



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Aug. 7, 2017



Inside look at Carolina Hurricanes

GM Francis hopes active offseason results in first playoff berth since 2009

by Tom Gulitti @tomgulittinhl / NHL.com Staff Writer

August 6th, 2017

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

The Carolina Hurricanes set the tone for their offseason on April 28 when they acquired goaltender [Scott Darling](#) in a trade with the Chicago Blackhawks.

Darling, 28, was to become an unrestricted free agent July 1, but after failing to qualify for the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the eighth consecutive season, the Hurricanes weren't willing to wait until then to start making moves. Having targeted Darling as their potential No. 1 goaltender, the Hurricanes traded a third-round pick in the 2017 NHL Draft for him and signed him to a four-year, \$16.6 million contract one week later.

That began of a flurry of activity that included the acquisitions of defenseman [Trevor van Riemsdyk](#) and center [Marcus Kruger](#) in trades with the Vegas Golden Knights on June 22 and July 4, and the signing of right wing [Justin Williams](#) as an unrestricted free agent on July 1.

The Hurricanes are entering the fourth season of their rebuilding plan under general manager Ron Francis, and it's time to make the next step.

"We're comfortable with the changes we made and think it gives us a better chance to accomplish what we want to do, and that's get in the playoffs," Francis said.

Last season, the Hurricanes (36-31-15) finished in 12th place in the Eastern Conference. After a late-season surge when they earned at least one point in 13 consecutive games (9-0-4), they were within four points of the second wild card into the playoffs from the Eastern Conference before going 1-4-1 in their last six and finishing eight points out.

Getting that small taste of the playoff race could be a helpful experience for a young core that includes forwards [Sebastian Aho](#), 20; [Elias Lindholm](#), 22; [Teuvo Teravainen](#), 22; and [Victor Rask](#), 24, and defensemen [Noah Hanifin](#), 20; [Brett Pesce](#), 22; [Jacob Slavin](#), 23; and [Justin Faulk](#), 25. But getting close to the playoffs won't be good enough this season.

"You need to do it over an 82-game schedule, not a 13-game stretch," Francis said.

The return of Williams, who won the Stanley Cup with the Hurricanes in 2006, should help in the locker room and on the ice. The 35-year-old, who also won the Stanley Cup with the Los Angeles Kings in 2012 and 2014, had 48 points (24 goals, 24 assists) in 80 games last season with the Washington Capitals. Darling, Kruger and van Riemsdyk also bring Stanley Cup rings with them from their time with the Blackhawks. (Before being acquired by Carolina, Kruger was traded to Vegas and van Riemsdyk was selected by the Golden Knights in the NHL Expansion Draft.)

In addition to gaining experience, the Hurricanes believe they have addressed two of their biggest needs by adding Darling and van Riemsdyk.

Carolina was tied with the Philadelphia Flyers for 26th in the NHL with a .901 save percentage. Darling, who went 18-5-5 with a 2.38 goals-against average, a .924 save percentage and two shutouts in 32 games last season, has never been a No. 1 goalie, but the Hurricanes believe he'll be able to handle a larger workload and share the duties with [Cam Ward](#) (26-22-12, 2.69 GAA, .905 save percentage, two shutouts).

And with van Riemsdyk likely playing alongside [Klas Dahlbeck](#) on their third defense pair, the Hurricanes expect to be more efficient in moving the puck out of their end, which will help them spend more time in the offensive zone.

Offense remains a concern after [Jeff Skinner](#) (37 goals) and [Aho](#) (24) were the only Hurricanes to score more than 20 last season. The hope is that Aho will continue to develop along with [Rask](#) (16 goals), [Teravainen](#) (15) and [Lindholm](#) (11), but the Hurricanes probably will need to acquire a center who can play on their top two lines.

Francis isn't ruling out doing that before the season but sounded content with this offseason, which included contract extensions for [Slavin](#) (seven years, \$37.1 million) and [Pesce](#) (six years, \$24.15 million).

"We're still kicking tires and talking to teams on things," Francis said. "But if there's nothing we feel makes sense at this point we're comfortable with what we've done and starting the season with what we have."



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Top prospects for Carolina Hurricanes

Forward Gauthier has size to make jump this season

by Tom Gulitti @TomGulittiNHL / NHL.com Staff Writer

August 6th, 2017

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

When the Carolina Hurricanes began their rebuild in 2014, they needed to not only remake their NHL lineup but also restock their system.

Heading into the fourth season of that rebuild, they believe they have upgraded their talent enough to take the next step by qualifying for the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time since 2009. That depth includes an impressive collection of young defensemen in the NHL and prospects in the American Hockey League with Charlotte and in junior that give the Hurricanes some flexibility to potentially make a trade for scoring help at forward that they need.

"Our depth in Charlotte and the players we have within the system I think are dramatically better," Carolina general manager Ron Francis said. "You can wish you can turn the page and it happens real quick, but sometimes it takes a little bit of patience in building it the right way, and I think we're getting much closer to where we want to be."

Here are the Hurricanes' top five prospects, according to NHL.com:

1. Julien Gauthier, RW

How acquired: Selected with No. 21 pick in 2016 NHL Draft

Last season: Val d'Or (QMJHL): 23 GP, 7-20-27; Saint John (QMJHL): 20 GP, 10-14-24

Gauthier, who turns 20 on Oct. 15, will make his pro hockey debut this season after a strong 2016-17 in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. He might need some seasoning in the AHL before jumping to the NHL but already has the size (6-foot-4, 225 pounds) to play in the League.

