



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 6, 2018

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Why Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon says it wasn't hard to trade Jeff Skinner

By Chip Alexander and Luke DeCock

A day after the Carolina Hurricanes traded forward Jeff Skinner, one of the team's most popular players, team owner Tom Dundon said the decision wasn't a hard one.

"It had to be done," Dundon said Friday. "The consensus in the organization, and it has been for a while, was it was better for all parties. It's good for him, too."

Skinner, 26, said Friday he was excited about Thursday's trade to the Buffalo Sabres, about joining another team with a young core of players, one that includes Swedish defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, the No. 1 pick of the 2018 NHL draft.

"It's a fresh start," he said.

At the same time, Skinner said it was tough to leave behind the team that made him its first-round pick in 2010, to leave a community and fan base that quickly embraced him.

"I enjoyed my time in Carolina," he said. "I made a lot of great friends, played with a lot of great players, worked with a great staff. I'm grateful I had the opportunity the organization gave me. The fans were unbelievable to me.

"It was frustrating for sure to not reach your goal. Everyone involved gets frustrated. We didn't reach our goal and it's disappointing. It's disappointing for me personally and disappointing as the team."

Soon after Dundon became the team's majority owner in mid-January, he said he wanted players only totally committed to the Hurricanes, to winning and to doing all the things necessary to win all over the ice. When the team failed to reach the Stanley Cup playoffs — the ninth straight year for Carolina — Dundon said changes would be made.

Gone is former general manager Ron Francis, a Hockey Hall of Famer. And goalie Cam Ward, one of the stars of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup champs. Gone is longtime radio voice Chuck Kaiton, another team icon.

Now Skinner.

Skinner was entering the final year of his contract with Carolina and due to make \$6 million in salary this season. If not re-signed he would have become an unrestricted free agent after the 2018-19 season.

"This was not money motivated," Dundon said. "This was simply that we think the team has a better chance to perform at the level we think it can perform at right now."

General manager Don Waddell said Skinner had discussions after the season with Dundon, who conducted the team's exit interviews. By the NHL draft in June, Waddell and Dundon were talking openly about Skinner being one those players who might be available for a trade, one who might need a "change of scenery," as Dundon put it.

With a full no-move clause in his contract, Skinner and agent Don Meehan could have refused all trades. He could have played out his contract, then tested free agency next summer, with the Hurricanes getting nothing in return.

But Skinner did not do that to the Hurricanes.

"It just seemed like they wanted to go in a different direction," Skinner said. "I think as a player you want to play where you're wanted."

With no discussions of a contract extension, it became almost a given that Skinner's time with Carolina was coming to an end. The only question was where he might land. Skinner approved the trade to Buffalo, saying it came rather quickly and was handled smoothly.

Skinner was asked Friday about his relationship with former coach Bill Peters, which was contentious at times — Peters resigned after the season to become head coach of the Calgary Flames. But Skinner said it did not sour his feelings for playing for the Canes or fuel a desire to leave after the season.

"I don't think so," Skinner said. "During the season, as a player and coach, we're both looking to win games. Our goal is the same. I liked playing for Bill. He's a good coach.

"For me, during the season you're focused on trying to win games and focused on trying to make the playoffs. After the season is when things kind of settle down and people reflect on the season. Then it's not too long and the draft is on the agenda and teams looking to make changes to improve."

Skinner now has a new coach and new organization. He's still in the final year of his contract, but that's Buffalo's issue now and Skinner said he would let Meehan again do the legwork.

"I'm just focused on the season and preparing for the new season," Skinner said.



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## With Jeff Skinner gone, who will score the goals for the Hurricanes?

By Chip Alexander

The trade of Jeff Skinner by the Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday quickly led to an inevitable question: who makes up for the goals Skinner scored?

[Sebastian Aho](#)? The Finnish forward scored a career-high 29 last season to top the Canes and could move past the 30-goal plateau in his third NHL season. Canes goalie Scott Darling, for one, believes Aho could push for 40.

"He's got some more offensive guys he'll play with that could take some heat off him and open up the ice a little bit more," Darling said. "Some young guns."

The Canes believe Russian forward [Andrei Svechnikov](#), the No. 2 overall pick of the 2018 NHL Draft, can quickly make the transition to the NHL and be an offensive factor. They're counting on Czech center Martin Necas, their first-round draft pick in 2017, to do the same.

[Skinner, who waived the no-move clause in his contract to be traded to the Buffalo Sabres](#), scored more than 200 goals in his eight seasons with the Canes, putting up a career-high 37 in 2016-17. He fell off to 24 last season -- former Canes GM Ron Francis called him "snakebit" -- but continues to be among the best in the NHL in creating offensive chances and in drawing penalties from opponents in the offensive zone.

Svechnikov and [Necas](#) are unproven and both will be rookies. The Canes will need players such as forwards Teuvo Teravainen, Jordan Staal, Victor Rask, newly acquired Micheal Ferland and others to step up their production.

Valentin Zykov led the American Hockey League with 33 goals last season for the Charlotte Checkers, the Canes' AHL affiliate, and has size and the willingness to go to the front of the net. But can he consistently score at the NHL level?

"This is going to provide an opportunity for some of our young kids," Canes general manager Don Waddell said. "If one of them doesn't score 30 goals, maybe two of them together gets to 40 goals. You've got Necas coming over, you've got Svechnikov and all the young guys down in Charlotte. They deserve an opportunity."

Waddell noted veteran defenseman Dougie Hamilton, obtained with Ferland by the Canes in the Calgary trade,

scored 17 goals last season for the Flames. Ferland had a career-high 21.

"I don't think goal-scoring is going to be a big issue for us as we move forward," Waddell said.

It has been an issue for the Hurricanes the past few years. Carolina was 23rd in NHL scoring last season at 2.74 goals per game after scoring 2.59 in 2016-17.

So why trade Skinner, a proven scorer? Skinner's agent, Don Meehan, said Thursday that Skinner did not request a trade, saying the decision to move him was an organizational one.

"Jeff never called me and said 'I want to be traded,'" Waddell said. "I had a lot of talks with his agent about what the best thing would be not only for our franchise but also for Jeff personally."

Meehan said Waddell and the Canes were "very professional" in the trade discussions. With the no-move clause, Skinner had the right to approve any proposed trade.

Waddell said the Canes were mindful of another sticky contract situation this past year, saying, "We watched what happened on the Island with John Tavares."

Tavares, one of the NHL's most productive forwards, played out the final season of his contract with the New York Islanders, nixed all contact extension proposals and became an unrestricted free agent on July 1. He then signed a seven-year, \$77 million pact with the Toronto Maple Leafs, leaving the Isles empty-handed.

Skinner could have done the same with the Hurricanes -- stayed, played and left. Waddell said there were no talks about a contract extension for Skinner, which Meehan confirmed.

Waddell said the Canes are hoping to sign Aho, who's entering the final year of his entry-level contract, to a long-term deal. There also will be contract discussions with Teravainen, he said.

In the end, with their trade options limited for Skinner, the Hurricanes settled on offensive prospect Cliff Pu and the three draft picks from the Sabres.

"We weren't going to trade him to Buffalo or any place else unless we felt we got some decent assets coming back," Waddell said.



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## Hurricanes Trade Skinner, Get Pu & Picks in Return

By Mark Shiver

In what has to be one of the most amazing developments of the NHL offseason, the Carolina Hurricanes traded forward Jeff Skinner to the Buffalo Sabres. [According to WKBW in Buffalo](#), in return, the Hurricanes acquired prospect Cliff Pu, a 2019 second-round draft pick, 2020 third round pick, and 2020 sixth round pick.

August 2 may go down in Hurricanes lore as one of the team's most significant days. It will either be a day that fans and talking heads look to as a stroke of genius or as a horrendous deal for the Canes. Only time will tell.

Don Waddell, Hurricanes president, and general manager [said in a statement](#), "First and foremost, we thank Jeff for the impact he had on our franchise and our area, both on and off the ice. He's a good person who has been an excellent representative for our team in the community throughout the past eight years."

Waddell continued, "However, with Jeff becoming an unrestricted free agent next summer, this was the right time for us to move on, and to provide Jeff with a fresh start in Buffalo. We talked to every team in the league over the past four months, and ultimately the Sabres were the team that provided us with the best value in return, including three picks and a prospect we like in Cliff Pu."

