



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 9, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

What should be the Hurricanes' new goal song? Our experts weigh in on the choices.

By Luke DeCock

Something has to come after the Woo. The Carolina Hurricanes are letting fans vote on their new goal song, which presumably will be played more often than the 108 times it was heard at PNC Arena a year ago. Avicii's "The Nights," the incumbent, is one of eight contenders that includes a techno mix of an old, old favorite and one song with local roots that already appears to have emerged as a consensus choice: Petey Pablo's "Raise Up."

But in the interest of a robust and productive debate, it seemed like a good idea to check with the experts, two local rockers whose hockey and Hurricanes fandom runs deep: Superchunk frontman and Merge Records president Mac McCaughan and Corrosion of Conformity bassist/vocalist Mike Dean.

"All of these choices are old songs but I guess that's the nature of sports music," McCaughan said. "People want something familiar. There is really only one choice from this list and it's Petey Pablo's iconic N.C. anthem 'Raise Up.'"

Dean, who worked a PNC Arena spotlight during the 2006 playoffs, leaned away from "Raise Up" and toward a few other choices, but acknowledged the team's musical dilemma.

"Fans of the game of hockey, fanatical or casual, come from all generations and all areas of the cultural spectrum, so whatever you choose, someone is going to be underwhelmed or even alienated by whichever song is selected," Dean said. "The more you try to be current, the sooner your choice becomes obsolete."

This is an old story: 25 years ago, N&O music critic David Menconi suggested 80 different songs for general use by the old Raleigh IceCaps, frustrated with the middle-of-the-road selections at Dorton Arena. Some of his suggestions – "Blitzkrieg Bop," "Been Caught Stealing" – are now arena-rock staples.

It also seemed important to sample the opinions of more than merely musicians, so we presented the eight candidates to an expert panel consisting not only our esteemed musicians but media personalities, an ex-player and fans for their consideration.

The songs are presented in the order they were listed for voting on the Hurricanes' website.

One suggestion that recurred throughout this process: Instead of settling on one clip, maybe pick a few and rotate through them. Dean, for what it's worth, preferred Led Zeppelin's "Rock and Roll," "Party Up" by DMX and "Lithium" by Nirvana.

"If the Canes go on a goal-scoring tear, hearing one track over and over would be pretty brutal, so I suggest they have three tracks," Dean said. "Lately, we can only dream of having such problems."

Brass Bonanza (techno remix)

Mike Dean, Corrosion of Conformity: Unlikely to resonate with anyone. And it's pretty forgettable.

Mac McCaughan, Superchunk/Merge Records: I understand the appeal of Whalers throwback jerseys -- the Hartford logo is outstanding -- but a techno remix of "Brass Bonanza" can be thrown in any time during the game, it doesn't need to be the goal song.

Luke DeCock, N&O sports columnist: Despite the current retro craze for the Hartford Whalers -- borrowed nostalgia for the unremembered '80s, to quote a different song -- the Hurricanes have their own history and own tradition here and shouldn't be borrowing from what they left behind.

Joe Ovies, WCMC-99.9 afternoon host: The classic Whalers song is fine to play once a game as a nod/wink to the past, but making it the goal song would be the equivalent of overdoing it at the NC State Fair and acting surprised you feel sick. Adding the techno remix to it is no different than deep frying a peanut butter stuff pickle.

David Menconi, N&O music critic: Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass unavailable?

Bates Battaglia, former Hurricanes forward, current owner of Lucky B's: I like the nostalgia of the Bonanza but a little old school. Time for a change.

Adam Moore, 26, Raleigh, @Moore_of_Adam: I don't like it but don't hate it. Straw poll with some friends my age say this is up there. Weird but good.

Patty Jasper, "Gen X," Apex, @lgc_com: There's a techno mix? Anyway, just say hell no. I have zero nostalgia for the Whalers, and honestly I just don't see why we're going there. ... Oh yeah, the owner.

Mike Jaquish, "gray hair," Cary, @MikeJaquish: To reminisce about all the Stanley Cups won in Hartford? Na-a-a-ah. Hartford is museum stuff, not the future. I sat on the plane a couple of weeks ago next to a former Whalers fan from Hartford, and mentioned this and he agreed with me. In the museum. In the past. Bury it. We sell season tix in Raleigh, not Hartford.

Jump Around, House of Pain

DeCock: What is this, drunken sunset karaoke in Cabo san Lucas?



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Ovies: Oh, I'm sorry, I thought I was a hockey game and not a North Carolina Tar Heels sporting event? And you want to make the song associated with Roy Williams blasting in a building you share with N.C. State? Sure!

Menconi: Super fresh. In 1992.

Battaglia: Kind of dig the House of Pain but I could see people wanting to dig their hair out after a while, especially if we score some goals this year.

Moore: Eh. Just doesn't do it for me.

Jasper: So this song is played regularly at Charlotte Checkers games, with the PA guy saying "Come on rock 'n' rollers, jump around!" No -- on the basis of this reminds me of AHL hockey.

Jaquish: 150 times for the STMs? Na-a-a-h.

Lithium, Nirvana

McCaughan: Nirvana was a great band, but do you want an anthem about manic depression playing after each goal? (OK, I see the parallels with being a Hurricanes fan for the last 20 years.)

DeCock: Perfect for the expansion Seattle Flannels, but pretty dated for these purposes.

Ovies: A song about a drug used to help bipolar disorders is way too meta for a fanbase that both loves and hates the team.

Menconi: Nothing says hockey-goal jubilation like psychotropic drugs.

Battaglia: Grunge is done.

Moore: Too much "yeah."

Jasper: Why? Grunge is over. This list and this song particularly, sends me into fits. We're flashing back.

Jaquish: Whining after a goal? That's what it sounds like.

Party Up, DMX

DeCock: Yes, if we're picking a walk-up song for a minor-league cleanup hitter in 1999.

Ovies: Y'all gonna make me lose my mind, up in here up in here, given all the clean edits you'd have to make in order to play this song after goals.

Menconi: Really needs to be more energetic, uptempo than this.

Battaglia: I hear this enough at Lucky B's.

Moore: This one isn't cut very well; not bad. I could do it.

Jasper: More nostalgia -- and the Canes created their own self-ruin with this song, played at every game for maybe the last 3 seasons. Making it a goal song? My lord.

Jaquish: Fun. Worn out.

Raise Up, Petey Pablo

Dean: Using this forgettable track just because it has explicit localism in the lyric would be an especially unfortunate choice.

McCaughan: There is really only one choice from this list. If the Canes wanted to update they could switch it out for G Yamazawa's "North Cack" which is great.

DeCock: The best of the bunch, locally grown and not something you're going to hear in any other NHL arena.

Ovies: The one and only choice.

Menconi: Probably the best choice, actually. Should be accompanied by Petey's Pale Ale.

Battaglia: No idea, never heard of it, and of course I'm on fleek, I would know.

Moore: This is my choice; Straw poll with friends confirms polls well; Would be interested to see how it sounds in game setting. Still my No. 1.

Jasper: The Caniac consensus is that we 'must' use this song -- out of some mad props to Petey Pablo. I could maybe go with that.

Jaquish: Meh. OK. Look at the age of season-ticket holders. We're too old for that crap.

Rock and Roll, Led Zeppelin

DeCock: It's been a *really* long time since this song rock and rolled.

Ovies: What is this, a Cadillac commercial?

Menconi: Already heard too much of this on classic-rock radio.

Battaglia: That's even older than Roddy (Brind'Amour). No go.

Moore: This isn't bad. Probably the choice from my dad (though I love me some Zeppelin). Doesn't do it for me.

Jasper: The issue here is this is an overplayed song. You hear it too much. See "Party Up" -- not that the Canes played this into the ground, it's just one of those songs you hear at hockey games a lot. I'm telling on myself and my frequent travel to other NHL arenas.

Jaquish: Love it. Not 150 times.

The Nights, Avicii

McCaughan: Avicii is just boring.

DeCock: Surely they could have done better than offering to settle for this again. Feels too connected to the Skrillex-dubstep-overload era of ear-bloodying PNC music.

Ovies: A generic EDM track might be a little too on the nose for the generic product on the ice.

Menconi: Not frantic enough.

Battaglia: I can get into this, grab my glow sticks, start the rave.

Moore: I never hated this. Upbeat tune, easy to clap with. The repetitive "Hey Hey!" never caught on, shame.

Jasper: Another tune that the Canes ran into the ground. They were already playing this when a goal was scored. They also played Avicii during warm ups. No more.



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Jaquish: Party music across age groups and we can wait to it in unison. Do it. Got my vote.

Uprising, Muse

Dean: It's a creepy reworking of the creepy Gary Glitter song "Rock and Roll." If they had to go that way, I'd suggest "Do It Again" by Queens of the Stone Age.

McCaughan: The Muse song must have been chosen because you can't use Gary Glitter anymore as he's in jail for sex crimes but you want his drum beat.

DeCock: For these purposes, and the portion they picked, it sounds like something you'd play after the *other* team scores.

Ovies: The last time Muse was a thing the Carolina Hurricanes made the playoffs. That was nearly a decade ago.

Menconi: Too easygoing. You want energy for this.

Battaglia: No way Stormy can dance to that. I've seen his moves. I don't think he'd be happy.

Moore: Nah.

Jasper: This would rival Petey Pablo, but then I listened to the clip that they Canes have for the contest. It's all music, I saw Muse open for U2 at Carter Finley in 2009 -- this song got people all crazy in the crowd, and they were the opening act and it was during this part of the chorus: "They will not control us/We will be victorious." It's one of their best songs. I'm not sure it's truly a goal song.

Jaquish: We could do worse.



Tweetmail No. 197: Opportunities, Competition & Songs

by Michael Smith

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

Let's get to it.

With Skinner having been dealt, and with the management saying they aren't expecting to make any additional moves, does that mean that we are expecting at least one more Checker in the lineup this year, or should we expect more moves?