Gauthier has shown he can use that size go to the dirty areas around the net to score in the QMJHL and at the 2017 IIHF World Junior Championship, where he helped Canada win a silver medal with seven points (five goals, two assists) in seven games.

Projected NHL arrival: This season

2. Jake Bean, D

How acquired: Selected with No. 13 pick in 2016 NHL Draft

Last season: Calgary (WHL): 43 GP, 8-37-45

The depth of young defensemen, which includes Noah Hanifin, 20; Brett Pesce 22; Jaccob Slavin, 23; Justin Faulk, 25; and Haydn Fleury, 21, means that, barring a trade, Bean likely will spend another season in the Western Hockey League. At 6-1, 173 pounds, the 19-year-old needs to fill out

physically but is a talented skater and has the offensive skill to play in the NHL.

Although Bean missed time early in the season with a broken finger and represented Canada at the World Junior Championship (two assists in seven games), he finished fourth on Calgary with 45 points.

Projected NHL arrival: Next season

3. Haydn Fleury, D

How acquired: Selected with No. 7 pick in 2014 NHL Draft

Last season: Charlotte (AHL): 69 GP, 7-19-26

Fleury might have made his NHL debut near the end of last season if he wasn't needed to help Charlotte try to qualify for the AHL playoffs. After the acquisition of defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk in a trade with the Vegas Golden Knights on June 22, the 21-year-old likely will have to beat out Klas Dahlbeck, 26, for a spot on the third defense pair or head back to the AHL at least for the start of the season.

Fleury (6-3, 221) has an NHL-ready body and developed into more of a two-way defenseman last season with Charlotte when he tied a Checkers record with a plus-16 rating.

Projected NHL arrival: This season

4. Nicolas Roy, C

How acquired: Selected with No. 96 pick in 2015 NHL Draft

Last season: Chicoutimi (QMJHL): 53 GP, 36-44-80

Roy, 20, is another forward with size (6-4, 208) and strength who put up points in the QMJHL and played well for Canada at the World Junior Championship (three goals, one assist in seven games). Roy also won the Guy Carboneau Trophy as the best defensive forward in the QMJHL last season.

If his 200-foot game translates at the professional level, Roy could make it to the NHL quickly as a two-way center.

Projected NHL arrival: This season

5. Martin Necas, C

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

Last season: HC Kometa Brno (Czech): 41 GP, 7-8-15

A gifted skater and playmaker, Necas, 18, played against men in the Czech Extraliga last season, skating on a line with former NHL player Martin Erat, and helped Kometa Brno win the championship. The 6-1, 167-pound Czech will need to put on some weight and get stronger, so the Hurricanes likely will give him time to develop.

Projected NHL arrival: 2019-20



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Three questions facing Carolina Hurricanes

Darling's ability to be No. 1 goaltender among concerns

by Tom Gulitti @tomgulittinhl / NHL.com Staff Writer

August 6th, 2017

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

Talk of the Stanley Cup Playoffs used to bring many more questions for the Carolina Hurricanes than answers. Now three years into their rebuild under general manager Ron Francis, they believe they are ready to end their drought.

But they still have some questions to answer to qualify for the postseason for the first time since 2009.

1. Can Scott Darling be a No. 1 goaltender?

Martin Jones of the San Jose Sharks and Cam Talbot of the Edmonton Oilers each made a similar jump from backup to No. 1 when given the opportunity following a trade. The Hurricanes hope Darling can do the same after acquiring him from the Chicago Blackhawks on April 28 and signing him to a four-year, \$16.6 million contract on May 5.

The 28-year-old went 18-5-5 with a 2.38 goals-against average, a .924 save percentage and two shutouts last season, and his 27 starts and 32 games were the most in his NHL career. Will Darling be to handle the heavier workload or will he split the job equally with Cam Ward? Though Ward, 33, was inconsistent over his 61 games (all starts), going 26-22-12 with a 2.69 GAA, a .905 save percentage and two shutouts, he played well for stretches and might benefit from more rest.

2. Will the young forwards provide scoring depth?

Carolina Hurricanes fantasy preview for 2017-18

Aho, Skinner worth top 75 consideration; Faulk among defenseman bargains

by Pete Jensen @NHLJensen / NHL.com Senior Fantasy Editor

August 6th, 2017

As part of NHL.com's 31 in 31 series, our fantasy hockey staff is breaking down each team's fantasy landscape. Fantasy-relevant players are listed in order of rank in [NHL.com's top 250](#). Today, we look at the Carolina Hurricanes.

FORWARDS

Sebastian Aho, LW/RW -- The 20-year-old has a high fantasy ceiling for the Carolina Hurricanes and should be available outside the top 50 overall. He finished third in goals (24) and fifth in points (49) among rookies last season, and had strong peripherals (17 power-play points, 214 shots on goal). He was second among rookie forwards (minimum 75 games played) in Shot Attempts percentage (53.26) and could jump to 65-70 points in a top-line, first power-play role.

