value there is remarkable, and think about what that value stands to provide Carolina down the line.

At the rate Pesce and Slavin are developing, both stand to be in their prime in, say, three years' time. On shorter-term contracts, that would mean both are due big-money deals, if they hadn't signed them already. But by handing the two defensemen those contracts earlier in their careers when they're only starting their breakout keeps the cap hit down. Given that Aho stands to be a top-six talent, Teravainen a consistent top-six scorer and Skinner further in his prime as the team's top sniper by the 2020-21 season, having Slavin and Pesce locked up to high-value contracts opens up cap space for when the three aforementioned forwards will be playing on new contracts that include sizeable salary bumps.

Then you go ahead and mix in a few of the Hurricanes' more promising prospects, including Julien Gauthier, Nicolas Roy and Janne Kuokkanen, and Carolina should be able to [fill out](#) the rest of the roster with the cheap, effective depth that is the cornerstone of contending teams.

Throughout the post-season and into this summer, Nashville Predators GM David Poile has been praised for the moves and signings he has made, getting integral pieces such as Ekholm, Roman Josi, Viktor Arvidsson and Calle Jarnkrok signed to the type of long-term deals that have allowed the team to contend while maintaining cap flexibility. And in a few short years, it sure seems as though those same stories will be written about Francis.

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Sportsnet.ca / Matt Duchene opens up about frustrating season, trade rumours

Ryan Dixon

For most NHLers, the off-season lands with an unwanted, gut-punching thud. For Matt Duchene, though, it must have felt like the Rocky Mountains were removed from his shoulders once the schedule relented and it was finally time to stop playing losing hockey with the Colorado Avalanche.

"I burnt out in January," said Duchene, who started the year by winning gold with Canada at the World Cup. "I think a lot of guys did. Nobody really knows how tough that situation was. We were out of it by mid-December. To play the rest of the year out, after playing big hockey at the start of the year with the World Cup, it was really hard."

Colorado's mighty struggles—the team finished with a league-worst 48 points—triggered all kinds of talk that Duchene could find himself in a new city as the Avalanche looked to rebuild. When nothing happened before February's trade deadline, nobody really batted an eye because deals of that scale don't often occur during the season. But when Duchene remained in Colorado through the swap-happy period in the NHL calendar that started around the expansion draft and carried through the start of free agency on July 1, it ranked as one of the bigger off-season surprises.

After all, Duchene himself had indicated along the way that it was likely time for a new beginning and it seemed a slam dunk that something would get done that changed the 26-year-old's surroundings. The Nashville Predators, New York Islanders and Montreal Canadiens were just a few of the clubs linked to Duchene that seemed like appropriate suitors.

Now, with two years remaining on his contract, some are wondering if Duchene will still be a member of the Avalanche when training camps open in late September.

"It's not for me to decide," said Duchene, who's spending most of the week in Toronto refining his game at the Power Edge Pro Hockey skills camp. "It's up to the management in Colorado. We'll see what happens. I'm not sure who I'm going to be playing for next year, but it doesn't matter, you come out with the same intensity here and in the gym."

As hard as he pushes himself in training, you get the sense the only fatigue impacting Duchene stems from his taxing situation. While this year has been especially draining, things have been trending the wrong way for a while. Since winning a surprise Central Division title in 2013-14, Colorado has failed to make the post-season in three consecutive campaigns, despite the presence of some nice young pieces.

"We've had some years where things were looking up and that would almost give you some false hope, I guess," Duchene said.

Duchene's career-low 41 points last season may have duped some people into believing he's not the player he once was. While he acknowledged he could have done a better job of fighting through the misery, the naysayers have clearly created a chip on the speedster's shoulder.

"You've got to just use it as motivation because it's funny how short people's memories are and they doubt you pretty quick," Duchene said.

While his situation remains less than ideal, Duchene has a clear idea of what he needs to focus on, even if the big picture remains hazy.