The departure of Jeff Skinner undoubtedly opens a door for a player who spent the majority of last season in Charlotte. I wrote a bit about this situation last week, and I think a player like Valentin Zykov, Warren Foegele or Lucas Wallmark really stands to benefit from the roster space that's now available.

Zykov, especially considering his one-way contract, is in good position to crack the Opening Night roster, I'd have to think. He's only played in 12 NHL games over two seasons, but he's tallied four goals and eight points in that small stretch. In last week's #Tweetmail, we looked at projected point totals, and the math suggests Zykov could contribute 34 points over a full 82-game season.

Foegele is another player to watch, especially considering his two-game stint with the Canes late last season (caution:

extremely small sample size), as is Wallmark, who could potentially be in the mix to center the team's fourth line.

What about Saku Maenalanen? Training camp will be our first glimpse at the Finnish winger that the Canes inked as a free agent in May. He figures to be among those competing for a roster spot with the team, as well. Patrick Brown and Janne Kuokkanen have some previous NHL experience to their names, and is someone like Aleksi Saarela or Nicolas Roy or Julien Gauthier prepared to make an impact in camp?

Competition was always going to drive camp, but it becomes an even more intriguing storyline now with an additional roster spot up for grabs. Who wants it most? Who is going to put forth the work and effort required to be an everyday NHL player? It should be fun to watch.

As far as more moves go, I don't expect anything to be imminent or even likely at this point. I believe the Hurricanes are comfortable with the group as it stands now, especially with the number of young players who are looking to take the next steps in their careers. This could, of course, change given one phone call, but I don't see that being the case.

What do you think the plan is for Haydn Fleury this coming season? Seems to me like he'd be better served with top pairing minutes in Charlotte rather than in the press box in Raleigh.

Another storyline to watch when training camp opens in just over a month's time? How the defense shakes out.

Here's what we know. The Canes, through a trade and a free-agent signing, improved their already impressive blue line. Justin Faulk remains under contract for the next two



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seasons, and the team isn't in any hurry to move him. That leaves seven NHL-ready defensemen, including four right shots and three left shots, on the roster.

So where does Haydn Fleury fit in?

In all likelihood, the top four will resemble something like Slavin-Hamilton and de Haan-Pesce (mix and match as you see fit). That leaves Trevor van Riemsdyk, Faulk and Fleury vying for two spots on the third pair. Fleury played in 67 games as a rookie last season, but he could be the odd man out in this situation. He would, without a doubt, be a top-pairing defenseman for the Charlotte Checkers, and he'd play in every situation.

Ultimately, the decision is going to rest on a few factors, including how Fleury performs in camp and the preseason and what the organization feels is best for his development at this point in his young career.

There's also the unfortunate (and constant) threat of injuries, which the team was mostly able to sidestep last season. Quality depth is a good problem to have.

A handful of players have already hit the ice at Raleigh Center Ice, including Scott Darling, Jaccob Slavin and Valentin Zykov. Over the next few weeks, you'll see those numbers begin to grow. By the last week of the month or first week in September, there should be a solid collection of skaters on the ice as they ramp up their workouts leading into the beginning of training camp.

I figure I should go to an expert source for this one... how does a UNC grad feel about one of their arena hype songs being one of the finalists for the Canes new goal song?

I think "Jump Around," a fairly popular fan suggestion, is a quality goal song option. It's very hype.

Honestly, I dig most of the eight options we put up for a vote. It was a longer process than expected to assemble all suggestions, both internal and the nearly 1,500 we received

from fans, into a small, final list of eight. Obviously, there were many great suggestions that didn't make the cut for one reason or another. Some were great tunes that just didn't work properly in our goal horn-Ric Flair-goal song sequence. Some, like "Rock You Like a Hurricane," are already integral to other parts of the in-game presentation. Inevitably, there was going to be disappointment for some.

In the end, I think the list is eclectic and unique, and hopefully y'all find at least one song worthy. The response after just a day's worth of voting has been incredible and passionate. Keep the votes coming!

With the team's new #TakeWarning hashtag on social media, will we see this truly become the team's and get the Hurricane logo pop up beside it whenever someone uses it?

As was the case last season with #Redvolution, that's accomplished through the NHL's partnership with Twitter Sports.

Stay tuned for what's ahead this season!

@MSmithCanes how about a shout out to my friend and long time @NHLCanes fan @Melaniedunia for being the runner up on food networks chopped tonight.

Shout out!

Congrats on a spirited battle, Melanie. I missed the episode but saw some images of the various dishes on social media. It all looked so very delicious. If you ever need taste testers, TV's Mike Maniscalco and I are always game.

Join me next week for more questions and more answers!

If you have a question you'd like answered or you'd like to state your case for Eastern vs. Western style, you can find me on Twitter at @MSmithCanes or drop an email here.



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Carolina Hurricanes announce roster for Traverse City Prospect Tournament

Ten returning players and 13 first-timers fill out the roster as the Canes look to improve on last year's third-place finish.

By Brian LeBlanc

The Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday announced the roster for the 2018 Traverse City Prospect Tournament, hosted by the Detroit Red Wings and beginning Friday, September 7. Twenty-three players will represent the Hurricanes at this year's tournament, including nine that participated last year when the Canes finished third in the tournament. A tenth player, Aleksi Saarela, participated in 2016 but was injured and missed last year's event.

Among the returning players, Nicolas Roy is participating in his fourth tournament. Jake Bean, Julien Gauthier, Janne Kuokkanen and Jeremy Helvig will make their third appearances, and Saarela, Morgan Geekie, Brendan De Jong, Stelio Mattheos and Martin Necas will participate for the second time.

Players that will participate in this season's tournament are drawn from Canadian major junior hockey and overseas leagues, plus a few who spent last season in professional hockey. Since the school year will have begun at the time of the tournament, players who are playing college hockey will not participate, including Jack Drury, David Cotton, Jack LaFontaine, Adam Fox and Luke Martin. Three invitees from the Hurricanes' prospect development camp, goaltender Mario Culina and defensemen Theo Calvas and Mitch Eliot, will take part in the tournament.

The Hurricanes will again be coached by Charlotte Checkers coach Mike Vellucci, who was behind the bench last season. Carolina has had good results the past two years at the Traverse City tournament, capturing the championship in 2016 and finishing third last season. The tournament is played in a round-robin format, with two four-team divisions competing over four days and a final round of games determining the finishing positions for the tournament. The Canes' first game is Friday, September 7, against the St. Louis Blues at 3:30 p.m.

Revisionist history: Gerber stays in net

Cam Ward capturing the Conn Smythe Trophy as a rookie after taking over for Martin Gerber in 2006 is probably the most iconic story line in Hurricanes history. But what if it never happened?

By Andrew Schnitker

It's the most famous goalie change in Carolina Hurricanes history. Maybe one of the most famous in NHL history. I'm talking about the switch from veteran starting goalie Martin Gerber to rookie Cam Ward in the first round of the 2006 Stanley Cup Playoffs against the Montreal Canadiens, of course.

The Canes, coming off the best regular season in franchise history with 52 wins and 112 points, good for the second seed in the Eastern Conference, were expected to run roughshod over the No. 7 Montreal Canadiens. The team hit its first taste of adversity; however, as Gerber, who it was later revealed was battling a stomach flu, turned into a sieve, allowing 11 total goals over the series' first two games.

The team turned to Ward part way through game two, and the rest is history. Carolina won four straight to eliminate Montreal, steamrolled the Devils in five games, and won seven-game series against the Sabres and Oilers to capture the first Stanley Cup in franchise history.

Ward went 15-8 with a .920 save percentage, 2.14 goals against average and two shutouts, earning the Conn Smythe Trophy. Ward treated Canes fans to highlights like THE save

against Fernando Pisani in game seven against Edmonton, which Andy spotlighted earlier this week. Head coach Peter Laviolette's decision to switch goalies ended up being the most important choice in franchise history.

But what if it never happened? What if Gerber stayed healthy for the entire postseason, had been steadier early against Montreal and the Canes had stuck with their starter from the spectacular regular season?

Would Gerber have been capable of finding the higher gear a goalie needs for a deep playoff run?

Looking at Gerber's numbers, he was solid but unspectacular in the regular season. He compiled a strong 38-14-6 record, but his .906 save percentage and 2.78 goals-against average suggest he was buoyed by the Canes' prolific offense and lunch pail group of defensemen.

If Gerber stays healthy and continues to provide solid play, the Canes probably still beat Montreal. Maybe they still beat New Jersey too, though it probably takes more than five games. I don't think the Canes get past a talented (albeit very injured) Sabres team without Ward's heroics. They squeaked by them with him.

Would Laviolette still have gone to Ward if the team ran into trouble later on? Perhaps, but how would that have affected the team if Lavi went away from the goalie that got them to the conference finals?



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So, long story short, a bout of stomach flu led to the Canes' magical Stanley Cup run. That's a bit simplistic, but it's doubtful the Canes win the cup with Gerber between the pipes instead of Ward. It's fascinating, and one of my favorite things about this alternate history, to see how one thing can change the course of history so dramatically.

Without capturing the ultimate prize to cement themselves among Triangle sports fandom, there's no telling how not winning the cup would have changed the Canes' long-term future in Raleigh. Switching goalies in April 2006 truly was the most pivotal choice in franchise history.



Mailbag: Skinner trade right move for Hurricanes

NHL.com's Dan Rosen answers weekly questions

by Dan Rosen

Here is the Aug. 8 edition of Dan Rosen's weekly mailbag, which will run on Wednesdays periodically throughout the offseason. If you have a question, tweet it to @drosennhl and use #OvertheBoards.