Last season, the Hurricanes were tied with the Philadelphia Flyers for 20th in the NHL with an average of 2.59 goals per game, and Jeff Skinner (37) and Sebastian Aho (24) were their only Carolina players to score more than 20. The signing of 35-year-old unrestricted free agent right wing Justin Williams, who scored 24 goals last season with the Washington Capitals, will help, but the Hurricanes are banking on some of their younger forwards increasing their production.

The Hurricanes expect 20-year-old Aho to continue to progress and believe 22-year-old Teuvo Teravainen, who scored 15 goals last season, will be more comfortable in his second season after being acquired in a trade with Chicago. Carolina also will be looking for 24-year-old Victor Rask (16 goals last season), and 22-year-old Elias Lindholm (11) to take another step in their development and score more.

3. Will they trade for a top-two center?

A playmaking center for one of the top two lines remains the Hurricanes' biggest need, and they'll probably have to add one eventually to compete for the Stanley Cup. They have stockpiled an impressive group of young defensemen - Noah Hanifin, 20; Brett Pesce, 22; Jacob Slavin, 23; Justin Faulk, 25; Haydn Fleury, 21; and Jake Bean, 19 -- but have been reluctant to trade any of them for a center.

Francis has been patient in rebuilding the Hurricanes and has done well in collecting assets through the NHL Draft and smaller trades. At some point, he'll need to utilize some of those assets in a bigger trade.

Jeff Skinner, LW -- He quietly finished among the NHL's top seven in goals (37, 6th) and shots on goal (281; 7th) and has shaken off the injury concerns from earlier in his career by playing 238 of a possible 246 games over the past three seasons. This is the best roster the Hurricanes have fielded in the Skinner era, so he's an appealing choice if available outside the top 75.

Elias Lindholm, C/RW -- He led the Hurricanes in assists per 60 minutes (1.56) last season and ranked 12th League-wide in primary assists (29) even though he missed 10 games. Lindholm, 22, is a relatively unknown name in fantasy circles but a prime sleeper candidate this season.

Teuvo Teravainen, C/LW/RW -- Tri-eligible in Yahoo last season, Teravainen had NHL career highs in goals (15), assists (27), points (42), power-play points (15) and shots on goal (169) playing mostly alongside Aho at even strength



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and on the Hurricanes' first power-play unit. They formed Carolina's best point pair (23 team goals with each having a point) and are only scratching the surface, so target them together hoping the Hurricanes leap into Stanley Cup Playoff contention.

Justin Williams, RW -- The most notable forward addition this offseason is a familiar face in Williams, who will be 36 when the season starts, but averaged 50 points per season over his two-year tenure with the Washington Capitals. The best offensive seasons of his NHL career came during his previous time with the Hurricanes (2003-09), and he's always a threat to finish in the fantasy top 125 overall with sound category coverage.

Victor Rask, C -- The Hurricanes are loaded with talent at wing, so this is a big opportunity for Rask and center Jordan Staal to return value as late-round fantasy picks. Rask saw a big dip in shooting percentage (8.6 last season; 13.1 in 2015-16) but barely regressed in points (45 last season; 48 in 2015-16). This should be his best season yet with at least 50 points in an even-strength spot with likely Skinner or Lindholm.

DEFENSEMEN

Justin Faulk -- His career has been hindered by injuries and the inconsistent production that followed. That said, he's tied

for third in goals per game (0.22) and ranks fifth in shots on goal per game (2.9) among defensemen over the past three seasons combined. With the Hurricanes on the rise, he could be the biggest fantasy bargain at his position if he falls outside the top 100 overall.

Jacob Slavin -- From Feb. 28 to the end of the regular season (24 games), Slavin ranked fourth in points (15) and was tied for third in plus/minus (plus-13) among defensemen. He did not have much of a power-play role, but is a high-upside fourth defenseman for any fantasy roster after impressive even-strength results and the best SAT relative percentage (4.5) among Carolina defensemen.

GOALTENDING

Scott Darling -- An efficient backup over his first three NHL seasons, Darling has the path to a starting goaltender job upon joining Carolina. Only Carey Price (.929) has had a better save percentage than Darling (.923) among goalies with at least 75 games played over that span. Darling has fantasy breakout potential and is a huge upgrade over Cam Ward and Eddie Lack. Target him in the ninth round or later of a 12-team draft.

Others to consider: Jordan Staal (C/LW), Noah Hanifin (D), Trevor van Riemsdyk (D)

Carolina Hurricanes key statistics

Darling, strong penalty kill should lead to improvement this season

by Rob Vollman / NHL.com Correspondent

August 6th, 2017

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

1. Goaltending change

After ranking 27th or lower in team save percentage for a third consecutive season, the Carolina Hurricanes decided to change their No. 1 goalie. On April 28, they acquired Scott Darling in a trade with the Chicago Blackhawks, and on June 29, they traded Eddie Lack to the Calgary Flames.

Based on three statistics, Darling could be one of the NHL's top six goalies. Over three NHL seasons, Darling's save percentage of .923 ranks sixth among goalies who have played at least 50 games over that time span.

Quality starts are a way to measure how often a goalie plays well enough for his team to win. They are awarded in any game when the starting goalie has a League-average save percentage or higher. Darling's quality start percent of 62.5 ranks fourth among those to play at least 50 games over the past three seasons, according to the data compiled at Hockey Reference.