One of the most telling things that Waddell said was later in the evening on a conference call with the media. When asked if the Hurricanes had negotiated with Skinner's representation Waddell replied, "No. we did not." It was clear to Hurricanes management the Skinner era was over in Raleigh.

### Skinner for Pu. Who?

Earlier Thursday, Carter Fricano, who also covers the Hurricanes for The Hockey Writers, speculated about a possible [Skinner for Artemi Panarin](#) trade between the Hurricanes and the Columbus Blue Jackets. That speculation was short-lived, even though it made much better sense in terms of a return for Skinner.

Cliff Pu is a prospect. Steve Kournianos of The Draft Analyst posted on his Twitter Thursday after the trade, "Solid move by the Sabres. For Carolina, Cliff Pu is a speedy 2-way center with size who stood out for London back in 2016 when Marner, Dvorak etc. were at the WJC. He then became their best player a season later. Was teammates with Janne Kuokkanen, who was Carolina's 2nd in 2016."

As prospects go, the Hurricanes could have done worse. Michael Smith of the Hurricanes organization [wrote this about Pu in his breakdown](#) of the trade on the team's website: "Pu is coming off his fourth season in the Ontario

Hockey League, in which he totaled 84 points (29g, 55a) in 65 games with London and Kingston. The 20-year-old winger ranked eighth in the league in assists and 10th in the league in points. Pu, who inked his three-year, entry-level contract last October, will begin his professional career this season."

In summary, the Hurricanes acquired a player who is showing promise. If, or when, he will become a contributor to the team is unknown. For now, it is safe to say that if the Hurricanes were going to get a prospect, Pu was a good one to get.

### Skinner for Picks, Too

The Hurricanes also acquired three draft picks from the Sabres in exchange for Skinner. They received Buffalo's second-round draft pick in 2019 and their third- and sixth-round picks in 2020. Smith also noted in his breakdown, "Whether they are utilized to make picks in 2019 and 2020 or packaged in a separate transaction, they are quality future assets."

This is a mantra that former Hurricanes general manager Jim Rutherford used to roll out whenever he employed his grand plan of "acquiring assets." His successor Ron Francis followed in that train of thought, at times choosing to stockpile picks instead of pulling the trigger on a trade that would help the team.

It is nice to have draft picks. For those who are "glass half full" folks, Skinner for Picks and Pu is a wonderful deal. But, that does not tell the whole story.

### Why Deal Skinner for Pu & Picks?

Much has been written about Skinner's situation with the Hurricanes. The former Calder Trophy winner and 2011 All-Star was the team's most dangerous scoring threat and at times its biggest frustration. Luke DeCock of the Raleigh News & Observer [wrote Thursday after the trade](#), "First Kirk Muller and then Bill Peters was unable to get Skinner to commit to the kind of two-way game that would have enabled them to give him more ice time and more responsibility. Only rarely during the course of his career here did he get the true first-line minutes his offensive production appeared to deserve on paper and his unquestioned scoring ability appeared to deserve on the ice. It was a constant battle between player and coach."

Skinner refused to play the kind of defense that his coaches wanted him to play. My own position on this was, "So what?" Having Skinner playing on the top line and possibly scoring 35-40 goals a season might be a worthy tradeoff. [I wrote on April 28](#), "Let Skinner work with a new coach and see if there is a chemistry that was lacking between him and Peters."



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I have been asking all offseason, "Why and for who?" when it came to discussions of the Hurricanes trading Skinner. Yes, he is in the last year of his contract. Yes, it is good to get rid of him before that contract expires. I get all of the "reasons."

Waddell also told the media Thursday night that the decision had been made after the season to begin to listen to what other teams had to offer regarding Skinner. Waddell said, "As you know when it becomes time to have extra draft picks in today's day with salary caps and you have an opportunity to improve your team during the year to have those extra picks is very important. So we just made a decision early on that we would listen to people and if there's a deal that made sense to us we would make a decision and move in that direction."

The exact reason for the timing may not be evident to the fans or even to the media that covers the team. But, it is clear that the team has wanted to move on from Skinner since the end of the season.

*LOVE the Jeff Skinner trade!! The #Sabres gave up inconsequential picks for a player who scored 37 goals a season ago and has never played with a center like Jack Eichel. They're gonna light it up this year. Oh they have Rasmus Dahlin too!*

— Pete Prohaska (@scifihifives) [August 3, 2018](#)

Waddell saying that the Hurricanes had talked to every team in the league and that the Sabres – Pu, and picks – provided the best value is huge. Panarin must never have even been close to a reality for the Hurricanes. Getting the Montreal Canadiens' Max Pacioretty for Skinner must have never been close.

Do all of the other teams in the NHL see Skinner as valueless? Is this 26-year old with potentially astronomic goal-

scoring ability really only worth Pu and a few picks? Was it his no-move clause that kept the Hurricanes from getting the kind of value they should have for Skinner?

Asked if he was concerned about giving up a 30-goal scorer and how the fans would react Waddell said, "I'm always concerned about goals, but I'm more concerned about winning." He elaborated that the team has picked up pieces in the offseason that should enhance the team's goal-scoring potential such as Martin Nečas and the [number two overall draft pick, Andrei Svechnikov](#).

Waddell also said that there are players in Charlotte that can score who may be ready to move up and that the trade with the Calgary Flames brought Michael Ferland and Dougie Hamilton to the team who can also score.

Waddell said, "Again, this isn't about Jeff Skinner and us not winning, it's about us feeling it was time to make a change. We feel the pieces we've added this offseason will make up for the goals."

On the opposite side of the analysis, Scott Cullen at TSN [summed up the trade saying](#), "Buffalo got a first-line scoring winger at a discount price, so they have to be ecstatic. Perhaps Skinner's no-move clause limited his potential marketplace, but the Hurricanes are clearly worse after getting rid of Skinner, and it doesn't look like the return makes the deal worthwhile. Essentially, if this was the best deal available, why not keep Skinner next season and try to make the playoffs?"

Buffalo and Skinner are clear winners in the deal. But, Waddell is confident that the trade is in the best interest of the team. If what Waddell hopes comes to pass regarding the team finding goal-scoring from more than just one player, it will be a win for the Hurricanes.



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## Jeff Skinner Trade: What did the Hurricanes Get?

The Hurricanes get a number of assets in Cliff Pu and three draft picks.

By Brett Finger

Two days ago, the Carolina Hurricanes traded Jeff Skinner to the Buffalo Sabres. In return, they got four assets.

Opinions (mostly negative) have been flying around all over the place since then, so I'm not necessarily interested in talking about the missteps by Skinner and the organization over the past eight years, the emotions of the trade, "culture", no-trade clauses, or any of the extracurriculars surrounding the trade.

Instead, I want to talk about what the Hurricanes are getting and what it means this season and beyond - on the ice.

For starters, the Canes got a prospect - Cliff Pu. The 20-year-old forward was drafted in the third round of the 2016 NHL Draft by the Sabres and has since totaled 170 points in 128 OHL regular season games and 24 points in 29 OHL playoff games. Prior to getting drafted, he was pegged by many as a second-round pick, being ranked as high as 34 by ISS Hockey. TSN and McKeen's Hockey also had him ranked safely in the second round.

The numbers alone look pretty good, if not great. Looking deeper into it, his NHL (a translation of points in one league to another, pioneered in part by Rob Vollman) last season was 32. That means that his OHL numbers last season indicate that he would score 32 NHL points this upcoming season if he were to make the jump.



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That's very impressive. And it's even more impressive that it wasn't just one good year of production. Pu put up almost the exact same numbers in the 2016-17 season as well.

Pu has the size that you'd like. As of now, he stands at 6'2", 192 pounds. He can play both the wing and down the middle, but he projects as a right shot center at the NHL level. He has speed, skill, size, and a track record that suggests he will be a real player for this organization in the near future.

He will likely play for Charlotte in the AHL this upcoming season, but maybe he makes a good enough impression on Rod Brind'Amour and company that he throws himself into the conversation for a roster spot or, more likely, as a call-up option.

In addition to Pu, the Canes got three draft picks - a 2019 second-round pick, a 2020 third-round pick, and a 2020 sixth-round pick.

I've seen the terms "magic beans" and "lottery tickets" thrown around about these picks, which, in a sense, is true - you don't know what you will get with those picks. That being said, I don't think it's necessarily fair in this case.

If you are using those selections to draft 18-year-old players who are four or more years away from being NHLers, then yes they are magic beans. However, they aren't magic beans if you are using those picks to acquire known NHL assets, which is something Don Waddell hinted at after making the trade.