Why did the Carolina Hurricanes make that Jeff Skinner deal now? Wouldn't they get way more at the trade deadline? -- @Lemieux67

There's no guarantee that they could get more before the NHL Trade Deadline than what they got from the Buffalo Sabres: forward prospect Cliff Pu, a second-round pick in the 2019 NHL Draft, and third- and sixth-round picks in the 2020 NHL Draft. What if Carolina kept Skinner with the intention of trading him and he didn't play well? What if he got hurt? What if both happened? Anything like that would have negatively impacted his value, if not deteriorated it completely. Or what about the other side, if the Hurricanes kept him and he played so well that he helped them get into position to make the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time since 2009? How could they justify trading him to their fan base if that were to happen? Imagine the uproar.

There were too many what-if scenarios for the Hurricanes to consider, which is why trading Skinner before the season was the right move, especially since they clearly had no interest in keeping him. General manager Don Waddell said there were no talks of a new contract for Skinner, who is entering the final year of his current contract.

Do you have any concerns that the new-look St. Louis Blues might face speed of play matchup challenges? -- @BHFanjb

I don't have any concerns about speed because I expect the Blues to have the puck a lot and that will enable them to control the pace of the game. The additions of centers Ryan O'Reilly and Tyler Bozak means the Blues should win a lot of face-offs. O'Reilly leads the NHL in face-off wins (3,337) and is second in winning percentage (58.1, minimum 1,000 face-offs taken) since 2015-16, including an NHL high 1,274 wins and 60.0 winning percentage last season, including 62.5

percent (514 of 822) in the defensive zone. Bozak is 53.6 percent on face-offs in his NHL career, and he led the Toronto Maple Leafs in face-offs taken and won in seven of the past eight seasons. The Blues also have a mobile defense group led by Alex Pietrangolo, Colton Parayko, Jay Bouwmeester and Vince Dunn. Once they win the face-off, they should be able to transport the puck up the ice.

I don't think the Blues will be in contention for the title as the fastest skating team in the NHL, but they're not slow and they should be able to keep up, especially because they should have the puck a lot and they should be able to move it well. And that's the key to speed in the NHL today, quick puck movement. The teams that win all skate well, and all move the puck quickly and with purpose. It's about having a plan, being on the same page and going to the areas where you know the puck is going to go. That comes down to coaching and chemistry. The Blues' chemistry may take some time to develop with so many new faces in key positions, but with their likely ability to possess the puck, their mobile back end, and their newfound depth down the middle with Bozak and O'Reilly joining Brayden Schenn and possibly rookie Robert Thomas at center, they should be able to move the puck quickly. That will make them a faster team.

How concerning is the Florida Panthers' goaltending situation? -- @djgoldman35

I don't consider the Panthers' goaltending situation, with Roberto Luongo and James Reimer as their top two, to be concerning. I think of the Hurricanes, with Scott Darling and Petr Mrazek, as having a concerning goaltending situation. I feel the same way about the New York Islanders with Robin Lehner and Thomas Greiss, the Sabres with Carter Hutton and Linus Ullmark, the Chicago Blackhawks if Corey Crawford isn't healthy, and the Philadelphia Flyers with Brian Elliott and Michal Neuvirth together again. Long term, the Panthers' goaltending situation doesn't look great because Luongo is 39 and Reimer never has proven capable of being a long-term No. 1. Florida's top goalie prospect, Sam Montembeault, had an average first professional season with an .896 save percentage and 3.25 goals-against average in



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41 games with Springfield of the American Hockey League. Montembeault, though, is 21 years old with a lot of room to grow. He is considered the goalie of the future for the Panthers, but you're asking me about their goaltending situation now and I don't find it all that alarming.

I believe the Panthers' strength is their ability to score, but Luongo and Reimer should be good enough to get Florida into the playoffs. Luongo had a .929 save percentage and 2.47 GAA in 35 games last season. The key is his health. If he can start 50 games, give or take a few here and there, and if he puts up similar numbers to last season, or even slightly worse numbers, the Panthers should be able to score enough to win a lot of games. Luongo was one of the best goalies in the NHL from Feb. 17 to the end of the season, going 12-5-1 with a .930 save percentage and 2.36 GAA in 20 games. Similarly, if Reimer plays closer to the 2016-17 version of himself (2.53 GAA and .920 save percentage in 43 games) as opposed to the 2017-18 version (2.99 GAA and .913 save percentage in 44 games), the Panthers should be able to compete for a playoff spot. I don't believe that's asking too much from him.

Of the multitude of Ottawa Senators players mentioned as trade candidates, one name I haven't heard is Matt Duchene, yet I can't imagine he wants to stay in Ottawa during a painful rebuild. What's his status beyond the 2018-19 season? -- @BrandoWriter

I don't think Duchene's status with Ottawa is off the radar for Senators fans. They know he has one year left on his contract and can become an unrestricted free agent July 1, 2019. They know what it took to get him in that three-team trade with the Colorado Avalanche and Nashville Predators on Nov. 5, and they know that the cost still could increase. The Senators still must give the Avalanche their first-round pick in the 2019 NHL Draft as part of the trade that also sent center Kyle Turris to the Predators and goalie Andrew Hammond, forward Shane Bowers and a third-round pick in the 2019 draft to the Avalanche. They could have given Colorado their first-round pick this year, but they kept it and selected forward Brady Tkachuk at No. 4. Next year, the first-round pick going to Colorado isn't lottery protected, meaning potentially it could be the No. 1 pick. That's a huge reason why I doubt Duchene is going anywhere soon. There is simply no way the Senators will be able to get back the value they gave up to get Duchene if they trade him now.

I am not predicting the Senators to be a playoff team this season, but they have great incentive beyond the obvious to be better than they were last season, when they were 30th in the NHL standings. They must avoid being at the bottom of the NHL and the potential for their first-round pick in 2019 to be better than No. 4. It's also too early to know what Duchene thinks of the Senators now because we still don't know what type of team they're going to be this season, what type of chemistry they're going to develop and what they would get back in a potential Erik Karlsson trade, which is still their biggest issue that needs to be resolved.

With the depth of wings now in the Sabres organization, how much longer should players like Nicholas Baptiste, Justin Bailey and Alexander Nylander be expected to be patient? I like the moves they made but players we thought were going to get a shot realistically won't make the big club. -- @TommyConroy10

What about patience from general manager Jason Botterill and coach Phil Housley? They can't wait for Baptiste, Bailey and Nylander to prove they belong in the NHL. They must make the Sabres better now, which is what Buffalo tried to accomplish this offseason by acquiring Skinner, Conor Sheary, Patrik Berglund, Vladimir Sobotka and Tage Thompson in three different trades. The competition to crack the Sabres lineup should be better this season because their depth is improved. That should push players like Baptiste, Bailey and Nylander to be better. If they prove they belong, I fully expect Botterill and Housley will find roles for them in Buffalo this season. But they have to prove it or else the patience from the Sabres' end will run out.

Nylander is coming off a season when he had 27 points (eight goals, 19 assists) in 51 games with Rochester of the AHL. He was the No. 8 pick in the 2016 NHL Draft, so the Sabres have a lot invested in him. He's also 20 years old, so there's plenty of time for him to develop. But a breakout professional season, whether that's in the AHL or the NHL, is a must for Nylander this season.

Baptiste and Bailey are each 23 and require waivers to be sent down to the AHL this season, meaning their time in the organization could be limited if they don't make a stand in training camp. Neither has wowed to the point where they have become lineup regulars in their time in the NHL.

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1102767 Carolina Hurricanes

What should be the Hurricanes' new goal song? Our experts weigh in on the choices.

BY LUKE DECOCK

ldecok@newsobserver.com

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Something has to come after the Woo. The Carolina Hurricanes are letting fans vote on their new goal song, which presumably will be played more often than the 108 times it was heard at PNC Arena a year ago. Avicii's "The Nights," the incumbent, is one of eight contenders that includes a techno mix of an old, old favorite and one song with local roots that already appears to have emerged as a consensus choice: Petey Pablo's "Raise Up."

But in the interest of a robust and productive debate, it seemed like a good idea to check with the experts, two local rockers whose hockey and Hurricanes fandom runs deep: Superchunk frontman and Merge Records president Mac McCaughan and Corrosion of Conformity bassist/vocalist Mike Dean.

"All of these choices are old songs but I guess that's the nature of sports music," McCaughan said. "People want something familiar. There is really only one choice from this list and it's Petey Pablo's iconic N.C. anthem 'Raise Up.'"

Dean, who worked a PNC Arena spotlight during the 2006 playoffs, leaned away from "Raise Up" and toward a few other choices, but acknowledged the team's musical dilemma.

"Fans of the game of hockey, fanatical or casual, come from all generations and all areas of the cultural spectrum, so whatever you choose, someone is going to be underwhelmed or even alienated by whichever song is selected," Dean said. "The more you try to be current, the sooner your choice becomes obsolete."

This is an old story: 25 years ago, N&O music critic David Menconi suggested 80 different songs for general use by the old Raleigh IceCaps, frustrated with the middle-of-the-road selections at Dorton Arena. Some of his suggestions – "Blitzkrieg Bop," "Been Caught Stealing" – are now arena-rock staples.

It also seemed important to sample the opinions of more than merely musicians, so we presented the eight candidates to an expert panel consisting not only our esteemed musicians but media personalities, an ex-player and fans for their consideration.

The songs are presented in the order they were listed for voting on the Hurricanes' website.

One suggestion that recurred throughout this process: Instead of settling on one clip, maybe pick a few and rotate through them. Dean, for what it's worth, preferred Led Zeppelin's "Rock and Roll," "Party Up" by DMX and "Lithium" by Nirvana.

"If the Canes go on a goal-scoring tear, hearing one track over and over would be pretty brutal, so I suggest they have three tracks," Dean said. "Lately, we can only dream of having such problems."

Brass Bonanza (techno remix)

Mike Dean, Corrosion of Conformity: Unlikely to resonate with anyone. And it's pretty forgettable.

Mac McCaughan, Superchunk/Merge Records: I understand the appeal of Whalers throwback jerseys -- the Hartford logo is outstanding -- but a techno remix of "Brass Bonanza" can be thrown in any time during the game, it doesn't need to be the goal song.