In terms of shots taken exclusively in the home plate area directly in front of the net, Darling's .865 save percentage ranks fifth in the NHL among the same group of goalies, according to shot location in NHL play-by-play files.

2. Shorthanded success

The Hurricanes are among the most effective teams in the NHL at killing penalties, whether using traditional statistics or more modern shot-based metrics.

In traditional terms, Carolina has a penalty-kill percentage of 84.4 over the past three seasons, which ranks second to the St. Louis Blues (84.5).

In terms of shot-based statistics, the Hurricanes have allowed the fewest shot attempts per 60 minutes in each of the past three seasons, and are trending lower every season. According to the data compiled at Natural Stat Trick, Carolina allowed 85.93 shot attempts per 60 minutes in 2014-15, 78.87 in 2015-16, and 77.74 in 2016-17.

3. The blue line

In last season's Stanley Cup Playoffs, the Nashville Predators demonstrated the value of having young, effective and salary cap-efficient defensemen. Based on the Hurricanes' numbers, they could be the next team to follow suit.

The average age of Carolina's top seven defensemen - Justin Faulk, Jacob Slavin, Brett Pesce, Noah Hanifin, Klas Dahlbeck, Trevor van Riemsdyk and Haydn



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Fleury -- is 23.6 years old. And, according to the data compiled at NHL Numbers, the Hurricanes have \$10.133 million in salary cap space assigned to their defensemen, which is the lowest in the League.

The defensemen are already showing signs of future effectiveness. Last season, the Hurricanes outshot

opponents 1,411-1,198 with Pesce on the ice at 5-on-5, an SAT of plus-213 that ranked 12th among NHL defensemen. Slavin ranked 20th at plus-161, and Faulk ranked 35th at plus-111, making Carolina one of five teams with at least three defensemen with an SAT of plus-100 or better.



Carolina Hurricanes: 2017-18 Bold Prediction

AUGUST 5TH, 2017 ANDREW FORBES

Throughout August, The Hockey Writers will be releasing a series of bold predictions. Team by team, this series will take shape as we look at some of the more questionable possibilities that could come into fruition during the 2017-18 season.

We start in Raleigh and the Metropolitan Division. They were part of the powerhouse division in the NHL last season, but only missed the playoffs by eight points. In fact, they had just one win less than the Toronto Maple Leafs who finished in the second wildcard position in the Eastern Conference. Still, the Carolina Hurricanes finished the year with 88 points and didn't see any postseason action.

Recapping 2016-17

Led by seven-year veteran Jeff Skinner, the Canes didn't have that disappointing of a season. In fact, Skinner led the team with a career-high 37 goals and 63 points in 79 games.

Their rookie standout, Sebastian Aho, also had a good individual year finishing second in team scoring with 24 goals and 49 points. He topped all Hurricanes with 17 power play points to go along with a team-leading four game-winning goals.

Add to that the impressive seasons of Justin Faulk and Jaccob Slavin and it's almost surprising the Canes couldn't find their way into the playoffs.

In net, the majority of the time was handled by Cam Ward who play 61 games and finished with 26 wins. His 2.69 goals against average (GAA) and .905 save percentage (SV%) were subpar, but enough to give his team a fighting chance.

Backing him up, Eddie Lack saw action in 20 games and finished with a record of 8-7-3. His numbers weren't far off from Ward's clocking in at 2.64 to go along with a .902 save percentage.

But without the taste of playoffs, there's a need for change. And while the Hurricanes didn't change much, they did bring in some new faces in the hopes of taking the next step.

A Change in the Carolina Crease

The Canes added a little blue line depth already this offseason trading a 2017 second-round pick to the Vegas

Golden Knights for Trevor van Riemsdyk and a 2018 seventh-round pick. In 158 career regular season games, the 26-year-old defenceman has eight goals and 31 points.

On top of that, they shipped out Lack and defenceman Ryan Murphy at the end of June (along with a 2019 seventh-round pick) to Calgary for prospect Keegan Kanzig and a sixth-round pick in 2019.

On the free-agent market, they signed 35-year-old Justin Williams and Scott Darling (after trading a third-round pick to the Blackhawks back in April to acquire his rights). Williams is coming off a year that saw him notch 24 goals and 48 points with the Capitals, while Darling had a record of 18-5-5 in 32 games during the regular season posting a 2.38 goals against average and .924 save percentage.

2017-18 Bold Prediction: A Darling of a Starter

With the Hurricanes having missed the playoffs for the past eight seasons, and actually taking a step back this year compared to 2015-16, the Hurricanes won't be able to deal with the same kind of failure for too much longer.

With Ward's numbers in 2016-17 being at their worst since 2013-14 when he only suited up for 30 games, chances are he'll have a short leash in 2017-18. That, coinciding with the acquisition of Darling, and the Hurricanes might have the perfect storm brewing in their crease.

With that in mind, expect Darling to take over as the Hurricanes starter in 2017-18. While he only has 75 games of NHL experience, his numbers are quite impressive over his short career so far.

He holds a 39-17-9 record during the regular season with a 2.37 career goals against average and .923 save percentage to go along with four shutouts. When it comes to the postseason, he has a 3-1 record in five games – posting a 2.22 goals against and .936 save percentage. While his experience isn't even close to matching that of Ward's career, his number speak for themselves and it wasn't long ago that Cam Talbot took over as the starter in Edmonton with less than 60 games of NHL experience. It happens.