"That visualization part is [tough] because you don't really know where you're going to be, so you just have to have some blind faith and work as hard as you can and be the best version of yourself you can be," he said. "All that cliché stuff, but it's cliché for a reason."

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Sportsnet.ca / Devils to retire Patrik Elias' No. 26 on Feb. 24

Sportsnet Staff

The New Jersey Devils will retire Patrik Elias' No. 26 in a pre-game ceremony on Feb. 24.

Elias spent his entire 20-year NHL career with the Devils, after being drafted by the team with the 54th pick of the 1994 NHL Draft.

The 41-year-old amassed 408 goals and 1,025 points in 1,240 games and won the Stanley Cup twice.

He announced his retirement on March 31.

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TSN.CA / Canada earns comeback win over Finland at Summer Showcase

By Mark Masters

Canada defeated Finland 6-5 in overtime on Wednesday at the World Junior Summer Showcase in Plymouth, Michigan. The lines are listed below.

Michael McLeod scored the winning goal to cap a wild end to the game, which saw Canada storm back from 4-2 down to take the lead only to see the Finns tie it up with the goalie pulled.

The win represented a nice bounce-back effort for the Canadian group, which had been shelled 8-2 in a scrimmage against Team USA on Tuesday.

"We stuck with it," said head coach Dominique Ducharme. "That's one positive thing. It's not perfect, but those guys played better than they did yesterday and that's what we want to see from one day to the other is our guys improving."

Phillips scores with 1:38 to play to give Canada the lead

Just 47 seconds after Canada's tying goal, Matthew Phillips tucks one in from behind the net to give Canada a 5-4 lead with 1:38 to play.

Flames prospect Matthew Phillips scored twice in the third period to spark the comeback. The shortest (5-foot-6) and lightest (141 pounds) player on Team Canada's roster wasn't sure he would even be invited to this event, but is now making the most of the audition.

"Honestly, I really wasn't expecting it," Phillips said. "There was a lot of excitement when I got the call and I've been looking forward to it ever since. This week's going really well."



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"He's involved," said Ducharme. "He's not the biggest guy, but he gets in there and he's in the action for sure. He can make plays and has that drive to take it to the net like he did with that goal at the end. There's a reason why he's scored so many goals in the WHL (50 in 70 games with Victoria last season) and I think the more it goes on you see him get a little more comfortable. We like what we're seeing right now."

Flames prospect Phillips making most of unexpected audition

Matthew Phillips wasn't sure he would get an invite to the World Junior Summer Showcase. Well, the Flames sixth round pick in 2016 is making the most of his Team Canada audition scoring twice late in the third period to help Canada earn a 6-5 OT win against Finland.

Team Canada lines in Wednesday's game:

Howden-McLeod-Phillips

Gadjovich-Pu-Lind

Dube-Ang-Raddysh

Katchouk-Glass-Bitten

Suzuki

Mahura-Timmins

Cholowski-Quenneville

Girard-Fabbro

Hague

Skinner

Wells

Canada climbs out of hole late to win it in OT

Canada scored three times in the last four minutes to take the lead before ultimately winning it in overtime. Gord Miller and Craig Button have more on that, and what the Canadians have to improve on moving forward.

STANLEY A FORCE ON THE ICE, 'TEDDY BEAR' OFF IT

Thirty-nine teenagers are playing for Canada at the World Junior Summer Showcase and all of them are trying to stand out and get noticed by the coaching staff. Logan Stanley doesn't have to worry about standing out. At 6-foot-7, 231 pounds, the defenceman is noticeable the moment he steps on the ice. "I joke that he doesn't even have to move in the D zone," said goalie Michael DiPietro, Stanley's teammate in Windsor, "he can just poke his stick and reach the blue line. Yeah, with that oak tree of a stick it makes him pretty effective out there on the ice."

But with the NHL game getting quicker and quicker, Stanley has made keeping up a priority. "You always try and develop your skating," the Winnipeg Jets prospect said. "The game's so fast now that everyone has to be able to skate. You can't just be a big guy so that's what I try to work on and I think it's been improving."