The 2019 second-round pick and the 2020 third-round pick, in particular, hold some value moving forward.

At the 2018 NHL trade deadline, the New York Rangers traded Michael Grabner for a decent defensive prospect and a second-round draft pick, the Edmonton Oilers traded Patrick Maroon for a third-round pick and a decent center prospect, Vancouver traded Thomas Vanek to Columbus for assets that many believed didn't even add up to that of a third-round pick, and the list continues.

If the Hurricanes are so inclined, they can package a second-round pick out of Buffalo (a team that projects to not make the playoffs) and acquire a player that makes them better immediately. That 2020 third-round pick is less valuable, but it still accomplishes the same goal, even if it is

just for a rental that helps Carolina end a near decade-long playoff drought.

That's why, if you were to ask me who won the trade, I'd say TBD.

Right now, Carolina is not getting better because of this trade. They're just not. They traded out at least 20 goals this season and got back zero. Though, Carolina's management would argue that they're getting back goals from the young player who takes his role in the lineup, which is entirely possible, but for now it's just an "if".

For me, this trade isn't complete until we see what happens with the draft picks that were acquired. There is a very real possibility that one, two, or all of those draft picks will be used to acquire an NHL player. Then, instead of it being Skinner for Pu, a second, a third, and a sixth, it's Skinner for Pu and [insert name of player(s) here].

Now, imagine if Pu turns into an NHL player, which he is expected to do, the Canes deal two of those picks for a player or two, and Skinner hits free agency and signs elsewhere after the 2018-19 season. In that case, the trade starts to look different. Of course, those are all assumptions, but it's a very reasonable outcome based on what we know right now.

Would it have been more valuable for the Hurricanes to just keep Skinner? Could this trade blow up in Carolina's face? Maybe, but I think it's just as likely that the Canes look back on it a year from now and find themselves pretty happy with how things worked out.

For now, though, the Hurricanes have more trade assets and one more good prospect than they did on Wednesday. And now it's up to Don Waddell and the GM by committee to get as much value as possible out of the assets they now have.

One thing that is for sure, though, is that the Canes will have a tough time selling a "we're trying to be a winner right now" narrative and then turn around and use all of those draft picks on 18-year-olds. I think they have to flip some of those picks at some point, be it prior to training camp, prior to the trade deadline, or at some other point in the relatively near future.

## Jeff Skinner Trade Was Inevitable, But Avoidable

Why?

By Justin Lape

On Thursday, the Carolina Hurricanes shocked the hockey world by shipping forward Jeff Skinner to the Buffalo Sabres for...well, nothing. That's it. It's that simple. There's no other way to spin this. Sorry, Cliff Pu experts.

Jeff Skinner's services earned the Hurricanes a C-level prospect in Pu, a second round pick, a third round pick and a sixth round pick.

A three-time thirty goal scorer got you that.

A player that has scored above fifty points in four of his eight seasons got you that.

A player that has been cleared of concussion worries and managed to score 49 points while tied to the third line with Derek Ryan got you that.

That's embarrassing.

How did we get here? How did the Hurricanes go from marketing the face of the franchise to shipping him to western New York? What went wrong?

Relationships are like cuts. If you don't treat them, take care of them and mend them, they'll be full of pus and burst before you know it. The relationship between the Hurricanes and Skinner got to this point. He wanted out and it's tough to point the blame at him for looking for a new home, away from



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a team that hasn't provided with the necessary tools to succeed.

Management through Skinner's tenure here is the culprit of the crime. Jim Rutherford was the general manager when Skinner's entry level deal expired. He included the no-movement clause that handcuffed the Hurricanes in the present day. Rutherford's successor, Ron Francis, brought on a coach that constantly feuded with Skinner in Bill Peters. The franchise was seemingly eternally unsure of what his role, was and asked a player known for his scoring touch to become a two-way player.

The plan never worked, and Peters tinkered with Skinner too much and shifted him up and down the line-up, rarely giving him a chance to play with other Hurricanes scoring leaders.

So, why the poor return? Skinner was in charge of his own destiny. There were links to the Los Angeles Kings, the St. Louis Blues and the Pittsburgh Penguins as possible destinations. The Hurricanes were not going to trade Skinner within their division and risk the chance of him lighting the lamp in multiple games against them this season. The choice was up to Skinner, and as LA and St. Louis tied their hands financially after they shaped their rosters, a team with the cap room to fit Skinner's \$5.75 million hit had to be found.

Enter Buffalo. The Sabres had the cap space and have enticing options on offense, such as Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart, that most likely played a factor in Skinner's decision. Top prospect Casey Mittelstadt is on the way and could see time this year. The team just drafted one of the best defensive prospects in the past ten years in Rasmus Dahlin. Buffalo is not the same team that finished an abysmal season back in April. The team has added valuable complimentary pieces to an already young core in place.

## Farewell to Jeff Skinner, A Goal Scorer with Few Equals

The times they are a-changin'.

By Andrew Ahr

Well, it finally happened. After months of serious trade rumors, Jeff Skinner has finally been shipped out to the Buffalo Sabres. In return the Hurricanes will receive 2016 3rd round selection Cliff Pu, a 2019 second round pick, as well as a 2020 third round and sixth round pick.

Despite the writing being on the wall for Skinner this trade still came as a shock to me. Based on the light return as well as rumblings from the franchise, it seems clear that the front office wasn't interested in seeing Skinner in a Hurricanes jersey next season. Here in Carolina we will miss his big personality around the club and his unique figure skating influenced playing style. But perhaps his pure ability to score goals will be missed the most.

Jeff Skinner was selected 7th overall in the 2010 NHL Draft. Coming off a 50-goal performance in the OHL regular season with the Kitchener Rangers, he was touted as the best pure goal scorer in his draft class who wasn't named Taylor Hall. He joined the ranks of one of the hottest forward prospect pools in hockey with the likes of Zac Dalpe, Zach Boychuk, and Drayson Bowman.

The beauty of the trade from Skinner's personal standpoint is he doesn't have to stay if it doesn't work out. On an expiring deal, Skinner could be one of the top unrestricted free agents on the market come next off-season. His contract demands for next season will most likely be north of his current cap hit, especially if he reaches the 60-70 point threshold next season playing next to a competent center in Eichel. If Buffalo doesn't pay up, fine; Skinner can explore options in markets that may be desperate for scoring. He comes out of this deal a winner either way.

There will be pundits trying to justify the unjustifiable over the next few days. You may hear slander from sites or leaks about Skinner's character. Just one night ago, Skinner was at a ping-pong charity event that raised over \$200,000 for concussion and rare cancer research.

His play shows just what he gave to a franchise in its most incompetent state. Skinner brought life and energy to a team that has had no hope over the past nine playoff-less seasons all while having that signature smile on his face. With tomahawks and pirouettes aplenty, he provided entertainment to an otherwise bleak nine-year stretch.

Up until this point, the Hurricanes made moves that made the media and the fans believe they would at least be able to tread water in the Metropolitan Division. Strong rookie seasons by both Martin Necas and Andrei Svechnikov could have even put them up into one of the top three spots in the division. Now, the Hurricanes will need to search for answers on offense because they don't currently have a definite solution. Perhaps it's too early to throw in the towel before the season even begins but the Hurricanes could be drowning in their own problems if an offensive life raft is not thrown their way.

OK, so maybe Skinner was the only NHL level forward in that group, but he embraced the pressure of being the franchise's most promising youngster. He made the team out of training camp — something that Jim Rutherford hinted at before Skinner was even selected that summer — and immediately took the league by storm.

His first goal, scored in his sixth NHL game, was actually a pretty good indicator of his future in Carolina. A slapshot from Anton Babchuk fought off by Jonathan Bernier, Skinner found it in front of the net and shoveled the puck in on his backhand. This franchise will remember Jeff Skinner for his ability to score beautiful goals, but we shouldn't forget his knack for finding the back of the net off of second and third chance opportunities.

Skinner was certainly flying high in his rookie season. He came into the league and immediately found his calling as a goal scorer playing with Erik Cole. Skinner was a breath of fresh air in the Carolina market as a great, marketable youngster who attracted much attention from casual fans around Raleigh.

As the season carried into the all-star break, Skinner was sitting on 18 goals and 40 points, earning him a spot as an injury replacement in the All-Star Game, which happened to



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be in Raleigh. The youngest NHL player to ever participate in the game, he received much national media attention.