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Sportsnet.ca / Taylor Crosby pokes fun at brother Sidney in college hockey bio

Emily Sadler

Taylor Crosby is a goaltender for the women's hockey team at St. Cloud State University. She also happens to be Sidney Crosby's younger sister.

We can only imagine that she's been referred to as Sid's kid sister more often than not—especially considering the elder Crosby just happens to be the sport's greatest player right now—which is what makes her St. Cloud Huskies player bio especially great.

The clever write-up pokes fun at the Pittsburgh Penguins captain with the line "Older brother Sidney also plays hockey."

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Sidney Crosby's sister Taylor plays hockey at St. Cloud State.

Her bio is fantastic.

8:12 PM - Jul 16, 2017

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Whether the idea came from Taylor herself or the media team at St. Cloud State, we think it's great. (Little sisters unite!)

Crosby—Taylor, that is—finished her sophomore season with a career-best 4.14 goals-against average and .891 save percentage in six games (four starts) in 2016-17 while earning All-WCHA Academic Team honours. Like her brother, she also honed her game at Shattuck-St. Mary's prestigious prep hockey program.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.07.2017

1072045 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Dubois past playing it safe, ready to crack Blue Jackets roster

Sonny Sachdeva

When the Columbus Blue Jackets tabbed Quebec native Pierre-Luc Dubois with the third-overall pick in the 2016 NHL Draft, expectations for the young centreman took a sharp turn north.

Coming off a strong 42-goal, 99-point campaign for the QMJHL's Cape Breton Screaming Eagles, Dubois' potential was undeniable. But his presence among his draft class' top three still surprised many, especially with expected top-three pick Jesse Puljujarvi – who fell to the talent-rich Edmonton Oilers – sitting available for the taking.

A tumultuous 2016-17 season followed, one that saw Dubois get sent back down to juniors by his NHL club, traded from Cape Breton to Blainville-Boisbriand, and defeated in the gold medal game of the 2017 world juniors by rival Team USA.

Now suiting up for Team Canada at the World Junior Summer Showcase as he prepares for his second chance at cracking an NHL roster, Dubois said he has a better understanding of what's required for him to take the next step.

"I want to go there this year and make the team like last year, but I think now knowing all the staff, knowing all the players, I'm not nervous anymore," Dubois said to Dhiren Mahiban of IIHF.com on Saturday. "Last year, I wanted to prove I can play the 200-foot game a little too much, played too safe, whereas this year I want to go there and have fun, play my game, play how I usually play.

"I think one of the big things that hurt me last year is I wasn't myself at camp. ...I was playing a game that I don't usually play. This year, I'm not going to do the same mistake twice."

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Dubois (#CBJ) -> Makar (#avs) -> Steel (#ducks) -> goal

Canada cuts into the lead, down 6-4 now#WJSS

2:27 AM - Aug 6, 2017

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While playing at safe may have stymied his chances of breaking into the big leagues as quickly as the two players taken above him – Auston Matthews and Patrik Laine – Dubois' roller-coaster 2016-17 season turned out to be a useful one, as he helped his club battle to the QMJHL finals while further developing his all-around game.

"To go to a new team, new systems, new everything (was good)," Dubois told Mahiban. "I think we play a more defensive game so maybe it helped my play without the puck – being centre that's really important. I think I benefitted from it."

Dubois posted a goal and an assist in Canada's 7-5 loss to Team USA in the Summer Showcase finale on Saturday. He'll report to Columbus' training camp in September to try for a spot in the Blue Jackets' lineup once again.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.07.2017

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TSN.CA / Charging into Buffalo: Canada's projected roster for the 2018 WJC

By Craig Button

Make it a high five.

After Saturday night's 7-5 win over Canada in the World Junior Summer Showcase in Plymouth, Mich., the United States has now beaten Canada five straight times in World Junior-level games. This marks an unprecedented streak of dominance for USA Hockey over their rivals from north of the 49th parallel.

Canada's last victory over the United States was a 5-3 preliminary round win in the 2015 edition of the World Junior Hockey Championship in Montreal.



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RECENT DOMINANCE: TEAM USA'S LAST FIVE WINS OVER CANADA

| DATE | TOURNAMENT | ROUND | SCORE |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Dec. 26, 2015 | World Junior Hockey Championship | Preliminary | 4-2 |
| Aug. 6, 2016 | World Junior Summer Showcase | | - |
| | | | 5-1 |
| Dec. 31, 2016 | World Junior Hockey Championship | Preliminary | 3-1 |
| Jan. 5, 2017 | World Junior Hockey Championship | Final | 5-4 (SO) |
| Aug. 5, 2017 | World Junior Summer Showcase | | - |
| | | | 7-5 |

NOTE - Not included are a pair of split-squad games - one won by the US and the other by Canada - early on in the 2017 World Junior Summer Showcase

With a seeming inability to get the better of the hosts and defending champions at this December's tournament in Buffalo (where Canada will meet the United States in the preliminary round on December 29 outdoors at New Era Field), head coach Dominique Ducharme and the rest of the Hockey Canada brain trust must look to assemble a squad that can get past not only the United States, but the rest of the field.