Luke DeCock, N&O sports columnist: Despite the current retro craze for the Hartford Whalers – borrowed nostalgia for the unremembered '80s, to quote a different song – the Hurricanes have their own history and own tradition here and shouldn't be borrowing from what they left behind.

Joe Ovies, WCMC-99.9 afternoon host: The classic Whalers song is fine to play once a game as a nod/wink to the past, but making it the goal song would be the equivalent of overdoing it at the NC State Fair and acting surprised you feel sick. Adding the techno remix to it is no different than deep frying a peanut butter stuff pickle.

David Menconi, N&O music critic: Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass unavailable?

Bates Battaglia, former Hurricanes forward, current owner of Lucky B's: I like the nostalgia of the Bonanza but a little old school. Time for a change.

Adam Moore, 26, Raleigh, @Moore_of_Adam: I don't like it but don't hate it. Straw poll with some friends my age say this is up there. Weird but good.

Patty Jasper, "Gen X," Apex, @lgc_com: There's a techno mix? Anyway, just say hell no. I have zero nostalgia for the Whalers, and honestly I just don't see why we're going there. ... Oh yeah, the owner.

Mike Jaquish, "gray hair," Cary, @MikeJaquish: To reminisce about all the Stanley Cups won in Hartford? Na-a-a-ah. Hartford is museum stuff, not the future. I sat on the plane a couple of weeks ago next to a former Whalers fan from Hartford, and mentioned this and he agreed with me. In the museum. In the past. Bury it. We sell season tix in Raleigh, not Hartford.

Jump Around, House of Pain

DeCock: What is this, drunken sunset karaoke in Cabo san Lucas?

Ovies: Oh, I'm sorry, I thought I was a hockey game and not a North Carolina Tar Heels sporting event? And you want to make the song associated with Roy Williams blasting in a building you share with N.C. State? Sure!

Menconi: Super fresh. In 1992.

Battaglia: Kind of dig the House of Pain but I could see people wanting to dig their hair out after a while, especially if we score some goals this year.

Moore: Eh. Just doesn't do it for me.



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Jasper: So this song is played regularly at Charlotte Checkers games, with the PA guy saying "Come on rock 'n' rollers, jump around!" No -- on the basis of this reminds me of AHL hockey.

Jaquish: 150 times for the STMs? Na-a-a-h.

Lithium, Nirvana

McCaughan: Nirvana was a great band, but do you want an anthem about manic depression playing after each goal? (OK, I see the parallels with being a Hurricanes fan for the last 20 years.)

DeCock: Perfect for the expansion Seattle Flannels, but pretty dated for these purposes.

Ovies: A song about a drug used to help bipolar disorders is way too meta for a fanbase that both loves and hates the team.

Menconi: Nothing says hockey-goal jubilation like psychotropic drugs.

Battaglia: Grunge is done.

Moore: Too much "yeah."

Jasper: Why? Grunge is over. This list and this song particularly, sends me into fits. We're flashing back.

Jaquish: Whining after a goal? That's what it sounds like.

Party Up, DMX

DeCock: Yes, if we're picking a walk-up song for a minor-league cleanup hitter in 1999.

Ovies: Y'all gonna make me lose my mind, up in here up in here, given all the clean edits you'd have to make in order to play this song after goals.

Menconi: Really needs to be more energetic, uptempo than this.

Battaglia: I hear this enough at Lucky B's.

Moore: This one isn't cut very well; not bad. I could do it.

Jasper: More nostalgia -- and the Canes created their own self-ruin with this song, played at every game for maybe the last 3 seasons. Making it a goal song? My lord.

Jaquish: Fun. Worn out.

Raise Up, Petey Pablo

Dean: Using this forgettable track just because it has explicit localism in the lyric would be an especially unfortunate choice.

McCaughan: There is really only one choice from this list. If the Canes wanted to update they could switch it out for G Yamazawa's "North Cack" which is great.

DeCock: The best of the bunch, locally grown and not something you're going to hear in any other NHL arena.

Ovies: The one and only choice.

Menconi: Probably the best choice, actually. Should be accompanied by Petey's Pale Ale.

Battaglia: No idea, never heard of it, and of course I'm on fleek, I would know.

Moore: This is my choice; Straw poll with friends confirms polls well; Would be interested to see how it sounds in game setting. Still my No. 1.

Jasper: The Caniac consensus is that we 'must' use this song -- out of some mad props to Petey Pablo. I could maybe go with that.

Jaquish: Meh. OK. Look at the age of season-ticket holders. We're too old for that crap.

Rock and Roll, Led Zeppelin

DeCock: It's been a *really* long time since this song rock and rolled.

Ovies: What is this, a Cadillac commercial?

Menconi: Already heard too much of this on classic-rock radio.

Battaglia: That's even older than Roddy (Brind'Amour). No go.

Moore: This isn't bad. Probably the choice from my dad (though I love me some Zeppelin). Doesn't do it for me.

Jasper: The issue here is this is an overplayed song. You hear it too much. See "Party Up" -- not that the Canes played this into the ground, it's just one of those songs you hear at hockey games a lot. I'm telling on myself and my frequent travel to other NHL arenas.

Jaquish: Love it. Not 150 times.

The Nights, Avicii

McCaughan: Avicii is just boring.

DeCock: Surely they could have done better than offering to settle for this again. Feels too connected to the Skrillex-dubstep-overload era of ear-bloodying PNC music.

Ovies: A generic EDM track might be a little too on the nose for the generic product on the ice.

Menconi: Not frantic enough.

Battaglia: I can get into this, grab my glow sticks, start the rave.

Moore: I never hated this. Upbeat tune, easy to clap with. The repetitive "Hey Hey!" never caught on, shame.

Jasper: Another tune that the Canes ran into the ground. They were already playing this when a goal was scored. They also played Avicii during warm ups. No more.

Jaquish: Party music across age groups and we can wait to it in unison. Do it. Got my vote.

Uprising, Muse

Dean: It's a creepy reworking of the creepy Gary Glitter song "Rock and Roll." If they had to go that way, I'd suggest "Do It Again" by Queens of the Stone Age.

McCaughan: The Muse song must have been chosen because you can't use Gary Glitter anymore as he's in jail for sex crimes but you want his drum beat.

DeCock: For these purposes, and the portion they picked, it sounds like something you'd play after the "other" team scores.

Ovies: The last time Muse was a thing the Carolina Hurricanes made the playoffs. That was nearly a decade ago.

Menconi: Too easygoing. You want energy for this.

Battaglia: No way Stormy can dance to that. I've seen his moves. I don't think he'd be happy.

Moore: Nah.

Jasper: This would rival Petey Pablo, but then I listened to the clip that they Canes have for the contest. It's all music, I saw Muse open for U2 at Carter Finley in 2009 -- this song got people all crazy in the crowd, and they were the opening act and it was during this part of the chorus: "They will not control us/We will be victorious." It's one of their best songs. I'm not sure it's truly a goal song.

Jaquish: We could do worse.

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The Athletic / Stan Mikita's greatest legacy goes far beyond hockey

1102808 Websites

By Chris Kuc Aug 8, 2018 14

The Athletic / How Jerry Buss and Bruce McNall brought Wayne Gretzky to Los Angeles 30 years ago

The look in Jill Mikita's eyes that afternoon in June 2015 while sitting in the sun room of the family home and speaking of her husband, Stan, is one I will never forget.

By Lisa Dillman Aug 8, 2018 27

There was a sadness, of course, mixed with some fear of the unknown with her husband living in an assisted care facility, his memories stripped by the devastating brain disorder dementia with Lewy bodies. But it was the strength in Jill Mikita's eyes that left an indelible mark.

Jeanie Buss was on the phone from her office in El Segundo, California the other day, almost a month after LeBron James agreed to a four-year, \$154-million deal with the Lakers. It was three days before President Donald Trump set off another social media firestorm with a disparaging tweet about James.

Stan Mikita died on Tuesday at age 78. The news arrived via e-mail while I sat in my car in the parking lot of a local store. I'd gone there with my son, Adam, to buy him a Cubs jersey for a journey to Kansas City to see his favorite baseball team play the Royals.

You might say this was the calm between the storms for Buss, the Lakers' controlling owner and CEO.

Adam is 8 years old, and was talking a mile a minute, excited about the father-son road trip that will cap the summer before school starts next week. But when I read the e-mail and mumbled more to myself than to him that Stan Mikita had died, Adam went quiet after whispering, "That's sad."

My dealings with Buss began when she used to bring in tennis stars to play exhibitions matches at the Forum in Inglewood, California. Established stars such as Chris Evert, John McEnroe and Martina Navratilova would play as well as up-and-comers Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras.

And it is. It's sad because the world lost not only one of the greatest hockey players to ever lace up skates, but a man whose zest for life and caring for others surpassed what he did on the ice during his 22 seasons with the Blackhawks. During my nearly 10-year stint as Hawks beat reporter with another publication, our paths would cross on occasion and Mikita would often offer his customary greeting: a crushing handshake that would require the suppression of a pained yelp.

One time, when she was searching for a top-20 player to play an exhibition against a rising youngster from Compton named Venus Williams, Buss talked about the problem with Venus's dad, Richard, who also coached her at the time.

The last time I saw Mikita was at the opening of the Blackhawks Store on Michigan Ave. in October 2014. When he spotted me, he asked, "What are you doing here?" It was a strange question at the time because the team was holding a news conference at the store and it was my job to be there. Only later was it revealed that Mikita had been experiencing dementia symptoms. A few months later, all of his memories would be gone.

"Richard Williams told me the player that gives Venus the most trouble is her younger sister Serena," Buss said. "I said, 'She has a sister?' And that was the first time I ever heard of Serena Williams."

I've written countless words as a sportswriter, but none have meant more than the ones penned when the Mikita family allowed me to tell the story of Stan's battle with dementia with Lewy bodies. The piece appeared the morning of Game 6 of the 2015 Stanley Cup Final, and later that June 15 night, the Hawks defeated the Lightning to capture their third championship in six seasons. It is the most important story I will ever write. Stan Mikita and his family deserved it.