He would finish out his dynamite rookie season with 31 goals and 63 points on his way to a Calder Trophy.

His speech at the NHL awards in 2011 was completely emblematic of his young personality in the NHL. Soft-spoken and seemingly uncomfortable in the spotlight, he would nervously apologize to the crowd for taking so long in accepting his award.

His sophomore and junior season in the league brought on reduced production from the young sniper, as he battled some injuries as well as increased notoriety as a goal scorer from opposing teams. But he was never quite able to reproduce his lightning rookie performance.

Until the 2016-17 season.

For the final month of the season, no forward in hockey was better than Jeff Skinner. He generated 7.30 individual expected goals at 5-on-5 — good for best in the league. The closest player to him was Connor McDavid with 6.96, but

after that the next closest players were Eric Staal and Rickard Rakell with 4.87. And he passed the eye test with flying colors. Skinner was on fire, scoring 13 goals at even strength in just one month, three more than the second best scorer in the league in that stretch.

This is the Jeff Skinner that we will miss most. When his game is on everyone in the building knows it, and he'll score some truly incredible goals. Here's just one example of his unbelievable play during that stretch in the spring of 2017.

His overtime heroics here kept the Hurricanes' streak towards the playoffs alive, moving them to 9-0-4 and a 13 game point streak. With all that's been said about Skinner and this hockey team over the last few months, no one can deny his gumption and leadership over this stretch. The final month of the 2016-17 season, and that overtime game in particular, was the brightest this Hurricanes team has shined in years.

And it was led by Jeff Skinner, the most electric goal scorer the franchise has ever seen.



## Inside look at Carolina Hurricanes

New coach Brind'Amour, trade for Hamilton, Ferland among organization shake-up

by Tom Gulitti

NHL.com is providing in-depth roster, prospect and fantasy analysis for each of its 31 teams throughout August. Today, the Carolina Hurricanes.

The winds of change that swept over the Carolina Hurricanes in 2018 have been worthy of their nickname.

Rod Brind'Amour, who turns 48 on Aug. 9, was named coach May 8 after seven seasons as an assistant, succeeding Bill Peters, who stepped down to become Calgary Flames coach. On the day Brind'Amour was promoted, Don Waddell, who was Carolina's president of business operations for four seasons, was named general manager, filling the vacancy created when Ron Francis was removed March 7.

"I don't want to say it's a new team, but it will be," Brind'Amour said. "We'll potentially have 12 new players, so I think everyone's just excited. There's been a lot of change, but we've done a pretty good job of keeping the pieces we wanted to keep and build around, and then we have a couple young players we're excited to see, new rookie players that I think will be exciting to watch."

The Hurricanes have been shaking up their roster this offseason, the latest move coming Aug. 2 when forward Jeff Skinner was traded to the Buffalo Sabres for forward prospect Cliff Pu, a second-round pick in the 2019 NHL Draft, and third-round and sixth-round picks in the 2020 NHL Draft.

The retooling began when defenseman Dougie Hamilton, forward Micheal Ferland and defenseman prospect Adam Fox were acquired in a trade from the Flames on June 23 for forward Elias Lindholm and defenseman Noah Hanifin.

The addition of Hamilton, 25, in combination with the signing of unrestricted free agent Calvin de Haan, 27, on July 3 (four-year, \$18.2 million contract) will provide more experience at defenseman. Trevor van Riemsdyk, 27, and de Haan are the Hurricanes' oldest defensemen.

"I get to play with one of the best young blue lines in the NHL," said de Haan, who played 304 games in six seasons with the New York Islanders. "I feel I can step in and help this team win. I'm aware that the Hurricanes haven't made the playoffs in the past nine years and I want to be part of the solution here."

Carolina allowed the fewest shots on goal in the NHL last season (28.9 per game) but gave up 3.09 goals per game, which ranked 22nd, because of inconsistent goaltending. Scott Darling, 29, had trouble adjusting to a



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heavier workload after being acquired in a trade from the Chicago Blackhawks on April 28, 2017, going 13-21-7 with a 3.18 goals-against average and .888 save percentage.

With Cam Ward leaving after 13 seasons in Carolina to sign with Chicago, the Hurricanes and goalie Petr Mrazek agreed to a one-year, \$1.5 million contract July 1. Like Darling, Mrazek, 26, will look to rebound after struggling last season with the Detroit Red Wings and Philadelphia Flyers, going 14-13-6 with a 3.03 GAA, a .902 save percentage and four shutouts.

"I know Scott a little bit, so I believe we can be a great tandem for Carolina in net," Mrazek said. "We are going to be sharing the net well and helping the team get the wins."

The Hurricanes hope to get a boost offensively from rookie forwards Andrei Svechnikov, the No. 2 pick in the 2018 NHL Draft, and Martin Necas, the No. 12 pick in the 2017 NHL Draft. Carolina was 23rd in the NHL in scoring last season (2.74 goals per game).

"You don't want to put too much on them too early, so if that doesn't pan out then it doesn't quite look the same,"

## Top prospects for Carolina Hurricanes

Svechnikov set to contribute immediately; Necas to get long look

by Tom Gulitti

NHL.com is providing in-depth prospect analysis for each of its 31 teams throughout August. Today, the top five prospects for the Carolina Hurricanes, according to NHL.com.

1. Andrei Svechnikov, F

How acquired: Selected with No. 2 pick in 2018 NHL Draft

Last season: Barrie (OHL): 44 GP, 40-32-72

NHL Central Scouting ranked Svechnikov as the top North American skater available in the 2018 draft, and he was the clear-cut No. 2 pick behind defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, who was selected No. 1 by the Buffalo Sabres.

The Hurricanes hope to get a boost offensively from Svechnikov after finishing 23rd in the NHL in scoring last season (2.74 goals per game). The 18-year-old from Barnaul, Russia, has the size (6-foot-2, 188 pounds) and strength to play in the NHL.

Projected NHL arrival: This season

2. Martin Necas, C

How acquired: Selected with No. 12 pick in 2017 NHL Draft

Last season: Carolina: 1 GP, 0-0-0; Brno (Czech Extraliga): 24 GP, 9-8-17

Necas made his NHL debut with the Hurricanes on Oct. 17, 2017, before returning to the Czech Extraliga. The 19-year-old also played for the Czech Republic at the 2018 IIHF World Junior Championship, when he had 11 points (three goals, eight assists) in seven games (tying Buffalo's Casey Mittelstadt for the tournament lead), and the 2018 IIHF World

Brind'Amour said. "But I think right now we've got pretty high hopes on both of them cracking our lineup and being impact players for us."

More roster changes may be coming. There has been speculation that the Hurricanes might trade 26-year-old defenseman Justin Faulk.

Waddell is working with majority owner Tom Dundon, who replaced Peter Karmanos on Jan. 11, and Brind'Amour in a restructured front office by committee that includes senior vice president of hockey operations Rick Dudley, who was hired May 1, and vice president of hockey operations Paul Krepelka, who was hired April 19.

It will be Brind'Amour's job to change the mindset from the Hurricanes being a rebuilding team to one that believes it can contend for the Stanley Cup.

"I don't think baby steps is the way to look at it," Brind'Amour said. "Every year has a new beginning, and whether you were Stanley Cup champs or last place it's kind of irrelevant. You're trying to win the Stanley Cup the next year. That's the mentality that you have to have."

Championship, when he had five points (three goals, two assists) in seven games.

With the Hurricanes' need for centers, Necas (6-1, 167) will get a longer look in the NHL this season.

Projected NHL arrival: This season

3. Valentin Zykov, F

How acquired: Trade from Los Angeles Kings on Feb. 28, 2016

Last season: Carolina: 10 GP, 3-4-7; Charlotte (AHL): 63 GP, 33-21-54

After three seasons in the American Hockey League, it's time for Zykov to take the next step and establish himself as a full-time NHL player. The 23-year-old led the AHL last season in goals (33) and power-play goals (17).

Zykov, who was selected by Los Angeles in the second round (No. 37) in the 2013 NHL Draft, didn't look out of place in 10 games with Carolina at the end of last season. He skated at left wing on the top line with Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, and used his size (6-1, 224) and strength to score three goals.

Projected NHL arrival: This season

4. Warren Foegele, F

How acquired: Selected with No. 67 pick in 2014 NHL Draft

Last season: Carolina: 2 GP, 2-1-3; Charlotte (AHL): 73 GP, 28-18-46

Foegele made an immediate impact with the Hurricanes last season, scoring on his first shot and getting an assist in his NHL debut against the Ottawa Senators on March 26. The 22-year-old scored again the next game against the New Jersey Devils before being returned to Charlotte for the remainder of the season.