Bear in mind that the following team projections are made with the understanding that neither forward Nolan Patrick – the second overall pick in June's 2017 NHL Entry Draft by the Philadelphia Flyers – nor forward Tyson Jost – the 10th overall selection by the Colorado Avalanche – will be made available by his respective NHL club.

That being said, it is worth considering the possibility that Patrick, who missed last season's tournament and whose season with the Brandon Wheat Kings was limited to just 33 games due to injury, might be loaned to Canada for his World Juniors bow.

Without further ado, the projected Team Canada roster for the 2018 World Junior Hockey Championship:

GOALIES

Michael DiPietro, Windsor (OHL)

HT: 6-0 WT: 193 C: L NHL Draft: Van 2017

Memorial Cup winner could do for Canada what undefeated Tyler Parsons did for USA in 2017.

Carter Hart, Everett (WHL)

HT: 6-2 WT: 180 C: L NHL Draft: Phi 2016

Lost 2017 gold-medal game to USA and allowed 4 goals on 14 shots in Showcase final.

LEFT DEFENCEMAN

Jake Bean, Calgary (WHL)

HT: 6-1 WT: 169 S: L NHL Draft: Car 2016

Needs to perform at higher level than he did in 2017 tournament for Canada.

Samuel Girard, Shawinigan (QMJHL)

HT: 5-9 WT: 166 S: L NHL Draft: Nsh 2016

Brilliant offensive blueliner has 149 points in last 126 Quebec League games.

Kale Clague, Brandon (WHL)

HT: 6-0 WT: 177 S: L NHL Draft: LA 2016

2017 No. 7 filled in admirably for injured Philippe Myers.

Josh Mahura, Regina (WHL)

HT: 6-0 WT: 179 S: L NHL Draft: Ana 2016

Looked great playing alongside Dante Fabbro vs. Finland in Showcase.

RIGHT DEFENCEMEN

Cale Makar, UMass-Amherst (NCAA)

HT: 5-10 WT: 175 S: R NHL Draft: Col 2017

Regarded as the most exciting Canadian offensive defenceman prospect since Drew Doughty.

Dante Fabbro, Boston University (NCAA)

HT: 6-1 WT: 192 S: R NHL Draft: Nsh 2016

Solidified his reputation as an ultra-solid, all-purpose defenceman in 2017 tournament.

Cal Foote, Kelowna (WHL)

HT: 6-4 WT: 210 S: R NHL Draft: Tam 2017

The thinking man's defenceman, the Colorado native chose to play for Canada over USA.

LEFT WINGERS

Pierre-Luc Dubois, Blainville-Boisbriand (QMJHL)

HT: 6-3 WT: 202 S: L NHL Draft: Clb 2016

2017 returnee better-suited to wing than centre where he played at Showcase.

Dillon Dube, Kelowna (WHL)

HT: 5-11 WT: 186 S: L NHL Draft: Cgy 2016

Speed merchant and catalytic converter was plus-6, second best for Canada in 2017.

Michael Rasmussen, Tri-City (WHL)

HT: 6-5 WT: 221 S: L NHL Draft: Det 2017

Huge net-front presence (6-foot-5 1/2, 221 pounds) could be power play force.

Givani Smith, Guelph (OHL)

HT: 6-2 WT: 209 S: L NHL Draft: Det 2016

Hard winger is no fun to play against; he collected 139 penalty minutes in the OHL last season.

CENTRES

Sam Steel, Regina (WHL)

HT: 6-2 WT: 209 S: L NHL Draft: Ana 2016

2016-17 WHL scoring leader and Man of Steel shone at the Showcase.

Brett Howden, Moose Jaw (WHL)

HT: 6-3 WT: 191 S: L NHL Draft: Tam 2016

All-around cerebral centre competes and contributes at high level.

Michael McLeod, Mississauga (OHL)

HT: 6-3 WT: 202 S: L NHL Draft: NJ 2016

Returning centre will play up the lineup after filling role of 13th forward in 2017.

Cody Glass, Portland (WHL)

HT: 6-2 WT: 179 S: R NHL Draft: VGK 2017

Can Vegas' first-ever draft pick be Knight in shining armour for Canada?

RIGHT WINGERS

Jordan Kyrou, Sarnia (OHL)

HT: 6-0 WT: 177 S: R NHL Draft: StL 2016

Swift-skating finesse player was definitively Canada's best player in Showcase.

Taylor Raddysh, Erie (OHL)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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HT: 6-2 WT: 209 S: R NHL Draft: Tam 2016

Averaged 1.75 points per game with 140 in combined 80 regular season and playoff games.

Gabe Vilardi, Windsor (OHL)

HT: 6-2 WT: 193 S: R NHL Draft: Los 2017

Memorial Cup all-star is a puck possession monster drawing comparisons to Jaromir Jagr.

Robert Thomas, London (OHL)

HT: 6-0 WT: 192 S: R NHL Draft: Stl 2017The playmaker extraordinaire could end up at centre in World Junior tournament.

Nick Suzuki, Owen Sound (OHL)

HT: 5-11 WT: 183 S: R NHL Draft: VGK 2017

OHL Scholastic Player of the Year finalist plays brainy, purposeful game.