Turns out it wasn't the last time.

It turned out that others deserved it, too. E-mails began flooding in from readers reaching out to share stories about their loved ones who battled dementia. The notes numbered in the hundreds and came from sons and daughters, husbands and wives and grandsons and granddaughters from all walks of life. To this day, the e-mails still come.

Ultimately, Venus played Serena at the Forum, the first time two of the most dominant players in women's tennis played on such a large stage. It was also just another example of Buss's forward thinking, a quality she shared with her father, the late Dr. Jerry Buss, the legendary impresario of the L.A. sports scene.

Stan Mikita's legacy as a hockey player includes being arguably the greatest Blackhawks player of all time. His legacy as a family man includes a wife, children and grandchildren who will forever be proud of the husband, father and grandfather he became.

The Buss family was always ahead of its time in identifying the future movers and the shakers in the world of sports.

In Tuesday's announcement, his family said Mikita "was surrounded by his loving family whom he fiercely loved" when he passed away. That family fiercely loved him back.

On Thursday, it'll be the 30th anniversary of the celebrated trade that sent Wayne Gretzky to the Kings.

But perhaps Stan Mikita's greatest legacy is the way he unknowingly inspired strangers to open up about family members' struggles with a brain affliction that can take a horrible emotional toll on everyone with whom it comes into contact. They need to talk. Stan Mikita inspired them to do so. That's a legacy.

Much of what happened in that seminal transaction is widely known. There's a bookshelf of Gretzky-related literature, detailing the deal and its long-term implications on both the growth of the Kings' franchise and the state of hockey in California. Television specials routinely spring up whenever a notable anniversary rolls around. The 25th anniversary of the trade turned into Gretzky Week in Canada back in August of 2013.

In what was an unfathomable scenario at the time, Edmonton Oilers owner Peter Pocklington was prepared to essentially take \$15 million from his Kings' counterpart Bruce McNall in exchange for the greatest player in the history of the game.

But what is not as widely known is that Jerry Buss, the late owner of the Lakers and Jeanie's father, originally planted the seed for the Gretzky transaction.

That was Buss prominently seated at the news conference when Gretzky was introduced in Los Angeles on Aug. 9, 1988, sharing the stage with Gretzky and Janet Jones Gretzky and McNall. It was a nod to his early influence on a deal that rocked not just the NHL but the sports world at large. Many wondered how a player of Gretzky's pedigree could be moved in the prime of his career.

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Even now, it is a saying in NHL circles: "If Wayne Gretzky can be traded, anybody can."

Jerry Buss, who died in February of 2013, made his first approach to Pocklington almost two years before the actual trade went through.

According to Jeanie Buss, "It was really a simple economic understanding of how the league works and how to sell tickets to a sports team.

"Dad knew that owner [Pocklington] couldn't sell any more tickets anyway," she said. "The Edmonton Oilers already had [Mark] Messier. Pocklington couldn't make the kind of money that he needed off of Wayne, so why not convince him to consider this trade?"

"Then the Kings would get the upswing in the revenue to afford bringing on a superstar like Wayne Gretzky. It was all about the economics as opposed to my dad waiting for him outside a restaurant to start hounding him to do the trade."

In fact, Jerry Buss used a similar formula in July 2004 when the Lakers traded Shaquille O'Neal to the Miami Heat for Lamar Odom, Caron Butler, Brian Grant and a future draft choice, who became Jordan Farmar.

"My dad looked around the league to see which teams weren't selling out their games and he knew wherever Shaq went, the team would immediately see an upswing in revenue and would be able to afford the additional salary Shaq was looking for," Jeanie Buss said.

"That's a trade that Dr. Buss orchestrated from owner to owner – and that's exactly what he did when he approached Peter Pocklington for the trade for Gretzky. He initiated the conversation. At some level, he moved the puck forward in that trade."

Pocklington initially wasn't ready to consider cutting the heart out of the Oilers at that point. In the meantime, McNall kept increasing his stake in the Kings.

From his original 25 percent stake in 1986, to 49 percent a year later, he finally purchased all the remaining shares from Buss in 1988.

McNall knew two things. One, the Kings needed a superstar face for the franchise. Two, for hockey to become more than a niche sport in Los Angeles, it required a major publicity push.

The Gretzky deal accomplished both goals. Nowadays, the legacy of Gretzky's presence in a major U.S. market can be seen on multiple levels. Part of hockey's U.S. growth spurt can be attributed to the NHL's strategy of establishing a footprint in non-traditional markets and then seeing those teams aggressively promote the grassroots of the sport in their respective communities.

The Gretzky deal made a specific and tangible impact in Southern California.

So, for example, what looked like a minor footnote on June 30 – when the Ducks traded Nic Kerdiles to the Winnipeg Jets for Chase De Leo – was actually a perfect illustration of the Gretzky ripple effect. It might have been the first time in NHL history that players raised and trained in Southern California were traded for one another.

With Gretzky in the lineup, celebrities suddenly started turning up at the Forum.

President Ronald Reagan became a fixture, as did Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell and John Candy, who would later go into business with Gretzky and McNall as co-owners of the Toronto Argonauts of the CFL.

How did it change? Prior to Gretzky's arrival, Jerry Buss noted in an interview for the Kings' 2003-04 yearbook, that Connie Stevens was one of the bigger celebrities in the pre-Gretzky days, along with Uncle Jed, Buddy Ebsen of "The Beverly Hillbillies" fame.

In an interview with me for NHL.com, Gretzky said he wasn't thinking about making hockey bigger on the day of the trade. Instead, he

described himself as feeling like "a deer in the headlights," at his introductory news conference in Los Angeles.

While Buss originally planted the idea of the Gretzky trade, it was McNall's persistence that ultimately saw it come to fruition.

"I had been in sessions with Peter, in a preliminary way," McNall said. "I thought there was a reasonable chance. When he finally said, 'Let's discuss it,' I thought, 'I'm going to get him [Gretzky]. Somehow, I'm going to get him.'"

The next step involved preparing his front office, his scouts and his coaches for the possibility.

One of the newest members of the hockey staff, goaltending coach Cap Raeder, had never met McNall prior to the NHL draft in Montreal in 1988.

"Mr. McNall came in and sat down and said to us, 'What would you think if I told you that we could get Wayne Gretzky?'" Raeder said. "Everybody just sort of fell silent and listened.

"I'm sitting there. 'Wow, it's a pretty big deal. Like, REALLY?'"

"I thought, 'Well, this is a good start to pro coaching. This might help.'"

Said McNall, "I think the scouts thought I was out of my mind, or crazy or whatever. I think even [general manager] Rogie [Vachon] thought I was a little nuts."

As the talks with the Oilers progressed, McNall relied on Gretzky's input to help finalize the details of the deal. The Kings weren't a particularly good team and Gretzky knew he would need help to turn the team's fortunes around.

"Once I had Wayne knowing the trade was going to happen or could happen, he became my GM," McNall said. "He started telling me, '[Mike] Krushelnyski is great. Get Marty [McSorley]. You can't give up three draft picks in a row, spread them out every other year.'"

That's exactly what transpired. Gretzky, Krushelnyski and McSorley were traded from the Oilers to the Kings for Jimmy Carson, Martin Gelin, first-round draft picks in 1989, 1991 and 1993 and \$15 million.

One battle McNall fought and won was keeping Luc Robitaille out of the deal. Robitaille, now the Kings' president, is the NHL's highest-scoring left wing and entered the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2009.

McNall and Robitaille remained close through the years. Robitaille and Gretzky were among the players who would visit McNall in prison after McNall's 1994 guilty plea to four criminal counts stemming from a bank fraud investigation.

"I just couldn't trade Luc," McNall said. "We were too close. I really thought he [Robitaille] was another Hall of Fame player and I guess I wasn't wrong. At that time, Wayne and I never really thought about how this would impact the whole world. We only thought about how this would impact our team. That was the main focus.

"In hindsight, I guess I would have traded Luc and the Pope for him now. It changed the game and the whole nature of the sport. I didn't know that at the time the impact it would have. I don't think Wayne realized the impact it was going to have exactly."

One significant shift since the last series of Gretzky anniversary stories is that Gretzky is back in hockey. Five years ago, he was not directly involved in the NHL, and hadn't been since he quit coaching the Phoenix Coyotes in 2009.

McNall correctly predicted in 2013 that Gretzky would eventually return to the sport he loved. Now Gretzky is partner and vice-chairman of Oilers Entertainment Group, and in 2017 he spent a calendar year as the NHL's centennial ambassador.

"That's his life," McNall said. "That's his sport. There were some great players that never really came back. It's not in his DNA [to be out]. He is what hockey is."



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In the summer of 1988, Gretzky was coming off a season in which he scored 149 points in 64 games and won his fourth Stanley Cup with the Oilers.

The notion that any player of that caliber could be moved was far-fetched. But one thing about McNall was that he always dreamed big even if others thought those might be pipe dreams.

"They probably thought this guy is out of his [bleeping] mind," McNall said, chuckling. "And they probably weren't wrong. But hey you've got to follow your dreams sometimes."

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The Athletic / World Junior camp takeaways and projected rosters

By Corey Pronman Aug 8, 2018 114

I was in Kamloops, British Columbia, to take in the World Junior Summer Showcase between Canada, Finland, Sweden and the USA's U20 teams. I also watched video of Finland and the Czech Republic's U20 teams playing a two-game set.

These are some of my takeaways:

CZECH REPUBLIC

Martin Necas, C, Carolina: Necas looked quite good at the U20 level, showing a high-end combination of speed, skill and vision, as you'd expect from someone who led the previous world juniors in scoring and was a key part of the Czech World Championship team last spring. This seemed like a tune-up for his NHL camp more than anything, as I'm quite skeptical Necas will be available for the tournament this winter.