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A strong skater with good size (6-2, 190), Foegele is expected to compete for an NHL roster spot in training camp.

Projected NHL arrival: This season

5. Adam Fox, D

How acquired: Trade from Calgary Flames on June 23, 2018

Last season: Harvard (NCAA): 29 GP, 6-22-28

The main question about Fox is whether the skilled puck-mover will sign with the Hurricanes. The 20-year-old will return to Harvard for his junior year, but general manager

Don Waddell said he hopes to sign him after the season. Otherwise, Fox could play out his college eligibility and become an unrestricted free agent in 2020.

A two-time first-team CCM/American Hockey Coaches Association All-American, Fox (5-11, 181) led NCAA defensemen with 40 points (six goals, 34 assists), including 24 (two goals, 22 assists) on the power play, as a freshman in 2016-17. He had 18 power-play points (two goals, 16 assists) last season.

Projected NHL arrival: Next season

### Carolina Hurricanes key statistics

Hamilton could spark young defensemen; shooting, save percentages must improve

by Rob Vollman

NHL.com is providing in-depth analysis for each of its 31 teams throughout August. Today, three key statistics for the Carolina Hurricanes.

#### 1. Unlocking potential

Dougie Hamilton, acquired in a trade from the Calgary Flames on June 23, could spark Carolina's talented group of young defensemen.

In three seasons with Calgary, the 25-year-old had 94 points (29 goals, 65 assists) in 245 games at even strength, seventh among NHL defensemen in that span.

The Flames had a 4,309-3,636 advantage in 5-on-5 shot attempts with Hamilton on the ice since the start of the 2015-16 season, for an SAT of plus-673. That boosted their share of shot attempts from 48.81 percent to 54.24 percent, giving Hamilton a relative SAT of plus-5.43 percent that was fifth among defensemen who played at least 50 games over that time.

#### 2. Lifting the percentages

### Three questions facing Carolina Hurricanes

Goaltending, center depth among concerns

by Tom Gulitti

NHL.com is providing in-depth analysis for each of its 31 teams throughout August. Today, three important questions facing the Carolina Hurricanes.

#### 1. Will their goaltending be good enough?

The Hurricanes envisioned Scott Darling as their No. 1 goalie when they acquired him in a trade from the Chicago Blackhawks on April 28, 2017, and signed him to a four-year, \$16.6 million contract. But Darling struggled with the heavier workload, going 13-21-7 with a 3.18 goals-against average and .888 save percentage in an NHL career-high 43 games last season.

This season, the 29-year-old will compete for playing time with Petr Mrazek, who agreed to a one-year, \$1.5 million

The Hurricanes had a 4,253-3,558 advantage in 5-on-5 shot attempts last season, for an SAT of plus-695 and an SAT percentage of 54.45, each the best in the NHL. This territorial advantage is confirmed by their NHL-high offensive zone start percentage of 56.61.

Despite these numbers, Carolina was outscored 179-155 at 5-on-5, when it had a 7.0 shooting percentage (28th in the NHL) and its goalies, Cam Ward and Scott Darling, combined for a .909 save percentage (30th).

The Hurricanes' shooting plus save percentage (SPSV) of 980 was 30th in the NHL, better than only the Buffalo Sabres' 978. If last season was any indication though, improvement in 2018-19 is possible. The four teams that had the worst SPSVs in 2016-17 (Colorado Avalanche, Boston Bruins, Philadelphia Flyers, Los Angeles Kings) went from an average of 980 to 1,008 in 2017-18, and each made the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

#### 3. Consistently disciplined

Carolina spent 404:01 on the power play and 306:46 shorthanded, for a differential of plus-97:15 that led the NHL.

The Hurricanes have been outside the top six teams once since this measurement became available for the 2002-03 season, when they were 10th in 2009-10 (plus-24:15).

contract July 1. Mrazek replaces Cam Ward, who left after 13 seasons in Carolina to sign with Chicago.

Mrazek, 26, also has something to prove after an inconsistent season with the Detroit Red Wings and Philadelphia Flyers, when he went 14-13-6 with a 3.03 GAA, a .902 save percentage and four shutouts.

Ideally, either Darling or Mrazek will play well enough to take the starting job.

#### 2. Is Sebastian Aho a center?

Aho didn't look out of place after being moved from right wing to center near the end of last season, but Rod Brind'Amour, who is entering his first season as an NHL coach, isn't ready to say Aho will stay in that position. The 21-year-old's skill as a finisher (he led Carolina with 29 goals last season after scoring 24 as a rookie in 2016-17) might make him a better fit on the wing.



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The problem is the Hurricanes are thin up the middle with veteran Jordan Staal, who had 46 points (19 goals, 27 assists) in 2017-18, as their next best option. If Martin Necas, 19, shows he's ready to play on the top two lines, that would make it easier to play Aho on the wing.

Necas is a talented playmaker the Hurricanes expect to develop into a top-line center, but he might begin the season in a lesser role to give him time to adjust to the NHL.

3. Can a front office by committee work?

Tom Dundon is a hands-on owner who is involved in almost every decision. He's assembled an experienced

management team that includes general manager Don Waddell, senior vice president of hockey operations Rick Dudley and vice president of hockey operations Paul Krepelka. Dundon also has given Brind'Amour a say in personnel decisions.

Whatever the group decides, Dundon has final approval.

The New York Islanders tried a similar collaborative approach in 2006. It lasted less than six weeks before GM Neil Smith was fired and senior adviser Pat LaFontaine resigned.

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# SportScan

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

1102672 Websites

The Athletic / 'The bird was the tamest thing going on that night ... so we thought': An oral history of Bakersfield's viral hockey moment

By Josh Cooper Aug 6, 2018 2

A little over five years ago, Bakersfield, Calif., was the center of the viral hockey universe.

On Feb. 8, 2013, the ECHL's Bakersfield Condors held a promotion called "Cirque du Condorstown" for a game against the Las Vegas Wranglers. A contortionist, stilt walkers and a high-flying aerialist were scheduled to perform. The host team also invited bird trainer Joe Krathwohl – also known as The Birdman – to bring a live Andean condor from his home location in Las Vegas.

The hope was the condor, named Queen Victoria, would jump onto a perch at center ice of Rabobank Arena to the delight of the fans. Instead, a comedy of errors ensued that led to Queen Victoria shaking loose, skidding around the playing surface, heading onto the Bakersfield bench and then down the hallway into the team's locker room.

"Going into it, the bird was the tamest thing going on that night ... so we thought," said Kevin Bartl, Bakersfield's then-radio broadcaster and current vice president of communications and marketing.

At the time, people around the team thought they had witnessed a viral moment, but they didn't know how big it would get. The footage ended up on ESPN's "SportsCenter," "Good Morning America" and "The Today Show." The organization got calls from Animal Planet and the Discovery Channel. A television show in Japan also wanted footage.

Overall, the video on the Condors' YouTube channel has received over 1.2 million views. The next most popular video on their channel is a line brawl from 2012 that has over 255,000 views.

"There certainly weren't minor league sports videos that were getting views like that," Bartl recalled.

Even today, that moment is emblematic of the Bakersfield franchise. The organization is constantly seen as one that pushes the envelope for wacky minor league hockey promotions, and the condor mishap cemented it in the sports' consciousness as one of the sport's more creative teams. Currently, the Condors are the Edmonton Oilers' AHL affiliate.

There is an element of redemption to the story as well. This past season, Queen Victoria was asked to come back – but this time with an abundance of caution to ensure nothing crazy would happen again.

This is the oral history of the time the live Andean condor Queen Victoria got loose before a minor league hockey game in Bakersfield.

The Brainstorming

The Cirque du Condorstown promotional idea didn't seem provocative or outlandish at the time. Before then, the team had held Charlie Sheen Night where fans who brought clean drug tests to the game would get free admission. The Condors also tried to sign pop star Justin Bieber. For



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them, bringing a live bird on the ice as part of several other stunts wasn't supposed to be a big deal.

Condors president Matt Riley: I was talking with my buddy Billy Johnson [president of the Wranglers] and he's known for some of his [promotional] stuff and we talk on a regular basis and will brainstorm ideas and so forth, so he had hooked us up with some folks and said, "Hey have you ever had a condor at a game? There's a guy in Vegas who has live condors." I'm like, "No, it's not like every day you see a live condor." They're on the endangered species list. They're usually not in captivity. Rarely are they even in zoos and stuff. So I'm like, "Cook me up. Let's try to work something out."