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TSN.CA / Canada wraps up Summer Showcase with loss to USA

By Mark Masters

PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN – Team Canada wrapped up the World Junior Summer Showcase with a 7-5 loss against Team USA on Saturday night. The lines are listed below.

It was the second time Canada lost to their cross-border rivals at the camp. The teams split a pair of scrimmages on Tuesday.

"At this camp we haven't been ourselves against them," said Flames prospect Dillon Dube. "I think we're a little bit nervous. It's just tough ending the camp like that. They're a team we don't like at all so it'll be a good battle when we play them in the tournament."

The next time Canada will play the United States will be on Dec. 29 outdoors at New Era Field during the preliminary round of the World Juniors.

Canada had eight players with World Junior experience in the lineup on Saturday, including Dube. Tyson Jost, who is dealing with an injury issue and hasn't been on the ice at the camp, was the only returning player missing.

Canada ends camp with 'sour taste' after loss to USA

It certainly didn't feel like Summer hockey on Saturday night as Canada fell to Team USA in a game featuring plenty of bad blood. It was the second time the Americans got the better of their rivals at the camp, which didn't sit well with some of Canada's returning players.

"My mom's American, but I don't like the American hockey team," said Pierre-Luc Dubois, who had a goal and an assist. "Playing against them at the U17, U18, U20 and losing last year to them, even though it's the middle of the summer, losing is not fun especially against the Americans."

Joey Anderson (three goals, one assist) and Adam Fox (one goal, three assists) led the way for the Americans.

Team Canada's lines in Saturday's game:

Forwards

Dube-McLeod-Raddysh

Kaspick-Howden-Pu

Smith-Dubois-Thomas

Shaw-Steel-Kyrou

Gadjovich

Defencemen

Girard-Fabbro

Stanley-Clague

Bean-Makar

Mete

Goaltenders

Hart (10/14)

Wells (7/9)

WJC Summer Showcase: USA 7, Canada 5

Team USA scored four power play goals on four shots to help the Americans down the Canadians in the final game of the World Junior Summer Showcase.

CANADA'S MAN OF STEEL

Sam Steel was one of the final two forwards cut by the Canadian World Junior team last year. It was a bitter pill to swallow for the then 18-year-old, who had arrived at the camp as the WHL's leading scorer.

"It's tough right now," a downcast Steel said on Dec. 14, 2016 as he made his way out of the Team Canada hotel. "I'm sure I'll get through it and hopefully learn from it."

"He was a hard guy to cut," said Joel Bouchard, part of Hockey Canada's management group. "When I spoke to him, he's the guy that it was hard to cut him, because I felt he really brought his game to another level, which was nice to see. So, I was happy to see him when we met with him this year. It is exciting to see he grew from it."

Steel used that setback as motivation and is now a leading candidate to be Canada's top-line centre at this year's World Juniors.

"I see a little bit more jump in his game," said Team Canada head coach Dominique Ducharme. "We saw all his offensive abilities last year, but to be playing at this level and to be playing a complete game and to be playing 15 minutes at five-on-five you need pace and you need that jump and you can see that he's got that now."

"It's a few little things," Steel said of his development. "You always want to try and improve so I've been working on getting stronger and a little faster ... Obviously, it was a team I wanted to be on (last year), but, you know, once it happens you can't do anything about it except just go out and play the best hockey you can."

And that's exactly what Sam Steel did. He led the Canadian Hockey League in scoring last season with 131 points in 66 games with Regina.

"One of the most skilled guys I know at the junior level," said goalie Carter Hart of the Everett Silvertips, who is a long-time friend of Steel's. "I wouldn't be surprised if he's up in the NHL next year. He's got such good vision and a quick release and he's one of the best passers in the game."

For now, Steel is focused on achieving his dream of wearing the Maple Leaf at the World Juniors and he helped his cause by scoring a goal and adding two assists on Saturday night. "It would mean a lot," he said. "This is a team I always wanted to make."

And he isn't simply motivated by his own desire to play for Canada. He wants to succeed in order to honour the memory of his older brother Patrick, who passed away suddenly in his sleep in 2011 at the age of 18. Patrick was playing Junior A Hockey in Canmore at the time.

"We'd always watch the tournament and I'm sure he'd want me to be on that team and try and win a gold medal."

PART OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS

One of the stand outs at the World Junior Summer Showcase was American Brady Tkachuk. This fall he will follow in his father Keith's footsteps by playing at Boston University. And next Spring he's expected to follow in his brother Matthew's footsteps by being a top pick in the NHL draft.

The following is a Q&A with the 17-year-old about what it was like growing up in the Tkachuk family.

Q: How does your game compare with your dad and brother?

Brady Tkachuk: "To my dad, I think I got his feistiness. I'm not afraid to go in the tough areas. And for my brother, I like to be around the net, like both of them actually were, I like to make plays in close and in tight to the net."

Q: How are you different?



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BT: "Probably I'm a little faster than they were, but besides that we're all pretty similar."

Q: Like your brother, you play with an edge. What is it that makes the Tkachuks so feisty?

BT: "I don't know. It's just, I've been taught from a young age that you don't have friends out there so you just always compete and play hard."

What makes the Tkachuk family so darn feisty?

One of the stand outs at the World Junior Summer Showcase has been American Brady Tkachuk. This fall he will follow in his father Keith's footsteps by playing at Boston University. And next Spring he's expected to follow in his brother Matthew's footsteps by being a top pick in the NHL draft. And just like his sibling, Brady is known for playing with an edge.