Martin Kaut, RW, Colorado: Kaut was just OK in the two games versus Finland. He showed his typical smarts and competitiveness, and was involved in some offense for sure. But it was Necas who drove this line, and when Kaut got the puck, he looked average in terms of his creativity. I think Kaut plays in the league, but I still have questions on how significant his offensive upside is in terms of how much speed and skill he has.

Ostap Safin, LW, Edmonton: Safin is an intriguing player due to his athletic tools. He's 6-foot-5 and skates like he's 5-foot-11. There was one play during the exhibitions where he came back hard on defense, making up a few feet on his check, delivered a hit, got the puck back and rushed it the other way for a clean entry. With Safin, I think his size/speed combo gets him to the league; my question is whether he has enough skill/offensive IQ to make a dent scoring-wise in the NHL. I think it's possible, but his offensive flashes are quite inconsistent in terms of those attributes.

FINLAND

Anttoni Honka, D, 2019 draft eligible: Honka was so good in the two games versus the Czech Republic, but I thought he was just so-so in Kamloops. He'll be compared to his brother Julius a lot, whose development hasn't gone as hoped in Dallas, but they're slightly different players. They're both small and not great defensively, but Anttoni Honka is smarter and makes more plays, and I have some confidence he may not follow his brothers' path, even if he isn't as dynamic a skater.

Jesper Kotkaniemi, C, Montreal: Kotkaniemi was very good in the first game versus the Czechs and just fine in the second game. He didn't go to the showcase in Kamloops. At his best, he showed his dynamic skill and vision that catapulted him to be the third overall pick this past June. Kotkaniemi is such a creative playmaker who makes plays with pace and

there were moments he showed some fantastic offensive instincts to create chances. The big question with him is how quickly can he push the pace. There were moments I thought his skating looked decent/average, other times he looked like he was lagging. I was really hoping to see him live in Kamloops to gauge that aspect with more scrutiny, but he didn't attend. For now, despite the fact he's not technically smooth, I grade him out as a roughly average skater.

Rasmus Kupari, C, Los Angeles: Kupari was such a tough player to evaluate last season. He barely played versus his peers, was in Finland's Liiga all season and didn't get much ice time. Still, I had many NHL friends who not only liked him but went to bat for him as a potential cornerstone guy. I'm not all the way there, but boy did he look good in Kamloops. He has high-end speed and skill, and created offense with many clean zone entries. He also made more plays than I've seen from him in the past. I was thoroughly impressed, and with Kupari and Gabriel Vilardi, the Kings have options going forward at center.

Oskari Laaksonen, D, Buffalo: When I watched Laaksonen in February and April, I was impressed. And during the past few weeks, I came away with a positive impression again. He's a skilled puck-moving defenseman who tries to create chances every shift. I don't love his decision making and sometimes he takes bad risks, but you take some bad with a lot of good. Laaksonen skates decent and defends OK. His calling card is his offensive creativity.

Lauri Pajuniemi, RW, New York Rangers: Pajuniemi played one game versus the Czechs and didn't go to Kamloops. I wasn't blown away by him in that one game, but I saw flashes of above-average speed and skill that could make him intriguing as a prospect. At his size, I have questions on if he's dynamic enough offensively to be a legit NHLer, but I've bumped him up to a bubble prospect.

SWEDEN

Lucas Elvenes, RW, Vegas: Elvenes didn't put up a ton of points during the camp, coming off a huge season in Sweden, but I was very impressed watching him. He's very skilled with the puck, but what impressed me more was his hockey sense. It's high-end, if not elite. He sees the ice at an incredibly high level, making plays with pace, and looks like a premier playmaker. His speed is OK and he's not the best physically, but he can run a power play with the best of them, and for my money, there's not many players outside the NHL with his talent level.

Nils Lundkvist, D, New York Rangers: I was a Lundkvist skeptic heading into the draft and I still have heavy skepticism on a small defenseman with average hands going in the first, but he played solid at the event, so credit where credit's due. He showed fantastic poise with the puck and gets it up the ice well. He's mobile and was decent on both special teams. I still have upside questions, but I bumped him up as a prospect.

Isac Lundestrom, C, Anaheim: Lundestrom was Sweden's most consistent forward in terms of generating offense. He'll never blow you away, but his skill, speed and sense are all above-average. He showed the ability to push the pace, attack seams in the defense and contribute defensively, too. He will be trusted as an all-situations center for Sweden at the main tournament.

Simon Johansson, D, Minnesota: Johansson wasn't one of Sweden's best players, but overall, I came away with positive impressions of him. He was one of my pet favorites at the draft last summer, and I gave him a small bump now from what I saw. He's a smart puck mover who can make crafty offensive plays and is reasonably mobile. His defensive work isn't great, but it's not as bad as I saw from him last season. He's a nice gamble for the Wild in the mid rounds.

USA

Jay O'Brien, C, Philadelphia: O'Brien was impressive throughout the camp. He looked quicker than when I went out to watch him in prep last season, which, combined with his above-average skill and work ethic, made him consistently noticeable. Is he going to be an offensive



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dynamo? Probably not, but he has enough touch to be a solid third-line forward with a chance to be more.

Jack Hughes, C, 2019 draft eligible: For a double underage player at the U20 level, Hughes didn't look the part. He was USA's most noticeable forward whenever he was on the ice. His skill, IQ and skating all get very high grades. When he has the puck, he's dangerous with the way he can attack with speed and skill. He's one of the most impressive 17-year-old players I've ever seen take part in U20 games.

Quinn Hughes, D, Vancouver: Quinn Hughes' offensive creativity was as good as I've seen from him. He always attacks with his skating and creativity, but he was very aggressive in how he was making high-skilled plays and trying to create offense at every opportunity. His highlight reel assist versus Canada in the split-squad game made its way around the internet quickly. On the other hand, he was a little riskier than I was used to seeing from him and made some bad decisions with the puck that were uncharacteristic.

Joey Keane, D, New York Rangers: Some OHL friends of mine were Keane diehards last season, and I'm beginning to see why. He's very mobile, smart and has some skill, too. He plays well at both ends of the rink, and at this camp, he had nice flashes of offensive creativity. I wouldn't classify Keane as a true top prospect, but he's trended up for me in the past week, and I think he worked his way into the conversation for USA's final team in December.

Oliver Wahlstrom, RW, New York Islanders: Wahlstrom's camp was very so-so, though he was better toward the end. I still like him a ton due to his skill, size and elite shot, but I didn't like how he got caught behind the pace at times and didn't find ways to win back pucks. Pace and battle effort have been criticisms of his game, but I know what he looks like at his best from seeing him a ton last season.

Alexander Chmelevski, C, San Jose: When I watched Chmelevski in the OHL, he looked like a dynamic playmaker and someone who ran the 67's offense. At this camp, he was put into a versatile and at times checking role, and to my surprise, he excelled at that. I can't remember seeing him on the PK at any point before, but he was winning battles and making defensive plays while chipping in with some of his usual offensive creativity.

Noah Cates, LW, Philadelphia: Friends of mine around the USHL have raved to me about Cates. I saw it in flashes when I watched Omaha, but I wasn't blown away. I did like what I saw from Cates here, though, especially in how versatile he was in all situations. He's smart, skilled, hard-working and seemed to be slightly quicker from last season. I don't know if he has the skill level to be a top-six guy or anything, but I think there's a chance he could play games.

CANADA

Noah Dobson, D, New York Islanders: Dobson was Canada's best defenseman at the camp. I didn't buy him as a top-five candidate because I thought his skill level was very average, but I've been a believer in his great mobility and IQ, and he showed that at the camp. I also saw some flashes of offensive creativity. It won't happen often, but every now and then he made a nice play to evade pressure or make a man miss off the rush. I gave him a small bump up following this event.

Cody Glass, C, Vegas: Glass wasn't fantastic during the end of the camp, but he blew me away in his first game. He looked so dynamic and creative as a playmaker. It was good to see, as I had mild concerns about whether he could elevate his game at the quicker pace as he's struggled in international play over the past few years. He could play a bit quicker, though his stride looks fine, but if available, he'll be the guy to run Canada's power play.

Liam Foudy, LW, Columbus: I had skepticism about Foudy going into the draft, but he made it hard for me to stay a skeptic watching him during the past week. Yes, his speed is elite and everyone knows that, but he showed good anticipation finding lanes to break up the ice for a chance or finding a way to put pressure on the defense. He got a lot of scoring

chances and pushed the pace for Canada. I have my doubts on if his hands are any better than average, and I wouldn't tab him as a top-six guy yet, but I think he could be a real solid third-line forward who PKs.

Alex Formenton, LW, Ottawa: Formenton did a lot to impress me at the camp. His skating is his best asset and what's defined him as a prospect. However, what I liked seeing was him showing some puck skills, creativity and offensive IQ. I don't think any of those attributes are high-end, but if he just makes the odd play to couple with his speed, he could be a potential top-six guy, which for me isn't outside the realm of realistic possibilities.

Ty Smith, D, New Jersey: After a very disappointing U18 championship in April, Smith looked much more solid for Canada's U20 team. He's so smooth, not Robert Thomas smooth (I couldn't resist) but very smooth with the puck with his high-end vision and his way of scanning the ice. Canada's coach Tim Hunter called him the great surveyor. He also has the skating ability to push the pace when he needs to. He kept the turnovers to a minimum while making great plays, a step up from his U18 performance.

Projected rosters for the world juniors

And for fun, I'll do a quick projection of how I think Canada and USA will look in December after watching this camp. I presume Robert Thomas is on the Blues and Gabriel Vilardi is on the Kings but everyone else is available.