Bartl: We wanted to do just some crazy stuff ... The bird was only part of it.

Krathwohl: There are only two people in the country who have condors privately owned. One's in Orlando and one's in Las Vegas (being me), so if you're calling around looking for a condor, it's only a matter of time before my phone rings. So the initial idea I thought was, "Great! I'm trying to reach as many people to make them aware of condors."

### The Preparation

Krathwohl arrived in Bakersfield from Las Vegas the night before the game in order to get ready. He didn't feel like he needed much more than a few practice runs with Queen Victoria. Fortunately, she had performed on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" as well as other live entertainment events. Krathwohl didn't seem to think he would need to radically alter his routine.

Krathwohl: I had built this entire perch that had looked exactly like the Bakersfield Condors logo and I said, "OK, here's the goal. All we're going to do is we're going to have her jump up onto this perch at the end of the anthem. Everybody will love it. Their logo comes to life. Everyone's a hero." We got there real early in the day and rehearsed it and rehearsed it and it was great. I have all these photos of her on this perch, and it was just perfect.

Bartl: I actually remember because we went down and Joe "The Birdman" did a couple of dry runs first in the morning when he brought the birds in. Queen Victoria was out on the ice and she was just walking around, couldn't care less about the ice by the way. Couldn't care less. Just kind of walking around and checking things out.

Riley: I was there periodically and some of our other folks were too. He would never put the birds at risk of anything and wanted to make sure it was a safe environment and they felt comfortable in it and that sort of thing. He did the best he could from a practice standpoint in a sterile environment.

Defenseman Erik Burgdoerfer: We knew a couple of days, maybe even a week or so leading up, because they were kind of publicizing out in the media that this bird was going to be on the ice for the anthem. But we didn't have any specific instructions and I honestly had never seen a condor before, so I didn't really know what to expect.

Condors radio broadcaster Ryan Holt: We had the picture of the bird [on Instagram] on top of the sticks with the logo [while practicing earlier in the day], so we had her on the perch. I remember thinking, "OK, the bird's here. Great. The bird jumps on the crate. Awesome. We're done." The thought of what eventually happens never crossed my mind.

### The Fall

Though Queen Victoria seemed ready earlier in the day, a few variables changed shortly before the anthem. Krathwohl had been prepared for the crowd and the noise, but the ice being resurfaced created a new wrinkle. While he was able to easily walk on the ice in the morning when it was chewed up and stickier after a practice, he couldn't maneuver with the same level of confidence before the game due to ice's slick coating.

Krathwohl: I'm learning this new environment all day and what I learned was that scuffed-up ice is pretty safe to walk on in tennis shoes. And so they Zamboni'd the ice, and at this point people are coming in and sitting

down. I can't go out there and rehearse again. A couple of the guys who worked behind the scenes for the team said, "Hey, it's really slick out there and it's really dangerous. We're going to help you out and add some carpeting" and stuff like that. And I was like, "Huh, OK." And then when we got out there it was like, "Oh man, there's even more red carpeting" and all that, and I realize they're trying to help but it just changed the entire venue.

She [Queen Victoria] has been doing this routine for years and years and years, so my mistake that was probably the main contributor to it going wrong that first night was I thought it was easy. I said, "This is easy, this is so less challenging than our normal crazy environment. Certainly less challenging than going on 'The Tonight Show.' Here we have a lot of extra space. We have no time pressure. We don't have cameras close in our face. It should be easy." And because I thought it would be easy, Murphy's Law decided, "No, no, no pal. We're going to make this difficult."

The minute we opened the crate and she saw that [red carpeting], she was like, "Oh hell no, I'm not doing this." So I'm like, "We're live, let's press on. It's such an easy job, you'll be fine."

Holt: I remember the bird coming out of the little pen there and thinking, "OK, everything is great. Everything is awesome." And there was a stand he made with two hockey sticks and he was going to perch her on top of the Condors logo on top of the hockey sticks. And I'm thinking, "There's no way that bird is going to get up onto those hockey sticks."

Condors coach Matt O'Dette: I didn't think anything of it. I had no idea what was going to happen. I just thought there would be a condor out on the ice [pause and laughter in the background] — I have some co-workers in my office right now ... they're laughing their asses off — I didn't expect what happened to happen. I just thought there would be a condor on the ice and that would be it.

Krathwohl: So many years ago, I trained her to put her beak into my glove so if she accidentally walked near traffic or something dangerous, I had this Plan B where I could guide her out of there by leading her by her beak. So I said, "I'll just use the Plan B so I'll guide her and set her on the perch." But she decided, "No, no, no." She was not going to be on that carpeting. So she wiggled out of my grip and all she did was walk about 10 feet out to see what was on the ice and then she turned around and looked at me and was like, "No, I am not going on that carpeting."

Cassie Dunlap, national anthem singer: All these things were happening while I was trying to stay focused on doing the national anthem justice and honoring America with this song so then [Joe The Birdman] kind of passed the path in front of me, and then that's when the bird jumped off his arm and started coming toward me. I'm like seeing all this happening all the while still trying to stay focused on singing the song, and then it just got worse from there.

Krathwohl: We had made a deal with whatever players that were on the ice to just stay away from the bird because the only real thing that was dangerous in that rink are the blades of the skates and I really didn't need or want her sitting on the ice for five or 10 minutes, but I didn't think that was a big concern. So she's standing out on the ice and I'm standing on the carpeting and I took a read of where we were in the anthem and my brain quickly thought, "Hey, I've got about 10 seconds, I can fix this ..." so I trotted out on the ice, scooped her up like a baby like I've done for years, and as I was walking back to set her up on the perch and stand back and hear all the gracious applause, the last step before the carpeting my foot came right out from underneath me and down I went. And I went, "My God." And as I was going down all I could hear was the voice in my head going, "Aw crap."

### The Chase

When Krathwohl fell, more than just his pride was hurt. He also had the wind knocked out of him and injured his ribs. Queen Victoria remained stationary on the ice, waiting for her owner to get up and put her back in her crate ... until a Condors player came over to see if Krathwohl was OK. Then the spooked bird decided she had to make a move. She



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skidded across the ice towards the Wranglers' bench, then shifted towards the Condors' bench, jumped up on the boards, went behind the players and made her way down the hallway under the arena to the home team locker room.

Riley: The first reaction, it's, "Oh my gosh, this is not good."

Burgdoerfer: I remember thinking, "Wow, that's a huge bird" because it stretched its wings out and I was very taken aback by how big the bird was. The biggest thing I remember is once the bird started flapping around and the guy ended up falling, just the sound of him hitting the ice you could tell he was hurt. With just the sound of him hitting the ice and then the bird scooting away, I kind of figured we were going to be in for one because I didn't expect him to get up any time soon.

Dunlap: I'm like seeing all this happening all the while still trying to stay focused on singing the song and then it just got worse from there. He came and recovered the bird and then he slips and falls and now he has lost the bird again – I'm still signing the song, still not over. But from my family's perspective, they were there and they were recording me. They're always nervous when I sing the national anthem. That was just exponential. Like wow. They were all wondering like, "Please keep it together." They were wondering what I was thinking too. I have had so many questions like, "How did you continue to sing through all that?" I guess the only way to answer that would be what I was thinking and what was going through my head, is just like, "Maintain composure." Almost like, "The show must go on" type of thing and "Do the song justice."

Bartl: We're up there and it's going on during the anthem so our mics are muted and we're cracking up and we're laughing in the booth with the headsets on, and then the anthem's done and we kind of look at each other like, "We have to kind of go on the air" and [Holt] is still cracking up. So that's why I just kind of took over and just started talking until he could get his wits about him. But I think we were both just kind of lost in the moment.

Holt: I just remember thinking, because it was mid-anthem when he fell, and I remember not wanting to laugh and I remember not wanting to laugh at him falling. We kind of had a little lull between midway through the anthem when he falls and then the end of the anthem where everything has kind of died down, but we have to get back on the air. So now I have to start talking. I have to come up with something. I remember looking at Bartl and Bartl does this thing when he tries to hold in a laugh, he tries to grab his nose and tries to distract himself so he doesn't start laughing. So once I saw him start doing that, I started cracking up laughing.