Stanley's expansive wingspan allows him to cover a lot of ground even if he's not the most nimble guy. "You just have to take advantage of the long reach you have and have a good stick and just try and close gaps on guys quick," he explained. "After that it comes down to moving your feet. You can't just rely on your reach. You have to move your feet all the time."

"I think his skating has really improved," DiPietro said. "You know, he's definitely a threat defensively and then offensively I think he's underestimated a bit. He has great hands for a big guy. And he's definitely mobile. He can get to spots on the ice, use his skating to his advantage and with his stick length and reach there's no problem."

Stanley, who returned from a knee injury just in time to help Windsor win the Memorial Cup last spring, is an imposing figure on the ice and not afraid to drop the gloves. In fact, back in the 2015-16 season he fought Guelph's Givani Smith, a friend and Canadian teammate at the Summer Showcase.

"That game was pretty nuts," Smith recalled, referencing a series of fights near the final buzzer. "We looked at each other at centre and said, 'Hey, why not? Let's do it.' The good thing about Stanley is he's a hard player to play against on the ice, but off the ice he's a nice guy and we joke around a lot."

How different is Stanley's demeanour away from the rink?

"I think polar opposite is the best way to describe it," DiPietro said. "On the ice he can definitely rub people the wrong way and off the ice too he can sometimes get in moods (laughs), but he's a great guy off the ice. Just a big teddy bear."

Canada's Stanley a giant force on the ice, 'teddy bear' off it

Logan Stanley can't help but stand out at the World Junior Summer Showcase. He is the tallest (6-foot-7) and heaviest (231 pounds) player on Canada's roster. The Jets prospect is fresh off a Memorial Cup win and believes his skating has improved significantly in the last year. As a result, the defenceman believes he can more than keep up at the top junior level.

BROTHERLY ADVICE

Smith, Detroit's second round pick in 2016, relies on his older brother Gemel Smith, a fourth-round pick of the Dallas Stars in 2012, for advice. "My brother's helped me a ton. He's been through everything before I have and he always tells me, 'You got to work, you got to be the best player you can be.'"

The older Smith made his NHL debut last season playing 17 games for the Stars, but at the moment he's living vicariously through his younger sibling.

"He's loving it," Givani Smith said. "He tells me that he wishes he could be here. But, for me, I got to do the little things right, got to finish your checks and be confident with the puck."

Smith is one of eight Detroit prospects at the Summer Showcase, which is more than any other NHL team. That's an encouraging sign for Kris Draper and the management team, who saw the franchise's remarkable 25-year playoff streak come to an end last season.

After missing playoffs, Wings pipeline gets a boost

Detroit's remarkable 25-year playoff streak ended last season putting the franchise in an unfamiliar position: looking to reload. And there are positive signs for the Red Wings at the World Junior Summer Showcase where they have eight prospects taking part, more than any other team. Assistant to the GM Kris Draper offers a scouting report and takes the pulse of a franchise in uncharted territory.

FUTURE PREDS

The Nashville Predators have one of the deepest blue lines in the NHL, which could be a bit intimidating for a prospect in the franchise's pipeline. But Team Canada defencemen Dante Fabbro and Samuel Girard don't see it that way. Quite the contrary, they view it as a great opportunity to learn from elite players.

"For me, Ryan Ellis is the best role model," Girard said. "When it's my time I'll have my place there."

"All the guys they have now are pretty much all superstars," Fabbro said, "so for me to watch those guys go through the same things is pretty cool."

Fabbro looks up to Roman Josi in particular. "He does everything well offensively and defensively and his play speaks for itself."

What's it like being a D prospect in the Preds system?

The Nashville Predators have one of the deepest blue lines in the NHL, which means roster spots may not open up in the near future. That doesn't worry Team Canada's Samuel Girard and Dante Fabbro, who draw inspiration from players like Ryan Ellis and Roman Josi.