Projected Team Canada

Forwards:

Alex Formenton-Cody Glass-Owen Tippett

Michael Rasmussen-Barret Hayton-Nick Suzuki

Maxime Comtois-Jack Studnicka- Morgan Frost

Joe Veleno-Ryan McLeod-Jaret Anderson-Dolan

Alexis Lafreniere

Defensemen:

Ty Smith-Noah Dobson

Ian Mitchell-Evan Bouchard

Pierre-Olivier Joseph- Jacob Bernard-Docker

Calen Addison

Goaltenders:

Michael DiPietro

Matthew Villalta

Projected Team USA

Forwards:

Brady Tkachuk-Ryan Poehling-Jay O'Brien

Joel Farabee-Jack Hughes-Oliver Wahlstrom

Logan Cockerill-Josh Norris-Jason Robertson

Grant Mismash-Sasha Chmelevski-Noah Cates

Jack Drury

Defensemen:

Dylan Samberg-Quinn Hughes

Mikey Anderson-K'Andre Miller

Mattias Samuelsson-Joey Keane

Cam York



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Goaltenders:

Cayden Primeau

Spencer Knight

The Athletic LOADED: 08.09.2018

1102810 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Gretzky talks Olympics, growing the game in China and summer hockey

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec August 8, 2018, 8:25 PM

EDMONTON — Wayne Gretzky may be retired from playing, but when it comes to Olympic participation, teaching the game in China, or Canadian kids and summer hockey, he's still got strong opinions.

Gretzky met with the media Wednesday at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup in Edmonton, where he was peppered with questions on a slow day in the hockey world. We put them together here, one day short of the 30th anniversary of his trade (read: sale) from Edmonton to the Los Angeles Kings back in 1988.

That topic, ironically, was the one subject he didn't much care to speak at length on. Here is the conversation:

On the death of Stan Mikita:

Wayne Gretzky: Obviously it's a sad day for his family, teammates, people that knew him and obviously the fans in Chicago. He was one of my dad's favourite players, so the very first game I played, the first face-off I got to go against Stan Mikita, so I thought that was pretty cool.

He just was a special guy and not too many guys in the game of hockey have had the most penalty minutes and then won the Lady Byng [Memorial Trophy], and then won the scoring race and the Hart Trophy, so good on him. He was great for our sport and he was innovative and was probably a big part to bringing the curved stick to hockey today. But most importantly, he was very much liked by his teammates and had a tremendous family.

Thursday is the 30th anniversary of the trade to L.A. Your thoughts?

Gretzky: It's for other people to talk about. I don't really talk about it much. It happened, it's part of life, it's part of history. It seems like it was 10 years and then 25 years and here we are at 30 years. In 35 years I'm sure I'll probably get asked the same question.

What does the China ambassador job entail?

(Gretzky was announced Wednesday as the global ambassador for Kunlun Red Star of the KHL. He and his son Ty will open two hockey schools in China).

Gretzky: We've been working on this for close to two years. The Chinese people and the Chinese business community have really rallied around ice hockey because they're hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics, so they really want to have a good showing and they've built these academies. They have one in Canada and one in the United States.

So we're going to go over, my son and I, we're going to do a little hockey academy there and we're going to see about building ice rinks in China. And it turns out there will be an NHL game (Calgary vs. Boston) when we're there, so we'll get to see a game. It'll be a fun trip. I've never been to China. I'm looking forward to it and it should be a lot of fun.

It's an untapped market...

Gretzky: The Chinese people have really rallied around hockey. Somebody told me that last year, Pittsburgh and Nashville had 36 million people in China that watched Game 6. So it shows you the size of the market in China is pretty amazing. So, good on the NHL for realizing that, and they've stepped in. They're really trying to put a bit of an imprint of our game and our sport in China and it just helps make our game bigger.

Los Angeles Kings Wayne Gretzky

You were credited with spreading hockey's gospel through the South when you were traded to L.A. Is this the same thing, but in China?

Gretzky: No. This is great for hockey, it's a good business transaction for me and my family — my son runs hockey camps and this will really be a great experience for him. But one person doesn't make the game, one person doesn't sell the game. It takes everyone.

The sport makes the player, the player doesn't make the sport.

Are you in favour of the NHL participating in the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing?

Gretzky: I've made no secret that I believe the players should be at the Olympics. I think it's special, I think it rallies the country, the players love to play in it ... Hopefully they can come to an agreement, the league and the union, and we can get the best players back into the Olympics.

Can this arrangement you have in China create an environment that the players union and league can not say no to?

Gretzky: I don't know about that — that's up for the union and the players and the commissioner to make that decision. That's not for me. I don't have all the answers to all that sort of stuff. That's between the union and Mr. Bettman.

I've made no secret, I think it's great for guys like Connor (McDavid) and (Leon) Draisaitl playing in the Olympics. It was great for me, it was great for Sidney [Crosby]. I'd love to see those kids get that chance.

What about the Hlinka Gretzky Cup? Is there an education process for the fans?

Gretzky: Listen, I played in '77 at the World Junior. We had 1,200 people in the Montreal Forum. Now, look at a World Junior when Canada plays — you have 17,000 people. So it isn't going to happen over night. This is a nice hockey town and a great sports city.

The Canadian team ... I am very impressed with their size, skill and speed. This is a stepping stone. Two years from now, (crowds) will be better and better.

Bobby Orr recently said he thought that too many Canadian kids played hockey year-round. What are your thoughts on summer hockey?

Gretzky: I'm a big believer in Bobby Orr. I've said (the same thing) for a lot of years. When I was 12, 13, 14, I played baseball, lacrosse, track and field ... I think all those sports helped me to be a better hockey player. I think there's an unfair balance. Some kids can't afford to play all year round, and they think they get left behind. That's not true. By playing soccer, lacrosse, those sports help their hockey.

When I finished playing hockey, in mid-April usually, I threw my bag in the basement and I didn't get it back until after Labour Day. I didn't skate in the summertime. I didn't go to hockey schools — my family couldn't afford it, to be honest — so I played baseball and lacrosse. I think they helped my hockey career, and the other thing was, when I came back in September I was fresh and excited to play again because I hadn't skated for three or four months.

(Even as a pro), by not skating in the off-season, I was always a lot fresher in January and February.

Did you pattern yourself after Stan Mikita at all?

Gretzky: No, I couldn't wear the helmet. It looked too heavy. And the stick had too big of a curve. I played golf with him a couple of times and he



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was one of the great golfers, as a hockey player. Like, a one handicap. I played with him in Chicago at Medinah one year. I must have shot close to 100 and I think he had 71 or 72. It was pretty embarrassing.

What's it like going to a major golf tournament now, when Dustin Johnson is your daughter's significant other?

Gretzky: It's interesting. He's very serious, very focused. I just try to stay out of his way ... especially the night before. You don't really want to talk a lot, and just focus on what you're doing. He has his routine.

It's strange for me to see him, when he plays in the afternoon he works out for two hours in the morning. But that's his routine and he sticks to it.

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

Tell us about your relationship with Ivan Hlinka.

Gretzky: Well, I played against him a bit and then I got to know him at the '98 Olympics, where he stole our gold medal (laughing). Losing is so gut-wrenching, especially at that level. But it was unreal for hockey when the Czechs won that gold medal ... and he was a huge part of that, as their coach.

What advice would you give to the kids playing at this tournament?

Gretzky: You just don't know, at 16 and 17, who is going to be... You've got the Lemieux's and Crosby's who are can't-miss guys. Then you've got guys who come along in the second or third round and become Hall of Famers. So, I would give them the same advice that Gordie Howe gave me: You've got to be the hardest working player every night. Work hard, good things happen. And guys who love the game the most work the hardest and put the time in.

It's not a big secret why guys like Mark Messier and Paul Coffey are in the Hall of Fame. Because they loved to play. The bigger the game, the more excited they got, the better they played.

I met with the kids before Game 1 and said, "This is something you'll never forget. Work hard, and you'll love it."

What about Canadian star Alexis Lafreniere?

Gretzky: That kid is pretty good, isn't he? He reminds me of Gilbert Perreault. He can skate, handle the puck ... I said to someone, "I think he's going to be a centre in the NHL," and they said, "No, he's a left winger." I said, "One of the best centres ever (Messier) played the wing for three years. He didn't have any problem moving into the middle."

He's just around the puck so much. When you have that much puck sense, that much speed, I can see him being a centreman at the next level.

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1102811 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Connor McDavid talks Jack Hughes, Oilers moves, linemate search

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox August 7, 2018, 11:02 PM

TORONTO – Connor McDavid uses the word funny, but he's not laughing.

He's the captain of the Edmonton Oilers, who finished 18 points out of a playoff berth in 2017-18, a year in which some critics leapt from pegging

that team as Stanley Cup favourites to writing them off before all the Halloween candy had been gobbled up.

He's the captain of the most recent edition of Team Canada, the one that floundered in the medal round and finished fourth at the world championship in May, the first national squad in four years to not leave with something shiny around their necks.

Individually, only a fool would blame McDavid — the most outstanding hockey player on the planet two years running, as voted by his peers — for these failures, even partially.

He won his second consecutive NHL scoring race in 2018, with a personal best 41 goals and 108 points. He piled up 17 points in 10 games for his homeland at the worlds. Earlier this week, the NHL Network anointed him the best centre in the game (again). A defiant "Crosby's better!" debate never arrived.

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.

He's the best right now. Present tense.

And yet, hockey is the ultimate team sport. One man cannot LeBron his way through June — even if that man is faster, smoother, more talented and more determined than anyone he shares a sheet with. McDavid didn't win the league MVP only because his supporting cast, taken as a whole, was lousy. He needs help, and judging by the Oilers limited off-season movement, it must arise from within.

So when McDavid, a month away from his fourth NHL training camp, muses about his potential wingers — Ty Rattie? Kailer Yamamoto? Bueller? — he says funny, but not in an LOL way.

"It's funny that we talk about it, and it's been three years now," McDavid said Tuesday after an intense, 90-minute skills workout at Toronto's Power Edge Pro camp. "I was able to find a little chemistry with Nuge [centre-turned right winger Ryan Nugent-Hopkins] and Ty Rattie at the end of the year, so you hope to come into that. Or maybe someone new. You hope to come into training camp and stay with someone and try to build your game with someone."