Bartl: [Joe] told me these birds are very heavy and I knew that they typically glide and they don't have takeoff power ... I had asked if she could take off and he said, "I would be very surprised if she could clear the glass from ice level because they need a long runway to get going." So I never thought that the bird was going to try to hop up on the bench or anything. I just knew, "Whatever happens, she's just going to scoot around the ice and finally we'll get her off and that'll be the end of this." Anyways, I was wrong about that too.

O'Dette: I saw the bird get away from the handler and he corralled the bird and then obviously had that spill, which I think he broke some ribs on that one. But then as the bird got away it was coming towards the bench and then I think everyone on the bench was wondering, "What's this thing going to do?"

Burgdoerfer: There's a movie called "Semi-Pro" where Will Ferrell [is a minor league basketball player] and wrestles a bear as a stunt. The bear gets out of the cage and Ferrell starts screaming, "Everybody panic!" and literally that movie line was what popped into my head and that's all I could think of, and I was hysterically laughing.

Definitely you were not hoping it was going to land on you. It had pretty big talons and a wingspan, but you're wearing all your equipment and you have a stick. I wasn't super worried from that regard, but I definitely didn't want it landing on my shoulder. I was taking a couple of steps away from it without a doubt.

O'Dette: I remember thinking to myself, "Jesus, this bird is huge." And then I was pretty much staring eye-to-eye with it. It was pretty much eye level with me on the bench. And I'm thinking to myself, "What's this thing going to do?" And from there I think it got startled or something and flew towards me and I ducked and I kind of hit the glass behind me and it kind of briefly brushed down my back.

Riley: As the person in charge if you will or the operator, certainly those are the concerns – safety. Any time something doesn't go as planned you're worried about it.

Krathwohl: Even with the wind knocked out of me, I go into that recovery mode and just follow her and if she stops I can pick her up and get her out of there. If she doesn't stop, I'm going to follow her anyways and stay close to her in case somebody else is nervous and accidentally acts in some sort of a way that presents a danger.

I've got to get there fast so they don't hurt the poor bird, so even though you can't breathe, even though you can't hear, even though you fell on your butt in front of thousands of people, you've got to get to your feet and follow your half-a-million-dollar bird wherever she's walking off in this arena so that you can keep her safe. Keeping her safe was more important than whatever injury I had at the moment.

She found her way down to the locker room and I went over the boards and followed down after her, and the scene that I came down to was her in the locker room standing on the embedded Bakersfield Condors logo on the carpeting and she turned around and looked at me and she's flapping her wings like a baby bird and looking up at me like, "Oh my gosh, are we OK? Is everything good?" Like she's ready to go again. And I just looked at her and said, "Don't worry, it's over."

### The Aftermath

The game went on and the Condors lost 4-1. Krathwohl got checked out by medics who determined he had indeed injured his ribs. Feeling OK enough to play hurt, he still carried on another bird act (not with Queen Victoria) between periods. After the game ended, he decided to get into his van and drive back to Las Vegas that night, knowing he would be in pain for some time and wanting to head towards more familiar and comfortable surroundings. Meanwhile, Condors staffers had a sense they had just witnessed a viral moment and knew they had to figure out a way to post whatever video they had.

Holt: I remember thinking through it: One, how am I going to get copy of this video; Two, it's all standard definition at that time; and three, we were leaving on a bus to go to San Francisco right after the game [for another game]. I'm not going to have time to cut this highlight and still get to the bus in time. So all these things are going through my head in the first period as things are going on and I realized that we were not going to get this up instantaneously, which wasn't necessarily a bad thing because it has clearly had a long shelf-life here. But it took a little bit to refocus.

Bartl: Our public address guy who had been here a long time, he works for the local ABC affiliate, and we asked him if he could – he usually would pick up the game disk from the production room and take it back to the station so they could do their highlights. So Ryan asked him if he could clip it and put it together so that Ryan could distribute it.

Holt: I sat on it basically all night because I figured if we posted something at 11:30 p.m. it wasn't really going to get viewed. So we waited until the next day when we got to San Francisco. I'll never forget, we were at the La Quinta Inn in Daly City and before morning skate I sat there in the hotel room. I hit send on YouTube and by the time morning skate was over and I got back to my computer I had emails and phone calls and everything saying, "We want to use this." TSN and ESPN ... I couldn't believe how far it got.

O'Dette: I didn't really follow what we put on YouTube or anything like that, but I know when people started calling me and messaging me saying, "I saw you on TV." That was kind of when I knew it was getting around. I'm like, "Holy cow. This is out there."



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Burgdoerfer: I'd say right after the game straight on through for a week out, there would be people chiming in about what happened. It was pretty instant.

Dunlap: The next morning, my sister said, "This is going to go viral." Before the numbers even started climbing and they had posted the video of it, she was like, "That was so crazy, this is going to be all over the internet."

Krathwohl: By Monday morning, that's when all the salt was getting rubbed into the wound where it was like, "Wait a minute. I didn't just embarrass myself in front of thousands of people in Bakersfield. Now this is filmed and being distributed and oh my God!"

At first I read some of the response comments and they were everything from, "Oh my gosh, that poor guy, he loves his bird so much and he tried so hard" all the way to "What kind of a moron would have a condor in captivity?" So I stopped reading that stuff. I understand why celebrities don't read the tabloids.

Sean Leahy, then editor for Yahoo's Puck Daddy blog: Any time you bring a live animal onto the ice, there's the chance something wacky will happen. The Condors were always our favorite minor league hockey team at Puck Daddy because they constantly had unique promotional nights. So when I saw they were including an actual condor into their pre-game festivities for a game, I knew it had some potential.

Holt: A Pittsburgh radio station actually wanted to send us Primanti Brothers sandwiches because they thought it was the funniest thing. We did interviews in Toronto, Vancouver ... everywhere. "Ridiculousness" had the video. "Talk Soup" had the video. It was on "When Animals Attack." It was everywhere.

It was a fun week and it stretched almost two weeks of people calling and wanting to talk about it. "Good Morning America" and "The Today Show" were Tuesday or Wednesday the next week when they started calling. That was the good part about it was things didn't go viral as much so it had kind of a shelf life a little bit. Nowadays it's one day and that's it. We were talking about that for like a week and a half or two weeks.

Bartl: I'm a broadcaster. I wanted to be on "SportsCenter." It was, 'This was how I'm getting on SportsCenter. A giant bird runs loose on the ice during my minor league hockey game?' Like, "This is it." Every broadcaster wants to be in the spotlight. And some people get the dream jobs calling games for the Dodgers and other people just get to give a voiceover of a condor running loose on the ice. That's it. That's our lot in life.

### The Redemption

Krathwohl was invited back by the Bakersfield Condors multiple times, but he never went on the ice. Instead, his condors were displayed on the concourse in a much more controlled environment. But with the five-year anniversary of the event approaching, the organization decided it was time to see if Krathwohl wanted another crack at returning to the almost exact scene of the moment. So, on Feb. 9, 2018 against the Ontario Reign, Queen Victoria made her return to the ice. Another one of Krathwohl's birds, King Edward, also came to the game and went on the ice during intermission, but with much less fanfare.

Riley: We had always talked about doing it again. He wanted to be able to have more time on the ground here and in the arena as a multiple-day process to be able to have Queen Victoria, and he's also got King Edward, to get them used to their surroundings. So we needed a window for that to happen and kind of the five-year mark made sense. The whole time we were thinking about it and kind of talking about it.

Krathwohl: When they decided to do the original formula again, with Queen Victoria again, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I just finally had forgotten that horrible night and now we're going to bring everything up again?" And so I said, "You know what? There has to be a way where we can do this where it's just easy and she will understand it."

Holt: I think the game was on a Saturday and he got in on a Wednesday or Thursday and we were able to practice a little bit and kind of get the feeling of, "What does he want to do? What do the birds want to do?" And there were kind of a couple of dry runs. His big thing was he wanted to have the crate kind of be out there. And I think the easiest way to get the crate out there was through the Zamboni entrance, which for us is in a corner because the penalty box area where we normally have the anthem and everybody comes out, it's kind of a tight squeeze. So once he found out that he could come through the Zamboni entrance and push the crate out that way, that made a whole lot of sense.

Bartl: I had even put signs down in the locker room and in the referees room too, saying, "There will be a live bird on the ice, if the bird gets loose do not approach it." And guys thought it was funny. They were taking pictures of the signs before the game. I think there was probably a significant number of people there who wanted to see a repeat performance exactly like it went.