QUICK HIT: A GM'S PERSPECTIVE

Playing intense games in the summer can be tough for those on the ice as well as the scouts in the crowd. Veteran GM George McPhee, who has four Golden Knights prospects in Plymouth, explains what he's looking for when assessing a performance in early August:

How do you evaluate players in the middle of the summer?

Some of the best teenagers in the world have gathered for the World Junior Summer Showcase. But playing intense games after such a long layoff can be tough for those on the ice as well as the scouts in the crowd. Veteran GM George McPhee, who has four Golden Knights



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prospects in Plymouth, explains what he's looking for and why the upcoming training camp is so important for his expansion franchise.

UPCOMING SCHEDULE:

THURSDAY: Canada will hold an off-ice workout and team meetings

FRIDAY: Canada v Sweden, 1pm et (TSN Network) ... USA v Finland, 4pm et (TSN Network)

SATURDAY: Sweden v Finland, 4pm et on TSN3/5 ... USA v Canada, 11pm et (tape delayed) on TSN3/5

Gord Miller and Craig Button will call the games with Tessa Bonhomme hosting the coverage.

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evening. Barring a last-minute deal, both sides will present their case to an arbiter in Toronto on Thursday.

The two-rink practice facility, which has been branded City National Arena, is nearing completion. The 146,000-square-foot headquarters, which will cost between \$25 million and \$30 million to complete, will be ready for occupancy Aug. 25. More important, it will be ready for the team's inaugural training camp, beginning with the rookie camp Sept. 8. Veterans report Sept. 14.

END

Boston Bruins

David Pastrnak remains without a contract for the upcoming 2017-18 NHL season, and Boston general manager Don Sweeney said Monday that negotiations have reached "a holding pattern," adding that he wishes the process were further along with the Bruins' talented first-line right winger.

Sweeney confirmed that both sides have submitted contract offers. Pastrnak, represented by longtime agent JP Barry, agent for Joe Thornton in Jumbo Joe's days here, likely is looking for a long-term deal (five years or more) averaging some \$6 million per season.

Nashville Predators

The career of arguably the most recognizable player in Predators history ended Thursday when captain Mike Fisher announced his retirement in an exclusive for The Tennessean.

Fisher played 1,088 NHL games across 17 seasons with the Predators and Ottawa Senators. The 37-year-old became synonymous with the Predators franchise during six-plus seasons, totaling 237 points in 413 games.

New York Islanders

The Islanders agreed to terms on a one-year contract with defenseman Calvin de Haan worth \$3.3 million on Wednesday morning.

St Louis Blues

The Blues have a new affiliate in the American Hockey League, although it will be another year before the club actually takes control of the minor-league organization.

The Blues are soon expected to announce a five-year agreement with the San Antonio Rampage, a deal that will take effect beginning with the 2018-19 season, according to multiple NHL and AHL sources.

The Rampage, who are owned by Spurs Sports & Entertainment (SS&E), are currently the top affiliate of the Colorado Avalanche. But the AHL has announced that it will expand by one team in 2018-19, and according to a report in the Denver Post, the Avs are in discussions with the ECHL's Colorado Eagles for the Eagles to become the expansion franchise.

The Blues' alignment with San Antonio will end a two-year search for a new AHL affiliate after a relationship with the Chicago Wolves turned sour and efforts to place an expansion club in Kansas City or Indianapolis came up short. The Blues will operate without an affiliate in 2017-18 because the addition of the expansion Vegas Golden Knights will give the NHL one more franchise than the AHL, and with the Knights collaborating with the Wolves, it will leave the Blues as the odd team out. But that will change the following year when the AHL expands.

The Blues would not confirm the new arrangement, nor would AHL President David Andrews, who in an interview with the Post-Dispatch this week only addressed the development in general terms.

Vegas Golden Knights

For the first time, the club may find itself involved in salary arbitration. Defenseman Nate Schmidt, a restricted free agent, was unable to come to terms with general manager George McPhee as of late Wednesday