Q: What was the sibling rivalry like when you were growing up?

BT: "Usually, when we were younger, he'd win pretty much everything and I'd win maybe once a year and, yeah, everything we did it was always me and him and my little sister joined in later in years, but from roller blading to mini sticks to basketball, you name it, we were always one-on-one with each other."

Q: Any good memories of when you got the better of Matthew?

BT: "One roller hockey game a while back I won and usually I never won those so I was pretty pumped and he was not too happy."

Q: What was it like to spend time around NHL arenas as a kid?

BT: "I got to go in the locker room almost after every home game and be with all the guys. It was awesome and usually on weekends we'd go to practice with him. It was a lot of fun."

Q: What was it like being in the dressing room? What did you notice?

BT: "Just being with all the guys. I mean, there was a lot of big names back then like Al MacInnis, Chris Pronger so I didn't realize it back then, but right now it's like, they're Hall of Famers so just to hang with them and get to know them was pretty awesome."

Keith Tkachuk and his son, Calgary Flames' forward Matthew Tkachuk, join Tessa Bonhomme ahead of the World Junior Summer Showcase game between Canada and the USA to chat about their World Juniors memories and the reason they're at the tournament; Brady Tkachuk

Q: Do you have a favourite moment?

BT: "For sure, my dad's last home game. They had a little ceremony after so my brother and I got to stay on the ice after and just go one-on-one on the rink so it was just us two in the whole arena. It was awesome."

Q: Did you guys compete? Were you keeping score?

BT: "There was no net so we were just kind of hitting each other. But, it was a lot of fun."

Q: What was your favourite moment of Matthew's rookie NHL season?

BT: "I only got to see him play once last year and it was at The Joe so it was my last time at The Joe too so it was pretty cool to see him and we got to see him after too so that was probably my favourite memory of him last year."

Q: What would it mean to you to make the World Junior team?

BT: "It's been a goal of mine for pretty much my whole life. I've been working for it for the past couple years now. My brother went through it and I got to watch him so it'd be a huge honour to be on this team."

WORLD JUNIOR SUMMER SHOWCASE RECAP

In case you missed it, here are some highlights from TSN's coverage from Plymouth, Michigan:

Leafs GM Lou Lamoriello talks about the progress of prospects defenceman Timothy Liljegren and goalie Joseph Woll and evaluates Toronto's off-season moves:

Lamoriello on Leafs prospects: 'We don't have room for a lot of them'

Lou Lamoriello is "extremely pleased" with Toronto's current crop of prospects and hopes they'll start pushing the team's veterans soon. The Leafs GM offered progress reports on defenceman Timothy Liljegren and goalie Joseph Woll who are both playing at the World Junior Summer Showcase this week.

Team Sweden head coach Tomas Montén explains how the team is using a different camera angle – "The Eye of the Puck" – to improve their face-off results:

'We really sucked': Swedes use 'eye of the puck' to improve on face-offs

After a terrible night in the circle against Team USA, Team Sweden spent a good portion of Thursday's practice working on face-offs. And in order to show players where they can improve specifically, the team used a small camera attached to the puck and then showed them the video immediately on an iPad.

TSN director of scouting Craig Button believes that Windsor's Michael DiPietro has a chance to unseat Everett's Carter Hart as Canada's starting goalie:

Can DiPietro unseat Hart as Canada's starter?

The two leading candidates to start for Canada at the 2018 World Juniors are Flyers prospect Carter Hart and Canucks pick Michael DiPietro. As a returning player, Hart would appear to have the inside track to start on Boxing Day. But TSN director of scouting Craig Button believes that 18-year-old DiPietro has what it takes to challenge him for the job.

Vegas Golden Knights GM George McPhee on why NHL executives have to be careful when it comes to evaluating players in the middle of the Summer:

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

Avalanche fourth overall pick Cale Makar hopes to develop into the Canadian version of Erik Karlsson:

Can Makar develop into the Canadian Erik Karlsson?

Cale Makar is a smooth-skating, offensive-minded defenceman who dominated the Alberta Junior Hockey League before getting picked fourth overall by Colorado. Along the way he earned a lot of comparisons to Erik Karlsson. The 18-year-old sees some similarities and continually watches video of the Sens captain. For now, Makar's out to prove he can make a smooth transition to the NCAA and World Junior level.

Lightning prospect Cal Foote is following in his father Adam's footsteps by choosing to play for Canada internationally:

Finally following in the Foote-steps

Cal Foote was born in Colorado when his dad played for the Avalanche. As a result he wasn't eligible to play for Canada internationally until after he played two full seasons in the country. So, last year Foote sat out the world juniors as he played his second year in Kelowna. He could've chosen to play for Team USA, but he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps.

The nine Canadian players eligible to return to the World Juniors in 2018 are eager to avenge last year's heartbreaking shootout loss to the Americans:

"Unfinished business": Canada starts World Junior quest

Team Canada is proud of how it played last January in Montreal despite the heartbreaking result in the gold-medal game. And yet it remains a bittersweet memory for head coach Dominique Ducharme and the nine players eligible to return for this year's tournament. And it's a source of motivation as they begin the quest to go one step further.

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