Krathwohl: We went out there, near the goal line and she came on the ice and we jumped her up to the top and she hung up there for a little bit and we walked her back into the crate and got out of there and it was like, "Thank god, no broken ribs this time."

Dunlap, who again performed the national anthem: I don't know if [Krathwohl] prepared more, but afterwards he told me if the bird would spread its wings like every time when I got to the climactic point of "Land of the free and home of the brave," he would take me all over the country and let me sing every time he wants to put the bird on display. It actually worked exactly how he wanted it.

Krathwohl: I don't go out on the ice now without slip-on cleats. Our own sense of self-survival makes our brain rise to the occasion and not make the same mistake twice, especially when it puts you in bed for three weeks.

Riley: Thank goodness the name of our team wasn't the Tigers.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.06.2018

1102673 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Hlinka Gretzky Cup will showcase best U18 players in the game

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec August 5, 2018, 3:41 PM

EDMONTON — An international hockey tournament featuring the world's best players in an age group, held on Canadian soil? Hockey interrupting Edmonton's short summer window in August?

Seriously... Is the Hlinka Gretzky Cup going to fly?

"You know, you could have asked the same question of the World Junior Championship a number of years ago too," Hockey Canada CEO Tom Renney pointed out. "A World Junior tournament at Christmas time? Are you kidding me?" Now, it's probably one of the best properties there is."

The message: never underestimate a Canadian fan's thirst for hockey, particularly when it is a best-on-best men's game and the highest pedigree available. And this tournament — heretofore known as the Ivan Hlinka tournament and held mostly in the Czech Republic — does not lack for talent.

Whereas the World Junior, or Under-20 world championship, annually loses a few of its best players to the National Hockey League, this tournament does not. As such, it becomes the starting point for the 2019 NHL Entry Draft, with multitudes of NHL general managers and scouts



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expected at Rogers Place to watch a field entirely comprised of Under-18, draft eligible players.

As such, 77 players from last year's tournament were chosen in the 2018 NHL draft, seven being drafted in the Top 10. Historically, this tournament has produced numerous first overall NHL draft picks, including Sidney Crosby, Aaron Ekblad, Joe Thornton, Nathan MacKinnon, Rick Nash, Taylor Hall, Marc-Andre Fleury and Vincent Lecavalier.

And this year Rimouski winger Alexis Lafreniere — the early favorite to go first overall in 2020 — is expected to star for Canada.

"(The Hlinka Gretzky) will take time to get some traction, we understand that," said Renney. That's why they've teamed up with the Oilers, respectfully added Wayne Gretzky's surname after Hlinka's, and quietly consider this another crown jewel in Hockey Canada's Program of Excellence crown.

Remember, the Program of Excellence began back in 1982 as a project that could provide international exposure for players as young as 17 years old, that would leave them with big-ice experience should they graduate all the way to those old, amateur-built Hockey Canada Olympic teams.

Much has changed in 2018, with Renney's group leaving the U-16 level to the provinces, but taking over control of selecting national team candidates from age 17 and up. The U17 protocol used to be that Hockey Canada took a certain number of players from each region across Canada. Those days are gone.

"Now we are taking what we deem to be the best 112 players in the country — no matter where they're from," Renney said. "There are no quotas. Now we get to that needle head a little sooner, with the right people."

In the 27 years this U18 championships has been held, Canada has won gold 21 times and medalled 24. The red Maple Leaf has won nine of the past 10 tournaments, as our polite Canadian persona gives way to a nation that sees itself as the best hockey country in the world, and is OK with acting that way.

"It is high performance. We need to win — to put our best players on the ice — if we are going to inspire little kids to play," Renney said. "It's OK to want to be the best at something, but in saying that we want to inspire kids to play regardless of what they become beyond that."

Renney estimates that "around 70 percent" of players who wear the Team Canada sweater at the U-18 level end up playing in the World Junior tournament.

It is a quick, Monday-to-Saturday tournament played in Edmonton and the suburb of St. Albert, the town that gave hockey Mark Messier and Jarome Iginla. It features eight of the world's top hockey nations — Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

Three rule changes will be experimented with during the tournament:

- A team will lose the opportunity to change lines if a defending player or goaltender unintentionally dislodges the net, augmenting the current rule that a minor penalty will be assessed to any player who deliberately dislodges the net.
- Teams awarded a power play may choose which offensive zone circle the ensuing face-off will occur, regardless of where the penalty was called.
- When the power play team makes its decision, the short-handed team will be allowed to change lines first, followed by a line change by the power play team if necessary.

Canada is in a pool with Switzerland, Slovakia and Sweden, played out Monday through Wednesday. After an off day Thursday, the semifinals go Friday before the medal games are played next Saturday.

Hockey in August.

Let's face it: We're hooked on the game.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.06.2018

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Victor Mete styling game after Leafs' Morgan Rielly

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox August 5, 2018, 1:45 PM

Victor Mete has plenty of NHL goals in the grand sense, just not any actual NHL goals — the kind that alight a red siren and compel fans to bang the Bell Centre glass. Yet.

After a strong training camp allowed him to work his way into a Montreal Canadiens lineup as a teenager, Mete dressed in 49 games during his rookie campaign. He contributed seven assists, blocked 71 shots, registered positive possession metrics and put up a better plus/minus than any other Habs defender. Mete's plus-5 stands out on a club that posted a disastrous minus-55 goal differential over the course of 2017-18.

What Mete failed to do, however, was hit — he's thrown all of one official big-league body check — and score. A 359-day-old doughnut will sit under the "G" column of Mete's stat line when the puck drops in October.

Strange, perhaps, after the 2016 fourth-rounder flexed all kinds of offensive flair in his third and final OHL run, piling up 15 goals and 44 points in 50 games for London in 2016-17.

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.

So as soon as Montreal's season ended, Mete could still be spotted at an NHL rink. With access to a private box, the Woodbridge, Ont., native and childhood Maple Leafs fan attended all three Round 1 games of the Leafs-Bruins series in Toronto.

His eyes were drawn, in particular, to another young left-shot D-man whose offensive game needed time to nurture.

"I love watching Morgan Rielly. I think I style my game after him — or try to anyway. I was able to see Rielly live, so it was really good," Mete, now 20, explains in a recent interview. Rielly scored just twice as a rookie; five years later, he's a 52-point D-man.

"He's a really good skater. He has great offensive and defensive instincts. His ability to jump into the play and be that fourth man in makes their attack that much better. And then it's his ability to play in the defensive zone and stop guys. Obviously he's not the biggest guy, but he acts like he's a big guy."

Such will be the challenge thrown at the five-foot-nine, 184-pound Mete, whose ambitions exceed his frame. He's another cog in a growing movement for the small, agile blueliner.

"The goal is to play in the top four as much as I can, play as much as I can, be the best I can be and get a lot of trust from the coaching staff, so they put me in some key situations," Mete says. On average, coach Claude Julien used Mete 15:35 per night, tossed him some power-play shifts but sheltered him from the penalty kill.

"I'm hoping to get a lot of minutes. I have to make the team again. I know that."



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

Already thin at D, Montreal will play the first couple months of the season without its best defenceman, the knee-rehabbing Shea Weber, which should free early-season minutes for up-and-comers like Mete and Noah Juulsen.

"We don't want him to rush back because that could lead to bigger and longer injuries," Mete says. "We want him to take all the time he needs to get better and come back when he can."

Mete can take some measure of comfort from shedding the rookie nerves, which hit him like a raging bull in his first road game.

"Ovechkin," Mete says. The kid needn't continue but does anyhow. "I remember him coming down on me. I was kinda scared. Good thing he dumped the puck in because I had no idea what he was gonna do. I think he got three goals in the first period against us that game." All told Ovie lit up the Canadiens for four goals in a 6-1 beatdown, and Mete finished a minus-2 on the night.

"That was a star-struck moment for me."

Once he was finished studying Rielly's moves this off-season, Mete took time to play beach volleyball and snorkel coral reefs in Jamaica, a semi-regular vacation spot ("I love fish and water," he exclaims) and bolt to the cottage with family and friends.

He's now back training diligently Monday through Friday, preparing a go-get-it mindset for when camp starts next month and his goal quest begins again in earnest.

Julien left Mete with a simple encouragement heading into Year 2.

"Keep doing what you're doing," Mete recalls his coach saying, "and I think you can be that guy."

"Just keep working, plug away, and you can do it."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.06.2018