A self-described homebody, McDavid has been skating regularly for weeks now. He feels refreshed and looks driven after bouncing around Europe (Paris, London, Amsterdam) with girlfriend Lauren Kyle and friends for a while. "Which was awesome — to get away from everyone and everything. Spend some time with friends," he says.

Weaving through the increasingly popular skill-handling obstacles at PEP, which force players to up their hand speed and sharpen their edge work, McDavid starts off every drill, and none of the pros who follow — Connor Brown, Dylan Larkin, Boone Jenner, Alex DeBrincat among them — are as swift or nimble. McDavid's reaction time is so mesmerizing up close, Larkin, the last NHLer to hold the crown of Faster Skater pre-McDavid, doesn't dare suggest he could take him.

"Connor, for sure," Larkin concedes. "He's fast. Quick hands. The way he skates, you can tell he's been doing this training for a while now, and it clearly pays off for him."

McDavid, as ever, is trying to improve every aspect of his game. Despite his year-over-year goal total jumping from 30 to 41, his reputation is that of passer and playmaker first, so he's again pouring summer hours into his shot.

"It's hard to work on the other things," he admits. "You can talk about how you want to work on your defence, but how are you going to do that in the summer unless you're scrimmaging?"

So he continues to zip and spin through the patented on-ice equipment and makes expert players look like pylons.



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At one point, Jack Hughes — the 17-year-old projected to go No. 1 overall in the 2019 draft — accepts a perfect lead pass from McDavid's tape and you wonder if the two have a relationship.

"We're friendly with each other, I guess. He's been really nice to me. I'm not expecting to be friends with him or anything. As long as he's nice to me, that's all I'm asking for," Hughes explains. No phenom-to-phenom draft-year secrets have been revealed.

"It's kinda just been him chirping me about going to the OHL," says Hughes, who will return to the U.S. National Team Development Program. "He's a nice guy."

McDavid has trained with Hughes a couple times last summer and this one. Any advice McDavid passes to Jack, he reasons, wouldn't matter.

"You look at all the kids who have come in and done their thing — there's so many different examples he can relate to — it's not going to be an issue. He's so good that he's probably just waiting to get to the draft," says McDavid.

He launches into a scouting report that could fit either of them: "Such a good skater. He's very agile. He just looks smooth with the puck. He's obviously going to be a very good player."

Quinn Hughes, Jack's older brother and the shiniest addition to the Canucks' prospect pool, believes not only is McDavid hands-down the best at running the drills, he sets a tone.

"Especially Jack watches him and sees how good he is and takes things from what he sees out here and tries to apply it. Seeing all these pros, being around these guys is really good for the both of us," Quinn explains.

"Nowadays, guys are so serious and skilled about it. No one can really take breaks. I mean, you watch the best player in the world and he's out here too, so..."

So... how 'bout them Oilers?

Purse-strung on July 1 by the giant contracts given to McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and critical lightning rod Milan Lucic in recent summers, McDavid says the consistent message from GM Peter Chiarelli to players and fans was that a big move would only be made if it presented itself.

"But nothing too promising came up. That's good. You want to keep the group together. We were a good team two years ago," says McDavid of the group that elevated all expectations when they drew within one win of the conference final. "The team we were last year wasn't up to our standards, and it's important we get back to our level."

It's suggested that the Oilers showed pride by finishing 2017-18 stronger than they started.

"There's just got to be a point in time where you get sick of losing, and you just don't anymore. Guys came together. Guys were sick of how the year was going and came back to playing hockey the way it should be, the way you need to," McDavid says.

"It's a good learning experience, but one you never want to go through again. We talked about it so much now that it doesn't really need to be talked about again."

Chiarelli did make two smart, low-risk free-agency bets on depth forwards Tobias Rieder and Kyle Brodziak, to whom McDavid has fired off a few text messages.

"Very excited to bring both those guys on. Reider with his speed and offensive flair, he's going to get chances in our lineup. He's a guy that can complement the number of centremen that we have," the captain says.

"Then you look at a guy like Brodziak, who's been in the league so long, who does everything right. I've heard he's an excellent guy in the room, and that's definitely something we could use."

One more thing the Oilers could use before McDavid flies from Toronto to Edmonton in about a month's time is a new contract for Darnell Nurse. The unsigned RFA led all Oilers defencemen in scoring last season and should take another step in his progression.

"He's definitely a guy that's a key piece to our puzzle," McDavid says. "He's going to need to be there. I'm not sure the extent of what they're talking about, but he definitely needs to be there."

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1102812 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Red Wings' Dylan Larkin updates contract talks: 'Something's coming'

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjokebox August 8, 2018, 10:12 AM

TORONTO — More than a week deep into August, the Detroit Red Wings' greatest off-season priority remains the club's last bit of unfinished business.

Training camp is roughly a month away, and Dylan Larkin — Detroit's best and most important player — still does not have a job in place for the 2018-19 season.

"Something's coming," Larkin promised Tuesday afternoon, following an intense skills-training session alongside Connor McDavid and other NHLers at the Power Edge Pro camp in Toronto.

"I've told everyone I think it'll be before training camp. It's right there. I'm just waiting to iron out the details."

The 22-year-old Larkin made a smooth shift from wing to centre last season, leading all teammates in scoring (63 points) while embracing a penalty-killing role and improving his defensive game. With captain Henrik Zetterberg turning 38 in early October and back issues putting the long-serving star's availability in doubt, Larkin is the undisputed franchise centre of the present and future.

GM Ken Holland would prefer to lock Larkin up for the next five or six seasons, but he's under a salary-cap crunch.

"That's a pretty good honour — they're showing a long-term commitment to you — but there are different offers out there, whether it's a short-term bridge deal or a long-term deal," Larkin said.

"Now we're just trying to figure out what's going to be best for both our futures."

There's a significant obstacle to overcome here. After signing a slew of free agents — UFAs Thomas Vanek, Mike Green and Jonathan Bernier, plus RFAs Andreas Athanasiou and Anthony Mantha — the Wings have just \$2.83 million in projected cap space, according to capfriendly.com. That's not enough for Larkin, who's looking for a massive raise from the \$925,000 he earned in the final year of his entry-level deal. He does not yet have arbitration rights.

Holland wants to avoid an issue like the one he ran into with Athanasiou last fall. In that instance, his unsigned RFA did not report to camp and a deal wasn't agreed to until late October. Athanasiou missed the first 10 games of the season.

Detroit can ill afford a similar case with Larkin, who has lofty expectations for one of the Atlantic Division's underdogs.

"Make some noise in the playoffs," said Larkin, when asked what would constitute a successful season in Motown.



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"As a young group of players, we need that playoff experience where we get in a series and we're grinding it out against one of our rivals in the Atlantic and anything can happen. We need to put it together for 82 games. We need to get hot off the start. I think we can make some noise in the playoffs."

But first? A contract.

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1102813 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Proposing 5 potential Christmas Day NHL games

Daniel Goffenberg | @interndaniel August 8, 2018, 2:08 PM

The NBA has announced its national TV broadcast schedule, with a juicy slate of five Christmas matchups revealed, as is tradition.

Getting a Christmas game is sort of the NBA's way of validating your relevance in the league, with marketability, entertainment-value, and title hopes all considered when making the schedule.

The NHL prefers to give its players the holiday off (its marquee games are spread out around the Winter Classic and Stadium Series contests), but what if it didn't? Which matchups would the NHL come up with to best entertain us all this holiday season?

Let's take a stab at it.

Note: There are seven Canadian franchises, and only five games to work with. Let's just assume that if your favourite team didn't get a game, a Heritage Classic awaits elsewhere in the year.

Game 1, Pittsburgh-Washington, 12 p.m. ET

The holders of the last three Stanley Cup titles will do battle early in the afternoon in a rematch of this past season's second-round playoff series.

This game will have the league's two biggest faces do battle as captains of two Cup contenders and is a great way to get our Christmas day rolling.

Sorry you got snubbed: Tampa Bay

The Lightning would work as an alternate for either of these two teams, boasting enough star power and recent playoff meetings to warrant Christmas Day consideration. Unfortunately, the all-Metro showdown was too juicy to pass up.

Game 2, Toronto-Boston, 3 p.m. ET

Two Original 6 teams with Cup aspirations that also conveniently play in the same division and met in the playoffs this past spring. Oh, and they're two of the league's biggest markets.

It was very tempting to schedule John Tavares' return to Long Island here, but we'll leave that where it lies, on Feb. 28.

Sorry you got snubbed: Montreal

This is a case where the relative (lack) of excitement around the team itself outweighed the sheer market size. Next year, though.

Game 3, Chicago-St. Louis, 6 p.m. ET

We're slowly moving west now, with a pair of Central Division teams with a history of playoff battles who are both looking to take a step forward from where they were in 2017-18.

The Blackhawks seem to always get a spot whenever the NHL decides to reveal its outdoor schedule, so they're a pretty natural fit.

The Blues are a deep team, with star power on offence and defence.

Sorry you got snubbed: Colorado

Nathan MacKinnon willed this team into the playoffs last year, but his heroics weren't enough to force himself into working over the holidays. Poor guy.

Game 4, Winnipeg-Nashville, 8:30 p.m. ET

Two of the NHL's best teams, who met in the second round this past post-season, get another chance to show their stuff on a big stage.

They met five times in the 2017-18 regular season, with an average of 8.4 goals per contest. This is an easy game to sell.

Sorry you got snubbed: Vegas

The Golden Knights are fun, really good, and still have a large novelty excitement around them from being an expansion team. But we can't give them everything.

Game 5, Edmonton-Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m. ET

In a battle of the "Gretzky Trade" rivals, Connor McDavid gets to strut his stuff on a big stage, while one of the NHL's biggest markets gets a marquee event.

The bet here is that a return to 2016-17 form for Cam Talbot ensures the Oilers can enter this game as one of the league's better teams.

Sorry you got snubbed: Calgary

The Battle of Alberta would have been great here, but we had to keep the U.S. happy.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.09.2018